


2018

# Understanding Parenting Styles of Second- Generation Parents of Residential School Survivors Within Treaty 8 Reserves

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# Walden University

College of Health Sciences

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Judy Kim-Meneen

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Walden University  
2018

Abstract

Understanding Parenting Styles of Second-Generation Parents of Residential School  
Survivors Within Treaty 8 Reserves

by

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MEd, University of Portland, 2009

B.Ed., University of Alberta, 2004

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Public Health

Walden University

August 2018

## Abstract

Approximately 150,000 First Nation, Metis, and Inuit children attended Canadian residential schools from the 1840s to 1996. Most residential school children had negative experiences of physical, verbal, and sexual abuse that led to parenting repercussions once these children became parents. These repercussions of residential schools led to a rate of neglect for First Nation children 12 times higher than non-First Nation children. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological descriptive study was to explore the lived experiences of second generation parents, who were schooled in residential schools as children and their current parenting styles. The conceptual frameworks of trauma theory and family systems theory were used to understand the parenting styles of second-generation parents. Data were collected through one-on-one interviews with 20 second generation parents living within 10 Treaty 8 territory Woodland Cree reserves of Alberta, Canada. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded using NVivo10 software to determine common themes. The themes were little affection, too much alcohol and substance abuse, lack of positive reinforcement, an abundance of household chores, coparenting with extended family and friends, and spanking, revolving privileges, and yelling as forms of discipline. Social change may occur through better understanding of the parenting styles of second-generation parents. Recommendations include making levels of government aware of the need for a program to aid second-generation parents in healing from their past trauma and that First Nation curricula should include the history and legacy of residential schools to allow children and their parents to acknowledge the effects of colonialism on their lives today and, hopefully, to overcome them.

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## Dedication

To my loving, supporting, and dedicated husband who is a terrific parent to our two girls Evelina and Victoria, thank you for being my rock. To my parents who worked tirelessly all their lives so my brother and I could succeed in life, thank you. To my extended family and friends, who've supported me as a parent so I could reach my potential, thank you.

## Acknowledgements

For all the amazing parents that I met, doing the best they can every day for their children even through their dark history and sharing their stories with me. To my committee members Dr. Jeanne Connors (Chair) and Dr. Larissa Estes, thank you for your patience and guidance through my PhD dissertation journey. Most of all, Rupert Meneen my husband, best friend, life partner, advisor, and rock, for his understanding, patience, wisdom, support, encouragement, and pushing me to reach my full potential and believing in me.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Canada's First Nation population has a history of suffering under colonization. As a people, they have historically been subject to cultural and social assimilation, largely through the residential school system and other government programs (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development of Canada [AANDC], 2014). During the Canadian Indian Residential School period in Canada (1857-1996), more than 150,000 First Nation, Metis, and Inuit children were required to attend residential schools (AANDC, 2014).

Mandatory attendance in residential schools plucked children from their parents and their homes, placing them in distant locations where they were forced to live under foreign linguistic (English or French), cultural, and spiritual practices while being restricted from speaking their native tongues (Elias et al., 2012, & AANDC, 2014). Countless children were abused physically, mentally, sexually, and emotionally, leading to drug and alcohol abuse, family dysfunction, and lateral violence (Barnes, Josefowitz, & Cole, 2006). Residential school trauma lingers despite the last school having been shut down in 1996 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012).

Barnes et al. (2006) stated that because these First Nation children were sent to residential schools at such an early age, most former residential school students lacked appropriate parenting skills such as positive discipline and attachment skills when they eventually became parents themselves. Instead, they developed often problematic coping skills such as substance abuse to bury their traumatic memories (Barnes et al., 2006). As the residential school children grew up and had their own children, these second-

generation parents were also robbed of parenting skills due to their parents' trauma. Instead of positive parenting skills, their residential school parents unwittingly passed on destructive coping skills such as substance abuse (Barnes et al., 2006). The parents did not know how to emotionally connect with their children; instead, they developed unhealthy codependent relationships in addition to modeling destructive coping skills. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of second generational parents to learn how their parenting skills were affected by their parent's residential school experience. This study provides more information on parenting styles of second-generation parents and provides information to public health agencies that develop parenting programs.

This chapter includes an introduction to the problem and delineates specific linkages to residential school intergenerational trauma as related to the research questions presented, including relevant background information and a problem statement. The study and the research questions are then described and explained. What follows is a description of the conceptual framework, emphasizing the linkages of residential school trauma intergenerationally with families living on First Nation reserves. Details of the operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations also appear here. I also present the study's significance, including social change implications.

### **Background of the Study**

Traditionally, many First Nation families lived nomadically, moving from territory to territory depending on the season and the source of their food; this way of life drastically changed when European settlers arrived in Canada (Kirmayer, Brass, & Tait,

2000). Prior to their arrival, First Nation peoples lived holistic lives in which they balanced individual, familial, and communal interconnectedness through mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical practices (Carriere, 2005). Infectious disease, warfare, and the settlers' active suppression of First Nation culture and identity accelerated cultural change (Kirmayer et al., 2000).

Intergenerational effects exist where trauma from one generation may be transferred to the next generation. For example, Schick Morina, Klaghofer, Schnyder, and Müller (2013) state that the parents who experienced the Kosovo war in 1998/1999 had an increased prevalence of mental disorder such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression. The children of these parents suffered with mood and anxiety disorders, especially PTSD, and these characteristics were also seen in children with fathers who served in the gulf war (Schick et al., 2013). Interestingly, Caselli and Motta (1995) stated children of Vietnam veterans with PTSD had behaviour problems and that those problems rose due to trauma transference.

In similar situations, the Canadian government developed sedenterization policies for nomadic families and implemented a reserve system, relocating First Nation peoples to undesirable, isolated areas (Kirmayer et al., 2000). European settlers deemed First Nation peoples unable to contribute to broader society and that they could not be properly educated or pass on good, European values until they were "civilized" (Kirmayer et al., 2000).

In order to further "civilize" First Nation children, they were taken from their parents and placed in Canadian government-created, church-run, boarding schools called



residential schools (Kirmayer et al., 2000). According to Kirmayer et al. (2000), over 100,000 children were taken from their parents and were “subjected to institutional regimes that suppressed who they were as First Nation children” (p. 18). These residential schools were located far from the children’s home communities, where their parents had no contact with or influence on them (Kaspar, 2014). While isolated, the First Nation children’s language, culture, spiritual beliefs, and traditional norms were stripped away (Kaspar, 2014). The residential schools were not set up for First Nation student success as they were underfunded in comparison to public schools established for the settlers’ children. Furthermore, the residential school’s mandate was to take the “Indian” out of the First Nation child. Thus, further funding was not provided to educate students academically (Bombay Matheson, & Anisman, 2011).

Bombay et al. (2011) stated that many children were affected by the impoverished physical environment of their residential school and “adverse treatment leading to lifetime of trauma that is felt intergenerationally” (Bombay et al., 2011, p. 368). First Nation peoples descended from residential school students still feel the negative effects of these schools’ legacy through a cycle of trauma transmitted from generation to generation (Bombay et al., 2011). The negative effects include a “loss of culture, language and identity, including pride and a sense of kinship with other First Nation people” and this can be seen in former residential school students and their families as well as communities; the trauma and stress transfers from one generation to the next (Bombay et al., 2011, p. 7).

Research shows that residential schools have affected the children of those who attended the residential school. Elias et al. (2012) stated that history, along with age and having parent or parents who attended residential school, correlated to the offspring of the residential school survivor having suicidal thoughts and attempts. Additionally, Yellow Horse Brave Heart, Chase, Elkins, and Altschul (2011) described number of residential school survivors' offspring having problems with depression, substance abuse, interpersonal grief, and unresolved grief due to transference of residential school trauma from the survivors.

Many descendants of the survivors carry the burden of their parents' and grandparents' personal trauma, which manifested in compromised family systems, loss of culture, and loss of language (Milloy, 1999). Additionally, descendants of residential school survivors have an elevated incidence of depression and sensitivity to experiences of childhood adversity, adult trauma, and perceived discrimination (Bombay et al., 2011). Thus, this study enhances our understanding of second-generation parents of the residential school legacy's parenting styles.

### **Problem Statement**

Although the second-generation children who are now parents have been affected by the residential school legacy, no one has examined whether survivorship has affected parenting skills. But colonization and the residential school system's legacy continue to significantly shape First Nation family dynamics today. The intergenerational imprint on the families of residential school survivors puts them at risk and in crisis (Health Canada, 2015). Partridge (2010) and Dion Stout and Kipling (2003) stated that an investigation of

the residential school system's role and its impact on First Nation peoples' traditional knowledge and mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being needs to be conducted.

The Truth and Reconciliation of Canada panel, a commission formed through Canadian federal government's department of Truth and Reconciliation Commission Secretariat had a 5-year mandate to document the truth of Indian residential school experience (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012). However, literature and research on the residential school system's legacy fails to systematically assess the intergenerational linkage of the schools' adverse psychological effects and their legacy on the children of residential school survivors (Bombay et al., 2011). While the direct impacts on survivors are well known, how it has affected the descendants, family dynamics, and parenting styles today remains unclear. Therefore, it was important to identify the mechanisms whereby trauma and stress repeat across generations in order to intervene and preclude the intergenerational cycle.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the lived experiences of second generational parents and how their parenting skills were affected by their parent's residential school experience. The interested families of this study were the reserve First Nation families (Woodland Cree) of Treaty 8 territory. This territory in northern Alberta, Canada, was defined by an eighth treaty signed between the First Nations people and Queen Elizabeth of England in 1988 (Government of Canada, 2010). The sizes of reserves within the Treaty 8 area are different; some have a larger population

living on reserve and some smaller. Also, there are reserves that are situated in resource rich areas (e.g. oil and gas) that may influence provision of supplemental parenting programming that other reserves in resource poor areas may not have. Thus, the applied criteria focused on families living on reserves with a population of 250–500 and reserve communities within poor resource areas. The reserves within Treaty 8 territory used in the study were as follows: Beaver First Nation, Driftpile First Nation, Kapawe’no First Nation, Lubicon Lake Band, Peerless Trout First Nation, Swan River First Nation, Sucker Creek First Nation, Sturgeon First Nation, Tallcree Tribal Government, and Whitefish Lake (Atikamag) First Nation. These reserves are similar in their size, population, and the resources available within their reserve.

To mitigate the ongoing impact of the residential school legacy, it is important to understand the effects of the intergenerational trauma on First Nations. For example, Morrissette (1994) identifies a connection between residential school student abuse survivors and their parenting struggles. Former residential school students exhibit a high prevalence of negative lifestyle behaviours including tobacco, alcohol, and drug usage due to lack of parenting education, which has led to the abuse and neglect of children (Health Canada, 2016).

### **Nature of the Study**

A qualitative research method and phenomenological design was used to explore the lived experiences of second generational parents and how their parenting skills were affected by their parents’ residential school experience. Maxwell (2013) argues that choosing a study methodology must be done by examining the researcher’s topic or issue

and the research question. I chose a qualitative research method rather than quantitative because qualitative research is mostly done in a setting natural for participants rather than moving them to a different location (Patton, 2002). This method allowed the participants' responses to be studied holistically and with deeper meaning and understanding of them through one-on-one interviews (Patton, 2002). Additionally, as First Nation culture is rich in an oral storytelling tradition, a qualitative study was most useful. A qualitative study allowed me to study the population of interest in their natural setting to gain a deeper understanding of the legacy effects on the descendants of the residential school survivors.

I deemed a phenomenological design the most appropriate methodology for studying the lived experiences of second-generation parents of residential school survivors because a phenomenological study is focused on people's lived experiences and attempts to understand or portray an individual's experiences of a concept or phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004). This research design allows for a detailed description of what study participants have in common as they experience a specific event, concept, or phenomenon (Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). The lived experiences of second-generation parents and their family dynamics and parenting styles were highlighted in this phenomenological study. Groenewald (2004) points out that a phenomenology study describes, as realistically as possible, the lived experiences of people, leading to a deeper understanding of the social and psychological phenomena from the people who are experiencing it through their lived experiences.

## **Conceptual Framework**

In order to understand the residential school legacy phenomenon's impact on second-generation parents, I used trauma and family system theories as the conceptual framework. A conceptual framework is from theories or concepts identified through a literature review on the research topic that is not well known. The conceptual framework provides a basis for a possible course of action to better understand the phenomenon (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The conceptual framework further enhanced the study and gave it another layer by providing a cultural context, which supported further understanding of the lived experiences of second-generation adult children of First Nation residential school survivors and the intergenerational effects on parenting styles.

Residential survivors, as well as their offspring, have historical, social, and political stressors embedded in their personal experiences that have shaped them. I used the trauma theory to describe the innate ability of all people to heal with a focus on self-healing through holistic methods (George, 2010). Bowen's (1976) theory describes the family as an emotional unit or system that regulates the behaviour of its members. Bowen (1985) used the theory to imply that stress and anxiety in a family impacted by residential school legacy are associated with problematic symptoms that limit successful emotional functioning, and that unresolved emotional dysfunction is transitional from childhood through to later life relationships. The factors that influence family dynamics and parenting styles are subjective and vary based on the experience of the family; as such, a qualitative approach was best suited to explore the lived experience of families impacted by the residential school program.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following two research questions:

RQ1: What are the parenting experiences of second-generation adult children of First Nation residential school survivors?

RQ2: What are the intergenerational effects on parenting styles as a result of First Nation residential schools?

### **Assumptions**

I assumed that participants would answer the interview questions honestly and that the second-generation participants would be willing to talk about their parenting styles and how it may have been affected by their parents' residential school experience as they are interviewed. I assumed that the participants would be able to remember their childhood and be willing to share their stories and how their parents affected their own parenting styles. Lastly, I assumed that participants would be willing to discuss details of their current parenting styles and how it may impact the next generation of parents.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The focus of the study was on the second-generation families of residential school survivors of Treaty 8 territory of Alberta. The Treaty 6 and 7 territories of Alberta were not included in this study. The population involved in the current study was limited to the Woodland Cree First Nation descendants of Treaty 8 territory of Northern Alberta. Twenty participants of second-generation children of residential school survivors composed the sample for this study, where the families were from First Nation reserves of Treaty 8 area of Alberta that are similar in size, population, and resources. The reserve

communities for this study were Beaver First Nation, Driftpile First Nation, Kapawe'no First Nation, Lubicon Lake Band, Peerless Trout First Nation, Swan River First Nation, Sucker Creek First Nation, Sturgeon First Nation, Tallcree Tribal Government, and Whitefish Lake (Atikamag) First Nation.

### **Limitations**

Residential school experiences in Canada have been traumatic to most students who attended. Some of this trauma has been transferred to residential school students' children. By interviewing the children of residential school survivors on their parenting experience, trauma related to their parent's residential school experience may have been triggered. Thus, I recognized that some participants did not want to speak of their trauma or may have been retraumatized. If any negative experience was triggered there were measures built into the interview to support the participants, such as a referral to Native counseling center.

Due to the nature of this qualitative phenomenology study and the purpose of the study, the limitation was the sample size. However, the use of a small sample size allows for depth rather than breadth in the exploration of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Thus, due to the size and nature of the sample, the findings cannot be generalized across wider population such as the Treaty 6 and 7 populations of Alberta or Canada as a whole. Also, a disadvantage of qualitative research is deciphering the participants' meaning as not everyone understands the true meaning of what the study participant intended in their answers unless they themselves analyze the data (Patton, 2002).



### **Definition of Terms**

*Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development of Canada:* Also known as Indigenous Northern Affairs Canada (INAC; Weiss, 2015)

*First Generation:* The original generation that experienced residential school and were students in the residential schools (Elias et al., 2012)

*First Nation:* Single individual, single band, many bands, or Aboriginal governing body that is one of the three distinct groups recognized as “Aboriginal” in the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 (Assembly of First Nations, n.d.)

*Intergenerational effect:* Trauma experienced by residential school survivors that could be seen in the survivors’ offspring (Bombay et al., 2011, p.7).

*Reserve:* Land parcel set aside under the Indian Act and treaty agreement for exclusive use of a First Nation band (Kirmayer et al., 2000)

*Residential school:* Government sponsored religious schools established to assimilate First Nation students into European culture between 1860 to early 1980s (Lafrance & Collins, 2003)

*Residential school survivor:* First Nation students who attended Canadian government-sponsored religious schools and are currently living today (Barnes et al., 2006)

### **Significance of the Study**

This study was designed to address the lack of research on lived experiences of second-generation adult children of residential school survivors. Specifically, the study was designed to address the under-researched area of the residential school legacy’s

intergenerational effects on parenting styles of second generation parents living on reserves and in cities. It is possible that the findings may have certain implications for other families of the residential school legacy in a reserve within Treaty 8 territory of Alberta.

This study is significant because it assesses the intergenerational vulnerability of children of residential school survivors who are parents today (Bombay et al., 2011). This research study generated information that will aid health, education, and social service providers in enhancing their current service delivery to better support the needs of First Nation families. Positive social change implications may include the expansion of current holistic wellness treatment to first generation residential school program participants to include their children.

New information and insight about the residential school legacy for second-generation parents contributes to social change by informing the design of specifically targeted intervention and appropriate treatment planning for First Nation families. This study provides a foundation for future research on the second-generation families impacted by residential school legacy. Additionally, the study may lead to the development of intervention programs to better support second-generation families in areas of mental wellness and healthy families.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, Canada's First Nation population has had to overcome many different adversities throughout history. Along with remote geography, isolation, and Northern Alberta's extremely cold temperatures, Tallcree Tribal Government First Nation

families have had other significant challenges such as the impact of the residential school legacy. Tallcree Tribal government families have the added historical adversity of the residential school system. The Canadian government developed the residential school system and First Nation children were removed from their families and their familiar environment. A regimented and structured system, most children were forbidden to speak their languages or practice their cultural traditions. Many children were abused and carried that burden with them into adulthood; some dealt with their memories through alcohol and substance abuse, while others struggled to cope with their memories, and inadvertently passed on their harsh experiences to their children, leading to parenting difficulties.

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of second generation parents and how their parenting skills were affected by their parents' residential school experience. In this a qualitative phenomenological study, I set out to inquire of second generation adult parents who were children of residential school survivors about their parenting styles and how the residential school legacy may have impacted those styles. Upcoming chapters elaborate on parenting styles of adult parents who were children of residential school survivors. Chapter 1 portrayed an overview of the study and insight into the theoretical base and methodology used for the study. Chapter 2 presents a review of current literature, and Chapter 3 includes the methodology used to collect and analyze the data needed to answer the research questions.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

This study's purpose was to explore the lived experiences of second-generation parents and their parenting styles impacted by residential school legacy. Several studies identify residential school survivors' descendants as having higher incidences of depression and sensitivity to experiences such as childhood adversity, adult trauma, and perceived discrimination (Bombay et al., 2011). The review began by exploring different search criteria for exploring the conceptual framework and the methodology used to support this qualitative inquiry. What follows is a review of the current literature on how residential school legacy that can affect residential school survivors' second-generation parents, literature on theory, and literature on peripheral topics of parenting.

### **Search Criteria**

Journals, Public Health organization and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, books, and personal communications were used as sources with which conduct the inquiry. For my search I employed the following databases: ERIC, EBSCOhost, MEDLINE, and CINAHL with full text. Keywords and phrases included *residential school, residential school legacy, residential school residue, residential school intergenerational trauma, residential school intergenerational effects, residential school survivors, residential school First Nations, and residential school cultural genocide*. I selected only articles presenting sound science and compelling arguments on the impact of the residential school system on parenting styles for the review.

The data presented in this review was analyzed using a literature matrix that outlines each article's research question, methodology and research design, sample, analysis and findings, and recommendations for future research. As the topic of parenting styles of second-generation parents who were children of residential school survivors is under-studied, periodicals pertaining to second generation parenting of war veterans (e.g., Vietnam war veterans) and families of holocaust survivors were also reviewed.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Trauma theory and family system theory provide a framework for understanding how families are affected by trauma and how those families develop a family system (Haefner, 2014; Mollica, 2006). While research on parenting styles of residential school survivors exists, there is little research on the residential school legacy's second-generation parents. The residential school experience has far reaching effects, and parenting has been directly impacted.

The history of First Nation people in Canada is traumatic in nature, including intergenerational trauma resulting from both colonization and the residential schools (Bombay et al., 2009). Mollica (2006) describes trauma theory as all people's innate ability to heal and focuses on self-healing through holistic methods. First Nation peoples' holistic culture focuses on physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of well-being. Mollica (2006) also describes trauma theory as emphasizing self-healing through spirituality, humor, physical exercise, relaxation, and good nutrition. Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen (2004) stated that to understand historical trauma, a person needs to understand trauma's transference mechanism across generations. The trauma that the

residential school survivors experienced extends to posttraumatic stress disorder where there are symptoms of numbing, anger, rage, major depression, anxiety disorder, alcohol, and drug abuse. Some symptoms, if not all, have been transferred to the second-generation residential parents, affecting their parenting styles.

Trauma theory can explain how massive, cumulative trauma across generations is inherited generation to generation via intergenerational transference (Bombay et al., 2009). Yellow Horse Brave Heart (2003) uses trauma theory to attribute current First Nation trauma to intergenerational transference of residential school trauma. However, thus far, a culturally based trauma theory has not yet been developed. A trauma theory that is culturally congruent considers First Nation historical trauma of colonization and residential school as well as continual trauma transference of the various historical traumas from one generation to another. First Nation families lost what it meant to be a First Nation family with forced assimilation and cumulative losses over generations that have included language, culture, and spirituality. These losses led to the breakdown of First Nation family systems (Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2003). The continuation of unresolved grief of residential school survivors and the current psychosocial conditions that First Nation people endure all contribute to ongoing intergenerational trauma. Yellow Horse Brave Heart (2003) states that the First Nation responses to this historical trauma have manifested in high mortality rates due to alcoholism, suicide, homicide, poor health conditions, substance abuse, and poor mental health.

The caregivers at residential schools abused many First Nation students (Bombay et al., 2009), and the abuse came from caregivers who were central to a student's

wellbeing. As such, the trauma these students suffered heightened their distress and threatened the attachment bond (Smith, Varcoe, & Edwards, 2005). When there is an abusive trauma between a caregiver and a child, there is a threat to the attachment bond between the two (Smith et al., 2005). As a result, the victims portray isolating behaviour due to their memories of abuse, and their dissociative tendencies are enhanced (Smith et al., 2005). Isolating behaviours that manifest as coping mechanisms for dealing with traumatic memories include substance abuse, alcoholism, and other means to try to forget the experience. As dissociative tendencies increase, the bonds of a family system are challenged.

When a person experiences trauma there are symptoms that can be seen in a person's behaviour and attitude. However, the traumatic experience itself is generally not spoken about. Zaleski, Johnson, and Klein (2016) state that trauma is generally an unspeakable secret that most people divert attention from. When a person experiences trauma, it triggers a vicious cycle that may never find resolution. A prolonged and chronic trauma, such as the residential school legacy, involves a history of subjection to totalitarian control that leads to many by-products of mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual destruction that ultimately shatters family, friendship, and community attachments (Zaleski et al., 2016). Trauma theory, then, supports the understanding of residential school legacy's impact on second generation parenting styles.

Haefner (2014) states that Bowen's family system theory consists of interlocking states. The theory describes the family as the system's emotional unit, responsible for regulating its members' behaviour. Family systems theory asserts that stress and anxiety

within a family impact the relationships between family members (Bowen, 1985).

Whitbeck et al. (2004) describe how family system theory can be applied to First Nation families through an example of a Holocaust family. Holocaust survivors who became parents had high expectations of their children; however, they had difficulties rearing adolescent children because of their childhood experiences (Whitbeck et al., 2004). The parents also had problems with parent-child boundaries, as well as in expressing emotions (Whitbeck et al., 2004). The Holocaust's second-generation parents were overly dependent on their children and had difficulty expressing their emotions (Whitbeck et al., 2004). Thus, individuals who have suffered traumatic stress generate vulnerability in their children who in turn experience their trauma.

When a member of a family system carries intergenerational trauma, it alters their functioning role in the family; the family balance is disturbed. Feinberg, Solmeyer, and McHale (2012) and Shalash, Wood, and Parker (2013) stated that when the balance of a family system is disturbed, development of important family relationship skill-building is jeopardized. Ackerman, Kashy, Donnellan, & Conger (2011) found that there is a linear relationship between family members' positive behaviour and the success of future relationships. Modeling positive behaviour between family members significantly influenced the supportive response between family members, regardless of their family role. Thus, when there is intergenerational trauma and a family member is affected, disturbing the balance of their family system, the outcomes for that family will likely be negative.



A fundamental construct of family systems theory is differentiation of self, where individuals navigate a healthy balance between independence and togetherness with other family members (Jankowski & Hopper, 2012; Mehri, Salari, Langroudi, & Baharamizadeh, 2011). Bowen (1976) stated that a differentiated self has the capacity to deal with anxiety and conflict in a thoughtful manner, rather than a reactive manner. Jankowski and Hopper (2012) found that poorly developed self-differentiation in the family of origin correlates with increased difficulty to form healthy relationships beyond it. Thus, when family systems are not balanced, the effects of the residential school legacy's intergenerational transference continue with future generations.

When by-products of trauma (e.g., alcohol and substance abuse) are included in a family system, there is an imbalance. Alcohol abuse is a mechanism that leads to increased levels of anxiety, which in turn leads to interpersonal, emotional, and social consequences for all family members (Lechner et al., 2014; Mann et al., 2012). Casswell, You, and Huckle (2011) stated that parental alcoholism is associated with inconsistent parenting, abuse or neglect, and the involvement of local child protection agencies. Thus, the vicious cycle of residential school legacy, where First Nation children are taken away from their families, continues due to the breakdown of family systems.

### **Phenomenology**

First Nation peoples have a strong oral culture, and to capture the essence of this qualitative study on the residential school legacy's second-generation parents, a phenomenology study was the most appropriate methodology. Phenomenology study is used to understand real and lived experiences of people by looking at key characteristics

that can be categorized by being the same or different. Groenewald (2004) states that a phenomenology study's true aim is to "describe accurately as possible the phenomenon.... remaining true to the fact" (p.44). The key word for a phenomenology study is "describe." For example, Hall (2006) used a phenomenology study to examine the thoughts and feeling of mothers suffering from postpartum depression. Hall (2006) used unstructured, open-ended interviews to encourage participants to speak openly and descriptively about their experiences, allowing the researcher to clarify when needed. Using a phenomenology study to gather detailed, in-depth data about the residential school legacy, the goal was to give participants a better understanding of their lived experiences.

### **Historical and Contemporary Trauma Endured by First Nations People**

Stressful events should be contextualized regarding long-standing traumas because they dramatically affect the person experiencing the stress, as well their offspring. Historically, Canada's First Nation peoples have endured extensive trauma and stressors. Stressors can occur in either a cataclysmic size, or a small size stemming from day to day hassles, a lack of control, unpredictability of events, or other psychological factors.

For example, one of the first stressors, due to the unpredictability of events, occurred at first contact between Europeans and First Nation peoples in Canada. Colonization of First Nation peoples began in the 16th century, starting with European and First Nation interaction through fur trade and missionary activities that focused on saving the "savages" through religious conversions (Bombay et al., 2009). The Royal

Proclamation signing in 1763 resulted in treaties that created reserves; and also held an agreement for hunting, fishing, and trapping land rights (Bombay et al., 2009). Since 1763, the Canadian government has developed policies such as the Indian Act (1867) that outlined the requirements to achieve Treaty Indian status (Bombay et al., 2009). First Nation peoples were forced to comply with many different government policies while their Treaty rights were diminished throughout the years. Furthermore, First Nation peoples did not have any civil rights (i.e. Voting rights or women's rights) (Bombay et al., 2009). One policy that restricted free choice and robbed First Nation peoples of control over their lives was the implementation of the residential school system.

Historical trauma was not just experienced by Canada's First Nations people. The American Indians have also suffered similar historical trauma as they were also forced to attend boarding schools with a similar framework to Canadian residential schools. According to Whitbeck et al. (2004) intergenerational trauma transference also exists within the present generation of American Indian populations who, too, have suffered historical losses of their culture, language, and identity. These historical losses are associated with negative feelings of anger and depression that need to be reconciled (Whitbeck et al., 2004). Without reconciliation, the historical trauma interrupts optimal functioning and influences parenting styles (Whitbeck et al., 2004).

The influence of historical trauma also exists among Holocaust survivors; intergenerational impacts of the Holocaust have also been studied (Whitbeck et al., 2004). Survivor syndrome consists of denial, depersonalization, isolation, somatization, memory loss, agitation, anxiety, guilt, depression, intrusive thoughts, nightmares psychic

numbing, and survivor guilt; all of which impinge intergenerationally, affecting parenting styles and resulting in symptomatic offspring (Whitbeck et al., 2004). Notably, Whitbeck et al., 2004 state that while the Holocaust event was captured in a single catastrophic period, the historical trauma and loss are still present and ongoing for Canadian First Nation people.

In addition to residential school historical trauma and loss, an added trauma and loss pertains to colonization. Fast and Collin-Vezina (2010) mention that before the European settlers arrived, First Nation people governed themselves and had their own economic systems for ensuring self-sufficiency. Before colonization then, First Nation peoples did not perceive the concept of owning land, they believed that the land belonged to everyone and it was not a claimable possession (Fast & Collin-Vezina, 2010). Thus, when colonization occurred and Europeans started claiming land and marking off their land, First Nation peoples were moved to parcels declared by the government as reserves. Reserve creation, then, started the historical trauma as First Nation peoples were forced to settle on land they may or may not have been familiar with, for many ending their nomadic way of living (Fast & Collin-Vezina, 2010).

### **Residential School System**

The Canadian residential school system began in 1867 when the Canadian government developed and implemented a policy to take the “Indian out of a child” through Christian teachings (Sellers, 2012, Manitoba Trauma Information and Education Centre, 2016 & Barnes et al., 2006). To remove the “Indian out of a child,” children were periodically taken from their parents and their familiar home environments. Some

“lucky” children were able to attend day school, but most children spent a long time away from their parents and were gone months or even years (Manitoba Trauma Information and Education Centre, 2016). For example, one residential school survivor describes her experience: “We were incarcerated for no other reason than being Indian. We were deprived of the care, love, and guidance of our parents during our most critical years of childhood. The time we could have learned the critical parenting skills and values was lost to the generations that attended residential schools, the effects of which still haunt us and will continue to have impacted upon our people and communities. In many instances, our models were the same priests and nuns who were our sexual predators and perpetrators” (Kelly, 2008, p. 24).

For many residential school children, the abuse and disconnection from the conditions necessary for health and wellbeing perpetrated through the residential school system produced profound and wide-ranging effects. From 1876 to 1996, there were about 130 residential schools in Canada. In 1996, the last school shut down (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 2016). Some of the schools are still standing, while others have been destroyed.

At the residential school, all children were stripped of the clothes they arrived in and were given uniforms and shoes. The uniforms and shoes were recycled and when they became too worn out, a “lucky” child received new items; however, this was not a good sign because as soon as a child received something new at residential school, they were ridiculed and bullied by their peers (Sellars, 2012). Then if a child (boy or girl) arrived with long hair (usually braided), they were taken for a haircut where it was

common practice to shave heads (Morrisette, 1994 & Sellars, 2012). For the First Nation peoples, hair has cultural, ceremonial significance that direct linkage to one's physical, and spiritual health and wellness. When children were forced to have their hair cut as soon as they entered residential school, their health and wellness diminished spiritually and physically. The children were forbidden to speak their native languages or practice their cultural traditions and customs. The children were completely robbed of their identities: even their names were replaced by a number they were associated with while they were at the residential school (Sellars, 2012).

Even before the last school shut down, countless stories came out about the physical, psychological, verbal, and sexual abuse, as well as the deplorable living conditions (Morrisette, 1994). Quality, nutritious foods were scarce at the residential schools and the main staple was watered down porridge (Food Security Canada, n.d. & Morrisette, 1994). First Nation children who were raised on wild game, berries, and other traditional foods were forced to eat a diet of foreign and poor quality European cuisine. Because the children were underfed and undernourished, they became sick and disease was an inevitable reality. More than 4000 First Nation children died while attending residential schools (Food Security Canada, n.d.).

When residential school students went home for visits for a month or two for holidays, most could not adjust to the life and language on the reserve. Many forgot their traditional, cultural ways of life and eating; they could not "cut up caribou meat, moose meat, work with fish and speak the language" (Daschuk, 2013, p. 103). The residential school children soon became alienated from their parents and grandparents, as so many

things had become foreign at home. Due to this alienation and cultural confusion, as well as the physical reality of being raised by largely uncaring nuns and priests, parenting skills were not transferred to residential school children (Morrisette, 1994).

### **Effects of Residential Schools on Parenting**

For generations, residential school children were robbed of their identities and the opportunity to acquire parental skills; they were raised with punitive authority rather than traditional First Nation parenting (Morrisette, 1994). Without familial models or exemplars to emulate good parenting skills, and with only dysfunctional relationships modeled at their residential schools, residential school children grew into troubled adults with no idea how to parent (Morrisette, 1994). The residential school survivors who became parents suffer with parenting difficulties because their impressionable years were filled with confusing, and often conflicting, information on parenting. If physical punishment is what they experienced at the residential schools as children, that was the same kind of punishment they doled out to their own children – they never learned another way. And because traditional First Nation parenting is not punitive, many First Nation parents feel guilty for disciplining their children with violence. Residential school children perceived punitive punishment from residential school nuns and priests as non-caring, devoid of affection, and as such, many residential school children became emotionally paralyzed parents (Morrisette, 1994).

Often, residential school survivors took to numbing their painful memories through substance abuse and other self-destructive behaviours, which, as parents, negatively impacted their children. In a vicious cycle, then, the children of residential

school children were apprehended for (what was claimed to be) their safety by child and family services. Rather than relocating children to kinship homes on the reserve, these children were taken and placed in foster families with non-First Nation people. The majority of these foster parents lacked any knowledge or training in First Nation history, culture, or customs. By having non-First Nation foster parents, the children in care were further separated from their cultural identities. Due to the history of the residential school, and subsequent cycle of family dysfunction where children were apprehended, many First Nation parents are overly protective of their children (Morrisette, 1994).

### **Traditional Parenting**

The traditional European and First Nation parenting styles differed in many ways. One of the differences was that First Nation parents did not practice corporal punishment; rather they gave a single reprimand in a non-punitive and positive way (Morrisette, 1994 & Hall, 1991). Traditionally, First Nation parents disciplined their children by tracking their interests and refocusing the children's negative behaviours to something they are interested in without force (Morrisette, 1994 & McDonald, 1991). First Nation parents had a substantial interest in the education of their children, especially in areas of learning from, and surviving off, the land. However, First Nation parents were discouraged from having an interest or being involved in their children's education within the residential school program. First Nation parents were often unable to travel to residential schools because they were far away, and transportation was an issue, as many parents did not have vehicles or money to visit their children. If First Nation parents refused to send their



children to residential school, then their food ration vouchers and treaty money were withheld (Food Security Canada, n.d.).

Another parenting difference was that First Nation parents reared their children with extended family such as their grandparents, while European families were nuclear units of father, mother, and their children. Thus, many First Nation children who attended residential school missed out on traditional parenting models and First Nation traditional parenting styles were not passed on to future generations. Many generations of residential school children lost their sense of identity, opportunity to acquire parental skills, and were taught nontraditional “parenting” of punitive authority (Lafrance & Collins, 2003). The children did not have familial models or exemplars to emulate good parenting skills. What they had were models of dysfunctional relationships at their residential schools. Their young and impressionable, formative years of childhood were filled with confusing and often conflicting information on parenting, and this experience, in turn, created incredible conflict and difficulty when they became parents themselves (Lafrance & Collins, 2003).

### **Gaps In Previous Research and Coverage of Current Study**

There is currently little research assessing the intergenerational trauma effects in First Nation people, and there is limited data demonstrating a process of trauma being transferred from one generation to another. However, a study on intergenerational transmission of eating attitudes and behaviours reflects how intergenerational trauma may be transmitted. Baker, Whisman and Brownell’s (2000) study on parental belief and behaviours related to eating and weight examined how children learned from their parents

and internalized their values and attitudes. When there is intergenerational transmission, then, parents are not actively or directly influencing how their child(ren) will behave; however, the child(ren)'s behaviour is influenced by their perception of their parent's belief and behaviours (Baker et al., 2000).

As one grows from baby to adulthood, they experience many different things from their immediate family and their environment (Bowen, 1976). From their experiences, they develop their values and who they are and influence the decisions that they make. These influences are then passed on to their children as the children develop their values (Baker et al., 2000). The Legacy of Hope Foundation (2015) describes the intergenerational trauma that is passed from one generation to the next, where unresolved trauma in ways of mental health and well-being is passed to future generations. Many First Nation children, through the residential school system, lived many months away from their families in government or church institutions. Thus, First Nation traditional parenting skills were not transferred from their parents; instead, children learned adapted abusive behaviours from residential school facilitators that led to intergenerational trauma (Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2015). As residential school students grew up and became parents they became like military sergeants very structured like the residential school system and most used physical discipline. Residential school children were taught a certain way to do things like folding towels, and this was passed on to their children and if it was not "correctly" there was physical discipline that was seen as correction of a negative behaviour not child abuse (Stout & Peters, 2011).

Morrisette (1994) states that parenting has been directly affected by the residential school legacy, and the effects will continue to impact many generations of First Nation families; particularly given that many grandparents are currently raising their grandchildren. Since First Nation culture and language have been suppressed through residential school, First Nation elders are often unable to guide younger generations in search of their identities. Additionally, due to lack of parenting teachings and role modeling, many First Nation parents currently struggle with generational boundaries, behaviour expectations, and limits from their offspring. As a result, some parents are very restrictive pushing their children away and severing relationships, while others are too relaxed and their children dictate over their life. Many of these parenting issues existed with residential school survivors and are well documented, and these issues have been passed down to the next generation of parents; however, clear linkages have not been documented and are less clear (Stout & Peters, 2011). Historical and contemporary traumas leading to intergenerational effects have not been extensively examined (Bombay et al., 2009). These resulting consequences (mental health issues, loss of culture and language, loss of identity and pride, and loss of kinship) have not been fully evaluated (Bombay et al., 2009).

While there are few studies pertaining to historical trauma and transference to survivors' offspring, the concepts of historical trauma and unresolved historical grief of trauma survivors has been well studied. However, a lack of empirical information exists regarding prevalence or characteristics of either historical trauma impacts on survivors' offspring or the mechanism of trauma transference from one generation to another

(Whitbeck et al., 2004). Whitbeck et al., 2004 found that perceptions of historical loss lead to emotional responses typically associated with anger, avoidance, anxiety, and depression; however, a gap remains in linkages between psychological characteristics and perceived loss of First Nation culture, language, and customs. Additionally, the association of historical trauma symptoms and its impacts on a trauma survivor's offspring's day-to-day life has not been well studied (Whitbeck et al., 2004). Thus, the literature lacks an understanding on the degree of historical trauma impact of the residential school experience on optimal life functioning in general, how it influences parenting styles, or how it contributes to maladaptive behaviours (Whitbeck et al., 2004).

LaFrance and Collins (2003) agree that the residential school system has a far-reaching effect on First Nation culture and family structure. Many students were deprived of valuable opportunities to experience family life, and many grew up having no clear concept of appropriate parenting behaviour or traditional family functions. According to LaFrance and Collins (2003), "Residential school effectively destroyed the intergenerational transmission of family and parenting knowledge and behaviour" (p.121). Because First Nation culture is largely oral, transmission of parent-child attachment behaviour has been disrupted, creating further parenting problems for as much three generations (LaFrance & Collins, 2003). Arguably, due to residential school history, one or more generations after the residential school era are not prepared for parenting.

### **Intergenerational Trauma**

The generational interchange, specifically from parent to child, is often described as intergenerational trauma where effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation (Bombay et al., 2009). When there is a stressful event, there are many different reactions that occur within the body without notice. The reactions can be physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual and often remain hidden until released unwittingly. Bombay et al., (2009) state that stressful events could affect one's well-being by influencing appraisal processes, coping methods, lifestyles, parental behaviours, as well as behavioural and neuronal reactivity that can have lasting repercussions on physical and psychological health. The effects can be immediate, but there can also be intergenerational consequence where the effects of the stressful event are transferred to offspring and future generations (Bombay et al., 2009)

The stressful event can be a trauma at a personal level, such as a car accident, or a collective level, such as war or natural disasters. According to Bombay et al. (2009) considerable evidence shows the effects of trauma being transmitted across generations, affecting the children and grandchildren of those that were initially victimized. The occurrence of an intergenerational trauma transfer from one generation's child maltreatment can favor the occurrence of child maltreatment in the next generation. Additionally, trauma transmission can occur through inadequate role modeling; children learn vicariously by observing and imitating their parents. Children who experience violence growing up have been seen to favor violence when they become parents themselves (Bombay et al., 2009). Identifying potential mediators of trauma's

intergenerational effects is of special interest in the healing process, wherein nothing can be done to alter the past, but interventions by critical mediators might lessen the impact across generations.

### **Parent Trauma History and Child Adjustment**

Parent trauma may affect children's adjustment through their parenting behaviour and secondary trauma mechanisms; which is the emotional duress that one feels when they learn of first hand trauma. Hilarski (2004), in a review of secondary trauma, found that a youth's exposure to family members' trauma and subsequent trauma response was strongly related to both posttraumatic stress and the likelihood of substance abuse. When children are exposed to parent trauma and their parent's negative parent response to it, the children's mental health and adjustment are negatively impacted (Stout & Peters, 2011). For example, due to unresolved trauma some residential school students delivered physical discipline of child abuse on their children, their children in turn come to a conclusion that violence was normal and it is normal not to hug their children.

The effects of parent trauma may affect children's adjustment to who they are in the society either directly or indirectly. Koverola et al. (2005) found that how a parent responds to trauma relates directly to the child's internalizing and externalizing behaviour problems and their socialization. When parents experience trauma in their childhood and adult life, they tend to have harsher parenting practices like always being angry and hitting their children, and their children show more externalizing and internalizing behavioural problems (Dubowitz et al., 2001). Thus, there is a cyclic relation of

intergenerational trauma where one generation's parental practices are transferred to the next generation due to their experiences.

### **Summary**

A major recurring theme in the literature is that the Canadian residential school system has made a lasting impact on the First Nation families. First Nation families have been exposed to violence and stress through the traumatic events of residential schools. The traditional model of the First Nation family and its parenting styles has been forever changed, and many First Nation families are working toward finding a balance between the historical and cultural context of parenting (Lafrance & Collins, 2003).

The second recurring theme is that the First Nation families retain memories of residential school experiences in their everyday life (Stout & Peters, 2011). The children who attended residential schools grow up to have a parenting style that reflects residential school regiments. The residential schools' intergenerational legacy is then cycled through different generations as family trauma; largely because the residential school trauma has not been treated and is then passed on to the new generation.

The third recurring theme is that healing needs to occur in First Nation families (Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 1999). When residential school children became parents, many emotionally distanced themselves from their children as means of coping with their trauma. Some created emotional distance through substance abuse while others became workaholics, both resulting in absentee parenting. However, these coping strategies, often exacerbated the distance, resulting in anger and violence in First Nation families.

This study fills in the current literature's gap and extends the knowledge of the residential school legacy's impact on second-generation adult parents. This study explores the lived experiences of second generational parents and how their parenting skills have been affected by their parents' residential school experience. As a phenomenological study, it reviews and analyzes residential school survivors' second-generation parenting styles.



## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of the residential school system's second-generation parents and how their parenting skills have been affected by their parents' residential school experience. For this study I used a qualitative phenomenological research design, seeking to reveal the essential meaning of the phenomena under study and to identify the phenomena as they were perceived by the participants in the situation (Hall, 2006). The preceding chapter focused on the current literature on the residential school legacy's impacts, the transference of trauma, and how the residential school legacy affected parenting styles. The literature review revealed a need for continued research to understand the trauma transference phenomena with second generation parents who are the offspring of residential school survivors, and how it affected their parenting styles. In this chapter, I outline the research methodology used to examine this phenomenon, the context of the study, the participant selection process, the role of the primary investigator, the measures taken to protect all study participants, and the data collection and analysis procedures.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

In this study, I used descriptive phenomenological methods to understand the phenomenon of lived experiences of second-generation parents and how their parenting skills have been affected by their parents' residential school experience. The research questions that guided the study are as follows:

RQ1: What are the parenting experiences of the second-generation adult children of First Nation residential school survivors?

RQ2: What are the intergenerational effects on parenting styles as a result of First Nation residential schools?

The most appropriate research design is one that examines different factors that contribute to the findings. Thus, a phenomenology study was the most appropriate methodology for inquiry into the effects of the residential school legacy on second generation parents' parenting styles because a phenomenological researcher describes lived experiences and attempts to unfold meanings of those everyday lived experiences (Patton, 2002; Reiners, 2012). Phenomenological study reflects the lived experiences of participants through, for example, one-on-one interviews to collect stories. For this study, I analyzed data collected from such interviews and drew out common themes. The topic of parenting styles of second generation parents is a phenomenon that needs to be better described so that there is a better understanding of what people have experienced.

Additionally, the process of phenomenological research is inductive and not theory driven, which allowed me to seek evidence as to what is happening currently due to the phenomenon. There are different types of phenomenological research approaches, but for this study, I used a descriptive phenomenology developed by Husserl (1970).

My goal with this qualitative research study was to learn more about the lived experiences of second generation parents' parenting styles as a result of the residential school legacy's historical trauma experienced by their parents. Husserl (1970) stated that descriptive phenomenological study supports researchers in obtaining rich, detailed

descriptions of a participant's worldview or life-world. Additionally, descriptive phenomenology provides a platform for the discovery of common experiences and universal themes within the sample population (Husserl, 1970).

However, I was cognizant in my research of the assumption that the participants had insight into their own experiences. Gee, Loewenthal, and Cayne (2013) stated that in order to enable participants to describe their true, lived experiences, they must be encouraged to think of moments in time: memories, imagination, and emotion. In order to access the true recollection or lived experience of a phenomenon, it was important to help participants remember and return to their experience of the phenomena as they lived it. Hence, the goal of descriptive phenomenology is to reveal what is known to the knower (participant) by intentionally directing their focus to develop a description of particular relatives and to allow the participants to recollect their lived experiences to reveal what is meaningful to them (Husserl, 1970; Moustakas, 1990).

### **Role of the Researcher**

There are many differences in the role of the researcher; they are determined by the type of phenomenology study that is implemented. The researcher needs to be cognizant of their bias, judgment, and personal beliefs about the phenomenon in the research scope. I live, work, and play within Treaty 8 territory and know a number of people, which means I likely have unknown biases. In order to address the issue of possible bias, I used a descriptive phenomenological process called bracketing (Husserl, 1970). Lavery (2003) describes bracketing as a process of suspending judgment or particular belief about a phenomenon in order to see it clearly.

I bracketed out my bias in order to hear the true story from the research participants. A strategy I used to do this began with self-reflection on my bias of what is and what could be, and identifying what my belief or beliefs were with regard to a particular phenomenon, which I then acknowledged and set aside so that the true phenomenon could be understood (Tufford, 2014). These reflections were written in my field study journal as a reference so that I was aware of my personal biases and assumptions, which enabled me to proceed without preconceived ideas about the research outcome (Tufford, 2014).

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

Reid, Flowers, and Larkin (2005) recommend five to 25 participants for a phenomenological study. This phenomenological study included 20 participants and was conducted on the Treaty 8 reserves with similar qualities of population and resources. The participants consisted of First Nation parents who identify as second-generation parents, meaning that their parents attended residential schools. I recruited 20 First Nation parents to participate from various reserves with populations around 800 to 1,500 where economic resources do not impact the reserve. Participants who met the research criteria were recruited by posting flyers in community centers (i.e. band office) and through social media (i.e. Facebook). Interviews were ceased once saturation was met, with no new themes emerging (Romney, Barcheleder, & Weller, 1986). In order to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, the names of the reserve communities where the First Nation participants are from are not used.

### **Sampling Strategy**

I used purposeful sampling as the sampling strategy for this study. Purposeful sampling is a strategic method that Patton (2002) described as selecting participants with the most information that fit the research participant's criteria. A purposeful sampling strategy was a relevant method to use for this study because it has relevance to the conceptual framework, as well as the potential to provide rich information and results (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

Another option for sampling is the criterion sampling strategy where the researcher has the control to determine differences as well as similarities (Patton, 2002). Snowballing sampling strategy was also used in which interested participants suggested other participants that they knew who might have been interested in participating in the study (Patton, 2002). However, purposeful sampling was the primary strategy, which allowed me to identify and select information-rich participants with limited resources and capacity. Thus, purposeful sampling techniques were used to identify participants who were currently parents and who had parents who attended residential schools.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrumentation for data collection was an interview protocol based on Institutional Review Board (IRB) principles (University of Vermont, Research Protections Office, 2012). The interview questions included a standard set of demographic questions. I used demographic questions from Canadian National Health Survey and the U.S. Behavioural Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2016). Establishing an interview

protocol was necessary to map out the interview structure and to determine the scripts and prompts that reminded me as the interviewer about important items (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Interview procedures were strategic to effectively engage participants and encourage them to provide rich data that contained useful information (Maxwell, 2013). Examples of interview strategies that were used to build rapport with participants and make them comfortable are as follows (Jacobs & Schimmel, 2013):

1. welcoming and conversational tone of voice as well as paying attention to the participants' physical comforts of room temperature and availability of refreshments such as water, coffee, and snacks;
2. appropriate use of eye contact, as many First Nation individuals feel uncomfortable with direct eye contact;
3. keeping a respectful distance to set personal boundaries;
4. empathetic response;
5. open-ended questions and appropriate use of probes.

Additionally, as part of the interview protocol, open-ended interview questions were developed to ask in a semistructured way. The interview questions remained the same for each participant, but there was room for new ideas to emerge from set framework of themes (see Appendix A for the interview protocol).

### **Pilot Study**

To enhance the validity of the qualitative research instruments, I implemented a pilot study. A pilot study established validity on the research instruments as well as assess relevance of the interview questions (Kim, 2010; van Teijlingen & Hundley,

2002). Generally, a pilot study is a small-scale feasibility study of the research study (Kim, 2010). Kim (2010) states that it can provide insights to issues and barriers related to recruiting potential participants, build cultural awareness to implement research in a culturally appropriate way, and create awareness to the epoch process.

Five parents were recruited who met the study criteria to assure validity and reliability of study questionnaire. The recruitment, data collection, and data analysis of the pilot study mirrored the main study; therefore, the data collected from this pilot study was also used as part of the main study. Generally, data collected from pilot study is not used within the main study; however, as this study will have a very limited pool of people meeting the inclusion criteria, the data collected from the pilot study was included. Additionally, in order to use the pilot study data, the pilot study participants were told upfront they were participating in the pilot study and that data collected from the pilot study would be used in the actual study. Full consent process was implemented with the pilot study participants and IRB approval was in place prior to the pilot study. The Walden University IRB approval number was 04-10-17-0264779.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Because this study pertains to human subjects, recruiting study participants and their interviews could not be implemented without a proper protocol approved by Walden University's IRB (Dalby, Calais, & Berg, 2011). IRB is an independent ethics committee, which approves, monitors, and reviews research that includes human subjects for potential harm. After IRB approval, participants were recruited through flyers in First Nation reserve common areas of Treaty 8.

The interested participants for this qualitative research contacted me via telephone or email through the information given in the flyers posted in the First Nation reserve band offices and the health center. First Nation band offices and health centers are selected as areas where the flyer was posted because these are the common areas that most community members visit weekly. I then verified their inclusion criteria which was as follows: over the age of 18 years, have or had primary caregiver as a child who attended residential school, and have children of their own that they are parenting. After the verification, I scheduled a meeting to review the study's details and to give the participant an opportunity to read and sign the informed consent forms and proceed with the interview following the protocol. Probing questions were asked as follow up questions to better understand the participant's responses.

Participants were informed of all procedures for data collection so that they would know what to expect. Each interview was scheduled for up to sixty minutes, with member checking throughout the interview. The purpose of member checking was to verify that the transcribed documents from each interviewed participants was what the participants had said and to get any needed clarification as well as more feedback. Each participant was interviewed individually in a safe, secure, and confidential environment. The location of the interview was either the participant's choice or a private office in the North Peace Tribal Council offices (where there is availability to have office space there for the duration of the interviews). Additionally, each interview was audio recorded with the participant's consent. The researcher offered each participant the opportunity to review his or her transcribed notes. If their interest was indicated, the researcher would



contact the participant after the interview transcription was done and the participants had the opportunity to verify the transcription content to ensure it was correct. This opportunity also provided time for further feedback and assumptions.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

After all the interviews were completed, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings from the interviews. The transcribed data were entered into NVivo10 software for organization and accessibility. A principle aspect of data analysis is to focus on the words and word patterns of the participants. Various forms of qualitative data analysis such as reading and listening, contemplating, memo writing, coding and developing various graphic displays were used (Maxwell, 2013). The data received was used to contemplate against the research questions that guided this research.

Data analysis through reading and listening means that the researcher read the transcripts of recorded interviews while listening to the recording, so that the researcher could examine, interpret, and synthesize the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Memo writing was also done, taking note of any distinctions, descriptions, and interpretations while studying the transcripts, to note initial reactions and thoughts on the data retained from the interviews (Miles et al., 2014).

For the sake of confidentiality, numerical codes were used instead of participants' names to record identifying data. Codes are generally used in a qualitative research to organize the data into categories and themes, enabling a process of inductive reasoning (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Four open coding techniques were used (Ryan & Bernard, 2003):

- Analysis of words.
- Careful reading of blocks of text.
- Intentional analysis of linguistic components.
- Physical act of manipulating text.

When I analyzed the words, I tried to understand what the participant was saying; analysis allowed me to look at the word choice that participants made during the interview and to interpret them. Ryan and Bernard (2003) state that this assists the researcher in identifying word repetitions and key cultural terms that may have been used during the interviews.

Reading blocks of text allows the researcher to compare and contrast similar and different themes (Glaser, 2005). This method is helpful to a researcher who wants to understand how people manage their life and solve problems that arise (Bogdan & Biklen, 2009). Intentional analysis of linguistic components shows metaphors, transitions, and connections across the collected data; which reveals deduction of underlying principles, sequence and chronology, and causal relationships (Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012). Physically manipulating the text was completed by highlighting different text to show a pattern as well as cutting and pasting quotes to sort and group identification of sub themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, Maxwell, 2013, & Bogdan & Biklen, 2009). The purpose of this was to see the common themes and make further interpretations.

It should be noted however, that there is usually exception to a grouping, such as discrepancies. At times, there were themes that did not quite fit within the research

questions. Miles et al. (2014) states that it is important to identify the rule exceptions and consider the source of the discrepancy rather than not doing anything with the discrepancy. Having an exception to the rule protects the researcher from personal bias (Miles et al., 2014). Thus, discrepancies in the data were identified and discussed.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

There are a variety of validation strategies, couple recommended practical strategies was to make sure that the researcher will take the time in the field with participants building trust and learning the participants' culture as well as checking and rechecking for misinformation that may be caused by distortion (Patton, 2002). Another strategy was to triangulate multiple sources of data, information, and theory to corroborate evidence for the qualitative research findings (Patton, 2002). All of these strategies were used and the data were validated for its quality, trustworthiness, and credibility in the interviews by to sending the participants the transcribed interview document for fact checking; this also ensured that the interviews were captured with the correct information and the right spirit.

In the capacity of capturing the essence of someone's story, the best strategy to ensure quality, trustworthiness, and credibility of the data is to collect data in the field. Due to colonization and residues of the residential school legacy, First Nation people do not have a lot of trust in non-First Nation people. Therefore, because I am not of First Nation descent, it was vital that I spend time in the First Nation community getting to know the participants and developing a good understanding of where they were coming from. Patton (2002) suggests a rigorous method for systematic analysis to enhance

credibility and make the researcher aware of personal perspectives and bias on how the data analysis is implemented. A rigorous, systematic analysis for this study was awareness of the inclusive and exclusive criteria as well as the data collection procedure.

At the same time, there needed to be transferability – meaning that the descriptions of participants' lived experiences can be understood by others who read their story (Castro et al., 2011). This was done by usage of participants' direct quotes and paraphrasing their responses. Dependability of the data is also important to secure the collection of the data; an audit trail was used to do this. An audit trail is when the interview protocol and guide, the audio recordings of the interviews, the manual and electronically transcribed data, field notes in a field note journal, and the research proposal are all organized and kept together. Additionally, the audit trail was used to demonstrate the researcher's neutrality in data analysis through verification with the participant to make sure what he or she discussed was understood.

### **Research Dissemination**

The First Nation protocol for research dissemination is making the research data available to the health director of individual First Nation of this study. If the health director invites the researcher to make a presentation to the leadership or to government to support program funding, the researcher is available to do so. The data collected from this qualitative research is summarized in key themes without any identifying information on the volunteer participants and has been given to the individual health directors of each First Nation for the purpose of dissemination.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Each participant was informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and matters of confidentiality, as well as the fact that their participation was voluntary and that they can stop their participation at any time. Due to the sensitive nature of the research study, where intergenerational wounds and trauma were revealed through the interview process, the participant was told that they have the right to refuse answering a question and can make requests to answer a question at a later time. There was a debriefing session after the interview to discuss and address any issues or concerns that arose during the interview. At the same time, participants were given phone numbers to their nearest Native Counseling Services in the event that the experience triggered traumatic memories.

Additionally, to protect the identity of the participants and ensure anonymity, a numerical code is used rather than the participant's name. To ensure confidentiality, all electronic data is stored in a password secured laptop and paper copies are stored in a locked office cabinet that only I have access to. In assessing the research plan, there were not any risks anticipated. However, this does not mean that ethical challenges did not arise. As a researcher, I was conscious of possible ethical challenges and when they arose, I used my most unbiased and ethical judgment to troubleshoot issues.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 included a detailed overview of qualitative research of descriptive phenomenology and the rationale for choosing this research method and design. A semi-structured interview procedure was discussed as a conduit to explore the past and present

lived experiences of the second-generation parents. The data analysis plan was outlined and the issue of data trustworthiness was discussed. The procedure for how to conduct sound and ethical research was addressed. Chapter 4 will contain the findings from this research study.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of the residential school system's second-generation parents and how their parenting skills have been affected by their parents' residential school experience. This chapter begins with a methodology overview and the pilot study's findings. I then offer the details and results of the main study: the setting, volunteer participants' backgrounds, data collection and data analysis procedures, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and a summary. The guiding research questions for the interview questions were:

RQ1: What are the parenting experiences of second-generation adult children of First Nation residential school survivors?

RQ2: What are the intergenerational effects on parenting styles as a result of First Nation residential schools?

### **Pilot Study**

Before the qualitative research of the main study was implemented, I conducted a pilot study to enhance the qualitative research instruments' validity and to make sure the interview questions gathered relevant information. Five volunteer parents were first recruited by posters hung at First Nation reserve offices (e.g. health centers and band offices). Additionally, I posted the poster on Facebook and shared it through referrals.

Four of the five participants lived on Treaty 8 First Nation reserve communities and one lived in an urban centre. The first pilot study participant, Rowan, was an administrator with a journeyman electrician certificate and two children; both of his

parents attended residential schools. Shannon was an early childhood education teacher from a reserve school with a college certificate and a single mother of five children; both of her parents attended residential schools. Cecelia was a single mother of seven children working as a receptionist; her mother attended a residential school. Greg was a carpenter with a Grade 9 education and five children. Shea was a social worker with a bachelor's degree in social work, one biological child, and three step-children; her father attended a residential school. Please note: An online name generator program was used to create pseudonyms for the pilot study participants to ensure confidentiality

Generally, data collected from pilot studies is not used in the main study, but because this study had a limited pool of people who met the inclusion criteria, and because the participants had no changes, data collected from the pilot study were included in the main study. Each of the pilot participants was given the consent form for permission and the interview protocol (Appendix A) before the interview proceeded.

Interviews were recorded via a program on agiledictate, and I used a note pad for notes. For each of the pilot participants, interviews were voice recorded and transcribed with transcribed documents sent via e-mail or shared at a face-to-face meeting to review for accuracy. Participants were given the opportunity to make clarifications. Creswell (2013) stated that allowing participants to see their responses before analysis is a valuable practice that clarifies intended versus interpreted meaning in the results while also giving the participants a sense of ownership over the whole research process. The clarification process allowed a couple of the pilot participants to expand on their interview responses, which were reflected in their final transcripts. The transcripts were repeatedly read to



detect patterns and key themes: repetitive words were underlined in response to different interview questions. These words may point to the essence of the participants' lived experiences as the children of parents who attended residential schools, as well as their parenting styles in relation to their parents' parenting styles.

### **Research Setting**

The research study took place in Treaty 8 territory of Alberta, Canada. The in-person interviews were conducted at a location most comfortable to the research participant: reserve health centres or in the participants' work offices. Social media posts and printed posters were used to recruit volunteer participants, though a few were referrals from other research participants. All of the participants were First Nation people with their own biological children, and their own parent(s) had attended residential schools and lived on First Nation reserves in Northern Alberta. Each of the participants received an interview package that contained the research study's information, confidentiality/consent form, and the protocol outline. All documents were retained and stored in a secure filing cabinet, as discussed with the research participants.

### **Demographics**

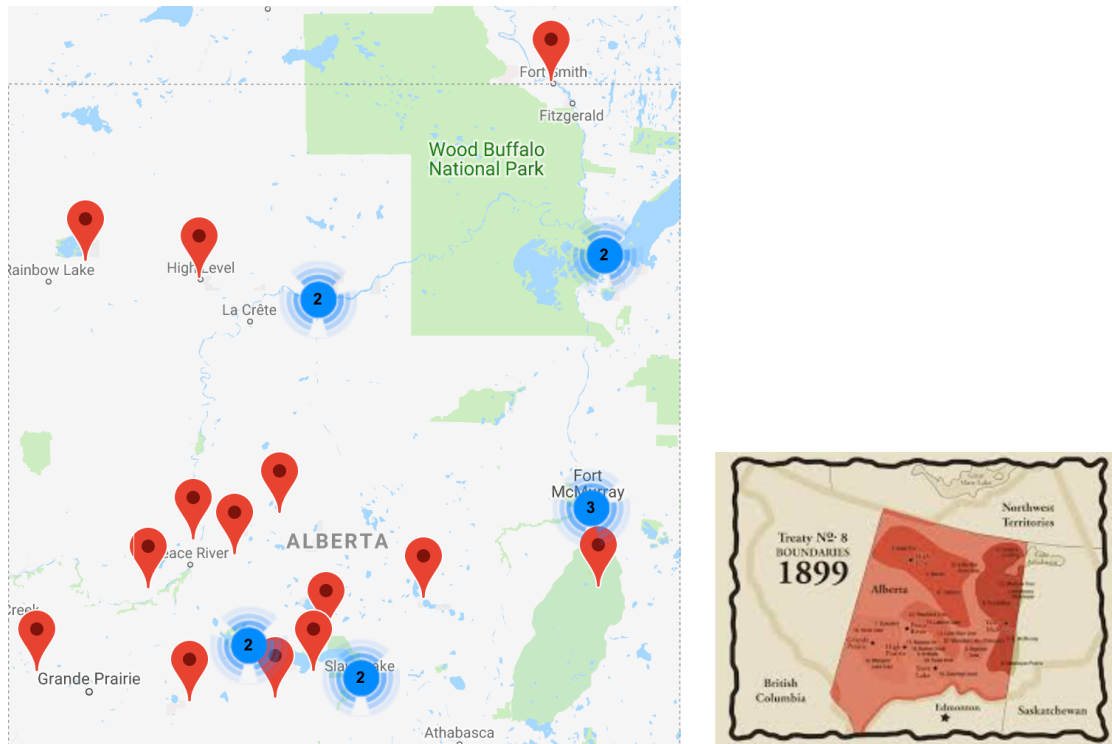
The study consisted of a total of 20 volunteer participants from Treaty 8 territory, including the pilot study group. Due to the interview questions' sensitivity and the participants' lived experiences, confidentiality was strict with steps taken to maintain the participants' anonymity; thus each participant had a pseudonym generated by an online name-generator program. The families from the Treaty 8 First Nation reserves were from Dene Tha First Nation, Tallcree Tribal Government, Mikesew Crew First Nation, Sucker

Creek, and Woodland Cree First Nation (see Figure 1). The participants comprised community members, chiefs, and community technicians with Grade 9 education, Grade 12 education, certificates, and college and university degrees. Participants had children ranging from eight years old to 39 years old and the number of children per participant ranged from two to seven children (see Table 1).

*Table 1*

*Demographic Table*

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Education level</i>	<i>Parent in residential school</i>	<i>Number of children</i>
<i>Rowen</i>	M	52	Administrator	College	Both	2
<i>Shannon</i>	F	50	Teacher	College	Both	5
<i>Cecelia</i>	F	61	Receptionist	College	Mother	7
<i>Greg</i>	M	65	Carpenter	Grade 9	Both	5
<i>Shea</i>	F	48	Social Worker	College	Father	5
<i>David</i>	M	58	Director	University	Both	6
<i>Muriel</i>	F	59	Chief	University	Both	2
<i>Jene</i>	M	47	COO	University	Mother	2
<i>Calla</i>	F	36	Teacher	University	Both	4
<i>Irv</i>	M	40	Chief	College	Mother	3
<i>Thorston</i>	M	57	Labourer	College	Both	5
<i>Karl</i>	M	48	Director	Grade12	Both	3
<i>Pammi</i>	F	56	Educator	College	Both	2
<i>Pearl</i>	F	40	Manager	College	Mother	2
<i>Gery</i>	M	46	Labourer	College	Both	7
<i>Glenn</i>	M	47	Director	University	Both	3
<i>Shaundra</i>	F	55	CEO	University	Mother	3
<i>Drew</i>	M	65	Ceremonial Helper	College	Both	4
<i>Bert</i>	M	49	Ceremonial Helper	Grade 8	Both	4
<i>Alliyn</i>	F	61	Teacher	College	Both	2



*Figure 1.* Map illustrating Treaty 8 territory reserves where participants reside and work.

### **Data Collection**

This qualitative research study began with a pilot test to establish the data collection instrument's (interview questions) validity. After the interview questions were validated to obtain valuable data for the research study, the full study was implemented. Through face-to-face interviews, data were collected as outlined in previous chapters and 20 First Nation parents were interviewed. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour in length (a little longer than anticipated) as participants shared the lived experiences of their childhood and the parenting styles they used with their own children. The interviews were conducted from March 2017 to September 2017.

### **Pilot Study Results**

After repeatedly reading the transcripts, the pilot participants' responses were entered into NVivo10 for analysis. Words highlighted while reading the transcripts came up in the NVivo10 software as did potential themes. Synopses of the major themes provided by the five pilot participants are:

- The way the participant was raised can have a major impact on parenting styles.
- If participants were raised in a harsh family environment, their parenting style is either similar or very relaxed.
- A loving relationship between a parent and their child is essential to healthy relationship building.
- There is still lot of trauma that second-generation parents experience as adults, and healing is needed to prevent negative reactions to their children in stressful situations.
- The best family memories don't include alcohol consumption.
- Violent childhood discipline affected how the participants disciplines their own children.

### **Pilot Study Discussions**

The pilot study participant stories included an array of emotions as participants recounted both happy times and dark times in their childhoods, where some were emotionally, physically, and mentally impacted. At times, it was difficult to hear the stories of their fears as children, but those stories led to stories of healing and resilience.

Nonverbal cues were controlled because some stories were tragic and elicited empathetic emotions. Sometimes I was triggered due to my own childhood experiences and had to debrief with my support network to work through my feelings and make sense of how what I heard was impacting me. I found it difficult to refrain from conversation, especially with participants I related to, but I remained objective and refrained from engaging in conversation.

The pilot study prepared me for the experiences I would encounter with the main study's interviews going forward, while also showing that none of the interview protocol questions needed to be changed. However, after the pilot study, the question order was reorganized for better flow. Additionally, some filler questions were added to draw out more details of the participants' lived experiences (e.g., Then what happened? What else? Anything else?).

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

I took audio recordings for each interview and these recordings were used for transcription. Because many of the participants lived a minimum of 3.5 hours from me, member checking was completed by review together over the telephone. Transferability of the study was done through a detailed outline of research methods and data collection procedures.

### **Main Study Findings**

Through repetitive review of the transcribed interviews during data analysis, six core themes emerged, which are identified in Table 2.

Table 2

*Core Themes*

<i>Core themes (6)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Frequency of response</i>
<i>No physical or verbal affection, a lot of alcohol and substance abuse</i>	20	76
<i>Lack of Positive Reinforcement</i>	20	60
<i>An Abundance of Household Chores</i>	20	35
<i>Extended family and friends co-parenting</i>	20	19
<i>Discipline: spanking, removing privileges, yelling</i>	20	67
<i>Parenting with affection and attentiveness</i>	20	22

**Research Question 1**

RQ1: What are the intergenerational effects on parenting styles as result of First Nation residential schools?

This research question addressed the experience of the study participant's childhood and how it affected who they were as parents today. The themes that emerged from the interview are as follows: (a) no physical or verbal affection, (b) childhoods with parents abusing alcohol and substances, (c) a lack of positive reinforcement, and (d) an abundance of household chores. RQ1 corresponded to interview protocol questions in section 3 that centered around memories of childhood and questions in section 4 centered around the study participant's parenting styles.

**Theme 1: No physical or verbal affection, a lot of alcohol and substance**

**abuse.** All 20 participants responded to the interview protocol section 3 with regard to memories of the participant's childhood. Question 1 of this section was, "Who reared you?" For many of the participants, growing up with parents who attended residential school was very traumatic. Some of the study participants were lucky enough to live with their grandparents or extended family to receive warmth and affection, while others lived with foster parents after being apprehended from their biological parents. For David, things were worse with his foster parents because both of them had attended residential schools and they were very physically, emotionally, and mentally abusive. David said, "All I can recall are the beatings, the fear, and the loneliness."

Question 2 of this section was, "Describe a happy memory that you have as a child." The majority of the study participants spoke about participating in outdoor cultural activities as their best memories (e.g. hunting their first moose or berry picking). Even though there weren't any hugs or "I love you" statements during these memories, the lack of alcohol and drugs allowed them to be together as a family. However, Thorston could not recall a happy memory. He said, "I was always told to stay quiet, especially when my parents had company. I was to go to my room and not make a sound until the company left. There was no warmth in my family. I didn't know what warmth was until I was sent to my auntie's house to live when I was 16 years-old because my parents just left my siblings and I one day."

Questions 3 of this section was, "What made it the best memory for you?" Alliyin said, "There weren't a lot of hugs or warm touches in our household. It was more like

making sure we stayed away from our foster mom when she had a broom in her hand as more than likely it would land on our heads. There definitely was not any exchange of verbal affection as I was growing up.”

Question 1 of section 4 with regard to participants’ parenting styles was, “Thinking upon your lived experiences, what has impacted or influenced your parenting?” Many of the participants grew up without much physical or verbal affection. Most of their childhoods were rife with verbal, physical, and emotional abuse. Shannon did not grow up with hugs and she said, “I make sure there are lot of hugs in my household, my kids and I, especially my daughters and I, hug all the time. I wanted them to feel a physical connection to me, I knew that I was loved by my mom, but I didn’t physically feel it.”

Questions 2 of this section was, “How have your experiences as a child impacted or influenced your relationship with your child(ren)?” Many of the participants said that the way they grew up messed up their lives, especially earlier in life. For some, there was alcohol and lot of stored anger from their children that they did not have a healthy outlet for. For example, David said he became the town “drunk,” until he had his first child, whose birth helped him get sober and seek treatment. David said, “The relationship with my first born isn’t as warm as my relationship with my other kids who I had later in life. But, he and I have come to respect one another, and we have good conversations.” For Shannon, she said, “We get along 65% of the time and the remainder is arguing, lecturing, silent treatment.” When asked, “What does getting along mean?” Shannon



replied, “Sitting down laughing and joking and cleaning up together, no angry word, bickering and angry stares, that is a good day.”

**Theme 2: Lack of positive reinforcement.** Question 4 of this section was, “Describe a time when you were a child and you got into trouble.” Some of the study participants spoke of how their parent(s) ruled by the rod and how they did not spare it much, while others spoke of cold silences or verbal lashings of abuse (e.g. name calling, shaming, ridiculing, and blaming).

Question 5 of this section was, “How were you disciplined?” Many of the participants spoke about physical punishment, verbal lashings, and the silent treatment from their parents or caregivers. Drew said “My mother (foster mother) used many methods for discipline, most of which were hurtful. Her main approach was whatever was in reach (i.e. a broom, a mop, an electrical cord, a knife) and used that to beat some sense in to me.” Pearl said, “I was yelled at a lot. When she yelled there was a rain of swear words with shame and ridicule. I did everything I could to comply and appease my parents, but no matter what I did, I just wasn’t good enough.” Cecelia said, “My mother, before she left, she pounded on me with whatever she got hands on because I was the oldest.”

Question 6 of this section was, “How did you feel about getting disciplined? Did you wish to be disciplined in a different way?” Many of the participants stated that they felt as though they were not good enough and they were worthless. Many did not wish to be disciplined differently because they did not know there could be a different way; being disciplined by physical punishment, verbal lashings, and ridicule was the norm and what

they knew. Drew said, “I got hit every day....so I must have been a very bad boy... and I got to a point where I didn’t cry. I felt dumb, stupid, incapable, and useless.” Jene said, “I was made to feel dumb, stupid, incapable, useless, and couldn’t do anything right.”

**Theme 3: An abundance of household chores.** Question 4, “Describe a time when you were a child and you got into trouble,” also brought up memories of doing household chores. Almost all the participants mentioned that they were responsible to keep their houses clean and spotless, and when they got into trouble there would be more chores to do.

Bert said, “I always needed to move all the furniture to the middle of the room and all corners and baseboards had to be wiped down once a week, then the furniture would be put back and the floors cleaned.” Shaundra said, “I was on my hands and knees with a toothbrush making sure each joint and crack of the tile were brushed clean.” Alliyin said, “I wasn’t allowed to wear gloves, not that we even had any as we were so poor. But when I was cleaning the floors with lye, I used my bare hands to clean the floors on my hands and knees with a sponge.” Muriel said, “One time I folded the tea towel where one end was sticking out and boy, did I get a verbal lashing and a hit to the head for that. I never did that again.”

## **Research Question 2**

RQ2: What are the intergenerational effects on parenting styles as a result of First Nation residential schools?

This research question addressed how study participants parent their own children. The themes that emerged from the interviews are as follows: (a) extended

family and friends co-parenting; (b) discipline, as in spanking, removing privileges, yelling; and (c) parenting with affection and attentiveness. Research question two corresponds to interview protocol questions in section 2 centered around experiences with parenting and section 4 about parenting styles.

Question 1 from section 2 on experiences with parenting was, “Describe a typical day with your child(ren).” Depending on the age of the children, the participants’ reply varied on the family’s average routine. Rowen, who has younger children, described a day of waking up his children and getting their breakfast ready and getting them ready for the day. Jene, whose children are older, described a day of waking up his children for school and work and, if time permits, having breakfast together. Jene said, “We meet for supper and on great days, we play board games or else we go our separate ways.”

Question 4 of this section was, “Describe your relationship with your children, how do you get along with your children and family?” Muriel said, “We get along really well. We talk about things, we have good communication. I give them lots of love and we have a really good relationship. We talk about things where we have issues, or somebody will be mad at somebody, and we talk it out until it is resolved. While growing up in my immediate family we never ever did talk through issues.”

Out of the 20 study participants, five had lost their children to child welfare, which answers section 4 question 5, “Have you ever lost your child(ren) to child welfare?” The children were apprehended to child welfare due to alcohol and substance abuse; however, the children were returned to their parents after the parents had gone through treatment successfully. At the time of the interviews, all study participants were

alcohol and substance free and were working on their sobriety (interview protocol question section 4 question 6, “If so, what were the circumstances?”).

**Theme 5: Extended family and friends coparenting.** All 20 participants responded to the interview questions in section 2, experiences with parenting. Question 2 of this section was, “What kind of parenting support do you have with your children?” The response to this question varied for the participants from none to plenty. Some participants, particularly single parents, mentioned support networks of extended family and friends. Shannon said, “I had no support as a single mother, I pretty much did it all by myself.” David said, “The community that my children and I were living in for my work helped out. Community members that I got to know watched my kids when I had work commitments and was away.”

Calla and David said similar statements where they received support from friends and community members, and that the support they needed was with childcare due to their work and other commitments. Muriel said, “My family, my siblings, helped a lot as my children didn’t really have a dad growing up.” It seemed to be a norm to have extended family and friends co-parent participants’ children, and many of them were raised by their grandparents or aunt and uncles.

Question 3 of this section was, “What parenting support(s) would you like to have had?” Many participants wished that there was an outlet where they could talk about their parenting issues, concerns, or problems in a safe environment without judgement, somewhere they could voice their thoughts, including emotions rooted in their

childhoods. Shannon said, “I would like to have kinda like someone who can coparent with me. Someone doing activities with my children, even at their age right now.”

**Theme 6: Discipline (spanking, removing privilege, yelling).** All 20 participants responded to the interview question on section 4 which was about parenting styles. Question 3 of this section was, “What happens when rules are broken?” Many participants explained how they discipline their children as “talk[ing] some sense into them.” Muriel said, “We talk about it and I always make them take responsibility of their actions.” Jene said, “We go to their room and then we explain that what they did was wrong and why, lot of explanation.” Calla said, “I basically tell them that you need to stop doing that because you are frustrating me. I would go to their room and tell them why it was wrong or what they were doing that I didn’t like, I do lot of talking.”

Some participants said they were “yellers” and some said, “I take away their privileges like taking away their electronic toys (e.g. tv, ipad etc).” However, 35% of parents mentioned that when their children were younger, before they had gone to treatment, they used punitive punishment as a form of discipline such as using the strap, belt, or spanking. Cecelia said, “I now yell at them letting them know that I am upset, but before, I used to slap or hit them when they did not listen.” Drew said, “With my oldest, I was most harsh with (he is 47 years old now), I was really messed up. I did not know much about being a parent. He knew my fist.”

**Theme 7: Parenting with affection and attentiveness.** The study participants were candid with interview protocol questions section 4 centered around parenting style. Question 10 of this section was: “What do you think are some of the most important

things you, as a parent, can teach or give your child(ren)?" The study participants described how important it was to build a respectful and strong relationship foundation with their children. They emphasized positive boundaries, where the children know right from wrong and where their "home and family" can be found. At the same time, the study participants stated the importance of allowing children to be children and being able to go out and live their lives to reach their full potential. Karl said, "I tried to mold my children to who I wanted them to be, it did not work very well until I let go of the reins and allowed them to become who they were meant to become." Irv said, "Give your children two lasting things: their roots and their wings. I believe children need a strong sense of who they are, where they come from, and where they belong."

Question 11 of this section was, "What things do you think children can decide for themselves?" Many of the participants stated that there are different decisions that their children can decide on their own depending on their age. For example, Shannon said, "Three of my kids are older so they can decide what they want to do with their lives, what to do with money, when they want to move out, pretty much anything. For my younger one, who is sixteen years-old, I'm giving her room to feel autonomy, but I guide her little bit more. The only thing is that she thinks she knows everything!" Shea said, "My children know that I am there if they ever needed me for anything. I let them make choices that sometimes do not turn out well. That is how they learn."

Question 12 of this section was, "What areas do you think you, as adults, need to make the decision on?" Unanimously, the participants all said education. They all felt that once they graduate from Grade 12, their kids can decide on pretty much anything.

Question 13 of this section was, “What is your role in your child(ren)’s education?” For some of the participants, as the highest grade that they finished was Grade 6, they did not have a role in their children’s education other than to encourage their children to go to school. However, if their child did not want to go to school, they did not really push them to go. For Shannon, the role that she had with her youngest daughter was a role model because she was in the process of going to school herself to become a teacher. She stated that even though there were many times where she just wanted to give up due to so many road blocks that life set in front of her, she could not quit and did not quit. She wanted to show her child that she could finish her education, which she had started and stopped several times over the last 10 years. For those with post-secondary education, they encouraged their children strongly to get a higher level of education. However, Karl said, “I want all my children to get degrees in universities because I know they can do it, they are super smart. But if they want to take some time off from school, I will respect that because I want them to be happy.” Kinship, relatives, and family connections are all important in establishing one’s roots. Establishing roots also means providing the firm foundations of security (safety) and fundamental basics (food and shelter) that a family gives. Parents are responsible for these things for their children. Giving children their wings is providing those things children need to become successfully independent and contributing members of the tribe. I have come to understand that each person has their own vision, song, dance, and purpose in life. Parents need to help their children find these things. Parents are

responsible for getting their children ready to be on their own and live their own lives, even if we don't agree with their choices or match their own desires/wishes.”

Overall impact and influence of parenting for this study's participants comes from growing up with a residential survivor. Most of the study participants learned to discipline their children positively and to avoid disciplining with negative emotions that lead to physical, verbal, and emotional abuse. Many participants still work hard to establish a good relationship with their children; when they were new parents, they didn't know how to parent but their healing journeys helped them realize what was wrong with their early parenting style. Many study participants also drank alcohol when they were younger, and some were called community drunks, but when their children came along, many stopped because they didn't want their children to see them drinking alcohol or being drunk.

Many of the study's participants realized through this study that the way they parent and do certain things life stems from their lived experiences. Bert said, “Until I did this interview, I didn't realize why I was making my children clean our house with the furniture in the middle to wipe down all the baseboards and corners. That way of cleaning has been ingrained in me.” Pammi said, “You know I never understood why I got stressed out when my children folded the towels because they were not folding them with the ends meeting, and I just unfold all their folding and redo all of them.” Gery said, “You know I hate feeling stupid, I just realized that was the word that my dad would always call me when I did something wrong. I always have this feeling of not being good enough and now I kind of see why I have that constant feeling with me.”



## Summary

The core intent of this study was to explore the effects of the residential school legacy on parenting styles of second generation parents. During the coding process, six core themes emerged to support the two research questions. Many residential school students were taught to be silent and not to express their feelings, with most having been exposed to punitive authority rather than traditional First Nation parenting. Because many residential school students did not know how to express love or be loving and supportive parents, their children, the participants, presented self-destructive behaviours (alcohol and drug use) with cycles of domestic violence. 95% of the study participants shared a life cycle in their teens, twenties, thirties, and forties similar to their parents' who attended residential school and experienced alcohol and/or drug abuse to forget about their residential experience. Just like their parents, they internalized their pain and feelings and did not know how to parent their children. As a result, most of the participants struggled to show their children affection in the early years of parenting; they didn't know how to say "I love you" to their children and relied on punitive punishment. The study's results indicate that, from the perspective of parents who were children of residential school survivors, the way they parent their children was affected by how they were parented. Some of the impacts of their childhoods are so deeply entrenched in their psyches, that the participants did not even know why they parented the way they did. In the upcoming chapter, six core themes that emerged from data collection and analysis will be connected, as well as study findings, limitations, implications for social change, and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of second generation parents of the residential school legacy and how their parenting skills were affected by their parents' residential school experiences. The study was conducted because while there are many studies on residential survivors, there is a gap in understanding the intergenerational trauma passed on from the residential school survivors to their children. Twenty participants completed face-to-face interviews and five out of the 20 were from a pilot study. This chapter interprets the results, discusses the study's limitations, provides recommendations, and posits the study's implications.

According to the findings, there is a definite relationship between how a residential school student's child was parented and how that child parents their own children. Many of the participants were "lost" at first on how to parent. They were parenting in a way that they did not understand or even consider until participating in this study. Many mentioned a lot of "dark times" when they were younger, as they were influenced primarily by alcohol use (and sometimes substance abuse). However, most of the study participants (about 85%) had quit drinking when they had children and are working on their sobriety. The results of this study can be instrumental in designing parenting and self-identity programs that offer holistic healing and family inclusivity, rather than just treating the grandparents who attended residential schools.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

From the in-depth, face-to-face interviews on parenting styles of second generation parents of the residential school survivors, several themes and causal relationships emerged on how the study participants parented their children: (a) no physical or verbal affection; (b) alcohol and substance abuse; (c) extended family/friends coparenting; (d) lack of positive reinforcement; (e) an abundance of household chores; (f) discipline, such as spanking, taking away privileges, and yelling; and (g) parenting with affection and attentiveness. The research findings highlight that the way people parent is directly related to how they were brought up, and that many do not even realize the connection between their parenting styles and their childhoods. The literature review in Chapter 2 mentions the gap in assessing the intergenerational trauma effects on First Nation people. There are limited data demonstrating a process of trauma being transferred from one generation to another through one's parenting styles. Baker, et al. (2000) discussed how parental beliefs and behaviours are related to their children's eating and weight habits and that children learn from their parents and internalize their values and attitudes. Thus, this study shows that there is a definite linkage between residential school survivor's parental beliefs and behaviour reflecting on their children who are now parents themselves.

The conceptual framework of trauma theory and Bowen's theory (1976) provided the theoretical framework for this study. Both theories helped to better understand the complex issue of parenting. George (2010) in his study of trauma theory, concluded that people have an innate ability to heal after trauma. This was confirmed in my study by all

participants describing their healing and their healing journeys to be better parents to their children. Bowen (1985) studied stress in a family unit and members and how emotions and feelings of a family unit regulate behaviours of the family members. The study confirms Bowen's family system theory: the violent and negative feelings the residential school survivors exposed children to were reflected in their children's parenting styles, their relationship with their children, and their communication styles. The study supported Bowen's theory that when there is violence and trauma, emotional functioning and bonding are inhibited, sometimes causing a volatile relationship between parent and child. However, the study showed that with time and healing, process emotions are regulated in a more positive way so that parents can improve their relationship with their children.

The participants in this study experienced little physical or verbal affection, coupled with alcohol and substance abuse. The children of residential school survivors who became parents reported difficulties in showing affection to their own children; however, when they had grandchildren it was a different story. Some of the participants stated that it was much easier to "hug" their grandchildren and to tell them "I love you." This supports the study by Smith et al. (2005) who reported that when a child goes through abusive trauma with their caregiver, the attachment bond is threatened in the relationship. And it is further confirmed by Whitbeck et al.'s (2004) study that described difficulty of expressing emotions whether it be positive or negative due to parent-child boundaries growing up. Thus, a lack of physical and verbal affection experienced in the participants' childhoods can be linked to the fact that their parents were residential school

survivors because Whitebeck et al. (2004) stated that having difficulty expressing emotions can manifest as excessive anger or lack of “love” to their children.

A lack of positive reinforcement in the participants’ childhoods was theme two of this phenomenological study. The punishment the participants experienced at the hands of their parents became a learned behaviour, and because positive reinforcement was not learned, it was not used as a parenting tool in parenting their own children (Morrissette, 1994). Furthermore, Gregg (2018) reported the residential school intergenerational trauma legacy’s linkage to contemporary family violence, where parents were using shaming and negative child disciplining. Bowen (1985) discussed stress and anxiety having a negative impact on relationships between family members. This study supports these theories because many of the participants described experiencing punitive discipline, harsh words, and a lack of love.

The study’s participants describe an abundance of household chores in their lives growing up, and how chores and responsibilities are laid out to their own children, which is theme three of this study. Stout and Peters (2011) described how residential school students were taught exactly how to do certain chores such as folding towels or cleaning floors, and if those chores were not done as specified, punitive measures were used. The study’s participants did not describe a harsh punitive repercussion for their children not doing their chores as specified; however, they did describe chore expectations for their own children and frustration and yelling when things were not done “properly.”

Lafrance and Collins (2003) described First Nation families traditionally parenting their children with their extended family members rather than as a classic

nuclear family with a mother, a father, and their children, which is supported by the study. In the interviews, the participants described seeking support for parenting from their extended family members, especially with the children's grandparents or family friends. Morissette (1994) states that many grandparents support their children with parenting their grandchildren. Like typical, traditional First Nation parenting, study participants describe considerable coparenting activities with their extended family and friends.

Punitive discipline in the participants' childhood marks the fifth theme of this study—spanking, removing privileges, and yelling—which is also supported by Morissette (1994), who described residential school survivors being raised with punitive authority. Having mostly dysfunctional relationships modeled at the residential schools, students displayed their learned behaviour to their own children. Many of this study's participants talked about their early years as parents, where they spanked and yelled at their children. However, they did learn to become better parents following personal growth in their healing journeys.

The sixth theme of the study is participants parenting their own children with affection and attentiveness. Jankowski and Hopper (2012) and Mehri et al. (2011) described this phenomenon best by stating that individuals can navigate a healthy balance in a family system to foster a parent and child relationship that is supportive and positive. The study's participants described their lived experiences as parents where they are intentional in spending quality time with their children because they lacked that time with their own parents. A few of the participants even described respectful teaching moments

with their children where they explained why a specific behaviour was not right as well as making sure their children know that they are loved.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The phenomenological research approach of this study was limited to 20 people's lived experience. I did not account for or collect data from other sources on the participants' experiences (e.g. social services, extended family, partners, their children, or their parents). If other areas of study participants' lives—work or community environments, for example—were studied, the results would offer more rich data to further develop themes and trends. Sampling for this qualitative research study was difficult because many potential participants did not want to talk about their trauma or their lived childhood experiences. Thus, all the study's participants have been on their healing journeys for number of years and were at a point where they could talk about their childhood trauma; none of the participants were still “raw” from their childhood trauma. Consequently, there was not a diverse group of study participants who were at different levels of healing from residential school legacy impacting their parenting styles. Because 65% of the study's participants were referred to the study through snowball sampling from the localized Treaty 8 area (many were related or were friends), many of the participants were at a similar point in life with regard to parenting. Thus, there is a possibility that the results can not be generalized to other territories of Treaty 8.

Another limitation was my possible bias as researcher through judgement, personal beliefs, and life experience. Researcher bias was mitigated through descriptive

phenomenological process called bracketing, where my judgement or particular belief was suspended from the interview and data analysis process (Laverty, 2003).

### **Recommendations**

This study highlights the relationship between parenting styles of residential school survivors and their adult children's parenting styles. Two overarching themes were discovered: 1) while the residential school legacy created traumatic childhoods for the participants, intentional healing from that trauma led to positive parenting styles; 2) participants demonstrated a continued healing journey of forgiveness and letting go to prevent the trauma from impacting how they parent their children.

While some study participants have come a long way in their healing journeys, others still have a long way to go. Therefore, a program to aid second generation parents in catharsis, healing, and growth could be developed as a result of this research.

Currently, there are few, if any, parenting programs that address the mental health of parents with a residential school legacy. Further research with a wider sample will help to investigate how far-reaching the residential school legacy's intergenerational trauma is, as well as its impact on parenting. Different levels of governments need to be aware that dealing with intergenerational trauma due to residential school is not a quick fix; it is not a problem that can be fixed with survivor compensation.

Public health policies need to be updated to make space for cultural healing and cultural practices to reintroduce First Nation parents to their cultural parenting practices. The school system must focus on the First Nation spirit of a First Nation child instead of trying to fill him or her with western knowledge and academic topics – they need to see



themselves reflected and represented in their learning. The truth of the residential school and First Nation history and legacy needs to be included in the education curriculum so that people are introduced to the overarching issues that led to the negative by-product of colonialism and the residential school legacy (e.g. alcohol, drugs, suicide, social welfare etc.).

### **Implications for Social Change**

This study adds to the literature on the residential school legacy and the intergenerational trauma that, often unknowingly, passes from generation to generation. Social change is needed to bring more awareness to how the impact of residential school intergenerational trauma affects parenting – for both First Nation and non-First Nation people. Understanding how this trauma is cycled from one generation to another is essential to creating a plan and strategy to break the cycle and bring about a path of healthy First Nation parenting. Implications for social change can be seen by study participants who participated in this research thinking consciously for the first time about their parenting styles and why they parent the way they do, in addition to making efforts to change negative parenting approaches.

For example, SP18 said, “I have accomplished a lot academically, but I have always felt I was not smart, in fact pretty stupid. But, now I realize that when I was a child my dad had called me stupid whenever I did something that was disappointing to him, because he himself was called stupid all through his life for making mistakes that is part of life. I never realized that until now.” The participant never realized the trend of

their childhood affecting how they perceived themselves until they participated in this study. This allowed participants to do some internal reflection for further growth.

Social change can also take place within First Nation communities and organizations through implementing further studies to support member Nations. For example, the Treaty 8 organization launched a parent conference to provide information break-out sessions (positive relationships/boundaries, traditional parenting etc.) and parental self-care. Many Nations, however, do not have the necessary funds to send their community members to a conference like this, so even though the Treaty 8 organization was paying for two parents from each community, members would benefit from local parenting conferences and workshops.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this qualitative research study demonstrate the relationship between the intergenerational trauma passed down from residential school survivors to their offspring and their subsequent parenting styles. Levels of posttraumatic healing and growth were diverse for this study's sample population which would likely reflect on other residential school second generation parents. Canada's First Nation people have been managing and suffering through posttraumatic healing and growth for years. While there is research on intergenerational trauma, there is a gap in research and data on First Nation intergenerational trauma due to the topic's sensitivity. This study uncovers the lasting effects of residential school legacy on the present generation through First Nation parenting styles that are not always visible on the surface. However, further research

within this topic, possibly a longitudinal study to bring forth richer data and enhance the study's established understanding, is needed.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

## Instructions

Good [morning, afternoon, evening]. My name is Judy Kim-Meneen. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this project study and signing the consent form. I would like to have a conversation with you about your experiences of parenting. I'll start by asking you a few questions about you and then questions about any barriers you may have experienced. You are free to decline any question or to stop at any time throughout this interview.

May I audio record our conversation? The purpose of recording the conversation is so that I can get all the details, but at the same time carry on an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that your responses will remain confidential. By this I mean that no one will know that any response was yours. I will be compiling a paper that will contain a summary of all participants' comments.

At no time will it be possible to identify anyone participating in the project study. If you wish not to answer any question, just tell me and we will skip that question.

## Demographic Interview Questions (Section 1)

1. What residence do you live in currently?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your marital status?



4. What is your level of education?
5. How many children do you have?
6. Which of your parents attended residential school?

#### Interview Questions

Thank you for your responses, I am now going to ask you a few questions about your experiences with parenting. (Section 2)

1. Describe a typical day with your child(ren.)
2. What kind of parenting support do you have with your children?
3. What parenting supports would you like to have had?
4. Describe your relationship with your children, how do you get along with your children as a family?

Thank you for your responses, I am now going to ask you questions in regards to your childhood. (Section 3)

1. Who reared you? (What role did each of your parent's play during your childhood?)
2. Describe a happy memory that you have as a child.
3. What made it the best memory for you?
4. Describe a time when you were child and you got into trouble,
5. How were you disciplined?
6. How did you feel about getting disciplined? Did you wish to be disciplined in a different way?

Thank you for your responses, I am now going to ask you questions in regards to your parenting style (Section 4)

1. Thinking upon your lived experiences, what has impacted or influenced your parenting?
2. How has your experiences as a child impact or influence your relationship with your child(ren)?
3. How has the way you were disciplined as a child affected the way you discipline?
4. What would you change about your parenting styles if you could?
5. Have you ever lost your child(ren) to child welfare?
6. If so, what were the circumstances?
7. Do you feel that you parent differently from how your parents parented you?
8. If so, how do you parent differently from your parents?
9. In bringing up your child(ren), what would you do, or what do you do, the same way as your parents?
10. What do you think are some of the most important things you as a parent can teach/ or give your child(ren)?
11. What things do you think children can decide for themselves?
12. What areas do you think you, as adults, need to make the decisions on?
13. What is your role in your child(ren)'s education?

Thank you for answering all the questions. Is there anything that I did not ask, that you would like to share with me?