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Reflections of Mentoring for Indigenous Youth In the Fourth R

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Education
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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the reflections of peer mentors and mentees over time who have participated in the Fourth R: Uniting Our Nations Peer Mentoring Program. Data was collected from five youth mentors (two female, three male), four of whom also participated as mentees, via interviews utilizing a narrative based methodology in which story-telling and meaning-making was encouraged through the interview guide and procedure. Thematic content analysis of the data was conducted manually and revealed five key themes: 1) Cultural Connection, increases in 2) Intrapersonal Skills, 3) Interpersonal skills, 4) Social support, and 5) Education and Career Benefits. The findings indicated that Indigenous youth post program involvement carried forward similar benefits to those previously reported in the Fourth R, including cultural connection based activity and engagement, as well as impacts on intrapersonal development such as confidence and leadership skills. The findings also indicate that benefits may transform in post-graduation as participants reported continued instances of mentoring others, as well as becoming more involved in Indigenous oriented advocacy and the desire to pursue further education and career goals. Specifically, a more nuanced meaning-making approach concerning their own personal understanding of culture was identified. This study contributes to strength-based research that underlines the importance of culturally relevant programming that puts Indigenous youth at the forefront and empowers cultural connection as well as personal development.

Key words: Indigenous youth, youth mentoring, peer mentoring, cultural programming, leadership, Indigenous mentorship, narrative research, strengths-based research

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor Dr. Claire Crooks of the Faculty of Education at Western University. Claire was patient with my process, encouraging, and always there to offer guidance and support while letting my voice come through in this work.

I would also like to thank Michael Cywink of the Centre for School Mental Health for his tenacity to help with the project in any way he could, and to whom much of this work would not be possible without his continuous dedication to the Fourth R program and to Indigenous mentoring initiatives.

Lastly, I would also like to acknowledge and dedicate this work to my greatest mentor, my Nokomis, Jane Goulais of Nipissing First Nation, whose resilience in her own journey has guided me in my research.

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Introduction

Indigenous youth mentorship programs have integrated two important aspects at the heart

of promoting Indigenous mental health, which in turn lead to more resilient youth (Wexler,

2009). Firstly, youth programs that are culturally relevant encourage Indigenous youth to engage

in their culture, which fosters a strong sense of cultural self-identity that may offer protection

against discrimination (Crooks, Burleigh, & Sisco, 2015; Crooks, Burleigh, Snowshoe, Lapp,

Hughes, & Sisco, 2015; Crooks, 2016; Patrick, 2017). Secondly, they promote Indigenous

culture and provide an avenue for cultural connectedness to take place that also supports more

positive experiences within the school system. Research investigating these programs

demonstrates this utility and many benefits to Indigenous youth (Crooks, Exner-Cortens, Burn,

Lapointe, & Chiodo, 2017, Crooks et al, 2015, Goodman, Snyder, Wilson & Whitford, 2019).

Research further suggests that being a mentor has a host of benefits relating to self-confidence

and leadership skills associated with modelling a desirable social role for other youth (Coyne-

Foresi, Crooks, Chiodo, Nowicki, & Dare, 2018; Karcher, 2005; 2008; Rhodes 2006). However,

these benefits from mentors and mentees have yet to be examined in Indigenous youth in the

years following their involvement with mentoring programs, and few follow-ups are done to

understand the way that youth make sense of their past experiences and to identify how such

impacts may carry forward. This project sought to explore the perceived benefits and reflections

of youth mentors and mentees who have engaged with a culturally relevant high school

Indigenous peer-mentoring program. It also inquired as to whether benefits from previous

research remained, transformed, or whether new benefits emerged after youth transitioned into

young adulthood. The study utilized Indigenous youth (First Nations, Intuit, and Metis; FNMI) participants who have experiences in either (or both) the mentoring and mentee role within the Fourth R program and have graduated or begun other life transitions as young adults. This study used a semi-structured interview that allows for a narrative/story-telling methodology to take place that will provide adequate context about these experiences. The study was exploratory and sought to add to the growing body of research on the benefits of strengths-based research around Indigenous youth programming using the voices of Indigenous youth.

Despite a longstanding history of systemic oppression (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004) and disproportionate rates of mental, physical socioeconomic, and political disadvantages Indigenous youth face (Assembly of First Nations (AFN), 2012; Collin-Vézina, Dion & Trocmé, 2009; Fallon Van Wert, Trocmé, MacLaurin, Sinha, Lefebvre, & Smith, 2015; Kirmayer, 2007; King, Smith & Gracey, 2009), they continue to exhibit resiliency (Andersson & Ledogar, 2008; Toombs, Kowatch & Mushquash, 2016). Research into Indigenous resiliency suggests that culture plays a vital role in fostering resilient outcomes (Toombs, Kowatch & Mushquash, 2016; Wexler, 2009; Kirmayer, Dandenau, Marshal, Phillips, & Williamson, 2011). Due to the heightened disadvantages experienced by Indigenous peoples, coupled with being the fastest growing population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006; 2011) it is integral to continue supporting and evaluating Indigenous youth programs that bolster resiliency in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FMNI) Youth and to understand the way benefits may unfold or evolve after mentorship experiences have ended.

Furthermore, additional strengths-based research that highlights the voices of Indigenous youth is needed. It is of utmost importance that research that identifies the benefits of these programs honour the worldview of Indigenous participants and adhere to culturally suitable

practices. Creating a conduit for Indigenous youth to engage in research, and to provide context and access to their lived experience, is a suitable way of honoring Indigenous worldview (Drawson, Toombs & Mushquash, 2017). Furthermore exploring these research initiatives utilizing a two-eyed seeing model that incorporates traditional methods of Indigenous inquiry such as narrative story-telling, and western methods, such as thematic content analyses, can be used in collaboration to emphasize the strengths of both strategies.

This project begins with a brief overview of important historical context to illuminate the lived experienced and struggles of Indigenous peoples in Canada. This is followed by a description of Indigenous well-being and worldview, which identifies the need for culturally relevant programming and the benefits of youth engagement as well as narrative methodology. A review of previous research in Indigenous youth programming will also highlight the various benefits and needs as well as gaps in the literature. An Introduction into the Fourth R: Uniting our Nations peer-mentoring program, study, results and discussion will follow.

Historical Context, Indigenous Well-Being and Worldview

Research that is culturally aware and sensitive to the worldview of a culture is necessary to ascertain valid empirical and qualitative information that in turn accurately reflects the population under study. This awareness includes not only working against the perpetuation of stereotypes and stigmatization associated with Indigenous peoples, but also identifying the barriers that Indigenous peoples face in the mental health sector (King, Smith, & Gracey, 2009). These longstanding barriers include problems associated with living on isolated reserves, inadequate access to health care, insufficient education, the large percentage of children in foster care, and higher levels of substance abuse, suicide rates, sexual abuse, mental health problems, as well as miscommunication and misunderstanding by the public through government and

media discourse, minority status, and subsequent low socio-economic status (Collin-Vézina, Dion & Trocmé, 2009; Newbold, 1998; Fallon, Van Wert, Trocmé, MacLaurin, Sinha, Lefebvre, & Smith, 2015; Jamieson, 1978; Adelson, 2005).

In addition, the lasting impact of residential schooling and proposed historical transmission of trauma emphasizes 400 years of cultural, social, and literal genocide of Indigenous peoples in Canada that has led to a severe disconnect of cultural traditions and identity in Canadian Anishnabe (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Furthermore, the Assembly of First Nations (2012) has worked alongside the First Nations Education Council (FNEC), Nishnawebe Aski Nation (NAN) and several other Indigenous First Nation organizations to file a Human Rights complaint in accordance to section five of the Canadian Human Rights Act, on the basis that First Nations children and youth attending on-reserve schools across Canada are denied access to the same standard and quality of education programs given to children off-reserves. They argued that this level of discrimination is historic, systemic, and effects approximately 70 000 Indigenous children and youth whose futures can be dramatically altered by their level of education. The importance of education cannot be overstated, as education brings along a host of protective factors otherwise associated with the prevention of a number of negative mental and physical health outcomes (MacMillan et al., 2013, King, Smith and Gracey, 2009).

In light of the historical and current sociopolitical context, it is essential that researchers acknowledge the impact of worldview and how Indigenous peoples choose to move forward despite a deserved mistrust in the education system. The First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework states that balance and well-being is achieved when individuals maintain purpose through cultural ways of being, preserving hope for their future (which is firmly

grounded in a sense of identity and unique Indigenous values), a belief in spirit, and a sense of belonging and connectedness within family (Health Canada, 2015). This creates an alternative dimension of protective factors that places great importance on the interconnectedness of relational systems within the community.

Traditional Indigenous Mentorship

Traditional Indigenous mentorship was a natural part of socialization which focused heavily on the role of the extended family (Makokis, 2001). In fact, "Children were regarded as a gift from the Creator and members of the community shared responsibility for their upbringing" (Ross, 1996, p 141). This extended family, or "spider web" of relations (Little Bear, 2000, p, 79) was relied upon in Indigenous communities and demonstrates the interconnectedness of social circles therein (Klinck et al., 2005). However, policies enforced on Indigenous peoples centered around residential schooling broke down these structures and disrupted the role that community and culture held for so many Canadian Indigenous peoples (Milloy, 1996, Wesley-Esquimaux, 2004). This cultural genocide, which separated young children from families, language and tradition, played a devastating role in diminishing pride and connectedness relating to Indigenous identity (Wesley-Esquimaux, 2004).

Supporting the efforts of Indigenous peoples requires Indigenous voices be at the forefront in developing these structures in Indigenous communities. As such, an appreciation and understanding of Indigenous worldview in the research paradigm is necessary. Indigenous worldview of education is different from that of non-Indigenous peoples (Henderson, 2000), and focuses on holistic learning that includes unique teaching methods taught by immediate kin, extended family and the community. For example, story-telling, and the use of oral traditions in general, as well as hands on interactive learning in groups, are highly emphasized for indigenous

children and highlight mentoring opportunities more-so than individualistic learning styles (Hall, 1996, Miller, 1996; Little Bear, 2000). This highlights the importance of utilizing a Two-eyed seeing approach that attempts to combine the power of Indigenous ways of knowing with western ways of knowing to create true collaboration in Indigenous research (Martin, 2012). Two-eyed seeing is described as a concept that acknowledges the strengths of both forms of inquiry so that researchers are guided by what is important to the communities it studies and impacts. If researchers use a lens informed by Indigenous ways of knowing and western ideology, or simply put: accept the different ways in which the world can be seen and understood, the researcher can see with "both eyes", and is not blinded by a lack of mindfulness towards multiple epistemologies.

Acknowledging these strengths and traditions is integral to researchers being open to reflect on the partiality of their perspective. It aids in creating research that supports Indigenous communities as well as developing programs that meet and respect the needs of Indigenous youth, whose resilience is undeniable and yet misunderstood. Moreover, the use of story-telling in a narrative methodological format can illuminate the complex tapestry of Indigenous youth' experience regarding life transitions and the impact that mentoring has and can have on them.

Indigenous Youth Transitions: The Context of Time and Structure

Indigenous youth experience falls under the category of "otherness" in that youth of the dominant western culture have the benefit of sameness in their day to day life reflected in media and culture, where Indigenous youth do not (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008). Indigenous youth lived experience is rife with excessive social cultural disadvantages, compounded by discrimination and a lack of guidance due to the loss of tradition that is both cultural in broad and familial contexts. Family structures were effectively broken down through the residential era and the 60's

scoop in which markers of cultural continuity (self-governance, control of health, education, food, law) were decimated ((Milloy, 1996; Wesley-Equimaux, 2004).

While adolescence is typically understood as a difficult time in one's life for all youth, many Indigenous youth for several generations have had the burden of broken families, cycles of abuse, trauma, and mental health disparities on their shoulders as they attempt to navigate this already difficult transition. Experiences of discrimination and otherness can also feed into instances of shame at a time when youth are developing their own identities, and questioning the realities of Indigenous identities that are often stereotyped in Canadian society (Kymlicka, 1995). Some consequences of these issues include a lower rate of education for Indigenous youth, such as a 41% high school completion rate on reserves compared to 65% non-indigenous city-dwelling youth (Mendelson, 2006). Furthermore, of those Indigenous students who do continue on to post-secondary education (9%), 31% dropped out in the first year or two, compared to 13% of the general population (Mendelson, 2006). It is clear that Indigenous youth start off with disadvantages that permeate into futures that do not permit them a chance to reach their full potential. This leads researchers to wonder how Indigenous youth navigate their time as adolescents, and what their own perceptions are during important life transitions into adulthood.

One study on the orientations of time and resilience as perceived by Indigenous youth identified a consistent theme of existential crises in which the youth often recognized "feeling lost" (p 1335, Hatala, Pearl, Bird-Naytowhow, Judge, Sjoblom, Leibenberg, 2017). This study attempted to acknowledge the gap in Indigenous youth's personal experience or orientation of time and how those perceptions could impact resilience. They unearthed what had been known in Indigenous communities for decades; that resilience aside, constructing identities and planning for the future is nearly impossible when living in constant crises (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008;

Hatala et al, 2017). Hatala and colleagues study noted how indigenous youth felt that issues of

abandonment often had the effect of taking them out of the "normal time that they were supposed

to be in as children" (Hatala et al, 2017, p 1335). The researchers noted how developmental time

for many Indigenous youth in their study focused on structure, or lack of it, and how it

contributed to instances of growing up quicker than others and not truly experiencing childhood.

One interviewee profoundly expressed this theme in the following statement;

> "My mom wasn't worried about me or anything, and I remember sometimes I'd even
> just hide for like hours, to see if she would come look for me. I was always, I was just
> so sad! I was just like an angry kid. So anyways my best friend's mom, I remember
> I'd always be like talking to her and crying to her and that's when she was just told me
> "Well, if you need you can come live with me" and so I did! I think I really needed
> that because, I was just a kid, and I needed that structure. I don't know what that word
> is, but I needed that, well, I guess, the support. I needed that support! Like I needed to
> know to be home at this time, you know. It was more strict there [friends home] than
> what my mom was like I guess. It was not like she was going to come look for me kind
> of thing. But when I stayed at [friends home] it was more, I don't know. I was just, I
> felt like a kid. I could be a kid! (Hatala et al, 2017, p. 1337).

It is in these stories that the need for structure and support for Indigenous youth becomes

so apparent. Another respondent, while discussing the protective effect of belonging and being

understood, suggested that "if there are multiple negative things going on, you can find one

person who understands you in one way or another, and you will be ok," (Hatala et al, 2017, p

1337). Similar to the youth who described finding another friend's mother as a caregiver and

confidante, this emphasis on having someone in your corner, and feeling understood as a

preventative measure to feeling lost and stuck, is crucial to building on the resilience in

Indigenous youth that propels them forward and aids them in transitions into adulthood.

Bolstering Resilience with Cultural Integration in Indigenous Youth Programming;

Despite the numerous disadvantages Indigenous youth face, a review by Toombs,

Kowatch, and Mushquash, (2016) indicates several important themes in resiliency among

Indigenous youth in Canada. Toombs and colleagues suggest that literature in this area that recognizes the importance of culture in resiliency is scarce and yet desperately needed to provide a clear picture of what in fact makes Indigenous youth resilient (2016). Their review of 33 published and grey literature sources suggested key themes that endorsed resiliency in this population which include positive personal identity, cultural engagement, positive peer relationships, along with family and community connections. They note that while positive personal identity, peer relationships, and family/community connections cross over into literature in the general population, unique themes to Indigenous youth included community based resilience that emphasized autonomy and access to resources, which went hand in hand with self-report statements on levels of support and connectedness between individuals. Similar themes have consistently been found in research that evaluates programs that support and promote Indigenous ways of being (Crooks, Burleigh, & Sisco, 2015; Crooks, Burleigh, Snowshoe, Lapp, Hughes, & Sisco, 2015; Crooks, 2016; Klinck, Cardinal, Edwards, Gibson, Bisanz, & Decosta, 2005). Toombs and colleagues suggest that strength-based research can foster strength as well as support pathways for Indigenous youth as a byproduct of participation. For instance the researchers emphasize how relational approaches, which include collaborative research methods that engage Indigenous youth and their communities, provide opportunities for networking and comradery, which is helpful in bolstering resilience (2016).

Examples of collaboration include Hackett and colleagues (2016) study that identified the benefits associated with incorporating traditional Indigenous practice and community engagement in the "Going Off, Growing Strong" program. This program integrated a number of traditional Indigenous activities relevant to their participants local Inuit culture. Two cohorts of 10 male Indigenous youth participated in the year-long program, which included being mentored

in traditional activities by community outreach workers and program staff harvesters. Activities

included hunting, gathering, and creative arts. The youth reported increased levels of confidence

and competency in utilizing traditional Inuit skills. Programs such as this highlight the need for

mentoring and guidance that focus on identity building within Indigenous youth and bringing

youth back to an erased past.

A recent study by Dubnewick, Hopper, Spence and McHugh (2018) focused on

enhancing sport experiences of Indigenous youth in Canada through the use of traditional games.

Eight Indigenous youth between the ages of 14-18 and 10 adults living in the Northwest

Territories participated in either a one-on-one interview, or group interview to discuss the impact

of traditional sport on Indigenous youth. Traditional Inuit games (two-foot high kick) and Dene

games (stick pull) were included and explained in terms of their historical use that encouraged

endurance, strength, and agility necessary for survival strategies such as hunting. Results

indicated that increased sport engagement was impacted by *a) promoting cultural pride, b)*

interacting with Elders, c) supporting connection to the land, d) developing personal

characteristics, and e) developing a foundation for movement. This study attempted to illuminate

the need to engage Indigenous youth and the possible holistic benefits related to physical,

emotional, mental and spiritual development. The Holistic ideology apparent in Indigenous ways

of knowing include these four realms that constitute one's full being and how balance is key to

overall well-being (Lavalee & Levesque, 2013). Furthermore, the ownership and cultural pride

involved in participation was suggested by coaches as one reported "Youth don't have much

culture in their life as they did back then. So [the games] just kind of bridges them back," (p 214,

Dubnewick et al, 2018). Participants themselves reported the effect of knowing their great

grandfather played this game, and how it encouraged them to want to learn about their family

and cultural histories. Concerning learning about the traditional legends, one respondent states

that "the games are not just teaching you about legends, it is teaching me about more of us, about

my culture, about how we should be much stronger (p 214, Dubnewick, et al, 2018). This study

also focused on connecting elders and youth through cultural teachings, emphasizing the natural

mentoring that occurs when Elders have the opportunity to share their skills and wisdom.

Moreover, a review of 20 articles relating to sport and recreational activities of

Indigenous youth by McHugh and colleagues (2018), supported the holistic benefits in themes

that explored relationships, traditions and connections to the land. Through analyses of

qualitative data, they found that traditional recreational experiences such as fishing and hunting

formed strong bonds within the family through teaching, as well as a strong connection to the

land. This could be seen in an acknowledgement made by one participant who clarified that "dad

teaches me the way of hunting and fishing", (p 7, McHugh, 2018), indicating it as being more

than a recreational activity, and a way of knowing within Indigenous skills.

For urban Indigenous youth, access to programs that involve outdoors skills and

traditional ways of knowing such as this are limited. However, school-based programming may

provide an avenue for in Indigenous youth to experience similar benefits.

School-based Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring likely proceeds mentoring between adults and youth by the very nature

that it stems from comraderie in youth relationships, especially in school environments (Karcher,

2005). This may be because instances of similar experience between mentor and mentee are in

recent memory, if not current, and there is less hesitation to open up to peers compared to

authority figures. Karcher argues that this relationship often acts as the mechanism of change in

both the mentor and mentee, rather than simply the skills or knowledge being taught. Cross-age

mentoring (mentoring when there are two or more year's difference between mentor and mentee) therefore offers a host of benefits that are unique considering the relative openness between individuals who may feel mutual understanding due to generational similarities. These benefits generally include those centered around cultural identity, social connectedness, youth engagement, and healthy behaviors and relationships (Allen, McManus & Russell, 1999; Crooks, Chiodo, Thomas, Hughes, 2010; Coyne-Foresi & Crooks, 2015; DuBois & Silverton, 2005; Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002; Karcher, 2005; Rhodes, 2005).

       School-based mentorship programing acts as form of intervention for at-risk youth, and the evidence suggests that it is a widely beneficial method that buffers declines in social functioning and academic performance (Blinn-Pike, 2007; Herrera, Grossman, Kauh & McMaken, 2011), however, some programs outperform others in terms of effectiveness. DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn and Valentine's (2011) systematic assessment of 72 youth mentoring programs indicate that positive outcomes are most noted across behavioural, social, emotional and academic domains when programs are more structured, maintain individual mentor supervision, mentor training, and maintain longer frequency and extended length of mentoring. Dubois and colleagues' findings also indicate that cross-age mentoring consistently revealed similar outcomes compared with adult volunteers as well in within group contexts. Moreover, a synthesis of evaluations on mentoring programs by Jekielek, Moore, and Hair (2002) indicate that mentees that are the most disadvantaged and/or at risk are the most likely to experience positive outcomes and benefits from mentoring programs.

       Recent literature on bolstering youths' interest in computer science by using peer mentoring programs indicates that as mentees perceptions of peer relatability increased, so did their perceptions of self-efficacy (Clarke-Midura, Poole, Pantic, Hamilton, Sun, & Allan, 2018).

This study also found that gender was not a significant indicator of a positive mentor relationship, while similarities such as age, disposition, personality traits, and similar backgrounds were. This may give credence to the notion that having mentors of a similar background for Indigenous youth may contribute to a more positive mentoring relationship and outcomes.

Interestingly, a study by Rawana, Sieukaran, Nguyen, and Pitawanakwat (2015) on Indigenous university students participating in an Aboriginal Leadership and mentoring program demonstrated the utility of program development based on an extensive literature review and a needs assessment with Indigenous students and faculty. The program was designed from a strengths-based perspective and utilized mentoring university students from a variety of disciplines (history, psychology, and law), who were interested in supporting other Indigenous students and collaborated on recruiting mentees and determining program content and evaluation. The researchers attribute the prioritization of cultural components in the program to the inclusion of Indigenous students and faculty in all levels of development. This included having meetings with Elders for both mentees and mentors. The study included 12 Indigenous students who engaged in pre- and post-program measures of ethnic identity awareness and resilience. Results from quantitative data at time one and time two indicated increases in social competence resiliency (strengths involving social skills), other-group ethnic orientation, and school engagement. In interviews, themes included; 1) *engagement in the university community,* wherein students reported they were more likely to stay in school because of the program, and 2) *strengthening Aboriginal cultural identity,* where one respondent indicated the program makes them "proud of [their] heritage and uniqueness in an understanding environment," (p 21, Rawana et al, 2015). The third theme concerning 3) *qualities of ALM mentors* identified a number of

salient characteristics mentors should have as reported by mentors and mentees alike, including

a) approachability, b) good listening skills, and c) responsibility. It is important to observe the

effects of mentorship in university level Indigenous students, who still fall within the youth

range, and their own vocalizations concerning the benefits, because it informs researchers about

patterns in mentorship programs that can be bolstered within earlier youth programs.

Specifically, this study reported mental health impacts where mentors and mentees identified

numerous emotional and psychological effects of the program including "a sense of

accomplishment because of helping others, increased self-worth, and an opportunity to give back

to one's community," (p, 22, Rawana et al, 2015).

Benefits to Peer Mentors

Youth who mentor may experience a plethora of benefits that act in a cyclical nature

(mentees who undergo pleasant mentoring experiences that become mentors), such as increased

self-esteem, having a sense of accomplishment, having access to a supportive network, gaining

insight into life development, and increased patience and leadership skills (Jekiklek, Moore &

Hair, & Scarupa 2002). Karcher suggests this is the work of modelling, in which mentors who

are monitoring their behavior in order to assist mentees, may become more self-aware and

introspective as a result (2008). This ideology leans heavily on Bandura's social competency

modelling in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1988), in which models who share similar traits

(youth status) as mentees are also expected to form a strong bond and more credibility. Positive

development in this relationship can be thought of as a feedback loop in which mentors gain

support through training initiatives, and are put in positions where their skills and talents are

utilized while teaching mentees. Jekielek and colleagues (2002) argue that this may improve

school attendance, higher chances of going on to higher education, better attitudes towards

school, and aid in social and emotional development. Indeed, the previously reported study on

Indigenous university students found that mentors reported benefits that included networking,

gaining leadership experience, and confidence, helping others, and developing skills for future

careers (Rawana et al, 2015). Mentors in this study also listed other benefits including the

"examination of your own ideology and way of socialization", (Rawana et al, 2015, p 22), and

"finding talents and gifts [that] you didn't know you had" (Rawana et al, 2015, p. 22.

Research by Coyne-Foresi, Crooks, Chiodo, Nowicki, & Dare (2018) on elementary

school mentors identified higher scores in school connectedness after engagement in a peer

mentoring program, compared with declines in school connectedness in a control group. Later

research by Coyne-Foresi and Crooks (2017) in the Fourth R Uniting our Nations peer mentoring

program found other protective factors in their study on peer benefits to Indigenous youth

mentors. The study included 11 youth mentors who were interviewed and returned at a later time

to participate in a concept mapping procedure in which they rank ordered their own responses

from their earlier interviews. The youth constructed three categories with their data: 1) cultural

connections, 2) benefits to self, and 3) relationships with family and friends. Further benefits

within these themes consisted of participation in cultural practices, exploring cultural identity,

connecting with other Indigenous youth, increased self-perception, confidence, and interpersonal

skills.

Fourth R: Uniting Our Nations Program

The Fourth R program is an evidence-based program designed to teach violence

prevention and healthy relationship skills in classrooms (Wolfe, 2009; Wolfe, Crooks, Chiodo,

Hughes & Ellis, 2012; Crooks et al., 2016). In addition to universal prevention programming, the

Fourth R team has developed a number of different school-based initiatives for Indigenous

youth, including elementary and secondary school mentorship programs. Crooks, Snowshoe, Chiodo and Brunette-Debeassige (2013) purport that "the primary objectives of these initiatives have been to promote healthy relationships, and develop youth leadership skills in order to increase youth engagement, school connectedness, and overall well-being," (p 14).

This study focused on the high school peer mentoring program; Uniting Our Nations. The Uniting Our Nations program connects youth mentees (grade nine students) with youth mentors (grades 10-12) on a 1:1 ratio, such that each mentee has access to one mentor (Crooks et al., 2016). The students meet once per week at lunch hour for 16 sessions over the course of the school year. The sessions include a combination of group and pair-based activities. Sessions are aligned with the Seven Grandfather teachings, which are locally relevant, and incorporate healthy relationship and coping skills throughout. Mentors attend a full day training in the fall. The students take part in a number of activities together while an Indigenous adult facilitator and teacher lead, engage, supervise, and organize the sessions.

School-based Programming for Indigenous Youth in the Fourth R program

Research on school-based peer mentoring by Crooks and colleagues in previous years with elementary and secondary school Indigenous youth indicate a number of benefits related to the Fourth R: Uniting Our Nations peer mentoring program. Crooks, Burleigh, Snowshoe, Lapp, Hughes, and Sisco, (2015a) conducted a mixed methods evaluation of a number of Fourth R programs using 35 elementary and secondary student interviews, as well as survey data from 45 secondary students, and seven educators, and principal interviews. Emergent themes included the finding that programming was perceived to contribute to student success, and participants reported improved relationships, as well as an increased sense of belonging. Participants also reportedly gained confidence and leadership skills, and lastly it was suggested that the

implementation of culturally relevant experiences and the use of role models was crucial to program effectiveness.

Another study by Crooks, Burleigh and Sisco, (2015b), looked at how culturally relevant programing provides a forum for intrapersonal and interpersonal growth. The study included interviewing 12 adult Indigenous community /educator stakeholders who were involved in the Fourth R: Uniting Our Nations mentorship programs. Interviews were analyzed using open coding and two key themes emerged. The first being cultural identity and belonging, and the second, cultural connectedness. One elder noted the changes they noticed during their interview:

> "I have seen a lot of positive things come from students who are in Fourth R who are either shy or wouldn't get involved in too many things but they really opened up when Fourth R came into the school and gave them a chance to lead themselves during their Fourth R meetings and that really opened them up to get involved and socialize and make new friends and so it was a positive thing." (Male community partner #4, Crooks, Burleigh, Sisco, (2015b), p. 110).

Lastly, Crooks and colleagues study (2016) was a mixed-methods, longitudinal study on the effects of the Fourth R: Uniting our Nations peer mentoring youth program on FNMI youth. The study followed a cohort of FNMI youth who began in the elementary peer mentoring program to the secondary peer mentoring program over two years. 105 surveys and a subset of participants ($n=28$) were interviewed. The program was evaluated throughout the school year and analyses controlled for participants who were included in the programs for year one and two. Sex and school climate were also accounted for, and post hoc analyses indicated that the mentoring program did benefit girls more than boys. Their results indicated that the two-year mentoring group showed better mental health and an improved sense of cultural identity.

Overall, consistent themes have emerged in this research, including improved student success, a sense of belonging, increased leadership skills and confidence, improved cultural connectedness and an enhanced cultural identity (Crooks et al., 2015a, Crooks et al., 2015b).

Elders and stakeholders associated with the program championed how Indigenous youth

programming appeared to promote positive mental health through enhancing cultural

connectedness regarding cultural pride, as well as by increasing self-confidence, a sense of

belonging, leadership, and relational knowing (Crooks et al, 2015). As noted, while the majority

of research on peer mentoring has focused on the benefits to the mentees, some research also

demonstrated the benefits to peer mentors themselves.

<center>Benefits for Indigenous Youth: Gaps and Considerations</center>

While the research above demonstrates the utility of Indigenous youth programming,

specifically in the Fourth R program: Uniting Our Nations, it is necessary to understand that few

studies specifically look at speaking directly to the youth mentors and mentees to understand

how their own perceived benefits have influenced their lives in different ways following

graduation or during other life transitions. In fact, DuBois and colleagues (2011) systematic

assessment of youth mentoring programs cautions that few studies include measures related to

whether benefits found are sustained at later points in youth development. Furthermore, the

studies that do have rarely utilized Indigenous oriented methodologies that allow for cultural

expansion and expression by the participants, and thus some context, as always, may be lost or

misinterpreted. Qualitative research narrative methodologies that put Indigenous voices at the

forefront and allow for cultural expression are limited. One such study, a dissertation on

understanding the impact of residential schools using a story-telling narrative methodology by

Patrick (2017), indicated the veneration for Indigenous ways of knowing by restructuring

interview procedures in a culturally appropriate way. In this study, the interview question guide

was reviewed together and given to the participant, who was then invited to use a story-telling

approach in which they could, if desired, use the questions as a guide. They could answer the

questions sporadically, out of order, as it related to their story, and were not interrupted by the researchers and only asked for clarification or probing upon finishing responses. In this way, the story-telling occurred organically, and participants were able to elaborate, or add information they deemed relevant to their experiences (Patrick, 2017).

Advantages of Narrative approaches for Research on Indigenous mentoring: Meaning-Making and Indigenous ways of Knowing

Within Indigenous Ways of Knowing, oral tradition is understood as a "process by which information is transmitted from one generation to the next" (Cruikshank, 1994, p. 404). It has always remained a crucial function of communicating histories in Indigenous communities. Storytelling, specifically, is a natural form of reiterating events, and can be considered a culturally fitting narrative inquiry (Bishop, 1999; Reeves & Stewart, 2014) for Indigenous peoples and offers participants a chance to demonstrate their own meaning and the consequence of certain events in their lives. Story-telling, as an inherent part of oral tradition, is not a static method of information transmission to be told and stored away, as many western ideologies have placed it, but is "a way of understanding the present as well as the past" (Cruikshank, 1993, p. 2). This viewpoint supports the Two-eyed seeing iteration that individuals maintain a unique subjective style of telling the stories that make up their lives, and that personal meaning, beyond the objective "truth" of the experience is formed in this process. That is to say whether the experience was true in terms of fact or not, it is undoubtedly believed and lived by the teller of the story; it is true to them and affects their life choices. This meaning-making process, which overlaps with contemporary iterations of narrative methodology in psychology (Stapleton & Wilson, 2017), demonstrates how individuals make sense of their experiences. Essentially, through telling of one's experience, individuals are able to identify the values and meanings they have attributed to different aspects of their lives. This is a particularly untapped resource in

qualitative research, in which interviews are often conducted in such a way that the participants are boxed into specific responses, which might not unveil their real experience, or the meaning they have attributed to that experience. Therefore story-telling, as a method of narrative inquiry, may be a useful way to provide context in Indigenous youth's transitional experiences (Patrick, 2017), such as visiting reflections of peer mentoring and the impact it may have had. Any story telling used by participants will be welcomed as the researchers acknowledge the validity of the intersection of Indigenous ways of knowing to help guide culturally informed academic inquiry.

The Present Study

Rationale

This study contributes to the growing body of strengths-based research around Indigenous youth programming. The main objective was to explore how experiences in peer mentoring, both negative and positive, are reflected on after time has passed and youth are given an opportunity to reflect on the influence of the program in their lives. That is to say, do some of the benefits previously reported remain, or change and transform as perceived by the participants? This study builds on the previous research identifying the benefits of participation in the short term, (Crooks et al., 2015a, Crooks et al., 2015b) by providing participants with an opportunity to reflect back on their time as participants and share their own lived experience and ideas about how peer mentoring has shaped their lives to the present day**.** It is also necessary that the research is guided by Indigenous voices and utilizes methodology that Indigenous communities acknowledge and identify with, such as using interviews that encourage narrative story-telling prospects (Barton, 2004; Patrick, 2018; Cruikshank, 2000; Rice & Mundel, 2018).

The qualitative data generated through interviews was analyzed utilizing a thematic content analysis.

This study was exploratory in nature; however, themes involving positive personal identity, improved student or career success, a sense of belonging, increased leadership skills and confidence, improved cultural connectedness and an enhanced cultural identity were expected as evidenced in previous research on mentors, mentees, and elders reported perceived benefits (Crooks et al., 2015a, Crooks et al., 2015b; Toombs, Kowatch & Mushquash, 2016; Coyne-Foresi et al. 2018).

Method

Participants

Young adults previously involved in the Fourth R: Uniting Our Nations peer mentoring program were recruited to participate in the study. Based on narrative methods and the need to balance diversity of views with proper depth from each individual, five individuals were interviewed, consisting of three male and two female participants. Criterion for participation included any individuals who engaged in the program between the years 2014-2017, as mentees and/or mentors, and who are of Indigenous descent (First Nation, Inuit, Metis). Participants were above 18 years of age (ranging from 21-24) and consented to an audiotaped interview either in person ($n=2$) or over the phone ($n=3$).

Recruitment

Previous students from the Fourth R mentoring program (for program flyer see Appendix G) were recruited through the Centre for School Mental Health via a social media advertisement (Appendix A) on the Centre's Facebook page, with approval from the Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (Appendix H). Contact information was provided in the advertisement, and volunteers were able to contact the researchers to briefly go over general

information about the study, reiterate its purpose, and asked to set up a time to meet for an

interview.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for this study include the focus on Indigenous youth who are

potentially a vulnerable population. Even research that is strength-based runs the risk of further

stigmatizing Indigenous youth and so researchers must be aware of their own biases and

prejudices during the study and how these findings will be received in the broader Indigenous

and non-Indigenous community. A list of support services in the area was offered to the

participants located on the debriefing form. There is also a concern wherein Indigenous

communities' participation in research has been a cause of distress related to inappropriate

methods and practices, as well as issues with ownership and dissemination of information

(Cochran et al, 2008). With this in mind the primary researcher has tread cautiously in an effort

to stay true to respectful collaboration with Indigenous participants and an awareness of

promises made to cause no harm and represent Indigenous youth appropriately.

In regard to some of the more variable impacts on qualitative research, positionality, as it

can and should be addressed within this type of qualitative analyses is necessary. For this study,

As the primary researcher, I am a 27-year old woman of mixed Indigenous, Italian, and Irish

ancestry who is working toward a masters in counselling psychology. The supervisory researcher

identifies as a white female ally based out of the Centre for School Mental Health and has been

engaged in culturally relevant programming for Indigenous youth since the conception of the

Fourth R Uniting our Nations program. I identify as Metis as well as Status First Nation, from

Nipissing First Nation located in North Bay, Ontario, and as a mixed ethnic identity. I further

identify as Ojibwe, belonging to Eagle Clan, as well as being Two-Spirit and am an active part of

the LGBTQ+ community both within traditional and non-traditional Indigenous contexts. My

previous work has included research investigating cultural based resilience and protective factors

in Indigenous women who have experienced sexual abuse as children, and on adaptive forms of

self-concept in resilience literature. I remain active in my community and hold the belief that

two-eyed seeing; the balance of traditional Indigenous ways of knowing, and western ideology is

a way to honour the strengths of both forms of learning and inquiry. My own mixed identity has

given me the experience of being between two different worlds and has informed me of the

differences and similarities in Indigenous worldview and non-Indigenous Canadian society.

Growing up on and off-reserve, engaging in tradition and ceremony, and connecting with Elders

has made me aware of my own reconnection with culture which has aided in my research

inquests and dedication to furthering Indigenous based research.

Procedure for Interviews

After responding to the advertisement, participants were emailed a copy of the interview

questions (Appendix B), Letter of Intent (LOI), and consent form (Appendix C) for their review,

to give them time to reflect on their answers prior to the interview. We arranged a time to

interview at an appropriate location of their choosing, mostly including cafes in the London area

or via the phone. Interviews ranged from 17-30 minutes. At the interview, I introduced myself

and reviewed the LOI and the informed consent form (which they had already had an

opportunity to review). I obtained written consent from each participant in person or via email.

The consent included the provision of being audio-taped, as this recording was considered

necessary for transcription and analysis purposes. The participants were also asked to complete a

brief questionnaire concerning demographic information, and where phone interviews took place

the demographics were collected in the interview (Appendix D).

The session began with me giving the participant compensation in the form of $30.00 gift cards and then notifying the participant that the audio-recorder was going to be turned on, which was followed by the participant introducing themselves. I provided the participant with a copy of the interview questions (which they had received previously; Appendix B) and invited the participant to use a story-telling approach, using the questions to guide them. The participants were encouraged to look over the questions and answer the guide in whichever order they would like, to encourage a more authentic response and story-telling style. This is suggested as a way to allow for the natural flow of information that unfolds in a way that is encouraged in traditional Indigenous inquiry (Patrick, 2018). I probed only for further clarification, in order to further contextualize responses for later analysis, and otherwise refrained from interrupting the responses of the participant. This open structure was in line with non-linear, narrative inquiries that mirror oral traditions in many First Nations communities, in which participants can also add information they deem relevant that may not initially have been asked. To honour the promise of collaboration with Indigenous voices as part of the whole research process, the last few minutes of the interview were spent going over answers to assure that I understood the information given in its intended context. This was done to increase confidence that I was appropriately interpreting all responses and to ensure reliability of the information as it represented the participant. After the end of interview, the audio-recorder was turned off and I answered any other questions pertaining to the project by the participant. The participant was verbally debriefed and given or emailed a debriefing form, (Appendix E), and instructed to contact me, or my supervisor (Dr. Claire Crooks), for any future questions concerning the study. The participants were also informed of their right to information regarding the study, and told that they would have access to their transcripts if they so desired by the researcher. They were also given the option to leave

contact information to receive a final e-copy of this project after the data are fully collected and

analyzed and approved by the University and defended.

Following the end of all interviews, all audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim. They

were initially processed by Trint (2017), a cloud based transcription program. Subsequently, I

reviewed them to assure integrity and accuracy and make all required revisions while listening to

the audio-recordings.

Materials

Demographics Questionnaire. This is a brief questionnaire used to identify background

information including gender, age, ethnicity etc., for descriptive purposes only and was not

linked to individual interview data (Appendix C), (see Table 2 for participant characteristics).

Interview Questions Guide. This is a guide formatted for individual interviews from

previous work under Coyne-Foresi and Crooks (2015), for use in research on peer mentoring

benefits in the Fourth R Program. Questions are designed to open up discussion regarding

experiences, recollections, perceptions, and interpretation of participants' time within the Fourth

R peer mentoring program either as mentors or mentees. It consists of a loosely structured format

that allows for spontaneous answering and encourages a voice centered narrative approach in

which participants can choose how they wish their story to develop and unfold.

Analysis

Thematic content analysis was used to systematically identify key themes from

interviews. Thematic content analysis typically pin points, examines and records patterns, or

"themes" within the collected data (transcripts/audio) (Braun, 2006). Researchers go over the

data several times and develop specific codes to identify reoccurring themes therein. These

patterns or themes help develop an understanding of the key influences that underlie the

phenomenon under study. This is a valid method for this study given the unique population and

the emphasis needed for providing context to properly interpret the data. This method allows the

lived experience of the participants to be evaluated, while minimizing bias interpretations. The

qualitative analyses was informed by research on thematic content analyses by DeCuir-Gunby,

Marshall, & McCulloch (2011) and Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, (2017). Analysis began with

participants verifying patterns and helping the researcher understand them during the interviews.

Afterwards, the audiotaped interviews were transcribed using TRINT software, and all

transcribed material was further edited by the researcher to account for errors in the transcription

software while listening to the recordings for assurance of quality and accuracy.

Near the end of the pre-analyses stage, step one included the researcher having read over

the transcripts to identify any errors and having made notes of first impressions, i.e., what stood

out, primary reader reactions etc.,) to gain a sense of the text as a whole. In step two, the

researcher read the transcript over again and began making hard copy notes, or memos, on the

interview scripts that identified preliminary or potential codes that represented any memorable

phrases, terms, patterns and areas of focus apparent during this second pass. In step three, the

reader then went over the transcripts a third time to highlight and colour code areas that

contained the notes, identifying the first possible set of codes that were distinguishable by colour.

In Step four, the researcher began the hermeneutic spiral phase (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017),

in which the highlighted areas of transcripts, texts, phrases, terms and codes were compared to

the meaning of the whole quote and fully contextualized. This process was ongoing throughout

the next six steps of the analyses and constantly revisited. It is an attempt to determine if

impressions of the whole verify analyses of the parts in all of the chosen quotes for further

analyses. In step five the chosen quotes were then broken down into shorter units, identified as

meaning units, this was done carefully and in consideration of the quotes context. In step six,

The original quote, the meaning unit, and the code developed in the precoding process was

labelled accordingly in a chart, sampled below (see table 1). From this step, the codes were then

entered into a separate document, constituting the official codebook for analyses. In Step 8, the

codebook was sent to my supervisor and committee member (Claire Crooks and Jason Brown)

for feedback and suggestions. In step eight the codebook was edited and the quotes and meaning

units were again coded in line with the final codebook as a guide where many previous codes

were collapsed into others to ensure divergent validity of the finalized codes (Appendix F). In

step nine the final codes were condensed into representative categories based on distinctive

qualities, and in step 10 all categories were further divided into key themes. The supervision,

discussion, and collaboration regarding category and theme generation between researchers

permit evidence to emerge as naturally as possible based on the data provided. Content analyses

detailed in Appendix I.

Table 1. Themes, codes and meaning units with sample quotes.

Theme	Code	Meaning Unit	Sample Quotes
Cultural Connection			
	Cultural Awareness		
		Shared Our culture	*"…We brought them together and we kind of shared our culture. Showed them a little bit about who we are as people and as students."*
		Talked about medicine	*… we talked about the medicine wheel for example, which talked about how some things that you do in school kind of hit each part of each quadrant."*
		See importance of culture	*I see the importance of the culture and language"*
Intrapersonal Skills			
	Confidence		
		Confident enough	*"…I was confident enough to do this interview"*
		Gave me confidence	*"… I definitely think confidence is a big one. I think it may not be something that they work on directly but it definitely gave me confidence in myself."*
		Confident enough	*"… I definitely was able to take on that role because I had the confidence in myself to know that I was able to be a leader and a mentor."*

Theme	Code	Meaning Unit	Sample Quotes
Education and Career Benefits			
	Sense of Purpose		
		Trying to pursue in my life	*"… With what I'm trying to pursue in my life is just to be a police officer or something you know like a public safety kind of standpoint. Without Fourth R pushing me to, you know, get out of my comfort zone a little bit with being a leader and speaking up about things you know I probably wouldn't have made the choice to be in public safety."*
		Saw self working with others	*"Being part of those programs and assuming those roles, it kind of helped me like post-secondary wise, like college and university, with what I wanted to do… I saw myself wanting to work with others constantly, that team work in those kind of situations [sic] where I want a career that deals with people"*
Interpersonal Skills			
	Social Skills		
		Very talkative after program	*"… I really didn't talk to a lot of people… I've very talkative now and I wouldn't be as talkative as when I was young, when Fourth R actually came in".*
		Going out of my way to get to know others	*"… it opened me up, like I said before with just being open with people and connecting with them and actually going out of my way to like get to know them".*

Theme	Code	Meaning Unit	Sample Quotes
Social Support			
	Sense of Belonging		
		In the same boat	*"… Just meeting people, interacting with everyone, and everyone's in the same boat"*
		Felt like I belonged	*"…It made me feel really like I belonged"*
		Like I was one of them	*"… People looked at me like I was one of them,"*

Table 2. Participant Characteristics

Participant	Gender	Age	Years Post Program involvement	Education level	Indigenous Self Identification	Role
1	M	22	4	College	Oneida First Nation	Mentee/Mentor
2	F	21	3	College	Oneida First Nation/ Métis	Mentor
3	M	24	6	High School	Oneida First Nation	Mentee/Mentor
4	F	21	3	College	Oneida First Nation	Mentee/Mentor
5	M	22	4	University	Oneida First Nation	Mentee/Mentor

Thematic Analysis Results

Five key themes surfaced from the main five categories that were used to code the

interviews, all guided by the study's initial inquiry "Do the benefits previously reported in the

Fourth R peer mentoring program, remain, change, or transform as perceived by the participants

over time?". Originally, 154 codes were collapsed, based on similarity, into 24 distinct codes

(see Appendix F) that denoted specific subthemes into which five key themes emerged. The five

themes include (1) Cultural Connection (2) Intrapersonal Skills, (3) Interpersonal Skills, (4)

Social Support, and (5) Education and Career benefits. Unique subthemes were also found

including increased Indigenous advocacy, transformative leadership development, and continued

mentorship, as well as mixed identity struggles and continued education and career benefits (see

figure 1). Subthemes and codes that make up the bulk of the analyzed material within the five

interviews are reported in detail below. Themes and Subthemes were identified both by

frequency (how many times it was mentioned) and consensus (if all or some participants reported

said code) in the interviews, but were also identified by the time the participant took to discuss

them and the depth into which they discussed that aspect. These themes are discussed below and

interview quotes are utilized to emphasize the participants' perspectives and contextualize the

interpreted data.

Cultural Connection. This theme occurred frequently and was coded within all participant

interviews. This theme assessed a variety of factors relating to cultural impact, including

awareness, advocacy and community engagement that the participants identified as having been

influenced by their experiences within the peer mentoring program. The participants spoke about

the benefits relating to culture and reflected on the programs influence both during the program

and its impact on them in the here and now, noting differences in nuance and perception.

Cultural Awareness. This subtheme was coded to identify perceptions of the importance of culture, including knowing one's culture, identifying or speaking on Indigenous ways of knowing, or being aware of culture in general. The discussion typically consisted of recollections, as well as how it relates to their understanding of culture in the present. One participant reflected on the focus on First Nations teachings and the programs way of explaining traditional practices:

> We did a lot of, we used a lot of pedagogy, like First Nations pedagogy… so like smudging and the ceremonial… we had [program leader] go through it. He'll talk about it, why we do it, the purpose behind it. (Male participant #5).

Another participant recalled experiences within the Fourth R camp that touched on bringing culture to the forefront: "that itself really opened my eyes to my culture especially with the ceremonies, like the drum making and all that and the teachings." (Female Participant #4). This participant also noted how the program was her first perceived exposure to Indigenous culture: "I actually think it was the first time I've ever smudged, it was the first meeting at Fourth R," (female participant #4). Another participant had a similar experience with her initial connection to culture in the program, stating: "It was also my first time getting to connect with those that share my culture." (Participant #2). Lastly, when asked how it had affected her relation to her culture in the present, this student commented on how the program made her feel like she was culturally competent and aware: "It makes me feel like I know what I'm talking about, not that I'm talking blindly," (Female Participant #2).

Indigenous Advocacy. This subtheme was coded when participants spoke about advocating for Indigenous peoples stemming from experiences in this program and afterwards. This was often focused on community causes, by either speaking out or bringing attention to

Indigenous issues and lived experience. One participant spoke about how doing the interview

was related to his desire to advocate for First Nations people in the here and now: "Honestly if

it's helping First Nations people that's all I want. The bottom line, that's all I want, that's the

reason I came here". (Male Participant #1). Another student spoke on how being in the program

influenced his involvement in this way, stating:

> It kind of made me want to be more active as a First Nations student and stuff like
> advocate. I kind of voiced the concerns that as being a First Nations student… what we
> have to deal with and kind of… educating others like non-First Nations and teachers and
> those individuals that have the authority to make those kinds of changes. It was important
> for me to be in that kind of role. (Male Participant #5).

> This student also reflected on his path following post-secondary and how it impacted this

advocacy role moving forward:

> When I was coming out of high school I wanted to go into business because I wanted to
> figure out what we could do, because from my reserve we don't have very much, like our
> economics aren't good…there's a lot of poverty. (Male Participant #5).

> Lastly, another student mentioned how an opportunity in college arose in which she able

to draw on experience and share hers and others lived experience:

> …One of our classes was kind of trying to learn about yourself and open up your
> pathways and explore who you are. So, I talked a lot about prejudice and racism… I was
> able to use that side, what I learned in the programs from experience and from other
> students. (Female Participant #2).

> *Cultural Identity.* This subtheme was coded during discussion of cultural heritage,

including one's lineage, awareness of tribe, clan, band or other cultural identifiers or ancestry the

participants mentioned. All participants identified as Oneida First Nations, while two gave their

Indigenous names which are not quoted to ensure anonymity. This subtheme also included

identifying as First Nations or Indigenous over time or transformations in self identifications

before and after the program. One participant who spoke of his struggles to proclaim his identity

commented: "Well I know what I am, I'm First Nations and I'm going to stand by that, who I

am." (Male Participant #1). When asked directly if the program impacted their cultural identity,

one participant commented on the programs influence towards promoting Indigenous identity:

> It gave more meaning to who you are as an Indigenous person in Canada, or Indigenous North America. I think it kind of reinforced the idea that you can be proud of who you are (Male Participant #5).

Another participant noted that his cultural identity was less influenced by the program,

and when asked if it had impacted him he reported: "Yes, but at the same time no because I've

never really tried to hide who I was, so I never really tried to hide my heritage… that I was

Native. (Male Participant #3).

Importance of Indigenous Role Models. This subtheme was coded to represent

participants' discussion of the need for Indigenous representation and role models. One

Participant spoke unprompted about this issue and suggested that the program move towards this

in the future:

> …We don't see a lot of Indigenous role models that go to Post Secondary, or professionals in general, so I think It would be good for both the Advisory Board or for the Fourth R program, to have someone kind of talk on their experiences, because it's like the next…those are the next mentors up," (Male Participant #5)

Another participant echoed similar sentiments that influenced his desire to mentor when

looking back on his own experience:

> … I was helping this one kid, you know go to his classes or even just be someone to come and talk to, because I didn't have someone like that for a bit there, until I had a mentor. (Male Participant #1).

Another participant commented that the need was related to the struggles Indigenous

students faced in completing secondary education: "…kind of help them and guide them because

a lot of them… like as a senior student not a lot of students make it to grade 12," (Male

Participant #5).

Mixed Identity. This subtheme was coded to identify participants acknowledging their mixed identity and or impacts associated therein. Participants (n=2) who identified as having mixed ancestry, reported having hesitations before entering the program, in which the program had a transformative effect on their own declaration of identity. One participant recollected his perception of his identity at varying times in the program initially as a mentee: "

> I would be in the back thinking… like well you're not red - you're not Native enough to look Native and you're not white enough to look white ‑ so what are you? I felt like I wasn't Native, just felt like I wasn't First Nations enough when I first started… until someone told me… my mentor came and said, "hey we have a peer mentor program, you want to come in and talk about it and …just sit down beside me and see how it is?". So, I sat down and from the first song playing… like I said it just makes me feel who I am right now as a person... when I left that program, I felt like I am First Nations. (Male Participant #1)

Another participant noted that she struggled with a similar feeling when first entering the program as a mentor, stating: "I've made a joke, "of course I look white and I'm sorry but I can't help that, but I am a Métis woman and I do know a little bit about the culture.", (Female Participant #2). When asked about her reaction when initially being asked to get involved as a mentor she also responded "I was surprised. I felt kind of honoured to be asked,".

Cultural Resiliency. This subtheme was coded to note instances of resiliency explicitly tied to cultural engagement, belief, or practice by the participant. Participants *(n=4)*, who spoke on this reflected on the different ways the culture had bolstered their inner reserve or inspired them to continue their cultural practice. One participant commented on how the practice of smudging had become a part of his routine that helped him gain clarity:

> The culture helps me a lot. When I wake up I have my own smudge bowl, I have my own sage, and go down the stairs, and I get all my stuff that I need to grab, it clears my mind out. (Male Participant #1)

Another student noted that the lead facilitator's devotion to teaching Indigenous students that differed from his own background was inspiring to her moving forward:

Knowing that he's far away from his home and still practicing…It's working with students that have similar heritage but different ancestry… It really kind of shows me that I don't have to necessarily go right back to my roots to learn and to grow within the culture. (Female Participant #2).

Cultural Community Engagement. Discussions that focused on cultural engagement oriented towards the community, one's band, or social network were coded into this subtheme. It encompassed contributions that were cultural in nature or in which a participant felt had a cultural component. One mentor reported how the program had impacted her engagement in the present:

It really helped me build connections in the community. So now when I do take my family to the pow wow in the community and I know people that are there [sic], I know the other students that are there… I'm able to have somebody, to say hi to them, and I feel comfortable with that." (Female Participant #2).

Another participant spoke about how he had recently undergone his own naming ceremony: "I got my name done and it was amazing, I cried when I got my name done in front of everyone." (Male Participant #1). Furthermore, this participant spoke candidly about his coming to the interview as an act of cultural community engagement in terms of being involved with current Indigenous research:

I know that I'm talking to a First Nations woman... I'm just really glad I could connect with you, and to connect in that way. I'm going to help some other people today, and I'm going to help myself out today. (Male Participant #1).

Intrapersonal Skills

This theme noted any individual skills gained or influenced by the program both as perceived and recalled by the participants and as skills in the present. It was found and coded in all interviews (n=5). Coding in this area revealed seven distinct subthemes:

Leadership Skills: This subtheme was coded over discussions of leadership skills perceived by the participant that were gained or influenced by the program both during the

program and in the present. Example: "I think I'd be a leader but I don't think I've be as much of

a leader, like confidently be a leader without having Fourth R help throughout High School".

(Female Participant #4). A subtheme apparent within the leadership code in three interviews

revealed the notion that some experiences involved a transformative leadership, both in and

outside of the program. A participant spoke on how the program cultivated leadership skills he

felt he had: "I always felt like I was more of a leader than like listening to somebody," (Male

Participant #3), and when asked if the program helped in his personal development he

responded: "Just my leadership skills in general…I make sure to use the tools I learned from the

Fourth R. I just try to be as assertive as much as I can be." (Male Participant #3).

Another example of transformative leadership by a participant who went on to take on more

leadership roles in college mentioned:

> I was more of a controlling person when I was a leadership kind of person. So, this
> helped me find ways to develop into a leader and not somebody who was controlling.
> (Female Participant #4).

Advocating for Others: This subtheme noted discussion involving participants advocating

for others in a way (unrelated to culture), within the program and afterwards. One student

mentioned that while being on the Advisory Board in the program, and advocating for First

Nations issues they also focused on others within the school:

> Also, not only First Nations content, so it wasn't just First Nations that we were focusing
> on… but to include others in their discussion of how we have to be inclusive" (Male
> Participant #5).

During another interview when telling a story about becoming more vocal and being the

one in the group to speak out if something was wrong, a participant confirmed when asked that it

made him more likely to stand up for others. Another participant spoke on how she stood up for

a fellow student in college when she was being bullied and advocated on her behalf to find a solution.

Self-Evaluation. This subtheme was coded for participants' reflections of self or one's ability to self-evaluate based on skills learned and or practiced in the program as well as afterwards. "I think it was like doing the self-evaluations, like evaluating your maybe your needs, like identifying your needs as a student". (Male Participant #5)

Role Modelling. This subtheme was coded for discussion of one self as a role model, including perceptions and expectations of how to model for others associated with the program. One participant commented that his current mentoring practices are rooted in what he learned in the peer mentoring program

> I go back to the mentorship role I had, so, I know, I think for me, in order to be a mentor you have to set good examples, you have to make good choices, and I try to live by that philosophy as you are someone that people look up to and ask questions, will ask questions, or will need guidance or want your opinion on things." (Male Participant #5)

Another student reported that she was: "Really wanting to teach and wanting people to learn and wanting to help people", (Female Participant #2) indicating a desire to mentor in the future.

Confidence: This subtheme was coded numerous times in all interviews during discussion of one's self-esteem, confidence, ability to open up, or reflect on how the program has influenced any of the above. One participant mentioned that it had given her the confidence to take on mentoring roles in college, reporting that: "I definitely was able to take on that role because I had the confidence in myself to know that I was able to be a leader and a mentor" (Female Participant #4), Another participant reported that the program influenced her confidence despite her perception that it didn't appear to be a primary goal: "I definitely think confidence is a big one. I think it may not be something that they work on directly but it definitely gave me

confidence in myself" (Female Participant #2). When asked how the program may have

influenced his confidence in the present, another participant responded: "I was confident enough

to do this interview." (Male Participant #1)

Resilience: This subtheme was coded regarding discussions of bouncing back or coping

with stress or adversity and relying on skills or influences of the program in the present. One

participant spoke on his reflection of the program and its influence now in a story concerning his

struggles with mental health:

> Moments like that when I'd go and just work through the whole shift... my anxiety just
> starts to kick up… I'd just feel like the people there are still helpful, still make me feel
> like I could talk more because I'd been really quiet." (Male Participant #1).

Continued Mentorship Role: This subtheme was coded during discussions of mentorship

after the program by participants in which they continued to take on mentorship positions. One

participant reported that she was asked to be a mentor in college and accepted it knowing the

experience from the peer mentoring program had aided the decision:

> When I moved from high school to college I was offered with the First Nation Center at
> Fanshawe to be a leader and mentor, like I think it was for 30 First Year students, First
> Nation students, and I never would have taken that role if I didn't do Fourth R. (Female
> Participant #4).

Another student told a story regarding her continued mentorship role in college that

centered on another student's situation where she had become a core support:

> I was working with a student and a fellow peer and she was experiencing some bullying
> from another girl. And so I put on my little peer mentorship hat and was like "OK these
> are the steps that we can take and I don't know a whole lot because I haven't been at this
> college long but these are the steps that we're going to take to get this resolved and so we
> went to a professor and the professor bumped us up to the head of program, and we went
> to security, and I was with her through this whole journey even though it hadn't impacted
> me, and I went with her to every single meeting because that meant something to her,
> having that peer support there. So that reminded me of when I was back in high school
> doing the peer mentoring and that one issue came forward of the teacher making that
> comment, working through the resolution and how do we get to a resolve. (Female
> Participant #2).

Interpersonal Skills

This theme was coded in all interviews and consisted of discussions regarding socially relevant skills, communication, and interpersonal abilities developed or influenced by the program both during and in the present. The main subthemes included two areas:

Social Skills. This subtheme was coded when participants reflected changing or improving social ability within the program and in the present. For instance, a participant reported that it helped her better connect with a mentee in a time of need:

> There'd be one day where the person I was mentoring wouldn't be having a good day and I'd just be like 'Ok well we're not doing this paperwork… talk to me about your day," … it really opened my social abilities up". (Female Participant #4)

Two male participants commented that the program generally helped with speakinothers: "It gave me better skills to talk to people," (Male Participant #3);

> "I was actually very [self] conscious…kept to myself. I really didn't talk to a lot of people… I'm very talkative now and I wouldn't be as talkative as when [sic] I was young when Fourth R actually came in" (Male Participant #1).

Healthy Communication. This subtheme encapsulated any discussion of healthy communication between friends, family, or partners, due to the programs teachings on communication both in the program and in the present. One participant reported his communication skills were enhanced during the program and that he continued to rely on them in the present: "I was grasping on things, using those talkative skills, my bubbly skills at work, using it here, using it with my girlfriend. I'm talking with my partner more than beforehand…" (Male Participant #1). Another participant discussed learning different communication styles, and listed them as aggressive, passive aggressive and assertive which drew in a subtheme corresponding to *Conflict Resolution Skills* where the participants often reported the resolution work as having stood out in their communication skills development. When asked how the

program had helped in his personal development he further commented: "I'd say it helped me. Like I stopped like… with the situational type stuff, I was more aggressive before but now I'm more like assertive". (Male Participant #3)

Social Support. This theme was coded in all interviews regarding any social support reflected on that was received or given in the program, and the ways in which that support had an impact in the present. There were three subthemes that participants indicated as social aspects that were helpful, impactful or memorable:

Social Connection. This subtheme was coded during instances of connection between individuals in the program. Example "They were bringing the connection from us… they would talk to us like, "Hey if something's going on…" to sit us down and talk to us about a story they have went through and it has helped us," (Male Participant #1). Another participant who reported feeling initially disconnected from her culture mentioned that being a mentor was an honourable experience that helped her connect with students she wouldn't have otherwise connected with: "… I felt really honoured, and I connected really well with students which made it great," (Female Participant #2). A participant who grew up off-reserve also commented: "I had my friends from different classes were off-reserve and I connected and everything, but this really brought me closer to people that were on the reserve." (Female Participant #4).

Safe Space. This subtheme was coded to label participants' responses towards feeling safe, comfortable, at ease, or as having the program as a refuge or resource to turn to. Example: "… if people were having a difficult time you know at home life and they just got away from it." (Female Participant #4). Another participant reported that the program: "made me more comfortable", (Male Participant #3).

Sense of Belonging. This subtheme was coded in discussions where participants felt the program helped them feel like they were part of something and belonged to the group. One participant reported:

> …being asked by somebody to be a mentor for these students … it made me feel really like I belonged... I was trying to prove to myself and to the other people around me that I did belong" (Female Participant #2).

Another participant also reported that the program helped them feel like others were going through a similar experience which also improved a sense of togetherness: "… Just meeting people, interacting with everyone, and everyone's in the same boat."

Education and Career Benefits.

This theme was also in the majority of interviews (n=4) and was coded to identify discussion associated with career, training, continued education, or aspirations from the program regarding purpose, meaning or direction in the here and now. The education and career benefits theme contained four subthemes:

Sense of Purpose: This subtheme indicated participants' reflections of the program that related to their motivations, or self-ascribed meaning related to past, current, or future aspirations. One participant proclaimed that the Fourth R played a major role in their vocation of choice:

> With what I'm trying to pursue in my life is just to be a police officer or something you know like a public safety kind of standpoint. Without Fourth R pushing me to, you know, get out of my comfort zone a little bit with being a leader and speaking up about things you know I probably wouldn't have made the choice to be in public safety. (Female Participant #4)

This was a common theme as another participant spoke on how the program had shaped her perception of self and purpose in the present moment: "It's also really helped me find who I

kind of want to be as a person in the world" (Female Participant #2). One participant further

noted that the program's impact permeated into his career orientation:

> Being part of those programs and assuming those roles, it kind of helped me like post-secondary wise, like college and university, with what I wanted to do… I saw myself wanting to work with others constantly, that team work in those kind of situations [sic] where I want a career that deals with people. (Male Participant #5).

Continued Education: This was a subtheme coded to indicate instances of continued

education outside of high school, which was coded in four of the interviews, such as university,

college or training not otherwise specified. One participant simply stated: "It helped me off to

college..." (Male Participant #1), while three others spoke candidly about their programs and

courses, i.e., "I was doing a college program, dualist studies at Fanshawe…" (Female Participant

#2).

School Success: This subtheme was coded during conversation centered on success or

achievement or perceived improvement related to school or education, such as completing high

school, college, university or training. On participant mentioned that simply going to the Fourth

R programming influenced his performance in school: "I felt really great after, I was honestly

like doing so good in school" (Male Participant #1), while another participant reported: "I found

it was a great resource to kind of motivate you to get your butt in the school…it really did help

my attendance," (Female Participant #2). Another participant echoed this sentiment by

reporting: "… Gave me a reason to go to school" (Male Participant #3).

Career Opportunities. This code was used to identify any instances of career

opportunities or career movement participant mentions as being related to Fourth R involvement.

One participant commented that his involvement in the program opened doors in his career

movement both in highschool and in College:

> While I was getting my diploma, I was also working on the reserve as a youth worker…having that experience as a mentor and mentee, the advisory board, it helped me when applying for jobs on the reserve… I put the Fourth R on my resume and I worked for a First Nations governance organization in the summer while I was in high school... (Male Participant #5)

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the reflections of past mentor/mentee participants of the Fourth R program and to identify if benefits and findings from previous research conducted within the Fourth R program were altered, remained the same, or changed in any way over time. The goal of this project was to identify in what ways these benefits may have been affected or transformed since the participants have entered other stages of their lives as young adults, including impacts on their perception of self as well as on career, education and future aspirations. This project was exploratory in nature, although it was expected that similar themes from past research would resurface including increases in intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, leadership, confidence etc., as well as those related to social support, cultural connection and identity, and school success.

In the winter of 2019, five previous participants (ages 21-24) of the Fourth R Uniting our Nations Peer Mentoring program from two secondary schools were interviewed. All five of the participants had experience as mentors either in grade 10, 11, and or grade 12, while four of them also had experiences as mentees in grade nine. Interviews were done in person, or over the phone, and individuals were reimbursed with gift cards for their time. This study utilized a narrative methodology that allowed for students to have access to the interview questions prior to the interview, and were instructed to answer questions in any order they chose and to tell stories when they felt it demonstrated their point. The interview guide was adapted from a guide used in a previous study by Coyne-Foresi & colleagues (2018) and asked questions relating to the

perceived benefits of being in the program either as a mentee or as a mentor, and how/if the

program has influenced or impacted their lives in the present time being. Data from all five

transcripts were coded using thematic content analyses that was guided by qualitative research

done by DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch (2011) and Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, (2017).

Originally, 154 codes were identified and collapsed into 38 codes, and then further collapsed into

24 unique codes that represented the five key themes found in the study. The key themes

included: (1) Cultural Connection, (2) Intrapersonal Skills, (3) Interpersonal skills, (4) Social

Support, and (5) Education and Career Benefits. Unique subthemes of this study included

Indigenous advocacy, continued mentorship, a more nuanced understanding of culture, mixed

identity experience, transformative leadership, as well as the inclusion of continued education

and career benefits.

Benefits of Narrative Methodology

      The opportunity to provide more context and insight into narrative inquiries of

Indigenous interviews was suggested as a possible benefit of story-telling approaches by Bishop

(1999), Patrick (2017), and Cruickshank (1993). This study found that the benefits of using a

narrative based methodology where the participants were given access to the interview questions

and encouraged to tell stories when applicable was apparent in the detail and depth of meaning

that participants took to explain their experiences. Although participants often reverted back to

answering questions in the order they appeared on the form, and responded based on questions

asked by the researcher in specific order, they were free to move from topic to topic and often

longer monologue-oriented responses were enriched with more context, detail, and nuance that

clarified the meaning for the researcher. This process leaves less for the researcher to interpret,

which ultimately offers more accurate information in the qualitative analysis. An example

included the one female participants (#2) story about taking on another mentoring role in college where a fellow classmate was being bullied, where she felt free to tell the story from start to finish with no interruptions even though it had deviated from the initial guide of questions. Two participants mentioned not having had time to fully read over the initial questions but commented that it gave them a sense of relief to know what kind of information was being gathered, so as to mentally prepare. It was evident in several interviews that the participants had engaged in their own process of meaning-making (Stapleton & Wilson, 2017), in which they interpreted their experiences and were able to convey them to the researcher. This interpretation of past events, such as participants commenting that they were trying to prove that they belonged to this Indigenous group in High School, exemplified the participants' voices and their introspective capabilities as young adults. However, it is unknown whether this ability was a product of time passing since the participants have engaged in the program, or whether it was in part due to the open structure of a narrative based methodology.

Relation to Previous Research in the Fourth R

Findings in this study both mirrored and extended those in previous research on the Fourth R Uniting our Nations peer mentoring program by Crooks et al (2017) which reported improvements related to interpersonal and intrapersonal development including leadership and confidence, as well as findings related to enhanced cultural connection. Intrapersonal skills in this study were evident in increased reports of confidence and leaderships skills that continued on past high school and into experiences in similar school settings like college and work. Participants recollected how the program influenced their ability to reach out for support and their willingness to support others when in need through advocacy as well as mentoring in these new settings.

Crooks and colleagues 2015 investigation involving interviewing adult stakeholders also identified keys themes including cultural identity and belonging, as well as cultural connectedness, which were prominent themes throughout this investigation. Cultural identity and belonging were echoed numerous times by participants in this study who initially struggled with owning their Indigenous identities and since finishing the program have further solidified their ownership of said cultural identity. They reported interest in exploring their own ancestry and lineage and continuing to learn about their personal backgrounds outside of the program.

Coyne-Foresi and colleagues research (2018) on the benefits of peer mentoring, which utilized a mixed methods design involving interviews and concept mapping, found that participants also reported interpersonal growth that was directly related to the programs positive influence on student's sense of belongingness, as well as their desire to help others. This investigation found similar subthemes as participants recollected on the way the program encouraged them to open up and connect with others in a safe environment that encouraged coming to one another's aid. Coyne-Foresi et al, (2018) noted that youth participants reported a desire to teach others about their culture, which was also reiterated in this study where participants spoke on teaching others in work and college environments. Of course, much of these supportive findings also suggest new data emerged as this study identified the experiences of mentors and mentees, both retrospectively, and in the present, with an average four years post program involvement. This investigation found that certain themes from previous research (Crooks et al 2015a; 2015b; 2017; Coyne-Foresi, 2018) have transformed in the participants personal development over the years since their participation in the program. New subthemes related to Indigenous advocacy, transformative styles of leadership, and continued mentorship as

well as a more nuanced understanding and appreciation for culture have emerged in this study's

findings which are further discussed below.
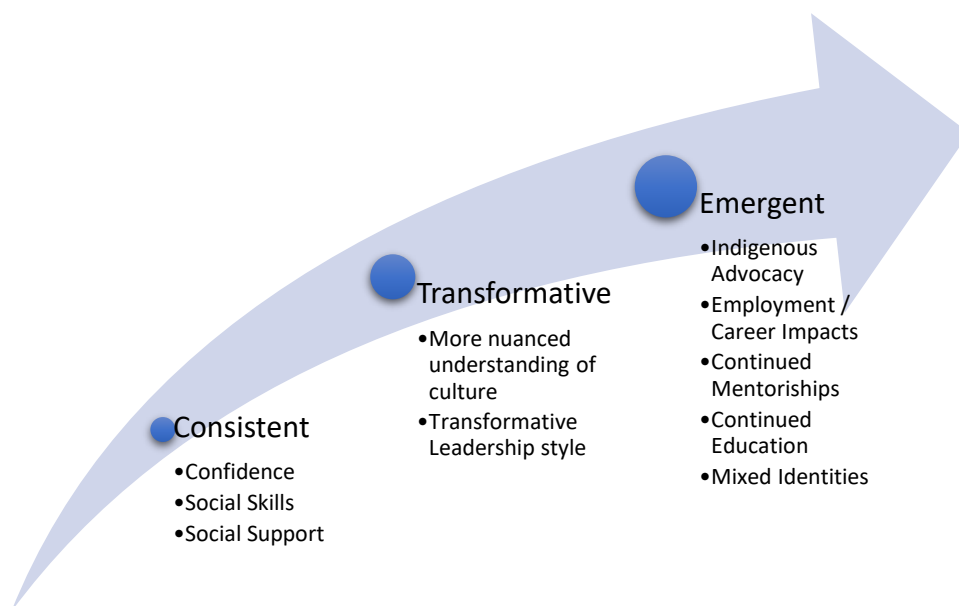
Figure 1. Unique Subthemes Reflecting the main research question regarding themes/benefits that have shown to be consistent, transformative, or newly emerged from the data.

Differences between Mentor and Mentee Reflections

While all participants had been involved in the program as mentors (*n*=5), four had also

been mentees, leaving one individual with only mentoring experience in the study. Those who

had both experiences (*n*=4), tended to speak more on their experiences as mentors, which may

reflect either that the experience as a mentor was more memorable and impactful, or that it was

easier to remember because of it being the more recent experience. The participant who had not

been a mentee also noted that she had wished that she knew about the program as a grade nine

student and would have entered it had she been aware, identifying the notion that despite the

program running at that time not all students were made aware or reached.

Concerning the differences between mentor and mentees experiences, the mentee

experiences appeared to focus more on aspects that centered on social support, such as reporting

a sense of belonging, feeling connected to other students, and having a safe space to escape too

in times of need either from a difficult home life or from other stressors. Mentee experiences also

spoke to the cultural aspects of the program if they had not been exposed to culture in their home

settings or in previous experiences. This seems natural given that exposure would have been

experienced first as mentees and then continued onwards as mentors. Mentee experiences also

spoke to the nervousness and hesitation before entering the program and the programs ability to

help with those struggles as well as the overall transition to high school. Mentee experiences also

focused on overwhelming positive appraisals of the lead facilitator of the peer mentoring

program, with many interviewees commenting on the feeling of belonging and connection

directly associated with his facilitation, indicating to an extent that the support of this mentor

may have influenced their likelihood of continuing on in the program.

　　Reported mentor experiences made up the bulk of the interview data and included various

instances in which the participants recollected their mentoring experiences through a general

explanation of the programs expectations and their roles, as well through more specific stories of

their experiences. These recollections also contained the participants' own interpretations of their

impact, and the program's impact on them as well their own perceptions of themselves in the

past. Mentor experiences often focused on their perceived development of leadership skills such

as speaking on the leadership opportunities afforded to them through the program as well as the

way it influenced their desire to take on leadership roles throughout high school and afterwards.

Mentor experiences also denoted the way they emulated the lead facilitator and learned to mentor

through other watching other mentor's interactions. Participants spoke about wanting to be like

the lead facilitator and feeling inspired by his involvement and commitment to mentoring.

Cultural identity and Mixed Identity in Indigenous Youth Experiences

As found in previous research on the Fourth R peer mentoring program (Coyne-Foresi et al, 2018, Crooks et al, 2015b), cultural identity was an important subtheme that permeated much of the discussion of culture in this study. Furthermore, self-identification of mixed ancestry, with participants reporting as First Nations/Metis, as well as Caucasian among other backgrounds made for an interplay in the complexity of what it means to claim oneself, or to feel like one belongs, as an Indigenous person. Several participants spoke on the difficulty associated with being seen as "not Native enough", and wanting to connect to the culture and belong as an Indigenous person, which was somewhat alleviated by their involvement in the program. These participants commented that the program gave them an avenue to feel safe in exploring this part of their identity and to feel confident in their ancestral awareness.

Another unique aspect of this study was the discussion of the differences in cultural identity in terms of lived experienced associated with living on- and off-reserve and the impact the program has on these different upbringings. Participants mentioned that the program helped these two groups in different ways. It was first posited by participants that urban Indigenous youth may benefit from the program by being exposed to culture that they might be alienated from in urban communities, while Indigenous youth from the reserve benefited from being exposed to non-Indigenous norms and ways of being that helped them immerse themselves in the high school atmosphere. One participant raised off-reserve mentioned that she was grateful to connect with those individuals that she felt she would have never met from the reserve who had taught her more about her culture, while another raised on-reserve felt that it helped him understand how to get along with individuals in his classes from the city, outside of the program. These experiences may have occurred regardless of their involvement in the program, although

participants did also mention that they believed they wouldn't have integrated or mingled with the other group in a meaningful way had the program not influenced them to do so. This discussion may indicate an important area that the program indirectly touches on concerning connecting Indigenous youth who come from various backgrounds.

Nuances in Culture, Careers, and Indigenous Advocacy

While a desire to connect to culture was echoed in this study as in previous research (Coyne-Foresi et al, 2018), this study identified distinctive new aspects surrounding types of cultural awareness and engagement. Some participants reflected on how the program was often their first exposure to culture, and helped them see themselves as *more* Indigenous or proud to be Indigenous. This study found that cultural awareness and understanding or its importance both to the individual and to the community was more nuanced and contextualized by the individuals' perception of self as an active member of First Nations community. Participants spoke on the importance of transmitting cultural knowledge to the next generations and learning about one's background. Participants spoke about how the program opened their eyes to their culture and inspired them to practice cultural activities as well as engage in the culture even when they were finished the program and when they were separated from their communities (in college etc.,). Other participants spoke about how they had learned to lean on their cultural roots, instilling a sense of cultural resiliency based on their practice, such as smudging to clear one's mind when addressing mental health issues in the present. There was a desire to not only connect to the culture, but also to give back and engage in the community that was emphasized in the participants choice of vocation and the sense of purpose they attributed to this decision. Participants had mentioned that the program influenced their going into vocations that could impact their communities, such as in law enforcement and in business. It should also be noted

that four out of five participants disclosed that they pursued post-secondary education, and as such the program may have had an impact on the desire to continue their education. Lastly, participants consistently advocated for Indigenous issues in the interviews and spoke candidly about the importance of being a voice for Indigenous peoples. Participants mentioned that Indigenous representation was lacking and suggested that more role models at the college level should be invited to speak in the high school program, and that it was important to see Indigenous people in positions of power. Participants spoke about the importance of raising awareness regarding the obstacles Indigenous youth and their communities face, as well as how to teach and inform non-Indigenous individuals in this area. This may suggest that participation in culturally relevant programming has a substantial impact on the sense of purpose and obligation Indigenous youth feel when they are immersed and supported in their cultural pursuits.

Transformative Leadership and Instances of Continued Mentorship

While increased leadership skills was a constant theme in this study, with participants reporting gaining confidence and competency as leaders throughout their experience as mentors, some participants spoke about their development as leaders in other areas of their lives and in the present. Participants reported that the program directly influenced the type of leader they saw themselves as and wanted to become after the program, being more assertive and less controlling for example. Participants spoke about being leaders as mentors in high school, and feeling like they became more confident leaders when they began to use those skills in continued education settings such as college and in work environments when they had a choice to engage or to walk away without expectation. This sense of transformative leadership was evident in their continued roles as mentors in college and work environments. Participants reported finding themselves in

positions where they aided others, and guided them through difficult processes, such as

becoming mentors for a number of first years in post-secondary, or working as camp counsellors

and taking joy in mentoring youth again. These participants also commented that they believed

the program, through giving them the opportunity to fulfill those leadership and mentor roles,

had helped them believe more in their abilities as mentors, which may have made them more

likely to take on similar roles afterwards.

Limitations

While this study adds to previous research on the benefits of culturally relevant

mentorship within the Fourth R program by investigating the impact of benefits over time,

limitations in the study are apparent. These concerns include a small sample size, sampling bias,

and those relating to the researcher background. Regarding sample size, the number of

interviews involved in the study was generally small (*n=5)*, and while all participants had

experience as mentors, only four had also been involved as mentees. However, it is suggested

that the richness of data is often considered more important to the overall aim of qualitative

analyses, in so much as the interviews contain sufficient information to answer the studies main

inquiry (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). Malterud and colleague's states that this

saturation of information is often determined by the aim of the study, its sample specificity, use

of an established theory, and the quality of dialogue as well as a rigorous analysis strategy, all of

which was considered in this inquiry. Regardless, the study would have benefited from

interviewing more participants, in addition to having more participants who had also been

mentees in the program. Sampling bias was considered in that all participants in the study

identified as Oneida First Nations, despite the program's inclusion of three different First

Nations communities within the London Middlesex county area. A second issue exists in that

four out of five participants denoted Indigenous advocacy or generally speaking out for

Indigenous peoples as important to them in their interviews, suggesting that their participation

may have been influenced by this personal concern, and not representative of the whole

participation pool. Furthermore, their participation may have also been influenced by favorable

experiences in the program that may not be fully representative of the experiences of all

individuals who participated in the Fourth R mentoring program in secondary school.

Replications or future studies would do well to interview more participants, and attempt to

collect a more varied participant pool. Lastly, my background as the lead researcher consisted of

Indigenous descent, from a northern Ontario reserve (Nipissing First Nation), in which my

understanding of culture may have been different from the participants. I engaged in a process of

learning and clarifying to make sure interpretations of responses were done so appropriately but

was aware of differences in cultural experience and understand that my lived experience is

limited in scope.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

This study exemplified that culturally relevant programming for Indigenous youth has a

powerful impact on their development and is a useful tool in supporting Indigenous youth in

secondary school. This programming encourages cultural connection, instills a sense of

belonging, and acknowledges the role of others and use of self for growing youth who may

struggle to overcome systemic barriers in society. The Fourth R: Uniting our Nations peer

mentoring program succeeds in their commitment to enhancing Indigenous youth intrapersonal

and interpersonal skills, as well as providing a conduit for cultural exposure and nurturing

experiences with others who share said culture. This study, though exploratory in nature,

identified key themes that supported previous research and added to the growing body of

research in this area, while also illuminating unique aspects concerning how benefits found in

these programs are experienced over time. A narrative based methodology provided an avenue for Indigenous youth who are transitioning into early adulthood to express themselves in a culturally suitable way that provided context and allowed for meaning making and introspection to take place. Furthermore, the Two-eyed seeing approach that allowed for story-telling and thematic analyses lending from a Western approach demonstrates the utility of collaboration in Indigenous oriented research methodologies and adds to strength based research in this area.

Moreover, culturally relevant programming encourages social connection that has a lasting impact on participants' likelihood to reach out and develop similar connections as they move forward in their education and careers. Participants in this study reflected on the ways in which the program supported them and motivated them through life transitions, while illuminating aspects of their current behaviour, such as engaging in healthy communication, that they believed were influenced by these facets. This programming also indicates that participants are inspired by their positive experiences as mentors and mentees in the school sphere, which often encouraged them to pursue a higher education seeking vocations that reflected this interest. The mentors and mentees demonstrated that having a solid foundation of which they could curate and grow as young leaders positively impacted their later commitments to leadership and advocacy as young adults. Interestingly, this advocacy also contained a cultural component that many participants owed to involvement in the program. Participants spoke on their involvement and how it encouraged strong formation of cultural identities devoted to speaking out and being a voice in the program but also in the here and now as Indigenous young adults.

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Appendix A

Social Media Advertisement

Western

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH IN

Reflections of Peer Mentoring in the Fourth R Program

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study looking at lived experienced and personal reflections of involvement in the Fourth R and how it has impacted their lives to date. We are looking for **Indigenous (First Nation, Inuit, Metis, Non-Status Indigenous) youth 18** and older who have participated in the **Fourth R Mentoring programs.**

If you are interested and agree to participate you would be asked to:
Engage in a 30 minute to 1 hour face to face interview.

In appreciation for your time, you will receive
A 30 Dollar Gift Card

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study,
please contact:

Elsa Trovarello, HBA Spec. Psychology
MA Counselling Psychology (Western)
Faculty of Education
Western University of Ontario

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Project Title: Reflecting on Mentoring Experiences in the Fourth R Program Peer Mentoring Program for Indigenous Youth

Narrative Prompts:
Do you want to include a question here about how they were involved in the program… how many years, what roles, etc?

Thinking about the many people and places in your life, as well as your own journey of personal growth, in what ways has your role in the peer mentoring program impacted your life?

Additional Questions:

What years were you involved in the program? Were you involved in the elementary and or secondary mentoring programs?

Were you a mentee or a mentor? Were you involved with the Leadership Council?

What was it like starting the program? Had you experienced other programs like it before?

What are the most important things you liked or learned about being in this program?

Has being in the program helped you at school or in your work in any way? (With academics? With non-academics? Work? Career?)

Has being in the program helped your perception of yourself in the here and now? (how have your views of yourself over the time since the program ended changed?)

Do you think the program helped your perception of yourself in the future? (Did you think differently about yourself or your capabilities after the program and now?

Has the program helped your connection with your culture? (Since being mentored or being a mentor, have you become more interested or involved in cultural practices or events?)

Do you have any final thoughts or comments?

(Adapted from Crooks et al., 2015b; Coyne-Foresi & Crooks, 2017)

Appendix C

Letter of Information and Consent to Participate in Research Study

Study Title: Reflecting on Mentoring Experiences in the Fourth R Program Peer Mentoring Program for Indigenous Youth

Principal Investigator: Dr. Claire Crooks
Co-Investigator: Elsa Trovarello

Contact Information:
Elsa Trovarello, HBA Spec. Psychology   Dr. Claire Crooks
MA Counselling Psychology   Director, Centre for School Mental Health
Faculty of Education   Western University of Ontario

Background/Purpose: The purpose of this study is to find out how youth who have been involved with the Fourth R mentoring program for Indigenous youth reflect back on their experience after leaving high school. We are interested in looking at the positive ways that the program may have improved or changed Indigenous youth experience. This information is valuable as it can inform future research on positive group identity and feelings of empowerment and belonging.

Study Design: You are being asked to participate in this research study about perceptions of self and experiences in the Fourth R program because we are interested in understanding the influence of the program on individuals who participate.

Procedures: You will be asked to participate in an interview that will take approximately 30 minutes to an hour. You will be asked about your experience with the Fourth R Peer Mentoring program will be asked and to reflect on your experience now that you are no longer in high school.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time if you so choose without penalty.

Withdrawal from Study: You may withdraw at any time by indicating to one of the researchers that you would like to stop your participation. You may also indicate that you would like to withdraw your interview data up to 48 hours post interview.

Risks: There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

Benefits: The possible benefits to you may be that you are able to be a part of a research initiative looking at Indigenous peer mentoring which may help promote programs like this in the future. Likewise, you are using your voice to inform research and help guide researchers to report accurate information about this area.

Confidentiality: Your answers will be kept confidential and you will not be identified in any coming theses, reports, or publications. Instead all participants will be given a code number such as person 1, person 2, etc. All information provided will be held in confidence by the researchers and kept in secure storage by Dr. Crooks (project supervisor) at the Center for School Mental Health for a period of seven years after which it will be destroyed. Elsa Trovarello and Dr. Crooks will have access to the information. A list linking your study number with your interview will be kept by the researcher in a secure place, separate from your study file.

Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research. While we do our best to protect your information there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. The inclusion of your [e.g., initials and date of birth] may allow someone to link the data and identify you. Also, if data is collected during the project which may be required to report by law we have a duty to report. Lastly, this research intends to use quotes to identify meaningful themes, these quotes will not be directly attributable to an individual by name.

Compensation: You will receive a $30 gift card as a thank you for your participation.

Rights as a Participant: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

You may have access to your survey, responses, a summary of the findings and you may withdraw within 48 hours post interview.

If you are a First Nations or an Indigenous person who has contact with spiritual Elders, you may want to talk to them before you make a decision about this research study.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Study Title: Reflecting on Mentoring Experiences in the Fourth R Program Peer Mentoring Program for Indigenous Youth

Document: Written Consent

Principal Investigator: Dr. Claire Crooks
Co-Investigator: Elsa Trovarello

Contact Information:
Elsa Trovarello, HBA Spec. Psychology   Dr. Claire Crooks
MA Counselling Psychology   Director, Centre for School Mental Health
Faculty of Education   Western University of Ontario
Western University of Ontario

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that audio recording the interview is for the purpose of transcription and analysis.

        Please check one of the following:

Do you consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research?

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**

By signing below, I signify that I have carefully studied and understood the above information and freely give my consent for participation in the study.

_____   _____   _____
Print Name of Participant   Signature   *Date (DD-MMM- YYYY)*

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

_____   _____   _____
Print Name of Person   Signature   *Date (DD-MMM-YYYY*
Obtaining Consent

Appendix D

Demographics Questionnaire

Project Title: Reflecting on Mentoring Experiences in the Fourth R Program Peer Mentoring Program for Indigenous Youth

Identity *How do you identify in terms of background?*

- ☐ *First Nations*
- ☐ *Metis*
- ☐ *Inuit*
- ☐ *Indigenous*
- ☐ *Native*
- ☐ *Caucasian*
- ☐ _____

Gender *What is your gender orientation?*

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Two Spirit
- ☐ _____

Age *What is your age?*

_____

Education *What is your current level of education?*

_____

Appendix E

Debriefing Form

Project Title: Reflecting on Mentoring Experiences in the Fourth R Program Peer Mentoring Program for Indigenous Youth

Investigators: Elsa Trovarello and Dr. Claire Crooks, Western University, Faculty of Education.

Thank you for your participation in this study. The purpose of this study was to investigate the benefits of peer mentoring in the Fourth R program for First Nations, Inuit, and Metis youth in transitional periods of their development. In particular we are interested in how youth experience the peer mentoring program and how it may have impacted their future decisions and beliefs.

This was an exploratory study and was carried out using a story-telling narrative interview procedure in which participants respond to interview questions in a story-like design that describes their experience.

Here are some references if you would like to read more.

- Snowshoe, A., Crooks, C. V., Tremblay, P. F., & Hinson, R. E. (2017). Cultural connectedness and its relation to mental health for First Nations youth. *Journal of Primary Prevention,* 38(1-2), 67-86. DOI:10.1007/s10935-016-0454-3.

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- Crooks, C. V., Burleigh, D., Snowshoe, A., Lapp, A., Hughes, R. & Sisco, A. (2015). A case study of culturally relevant school-based programming for First Nations youth: Improved relationships, confidence and leadership, and school success. Advances in School Mental Health Promotion. DOI: 10.1080/1754730X.2015.106477

Appendix F

Reflections of Peer Mentoring Codebook

Theme	Code	Sub-code	Code Description	Example
Culture Any culturally relevant discussion by participant related to experiences in the program	Cultural Awareness		Use this code to identify perceptions of the importance of culture, knowing one's culture, Indigenous ways of knowing, or being aware of culture.	*"…We did a lot of, we used a lot of pedagogy, like First Nations pedagogy… so like smudging and the ceremonial and kind of, we had Mike go through it. He'll talk about it, why we do it, the purpose behind it."*
	Indigenous Advocacy		Use this code to indicate advocating for Indigenous peoples, community and causes, i.e., speaking out or bringing attention to Indigenous issues.	*"Honestly if it's helping First Nations people that's all I want. The bottom line, that's all I want, that's the reason I came here".*
	Cultural Identity		Use this code to indicate instances of cultural heritage, lineage, awareness of tribe, clan, band or other cultural identifiers or ancestry.	*"Well I know what I am, I'm First Nations and I'm going to stand by that, who I am."*
	Importance of Indigenous Role Models		Use this code to indicate participant mentioning the need for Indigenous representation and role models to look up and learn from.	*"Because we don't see a lot of Indigenous role models that go to Post Secondary or professionals in general, so I think It would be good for both the advisory board or for the Fourth R program, to have someone kind of talk on their experiences, because it's like the next, those are the next mentors up."*
	Mixed Identity		Use this code to indicate participants acknowledging mixed identity and or impacts associated therein.	*"I've made a joke, "of course I look white and I'm sorry but I can't help that, but I am a metis woman and I do know a little bit about the culture."*
	Cultural Resiliency		Use this code to note instances of resiliency explicitly tied to cultural	*"The culture helps me a lot. When I wake up I have my own smudge bowl, I have my own sage,*

Theme	Code	Sub-code	Code Description	Example
			engagement or practice by the participant.	*and go down the stairs, and I get all my stuff that I need to grab, it clears my mind out."*
	Cultural Community Engagement		Use this code to indicate cultural engagement oriented towards community, band, or network.	*"It really helped me build connections in the community so now when I do take my family to the pow wow in the community and the I know people that are there I know the other students that are there so I'm able to have somebody say hi to them and I feel comfortable with that."*
Career/ Education use this code to identify discussion associated with career, training, continued education, or aspirations from the program regarding purpose, meaning or direction in the here and now.	Sense of Purpose		Use this code to indicate participants reflection of the program that relate to their motivations, or self-ascribed meaning related to past, current, or future aspirations	"*With what I'm trying to pursue in my life is just to be a police officer or something you know like a public safety kind of standpoint. Without Fourth R pushing me to, you know, get out of my comfort zone a little bit with being a leader and speaking up about things you know I probably wouldn't have made the choice to be in public safety."*
	Continued Education		Use this code to indicate instances of continued education outside of high school, such as university college or training not otherwise specified.	*"It helped me off to college..."*
	School Success		use this code to indicate success or achievement or perceived improvement related to school or education, such as completing high school, college, university or training.	*"I felt really great after, I was honestly like doing so good in school"*

Theme	Code	Sub-code	Code Description	Example
	Career Opportunities		Use code to identify any instances of career opportunities or career movement participant mentions as being related to Fourth R involvement	*"I put the Fourth R on my resume and I worked for a First Nations governance organization in the summer while I was in high school. So that helped too because I again, I was assuming that advocate role in high school and that's what that organization did was advocate on behalf of First Nations. So it gave me those opportunities".*
Intrapersonal Skills use this code to indicate individual skills gained or influenced by the program in the here and now.	Leadership Skills		Use code for discussion of leadership skills perceived by the participant gained or influenced by the program.	*"I think I'd be a leader but I don't think I've be as much of a leader like confidently be a leader without having Fourth R help throughout High School".*
		Transformative Leadership	Use code to indicate discussion of changing or developing leadership throughout program and afterwards.	*"I was more of a controlling person when I was a leadership kind of person. So, this helped me find ways to develop into a leader and not somebody who was controlling."*
	Advocating for Others		Indicate discussion of advocating for others unrelated to culture or in general within the program.	*"... I was in the back and I wanted to be like hey, here's some ideas if you want to hear from me and if I can help, so I was a voice for them."*
	Self-Evaluation		Use code to indicate reflections of self or one's ability to self-evaluate based on skills learned and or practiced in the program.	*"I think it was like doing the self-evaluations, like evaluating your maybe your needs, like identifying your needs as a student".*
	Role Modelling		discussion of one self as a role model or expectations of how to model for others.	"I go back to the mentorship role I had, so, I know, I think for me, in order to be a mentor you have to set good examples, you have to make good choices, and I try to live by that philosophy as you are someone that people look up to and ask questions, will ask questions, or will need guidance or want your opinion on things."

Theme	Code	Sub-code	Code Description	Example
	Confidence		Discussion of one's self esteem, confidence, ability to open up, or reflect on how the program has influenced any of the above	*"I definitely was able to take on that role because I had the confidence in myself to know that I was able to be a leader and a mentor".*
	Resilience		Discussion of bouncing back or coping with stress or adversity and relying on skills or influences of the program:	*"Moments like that when I'd go and just work through the whole shift... my anxiety just starts to kick up… I'd just feel like the people there are still helpful, still make me feel like I could talk more because I'd been really quiet."*
	Continued Mentorship Role		Discussion of mentorship after the program by participant.	*"When I moved from high school to college I was offered with the First Nation Center at Fanshawe to be a leader and mentor, like I think it was for 30 First Year students, First Nation students, and I never would have taken that role if I didn't do Fourth R".*
Interpersonal Skills use this code to indicate individual skills gained or influenced by the program in the here and now.	Social Skills		Use this code to indicate when participants reflect on their social skills or abilities changing or improving in the program.	*"There'd be one day where the person I was mentoring wouldn't be having a good day and I'd just be like 'Ok well we're not doing this paperwork... talk to me about your day," … it really opened my social abilities up".*
		Reaching out for Help	Discussion of participant asking or going to others for help or support or demonstrating help seeking behaviours.	*"For what I did learn from this it made me feel like I could once in a while…make me feel like when I need to go out I can go out and I will talk to someone."*
	Healthy Communication		Discussion of healthy communication between friends, family, partners, during program or due to the programs teachings on communication.	*"I was grasping on things, using those talkative skills, my bubbly skills at work, using it here, using it with my girlfriend. I'm talking with my partner more than beforehand, I really didn't."*

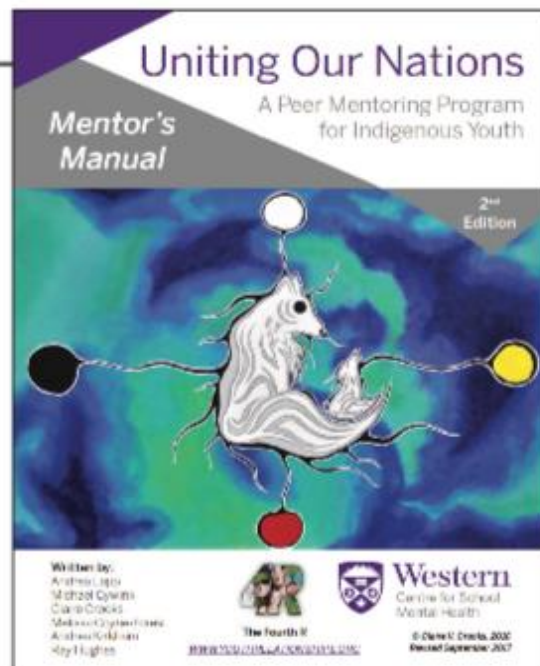| Theme	Code	Sub-code	Code Description	Example
		Conflict Resolution	Discussion of how the program impacted or influenced conflict resolution skills or skills learned in the program.	*"I'd say it helped me. Like I stopped like… with the situational type stuff, I was more aggressive before but now I'm more like assertive".*
Social Support Use this code to indicate any social support reflected on that was received or given, and the ways in which support was experienced in the program.	Safe Space		Use this code to label participants responses relating to feeling safe, comfortable, at ease, or having the program as a refuge or resource to turn to.	"*… it got you away from, if people were having a difficult time you know at home life and they just got away from it.*"
	Social Connection		Use this code to indicate instances of connection between individuals in the program.	"*They were bringing the connection from us right, like they would talk to us like "Hey if somethings going on…" to sit us down and talk to us about a story they have went through and it has helped us.*"
	Sense of Belonging			*"...being asked by somebody to be a mentor for these students … it made me feel really like I belonged."*
Appraisal of Lead Facilitator			Use this code for appraisals of lead facilitator or comments about his mentoring technique, style, or impact.	
Appraisal of Program			use this code to indicate any reflection or feedback about the program	

Appendix G

Program Flyer

Appendix H

Western University Ethics Approval

Date: 23 May 2018

To: Dr. Claire Crooks

Project ID: 111775

Study Title: A Mixed Methods Exploration of Benefits for FNMI Youth in a Culturally Relevant High School Mentoring Program

Application Type: NMREB Initial Application

Review Type: Full Board

Meeting Date: 04/May/2018

Date Approval Issued: 23/May/2018

REB Approval Expiry Date: 23/May/2019

_____

Dear Dr. Claire Crooks

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. All other required institutional approvals must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Appendix A Guardian consent - clean May 22, 2018	Written Consent/Assent	22/May/2018	3
Appendix B youth assent - clean May 8, 2018	Written Consent/Assent	08/May/2018	2
demographics questionnaire May 8, 2018	Paper Survey	08/May/2018	2
FNMI Mentor study GCM instructions April 12, 2018	Other Data Collection Instruments	12/Apr/2018	1
Recruitment Script	Oral Script	08/May/2018	2

Documents Acknowledged:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Thesis Timeline FNMI 2018 Feb-May	Supplementary Tables/Figures	04/Apr/2018	1

No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kelly Patterson, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Western Research

Date: 5 December 2018

To: Dr. Claire Crooks

Project ID: 111775

Study Title: Reflection of Mentoring Experiences in the Fourth R Peer Mentoring Program for Indigenous Youth

Application Type: NMREB Amendment Form

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: January 11 2019

Date Approval Issued: 05/Dec/2018

REB Approval Expiry Date: 23/May/2019

Dear Dr. Claire Crooks,

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the amendment, as of the date noted above.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Interview Guide	Interview Guide	16/Nov/2018	1
LOI CONSENT FORM	Written Consent/Assent	27/Nov/2018	2
Social Media Advertisement	Recruiting Advertisements	27/Nov/2018	2
Summary Rationale for Changes	Protocol	16/Nov/2018	1
Summary Rationale for Changes Clean	Protocol	27/Nov/2018	2

REB members involved in the research project do not participate in the review, discussion or decision.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kelly Patterson, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Appendix I

Thematic Content Qualitative Analysis

Step	Process
1) Pre-analysis (during interview/while editing Trint transcripts)	• This step consists of asking for clarification and or summarizing a statement during the interview process. • Editing and making mental memos of apparent or direct examples of codes (i.e., someone saying "it helped my confidence" = increase in confidence)
2) Read over Transcripts	• Reading to look for errors • Notes of first impressions (i.e., noticing what stands out, reader reactions, take home messages, gaining sense of the text as a whole)
3) Read over transcripts again	• Making hard copy memos/notes on the interviews with pen (i.e., making note of repeated phrases, terms, areas of focus, and suggesting possible codes.) • Highlighting distinctly different areas throughout texts in colour code (i.e., teal for Indigenous and culturally relevant information, pink for self and social related information). • Identify possible codes per highlighted area
4) Hermeneutic Spiral/Circle	• Comparing parts of text, phrases, terms, possible codes, to the whole text/quote. • Determining if impressions of the whole verify analyses of the parts in all chosen quotes for further analyses • **Note: (Ongoing through steps 5-10)**
5) Meaning Units Division	• Write out quote then break into shorter units carefully as to not to lose context (long = too many codes in one quote, short = meaning loss)
6) Formulate Codes and Codebook	• Write out original quote • Write out descriptive labels for meaning units (limited interpretation) • Formulate above into codebook and suggest possible code (leaving empty column for themes).
7) Supervisor/Second Reader(s) edit codebook give feedback	• Send to Supervisor and Second reader for feedback / suggestions

Step	Process
8) Edit Codes	• Edit codebook accordingly
9) Categories	• Condense codes (154 to 30)
10) Identify Themes	• Condense categories into robust themes and subthemes (4-7). • Send for review.

Appendix J

Brief CV

Elsa Trovarello

QUALIFICATIONS SKILLS

- ❖ MA Counselling Psychology at Western University, (Sept 2017- April 2019)
- ❖ MSc candidate in Psychological Science at Lakehead University (Sept 2015- Current)
- ❖ HBA Specialized Psychology at Lakehead University (May, 2015)
- ❖ Processing application for CRPO qualifying registered psychotherapist (April 2019

SKILLS

- ❖ Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training, Crisis Prevention Institute (August 2014)
- ❖ Sale TALK Training, Ontario Association for Suicide Prevention (February 2011)
- ❖ Harm Reduction Model training, Thunder Bay Shelter House (July 2014)
- ❖ Proficient in Caseworks, Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Powerpoint), IBM SPSS Statistics Software, STATA Statistics Software, Sona-Systems, and social media platforms.
- ❖ Prior experience in quantitative and qualitative analysis
- ❖ Thorough understanding of best practice and current therapies from a Biopsychosocial (CBT, DBT, ACT, etc.),
- ❖ Valid Ontario Drivers License & Vehicle owner
- ❖ Valid First Aid certificate, Canadian Red Cross (July 2017)

EXPERIENCE

- ❖ Practicum experience in counselling at Western University and Family Service Thames Valley (Sept 2017-April 2019).
  - o Individual therapy, Group therapy (anxiety & depression, anger, and LGBTQ issues assessments.
- ❖ Broken Arrow Residential Treatment Centre Youth Worker (June 2018- September 2018)
  - o Youth worker for Indigenous children in foster care in Thunder Bay.
- ❖ Graduate Assistant at Western University supervised by Dr. Claire Crooks at the Centre for Mental Health (September 2017- current).
  - o Assisted in a peer review of "Preventing substance use in American Indian youth:

The case for social support and community connections." Submitted to the Journal of Community Psychology (October 2017).

❖ Public Relations Assistant at Thunder Bay Counselling (June 2017 – September 2017).
- o Organizing events and promotional work, advocating for community organizations and other service providers in the Thunder Bay area.

❖ Graduate Assistant at Lakehead University for Dr. Tan's Psychotherapy and Modalities course (September 2015- April 2017).

❖ Research Coordinator Assistant at YouthREX (2016)
- o Assisting the Research Coordinator in developing a program for Social Work students and service personnel in Thunder Bay and surrounding Region.

❖ Thunder Bay Shelter House as an on-call Supervisor
- o Helping homeless individuals find shelter, food, clothing, mental and physical health assistance services within the region.

❖ Casual Support Worker at the Kwae Kii Win Alcohol Management Program in Thunder Bay. (2014-2016)
- o Providing non-violent crisis intervention and addiction support

❖ Presented and engaged in community development and networking in Jamaica and Nepal for the Outdoor Leadership Camp for Youth, (Nepal, May 2016) (Jamaica, February 2014).

❖ Youth Worker at Shkoday Biwasse'aa, an Aboriginal Afterschool Program for young children in Thunder Bay (March 2014-June 2014).

❖ Forest Fire Fighter – MRN Fire Ranger in Wawa Ontario (May – July 2012), Red Lake (April – June 2013), and Sault Ste Marie (June –September 2013).

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

❖ Current working Master's (MSc) Thesis: "Protective and resiliency factors in Indigenous women with experiences of child sexual abuse" (September 2015- current).
- o Supervised by Dr. Josephine Tan in the Cognitive Acquisition Lab/Centre for Biological Timing and Cognition.

❖ Qualitative Analyst for PhD Candidate, Taslim Alani, on her PhD Dissertation; "Healing the Whole Self: Exploring The Development and Evaluation of a Community-Based, Culturally Competent and Evidence-Informed Group Therapy for Women Survivors of Intimate partner violence.
- o Interpreted interviews to analyze the impact of therapy between time 1 and time 2 for participants. (May 2015)

❖ Honours Thesis; "Psychological Resilience and Complexity Theory: The effects of Mental Rigidity, Systems thinking, and Positive Disintegration on an Adaptive

 Self-Concept." (2014). Supervised by Dr. Mirella Stroink, a social psychologist working on commun her research and public initiatives.

- ❖ Research Assistant in Sensory and Neuroscience Perception Lab at Lakehead University, supervised by Dr. Michael Wesner (2013-2015); Data entry.
- ❖ Data Entry Volunteer at Thunder Bay Children's Center (2013)
  - o Worked under the supervision of Dr. Fred Schmidt
  - o Entered data using SPSS and aided in data analyses with family therapy initiatives affecting children families in the Thunder Bay Area.

ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

- ❖ Active Psi Chi Member and former acting Vice President (March 2016 – October 2016), Treasurer at Lakehead Lakehead University (2014-current).
  - o Organizing and hosting Psi Chi events, guest speaker lectures, and presentations.
  - o Presenting for undergraduate classes on GRE prep and grad school applications
  - o Handling financial matters for Psi Chi, such as membership dues, contract lecturers
- ❖ Assistant Administrator & Co-Presenter for "Working Together Toward a Community Response to Substance Use, Pregnancy, and Parenting, Seminar" - An event designed to confirm a shared understanding of the needs of substance-involved women and children in Thunder Bay (April, 2016)
  - o Cynthia Olsen, of the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy and City Hall led a presentation on an environmental scan of services provided in the area. I presented on key themes from a prior event (April 21st 2015) on pregnant and parenting women with substance issues.
- ❖ Assistant Organizer for "Issues, Impacts, and Promising Practice for Women who Use Substances and are Pregnant or Parenting," - A Workshop by the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy Maternal Substance Use and Child Issues Working Group, (April 2015).
- ❖ ⌜SEP⌝A Workshop for local service providers to discuss evidence based strategies that better meet the needs of pregnant or parenting women who use substances, and to learn more about risk factors and barriers that make women vulnerable to substance use. The intent was to inform service providers about current trends and best practice models and build connections to network within the service sector.

PRESENTATIONS

- ❖ Trovarello, E. (March, 2017). "*What is Over the Counter Codeine Misuse and what can be done about it?*" Seminar. Presented at Lakehead University.

- ❖ Dupuis, D., Trovarello, E., Campbell, S., (October 2016). "*Careers in Psychology and Applying to Graduate School*". Presented under aegis of Psi Chi in PSYCH-4901-YA.

Thunder Bay, ON.

❖ Trovarello, E. (September, 2016). *"Careers in Psychology, Graduate School Applications and GRE preparation"*. Presented under aegis of Psi Chi in PSYCH-4032-FA. Thunder Bay, ON

❖ Trovarello, E. (April 2016). *"Issues, Impacts, and Promising Practice for Women Who Use Substances and are Pregnant or Parenting: Key Themes from the April 21st 2015 Event."* Working Together Toward a Community Response to Substance Use, Pregnancy and Parenting - A Community event for Service Providers in Thunder Bay, ON.

❖ Trovarello, E., & M. Stroink (March 2014). *"Psychological Resilience and Complexity Theory: The effects of Mental Rigidity, Systems thinking, and Positive Disintegration on an Adaptive Self Concept."* Poster Presented at the Lakehead University Psychology Research day, Thunder Bay ON.

❖ Trovarello, E., & M. Stroink (December 2014). *"Psychological Resilience and Complexity Theory: The effects of Mental Rigidity, Systems thinking, and Positive Disintegration on an Adaptive Self Concept."* Presented an Honours Thesis Power point presentation at Lakehead University

❖ Trovarello, E., & M. Stroink (April 2014). *"Psychological Resilience and Complexity Theory: The effect of Mental Rigidity, Systems thinking, and Positive Disintegration on an Adaptive Self Concept."* Presented Honours Thesis Poster at Lakehead University.

PUBLICATIONS

❖ Trovarello,E. (December, 2015). *"Issues, Impacts, and Services for Women Who Use Substances and are Pregnant or Parenting."* Thunder Bay, Thunder Bay Drug Strategy.
   o Report written under the aegis of The Thunder Bay Drug Strategy's Maternal Substance Use and Child Issues Working Group April 21st Event.