INTERSECTIONS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY IN ABORIGINAL YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts
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University of Toronto

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Abstract

Many Aboriginal youth leave their communities to pursue work opportunities in urban areas, but statistics imply there is a pervasive problem Aboriginal youth are facing in terms of securing employment, despite programs and policies which have been designed to increase Aboriginal youth employment rates (Dwyer, 2003; White Maxim, & Gyimah, 2003). Previous research examining Aboriginal youth employment has neglected to include the perspectives of Aboriginal youth regarding the barriers they face when seeking employment. Even less research has been dedicated to exploring the role cultural identity plays in an Aboriginal youth’s employment experiences. This thesis utilized qualitative methodology to interview and explore the employment narratives of ten urban Aboriginal youth. The results identified four major themes and several meta THEMES regarding barriers to successful employment, the role of cultural identity and the hopes for future.
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Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis outlines a community-based approach to explore the intersections between cultural identity and employment outcomes for Aboriginal youth. The Canadian constitution recognizes three distinct groups of Aboriginal peoples: First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (AANDC, 2011). The government of Canada categorizes First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people as Aboriginal and legally defines who is an Aboriginal person (AANDC, 2011). However, Aboriginal peoples usually view this terminology as a form of colonial oppression. As such, this proposal will use the term “Aboriginal peoples” to refer to the original people and their decedents in what is now known as Canada (AANDC, 2011).

While it is important to acknowledge that Aboriginal culture is not homogenous, many Aboriginal peoples share a similar worldview concerning spirituality that is very different from spirituality as is practiced by mainstream Canadians (Johner, Gringerich, Jeffery & Maslany, 2008). Namely, Aboriginal spirituality is described as a respectful understanding of the relationship and connections that exists between nature, people, spirits, the spirit world and the Creator (AANDC, 2013). For many Aboriginal people these spiritual connections link to their values, including being respectful and caring for the environment, sharing with others in the community, and respecting others, especially Elders (Johner et al., 2008; McKenna, 1993).

Historically, mainstream Canadian society has been oppressive of Aboriginal spirituality. The participation in Aboriginal ceremonies, potlatch feasts, sweat lodges, and the sun dance was criminalized from 1884 to 1951 in an effort to assimilate Aboriginal peoples (Martel, Brassard & Jaccoud, 2011; Waldrum, 1997). In general, mainstream Canadians today do not engage in spiritual relationships with nature (Johner et al., 2008). As a result, many Aboriginal people who
engage in spiritual practices remain on the fringe of mainstream society by feeling as though they are isolated and disconnected from mainstream society.

Current Canadian Census data indicates that there are 1,400,685 Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2013a). The Aboriginal population is one of the fastest growing in Canada. The Aboriginal population increased by 20.1% between 2006 and 2011, compared to 5.2% for the non-Aboriginal population. Additionally, Aboriginal peoples are becoming increasingly urban with 54% of the population living in urban areas (Statistics Canada, 2009). This is true of the city of Toronto as it is reported by Aboriginal agencies that there are approximately 70,000 Aboriginal peoples living in Toronto (City of Toronto, 2010), and a high proportion of the population is children and youth (City of Toronto, 2010). However, many Aboriginal people in urban settings, such as Toronto, face barriers to finding meaningful employment. Employment outcomes coincide with educational obtainment (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). Statistics Canada (2013b) reports 9.8% of Aboriginal people between the ages of 25-years and 64-years have a university degree. In comparison, 25% of non-Aboriginal people in Canada in the same age demographic have a university degree (Statistics Canada, 2013b). Since many employers use educational credentials as a screening tool, applicants with higher educational obtainment are more likely to be hired than those with less formal education (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). This may contribute to Aboriginal households in having lower incomes than non-Aboriginal households. In fact, statistics indicate that the income for Aboriginal households in Toronto is 2/3 less than that of non-Aboriginal households (City of Toronto, 2008). These statistics imply that many Aboriginal people living in Toronto may encounter barriers to finding employment and that they may face challenges regarding their financial security.
Rationale

One of the most commonly sited reasons for the migration of Aboriginal youth from rural to urban areas is to pursue work opportunities or educational opportunities (Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, 2010). However, many Canadian Aboriginal youth struggle to find employment. Current data from Statistics Canada indicates that the unemployment rate for Aboriginal youth between the ages of 15 to 24 years ranges from 16.9% to 26.9% (Usalcas, 2011). In comparison, non-Aboriginal youth in the same age demographic have an average unemployment rate of 14.6%. Additionally, there are distinctions between Aboriginal identity groups. For example, First Nations youth who do not live on reserves have the highest unemployment rate of all Aboriginal youth in Canada (Usalcas, 2011). Theses statistics imply there is a pervasive problem Aboriginal youth are facing in terms of securing employment, despite programs and policies which have been designed to increase Aboriginal youth employment rates (Dwyer, 2003; White Maxim, & Gyimah, 2003).

Previous research has identified multiple barriers Aboriginal youth face when seeking employment, including: poverty, poor literacy, limited access to job opportunities, discrimination, colonization, and the negative impact of residential schools (Hoffman, Jackson & Smith, 2005; White et al, 2003; McCormick and Amundson, 1997). However, most of the current research conducted on Aboriginal youth employment has neglected to include Aboriginal perspectives on barriers to employment (Bown & Lavish, 2006; Hoffman et al, 2005; Juntunen, Barrraclough, Broneck, Seibel, Winrow, & Morin, 2001). Thus, it is possible that our present understanding of the barriers that Aboriginal youth face in obtaining employment may not be effective in decreasing unemployment, as current policies and procedures are based on Western worldviews that do not meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples (Neumann, McCormick, Amundson & McLean, 2000; Herring, 1990). In fact, recent research results from my current
MA supervisor’s study on Aboriginal youth employment, from Aboriginal perspectives, indicates that systematic oppression is a larger barrier to employment than other factors, such as job training or education (Stewart & Marshall 2011a, 2011b). The participants in this study further indicated that possible solutions to obtaining sustainable employment involve having a workplace environment that permits the safe expression of Aboriginal culture and values (Stewart & Marshall 2011a, 2011b). These results suggest that Aboriginal youth believe they would be more successful in workplace settings if they were permitted to build upon their cultural identity in the workplace (Stewart & Marshall 2011a, 2011b).

The present study

This thesis is part of a larger research project with my supervisor, Dr. Suzanne Stewart, who is the primary investigator, and is entitled Work-life Identity of Aboriginal Youth (WIAY). The research question for the WIAY project asks, “what are the intersections of cultural identity and work-life experiences for Aboriginal youth as they relate to employment outcomes?” The focus for this thesis project centers on the intersections of cultural identity and positive outcomes in employment for Aboriginal youth by exploring how Aboriginal cultural identity influences work-life experiences for Aboriginal youth, and how cultural needs of Aboriginal youth can be met by employers to improve employment outcomes.

This study is important as to date there has been a limited amount of research conducted which investigates the intersection of Aboriginal youth employment and culture, and even less research that has utilized Aboriginal youth perspectives. Thus, this research will address a current gap in the literature by assessing the intersection of culture and positive outcomes in employment in urban Aboriginal youth.
The research site

The research site for this project was the city of Toronto. As mentioned previously, Toronto has a large urban Aboriginal population, which is estimated to be approximately 70,000 people. This made Toronto an ideal setting for conducting research on urban Aboriginal peoples. Furthermore, the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (NCCT) is a community partner on the WIAY project and it is located in downtown Toronto.

The individual interviews were conducted at OISE, as OISE is centrally located in downtown Toronto. Furthermore, OISE also has a dedicated Aboriginal student lounge space, which provided a social space that was not sterile or hostile to participants.

Research goals

There are two main reasons for this study: 1) to explore the intersection of Aboriginal cultural identity and positive employment outcomes, and 2) to obtain Aboriginal youths’ perspective on employment challenges and barriers.

To date, most current research has not adequately assessed how Aboriginal youth who are successful in obtaining employment differ from Aboriginal youth who struggle to obtain employment. It is important to investigate factors that contribute to Aboriginal youth success in obtaining employment because presently there are policies and services in place to improve Aboriginal youth employment statistics, but they have not been successful in increasing Aboriginal youth employment rates (Dwyer, 2003; White, et al., 2003). By exploring the intersection of Aboriginal cultural identity and positive employment outcomes, this project focused on Aboriginal youth who have been successful in obtaining employment to elucidate factors to their success that can then be replicated in policies and programs.
There is also great deal of agreement in the barriers Aboriginal youth face when seeking employment including: poverty, poor literacy, limited access to job opportunities, discrimination, colonization, and the negative impact of residential schools (Hoffman, et al., 2005; McCormick and Amundson, 1997; White et al, 2003). However, it is hypothesized that our present understanding of the barriers that Aboriginal youth face in obtaining employment may not be effective in creating the desired changes to decrease the unemployment rate as current policies and procedures are based on Western perspectives that do not meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples (Herring, 1990; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Neumann, McCormick, Amundson & McLean, 2000). In fact, recent research results from a study on barriers to Aboriginal youth employment, from Aboriginal youth perspectives, indicate that the most prominent barriers to employment are systematic oppression, culture, and identity (Stewart, Reeves, Mohanty, Syrette, & Elliott, 2011). These results further suggest that Aboriginal youth believe they would be more successful in workplace settings if they were permitted to build upon their cultural identity in the workplace (Stewart, 2011; Stewart & Marshall, 2011b).

Finally, there has been a limited amount of research conducted in the area of Aboriginal youth employment that has included Aboriginal youth perspectives. As such, the lack of knowledge regarding Aboriginal youth’s work-related needs and preferences may be related to present ineffective programming which has been unsuccessful in improving employment statistics.

**Research question**

The research question that guided this thesis was: What are the intersections of cultural identity and work-life experiences for Aboriginal youth as they relate to employment outcomes? More specifically, this project was examining if: 1) Aboriginal youth with a strong, positive...
connection to their cultural identity will report positive employment outcomes; 2) Aboriginal youth who are able to integrate their cultural identity in the workplace will report a higher degree of workplace satisfaction than Aboriginal youth who are unable to integrate their cultural identity in the workplace and 3) Aboriginal youth who are active in, and supported, by the Aboriginal community will report utilizing their cultural identity to cope with challenges in the workplace. Literature addressing culture in the workplace suggests participants in environments that had a cultural community within the workplace report more favourable outcomes in comparison to Aboriginal peoples who experienced conflicts in non-Aboriginal workplaces (Campbell Clark, 2002), but has not done so with the Aboriginal youth populations.

Additionally, Thompson’s (2012) results indicate that self-efficacy could be used as protective measure and coping strategy against career challenges. Thus, a component of self-efficacy may be related to how effectively Aboriginal youth are able to use their community as a cultural support against workplace challenges.
Work is an important factor in an individual’s identity (Amundson, 2006; Blustein, 2006; Juntunen, 2006), as a substantial amount of one’s life is spent in the workplace. Additionally, work provides meaning in many peoples’ lives as it communicates who they are, what they do, and how they contribute to society (Reissner, 2010). Employment not only contributes to an individual’s financial wellbeing, employment also contributes an individual’s overall mental health through the impact of workplace satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Blunstein, 2001). Culture is one factor that is significant in terms of mental health and identity, and influences all aspects of an individual’s life, including their work (Bruner, 1990). Cultural identity, ethnic identity, gender, and family influences also impact the decisions people make regarding employment (Andres, Adamuti-Trache, Yoon, Pidgeon, & Thomsen, 2007; Young, Ball, Valach, Turkel, & Wong 2003; Shepard & Marshall, 2000).

**Group formation and discrimination**

The overarching framework for this research is the activation of cultural identity in the workplace and group formation within social, cultural, and work contexts. It is well documented by evolutionary psychologists that the formation of social groups and group membership were important for human survival (Van Vugt & Schaler, 2008; Kurzban & Leary, 2001; Baumeister & Leary, 1995) As a consequence, group membership continues to be important in our society today. It is important to note that group membership based on culture is regarded as being stable, influential, and important to individuals (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Jaret & Reitzes, 1999). Furthermore, individuals who are members of less desirable cultural groups (e.g., Aboriginal
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peoples) may experience negative impacts on their mental health, such as low levels of self-esteem (James, Cross, & DeFour, 2007). Low self-esteem tends to be a factor as Aboriginal peoples have a more disadvantaged position in society than Caucasians (Linnehan, Chrobot-Mason, & Konrad, 2006). In the workplace, low self-esteem tends to be reinforced by Caucasians, as they have low expectations for job performance of non-Caucasians (Ridgeway, 2001), which means Aboriginal employees are not always given access to the tools required to perform their jobs well, and have poorer performance levels on work related tasks (Linnehan, et al., 2006). The result is Aboriginal employees tend to be treated differently than their Caucasian coworkers, face a unique set of challenges in the workplace, and are given less opportunities by employers for workplace promotion or growth (Linnehan, et al., 2006).

Cultural identity in the workplace

Individuals who are members of ethnic minorities (e.g., not Caucasian) tend to establish a cultural identity by recognizing and understanding their history within the dominant society, and becoming aware of the racism and discrimination they have faced (Linnehan, et al., 2006). As a result, these individuals begin to question the privileged status of Caucasian people and explore their own disadvantaged position in society (Linnehan, et al., 2006). Additionally, members of ethnic minorities also begin feel “positively about their ethnic group, exemplified by feelings of pride for, and attachment to, the group” (French, Coleman, & DiLorenzo, 2013, p. 3) while participating in cultural activities and traditions with members of their cultural group (French, et al., 2013). For Aboriginal peoples these cultural activities may include drumming, smudging, attending a sweat lodge, or attending a language class.

Research has demonstrated that a strong cultural identity among minority employees acts as a protective factor. To begin, those who strongly associate with and endorse their cultural
identity have a more positive attitude towards working in culturally diverse environments (Linnehan, et al., 2006). It has been suggested that these positive attitudes (among employees who have a strong cultural identity) may result from a belief that understanding others and reducing biased behaviour will enhance their status in the workplace, and reduce exclusionary behaviour in the workplace (Linnehan, et al., 2006). Additionally, Linnehan and his colleagues (2006) further suggest that minority employees who strongly endorse their ethnic identity are more likely to view the workplace as supportive of diversity when they worked for minority supervisors.

The Linnehan et al. (2006) results are also supported in Aboriginal literature, which indicates Native Americans experience a greater sense of community when they are employed by Native American organizations (Campbell Clark, 2002). This may be linked to the fact that when employees work with and for people who share the same cultural identity, they often express more workplace satisfaction, reduced emotional conflict between employees and coworkers, and lower employee turnover rates (Linnehan, et al., 2006). Additionally, Campbell Clark (2002) reports that Native American employees intrinsically value their work when they have a sense of control and flexibility in the workplace. More specifically, many of the community members of Nez Perce who participated in Campbell Clark’s (2002) research project work for casinos that are owned by the tribe. The casinos’ profits are then put back into the community’s schools and recreational programs (Campbell Clark, 2002). Additionally, tribal members receive an end-of-year payment from the casinos’ profits (Campbell Clark, 2002). Furthermore, it has been stated that when individuals develop a workplace identity and invest themselves in their work, these employees report feeling like they have earned a spot in the work community (Campbell Clark, 2002). These participants strongly endorsed statements such as “I have a say in what goes on at work.” “I am free to work the hours that are best for my
schedule.” and “I get a lot of satisfactory from carrying out my responsibilities at work.” (Campbell Clark, 2002).

Suppression of cultural identity in the workplace

The reverse situation, whereby Aboriginal employees work for non-Aboriginal companies, has also been researched. More specifically, over the last twenty-five years Aboriginal people have been employed more frequently in non-traditional organizations (Dwyer, 2003). The Canadian federal public service (CFPS) sector is a conglomerate of government organizations whereby Aboriginal peoples have been employed (Dwyer, 2003). However, many Aboriginal people within CFPS are overlooked for promotional opportunities and are rarely employed in executive positions (Dwyer, 2003). In this literature, Dwyer (2003) indicates that Aboriginal employees face a number of challenges and barriers to promotion when working for non-Aboriginal organizations, including racism, discrimination, and environments that alienate Aboriginal culture. Even in instances where Aboriginal job candidates have obtained higher education and have experience, they are overlooked for promotions due to cultural factors (Dwyer, 2003). For example, Aboriginal employees who endorse their cultural identity are less likely to boast about their personal accomplishments, however, the practice of ‘bragging’ about one’s strengths is a common Western practice that helps employees in interview settings (Dwyer, 2003). Additionally, Aboriginal employees may experience high levels of stress and conflict when working for non-Aboriginal companies, as these companies frequently endorse values (e.g., individualism, interpersonal competition, conformity, lack of creativity, etc.) that are incompatible with Aboriginal values, such as cooperation, group consensus, and group cohesiveness (Dwyer, 2003).

As a cultural minority, Aboriginal peoples in certain workplaces may face several
challenges (Linnehan, et al., 2006; Jameson, 2007). For example, the dominant culture sets standards that are aligned with their own values (Jameson, 2007). Furthermore, it has been reported that those who are members of a minority group in a workplace may develop positive or negative attitudes towards their cultural identity in response to whether or not members of the majority group support or disapprove of that identity (Jameson, 2007). This is related to the fact that Caucasians, as the cultural majority, hold a position of power and privilege in society and the workplace, and members of cultural minority groups often feel marginalized when they interact with the cultural majority (Jameson, 2007). As a result of the treatment experienced by cultural minority members from Caucasians in workplace settings, minorities respond emotionally by either focusing on a different identity aspect (e.g., gender), devaluing their cultural identity (e.g., downplaying achievements), or no longer associating with that culture (e.g., ceasing all activities associated with the culture) (Sussman, 2000; Tajfel, 1978).

Aboriginal youth and work

Recent research by Stewart and her colleagues (2014) was conducted to explore why programs and policies to improve youth unemployment statistics have not been successful. This research also was addressing a shortfall in the literature by including the perspectives of urban Aboriginal youth regarding their employment experiences. This study was seeking to advance the understanding of why Aboriginal young adults struggle to find and maintain employment including the supports, challenges, and barriers Aboriginal young adults encounter.

This study was done using Aboriginal research principles, and included the Aboriginal community in the project. In this study, forty Aboriginal young adults between the ages of eighteen and thirty were interviewed using a qualitative methodology. More specifically, Stewart et al. (2014) employed a narrative research approach because it was deemed to be the
most culturally appropriate. Of the forty participants, twenty were interviewed in individual interviews and the remaining twenty participants were sampled using a focus group. The individual interviews were conducted prior to the focus group. All participants were asked four open-ended questions, and the participants’ responses were used to develop the four questions that were asked of the focus group participants. Story maps were created based on individual interview responses to represent the participants’ experiences across time. The participants reviewed their story maps and revisions were made based on their feedback. For the focus group participants, they collectively worked together to analyse their data together during the focus group by organizing the responses into categories.

Stewart and her colleagues (2014) report that culture gives young Aboriginal peoples a sense of pride in the workplace. However, when Aboriginal young adults work for mainstream employers, they miss having access to their cultural traditions and struggle to adapt to Western cultural norms. Participant reported they would feel more supported if culture was more visible in the workplace and employers supported their traditions, if non-Aboriginal employees were educated in Aboriginal history, and if policy changes were made to increase the number of employees who are Aboriginal and ensuring they have equal salaries.

Aboriginal young employees experience oppression in the workplace from feeling like an outsider in mainstream culture, overt and covert racism, and discrimination and exploitation in the workplace. As a result of the oppression Aboriginal young employees encounter, they attempt to conceal their identity, and are distrustful of mainstream employment settings because they are not treated fairly or equitably. Aboriginal young peoples address workplace oppression by confronting the people who said or did something inappropriate or by reporting the behaviour to a superior, others ignored what happened in order to keep their job, and some seek out new employment opportunities. Identity helps young Aboriginal participants boost their self-esteem,
provides them with balance, and is a source of inner strength. Identity is challenged because mainstream society marginalizes their identity.

Young Aboriginal adults struggle to gain work experience because of limited opportunities, employment instability, financial issues, difficult work transitions, racism, and difficulties separating work and personal life. Similarly, education is important for employment success, especially postsecondary education, and culturally based programs geared towards Aboriginal students completing secondary school are important. Educational obtainment improves self-esteem, but many youth encounter personal challenges that make completing secondary school difficult. Others reported difficulty in the workplace as result of being treated like an outsider in Aboriginal organizations because they did not grow-up on a reservation community, or being alienated by racism in mainstream organizations. They also felt oppressed when working with non-Aboriginal staff due to isolation or hostility. Participants with mixed identity do not fit into mainstream or Aboriginal organizations as they are the source of racist remarks or are not Native enough. Social supports, such as role models are important to demonstrate that work and school success is possible as well as teaching Aboriginal young people that if they work hard they can achieve their goals. Participants with a lack of social support dropped out of school and experienced more difficulty finding employment.

The strengths of the Stewart et al. (2014) study include the fact that culturally appropriate research methodology was used. Historically, the scientific community has exploited Aboriginal populations through research, so it is important to ensure respectful relationships with the community are established. Similarly, the participants were given agency over their data through conducting the data analysis and checking in with the individual interview participants to allow them to review their story maps and modify them. Another strength of the study is the sample size was quite large and board in terms of the ages of Aboriginal youth sampled. Additionally,
this study included Aboriginal young adults in order to assess the challenges they have in finding and maintaining employment. Finally, the researchers analyzed the data from the individual interviews and used the results to shape and form the focus group questions; they did not have preconceived notions regarding what the issues were, but allowed the data to guide their exploration.

In terms of the weakness in the Stewart et al. (2014) study the participants were all recruited from one location, Toronto, so the results of the study may not be generalizable to other urban locations or to Aboriginal young adults living in reservation communities. Additionally, the participants were recruited via community partners, so is possible that these young adults were more connected to culture and their cultural identity as they accessed these cultural community organizations. As such, the participants in this study may have been more likely to report upon the importance of cultural identity and the importance of accessing culture in the workplace than urban Aboriginal young people who do not access cultural community organizations. Finally, it would have been beneficial if all forty participants had been asked the same four questions as it would have allowed for more comparison between the individual interviews and focus groups.

Implications from this study indicate future research should address the willingness of mainstream employers to implement training for their non-Aboriginal staff in terms of Aboriginal history, culture, and context, as well as their willingness to implement policies that will effectively address and prevent oppression and discrimination of Aboriginal young people in the workplace. Another future study would be to interview Aboriginal young adults who work for mainstream employers and have effectively integrated their cultural identity into their workplace to assess their employment stability and success.
The main contributions from this study have practical applications in workplaces, such as how employers can improve their current workplaces via training and policies to make workplaces more welcoming and safe environments for Aboriginal young employees. Additionally, the findings indicate that culturally sensitive educational initiatives would benefit Aboriginal young people in staying in school as well as how to adapt educational programs so Aboriginal young people are more likely to successfully complete these programs, which would benefit their employment outcomes. Finally, this study indicates that many Aboriginal young people struggle with isolation as a result of the oppression they encounter in workplaces, despite many organizations having policies that prohibit racism. This implies that more work needs to be done to ensure Aboriginal young adults have the social support they need and are not left to fend off oppression on their own.

**Career counselling with First Nation youth**

Research by Neumann and his colleagues (2000) was conducted to assess if the career counselling model developed by the authors is culturally appropriate and effective for use with First Nation youth. This research was addressing a shortfall in the career counselling literature by using a career counselling model developed for use with First Nation youth as opposed to much of the literature that was assessing career counselling models that were developed using Western perspectives. The model developed by the authors promoted and incorporated First Nation values such as interconnectedness and culture in hopes it would improve career counselling outcomes for First Nation youth. This study was conducted to get feedback from First Nation participants to assess the effectiveness of the career counselling model and determine how to improve and refine the model.

For the study Neumann et al. (2000) invited thirteen Aboriginal youth between the ages of
thirteen and twenty-six to participate in one career counselling session and one follow-up interview. The youth participated in the career counselling session with people from their family and community. In the first session, the youth had the option of incorporating cultural practices that they felt were appropriate. Youth were asked to describe an activity they enjoy and describe a time when that activity was enjoyable and not very enjoyable. The family members/community members also provided their input on what the youth described. The facilitator utilized a chart during the discussion and encouraged the participants to discuss the areas they did not cover initially. Youth were asked their feedback about the session immediately and an individual interview was also conducted as a follow-up. Two of the authors read the transcripts and determined the key findings across participants.

Neumann and his colleagues (2000) report there were five themes across participants: increased self-awareness; usefulness of family, community, and peer input; openness to cultural practices; recommendations for improving the Career-Life Planning Guide; and feedback on process. For the theme of increased self-awareness the youth reported that they learned a lot about themselves from reflecting on their interests as well as from receiving feedback from family and community members. Additionally, the youth reported the sessions helped them to consider their strengths more in relation to their career goals, and that the session helped motivate the youth to focus on their career path.

The input from family and community members provided feedback that was valued by the youth. Some youth did not want their family members to participate in the session as they described that it put extra pressure on the youth or because they reported that they already knew their family members opinions. Other participants reported that having their family and community present let them know they are supported.
Not all participants chose to incorporate cultural elements into their session, but those who did reported that they appreciated it. Other aspects of the session were reported to be culturally appropriate including, sitting in a circle, having family and community members participate in the session, and the use of food before the session began. However, the participants reported the session could have been made more culturally appropriate by including more youth participants at the same session of different ages and from different Nations. Another participant stated that it was inappropriate for the facilitator to record the session and take notes because any information worth remembering the facilitator would be able to recall.

The participants reported the First Nations Career-Life Planning Guide could be improved by using simpler wording, using examples on the chart so the youth would understand what the terms meant, and including the following additions to the model: family history, parental expectations, and personal, community, or cultural challenges. The participants also reported that having more than one session to discuss their career planning would be beneficial.

The strengths of the Neumann et al. (2000) study include the fact that the authors adapted Western models of career counselling so that they were more culturally appropriate to use with First Nations youth. This is important because the youth in the study reported appreciating this model more than the career methods they had been exposed to in schools, and may result in more First Nation youth seeking out career counselling that will have positive outcomes. Another strength in the study was that the authors did not use traditional standardized tests to determine the youths’ interests, but allowed them to share their narratives and used their reflections to parlay it into a career context. Finally, the youth in the study were given agency to determine what, if any traditional elements they wanted to include in the session.

In terms of the weakness in the Neumann et al. (2000) study, the results do not
demonstrate the career counselling model developed by the authors is effective in helping First Nation youth achieve their career goals. The study simply finds First Nations youth in the study appreciated the Career Life-Planning Guide for its cultural sensitivity. Additionally, the youth in the study reported they experienced challenges to achieving their career goals, but they were not addressed in the study. The authors explained they wanted to focus on helping First Nations youth identify their career interests and goals, however it would be beneficial to help these youth identify and strategize ways to address, prevent, and overcome employment barriers as a key component to helping youth achieve their career goals. A final weakness of this study is that the authors also failed to address challenges First Nations youth encounter in terms of completing secondary and postsecondary school, which may be an additional barrier to finding employment or successfully entering their desired career.

The implications for future research are that the Career Life-Planning Guide should be implemented with youth who represent different First Nation communities, as well as Inuit and Metis youth. Additionally, it would be beneficial to have a study conduct long-term (e.g., five years and ten years) follow-up sessions to assess the effectiveness in this model in aiding youth in achieving their career goals. Finally, it would be valuable for the authors to implement the suggestions of the participants to ensure the best possible career counselling experience for First Nation youth while retaining cultural sensitivity.

The main contributions from this study have practical applications in organizations that offer employment assistance to Aboriginal youth and schools with Aboriginal students regarding how career counselling can be modified to ensure it is offered in a way that is culturally appropriate and will have the most effectiveness in terms of shaping the career paths of Aboriginal youth. Additionally, the findings indicate that culturally sensitive career counselling initiatives could encourage Aboriginal youth to complete secondary school as part of their career
planning so they have the education required to enter their desired career path successfully.

Finally, this study indicates that many First Nation youth experience challenges in terms of Western career counselling models. Thus, more efforts need to be made to ensure career counselling with Aboriginal youth is done in a manner that allows them to feel culturally safe and accepted in order to have a positive impact.

**Historical context of Aboriginal peoples in the workplace**

Many Aboriginal communities have relied on resource-based industries, including fishing, forestry, and mining, for employment opportunities. However, the recent decline in these resource-based industries has resulted in diminishing employment opportunities for Aboriginal youth (Ommer and team, 2007; White et al., 2003). The dwindling work opportunities have left many families struggling to get by on a day-to-day basis, while the cost of living continues to climb. As a result, there has been an increase in young people migrating to cities to pursue work opportunities that are not available in their communities (Statistics Canada, 2009). This can be a very challenging and stressful life-transition for these youth as they are separated from families and communities, which puts a strain on their cultural identity (Larsen, 2004; Marshall, Stewart, & Harrison, 2006; McCormick & Amundson, 1997).

Several barriers have been identified for Aboriginal youth finding and obtaining meaningful employment, including educational obtainment, discrimination, racism, and a lack of training (Hoffman, Jackson & Smith, 2005; White et al, 2003; McCormick and Amundson, 1997; Stewart & Marshall 2011a, 2011b). Additionally, of the Aboriginal people do find employment, very few tend to be employed in executive positions (Dwyer, 2003).

Many policies have been put into place with the goal of improving employment outcomes for Aboriginal peoples. One initiative is workplace mentoring. However, research
suggests (Dwyer, 2003; Barker, 2007) that cross-cultural mentoring is not effective as non-Aboriginal mentors do not share the same cultural values. Furthermore, it has been suggested (Burke & McKeen, 1992; Thomas, 1990) that non-Aboriginal mentors usually do not provide effective psychological support to Aboriginal employees, and as many organizations do not have many Aboriginal people employed in executive positions, mentoring programs tend to be unsuccessful (Dwyer, 2003).

Other career literature has focused on factors that contribute to the success of minority employees. Some of the mentoring literature suggests mentoring is a successful method of promoting career advancement (Gonzalez-Figueroa & Young, 2005). Gonzalez-Figueroa and Young (2005) report that Latina women who endorse their ethnic identity respond positively to being mentored by someone of a similar ethnic identity. Dwyer (2003) notes that most organizations feel that mentoring is important for Aboriginal people so they can develop skills necessary to succeed in Western workplaces. However, Aboriginal people employed in executive positions do not feel that mentoring is an effective way to advance career standing (Dwyer, 2003). Thus, caution must be exercised when assessing vocational research that focuses on non-Aboriginal minority groups as the findings may not be transferable or beneficial to apply with Aboriginal people, especially Aboriginal youth.

For Aboriginal peoples who are connected to their cultural communities, the community is often a very important social support. It has been demonstrated that when an individual in the community struggles, the community will rally to help support the individual (Juntunen, et al., 2001). Additional research indicates that Aboriginal students who are more effective at coping with vocational challenges (e.g., racial discrimination, systemic classism, etc.) report having higher levels of employment success (Thompson, 2012).
Recent research by Stewart and Marshall (2011a; 2011b) indicates that Aboriginal youth may be better able to address employment challenges if they are presented with an opportunity to build on their cultural identity in the workplace. The present study builds on results from previous research conducted by Stewart and Marshall (2011a; 2011b), which examined Aboriginal youth’s experiences of the supports, challenges and barriers they have faced in their quest to find sustainable work. Obstacles in the workplace, such as systemic racism and job training, are reported barriers to Aboriginal peoples obtaining meaningful employment (Stewart & Marshall, 2011a, 2011b) and as limiting factors to succeeding in the workplace (Juntunen, et al., 2001). Furthermore, participants expressed solutions to employment challenges would build on their existing strength of cultural identity to help them resist the colonial oppression they experienced systemically.

The present research plans to extend these results to investigate the depth and details of how culturally based work-life identity is understood by Aboriginal youth within the context of employment outcomes. More specifically, the goal of this research is to improve employment outcomes by influencing programming, policy, and services to implement the youths’ suggestions in an effort to increase Aboriginal youth employment statistics.
Qualitative research

Qualitative research methods enhance the understanding of the lived experiences of individuals from the perspective of the individual (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Additionally, qualitative researchers stress the importance of the socially constructed nature of reality and the situational constraints that shape research inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Thus, qualitative research is appropriate for understanding the life contexts of Aboriginal youths’ employment experiences as they have control over what they are sharing. This is important as in the past many Aboriginal communities were victimized by researchers who did not allow Aboriginal participants to have agency over their involvement in the research. Qualitative research methods are also culturally appropriate while enabling researchers to collect data that thoroughly answers research questions (Morrow, 2007). Additionally, qualitative research was appropriate for this study as it allows for in-depth understanding and analysis of participants’ personal experiences (Morrow, 2007). Finally, qualitative research enables researchers to interview participants in a more naturalistic setting while attempting to make sense of the context and stories people share (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As one goal of this research project was to engage in meaning making of Aboriginal youth and their workplace experiences, qualitative research was appropriate.

Narrative inquiry

A narrative inquiry approach was used in this project as it focuses on producing in-depth understanding of participants’ lives and world through the act of sharing their stories (Clandinin
Narrative inquiry is “characterized as an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them” (Chase, 2005 p. 651). Thus, Chase (2005) implies narrative inquiry in research is not static, but continually evolves while remaining focused on the unique experiences of each participant. This means that the data collected is approach is as distinct as each participant.

A basic underlying premise of narrative inquiry is that research participants are able to conceptualize and engage in meaning-making regarding their identity, experiences, and the world by sharing their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; McAdams & Janis 2004; Riessman, 2008). The process of narrative inquiry also creates conditions for meaning making to occur, which is distinct from simply sharing a narrative or telling a story (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Furthermore, narrative inquiry utilizes five analytic perspectives that make it distinctive from other forms of qualitative research (Chase, 2005). First, narrative inquiry acknowledges the use of the narrator’s perspective in a retrospective manner (Chase, 2005). This involves incorporating the narrator’s emotions, thoughts, and interpretations in a way that gives a unique understanding of the individual’s experiences over time (Chase, 2005). Secondly, narrative inquiry recognizes the narrator’s voice has the capacity for “verbal action” (Chase, 2005 p. 657). In essence, these narratives are constructed by the individual to communicate his/her experience of reality by deemphasizing the factual aspects of the story, and focusing on personal history. Third, narrative inquiry is constructed to address a particular audience, and with a specific purpose (Chase, 2005). Fourth, narrative inquiry explores the individual’s experience, while taking into account his/her social context (Chase, 2005). Finally, researchers using narrative inquiry are also narrators via their interpretation and presentation their studies (Chase, 2005).
This suggests narrative inquiry involves both the participants and the researchers in both storytelling and sharing the significance of the information.

More importantly, Aboriginal peoples usually describe themselves as having an oral-based storytelling tradition to communicate ways of knowing (Stewart, 2008; Medicine-Eagle 1989). Thus, a narrative exploration is culturally sensitive as it is consistent with Aboriginal oral traditions of telling stories to communicate knowledge (Stewart, 2008). Additionally, the similarity between narrative inquiry and Aboriginal epistemology suggests that narrative inquiry is both culturally appropriate and conducive to exploring the lived experiences of Aboriginal peoples (Barton, 2004). Individual interviews permitted for a narrative research design, which is appropriate not only for acquiring a detailed account of each participant’s unique experience, but is also culturally appropriate as Aboriginals have an oral based tradition (Medicine-Eagle, 1989) which translates effectively to utilizing a narrative approach for communicating knowledge and information (Stewart, 2008). For this research study, the decision to interview ten participants was deemed appropriate for elucidating understanding about urban Aboriginal youth workplace experiences. Furthermore, it has been noted that research utilizing a narrative inquiry method does not require a large number of research participants to adequately explore research questions (Wells, 2011). In fact, empirical literature utilizing narrative inquiry methods interviewed as few as three participants and as many as twelve participants (Early & Norton, 2012; Lindholm, Börjesson, & Cederborg, 2014; Schwind, Zanchetta, Aksenchuk, & Gorospe, 2013), which indicates using ten research participants in this current study is empirically justified.

**Research design**

The depth and detail of the research question required a qualitative methodology that utilized narrative inquiry to create meaning within the context of each participant’s life story.
Community partnerships and ethical principles were integral to the study design. Our experiences as researchers in Aboriginal communities have underscored the necessity of respectful and reciprocal relationships. Historically, researchers in Aboriginal communities had little or no knowledge of Aboriginal traditions and history. Furthermore, as Aboriginal communities typically have not been consulted or involved with the research design, Aboriginal communities are understandably suspicious of researchers (Cochran, Marshall, Garcia-Downing, Kendall, Cook, McCubbin, & Gover 2008; Hudson & Taylor-Henley, 2001; Marshall & Stewart, 2004; Menzies, 2001). Moreover, Stewart’s (2008) research suggests adopting an Aboriginal research paradigm supports Native communities and effectively aids in their healing from colonization.

Participants

10 self-identified urban (i.e., living in the Greater Toronto Area) Aboriginal youth between the ages of 18 and 30 were invited to participate in individual interviews. The participants were recruited through our Aboriginal community contacts. By focusing on urban Aboriginal youth, this permitted the research to assess Aboriginals who do not live on reserves, which is the Aboriginal population with the highest unemployment rate (Usalcas, 2011). Research participants were not excluded on a basis of gender, class, or position.

Recruitment

The recruitment of participants was conducted as part of a large SSHRC-funded study called “Work-life identity of Aboriginal youth: Exploring the momentum of challenges and strengths in career,” led by Dr. Suzanne Stewart, a faculty member at the University of Toronto and in collaboration with Dr. Anne Marshall, a faculty member at the University of Victoria. The recruitment process began with the formation of community partnerships with local
Aboriginal agencies. The community partners are invited to provide feedback on the proposed study, and are encouraged to be actively involved throughout the research process. This is consistent with the Ownership Control Access Possession (OCAP) principles that are designed to respect Aboriginal communities so that research is conducted with these communities rather than for or on the communities (Schnarch, 2004). Recruitment of participants for individual interviews occurred through word of mouth to those who frequently visit the Native Canadian Center of Toronto.

**Individual interviews**

Interviews were conducted over approximately a one-hour timeframe in a convenient location and at a convenient time, as identified by each participant. Each interview began by reviewing the informed consent letter both verbally and in writing. Once the participant consented to participate, each participant was informed of the flow and structure of the interview. The participants were all granted the opportunity to voice any questions or concerns regarding the interview, and all raised items were addressed prior to the start of the interview questions. Once the participant’s questions and concerns were addressed, I presented each participant with his/her gift card honourarium. Each interview was conducted in an open-ended and semi-structured format. All participants were asked the following questions: “How does a sense of who you are, or your workplace identity, develop in the workplace for Aboriginal youth? How do employers help or challenge the success of Aboriginal youth in the workplace? What do you consider to be the most important thing about work for youth? What are some of your hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth with regard to employment outcomes?” Prompts (e.g., tell us a bit more about that) and open-ended follow-up questions were used to facilitate the interview process as needed. All participants were randomly assigned a four digit code replace their name and protect their anonymity.
Data analysis

The analysis of the interviews involved a specific procedure developed by Dr. Stewart (Stewart, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011). The first step in this process included transcribing each interview, chunking the interview into segments, coding the interview segments, and identifying core themes and meta-themes. This process can be conceptualized by taking each interview as a whole, breaking it down to review the various elements within the discussion, and integrating the individual elements with similar concepts and elements from the other individual interviews to produce the themes and meta-themes. This process will be reviewed in detail below.

The first step in the data analysis began with transcribing each recorded interview verbatim. For this study, verbatim transcription entailed documenting the commentary of each participant, including articulations such as “mmhmm,” “uh,” “hmm,” laughter, pauses and any additional behaviours of significance. The inclusion of individual articulations and behaviours was to preserve the richness and complexity of the interview. After the transcription of the recording was completed I re-listened to each interview in its entirety, following along with the transcript and making any necessary corrections.

The second step in the data analysis involved chunking the interview transcript into smaller segments. This process was completed for organizational purposes. More specifically, the transcript was chunked so that each unit of data consisted of one key idea so that each unit of data would only have a maximum of one code that corresponded to the text. Chunking the data also aided in cross-referencing both within and between interview transcripts. Figure 1 depicts an example how chunking the data was used in the study:
Figure 1: Example of data unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Unit #</th>
<th>Interview Transcript</th>
<th>Corresponding Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>455</td>
<td>{I}: So what are some of your hopes, dreams, and fears for the future for youth with regard to employment outcome?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>456</td>
<td>{S}: Oh my. Is this Aboriginal youth?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>457</td>
<td>{I}: Yes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>459</td>
<td>{I}: So did you want to start with one?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>460</td>
<td>{S}: Hopes, dreams, and fears.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>461</td>
<td>Umm, my hope would be, umm just I suppose seeing more employment.</td>
<td>Hopes there are more youth employed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third step in the process was coding the interview data. For this study, each code used was specific and unique, and were derived explicitly from the data. More specifically, the language and context used by each participant determined the code that was assigned to each data unit. For example, Figure 1 shows how data unit #461 was coded “Hopes there are more youth employed” based on the text provided by the participant “Umm, my hope would be, umm just I suppose seeing more employment.” In this instance, the code represent the context of the discourse between myself and the participant concerning what the participant hopes will happen in the future regarding youth employment. Thus, the codes assigned represented the key concept, context, or topic that was being discussed between the participants and myself. After the initial coding was complete, the transcript was reviewed a second time to ensure that the code used had captured the essence of the participant’s perspective. All ten transcripts were coded in this manner.

The fourth step included reviewing each participant’s transcripts as whole to determine the overarching core message and themes within the data. The core message represents the main concept or central ideas that are articulated throughout the participant’s interview, while the themes represent main points that were connected to the core message but highlighted different
facets of their employment narrative. It was imperative that the participants’ narratives and stories were retained while organizing this information in a manner that elicited meaning making based on the content. The core messages and themes were identified for each individual participant after integrating and organizing their narrative into a story map. A story map is a visual representation of the overarching questions discussed in the interview (horizontal axis), and a time orientation (vertical axis) of past, present, and future representation of the participant’s narrative. The story maps allowed for participants' narratives and stories to be retained holistically while allowing the participant and researcher to review and reflect upon the participant’s narrative and to undergo meaning making. Based on the interview questions and literature review I anticipated each participant’s data could be organized under the four following headings: Workplace identity, Employer help/challenge success, Most important thing about work for youth, and Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment. These four headings were plotted onto each participant’s story map along the horizontal axis and represented the structural categories of each participant’s story. The story maps help to illustrate the participants’ narratives overtime which helped elicit meaning in the past, present, and future when taken into consideration with the headings (Stewart, 2007). The story map (see Figure 2) was created and used each participant’s unique descriptive codes to organize their narrative based on the headings and over time.

**Figure 2: Story map organization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Workplace identity</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
<th>Most important thing about work for youth</th>
<th>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past Experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Intentions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once all the descriptive codes were organized into the four headings and over time, I reviewed the transcripts and codes to ensure the placement of the code into each theme was representative of the discussion. I then reviewed the story maps to identify the core messages and themes. The story map, core message, and themes were presented to each participant. A discussion of this analysis and the results will be discussed in the following thesis chapter.

The final step was to conduct a follow-up interview with each participant. In the follow-up interview I presented each participant with a copy of his/her initial story map and we verbally reviewed the story map together. This process involved explaining the descriptive codes, the core message, and the themes. Each participant had the opportunity to make revisions or modifications to their story map and to further reflect upon the initial interview questions. The follow-up questions were: “From your narratives in the interview I have constructed a story map. How does this story map illustrate your views? What is missing from your story map? What would you like to add? Do you have anything else to say about your story map?” All the feedback provided by the participants was added to their story maps. For a detailed description of the results for each participant, please see Chapter Four.

Dissemination of knowledge is a key goal, which has been incorporated into the larger research project developed by Dr. Suzanne Stewart, “Work Life Identity of Aboriginal youth: Exploring the momentum of challenges in career.” This larger project targets three main audience groups for communicating the research results. First, it is anticipated that the dissemination to the academic community will be accomplished via publications in various peer-reviewed academic journals, scholarly presentations, and at conferences. The second audience is educators, counselling professionals, and policy makers, who need professional publications, in-service workshops, hands-on resources, curriculum packages, implementation manuals, policy briefs, and executive summaries. The third audience is the Aboriginal community including,
youth, teachers, parents, Elders, service workers, community agencies, and support staff. Poster sessions, brochures, newsletters, and community workshops are the most relevant dissemination choices for the Aboriginal community. Upon completion of this thesis, the results will be compiled into a research report, which will also be provided to each participant. Together with our community partners, the research results will be used to develop practical tools and strategies that will be specifically adapted for local contexts.
Within Participant Results

In this section a summary of each interview will be presented as well as the key themes and subthemes that emerged during the interviews will be discussed in relation to the overarching research question: what are the intersections of cultural identity and work-life experiences for Aboriginal youth as they relate to employment outcomes? The core message and themes across participants can be conceptualized with the following diagram in Figure 3 below:
Figure 3. Employment interrelated themes

Integration of cultural identity in the workplace promotes productivity

Desire to include culture more in the workplace

Cultural identity is integrated with workplace identity

Direct racism and lack of support from management, coworkers, and the system of work

Youth who live in isolated reservation communities face unique challenges and need support to gain successful employment

Not having education equivalent to non-Aboriginal youth

Employers need to learn about Aboriginal history, traditions, and way of life to breakdown employment barriers

Engaging with Aboriginal culture in the workplace for wellbeing

Inability to integrate culture in the workplace harms wellbeing

Desire to include culture more in the workplace

Cultural identity is integrated with workplace identity

Youth experiencing to find out what they love

Employers taking chances and providing opportunities

Establishing positive relationships between employers and employees

Private employment outcomes

Participants’ experience with work

Encouraging mentors

What employers need to know

Employees need to learn about Aboriginal history, traditions, and way of life to breakdown employment barriers

People learn differently

Employers need to acknowledge when employees are doing their job well

When employees make a mistake it is important for employers to explain what they would like to see happen in a respectful manner

Need to normalize mistakes
Participant 1515

**Character sketch.** Participant 1515 was a full-time university student at the time of our interview. She was a female in her early-twenties. Participant 1515 had varied employment experience in different sectors. She appeared to be relaxed and expressed excitement about sharing her experiences. During our interview 1515 shared how traditions and cultures had become more important and prominent in the present, and how culture and Aboriginal identity had been both absent in her past work experience and present in her current place of employment. The participant used humour throughout the interview. The story maps below illustrate the core concepts and themes that emerged.

**Story map.** The initial story map (see Figure 4) was constructed during the analysis phase of this interview (See Chapter Three for a detailed explanation of the process). Upon completion of the story map I identified one core message and two themes from the map and interview narrative. The initial core message for 1515 was a desire to include Cultural Identity in her personal life and in the workplace. The two themes were removing Systemic Barriers and the importance of creating Positive Workplaces.

**Feedback from second interview and final story map.** Upon completion of the analysis of 1515’s interview, I constructed her story map and identified the core message and themes. I then scheduled a follow-up interview with 1515 to review the findings with her. I provided 1515 with a copy of her story map and explained how I came to identify the core message and themes in her narrative. I asked her the following questions: “From your narratives in your interview I have constructed a story map. How does this map illustrate your views? What is missing from your story map? What would you like to add? Do you have anything else to say about your story map?” In response to the questions, participant 1515 initially explained she
### Figure 4. Participant 1515 initial story map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1515</th>
<th>Workplace Identity</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
<th>Most important thing about work for youth</th>
<th>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Past</strong></td>
<td>- When not working in the Aboriginal sector, Aboriginal identity not as salient - Absence of Aboriginal culture growing up has been limiting to cultural identity development - Aboriginal culture and history were missing on Dad's side growing up</td>
<td>- Sister encountered racism at the workplace - Sister was told her Native family members were &quot;bums I see on the street.&quot;</td>
<td>- Enjoyed workplaces where s/he knew coworkers - When got to know coworkers in past, got involved in more activities, the workplace is fun, and it increases productivity because it doesn't feel like work and employees are happy to be at work - Previously employed as a supervisor and ensured: - employee worked towards a common goal - helped individuals as needed - employees were happy - Important that no one feels left out because if one person feels left out it makes the team dynamic more negative, and it makes it more challenging for the team to prosper</td>
<td>- Most important thing about work for Aboriginal youth is community - Important youth understand the impact their work has on the community - Important youth understand they're working as part of the community environment - Important youth see the results of their work on the community - Important youth are invested in their work - Important youth feel like their work is an investment for the greater good - Important youth feel like they're working towards a better outlook - When feel like work is important it makes employees loyal to their job/employer - Important youth are able to integrate cultural practices into their work - Access to traditions and cultural values promotes work - When youth work in jobs they don't feel connected to, they don't enjoy their work - Important youth have a job that speaks to their identity as an Aboriginal person and feel like their work is having an impact on others - If work does not instil a sense of involvement, youth will distance themselves from their work and get lost (in terms of their identity) - Important for workplace environments to have social events for people to socialize with each other - Social events in the workplace are important because people can learn about each other - Social events in the workplace provide Aboriginal employees with the opportunity to share their cultural values and viewpoints - Social events in the workplace provide opportunity to learn about different cultural values - Social events in the workplace are an opportunity to create a community of sharing among employees - Social events in the workplace create a positive work environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present</strong></td>
<td>- Current job focus on developing Aboriginal identity because working in an Aboriginal field - Working in Aboriginal field leads to looking at things through an Aboriginal perspective - Learning about and integrating Aboriginal identity into daily life - Trying to integrate Aboriginal identity into the workplace because has been exposed to Aboriginal culture more recently, so it is more present and prevalent - Recently has been learning and exploring Aboriginal cultural roots and history - Meets with an Elder to understand teachings, and women's roles in Aboriginal life ceremonies - Smudges at home - Understanding of the history of ceremony practice important - Identity of cultural values important - Learning traditions is critical so youth learn: - where they came from - what their family did - why it's important to keep traditions so they aren't lost - Aboriginal culture is positive to personal and spiritual development - Attended a banquet where a traditional thanks was offered to the people who lived on the land before, which was positive - Access to traditions and cultural values provides a sense of identity that makes work more successful - Work becomes part of identity so youth have to be wise and conscious of what type of work they do - Cultural identity permits healing</td>
<td>- Challenges: - to address an employer if you live a traditional way of life - for employers to respect requests for time off work to attend ceremonies if they are unfamiliar with people living a traditional way of life - to bring cultural practices into everyday life at workplace - not all workplaces will permit employees to smudge - if Aboriginal employee doesn't feel like s/he can express cultural values - if Aboriginal employee doesn't feel like s/he is able to ask for time off - Aboriginal youth face challenges in obtaining work due to trauma, intergenerational trauma, personal circumstances, systemic barriers, and racism - Aboriginal youth face a lot of stigma - Many people in Canada do not understand Aboriginal culture</td>
<td>- Important youth are able to integrate cultural practices into their work - Access to traditions and cultural values promotes work - When youth work in jobs they don't feel connected to, they don't enjoy their work - Important youth have a job that speaks to their identity as an Aboriginal person and feel like their work is having an impact on others - If work does not instil a sense of involvement, youth will distance themselves from their work and get lost (in terms of their identity) - Important for workplace environments to have social events for people to socialize with each other - Social events in the workplace are important because people can learn about each other - Social events in the workplace provide Aboriginal employees with the opportunity to share their cultural values and viewpoints - Social events in the workplace provide opportunity to learn about different cultural values - Social events in the workplace are an opportunity to create a community of sharing among employees - Social events in the workplace create a positive work environment</td>
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**Challenges:**

- to address an employer if you live a traditional way of life
- for employers to respect requests for time off work to attend ceremonies if they are unfamiliar with people living a traditional way of life
- to bring cultural practices into everyday life at workplace
- not all workplaces will permit employees to smudge
- if Aboriginal employee doesn't feel like s/he can express cultural values
- if Aboriginal employee doesn't feel like s/he is able to ask for time off
- Aboriginal youth face challenges in obtaining work due to trauma, intergenerational trauma, personal circumstances, systemic barriers, and racism
- Aboriginal youth face a lot of stigma
- Many people in Canada do not understand Aboriginal culture

**Help:**

- Small sections of employers are more aware of Aboriginal cultural values
- Hopes youth will be seen more positively despite the setbacks they face
- Education may help to decrease stigmas about Aboriginal youth
- Important for people to understand Aboriginal culture

**Dreams:**

- outreach programs will be developed to:
  - connect youth to ceremonies or activities
  - connect youth to cultural values and practices that also teach anxiety and stress management, and coping from depression
  - traditions and culture
  - of instilling and reviving culture in youth
  - youth will embrace traditions in a modern way and bring them into their everyday lives
  - of flexibility in ceremony protocol so youth can still keep traditional values active in their lives and lifestyles
  - of adapting ceremonies in a modern, metropolitan way
  - youth can have culture present in workplaces
  - youth can work in environments with a presence in traditional ways and lifestyles

**Fears:**

- Increased psychopathology in low SES youth which is negative
- Some people are resistant to healing
- Some people are resistant to healing
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| - Takes cultural teaching about ceremonies to family and they want to get more involved in the community  
- Taking cultural teachings to family been filling a gap and has given them a different point of view  
- Taking cultural teaching to family has allowed them to get more in touch with their roots and to learn more about their family  
- Sharing aspects of Native culture with family and they are participating more in ceremonies | working with Aboriginal youth to help break negative cycles  
- Important to not come in trying to fix Aboriginal youth when helping them break negative cycles  
- Important to bolster sense of community when helping Aboriginal youth break negative cycles  
- Having open, sharing, positive work environments make employees:  
- feel comforted  
- have fun with coworkers  
- connect with each other  
- set goals | Social events in the workplace make for a better work experience  
- Important that workplaces are open to the ideas of different cultural values  
- Important employees and coworkers are interested in people's lives  
- Coworkers connecting with each other helps them work towards common goals at work  
- Important to persevere despite progress and setbacks  
- Likes inviting Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to:  
- participate in the community, share with other, and try out cultural activities  
- drum and explore the Aboriginal community | - Wants balance of self and workplace  
- Wants cultural teaching about ceremonies to family and they want to get more involved in the community  
- Takes cultural teachings to family been filling a gap and has given them a different point of view  
- Taking cultural teaching to family has allowed them to get more in touch with their roots and to learn more about their family  
- Sharing aspects of Native culture with family and they are participating more in ceremonies | - Future career wants to ensure:  
- Things are done through an Aboriginal perspective  
- Aboriginal cultural value balance  
- Aboriginal values align with Aboriginal healing  
- Aboriginal culture is present  
- has more grounded roots  
- Wants to incorporate cultural identity and cultural values:  
- more as enter the workforce  
- and work with Aboriginal people  
- in the own identity  
- while engages in self-care  
- in how interacts with others  
- Culture will help mediate change in breaking negative cycles  
- When employees have a sense of cultural identity and family it permits for more positive personal growth  
- Workplaces create a learning environment to teach each other about their cultural identities | - Access to traditions and cultural values promotes:  
- investment in work because it integrates lifestyle into the work  
- integration of lifestyle and work by giving back to the community  
- When youth have a job that speaks to their identity and feel like their work is having an impact on others, youth will feel rewarded  
- When youth feel rewarded from their work it:  
- creates positive changes  
- inspires them to do greater things  
- inspires other people  
- has a positive ripple effect on the community  
- When you get to know your coworkers it makes the job more worthwhile  
- Important to create positive workplace  
- Important to create work environment where employees can connect with each other  
- Wants to be employed in Aboriginal sector to be more involved in culture  
- Wants to work with Aboriginal people  
- Want to educate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal culture  
- In future wants to work in an environment where:  
- s/he can smudge  
- s/he can share culture with coworkers  
- s/he can regularly participate in ceremonies  
- In future, if doesn't work in an environment where can incorporate Aboriginal culture, Aboriginal culture will continue have a presence in personal life | - When individuals heal they can get more involved in the Aboriginal community  
- employees with strong cultural identity can bring that into more diverse job sectors  
- employees can have positive support and cultural group settings  
- Hopes to educate people on:  
- the causes of youth unemployment  
- how youth unemployment develops  
- youth unemployment patterns  
- how youth unemployment is rooted in history  
- Hope workplaces:  
- get employees involved in community  
- promote social activities  
- promote positive changes in employees through community  
- create more opportunities for employees to work together  
- for a better future in education  
- for a better future in the work field | - More people will know about Aboriginal education  
- Aboriginal youth become more awareness and education of how colonization has affected them  
- People become more active in their culture | - Wants balance of self and workplace  
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- be resistant to change  
- hold a grudge because of the way they are  
- focus on why they aren't getting more assistance instead of how to use the help available  
- stop pursing work opportunities because they face continual drawbacks  
- give up looking for employment because the job search is not successful  
- due to lack of employment options youth may not find proper employment |
shared everything she could think of during our initial interview. As we reviewed the different areas of the story map participant 1515 shared that she was excited to see the results organized into meaningful information. She also explained upon reviewing the information in her story map that she still felt the same way about what she initially said in our interview and that the information she provided in her narrative are relevant as well as close to her heart based on her personal experiences. However, as we continued to explore the items, there were two additional points she wanted to add to her story map. The first addition was under the Most important thing about work for youth heading for the present, as she wanted to include that when employers create workplaces that allow for employees to express and share their cultural identities with each other it is beneficial because it allows non-Aboriginal people to see Aboriginal culture expressed in a positive way. The final addition was under the Employer help/challenge success heading for the past, as she was employed in a summer job and one of the more senior employees, who she believes was three times hirer-up than her boss saw her in the hallway, was able to recall her name and wished her a happy Aboriginal day. She said this made her feel like the work environment was positive, welcoming, and inclusive of her culture, especially since this boss was not an Aboriginal person. These changes were noted in Figure 5 and are indicated by the italicised text.

**Final core messages and themes.** The core messages and themes did not change after participant 1515 reviewed her story map. The key themes that emerged during the interview included the absence of culture and a cultural identity that had recently become more salient and present through working in the Aboriginal sector. Participant 1515 expressed that while working for non-Aboriginal employers she experienced challenges and struggled to incorporate and express her Aboriginal culture and identity. Now that participant 1515 was working in the
### ABORIGINAL CULTURAL IDENTITY AND EMPLOYMENT

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<td>- When not working in the Aboriginal sector, Aboriginal identity not as salient - Absence of Aboriginal culture growing up has been limiting to cultural identity development - Aboriginal culture and history were missing on Dad's side growing up</td>
<td>- Sister encountered racism at the workplace - Sister was told her Native family members were &quot;burns I see on the street.&quot; - Three times higher up than her boss saw him/her in the hallway, was able to recall his/her name and wished him/her a happy Aboriginal day, which made him/her feel like the workplace environment was positive, welcoming, and inclusive of his/her culture, especially since this boss was not an Aboriginal person.</td>
<td>- Important thing about work for Aboriginal youth is community - Important youth understand the impact their work has on the community - Important youth understand they're working as part of the community environment - Important youth see the results of their work on the community - Important youth are invested in their work - Important youth feel like their work is an investment for the greater good - Important youth feel like they're working towards a better outlook - When feel like work is important it makes employees loyal to their job/employer</td>
<td>- Work is a safe place where Aboriginal employees can express culture - Workplaces can be open to learning about Aboriginal culture - More youth are employed - Healing occurs - Family benefits from someone sharing cultural teachings - When youth learn they are more inspired to go out and make a difference - Increased psychopathology in low SES youth which is negative - Some people are resistant to healing</td>
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<td>- Current job focus on developing Aboriginal identity because working in an Aboriginal field - Working in Aboriginal field leads to looking at things through an Aboriginal perspective - Learning about and integrating Aboriginal identity into daily life - Trying to integrate Aboriginal identity into the workplace because has been exposed to Aboriginal culture more recently, so it is more present and prevalent - Recently has been learning and exploring Aboriginal cultural roots and history - Meets with an Elder to understand teachings, and women's roles in Aboriginal life ceremonies - Smudges at home - Understanding of the history of ceremony practice important - Identity of cultural values important - Learning traditions is critical so youth learn: - where they came from - what their family did - why it's important to keep traditions so they aren't lost - Aboriginal culture is positive to personal and spiritual development - Attended a banquet where a traditional thanks was offered to the people who lived on the land before, which was positive - Access to traditions and cultural values provides a sense of identity that makes work more successful - Work becomes part of identity so youth have to be wise and conscious of what type of work they do - Cultural identity permits healing - Takes cultural teaching about ceremonies to family and they want to get more involved in the community - Taking cultural teachings to family been</td>
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|      | filling a gap and has given them a different point of view | negative cycles  
- Important to bolster sense of community when helping Aboriginal youth break negative cycles  
- Having open, sharing, positive work environments make employees:  
- feel comforted  
- have fun with coworkers  
- connect with each other  
- set goals | - Important employees and coworkers are interested in people's lives  
- Coworkers connecting with each other helps them work towards common goals at work  
- Important to persevere despite progress and setbacks  
- Likes inviting Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to:  
- participate in the community, share with others, and try out cultural activities  
- drum and explore the Aboriginal community  
- when employers create workplaces that allow for employees to express and share their cultural identities with each other it is beneficial because also allows non-Aboriginal people to see Aboriginal culture expressed in a positive way | - Wants balance of self and workplace  
Hopes:  
- When individuals heal they can get more involved in the Aboriginal community  
- employees with strong cultural identity can bring that into more diverse job sectors  
- employees can have positive support and cultural group settings  
- Hopes to educate people on:  
- the causes of youth unemployment  
- how youth unemployment develops  
- youth unemployment patterns  
- how youth unemployment is rooted in history  
- Hope workplaces:  
- get employees involved in community  
- promote social activities  
- promote positive changes in employees through community  
- create opportunities for employees to work together  
- for a better future in education  
- for a better future in the work field  
Dreams:  
- More people will know about Aboriginal education  
- Aboriginal youth become more awareness and education of how colonization has affected them  
- People become more active in their culture  
Fears:  
- some youth will:  
- be resistant to change  
- hold a grudge because of the way they are  
- focus on why they aren't getting more assistance instead of how to use the help available  
- stop pursuing work opportunities because they face continual drawbacks  
- give up looking for employment because the job search is not successful  
- due to lack of employment options youth may not find proper employment |
| Future | - Future career wants to ensure:  
- things are done through an Aboriginal perspective  
- Aboriginal cultural value balance  
- Aboriginal values align with Aboriginal healing  
- Aboriginal culture is present  
- has more grounded roots  
- Wants to incorporate cultural identity and cultural values:  
- more as enter the workforce  
- and work with Aboriginal people  
- in the own identity  
- while engages in self-care  
- in how interacts with others  
- Culture will help mediate change in breaking negative cycles  
- When employees have a sense of cultural identity and family it permits for more positive personal growth  
- Workplaces create a learning environment to teach each other about their cultural identities | - Wants to see more employers become aware of Aboriginal cultural values  
- Wants to see more presence of Aboriginal culture in the workplace so employees don't have to go out their way to ask for it  
- Better understanding of challenges youth face to obtaining work  
- Better understanding of work patterns to improve youth support  
- Improving youth support in obtaining work will help youth get proper start in life  
- Improving youth support in obtaining work will help youth become productive and valuable members of the workforce  
- Fears youth will give up looking for employment because of past disappointments  
- Helping youth break negative cycles  
- Will take a lot of hard work and effort to help Aboriginal people break negative cycles | - Access to traditions and cultural values promotes:  
- investment in work because it integrates lifestyle into the work  
- integration of lifestyle and work by giving back to the community  
- When youth have a job that speaks to their identity and feel like their work is having an impact on others, youth will feel rewarded  
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- creates positive changes  
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- has a positive ripple effect on the community  
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- Wants to be employed in Aboriginal sector to be more involved in culture  
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- due to lack of employment options youth may not find proper employment |
Aboriginal sector, she expressed feeling like her identity is intertwined in all aspects of her life so in the future she would not consider working for an employer who did not enhance her cultural identity, and that it is important for employers to create an open environment where cultural identities can be shared.

*Cultural identity.* When participant 1515 discussed cultural identity, what she was referring to was the desire to include cultural identity into her personal life and in the workplace. Throughout the interview participant 1515 spoke at length about how she recently connected to her cultural identity, and how incorporating Aboriginal culture in all aspects of her life is important to give her a sense of meaning and purpose in her life. For participant 1515, Aboriginal culture is not just about finding an employer who will permit employees to smudge in the workplace, but it means bringing Aboriginal history, teachings, and values into how she interacts with people in future workplaces.

For example, participant 1515 stated that she feels that being clear about her cultural identity both personally and in the workplace is a form of self-care, and that having her cultural identity accepted and invited in the workplace is important to mental health:

> And going out and, like, kind of having that identity of, like, cultural values and things that work... And being able to do those on my own, and then as, uh, like, as I work more, either in the psych field with Aboriginal people or just like at any job, like, just making sure that that’s more a part of umm, how I identify myself in the way that I take care of myself... and those values, and approaching others in a more umm, uh, understanding and welcoming way [at work] (participant 1515, p. 3).

When discussing the importance of integration of Aboriginal culture into the workplace for Aboriginal youth, participant 1515 discussed the importance of employers
creating workplaces where employees are able to implement cultural traditions and values. The integration of cultural traditions and values was perceived to be a way to strengthen workplace identity and improve the level of investment Aboriginal youth have in their jobs. For example, she stated that integrating cultural identity and practices in the workplace is positive because it can help promote the work or productivity itself:

I think it’s, it’s just in also, or important as well to kind of umm, to integrate [cultural identity and work]. It’s depending on where they’re working and what the situation is, uh to integrate more cultural practices into it…Like, if they’re working at like with, or on a reservation…to be able to like umm, have access to more traditional things and, and cultural values…to, like, help promote that work (participant 1515, p.6).

In another example, participant 1515 stated that providing a space for cultural identity at work can enable the workplace to be more successful in terms of productivity and provide a service of giving back to the Aboriginal community:

And to provide that sense of identity [at work]…That will definitively, umm, that’ll help make the work more umm, successful I think…Because they’ll be invested. Because they’re adapting in part to the lifestyle, into the work, and working to give back to the community (participant 1515, p. 6).

Similarly, participant 1515 shared how some employers may harm Aboriginal youths’ cultural identity by denying them access to cultural traditions in the workplace. This may further harm the employee’s relationship with his or her employer as the youth may not feel culturally safe. For example, she stated that if Aboriginal youth do not feel culturally safe in the workplace, they will not feel comfortable requesting time off to attend ceremonies, which is
important to their overall wellbeing:

Umm, but if, you know an Aboriginal person’s working in an office where umm, they don’t feel they can express their cultural values or practices…that could be a super, big challenge. They may not be able to want to be able to do that. Or something, you know? Or to be able to ask for a certain amount of time off [to attend cultural events or ceremonies], or…for other experience for that flexibility (participant 1515, p. 4).

Furthermore participant 1515 explained that if workplaces create space for socializing between employees it would aid in the facilitation of Aboriginal youth feeling safe to share and express their cultural traditions with other employees. Creating an environment where employees can share and express their culture is important because in participant 1515’s opinion it helps in the creation and maintenance of cultural identity. For example, she stated that having social events in the workplace creates an opportunity for Aboriginal employees to share their culture with non-Aboriginal people in a positive way:

Umm, if it’s, if it’s a workplace environment, umm, maybe just having like social events where people can connect with one another…where they can learn more about each other. If maybe there’s only a few Aboriginal people in the workplace…maybe like, inviting them to share different cultural values and viewpoints…And just make it a learning experience for others. And that way you can connect people across either uh, uh, cultural values…or just kind of opening that community of sharing (participant 1515, p. 8).

In another example, participant 1515 stated that there was not a lot of opportunity to include culture in mainstream workplaces, so in the future she plans to get more involved in
There’s not a whole lot of room for a cultural stance, or anything like that. And it’s also tough too because I am just now more coming into, umm like the Aboriginal lifestyle…So kind of, kind of integrate [cultural identity]…So, I think I’m going to try and focus on about how I would work it in in the future…So, actually I think that the more that I get involved with culture, the more I’ve been influenced to continue that cycle of working with culture, and working with-in that field (participant 1515, p.14-15).

Similarly, when discussing ways to improve youth employment outcomes, participant 1515 spoke about the importance of ensuring Aboriginal youth are invested in the work they are doing. She shared that one way to ensure Aboriginal youth are invested in their work is through working on something that will create a better outcome for others in their community. This will also help youth feel more loyal to their employer. For example, she stated when Aboriginal youth feel like their work is making a positive impact they are more likely to remain in the position and enjoy their work:

Having, like you know, not just kind of showing-up for work and not being invested in it…I think that’s more what I’m trying to say. Just that there’s umm, that there’s an investment in what they’re doing for a greater good…And that they’re working towards a better picture, or something. Umm, like in their work…And that can definitively, umm, give people a strong sense of, umm, loyalty to their position…Or to their employer (participant 1515, p. 5-6).

*Removing systemic barriers.* Another theme that emerged in participant 1515’s interview is her concern that Aboriginal youth are not succeeding in workplaces as a direct result of racism
and a lack of support at the level of management, coworkers, and the overall system of work. She spoke about experiences of stigma, employers not wanting to hire aboriginal employees, and racist stereotypes of Aboriginal identity and experiences. While she had not personally experienced racism in her workplaces, participant 1515 was able to vividly describe a difficult encounter her sister faced in the workplace. For example, she stated that her while her sister was employed as a bartender a patron asked her about her ancestry and when he found out that she was Native, he made racist remarks about her family:

Like, there’s still a lot of stigma today, out there about like, a lot of different things Aboriginal people are affected with…and umm, I think my sister has encountered. Like she was bartending or something ridiculous…And someone had asked her what, umm, like what her background was and she’s like ‘Oh, I’m Italian and Native.’ And he, and this was like a couple of years ago, and she was like ‘Oh.’ Or he said something like, to the effect of umm, ‘Oh you’re one of those bums I see on the street.’ And he’s like ‘That’s your family.’ (participant 1515, p. 15).

Additionally, participant1515 discussed how Aboriginal youth who live in isolated reserve communities face their own set of unique challenges in terms of securing employment. She explained that Aboriginal youth in these communities might require additional support in order to overcome systemic barriers and to become successfully employed. For example, she stated Aboriginal youth in some reservation communities face barriers to successful employment, including trauma, so employers need to understand the unique challenges these youth face and support them so they can be successfully employed:

…and just some of the work I’ve done, like you read a lot about different gangs on reserves…and it can be such, and it, it’s sad because on one hand you’re just like
there’s so many ways that you know, there can be those problems in those
individuals, like trauma, can be fixed but it’s hard because it comes from like an
overall cycle that’s rooted in our history…and the circumstances, systemic thing.
And it can be very challenging and very sad but umm, mostly what I want to try and
do-understand more of these problems, understand more of the way the patterns
work and try and go in there an umm, improvise like youth support…That will then
help, kind of get the proper start in life…Becoming a productive and valuable
member in like a workforce, or anything like that (participant 1515, p. 10-11).

Similarly, she also shared some Aboriginal youth may need additional assistance to
overcome the systemic issues they face. Participant 1515 explained it is imperative for
employers to learn about Aboriginal history, traditions, and way of life to successfully aid youth
in breaking down employment barriers. She explained Aboriginal youth need employment
strategies to gain successful employment that embrace and utilize an Aboriginal perspective and
not an outsider (i.e. Western) approach to ‘fix’ Aboriginal youth. For example, she stated when
organizations are attempting to help Aboriginal youth gain successful employment they need to
consider their experiences of trauma in addition to utilizing a cultural perspective instead of
Western perspectives:

Umm, I think some of the biggest challenges will definitively breaking in…like I
mentioned about like working with people on reserves and trying to break those
cycles…of trauma…And it’s not an easy fix…And it’s going to take a lot of hard
work and effort. But that’s why you kind of have to be like, flexible with the mind-
set that you approach when you’re engaging with individuals…from a cultural
perspective, and that’s why I think being able to bring in a cultural perspective with
it…will help mediate that change…because it gets invested in…like an equal
playing field…Where you’re not like an outsider coming in and trying to fix them or anything. You’re like ‘No, man. I’m just like you.’ Just trying to bolster the sense of community…and make that community. So I think that’s definitively something umm, to be aware of and to look forward to (participant 1515, p. 19).

The importance of creating positive workplaces. The third theme participant 1515 discussed was the importance of managers and supervisors creating positive workplaces. In participant 1515’s opinion the key factor in the creation of positive workplaces is establishing social connections and relationships between coworkers as well as between employers and employees. She explained that once employees established a meaningful connection with other people in the workplace, it would boost productivity and encourage employees to work towards common goals. For example, she stated that her workplaces where she was most productive were the ones that she enjoyed the most, and what made those workplaces positive environments were the relationships she established with her coworkers:

Umm, and then when you have more people in a more positive work environment it can be, it could be great…It could make for such a better, like experience. Umm, in all my undergrad jobs, initially I was like, alright. But then the more I got to know the people there it made it so much worthwhile…Like, and I enjoyed coming in, investing my time…and, and getting involved with, activities. And then by the end of it I was sad to go…Umm, because when the space that you’re working in is a fun one…it tends to make your work more productive…It makes your, you, you don’t feel like you’re actually work. It’s more like you’re happy to be there (participant 1515, p. 8).

Similarly, participant 1515 shared that when employers create positive workplaces it also
encourages employees to take on more leadership roles and makes employees more likely to be loyal to their employer. In a more broad sense, this can aid in employment success as the youth is more likely to stay with the employer long-term, which may help the youth to move-up within the company. If a person is promoted within a company, they may receive increased pay and/or benefits, which would aid in financial stability. For example, she stated that when coworkers are able to connect with other, and when Aboriginal youth feel culturally safe it makes it easier to collaborate on work projects:

Umm, so I think just making a positive space…uh, with others and connecting to others…and just maintaining that open idea of different umm, different cultural values…and people’s lives, and that sort of thing…Like, this may not happen very often for like, accountants, umm, but if you know, if people are connecting with the people they are working with like you’re all there, really for the same reason. You’re working towards a common goal (participant 1515, p. 8-9).

In a final example, participant 1515 stated that when she was employed as a supervisor it was important to ensure the staff was happy in order for them to complete projects successfully and the key component to her staff’s happiness was her relationship with the employees and their relationships with coworkers:

Like, you need and I think it’s important, like in my last job as a, at my last, previous employment, like where I was a supervisor and in a leadership role…it’s like, if we’re all working towards a common goal, that’s awesome, but you also need to help people individually and make sure that they’re happy coming in…so when, if one person feels left out, it’s gonna kind of, you need to, it can be difficult for the team dynamic to be positive…Or prosper. Absolutely. So, having those open,
sharing, positive environments make people feel individually com-forted…and having fun with people that they’re working with…and connecting with people, and being able, to like set those goals towards whatever they need to do, you know? (participant 1515, p. 9).

Participant 1448

Character sketch. This participant was a male who was in his mid-twenties at the time of the interview. He seemed slightly nervous and reserved initially. In order to establish rapport, prior to introducing the consent from and beginning the interview, I introduced myself and explained my background. This seemed to make participant 1448 more comfortable with the interview process and myself. He relaxed more and as the interview progressed and he opened up more. At the time of our interview, this participant was self-employed as freelance dancer in addition to working as a horticulturalist. Participant 1448 spoke about how he had relocated to the GTA from his reservation community and his current work experience. This experience of relocating gave participant 1448 invaluable insight into the struggles Aboriginal youth face with transitioning to large urban areas. He spoke at length about the programs available to help Aboriginal youth overcome employment struggles. He also discussed how Aboriginal culture had influenced his workplace identity. The story maps below illustrate the core concepts and themes that emerged.

Story map. The initial story map (see Figure 6) was constructed during the analysis phase of this interview (See Chapter Three for a detailed explanation of the process). Upon completion of the story map I identified one core message and two themes from the map and interview narrative. The initial core message for 1448 was The importance of culture. The themes were Relocation challenges Aboriginal youth face when they move from their communities to urban areas, and Education and addiction challenges.
Feedback from second interview and final story map. Upon completion of the analysis of participant 1448’s interview, I constructed his story map and identified the core message and themes. I then scheduled a follow-up interview with 1448 to review the findings with him. I provided him with a copy of his story map and I explained how I came to identify the core message and themes from his narrative. I asked him the following questions: “From your narratives in your interview I have constructed a story map. How does this map illustrate your views? What is missing from your story map? What would you like to add? Do you have anything else to say about your story map? Initially participant 1448 expressed that he felt like his story map was representative of his views. As we reviewed the different areas of the story map participant 1448 explained his story map was representative of his views on urban Aboriginal youth employment. However, as we continued to explore the items, he acknowledged that during our initial interview we did not have the opportunity to explore his views on the future of workplace identity, how employers will help or challenge the success of Aboriginal youth in the future, and what the most important thing about work will be about work for Aboriginal youth. He explained that he would like to add some points to these areas. Participant 1448 added three additional points to his story map. The first addition was under the future of Workplace identity heading as he wanted to include that his future career aspiration is to become a social worker with Aboriginal clients, so his cultural identity will be intertwined with his work identity. Additionally, under the future of Employer help/challenge success heading, he shared that he was uncertain how mainstream employers could help Aboriginal youth employment outcomes. He also stated that mainstream employers currently challenge the success of Aboriginal youth, but that he did not want add future challenges because he hopes that Aboriginal youth will not be challenged by employers in the future. The final addition was to the Most important thing about work for youth heading in the future. He said that if Aboriginal youth continue to relocate from reservation communities to urban areas that
### Figure 6. Participant 1448 initial story map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1448</th>
<th>Workplace Identity</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
<th>Most important thing about work for youth</th>
<th>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Past** | - As an artist s/he was able to do his/her own thing for employment  
- Used cultural identity in the workplace as a freelance dancer  
- Raised in Edmonton and on a reserve community so s/he adjusted to the city while growing up  
- Is the first half Asian from his/her reserve but does not view him/herself as Asian  
- Raised by mom and his/her reserve community and identifies as Cree | - S/he looked for jobs within Native agencies first, and there was usually something available, but the timing was wrong  
- S/he created his/her own job in the arts  
- Would not be able to create dancing joy job in Edmonton | | - Aboriginal youth statistics in Edmonton were that they would not graduate high school  
- S/he adjusted to the city while s/he was growing up |
| **Present** | - Workplace identity is him/her  
- Workplace identity is based in Aboriginal studies with plants  
- Is an entrepreneur and works with other Native people at his/her job in horticulture  
- Sells plants to non-Native people  
- Job has synergy in terms of working with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people  
- A lot of youth get jobs within the Native community  
- A lot of youth who work on oil rigs have addiction problems and are not interested in culture | - Lack of stability and poor housing does not allow youth to enjoy work  
- Aboriginal youth in Edmonton who do not finish high school get jobs on oil rigs  
- Aboriginal employers who work with youth are good and in tune with what the youth need  
- Non-Aboriginal employers do not see things from Aboriginal perspectives  
- Youth who are not following a post-secondary educational path are finding their own niche by starting their own enterprises and do whatever work they want  
- Youth are creating own enterprises in cultural based areas  
- Working for Native organizations are considered good jobs, but a lot of youth get mediocre jobs | - His/her job is perfect because s/he works with plants  
- The most important thing about work for youth is that it renews culture while allowing them to make money  
- Important work give youth self-esteem  
- Self-esteem helps youth  
- Important work keeps youth busy and provides stability  
- Important programs geared towards bridging youth going back to school result in youth going back to school  
- Positive youth are creating their own jobs | - A lot of youth live in poverty and cannot access stability  
- Youth need balance  
- Youth think there are enough resources but sometimes the program does not work for them  
- There is an imbalance of stability if the program does not suit the youth  
- Youth do not succeed in programs because:  
  - they lack of stability and poor housing situations  
  - they do not suit their personalities and youth burn bridges  
  - Youth juggling and sift through them  
- Those who run programs need to not give up on youth who have addictions  
- In Edmonton they do not have the employment programs like they do in Toronto  
- Toronto’s employment programs are good because:  
  - they create them and follow the medicine wheel  
  - they do a lot of traditional studies  
  - provide training in several areas (e.g., health, living skills, and traditions)  
- Youth who live on reservations are psychologically conditioned to believe they cannot do anything beyond the reservation  
- Youth who live on reservations are scared of moving to big cities  
- Youth who live on reservations get adjusted to the reserve and do not want to leave  
- When youth leave their reservations, they experience culture shock |
| **Future** | | | - Fears youth will not:  
  - have as many people stable enough to support |
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<td>- have the same amount of programming available</td>
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<td>- Fears youth will:</td>
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<td>- repeat programming because there is a lot of duplication</td>
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<td>- burn all their bridges within the available programs</td>
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<td>- More screening is needed to ensure youth are well</td>
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<td>- When youth leave their reservations it is hard for them:</td>
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<td>- to establish stability</td>
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<td>- To address the concerns of reservation youth in the city</td>
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<td>statistics of youth who leave the reserves for the city</td>
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<td>- inspire them to adapt in a way that is not</td>
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<td>intimidating or makes them lose their culture but helps</td>
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job training will be the most important thing to help Native youth gain successful employment. These changes were noted in Figure 7 and are indicated by the italicised text.

**Final core messages and themes.** The core messages and themes did not change after participant 1448 reviewed his story maps. The key themes participant 1448 discussed included gaps in employment programing that hinder Aboriginal youth success. He explained many youth who leave their communities need additional support. Furthermore, many of these youth lack financial stability, which may be an added barrier to taking advantage of employment programs. While participant 1448 found employment, he supplemented this job with his own endeavour that allowed him to tap into his artistic side. He also explained that where he grew-up many Aboriginal youth struggle to complete secondary school and struggle with addictions, and that many of these Aboriginal youth were disconnected from their cultural identity. He also shared that his cultural identity was intertwined with his workplace identity.

**The importance of culture.** Throughout the course of the interview participant 1448 spoke about the importance of culture. For participant 1448, culture meant upholding and honouring traditions and his identity. He explained that his cultural identity was at the forefront of everything for him, including workplace identity. As cultural identity cannot be divided from workplace identity it is important that Aboriginal youth are able to safely express and access their cultural traditions in the workplace. This is also true for Aboriginal youth who are of mixed ancestry. For example, he stated that despite having Cambodian ancestry, he identifies as Cree because that is his community:
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-Raised by mom and his/her reserve community and identifies as Cree | -S/he looked for jobs within Native agencies first, and there was usually something available, but the timing was wrong  
-S/he created his/her own job in the arts  
-Would not be able to create dancing joy job in Edmonton | -Most important thing about work for youth  
-Works in horticulture  
-Job has synergy in terms of working with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people  
-A lot of youth get jobs within the Native community  
-A lot of youth who work on oil rigs have addiction problems and are not interested in culture | -Aboriginal youth statistics in Edmonton were that they would not graduate high school  
-S/he adjusted to the city while s/he was growing up |
| Present | -Workplace identity is him/her  
-Workplace identity is based in Aboriginal studies with plants  
-Is an entrepreneur and works with other Native people at his/her job in horticulture  
-Sells plants to non-Native people  
-Job has synergy in terms of working with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people  
-A lot of youth get jobs within the Native community  
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-Aboriginal employers who work with youth are good and in tune with what the youth need  
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-they lack of stability and poor housing situations  
-they do not suit their personalities and youth burn bridges  
-youth juggling and sift through them  
-Those who run programs need to not give up on youth who have addictions  
-In Edmonton they do not have the employment programs like they do in Toronto  
-Toronto’s employment programs are good because:  
-they create them and follow the medicine wheel  
-they do a lot of traditional studies  
-provide training in several areas (e.g., health, living skills, and traditions)  
-Youth who live on reservations are psychologically conditioned to believe they cannot do anything beyond the reservation  
-Youth who live on reservations are scared of moving to big cities  
-Youth who live on reservations get adjusted to the reserve and do not want to leave  
-When youth leave their reservations, they experience culture shock |
| Future | -Is hoping to work as a social worker with Aboriginal clients in the future.  
-Not sure how employers can make adjustments in the future to better support | -Job training will be the most important thing to help Native youth from reservation | -Fears youth will not:  
-have as many people stable enough to support |
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<td>so cultural identity will be intertwined with work identity</td>
<td>Aboriginal youth employment outcomes</td>
<td>communities who move to urban areas gain successful employment</td>
<td>them&lt;br&gt;- have the same amount of programing available&lt;br&gt;- get anywhere&lt;br&gt;- Fears youth will:&lt;br&gt;- repeat programing because there is a lot of duplication&lt;br&gt;- get stuck within the community&lt;br&gt;- burn all their bridges within the available programs&lt;br&gt;- More screening is needed to ensure youth are well suited to the programs being offered and it suiting them&lt;br&gt;- When youth leave their reservations it is hard for them:&lt;br&gt;- to socialize because they have basic skills of knowing other cultures&lt;br&gt;- to establish stability&lt;br&gt;- To address the concerns of reservation youth in the city need to:&lt;br&gt;- connect youth to Native agencies&lt;br&gt;- educate youth about residential schools and the statistics of youth who leave the reserves for the city&lt;br&gt;- bridge them to services and them to know the city&lt;br&gt;- inspire them to adapt in a way that is not intimidating or makes them lose their culture but helps them adjust with others</td>
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...I was raised in Edmonton, in the city...And I was on and off the reserve. So I did, I uh did almost like a country boy like, half the time. So my mom would, I would most of the breaks I would go to the reserve...Yeah. Yeah. The reservation. I’m half, well I’m half uh, I have uh I think half Cambodian blood. So I’m the first non, like half Asian to be on my reserve...But uh, I don’t see it. Like I don’t feel it...'Cause I was raised by my mom and my reserve...So I identify as Cree, you know? (participant 1448, p. 9).

In another example, participant 1448 stated it is important that employment provides financial security, but he believes the most important thing about work for Aboriginal youth is how it impacts and influences cultural identity, “[Important work] renews our culture...While maintaining an innovative way of like of making money” (participant 1448, p. 1).

Furthermore, he explained the differences between working for Aboriginal employers and non-Aboriginal employers. Participant 1448 explained that non-Aboriginal employers do not see things from an Aboriginal perspective because they do not understand traditional teachings and culture. For example, he stated that working in the field of horticulture Aboriginal employers know the traditional uses for plants, but mainstream employers are unaware of the medicinal uses of the plants:

They [mainstream employers] wouldn’t know. They wouldn’t see things the way we see things, I guess...Uh, if I was working for, say a farmer...Or someone who was a botanical person...They would, they wouldn’t know how to use things medicinally. They would know the com, the common stuff...if I was getting hired by a botanical guy that was Native...He would know the old school way, of like what the family did... I think he would know a bit more from what, from what I’ve seen. As to say
what a one may, when we see a horticulture person…They’ll [mainstream employers] know the most, yeah. For the main purpose, but they won’t know the underlying things of like other medicines that it [the plant] could like, do (participant 1448, p. 6-7).

Participant 1448 also shared that because cultural identity cannot be disconnected from other aspects of his life, employment programs also need to ensure they incorporate cultural values and ways of knowing. Employment programs that respect Aboriginal knowledges and include Aboriginal culture are important because it is more likely Aboriginal youth will access these services over employment programs that utilize Western perspectives. For example, participant 1448 stated that he appreciated the employment programs offered in Toronto because they incorporate cultural values:

Umm, so like in Edmonton, Alberta, they don’t have uh, the traditional like, umm, employment programs…like they provide, say at Anishawbe Health or Anishawbe…They don’t have anything like that…But Toronto’s really good for that ‘cause they, they’ll create their own programming that, that uh goes on, like they’ll follow the medicine wheel…here they’ll do like traditional studies. They’ll go into uh, like, you know, almost an everyday uh, different right of training…With, doing it in a traditional style, way of doing it...(participant 1448, p. 5).

**Relocation challenges.** The first theme that emerged in participant 1448’s interview was the general challenges Aboriginal youth encounter when they leave their communities to seek employment in urban areas. To begin, participant1448 feels that many Aboriginal youth struggle to leave their communities due to holding a belief that they will be unable to succeed outside of their reservation. This largely stems from youth in those communities internalizing negative
messages and ideas that mainstream society holds about Aboriginal peoples. As a result, many Aboriginal youth who want to leave to pursue employment opportunities may not leave. For example, he stated that many Aboriginal youth are afraid of leaving their communities:

I’m talking about like, almost every reserve across Canada. They’re so used to like, it’s almost like the elephant that gets tied to like a rope and to like a plastic chair…He’s, he’s uh psychologically conditioned to uh believe that he’s tied to that chair. That he can’t do anything beyond it…It’s similar with like the Native youth. They, they get scared of moving to the big city…They, so they get to uh, adjusted to umm, you know, the reserve. They don’t want to leave (participant 1448, p. 7-8).

Similarly, participant 1448 discussed that when some Aboriginal youth relocate from their communities to urban areas they struggle with isolation. Not only are the youth away from their family and social support network, but they struggle to create new social networks. For example, participant 1448 stated many Aboriginal youth who relocated to urban areas struggle to establish culturally safe connections with non-Aboriginal people, and without social support they lack stability in all aspects of their life:

And when they do [relocated], it’s uh, it’s very culturally shocking for them, I think. And then, and then it’s hard. It’s hard for them to be-they get very, uh, they can’t socialize the same way-level of like, people who live or have been here in that big melting pot, you know?…Have the elementary skills of other cultures…Umm, they don’t have that. So, then it is difficult for them to be stable and like, and I, it’s almost like a snowball effect…And like stability and like, I’m not, I’m not, I’m just generalizing here…‘Cause it’s not, but that seems to be like, a pattern that I’ve noticed. Like, it’s umm, like hard for them to socialize…The same, the same way
Participant 1448 also explained many youth who leave their reservation communities face a unique set of challenges. He shared that many urban Aboriginal youth rely on the employment programs offered by different Aboriginal organizations, however these programs are not necessarily addressing all the concerns these youth have. Despite the benefits of the many culturally based employment programs that are offered to urban Aboriginal youth in the GTA, he explained that many Aboriginal youth end up dropping out of programs that could help due to financial struggles, personal difficulties, and programs not addressing what the youth thought the program would address. For example, he stated youth feel like they are unable to progress their skills or career as many programs are too similar to each other:

And that there’s going to be youth that repeat the duplication…But they don’t get anywhere with it. And uh, then they’re just like, within the community I’m talking wise…They’re getting stuck. Yeah. Like they’re going to be paradoxes of repeating. Of burning all their bridges within the programming that’s provided…Yeah, like burn-you think there’s enough resources, but sometimes the program doesn’t work for them (participant 1448, p. 2-3).

In another example, participant 1448 stated some Aboriginal youth are unable to successfully complete employment programs as they do not have financial stability or housing:

And they don’t, or they don’t have the right fit. It’s almost an imbalance of like, stability…of if the program suits them. Like if it’s like, yeah. Or if it’s actually uh, priming, if it’s going to bridge them into school or not…Uh, the misconnections with the youth and the programs have to be, umm (pause). Well a) would be stability. If the housing situation…like don’t allow them to get them to like, enjoy
their work…Umm, in whatever their situation is, right?…Umm, in whatever their shelter situation is, right? (participant 1448, p. 3).

Similarly, participant 1448 discussed how some Aboriginal youth do not succeed in employment programs as they do not take them seriously. He explained that some Aboriginal youth are not mature enough to complete the program and they treat the people running the programs disrespectfully. For example, he stated some programs would benefit from using additional screening before choosing participants so the right youth access the services they need:

Another would be, uh, if like the list. The long range of the list of people who uh, like there’s people who don’t personally think that it suits them…And I don’t want to say, use the word “deserve” or whatever. But the people who burn the bridge…and another person could have suited it better in like, within the community…umm, deserves it more, I think…Like, it fits them…(participant 1448, p. 3).

He also spoke about the challenges some youth encounter in finding meaningful employment in urban areas. More specifically, participant 1448 shared how many urban Aboriginal youth limit themselves by only searching for employment opportunities within Aboriginal organizations. While he explained that some Aboriginal youth will not apply for jobs in mainstream organizations for many reasons such as fears about cultural safety, lack of formal education, and limited vocational skills. For example, he stated many urban Aboriginal youth are only able to gain employment in Aboriginal organizations, but it is difficult to get hired in an Aboriginal organization, as there are so many urban Aboriginal people who apply for the same position:
Umm, it’s a, a lot of people like in the Native community like to work for-they like to get jobs that are within the community…Like all the, all the Native run organizations…like Native Child, and they do pro, provide employment…And those were, that was like really good if you could get a job like that. But a lot of it, you uh, you know, you get mediocre jobs, right?…So it would be, it was always a priority to look within agencies first…See if they could provide. And usually they’re always, there’s something, but sometimes the timing would be wrong (participant 1448, p. 4).

*Education and addiction challenges*. The final theme participant 1448 shared was the struggles some Aboriginal youth encounter with addictions in addition to the challenge to find successful employment due to not completing secondary education. He explained that many employers are not willing to take a chance on Aboriginal youth employees if they have addiction concerns. Employers also would prefer to hire employees with more education, which disadvantages many Aboriginal youth employees. This discussion was partially in relation to participant 1448’s experiences in his community. Addiction concerns are also a way Aboriginal youth attempt to cope with the trauma and oppression they encounter. For example, he stated that in his community many Aboriginal youth who do not complete high school struggle with addictions and are disconnected from their culture:

Yeah. I was very like, the model of the Aboriginal uh, statistics was that they would not graduate high school…And they would get oilrig jobs. And it was, uh, it was like all about the muscle…So a lot of people they would get really good training uh, in the oil industry, but umm, it would be like they, they would be like I, I it can be like it, so a lot of people get into like addiction problems…And so they would never, like they would not be into their culture (participant 1448, p. 2).
Finally, he explained many urban Aboriginal youth who have not completed their secondary education struggle to find employment. As a result many urban Aboriginal youth have to work more than one part-time job in order to financially support themselves. For the youth who are unable to find even part-time employment or employment within an Aboriginal organization, they have to find creative employment solutions. For example, participant 1448 stated that one of his employment solutions for not having enough formal education was to become an entrepreneur for his second job:

Uh, I think that more youth are actually discovering to create their own jobs. And…it’s actually like uh, the ones who are not necessarily having an academic path…Umm, uh, for post-secondary that they’re, that they find their knack. And like they just have a way to make their own enterprise with whatever work they want to do…But as an artists, you could do your own thing. Like me. You find your resources to get your, you know, your art uh, trade going (participant 1448, p. 1).

**Participant 1312**

**Character sketch.** Participant 1312 was female in her mid-twenties. She was referred to this study by someone who I interviewed as a research participant in a past research project. She initially requested the interview be conducted in a shopping mall, but it was held at OISE due to concerns about noise and anonymity. It was challenging for participant 1312 to answer some of the interview questions as she was struggling in her search for employment at the time of our interview. She had recently returned to school to complete her secondary education and was in the process of completing a training program to become a bartender. Participant 1312 spoke about her personal struggle to find employment, how she accessed employment programs to gain the education and training required to become a bartender, and suggestions for improving
employment outcomes for Aboriginal youth. The story maps below illustrate the core concepts and themes that emerged.

**Story map.** The initial story map (see Figure 8) was constructed during the analysis phase of this interview (See Chapter Three for a detailed explanation of the process). Upon completion of the story map I identified one core message and two themes from the map and interview narrative. The initial core message for participant 1312 was *Youth employment barriers*. The themes were *Programming* to aid in youth employment outcomes and *Community involvement*.

**Feedback from second interview and final story map.** Upon completion of the analysis of participant 1312’s interview, I constructed her story map and identified the core message and themes. I attempted scheduled a follow-up interview with participant 1312 to review the findings with her to no avail. After contacting her five times and leaving messages asking her to contact me and informing her that the purpose was to review the findings of her interview with her, I ceased trying to schedule the follow-up interview. As I had a copy of participant 1312’s email address, I did send her an electronic of her story map and explained how I came to identify the core message and themes in her narrative in this message. No changes were made to her initial story map.

**Final core messages and themes.** The core messages and themes did not change as participant 1312 did not provide any feedback on her story maps. The key themes participant 1312 discussed during the interview included the positive aspects of employment programs available to Aboriginal youth as well as how service providers could improve the access to services. She also spoke about the importance of experience to be hired for jobs and explained how this was hindering her from gaining successful employment. As she was struggling to find
**Figure 8. Participant 1312 initial story map**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1312</th>
<th>Workplace Identity</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
<th>Most important thing about work for youth</th>
<th>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Past** | - Concerned about process of completing requirements to start bartending | - Roommate is a chef which inspired him/her to learn how to handle food | - Took awhile to take advantage of the opportunities and resources  
- Wanted to improve his/her lifestyle so: - Started taking advantage of opportunities and resources  
- Went back to school  
- Got First Aid, CPR, food handling certificate, and smart serve  
- Trained to be a bartender  
- Aware of community resources but did not access them until returned to school  
- Did not realize that s/he could go to college or university  
- Did not realize that s/he had so many options for a career | - Not sure how workplace identity develops  
- Proud to be Aboriginal  
- Does not want to smudge at the workplace  
- Lives a traditional lifestyle by attending powwows and sweats  
- Most Aboriginal youth s/he knows: - work within the Aboriginal community because that is where they are comfortable  
- smudge at work  
- Overthinks his/her employment situation which causes stress  
- Is interested in bartending  
- Is interested in cooking | - Not sure how employers help or challenge the success of Aboriginal youth in the workplace because does not have workplace experience  
- Is training to be a bartender  
- Process of trying to find work is frustrating  
- Waiting to hear back about starting a job  
- Always has to call bartender employer  
- Employer does not return his/her calls or contact him/her  
- Finds it annoying when Bartender employer does not return his/her calls  
- Important for employers to trust employees  
- Career opportunities are important for Aboriginal youth  
- Feels like s/he is annoying potential employer who will not respond to her  
- It is difficult to get job experience | - Not sure how employers help or challenge the success of Aboriginal youth in the workplace because does not have workplace experience  
- Is training to be a bartender  
- Process of trying to find work is frustrating  
- Waiting to hear back about starting a job  
- Always has to call bartender employer  
- Employer does not return his/her calls or contact him/her  
- Finds it annoying when Bartender employer does not return his/her calls  
- Important for employers to trust employees  
- Career opportunities are important for Aboriginal youth  
- Feels like s/he is annoying potential employer who will not respond to her  
- It is difficult to get job experience | - Got funding to complete bartender training  
- Experience is the most important about work for Aboriginal youth  
- Life experience is important for Aboriginal youth because it helps Aboriginal learn how to live  
- Experience helps youth in the workforce  
- Training programs: - help youth get job experience  
- with job offers upon completions are important  
- help youth decide their job interests  
- Jobs that pay well are important  
- Job opportunities are important  
- Finds out about job opportunities through: - friend who works in the Aboriginal community  
- word of mouth  
- Miziwe Biik’s website  
- Important Aboriginal youth know where to look for employment opportunities  
- Volunteering provides opportunity to explore interests and gain experience for applying to jobs  
- Volunteering helps Aboriginal youth find what they are interested in for a career | - Hopes Aboriginal youth realize: - how many opportunities are available  
- how many resources are out there  
- what they are taking for granted  
- they are missing out on opportunities  
- Hopes Aboriginal youth take advantage of the resources available  
- All the career choices are overwhelming  
- Aboriginal youth need counselling and treatment to help them break the cycle in the court system  
- Thinks service providers can make their resources better known by posting more on social networks like Facebook and Twitter | - Stressed out because does not know what s/he will be doing for work  
- In the workplace would: - share that s/he is Aboriginal  
- do what s/he is told  
- like to incorporate Aboriginal culture | - Would like there to be more communication between him/her and bartender employer  
- Thinks bartender employer would respond differently if s/he was hired there  
- Aboriginal youth need opportunities to help break the court system cycle | - Stressful to try to decide what field to work in  
- Trying to decide what s/he wants to do for employment  
- Frustrating trying to figure out what s/he wants to do for employment | - Hopes Aboriginal youth realize they could be doing better  
- Still trying to decide what s/he wants to do for a career  
- Thinks more youth would use the resources and see job postings if they were posted on social networks |
| **Present** | - Not sure how employers help or challenge the success of Aboriginal youth in the workplace because does not have workplace experience  
- Is training to be a bartender  
- Process of trying to find work is frustrating  
- Waiting to hear back about starting a job  
- Always has to call bartender employer  
- Employer does not return his/her calls or contact him/her  
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- Thinks service providers can make their resources better known by posting more on social networks like Facebook and Twitter | - Stressed out because does not know what s/he will be doing for work  
- In the workplace would: - share that s/he is Aboriginal  
- do what s/he is told  
- like to incorporate Aboriginal culture | - Would like there to be more communication between him/her and bartender employer  
- Thinks bartender employer would respond differently if s/he was hired there  
- Aboriginal youth need opportunities to help break the court system cycle | - Stressful to try to decide what field to work in  
- Trying to decide what s/he wants to do for employment  
- Frustrating trying to figure out what s/he wants to do for employment | - Hopes Aboriginal youth realize they could be doing better  
- Still trying to decide what s/he wants to do for a career  
- Thinks more youth would use the resources and see job postings if they were posted on social networks |
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<td></td>
<td>-Not sure what s/he will do for a career so uncertain how much s/he will be able to incorporate Aboriginal cultural identity in the workplace</td>
<td>-Waiting to hear back about bartending job -Wants to start working -Been waiting to hear back about bartending position for over a month</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Dream for employment outcomes is that more youth will help: -the Aboriginal community -with the pipelines -with water -make positive changes to their community -Fear Aboriginal youth will continue to be involved in the court system and will not be able to break the cycle -Wants Aboriginal youth to be more aware of: -the resources -job opportunities -school programs -Wants Aboriginal youth to volunteer more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
employment she also discussed the importance of employers providing youth with employment opportunities and the value of education and volunteering in order to develop valuable skills to help gain employment. Participant 1312 also expressed concern about the struggles some youth face in terms of addictions and involvement in the criminal justice system.

Youth employment barriers. Throughout the course of the interview participant 1312 continually spoke about the barriers to youth employment. Participant 1312 candidly discussed her lack of employment experience. Despite her efforts to boost her employment skills through training programs and educational pursuits, participant 1312 was still struggling to gain employment. In her experience, participant 1312 felt potential employers could improve their communication skills with potential employees. She reports this is challenging as she does not know whether or not to pursue other opportunities or how to improve her application. For example, she stated that after applying for jobs she often does not hear back from potential employers and feels an onus to contact the organization regarding the position:

Umm, well it's the process of like, doing the things that I need to do in order to umm, start [working]…I'm pretty much done everything. I'm just waiting for them to, to talk and to umm, figure everything out and (laughs)…So it's like, I want to know but, they're just, they're taking their time…'Cause I always have to like, call them…And it's kind of frustrating because they didn't call me back…They wouldn't contact me. So I always have to call them…It's pretty annoying…Like they've uh, learned to interview and they didn't [contact me] or, I applied to register for jobs. But I don't know. I think it would be different [if I was an employee] (participant 1312, p. 2-3).
She also explained that some urban Aboriginal youth are unable to find and maintain employment due to involvement in the criminal justice system. She expressed concern that this negative cycle will persist in the future. For example, she stated that some of her friends have been dealing with issues in the legal system which makes it difficult for them to find employment, “Umm, a lot of youth that I know, like friends and stuff…they’re always like, in and out of the court system…So like it’s, I know it’s hard for them to get out of that” (participant 1312, p. 7). Furthermore, she explained many Aboriginal youth struggle to find meaningful employment because employers are unwilling to take chances on hiring them. This makes it difficult for Aboriginal youth to gain the invaluable employment experience many employers desire. Participant 1312 shared it is important for employers to take a chance on hiring Aboriginal youth, despite their personal challenges. For example, she stated many mainstream employers do not provide Aboriginal youth with employment opportunities as they do not trust the youth, “I think that like (pause)...Umm, I guess the [employment] opportunity, opportunity to [gain] experience…like what they [employers], have trust in them (participant 1312, p. 4).

Programming. The unwillingness on the part of mainstream employers to provide Aboriginal youth with employment opportunities makes it challenging for youth to gain experience. As such, the first theme of programing was discussed in relation to participant 1312’s creative way to address the experience gap in her resume through participating in programs designed to aid in youth employment outcomes. Participant 1312 explained there are other ways for urban Aboriginal youth to gain experience, such as through skills training programs, educational programs to complete secondary school, and certification programs. For example, she stated it is difficult to gain employment without taking advantage of training programs and they also help youth determine their career interests:
Yeah, it is difficult but it, you got to start somewhere…Umm, like training programs…That umm, they’re going to be offers…‘Cause I took a couple of training programs for there…And it was, it was helpful…And I have more knowledge of what umm, I want to do (participant 1312, p. 3).

However, she explained that many youth are not accessing programs and employment services. She believes many urban Aboriginal youth are missing out on employment opportunities because they are not accessing these services and gaining the skills they need or learning about employment openings. Participant 1312 shared initially, she was not accessing services available to help her gain employment experience because she was not mature enough or ready to improve her employment situation. For example, she stated that there are a lot of employment resources in the GTA but many youth are not in a position where they are ready to take advantage of the services:

Umm, uh it’s kind of bad to say but I hope that umm, more youth would realize how many, how many opportunities that they have. How many umm, resources…‘Cause they, they don’t take advantage of it. But I know I was like that too. Kind of took me awhile to get focused…But yeah, I hope yeah. That they just realize what they’re taking for granted and that they’re missing out on them (participant 1312, p. 5).

Finally, she believes more youth would access these programs if the organizations improved the advertising of their services. For example, she stated more youth would know about the programs if they increased advertising, especially on social media, “…I think they [service providers] should have like, more posting…on social networks. So sharing…by putting stuff on Facebook or Twitter, something like that and…and I think a lot more youth would see it” (1312, lines 321-330).
**Community involvement.** The final theme participant 1312 shared was value of being connected to and involved in the urban Aboriginal community. For participant 1312 community involvement was about having relationships with other individuals in the Aboriginal community. She spoke about involvement in the Aboriginal community as both a way to find employment opportunities as well as using your job to help the community. For example, she stated she finds out about most employment opportunities from either her friends in the Toronto Aboriginal community or through Aboriginal organizations in Toronto:

> Umm, well I have this friend and she, she works in the Native community…she always posts like, job opportunities…Or like, stuff like that. So I hear about that. Or like, you know, word mouth…Or, or postings…Like Miziwe Biik…there, there’s always something going on there [job postings at Miziwe Biik] (participant 1312, p. 4-5).

Similarly, in the future participant 1312 would like to see Aboriginal youth seek out careers that benefit the community and the environment as she is concerned if her generation does not help their communities that non-Aboriginal people will make decisions on their behalf. This is concerning for participant 1312 as non-Aboriginal people do not take into account Aboriginal perspectives, ways of knowing, values, or culture. For example, she stated it is important for Aboriginal youth to get involved in issues regarding the Keystone Pipeline to prevent damage to the environment and community: that is important for youth to “…like help the community [dream for youth employment]…Aboriginal community…Because there’s a lot of stuff going on with the pipelines…and the water and I don’t know. It’s really sad what’s going on (participant 1312, p. 7). While she explained she did not necessarily need to work for an Aboriginal employer, or engage in cultural activities in the workplace, such as smudging, she did express a desire to work for an employer who would be supportive of her engaging in
cultural activities. For example, she stated she engages in cultural activities on her personal time because it is important to her identity: “I’m like, kind of traditional. I like, go to powwows…and stuff. And on occasion I’ll, I’ll sweat (participant 1312, p. 9).

**Participant 1330**

**Character sketch.** This participant was referred to the study by a community research assistant (CRA), who was also present during the interview as he was learning how to conduct research interviews for this project. Participant 1330 gave permission for the CRA to be present during the interview. This participant was a female who was in her late twenties at the time of the interview. She knew the CRA from different community events and appeared relaxed and comfortable. She used humour throughout the interview. Participant 1330 shared she had varied employment experiences in different sectors, and had worked for both mainstream and Aboriginal employers. At the time of our interview she was in the process of upgrading her educational credentials in order to meet the admission criteria to attend university. She had previously completed a college program. Participant 1330 spoke about the importance of her Aboriginal identity and culture, the struggles Aboriginal youth encounter when they leave their communities for employment opportunities in the GTA, and her future career goal of becoming a lawyer. The story maps below illustrate the core concepts and themes that emerged.

**Story map.** The initial story map (see Figure 9) was constructed during the analysis phase of this interview (See Chapter Three for a detailed explanation of the process). Upon completion of the story map I identified one core message and three themes from the story map and interview narrative. The initial core message for participant 1330 was **Mainstream employer challenges.** The themes were **Cultural identity, Improving employment outcomes,** and **Systemic barriers.**
Feedback from second interview and final story map. Upon completion of the analysis of participant 1330’s interview, I constructed her story map and identified the core message and themes. I attempted scheduled a follow-up interview with participant 1330 to review the findings with her to no avail. After contacting her three times we did schedule a follow-up interview, but participant 1330 did not arrive as scheduled. I then attempted to contact her three more times and left messages asking her to contact me to reschedule our follow-up interview, but she did not respond. I then ceased trying to schedule the follow-up interview. As I had a copy of participant 1330’s email address, I did send her an electronic of her story map and explained how I came to identify the core message and themes in her narrative in this message. No changes were made to her initial story map.

Final core messages and themes. The core messages and themes did not change as participant 1330 did not provide any feedback on her story maps. The key narratives she discussed included the challenge to incorporate her Aboriginal cultural identity in the workplace when employed by mainstream employers and the general lack of knowledge that most mainstream employers possess regarding Aboriginal history, culture, and traditions. She also shared deep-rooted systemic barriers and issues negatively impact Aboriginal youth both when seeking employment as well as in the workplace. Finally, participant 1330 spoke openly about the struggle Aboriginal youth face to gain employment due to a lack of education in comparison to non-Aboriginal youth, and the need for improved advertising of employment programs.
### ABORIGINAL CULTURAL IDENTITY AND EMPLOYMENT

**Figure 9. Participant 1330 initial story map**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1330 Workplace Identity</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
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</table>
| **Past** | - Has been employed by both mainstream and Aboriginal organizations  
- When employed by non-Native organizations:  
  - Felt like just a worker  
  - There was not an opportunity to think about his/her Native identity  
  - Native identity was not salient as she was just doing his/her job  
- Put his/her culture on the back burner  
  - They did not understand what smudging means  
- When employed by Native organizations:  
  - Could participate in protests  
  - Had a sense of pride  
  - Participated in conferences and workshops  
- Developed Native identity more  
  - Felt like his/her culture was respected  
- When she was 19 years old worked as a cashier and telemarketer  
  - When employed by Native organization was able to participate in conference because they:  
  - Enhanced cultural identity  
  - Improved emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing | - Participated in a career fair hosted by a Native organization, but:  
  - Not a lot of participation by employers  
  - Most employers were banks  
  - Employed by different non-Native employers  
- Hired by non-Native employers because had a non-Native referee  
  - Aboriginal youth who grew up in reserve communities:  
  - Do not finish high school  
  - Do not finish school past grade six  
- Having culture respected in the workplace made him/her feel like she belonged in the workplace | - Has completed employment programs  
- Knows a youth who came to the GTA from a reserve community out West who was funded for a program, but she youth dropped out and left because she felt lonely and all her family was back home  
- Started a college program and one year into the program found out about a different program that she would have preferred to take  
- If found out about different college program sooner would have saved him/her a lot of money  
- Found about different college program because other students told him/her about it  
- When found out about different college program it was too late to start another program  
- Fire department was called when some of his/her peers smudged at school  
- People said peers were smoking weed in the Aboriginal room when they smudged at school  
- 1960 scoop a lot of Aboriginal children were taken and put in non-Native homes and did not learn about culture  
- Because of the 1960's scoop a lot of Aboriginal children did not learn who they were  
- A lot has been taken away from this generation of Aboriginal youth  
- When Aboriginal youth move to urban areas from reserve communities they feel isolated  
- When Aboriginal youth move to urban areas from reserve communities they need to feel supported |
| **Present** | - Native organizations help employees develop their identity:  
  - By running conferences  
  - By offering training  
- Non-Native organizations:  
  - Are not as accommodating as Native organizations in allowing Native employees to attend cultural events  
- Require Native employees to attend cultural events on their own time  
- Native organizations allow employees to participate in conferences and workshops  
- Important Aboriginal youth have a sense of identity  
- Aboriginal identity:  
  - Important for feeling comfortable in the workplace  
- Has to be in the forefront for Aboriginal youth to do well in the workplace  
- When youth move to urban areas from reserve communities and are employed by non-Native organizations, they need an outlet to engage in their culture  
- Important mainstream employers:  
  - Accommodate Aboriginal youth engaging in their culture  
- Host cultural events so employees can participate in conferences and workshops allow employees to gain experience  
  - Aboriginal people have different learning practices  
- Mainstream employers have a generic way of teaching employees  
- Important employers understand the perspective that Native youth come from  
- Challenging for Aboriginal youth to have skill sets required by employers  
- Challenging for Aboriginal youth to work for banks because:  
  - Strong math background is required  
  - They need to have completed high school  
  - If they have not completed high school they will not have the skills required  
- Challenging for Aboriginal youth to work for a marketing agency if they have not completed high school as they will not have the skills required  
- Aboriginal youth need more training so they have the skills mainstream employers require  
- Employers need to give Aboriginal youth employment opportunities  
- Aboriginal youth are not well represented in a lot of employment sectors like retail and business  
- The majority of Aboriginal youth are employed by Native organization  
- Important for Aboriginal youth to:  
  - Have funding to engage in their culture  
  - Be visible in mainstream workplaces  
  - Be visibly employed in banks  
  - Be visibly employed in construction  
  - Be visibly employed in the trades  
  - Be visibly employed in different industries  
- There are a lot of employment agencies  
- There are academic upgrading programs for Aboriginal youth  
- Many agencies offer employment support to Aboriginal youth, but Aboriginal youth do not know how to access them  
- She is 28 years old and wants an opportunity to do part-time work  
- Most important thing about work is to have transferable skills that can be used in a career  
- Employment is important for Aboriginal youth  
- Aboriginal youth are the fastest growing population  
- Important thing about work is to have transferable skills that can be used in a career  
- Important to participate in Aboriginal culture if practicing traditional spirituality  
- Important:  
  - In the library  
  - In shelters  
  - In different areas so youth get the information  
- A lot of Aboriginal youth are trying to get back the things that have been taken away from their generation  
- Aboriginal youth struggle with a lot of pain because they grew up in environments with different types of abuse  
- Aboriginal youth struggle with a lot of pain because they grew up in environments with abuse from first contact with the family | - Important for Aboriginal youth to:  
  - Have funding to engage in their culture  
  - Be visible in mainstream workplaces  
  - Be visibly employed in banks  
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  - Be visibly employed in the trades  
  - Be visibly employed in different industries  
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- Many agencies offer employment support to Aboriginal youth, but Aboriginal youth do not know how to access them  
- She is 28 years old and wants an opportunity to do part-time work  
- Most important thing about work is to have transferable skills that can be used in a career  
- Employment is important for Aboriginal youth  
- Aboriginal youth are the fastest growing population  
- There is a lack of advertising of services available to Aboriginal youth  
- Some organizations advertise their services in the TTC, but it is not on enough of the TTC vehicles  
- A lot of Native organizations advertise on Facebook, but some youth do not have access to computers  
- If Aboriginal youth can only use computers for one hour at the library they probably will not find out about Native organizations' services  
- Some Aboriginal youth can only access computers at the library for one hour, and may be more concerned about finding a place to stay that night so will not go on the Native Canadian Centre's website or Miziwe Biik's website to find programs that could help them find a job  
- A lot of funding available and it's important youth are aware of the supports available so they can access them  
- Important to post information:  
  - In the library  
  - In shelters  
  - In different areas so youth get the information  
- A lot of Aboriginal youth are trying to get back the things that have been taken away from their generation  
- Aboriginal youth struggle with a lot of pain because they grew up in environments with different types of abuse  
- Aboriginal youth struggle with a lot of pain because they grew up in environments with abuse from first contact with the family |
### Aboriginal Cultural Identity and Employment

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<td>share their culture</td>
<td>- A lot of Aboriginal youth are unable to get employment in non-Native organizations.</td>
<td>-Prefers to work for non-Native organization</td>
<td>-Aboriginal youth struggle with a lot of pain because they grew up in environments with abuse from cousins or grandparents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- In non-Native organizations there is no focus on:</td>
<td>- many Native youth require more skills so they have the equivalent skill set to non-Native youth.</td>
<td>-Needs workplace to align with his/her goals</td>
<td>-There is a lot of work that needs to be done in terms of healing at the community level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- cultural identity, the focus is on doing your work</td>
<td>- some Aboriginal youth who grew up in reserve communities struggle:</td>
<td>-If workplace does not understand his/her perspective and does not align with his/her goals, s/he can lose sight of employment potential.</td>
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<td>- maintaining balance between the four aspects of the self</td>
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<td>- A lot of Non-Native employers are not aware of:</td>
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<td>- Smudging in workplace important to help with balance of the four aspects of self</td>
<td>- Aboriginal culture</td>
<td>-Employment agencies provide assistance to Aboriginal youth to gain employment skills</td>
<td>-The Elders who have healed are seeing a lot of youth.</td>
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<td>- It is important to know who you are because if you do not know who you are you will not be able to move forward</td>
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<td>-Hope in 20-30 years Aboriginal youth see Aboriginal people employed in different employment sectors so they know it is possible to be whatever they want</td>
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<td>-Fears some Aboriginal youth will fall behind and not reach their employment goals</td>
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### Future

- If Aboriginal identity is not in the forefront youth will not succeed in the workplace
  - If one of the four aspects is not balanced the employee will:
    - not be able to go to work
    - late going to work
    - not be an effective employee

- Cultural events in the workplace:
  - allow employees to learn from each other
  - are valuable for employee bonding
  - improve work ethic among employees
  - Important Aboriginal people are brought to share different learning styles in mainstream organization
  - Mainstream employers need to: engage with Aboriginal youth more
  - Workplace projection rates would improve if different learning styles in mainstream organizations
  - Workplace projection rates would improve if Aboriginal youth would benefit from skills training.
  - Workplace projection rates would improve if Aboriginal youth would benefit from skills training.

- Workplace projection rates would improve if Aboriginal youth would benefit from skills training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future</th>
<th>Workplace Identity</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
<th>Most important thing about work for youth</th>
<th>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Cultural events in the workplace:</td>
<td>-allow employees to learn from each other</td>
<td>-Prefers to work for non-Native organization</td>
<td>-Aboriginal youth struggle with a lot of pain because they grew up in environments with abuse from cousins or grandparents.</td>
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Mainstream employer challenges. When participant 1330 discussed challenges Aboriginal youth face when working for mainstream employers, what she was referring to was non-Aboriginal employers or organizations who lack a basic understanding of Aboriginal peoples, their history, and cultures. Throughout the interview participant 1330 spoke at length about her experiences of working for mainstream employers and the struggle to find employment outside of Aboriginal organizations as result of not having similar credentials and education to non-Aboriginal candidates. This experience was frustrating as there are limited employment opportunities within Aboriginal organizations in the GTA, and the employment opportunities she was eligible for in Aboriginal organizations did not necessarily align with her career aspirations.

For example, participant 1330 stated she recently attended a career fair that was ineffective for helping her finding employment because most of the employers were banks and she did not have strong background in mathematics, so she would be ineligible for those positions:

And there was just uh, a career fair that took place not too long ago, but umm, Native organ-employment organization, organized and I feel like there could have been a lot more organizations. ‘Cause there was, it was mainly banks…And, and if, if one wants to work in a bank, they have to have a good math background

(participant 1330, p. 4).

In another example, participant 1330 stated that many Aboriginal youth would struggle to gain employment in a bank as the banks require their employees to be the age of majority and to have completed secondary education: “And there’s also certain criteria that umm, a youth would have to have. And a youth at eighteen years old, unless they finish high school…they’re not going to necessarily have those skills…to be able to work at a bank” (participant 1330, p. 4).
She also explained that some Aboriginal youth who move to urban areas might not have the equivalent education as their non-Aboriginal peers. This places some Aboriginal youth at a disadvantage when they apply for jobs as many employers will use education levels as a screening tool for positions. As a result, many Aboriginal youth are not considered for vocational opportunities. Furthermore, participant 1330 discussed that many Aboriginal youth would benefit from programs that would allow them to upgrade their education levels.

For example, she stated that Aboriginal youth would benefit from accessing organizations that provide academic upgrading so they have similar educational attainment of their non-Aboriginal peers as this would improve their employment success:

…there are a lot of umm, employment agencies and as well as umm, academic upgrading…for Native youth. What I’m trying to say is that, that there is an abundance of, of umm, Native youth…that require their skill sets to umm, to get like, branch off…so that it’s, it’s equivalent to, to non-Native youth (participant 1330, p. 2).

Another employment challenge participant 1330 spoke of is that many Aboriginal youth are unsuccessful in gaining employment with mainstream employers. She explained that since many Aboriginal youth do not have the same level of education that non-Aboriginal youth have, they have limited employment prospects. As a result, many of the Aboriginal youth are only able to gain employment within Aboriginal organizations. For example, she stated that while she has been employed by both Aboriginal and mainstream organizations that part the reason she was successfully hired by mainstream employers was because she had non-Aboriginal referees:

As, as far as I know umm, you know, I've been fortunate to work at like, quite a few non-Native uh, places…But, the only reason why I got those jobs was because I
knew someone that was non-Native, and I was able to...to get a reference. And as far as know right now uh, the majority of the Native youth umm, are, are working in Native organizations (participant 1330, p. 4-5).

Participant 1330 also explained many mainstream employers lack a basic understanding of Aboriginal culture. This is challenging for Aboriginal youth employees as they do not feel that mainstream workplaces are safe environments and that mainstream workplaces can be hostile and damaging to cultural identity. To begin, she shared many Aboriginal youth may not succeed in mainstream workplaces as Aboriginal peoples are very diverse and have unique learning styles that are in opposition to non-Aboriginal learning styles.

For example, she stated Aboriginal youth employees would benefit from mainstream employers bringing in Aboriginal people to teach things from a culturally appropriate perspective, as well as to increase the level of comfort and security of youth employees:

Well, umm, I, I know that there's different types of, of learning practices.... that, that Native people have and there seems to be like, this generic learning style when it comes to work, workforces. Umm, gaining umm, extra knowledge…So maybe if, if an outside person that has Native ethnicity can come into the workplace and not just have like uh, non-Native people coming. To have different faces...whether they, they be Native or umm, Metis or Inuit. Just to umm, have, have dif-different umm, different, different umm, learning styles…And as well as different faces...in, in the workplace…I think that would be beneficial…Well, I, I think that it's important for employers to know umm, the perspective that Native youth come from…And that, being a Native youth myself umm, I, I find it a challenge in the, in the workforce
umm, in, in terms of having certain skills set....and need to engage with, specifically Native youth more (participant 1330, p. 3-4).

An additional challenge participant 1330 experienced working for non-Aboriginal employers was that they are not as welcoming of expressions of Aboriginal culture in the workplace. She explained practicing her Native spirituality in the workplace is important as it enhances and aids in her overall wellbeing. Furthermore, many non-Aboriginal employers and non-Aboriginal employees do not understand how expressions of Aboriginal culture are beneficial to Aboriginal employees, and understanding Aboriginal culture makes her feel respected in the workplace. For example, she stated that when she wanted to smudge while working for non-Aboriginal employers they did not understand what that meant, and that if she needed to request time off work to attend powwow, they also did not know what a powwow was:

Whereas when I was working at non-Native organizations it, I just had to like, I just put it on the er…If I said word smudge, they wouldn't even understand what that would mean…They're not aware…It's, it's a lack of awareness that non, not umm, most, I'm not saying all...non-Native organizations are completely oblivious to, to what entails within Native culture...and language. But I would say that it, there's a, there's a high, significant number of non-Native organizations that don't have a clue what smudging is... don't have a clue what, powwows are...and I just think that speaks to overall umm, a lot of umm, lack of awareness that Canadians have of First Nations...people…And Inuit, and Metis…So I, I feel like just overall people need to respect each other and in terms of when I was working at a Native organization I knew that if I needed to, if I wanted to take part in umm, in say a conference, if I
approached the executive director there were, there wouldn't really be a question of whether or not I could attend (participant 1330, p. 10-11).

In a final example, participant 1330 stated that work production rates would improve if employers accepted and respected their employees’ cultures and allowed for the safe expression of their cultural values in the workplace:

If they, do you know if cul-if society and different workplaces, enacted different philosophies, it's not only Native philosophy...Buddhism, Rastafarianism, or just what people, just accepting people for who they are. I think like, workplaces would, would, their projection rates would go up…The work ethic would go up tremendously…When there's like, a dominate culture in, in our society and that's why I would, I would prefer to work in a non-Native organization. Although I, I wouldn't necessarily want to work at one. I had to take a step back and understand where, where my umm, where my perspective is, you know? So match, align that with my goals…Because if I don't do that then I can easily umm, I can easily lose sight of, of exactly where I could be (participant 1330, p. 12).

**Cultural Identity.** When participant 1330 discussed cultural identity what she was referring to was the stark contrast in how she is able to incorporate and enhance her cultural identity when working for Aboriginal organizations in comparison to non-Aboriginal organizations. She discussed how Aboriginal employers were welcoming and encouraging of her participating in cultural activities and events, and that they even hosted some events which employees were welcome to attend. However, when she worked for non-Aboriginal employers she shared her cultural identity was damaged due to a lack of understanding and the suppression of her cultural identity in the workplace.
For example, participant 1330 stated Aboriginal employers allowed her to take time off work to attend cultural events whereas non-Aboriginal employers were not as understanding about her needing to take time off work to attend cultural events. This resulted in her feeling like her cultural identity was important when working for Aboriginal organizations and like she was nothing more than worker when working for non-Aboriginal employers:

As opposed to in a non-Native umm, organization they, from my experience, they haven't really been accommodating in terms of me going to different events. Like, those are things that I would have to do umm, on my own time...after work...And umm, at one Native organization particular that I worked at, they would do a lot, they would host a lot of umm, conferences and workshops...And it didn't matter like, what centre I was working in, I would be able to go to the, the main area umm, wherever the conference or the workshop would be...And I would be able to, to take part and I would be able to gain experience that way...And it was just like [when working for non-Native organizations], I'm just a worker. Like uh, my, my identity my like, my identity wasn't really umm, I, I don't know. I just didn't really think about you know, me, me being Native. I was just there doing my, my job...But, when I was working at non-Native, I mean when I was working at Native organizations like, there was like a sense of pride that I had working there. And also this umm, organization that I have in mind they're very politically forward...and when they would have umm, protests which they were organized, I'd be able to, to join. Actually the whole organization would, would be able to, to take part (participant 1330, p. 1-2).

In another example, participant 1330 stated that when she worked for Aboriginal employers, they encouraged her to attend conferences because it enhanced her cultural identity
while ensuring her overall mental wellbeing was taken care of and non-Native employers just wanted her to do her job:

…and in terms of when I was working at a Native organization I knew that if I needed to, if I wanted to take part in umm, in say a conference, if I approached the executive director there were, there wouldn't really be a question of whether or not I could attend…Because it, it would, it would enhance my, my cultural identity and it would also it would improve my, my emotional, physical...ummm, mental and spiritual…And that's actually important, that's really key if someone's practicing umm, their, their spirituality…Whereas in the, the non-Native organizations it's just about, do, do your work (participant 1330, p. 11).

She also discussed how cultural identity cannot truly be separated from workplace identity. As such, it is important that Aboriginal youth are able to express their cultural identity in the workplace. When Aboriginal youth are employed by non-Aboriginal organizations where they are not able to express their cultural identity, they need an outlet where they can participate in cultural activities. For example, she stated that for Aboriginal youth who move to urban areas from reservation communities it is especially important that their cultural identity is respected in the workplace in order to feel comfortable and succeed:

Well, I think that it's important for, for First Nations, Metis, and Inuit youth whether they come from umm, the reserve or whether they come from the city, to have a sense of identity...that they're able to feel comfortable with when they're in the workplace…and for youth to do well in the workplace I feel that their identity has to be in the forefront…And if it's not then I think that they fall behind in the workplace
and I, I feel like particularly for Native youth that are from the reserves (participant 1330, p. 2).

Similarly, when non-Aboriginal employers hire Aboriginal youth it is important that employers create a safe environment for Aboriginal youth to engage in culture. Allowing employees to engage in their culture is important because it improves work ethic as well as employee relationships with each other. For example, she stated that in order to not single out Aboriginal employees, organizations can hold social events where employees can participate in their own culture and share their culture with others:

And if they're going to find work in average, maybe the, the mainstream organizations...mainstream organizations that are non-Native...then there has to be umm, there has to be an outlet in the workplace. Whether that be at the workplace or after they finish work, where the, the work can accommodate umm, the Native youth to engage into their culture…Maybe that may mean that they have funding dollars...or, or have umm, functions where they bring in drummers and they bring in umm, singers and so that workplace can be inclusive to, to that person's ethnicity and so that person doesn't get singled out...maybe it could be like, umm, a function where everybody that's in the workplace, you know, what, whatever their ethnicity may be can, can learn from each other…And it can be like, a valuable umm, thing for the workplace because people will feel more bonded together…And, therefore the, the production rate for, for their work like, the work ethic would, would go up (participant 1330, p. 2-3).

She also explained that she prefers working for employers who treat her with respect. In her work experiences, she explained that the employers who allowed her include her cultural
practices in the workplace made her feel the most respected. While she discussed that there are probably some mainstream employers who would respect and understand the expression of Aboriginal culture in the workplace, such as smudging, this was not her experience. As a result, she never felt respected and comfortable working for mainstream organizations. For example, she stated that she only felt respected when she worked for Aboriginal employers because her cultural identity was integrated with her workplace identity:

I think just knowing when I was working at umm, Native organizations that umm, my culture's respected...That alone made me feel like I, I, I belong within, within that umm, workplace…Whereas when I was working at non-Native organizations it, I just had to like, I just put it on the back burner (participant 1330, p. 10).

Finally, participant 1330 spoke about the importance of practicing her spirituality, such as smudging in relation to her effectiveness as an employee. She explained her spirituality ensures she is balanced, and that her physical health, mental health, spiritual health, and emotional health are taken care of. She shared that if she was not practicing her spirituality she would be less likely to work because she would not be taking care of herself, so it is imperative that cultural identity can be incorporated into workplace identity. For example, she stated taking care of her cultural identity was easier to do when working for Aboriginal employers than for non-Aboriginal employers who do not understand the purpose of smudging:

Umm, I'll, I mean, I practice like, Native spirituality...and I find that it helps me keep a balance...because umm, there's four, there's four different aspects to with, within us. And if, if one, if one aspect is, is not, you know, you're not up to par...for what your usual self is then you're not going to be balanced…And when I was working at different organizations and like, just in general it doesn't matter if was Native or
non-Native, if I don't take care of myself...then I'm not going to be able to go to work, I'm not go-I'm going to end up being late, uh, I'm going to end up umm, just not being an effective worker and uh, I, I found that when I worked at a Native organization, I'd be able to, to smudge…And it's im, it's, it's important for me to do that...sometimes. Not all the time…But if I were to go in a room and I went to just, to smudge myself like, the fire department might be called (participant 1330, p. 12-13).

**Improving employment outcomes.** Participant 1330 also spoke about ways to improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal youth. She explained there are many services and programs available to help Aboriginal youth improve their employment outcomes, however improvements could be made ensure more youth access these programs, such as increased advertising. Similarly, she discussed how youth from reservation communities need improved support to help them succeed in employment programs and in their careers She also shared that she would like to see the employment situation improve for Aboriginal youth in the future, and part of the way to improve employment outcomes in the future is for urban youth in the GTA to know about some beneficial employment programs.

For example, she stated that many employment services are predominately advertised online, but many youth who move to the GTA from remote communities do not have access to the internet or computers, so physical advertising, such as flyers, is important so the youth who need the services the most know about them:

A lack of re, a lack of umm, I guess umm, advertising…There are a couple of organizations that have, have fit the bill and have umm, put up advertising in the TT-uh...TTC trains. But it's on every train…It's only probably one in ten…Or maybe
more. Like, I'm not sure specifically...Some, some youth don't have access to computers...So, I know for a fact that there umm, are a lot of umm, Native organizations that are on Facebook...that's how I find out about upcoming events...And different programs that, that are available, but if you're a youth that doesn't have access to, to the computer or you only get like, maybe an hour on the computer when you're at the library...And if that, if that youth is, is, is more concerned about finding, finding a place to, to stay...for that night, then they're not going to be going on like, the Native Canadian Centre website...Or Mizwebke website, and looking for programs that they could be involved with which could help them get out of that situation...that they're in (participant 1330, p. 6-7).

In another example, participant 1330 stated that to benefit youth with limited computer access, it is important for employment agencies to advertise their services in public libraries and shelters: “...it'd be important to post things up in, in the library...Or post things at umm, shelters...and various places where they wouldn't necessarily get that information” (participant 1330, p. 10).

Furthermore, she spoke about the importance of youth accessing employment programs to help them upgrade both their employment skills as well as their academic achievement levels. Programs to help youth complete secondary school are important because many youth are unable to gain meaningful employment without a high school education. For example, she stated that when youth improve their academic skills that it helps them gain meaningful employment as their skill set is equivalent to their non-Aboriginal peers:

I've taken employment programs before...And, you know, there, there are a lot of umm, there are a lot of umm, employment agencies and as well as umm, academic
upgrading...for Native youth. What I'm trying to say is that, that there is an abundance of, of umm, Native youth...that require their skill sets to umm, to get like, branch off...so that it's, it's equivalent to, to non-Native youth (participant 1330, p. 5).

Participant 1330 also explained that Aboriginal youth who relocate from reservation communities to urban areas might need additional support to help them succeed. The additional support she referred to was social support, as many Aboriginal youth who relocate to urban areas struggle with loneliness as they are often living very far from their family and community. For example, she stated that some youth do not succeed in employment programs despite having financial support because they miss their family:

I, I know umm, one young lady and she came from a reserve...Umm, from out West just recently and she, she dropped out of a program that she got funded for...and she left because she felt so lonely...Like all her family is, is back home (participant 1330, p. 6).

In another example, participant 1330 stated that Aboriginal youth who relocate from reservation communities to urban areas might need the support of an employment counsellor to help them find work so they are able to finance the basic necessities of life:

...so if, if a youth is coming from umm, an isolated community...and they, they didn't necessarily have the best umm, childhood...I would hope that umm, an employment counsellor or wherever umm, wherever they're seeking a service...that they'll be able to first take of like, the basic needs...and then they'll be able to work on umm, the employment outcomes. And, employment is really important (participant 1330, p. 9).
Participant 1330 was also well informed of different employment programs that would aid Aboriginal youth in securing meaningful employment. These programs are run by different Aboriginal organizations in Toronto as well as government programs. She wanted to ensure that Aboriginal youth in Toronto are aware of these programs in order to provide them with awareness of how they can improve their employment outcomes. For example, she stated there is a GED program to complete their secondary education, employment skills programs that result in valuable job credentials, and government funding for work supplies:

Umm, well there's, there's quite a few employment umm, there's umm, quite a few employment programs that are being implemented at the Native Centre. There's a GED program that just got implement...umm, so both, they'll, they'll pay for youth to get their general education diploma. There's a program at umm, Miziwe Biik. It's called uh, skills link...And that's uh, a three month program. There's also umm, like, first aid, first aid and food handling service, at fur-sorry, food handling certificate that is available at Miziwe Biik...They also have funding for, for Native youth. Specifically from eighteen to thirty, so let's say if they're a construction worker...they can apply for, for money from Miziwe Biik for boots, for certification, for a hard hat...for anything that they need...And that, that's funding from Employment Ontario...'Cause I know that not every youth knows about that stuff...So that education and awareness piece is...I think it's key (participant 1330, p. 15-16).

Finally, she spoke about improving employment outcomes in the future. For participant 1330, she shared she would know employment outcomes have improved for Aboriginal youth when they are visibly employed in different employment sectors in addition to being employed.
in numbers that represent their increasing population. For example, she stated that presently Aboriginal people are not widely employed in many industries, which needs to change:

And, employment is really important and it's important for Native youth to be umm, visually, visually umm, in, in banks...in, in construction and trades, and all of those different umm, industries because Native, Native youth from eighteen to thirty are the fastest growing population...And at this point I don't see that reflected in the employment sector...And to have, to have Native youth be able to look umm, into the workforce and then seeing, like, okay, it's possible for me to be a firefighter...it's possible for me to be a policeman, it's possible for me to be a lawyer. Like, I'm talking about like, maybe twenty, thirty years like, down...down the road. You know? Where, where youth that are eighteen years old they can, they can see and like that it's actually possible for, for them to become a professional in whatever...employment sector that they wish (participant 1330, p. 9).

**Systemic barriers.** For this theme participant 1330 expressed concern that Aboriginal youth are not succeeding in workplaces as a direct result of racism, historical disadvantages as a direct result of colonization, intergenerational trauma, and a lack of support at the level of management. For example, she stated urban Aboriginal youth struggle to successfully enter the workforce as they are dealing with unique challenges such as mental health concerns, lack of formal education, and feelings of isolation:

And the majority of the people that they see are Native...and they have a really hard time in terms of getting into the workforce because they’re dealing with umm, different issues such as, maybe suicidal thoughts...or they, maybe they didn’t finish school...they only went up to grade six...Like, there, there’s that piece. And there’s
also umm, people that don’t feel supported and they’re very isolated (participant 1330, p. 5-6).

She also explained many Aboriginal youth are struggling with the effect of intergenerational trauma. Participant 1330 describes the negative impact of intergenerational trauma as the consequences of legacy of residential schools. This results in trauma being passed down to other family members in a cycle including, poor parenting skills due to mental health concerns, neglect, abuse, and an inability to express affection. For example, she stated that poor familial relationships are a direct result of intergenerational trauma, which makes it challenging for Aboriginal youth to succeed in the workplace as they are disconnected from their cultural identity:

Well, I think that it’s important for, for First Nations, Metis, and Inuit youth whether they come from umm, the reserve or whether they come from the city, to have a sense of identity that they’re able to feel comfortable with when they’re in the workplace…And it’s important because umm, throughout history umm, and from their intergenerational umm, relationships that they’ve had with family members, whether they come from umm, the reserve or whether they come from the city, to have a sense of identity…that they’re able to feel comfortable with when they’re in the workplace…And for youth to do well in the workplace I feel that their identity has to be in the forefront (participant 1330, p. 2).

Similarly she shared that most non-Aboriginal people living in Canada do not have an understanding of the historical disadvantages Aboriginal people face. This negatively impacts employment outcomes as Aboriginal youth are struggling to heal from the damaging effects of colonialism and intergenerational trauma. For example, she stated that the intergenerational
impacts of trauma are currently being experienced by Aboriginal youth who had family members placed in residential schools and the foster care system, which makes it challenging for Aboriginal youth heal and move forward:

Well, we live in a dominate society where Canadian, so called Canadian culture is, is the norm. And not a lot of people know about Native way of life…And a lot of systemic things have happened to us through, through umm, families going through residential school…And the foster care system…And now there’s claims for the sixties scoop…Because a lot of children and youth were put in there and they were in not, non-Native homes…And they didn’t learn about their culture. They didn’t learn who they were…And it, and it’s so important to, to know who you are…because if you don’t know uh, who you are then how do you know where you’re going to move forward?...So a lot has been taken away from I would say my generation and we’re just trying to get that back…And a lot of the pain that, that my generation is facing, it’s because they grew up in environments where there’s a lot of different types of abuse…Whether that be from like, the, the first, like first contact with family…or from umm, cousins or…grandparents or something like that. So there’s a lot of work that needs to be done in terms of on the community level…To, to ensure that youth move forward (participant 1330, p. 13-14).

Finally, she explained how the lack of awareness of Aboriginal culture by most non-Aboriginal people is damaging to cultural identity. Many non-Aboriginal people do not understand cultural practices, such as smudging and go to lengths to prevent cultural activities from taking place. For example, she stated that at her college, her Aboriginal student peers were smudging in the Aboriginal room and the fire department was called and people accused them of using drugs:
But if I were to go in a room and I went to just, to smudge myself like, the fire department might be called…And that, that actually did happen. Not to myself, but it happened to umm, some of my peers when they were going to school at George Brown College…And the, the fire department was called, some people made comments that umm, people were smoking weed in, in the room, in the Aboriginal room…So, there’s, there’s a lack of, there’s lack of awareness (participant 1330, p. 13).

Participant 1456

Character sketch. Participant 1456 was a male in his early twenties at the time of the interview. He was someone who I had previously interviewed for a different research project, so we had a cordial working relationship and he appeared very relaxed at the time of the interview. At the time of our interview participant 1456 had recently started working in a new field and with a new employer. His new job was full-time, but it was contract position. Participant 1456 declined to answer the first question “how does a sense of who you are as worker, or your workplace identity, develop in the workplace for Aboriginal youth?” as he had not considered his workplace identity or how it was distinct from his personal identity. Participant 1456 answered all the remaining interview questions. During the interview, participant 1456 shared how he used to be very disconnected from his Aboriginal culture and the community. He also discussed how his employment success was challenged by his involvement in the criminal justice system. Additionally, he spoke about how before he became more involved in the urban Aboriginal community that he worked for mainstream employer in a job that he disliked. Participant 1456 also described how he transitioned to working for an Aboriginal organization after being referred to the organization as a client, becoming increasingly involved in the Aboriginal community in the GTA, and how he now looks forward to going to work everyday.
Story map. The initial story map (see Figure 10) was constructed during the analysis phase of this interview (See Chapter Three for a detailed explanation of the process). Upon completion of the story map I identified one core message and three themes from the map and interview narrative. The initial core message for 1456 was the Importance of exploration and volunteering to identify career interests and skills. The three themes were the Role of employers in helping youth employees succeed, the Importance of Aboriginal community support, and Aboriginal Cultural identity in the workplace.

Feedback from second interview and final story map. Upon completion of the analysis of participant 1456’s interview, I constructed his story map and identified the core message and themes. I attempted scheduled a follow-up interview with participant 1456 to review the findings with him to no avail. After contacting him seven times and leaving messages asking him to contact me and informing him that the purpose was to review the findings of his interview with him, I ceased trying to schedule the follow-up interview. As I had a copy of participant 1456’s email address, I did send him an electronic of his story map and explained how I came to identify the core message and themes in his narrative in this message. No changes were made to his initial story map.
## Figure 10. Participant 1456 initial story map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1456</th>
<th>Workplace Identity</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
<th>Most important thing about work for youth</th>
<th>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Past | -Boss got to know him/her when s/he volunteered there for eight months  
-Got job because volunteered there for eight months and boss knew s/he was competent  
-Wanted to work at place where volunteered because s/he got used to the work, found the work easy, and got to know the employees  
-Has not been challenged by employers in the workplace  
-Has not had employment success challenged by employers due to being Aboriginal  
-Has liked all bosses  
-Has always been the youngest person at all previous jobs  
-Has not experienced any employment challenges due to being a youth  
-When painting hated Monday mornings because s/he had to wake up earlier than now has to wake up for current job  
-When painted had to travel  
-When painted was employed by a company and did not work directly for the people who owned the homes  
-When painted worked on newly built property developments and would paint house after house  
-When painted had to paint several houses on a deadline  
-When painted in newly built properties the floors were not completed  
-When painted Mondays were the worst day of the week because s/he would stay up late and go to parties  
-Offered a causal position to do motivational speaking for other youth | -Thought s/he would always be employed by painting walls, dry walling, and flooring  
-Thought may move up from painting walls, dry walling, and flooring into construction and renovations  
-Prior to working for multidisciplinary legal setting had only worked in general contracting  
-Starting painting because everyone in his/her neighbourhood worked in that field and his/her step-father had a connection to work in the field  
-Decided to try work outside of painting because s/he heard of book about a person who worked a different job everyday for a year  
-Started volunteering for multidisciplinary legal setting after being a client there  
-Finding My Way program required participants to complete a volunteer placement and s/he volunteered at multidisciplinary legal setting  
-While volunteering at multidisciplinary legal setting the receptionist taught him/her how to do some of her tasks so s/he could cover for her | -Used to get charged and go to court a lot  
-Used to attend anger management groups and harm reduction program at multidisciplinary legal setting  
-Stopped getting into legal problems when started Finding My Way program at Anishnabe Health |
| Present | -People in the Aboriginal community have been supportive when they tell him/her how well s/he is doing, how much s/he has changed, and how much s/he has turned his/her life around  
-People in the Aboriginal community are supportive by | -Helps when bosses are easy going  
-Likes tasks that lets him/her leave the office  
-Likes when boss lets you take occasional breaks  
-Good when boss lets you go pick things up to get out of the office  
-Good when boss lets you do things that you are able to do | -The most important thing about work for youth is that they have to love their job  
-Important for youth to be passionate about their work and enjoy it  
-Important that youth don’t just go to work and go through the motions  
-Benefit of youth loving their work is:  
-they look forward to going to work  
-Hope youth understand they can change their lives  
-A lot of youth are smart but aren’t living up to their potential  
-Youth need other youth role models  
-Dream youth get more involved in politics  
-Good when decisions are being made for the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal people without |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future</th>
<th>Aboriginal culture will be important in future career goal doing case work with Aboriginal youth</th>
<th>-Aboriginal culture will be important in future career goal doing case work with Aboriginal youth</th>
<th>-Aboriginal people being involved -Fears that Aboriginal youth don't look for work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Aboriginal culture will be important in future career goal doing case work with Aboriginal youth</td>
<td>-Potential for job growth in current job -Future may be promoted to community council liaison</td>
<td>-Aboriginal people being involved -Fears that Aboriginal youth don't look for work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Next year may be promoted to community council liaison -Potential promotion to community council liaison would be a one year contract position -Might take potential promotion to community council liaison position or may go back to school -Not sure if s/he will accept casual motivational speaking position because it will take a lot of time and need so figure out how to present his/her own story</td>
<td>-Potential for boss to know your personality -Important for boss to get to know employees -From volunteering at place where employed knew all the details of the job before getting hired -Workplace is a multi-disciplinary legal setting, but everyone gets along -Workplace has three managers -HR manager is his/her direct boss -Fears lucky that has not had employment success challenged by employers due to being Aboriginal -Workplace is more positive when you like your boss -Now that s/he works in multidisciplinary legal setting s/he doesn't mind Mondays -Working in multidisciplinary legal setting is easy in comparison to painting</td>
<td>-Aboriginal culture does not help a lot in his/her job because mostly just answer phones -Important for boss to know your personality -Important for boss to get to know employees -From volunteering at place where employed knew all the details of the job before getting hired -Workplace is a multi-disciplinary legal setting, but everyone gets along -Workplace has three managers -HR manager is his/her direct boss -Fears lucky that has not had employment success challenged by employers due to being Aboriginal -Workplace is more positive when you like your boss -Now that s/he works in multidisciplinary legal setting s/he doesn't mind Mondays -Working in multidisciplinary legal setting is easy in comparison to painting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Youth would benefit from a program where: -they enjoy their work -it makes them happy -Likes where s/he work and proud of his/her work</td>
<td>Youth would benefit from a program where: -they enjoy their work -it makes them happy -Likes where s/he work and proud of his/her work -Youth need to experiment with different jobs to find what they like to do for work -Multidisciplinary legal setting job, first job since left painting, and first job in an office setting -Working in multidisciplinary legal setting now likes Monday mornings -Youth need to experiment with different jobs to find what they will like to do for work -Is happy now that that s/he is working in multidisciplinary legal setting -Not all youth know what they want to do for work -Miziwe Biik has a carpentry program, but unsure if they offer computer programs -Aboriginal culture is important in the workplace because Aboriginal culture is everywhere -Aboriginal culture in the workplace is important</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Hope youth understand they can improve employment outcomes by: -making choices -putting in effort -committing to their job -Hope youth follow his/her path by finding what they love -Things won't change for the Aboriginal communities if Aboriginal youth do not get involved in politics -Important for Aboriginal youth to get involved in politics so Aboriginal people have a say in the decision being made for their communities and people -Fears Aboriginal youth will not find employment -Fears Aboriginal youth won't be get a job -Fears Aboriginal youth will not have employment opportunities</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Final core messages and themes. The core messages and themes did not change as participant 1456 did not provide any feedback on his story maps. The key narratives he discussed included the value of taking risks and seeking out work in different areas in order to find a job that youth love and thrive at. He also explained the impact employers have on youth employees and the ways that they help youth succeed through establishing relationships to determine their strengths and weaknesses. Finally, participant 1456 shared that social supports within the Aboriginal community are imperative at ensuring Aboriginal youth employees have both contacts and encouragement through personal support to help them succeed in the workplace.

Importance of exploration. The concept of exploration and experimentation in different fields as a way to discover what area of work suits each individual was expressed throughout the interview. Participant 1456 shared it is important for Aboriginal youth to try out different jobs and volunteer as way to develop employment skills and determine potential career paths. He explained exploration is important because in order for Aboriginal youth to succeed in the workplace they need to enjoy their work. For example, he stated he disliked his former job working as a painter so he decided to take action by switching his career after being inspired by reading a book where the author tried a different job everyday for a year:

…you'd have to just experiment…You'd have to like see what, what you like and like, what you wouldn't mind doing and like uh, I don't know. I, I heard about this book and I, I wanted to read it. This guy I think, I think he's like, he had he, he had like, tried working like, 365 different jobs in one year…Or something like that…Like, one job per day…A different job per day. It just and like, like I wanted to read it but it gave me a thought. I'm like I think that's when I heard about that
I was like, just the idea of like, what's in the book, and I was like 'Okay. Maybe I should like, try and switch it up'…'for myself.'…Try something else and…I mean, I'm not going to go try to be a crane operator or anything…I'm good for right now (participant 1456, p. 7-8)

In another example, participant 1456 stated that he found his new career after accessing services and then volunteering for the organization, which meant he understood the type of work he would be doing and knew he would enjoy the job when he was offered a position:

Originally I was a client [at place where he now works]…I was a client. I was uh, I was getting in shit all the time umm, like courts and like, I was getting charged all the time, and I uh, I used attend some of their like, anger management groups…that they hold. Umm, like once a week or so. And a harm reduction program…that they had going on there. I used to attend those and then I got into a program like, after I got, stopped getting into trouble. Like uh, when I stopped getting into trouble and started, I got into this program uh, at Anisnabe Health called uh (pause)…Finding my way. And umm, they require you to do a placement once a week…So I chose ALST to be my placement…And then the umm, receptionist taught me, like trained me how to do like, cover, so I could cover her lunch. Or…if she was sick I'd cover for the day or whatever. (participant 1456, p. 8).

Furthermore, this volunteer position was a positive experience for participant 1456 as he was able to translate this experience into a job offer. He explained by volunteering at the organization he was able to develop the skills required for the position. Additionally, he was able to establish a relationship with both his boss and coworkers. This resulted in his boss trusting him and recognizing that he would be valuable to the organization. For example, he
stated that because he volunteered with the organization that his boss knew he was able to do all the tasks required of the position competently:

Uh, I guess it was just getting to know me over the eight months I volunteered there. Uh, yeah. I’d say so [offered job]. Because I volunteered there for about eight months and they knew I was fully competent…In terms of uh, that job position. Like I knew, I knew all my job details umm, like, like, uh, like basically umm, I knew how to do the, do the job before I actually got the job…Yeah…’cause I got used to it [the job] (participant 1456, p. 2).

Experimentation and volunteering were also beneficial because participant 1456 was able to get a job that he now enjoys. As such, participant 1456 advocates that all youth explore and experiment to find a job they love. He shared this is important because it means employees will be more invested in their work and loyal to their position. If Aboriginal youth are not satisfied in their work this can damage their self-esteem and also increases the likelihood they will not remain in the job. For example, participant 1456 stated that he enjoys the work he does in his current job, which instils a sense of pride:

The most important thing for like [work]…You gotta love it…You gotta, got be passionate about it. Can’t just be something you do, you and like you just sit through and go through the motions. You gotta actually enjoy it…The benefit of loving what I do is uh, is looking forward to going to work…Uh, and enjoying what I do. Umm, (pause). Yeah, that's it. I mean like, if you enjoy it, then it makes you happy, right?…I like, I like where I work so, I'm kind of proud of it and stuff. (participant 1456, p. 4).
In another example, participant 1456 stated that not all of his past job experience resulted in positive outcomes, but that through trying diverse and new employment opportunities he is now in a job that he enjoys:

Like, I have to, like I always thought I would be the guy painting walls. And like, and like, doing dry walling and stuff like that…Hardwood flooring, and uh, I always thought that was for me and like I always thought eventually they could move up and like, do different kind of like construction or like, uh renovations or whatever…And then uh, I don't know. I just, I started experimenting with different well, this is actually the first job since I've switched…So like I haven't, I have never worked in an office setting…I've never worked retail. I've never worked in like uh, like service or anything like that, really. Yeah, so you just. Actually the only things I've done is painting, roofing, uh, just like general con...general contracting…Monday mornings are different, you know? Umm, Monday mornings like I used to hate it [when working as a general contractor] (participant 1456, p. 5).

He openly talked about the different programs offered in the GTA that Aboriginal youth could access to help them explore their interests and gain new employment skills. Additionally, participant 1456 had some feedback regarding gaps in the programing that is currently offered and how these organizations could modify their programing in order to aid youth in gaining successful employment. More specifically, he would like to see the creation of a program where youth could appetite in any field with it leading to an employment opportunity, as well as more programing to give youth computer skills. For example, he stated there are programs offered that are geared towards helping youth work in specific fields, but more diversity of programs are required so youth can learn employment skills that will help them gain successful employment in whatever field they would like to pursue:
...like I mean, not everyone knows what they want to do...Like, maybe an office setting’s not the right thing for them...But I mean like, it’d be cool if there was like a program that uh, that you could basically try as like, like, practice that kind of like whatever you want to get. So say, say you wanted to get into like, uh, like just say you wanted to train yourself like for like even a reception job...like there, there could be like a program that you could go through that like, teaches you different stuff...Like Microsoft Word or uh, or just, just like basic like, office skills...stuff like that. Or like, ‘cause I know Miziwe Biik has programs I think they, they don’t, I’m not sure if they have like uh, like a computer’s program or anything like that. I know they have like a uh, oh, what is it? A carpentry program (participant 1456, p. 8-9).

In a final example, participant 1456 stated that exploration and experimentation helped him determine what career path he wants pursue in the future, stating: “That's, that's what I want to do anyways like, I want to have like, like, my career I want it to be through ALST. Like I want to work there,” (participant 1456, p. 12).

**Role of employers.** Another theme that emerged in participant 1456’s interview is the impact employers have on helping youth employees succeed or struggle in the workplace. More specifically, participant 1456 shared that the more time employers spent getting to know him, the more positive his workplace experience was. He shared that in his previous job as a painter he worked for a mainstream employer, and he used to hate going to work everyday. For example, he stated that he disliked working as general contractor because he had to do physically demanding work on a tight deadline for employers he did not know, and he often had to commute:
I’d have to get up earlier when I was doing construction and painting and stuff. I’d have to be up by like 6:00 am, out the door by like 7:00, 7:30 uh, depending on how far the site was…And usually it was far. Usually it’s like…We’d never paint, we never got jobs in Toronto…it was more like umm, companies who I used to work for…like it’s not a company you’d call and be ‘Oh, I need you to paint this.’ It’s like, like brand new houses…It’s like, townhouses…Like when they’d build like, a huge complex or something…We’d hit those up and we’d just paint house, by house, by house…And you have a deadline and everything…That’s, they never, it, there’s no flooring done or anything it’s just your walking on like, before anything…Like, just be the basics (participant 1456, p. 6).

Participant 1456’s previous job experience was juxtaposed with his feelings about his current workplace. He explained that now he was more than a worker and this was the direct result of his employer establishing a social connection with participant 1456. This relationship made him feel more comfortable in the workplace, while aiding in his success of workplace tasks because his employer was able to recognize when he was doing well and when he needed assistance. For example, he stated that his boss got to know his personality and let him take breaks or do different tasks in order to keep him happy and engaged:

Well my boss kind of like, she’s like a, she’s really easy going…And uh, she’s pretty cool. She gives me these, lets me get out of the office quite a bit…Umm, like, an extra break here and there, or whatever…If she has something she needs picked up or something done I can, I can do it…So, I get out of the office…Uh, I guess it was just getting to know me over the eight months I volunteered there. (participant 1456, p. 1-2).
Similarly, participant 1456 explained it is also important to establish relationships with your coworkers in order to make the workplace a positive environment. This is important as it helps youth employees feel accepted and valued. For example, he stated that he gets along with everyone in this workplace, despite having different roles within the organization:

So there's like, there's, you got some lawyers that specialize in…like, defence and uh…like, a victim's right advocate. And uh, then we have like, housing like, lawyers…who deal with like housing and stuff. So I mean, but I mean everyone gets along there (participant 1456, p. 2).

Additionally, he spoke about the importance of employers providing potential for advancement within the organization. This is beneficial because it ensures Aboriginal youth have financial security and the opportunity to advance their career. It also provides Aboriginal youth employees with increased confidence that they are preforming their job well and makes them feel like their boss likes them and will support them. For example, he stated his boss is working with him to help him get another one-year full time position when his current contract expires:

Yeah, it's uh, when I next year umm, November eighteenth I might move up to uh, sorry (yawns)…Excuse me. I might move up to the community council umm, liaison…position…So, then once I get there umm, that's a Miziwe Biik funded position…So it's only a, a year contract. And then I might go back to do that (participant 1456, p. 3).

In a final example, participant 1456 stated that getting along with bosses and liking bosses makes the work environment more positive, “Like most, like all my bosses have been
cool. Like, I've liked them all…If you get along with your boss and you like your boss…that's so much better (participant 1456, p. 4).

**Importance of Aboriginal community support.** The second theme participant 1456 discussed was the importance of Aboriginal community support. For participant 1456 community support means having individuals from the urban Aboriginal community provide emotional and social support for him. He explained that social support from the community is important for Aboriginal youth’s success in the workplace as well as their self-esteem and mental health. For example, he stated that the community support has helped him improve his personal circumstances and encouraged him to achieve more:

Uh the community's helped out quite a bit. Umm, just like when certain people umm, tell me how good they think I've been doing…and how I've changed and turned my life around…and like, they give me that positive like, input basically…And I get like, when especially when I hear it from like, people, sometimes I hear it from people I don't even know, but especially when I hear it from the people that've known me the longest…that have known like, me when I was like, getting in shit all the time…So I think that's umm, a positive thing (participant 1456, p. 11).

In another example, participant 1456 stated that he utilized the urban community resources to help him turn his life around in a positive way:

I was uh, I was getting in shit all the time umm, like courts and like, I was getting charged all the time, and I uh, I used attend some of their [Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto] like, anger management groups…that they hold. Umm, like once a week or so. And a harm reduction program…that they had going on there. I used to attend
those and then I got into a program [Finding My Way at Anishnawbe Health] like, after I got, stopped getting into trouble (participant 1456, p. 8).

Additionally, he explained while many Aboriginal youth rely on the community for support, it is also important for the youth to give back the community. More specifically, participant 1456 spoke about the importance of Aboriginal youth making positive changes for their communities through becoming involved in politics. He shared that if Aboriginal youth do not get involved in politics, decisions will be made for the community without the community’s input. For example, he stated in order for Aboriginal communities to have positive futures, Aboriginal youth need to become leaders:

Uh, I want to see, I want to see like, a lot the youth get into like, just different kinds of things. Like we more, we need umm, people in like politics and stuff, you know?…’Cause uh, nothing’s ever going to change…For our community if we don't get in there and do it…And it like, decisions are being made about our community and our people like, without like, we're not even a part of that decision….regarding things. That's why I think it'd be best if like, future generations start getting involved in politics and stuff (participant 1456, p. 10).

**Cultural identity.** The final theme participant 1456 discussed was the importance of accessing Aboriginal culture in the workplace. He explained that including Aboriginal culture in the workplace through the safe expression of cultural activities, such as smudging, and access to Elders in the workplace was important to his workplace success. For participant 1456, cultural identity is not something that can be separated from workplace identity. For example, he stated that as he works for an Aboriginal organization culture is present in all aspects of his job and the work environment:
Yeah, it’s, it’s umm, I, I don’t see how it [culture] couldn’t [be in the workplace]…because like, our culture’s everywhere like umm, like uh, like when they run groups they, they, they smudge…like, people smudge everyday there anyways. Umm, an like we have like Elders come in sometimes…they’ll uh, run different workshops and stuff. Uh, so it’s uh, like it’s very our culture’s very there…(participant 1456, p. 11-12).

However, he stated that while prefers working for an organization where Aboriginal culture is present, he would not turn down a good employment opportunity even if there would be an absence of Aboriginal culture in the new work environment. This is because he does not want to stunt his professional development or his income potential and he believes many mainstream employers are better off financially than Aboriginal organizations. As a result, participant 1456 explained at some point he will probably have to leave the comforts of working for an employer who understands and accepts his culture in order to gain financial security. For example, he stated that he would prefer to work in an environment where he could incorporate his cultural identity, but he would not let that prevent him from pursuing other employment opportunities:

It is, it is preferred [culture in the workplace]. It’s definitively uh, it’s definitively something that you like, umm, it’s definitively something I’d prefer. But I mean it’s, it’s, I mean if I got a great job position somewhere where Aboriginal culture it umm, isn’t present, I mean I wouldn’t, I wouldn’t turn it down just cause like, but uh, yeah. It’s pretty important (participant 1456, p. 12).

Participant 1456 also spoke candidly about the fact that while Aboriginal culture is present in his workplace and it is important, he does not necessarily integrate his identity in his work as
he mostly answers phones. However, he expressed hope that Aboriginal culture will play a more prominent role in his work in the future. This is because he wants to directly with Aboriginal youth in the future and using cultural activities such as prayers and smudging will be important. For example, he stated that in the future he wants to work as a youth social worker for troubled Aboriginal teens as he benefitted from accessing the same service:

...with what I want to do eventually it [culture] would have…Umm, ‘cause I want to do like case work and work with youth…and with cli-have clients and stuff…So when I get there then yes, it’ll, it’ll definitively play, play a role into, into my job and stuff (participant 1456, p. 12).

Participant 1536

Character Sketch. Participant 1536 was a female in her mid-twenties. Due to participant 1536’s busy schedule, she requested we complete the interview using Skype. I emailed her a copy of the consent letter the day before our interview so she would have a copy of it to review. She appeared be comfortable with the interview process, but reflected that she was concerned about articulating her experiences clearly. To help establish rapport, I introduced myself and explained my background prior to reviewing the consent from. Participant 1536 reciprocated by introducing herself. As we did not meet in person, participant 1536 verbally consented to participate in the study. She inquired about the honourarium since we did not meet in person. In order to not further inconvenience this participant, she provided me with her mailing address and the gift card was sent via Canada Post. We experienced some technical difficulties during the interview that resulted in us being disconnected briefly. However, we were able to reconnect, and participant 1536 was able to complete the interview. At the time of our interview participant 1536 was working the field of social work. Participant 1536 shared that her work
experience included Aboriginal organizations and mainstream employers, but even when she worked for mainstream employers she was working with Aboriginal populations. She also spoke about the challenges she faced as a result of being half aboriginal and half white in the workplace in terms of participating in ceremonies, feeling the need to prove her Aboriginal identity to coworkers due working in a competitive environment, and the ways Aboriginal culture has been incorporated into her workplaces. Participant 1536 also discussed the role management plays in terms of supporting employees and creating harmony among co-workers. The story maps below illustrate the core concepts and themes that emerged.

**Story map.** The initial story map (see Figure 11) was constructed during the analysis phase of this interview (See Chapter Three for a detailed explanation of the process). Upon completion of the story map I identified one core message and two themes from the map and interview narrative. The initial core message for participant 1536 was **Employer challenges.** The themes were **Cultural identity** and **Systemic barriers.**

**Feedback from second interview and final story map.** Upon completion of the analysis of 1536’s interview, I constructed her story map and identified the core message and themes. I then scheduled a follow-up interview with participant 1536 to review the findings with her. I provided participant 1536 with a copy of her story map and explained how I came to identify the core message and themes in her narrative. I asked her the following questions: “From your narratives in your interview I have constructed a story map. How does this map illustrate your views? What is missing from your story map? What would you like to add? Do you have anything else to say about your story map? In response to the questions, participant 1536 initially expressed gratitude that I carefully and accurately summarized her narrative and
### Figure 11. Participant 1536 initial story map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1536</th>
<th>Workplace Identity</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
<th>Most important thing about work for youth employment</th>
<th>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Past** | - Worked almost exclusively for Aboriginal agencies  
- Worked for small mainstream organization with five Aboriginal people in the department and they would host Aboriginal awareness day and sweatlodge ceremonies  
- Worked for small mainstream organization with five Aboriginal people, and non-Aboriginal staff:  
  - viewed Aboriginal staff as "weirdoes"  
  - resented Aboriginal staff because they took time off work to attend ceremonies  
  - resented Aboriginal staff because they viewed them as being able to do whatever they wanted  
  - Experienced having to prove her Native identity because she does not look Native  | - Despite support of small mainstream organization, five Aboriginal staff members were othered  
- Small mainstream organization with five Aboriginal staff members because worked as a social worker for the Aboriginal community and the Aboriginal staff judged each other and the staff were supposed to be helpers who work without judgement  
- Experienced judgement and un-healthiness working in First Nation's communities in the far North  
- Experienced competitiveness of "real Indianness versus not real Indianness" in all her workplaces  
- Experienced people trying to figure out "who's a real Native person"  
- Experienced having to prove her Native identity  
- Management supportive in workplace because:  
  - let her do what she needed to feel comfortable  
  - been interested in what she brings to workplace  
  - interested in what she has to offer  
-let employees do training  
- Elder had strict ideas about ceremonies, who a real Native person was, and was quick to call you on any mistakes if you did not follow protocols properly, which played into staff's competitive nature and proving "Indianness" | - Grandfather had strong work ethic  
- Grandfather did physically laborious work as a lumberjack  
- Grandfather with strong work ethic was a mentor when it came to work because he never complained  
- When working after Master's for the Aboriginal community in Toronto sensed who would be a good mentor  
- Worked in the Aboriginal community in Toronto after completing her Master's and had mentors who she admired  
- Mentors when working in first job after Master's were important  
- Mentors in the workplace were grounded, and had a sense of humour about challenges  
- People in the workplace who were not her mentor got frustrated, angry, upset, and emotional about how hard things sometimes are within the Aboriginal community  | - Experienced judgement and un-healthiness in university  
- Experienced competitiveness of "real Indianness versus not real Indianness" at university  
- Dad unable to work much due to mental health challenges  
- Dad would take on work in episodes of mania  
- Dad was an entrepreneur  
- Dad always wanted to work, but he couldn't always follow through because of mental illness  
- Dad valued employment and wanted to work but wasn't able to because of prejudice and people wouldn't hire him for jobs because he was Native  
- Dad loved to learn and read a lot, but was negatively impacted by residential school  
- Dad never had a real teacher because of residential school  
- Grandmother was a residential school survivor who valued education because she never was able to get an education  
- Grandmother pushed for her children to be educated despite the fact that she did not get an education due to residential school  
- All aunts and uncles went to university in the 1960s, before Aboriginal peoples attended university much |
| **Present** | - Works as social worker in a hospital, but First Nation's health is a separate entity  
- Special and important to have an Elder on staff  
- Having Elder in the workplace is important and valuable but it could go wrong too  
- Cannot assuming First Nation's people only want to use First Nation agencies  
- Aboriginal culture important to identity as a social worker  
- Works for mainstream agency, but has a | - Management in mainstream organization supportive and excited for her to take training course on First Nation's community she works with  
- Social work managers:  
  - allow her to bring personal life into her work  
  - understand bringing her personal life into work is part of being an Aboriginal person  
- Has not experienced prejudice from employers  
- Management not addressing dysfunction among employees enables competition and proving Nativeess  
- Challenging to not have a culture of fear when you work in an organization with a lot of bureaucracy  | - Important to have a sense of:  
- pride at work  
- self at work  
- meaning from your work  
- bigger purpose from your work  
- Important work is part of a bigger picture  
- Important to feel like making things better for others and the future from your work  
- To develop sense of pride in workplace employers need to normalize mistakes and let youth know it's okay to make mistakes  
- To develop sense of pride in workplace employers need to have a culture of learning where it is okay to make mistakes  | - Most effective Elders let youth make mistakes  
- Most effective Elders aren't wrapped up in protocols  
- Most effective Elders engage in conversations and share stories  
- Most effective Elders are not afraid to tell you if they don't know an answer to a question  
- Hope people are working  
- Currently there are barriers to youth employment  
- Dream Aboriginal youth are employed in more decision making roles  
- When Aboriginal people are employed in higher-up positions it is a lot of Native men, and not many Native women  
- Dream Aboriginal people are no longer viewed as
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<tr>
<td>lot of Aboriginal clients &lt;br&gt;- Working with Aboriginal clients means mainstream job doesn't feel mainstream &lt;br&gt;- Working with Aboriginal clients means Aboriginal culture is always present &lt;br&gt;- Aboriginal culture always with her &lt;br&gt;- Thinks a lot about family in his/her work &lt;br&gt;- Career committed to working with and helping Aboriginal people and communities &lt;br&gt;- Does not think she would be comfortable if did not work with Aboriginal people &lt;br&gt;- Feels most comfortable working around other Aboriginal people &lt;br&gt;- People at work assume she is not Native so she has to out herself as Native &lt;br&gt;- In the far North, First Nations people are more integrated and it is normal to have Native people everywhere &lt;br&gt;- Tells a few people at a time that she is Aboriginal &lt;br&gt;- Waits for right moment to tell people she is Aboriginal</td>
<td>- Culture of fear in the workplace occurs when she feels like she is breaking the rules almost daily &lt;br&gt;- did something wrong despite being good at her job &lt;br&gt;- Depending on the Elder in the workplace, there can be some challenges &lt;br&gt;- Does not look stereotypically Aboriginal so people at work say offensive, racist, prejudice things because they think there is only white people in the room &lt;br&gt;- People at current job have said offensive, racist, prejudice things (only worked there 2 months) &lt;br&gt;- People at job who said offensive, racist, prejudice things did not know she is First Nations and what they said were hurtful and made her feel uncomfortable &lt;br&gt;- When people make racist comments at work, she tells them she is First Nations &lt;br&gt;- Tells people who make racist comments at work she is First Nations and what they said was hurtful, the people feel like they shouldn't have made racist comments &lt;br&gt;- Despite the large and strong Aboriginal middle class in the far North, people have ridge, concrete idea of who is and isn't Aboriginal &lt;br&gt;- Sometimes when coworkers make prejudice, racist comments that is the moment to tell people she is Native</td>
<td>- Important there is not a culture of fear in the workplace &lt;br&gt;- Important to not feel like you're going to be caught for something bad &lt;br&gt;- Prefers to work for First Nation's agencies &lt;br&gt;- Aboriginal culture is a nice home base &lt;br&gt;- Aboriginal culture is a retreat &lt;br&gt;- Important to have a work mentor or role model &lt;br&gt;- Values being able to work &lt;br&gt;- Values being able to go to school &lt;br&gt;- Important to have mentor in your life who values work</td>
<td>- Dream non-Aboriginal people do not feel nervous to enter Aboriginal workplaces as employees &lt;br&gt;- Dream Aboriginal workplaces do not have to been seen as separate &lt;br&gt;- First Nation's health promote health among First Nation's people &lt;br&gt;- When First Nations patients go to hospitals they never see mainstream social workers &lt;br&gt;- When First Nations patients go to hospitals they only see First Nation's health &lt;br&gt;- Fears culture of dependence on the government &lt;br&gt;- Hope youth see the value in employment &lt;br&gt;- Hope youth value employment over social service &lt;br&gt;- Aboriginal culture is a grounding thing &lt;br&gt;- Retreats to Aboriginal culture and feels good about it &lt;br&gt;- In the far North the Aboriginal middle class is quite large and strong &lt;br&gt;- Mom advocated for education &lt;br&gt;- school important to mom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Future &lt;br&gt;- Believes will always work with Aboriginal people or Aboriginal agencies</td>
<td>- Employers need to understand: employees with cognitive disabilities, mental health concerns, or addiction concerns deserve the same level of respect as employees with physical disabilities &lt;br&gt;- employees with mental health and addiction concerns can work and they want to work &lt;br&gt;- employees with mental health and addiction concerns can make valuable contributions in the workplace</td>
<td>- It's hard because First Nation's youth need to accept small successes as positive</td>
<td>- Hope youth get employed in a place that makes them feel good about themselves &lt;br&gt;- Hope youth can have a job they feel good about &lt;br&gt;- Hope youth are able to find the right workplace &lt;br&gt;- Right workplace for youth would: &lt;br&gt;- Have compassion and understanding &lt;br&gt;- let them learn &lt;br&gt;- let them develop pride and sense of self &lt;br&gt;- Dream Aboriginal youth become: &lt;br&gt;- leaders in the workplace &lt;br&gt;- managers in the workplace &lt;br&gt;- business owners &lt;br&gt;- Dreams will be a breakdown of the old boys club of Aboriginal men and more women are hired in high-up positions &lt;br&gt;- Dream Aboriginal people do not have streamlined agencies, can be part of the mainstream and not be viewed as weird &lt;br&gt;- Dream Aboriginal non-Aboriginal people can work together without othering Aboriginal staff &lt;br&gt;- Dream Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can all work together and not have Aboriginal staff feel different &lt;br&gt;- Fears youth may see collecting social service cheques as easier than working</td>
</tr>
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</table>
experiences. She shared that her story map was very representative of her views and opinions that in the course of her interview we thoroughly addressed all aspects of her workplace experiences. As we reviewed the different areas of the story map, participant 1536 stated there were three additional points she wanted added to her story map. The first two additions were under the Workplace Identity heading for the present. For both points, she wanted to include the challenges her workplace identity encounters as a result of being of mixed ancestry. To begin, she explained it is difficult to feel secure and comfortable in the workplace when her Aboriginal coworkers do not view her as being Native enough, and focus on her non-Native ancestry. Similarly, the second point was that she finds it emotionally challenging to her workplace identity when her Native clients also contest her background and she needs to explain and justify her Native identity. The final addition was under the Employer help/challenge success heading for the present, as she reflected she would appreciate having more emotional support from her colleagues and superiors in order to help her address the challenges to her workplace identity by needing to out herself as an Aboriginal person and needing to prove her Native identity to both clients and coworkers. These changes were noted in Figure 12 and are indicated by the italicised text.
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<td>- Grandfather had strong work ethic</td>
<td>- Experienced judgement and un-healthiness in university</td>
<td>- Experienced strong work ethic and protocol challenges.</td>
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<td>- Worked for small mainstream organization with five Aboriginal people in the department and they would host Aboriginal awareness day and sweatlodge ceremonies</td>
<td>- Small mainstream organization with five Aboriginal staff members, Aboriginal staff had challenges in comparing who was &quot;Native enough&quot;, who was &quot;a real Indian&quot;, judging each other, proving herself as &quot;being really Native&quot;, judging how Native they were based on who grew up on reservation communities and who grew up off reservation communities, and judging people who did not attend some ceremonies, like sweats</td>
<td>- Grandfather did physically laborious work as a lumberjack</td>
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<td>- Worked for small mainstream organization with five Aboriginal people, and non-Aboriginal staff:</td>
<td>- Aboriginal staff had ridged ideas of who a real Native person is created in-fighting with each other</td>
<td>- When working after Master's for the Aboriginal community in Toronto sensed who would be a good mentor</td>
<td>- Dad unable to work much due to mental health challenges</td>
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<td>-resented Aboriginal staff because they viewed them as being able to do whatever they wanted</td>
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<td>- Mentors in the workplace were grounded, and had a sense of humour about challenges</td>
<td>- Hasn't ever been able to get an education</td>
<td>- Frustrated in small mainstream organization with five Aboriginal staff members, Aboriginal staff had problems in comparing who was &quot;Native enough&quot;, who was &quot;a real Indian&quot;, judging each other, proving herself as &quot;being really Native&quot;, judging how Native they were based on who grew up on reservation communities and who grew up off reservation communities, and judging people who did not attend some ceremonies, like sweats.</td>
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<td>- Experienced having to prove her Native identity because she does not look Native</td>
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<td>- People in the workplace who were not her mentor got frustrated, angry, upset, and emotional about how hard things sometimes are within the Aboriginal community</td>
<td>- Aboriginal staff judged each other and the staff were not supportive of each other, but they were not supportive</td>
<td>- Aboriginal staff had ridged ideas of who a real Native person is.</td>
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<td>- Had strict ideas about ceremonies, who a real Native person was, and was quick to call you on any mistakes if you did not follow protocols properly, which played into staff's competitive nature and proving &quot;Indianness&quot;</td>
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<td>- Management in mainstream organization supportive and excited for her to take training course on First Nation's community she works with</td>
<td>- Important to have a sense of:</td>
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<td>- Having Elder in the workplace brought a calming sense to the employees</td>
<td>- allow her to talk about herself when most social workers are not allowed to do this</td>
<td>- bigger purpose from your work</td>
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<td>- Having Elder in the workplace is important and valuable but it could go wrong too</td>
<td>- allow her to bring personal life into her work</td>
<td>- Important work is part of a bigger picture</td>
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<td>- Dad valued employment and wanted to work.</td>
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<td>- Cannot assuming First Nation's people only want to use First Nation agencies</td>
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<td>- Hasn't ever been able to get an education</td>
<td>- Frustrated in small mainstream organization with five Aboriginal staff members, Aboriginal staff had problems in comparing who was &quot;Native enough&quot;, who was &quot;a real Indian&quot;, judging each other, proving herself as &quot;being really Native&quot;, judging how Native they were based on who grew up on reservation communities and who grew up off reservation communities, and judging people who did not attend some ceremonies, like sweats.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Aboriginal culture important to identity as a social worker</td>
<td>- Has not experienced prejudice from employers</td>
<td>- To develop a sense of pride in workplace</td>
<td>- Aboriginal staff judged each other and the staff were not supportive of each other, but they were not supportive</td>
<td>- Aboriginal staff had ridged ideas of who a real Native person is.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Works for mainstream agency, but has a lot of Aboriginal clients</td>
<td>- Management not addressing dysfunction among employees enables competition and proving NATIVENESS</td>
<td>- Aboriginal staff created unhealthy work environment</td>
<td>- Experienced judgement and un-healthiness in university</td>
<td>- Experienced strong work ethic at university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Working with Aboriginal clients means</td>
<td>- Challenging to not have a culture of fear when you work in an organization with a lot of bureaucracy</td>
<td>- Aboriginal staff created unhealthy work environment</td>
<td>- Experienced judgement and un-healthiness in university</td>
<td>- Experienced strong work ethic at university</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Culture of fear in the workplace occurs when she feels like she is:</td>
<td>- Aboriginal staff created unhealthy work environment</td>
<td>- Experienced judgement and un-healthiness in university</td>
<td>- Experienced strong work ethic at university</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>- Experienced judgement and un-healthiness in university</td>
<td>- Experienced strong work ethic at university</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 12. Participant 1536 final story map**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future</th>
<th>Workplace Identity</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
<th>Most important thing about work for youth employment</th>
<th>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mainstream job doesn't feel mainstream</td>
<td>breaking the rules almost daily</td>
<td>workplace</td>
<td>enter Aboriginal workplaces as employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Working with Aboriginal clients means Aboriginal culture is always present</td>
<td>-did something wrong despite being good at her job</td>
<td>-Important to not feel like you're going to be seen as separate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aboriginal culture always with her</td>
<td>- Depending on the Elder in the workplace, there can be First Nation's health promote health among First Nation's people</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Thanks a lot about family in his/her work</td>
<td>-Does not look stereotypically Aboriginal so people at work say offensive, racist, prejudice things because they see mainstream social workers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Career committed to working with and helping Aboriginal people and communities</td>
<td>-People at current job have said offensive, racist, prejudice things (only worked there 2 months)</td>
<td>-When First Nations patients go to hospitals they only see mainstream social workers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Does not think she would be comfortable if did not work with Aboriginal people</td>
<td>-People at job who said offensive, racist, prejudice things did not know she is First Nations and what they said were hurtful and made her feel uncomfortable</td>
<td>-When First Nations patients go to hospitals they only see First Nation's health</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Feels most comfortable working around other Aboriginal people</td>
<td>-When people make racist comments at work, she tells them she is First Nations</td>
<td>-Fears culture of dependence on the government</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-People at work assume she is not Native so she has to out herself as Native</td>
<td>-Tells people who make racist comments at work she is First Nations</td>
<td>-Hope youth see the value in employment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-In the far North, First Nations people are more integrated and it is normal to have Native people everywhere</td>
<td>-Sometimes when coworkers make prejudice, racist comments that is the moment to tell people she is Native</td>
<td>-Hope youth value employment over social service</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Tells a few people at a time that she is Aboriginal</td>
<td>-Need more emotional support from her colleagues and superiors to help her address concerns with needing to prove her Aboriginal identity to both coworkers and clients</td>
<td>-Aboriginal culture is a grounding thing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Waits for right moment to tell people she is Aboriginal</td>
<td>-Emotionally challenging to be of mixed ancestry because her Aboriginal coworkers do not view her as Native enough</td>
<td>-Retreats to Aboriginal culture and feels good about it</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Emotionally challenging to be of mixed ancestry because her Aboriginal clients do not always believe that she is Native</td>
<td>-Despite the large and strong Aboriginal middle class in the far North, people have ridge, concrete idea of who is and isn't Aboriginal</td>
<td>-In the far North the Aboriginal middle class is quite large and strong</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Sometimes when coworkers make prejudice, racist comments that is the moment to tell people she is Native</td>
<td>-Mom advocated for education</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>-school important to mom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>-Believes will always work with Aboriginal people or Aboriginal agencies</td>
<td>-Employers need to understand: employees with cognitive disabilities, mental health concerns, or addiction concerns deserve the same level of respect as employees with physical disabilities</td>
<td>It's hard because First Nation's youth need to accept small successes as positive</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-employees with mental health and addiction concerns can work and they want to work</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Hope youth get employed in a place that makes them feel good about themselves</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-employees with mental health and addiction concerns can make valuable contributions in the workplace</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Hope youth can have a job they feel good about</td>
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<td>-Hope youth are able to find the right workplace</td>
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<td>Right workplace for youth would:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-have compassion and understanding</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-let them learn</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-let them develop pride and sense of self</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dream Aboriginal youth become:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-leaders in the workplace</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-managers in the workplace</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-business owners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dreams will be a breakdown of the old boys club of Aboriginal men and more women are hired in high-up positions</td>
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<td>Dream Aboriginal people do not have streamlined agencies, can be part of the mainstream and not be viewed as weird</td>
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<td>Dream Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can work together without othering Aboriginal staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dream Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can all work together and not have Aboriginal staff feel different</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Fears youth may see collecting social service cheques as easier than working</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Final core messages and themes. The core messages and themes did not change after participant 1536 reviewed her story maps. The key narratives she discussed included changes employers can make to workplaces and policies to help Aboriginal youth succeed in the workplace. She also shared that it is important for Aboriginal youth to have role models and mentors to improve employment outcomes. Additionally, she discussed how the systemic barriers continue to negatively impact Aboriginal youth in the workplace through experiences of racism and historically from the legacy of residential schools. Finally she spoke about integrating Aboriginal culture in the workplace and how that can be both beneficial as well as challenging depending on the work environment.

Employer Challenges. Throughout the interview participant 1536 discussed the manner in which employers challenge the success of Aboriginal youth in the workplace. She spoke at length about her personal struggle of feeling pressure to prove her Native identity to her Aboriginal coworkers. She explained that managers did not attempt to intervene to stop the competitiveness that was occurring between employees, resulting in a hostile work environment that resulted in her quitting her job as a social worker. Furthermore, as employment prospects are limited for Aboriginal youth, management not taking action to improve workplace relationships between employees contributes to financial instability when employees leave these environments, as well as prevents youth from building valuable connections in order to advance their careers.

For example, participant 1536 stated she left her first job as a social worker due to feeling judged by her Aboriginal coworkers and feeling the need to prove that she is a real Native person:

Umm, unfortunately like that particular team of people, umm, also had our own kind
of resentments. About like who was, who was really like Native enough…You know how there’s like, there’s always like that spectrum like of I’m a real Indian, and no you’re a real Indian, like that kind of thing…was always happening in my umm, in my staff. As much as we maybe didn’t talk about it, you could feel it. You could feel like a lot of judgement. And that was hard. Umm, and probably is the number one factor that led me to leave that job (participant 1536, p. 2).

Additionally, she did not feel like management was willing to interject in the competitive nature of the Aboriginal employees, which permitted for hostility to develop among the Aboriginal coworkers. As the Aboriginal division only had five employees and was isolated from the rest of the organization due to misperceptions and lack of awareness among non-Aboriginal employees, this left her feeling very alone in the workplace. She explained that the employees in the Aboriginal division were very judgmental about who chose to engage in ceremonies that were organized by the division. However, she felt this was especially inappropriate given their profession and that social workers are supposed to work without judgement, yet they were judging their coworkers.

For example, participant 1536 stated her Aboriginal coworkers considered those who grew up on reservation communities as superior to those who did not grow up on reservation communities and they were critical of those who did not participate in ceremonies, which led her feel frustrated with her work environment:

I guess people would, people would just drop comments like, well I grew up on a reserve…and kind of like, these people didn’t, and like it was always like reserve verses off-reserve. You know? That kind of experience…Like that kind of idea. Umm, and also just people, umm people who were kind of like, umm who chose not
to en-engage in like some of the ceremonies...Like some people sat out of sweatlodge ceremonies...for their own, personal reasons. And there was kind of a bit of judgement around that...Umm, yeah. So I guess kind of people had-it seemed like people had really rige ideas of what of a real Indian is...And it is really hard, because I kind of always felt like it was supposed to be my workplace, like it was supposed to-and also 'cause I was working in social services, like I was a social worker...for the Aboriginal community, it made me frustrated to think that that was, there was that much judgement even within the staff of people who were supposed to be helping (participant 1536, p. 2-3).

Participant 1536 also stated she has experienced competitiveness of needing to prove her Native identity to her Aboriginal coworkers, and an Elder on staff exacerbated this competition. She explained that having an Elder on the staff was valuable as it provided the Aboriginal employees with someone who could offer guidance and advice in a context that aligned with Aboriginal values. However, she felt that having an Elder on staff also had some challenges. For example, she stated that this particular Elder had ridged ideas regarding following cultural protocols before engaging in ceremonies and that he would openly comment on mistakes she made during ceremonies, which played into the staff competing with each other:

And, in my previous work I-there was an Elder on staff...Umm, which was really special and really important...Umm, but, it also-it had some challenges. Like, it depends so much on the Elder...Like, I, I really shy away from just like, assuming all Elders, 'cause they have the word Elder in front of their name, are, are good, you know?...Like, as much as it brought like a calming, it brought a calming kind of sense to our team and to my workplace, to have an Elder around...it also, it was, unfortunately this Elder was the type of Elder that had like, very strict ideas about
the ceremonies…Protocols. Yeah…Like, or just had strict, like. Ugh. It’s so hard to say. Like, kind of had strict ideas about what a real Native person is…Umm, was really, really quick to call you on any mistakes if you didn’t follow their protocols properly…And that was really hard for me ‘cause it just was like. It just felt so. It felt like it played into that whole competitive nature of like proving your real, you real Indianness, you know? (participant 1536, p. 8).

She also spoke about the challenges of working for a mainstream employer. She explained when she worked in small Aboriginal department for a mainstream social work organization that the attempted provisions to allow the Aboriginal employees to access and express their culture in the workplace left them ostracized and isolated. This is because the non-Aboriginal employees in other departments lacked training and understanding of Aboriginal history and culture. She stated that the management permitted the Aboriginal employees to participate in cultural activities, but that the non-Aboriginal staff viewed the Aboriginal staff as getting special treatment, which lead them to be isolated and perceived as different from the rest of the employees:

Umm, so there’s always been a lot of opportunities to kind of talk with other Aboriginal people. But, umm, I’ve always kind of-well my biggest, like my biggest job after, after grad school was in a, like a non-Native organization that had like a tiny, little department. So it was like, an organization with, like four thousand employees, right?...And then there would be like a small organization just, just five of us (laughs)...So when I say there was like other people, it was always like, in the context of kind of a more mainstream, uh place…And so for that, that was an interesting dynamic. Because, even though we’d have things, like we, we would host Aboriginal awareness day, or we would umm, have sweat lodge ceremonies, as a
staff, it was kind of like we were these weirdoes. And the agency had like, I think, a little resentment towards us, because they weren’t able to like, they saw it as time off work, and you guys get to go off and do want you want to do…So, it was, as much as I didn’t feel alone, like as much as I always had these activities and these things, it was always in the context of where we were other-ed (participant 1536, p. 1).

She also discussed the financial challenges Aboriginal employees encounter as they are often employed in part-time positions. As a result, they face instability in terms of securing housing and food. For example, she stated that many Aboriginal youth consider themselves to be successfully employed when they only work limited hours as this is an improvement from being unemployed, even if they are not working in job that they do not enjoy:

Oh, I just hope that youth get employed (laughs)…I just hope that people are working. Umm, and that they work in a place that just makes them feel good about themselves…Like right now, both my partner and I work as a social workers with First Nations people. And he works with youth…And that, that’s really hard, because like, it’s just, he didn’t, I just, I just feel like people need to accept even like the smallest of, of kind of success as a good thing…like he has one, he has one youth who can work who works like a three-hour shift, four days a week…at a, at a, in the food industry…And it took me uh, like oh thank-that’s good. Good for him…I’m so happy for him, you know? Like that’s a really-‘cause he’s got like every challenge imaginable in his life…Umm, so for me like I just want people to like, have something that they feel good about…No matter how kind of, how, no matter how small it is (participant 1536, p. 9-10).

Similarly, participant 1536 reported that many Aboriginal youth are not being hired for
employment opportunities, as employers are unwilling to take chances on youth who have addictions, mental health concerns, or cognitive disabilities. She explained that many Aboriginal youth struggle with these personal challenges, but employers lack a basic understanding of these concerns. Furthermore, many Aboriginal youth who struggle with addictions, mental health concerns, or cognitive disabilities do want to work and are capable of being successful employees. She also shared that being successfully employed would aid many youth in overcoming these personal struggles.

For example, participant 1536 stated that many employers are willing to hire employees with physical disabilities and make accommodations for them, but that they are unwilling to hire people who struggle with additions, mental health concerns, or cognitive disabilities in spite of the fact that they are capable of working:

Umm, I guess just more kind of regard for the fact that people learn differently…People umm, you know, like cognitively like a cognitive disability is just the same deserves the same kind of, uh like kind of, same kind of respect as someone coming into a workplace with a physical disability…Umm, same with kind of mental health or addiction, like I think that people need to-employers need to know that, that people with mental health and addictions, Aboriginal or not, can-want to work and can work (participant 1536, p. 10).

Finally, when Aboriginal youth are employed, their success in the position is dependent upon not only their interactions with coworkers but also upon their relationship with their employer, supervisors and managers. To begin, she explained many workplaces are punitive, which intimidates Aboriginal youth employees. What participant 1536 meant by a punitive work environment is that many superiors are quick to point out faults and mistakes their employees
make, but very rarely will employers, managers, or supervisors thank employees for their contributions, praise them when they do work well, or let them know when they are happy with what they have accomplished. She explained that everyone will make mistakes in the workplace so it is important for employers to normalize mistakes so Aboriginal youth do not fear their workplace, their employer, or their job security.

For example, she stated that when she worked for an organization where there were a lot of rules, she continually felt like she was sneaking around or breaking the rules despite being competent in her job:

I guess it, it just means, umm, maybe normalizing that there’s going to be mistakes made…or that it’s okay to make mistakes…Like, kind of it’s okay to kind of. I, I mean I guess I of think of workplaces that have a culture, of like learning…Instead of just you know, being a kind of, like a superhero and never messing up and that kind of thing…Not having like a culture of fear, or…like kind of being, feeling like you’re going to get caught for some bad thing. Which was kind of always a challenge for me, ‘cause I, I worked in like really big kind of-a place with a lot of red tape and a lot of bureaucracy…I kind of, I kind of was in a place where I was always thinking, like I was breaking the rules, like nearly everyday…Even though I’m like a really good social worker (laughs)…I always felt like I was doing something wrong. So maybe, just that kind of culture (participant 1536, p. 7-8).

Cultural identity. The first theme that emerged in participant 1536’s interview was cultural identity. When she discussed cultural identity, what she was referring to was the desire to ensure her workplaces allowed her to include cultural values in her work. Furthermore, she spoke about how she would prefer to work with Aboriginal people in the future as it will allow
her to bring her values into her work, help her community, and stay connected to her family and history.

For example, she stated that her cultural identity is always with her because she works with Aboriginal people and thinks about her family a lot when she engages in her work:

But, umm, [cultural identity has] always been present ‘cause it’s just kind of like always with me, you know?…It’s always part of me and I think a lot about my family and work…I don’t know why, like I don’t know what in-‘cause it’s funny ‘cause both my brother and I have had very like, Aboriginal focused careers (participant 1536, p. 12-13).

She also discussed how her cultural identity has become entwined with her workplace identity. For her, this process began when she decided to dedicate her career to working with Aboriginal people. In her current job, participant 1536 is working as social worker in a hospital, but since she working in an area where there is a strong, Aboriginal middle class, she feels as though she works for an Aboriginal organization. For example, she stated that working for the Aboriginal community has always been a priority for her as her cultural identity is important to her workplace identity:

Also, like, I don’t know like, here in Whitehorse it’s really interesting ‘cause like, I’m a social worker, right?...And, so there’s social workers at the hospital…But then there’s this, other entity which is like First Nation’s health, which I think is great, and they do health promotion among First Nations and things like that…’cause I’ve oh, well yeah, I’ve pretty much always worked in First Nations kind of, or Aboriginal umm, agencies…Umm, and I don’t know. That’s always been a big part of me, and part of my social work identity (participant 1536, p. 11-12).
Similarly, she would like to see Aboriginal peoples and their culture be accepted by mainstream society. For participant 1536 this would mean that cultural practices and values would be understood and respected. In the context of work, she stated this would result in Aboriginal peoples being able to access services that are not segregated while still being culturally sensitive and appropriate:

And I would love to maybe one day at a-be at a place where like Aboriginal people (laughs) are kind of part of, maybe this is controversial, and a lot of people don’t want this, but maybe we don’t have to have our own like streamlined different agencies…We can have, be part of the mainstream and have it not be weird, you know? Just be Canadians (participant 1536, p. 11).

**Systemic barriers.** The final theme emerged in participant 1536’s interview was that systemic barriers are still impeding Aboriginal youth from succeeding in the workplace. She explained she has experienced racism in the workplace and expressed disappointment over the fact that employees at the management level have not taken action to train and education employees, nor have they created policies to eradicate racism. For example, she stated that two months into working at her current job her coworkers made racist comments about Aboriginal people to her because they did not realize she was Aboriginal:

Like, maybe there’s a lot of people out there who experience this, but because I don’t like stereotypically look very Aboriginal, umm, a lot of times in the workplace people will say, at the workplace or at school…like in university and in high school, people would say pretty offensive, pretty prejudice, racist things…in front of me thinking that there’s no other-thinking that there’s only white people in the room essentially…So I’ve only been at my job two months. And already, three people
have already said really racist things in from of me (participant 1536, p. 14)

She also discussed how her father was a victim of the residential school system. She explained that he was forced to attend residential school and obtained a subpar education as he was not educated by teachers. As a direct result of the trauma he endured he developed mental health concerns, and these mental health issues prevented him from being successfully employed throughout his life. For example, she stated, her dad always wanted to work so he was self-employed as an entrepreneur who struggled because of his mental health concerns and experiences in residential school:

And then my father was, so his son, was never really able to work because he umm, he had, my dad has uh, some mental health challenges…He’s kind of undiag-well no, he’s gotten diagnosed, but he’s got kind of unmanaged bipolar…And so I’ve, my whole life growing up I saw my dad, like take on in, in episodes of mania, like take on these huge jobs…And he alw-he never-my dad’s amazing, he’s never worked for another person. He’s been, he’s was a complete entrepreneur…So he would think up these businesses and sometimes they’d do really well, and sometimes-so he’s always had this relationship with work that was like, he wanted to work, but kind of couldn’t always follow through…My dad was umm, really loved to learn. And…even to this day he reads a lot…But he, he always talked about uh, residential school, and so…I mean my dad even when he, he didn’t go to university, but he did finish high school…And, it kind of almost just dawned on me like, in recent years that he never had a teacher who was really a teacher. He only ever had nuns and priests as teachers…And it kind of just made me think about even if maybe that put him, turned him off of work or, or-I mean sorry. Not work, but education…(participant 1536, lines p. 16-17).
Finally, participant 1536 expressed concern that Aboriginal youth are not succeeding in workplaces as a direct result of colonization, not believing that Aboriginal people will be able to accomplish anything meaningful, and that they may even deserve the situations they find themselves in (e.g., uneducated, underemployed, living in isolated reservation communities). For example, she stated some Aboriginal youth may prefer to live off of social assistance rather than work because it seems easier or because they do not believe they will succeed in the workplace:

Umm, I would be fearful that there’s like a culture of dependence on the government and that people, umm, maybe see collecting uh, social service cheques as easier than working…(laughs) I would be worried about that because sometimes that’s, like there’s a culture around that, sometimes…So, I just hope people see the value in employment, over, umm, over social service. Sorry like over getting…Social assistance cheques (participant 1536, p. 13).

Participant 1445

Character sketch. This participant was a male who was in his mid-twenties at the time of the interview. He was also a full-time student so all of his employment experience was limited to temporary summer positions or part-time positions. Participant 1445 was quiet and contemplative, so in order to establish rapport, I introduced myself and explained my background prior to introducing the consent form and beginning the interview. Participant 1445 shared that he appreciated my self-disclosure, and appeared to physically relax. During our interview he spoke about his work experience in both mainstream and Aboriginal organizations and that most of his work experience was outside of Ontario as he is originally from Alberta. He also discussed the importance of work to help support himself financially in his academic
endeavours as well as to subsist his cost of living. The story maps below illustrate the core concepts and themes that emerged.

**Story map.** The initial story map (see Figure 13) was constructed during the analysis phase of this interview (See Chapter Three for a detailed explanation of the process). Upon completion of the story map I identified one core message and two themes from the map and interview narrative. The initial core message for participant 1445 was **Systemic Barriers.** The themes were **Helping the community,** and **What employers need to know.**

**Feedback from second interview and final story map.** Upon completion of the analysis of participant 1445’s interview, I constructed his story map and identified the core message and themes. I then scheduled a follow-up interview with participant 1445 to review the findings with him. I provided participant 1445 with a copy of his story map and explained how I came to identify the core message and themes in his narrative. I asked him the following questions:

“From your narratives in your interview I have constructed a story map. How does this map illustrate your views? What is missing from your story map? What would you like to add? Do you have anything else to say about your story map? In response to the questions, participant 1445 initially expressed gratitude. He explained that not only did his story map accurately capture his narrative and workplace experiences, but also he appreciated having the opportunity to share his experiences and have someone listen to him. As we reviewed the different areas of the story map he had a few points that he wanted to clarify as well as some new insights he wanted to add. The first three modifications were under the Workplace identity heading for the past as he wanted to clarify that not all of his jobs had been summer positions. He also worked part-time in high school in addition to having a full-time intern position for three months. Thus,
Present - Workplace identity develops over time by being comfortable - Being comfortable in the workplace helps employees be themselves in the workplace - Employees need to know their deadlines to be comfortable in the workplace - A lot of Aboriginal youth want to return to their community and help their people - Aboriginal culture important to them - Working with Aboriginal people is important to him because he is not Metis and cultural identity was not important - Aboriginal cultural identity important when working in Aboriginal communities - Summer jobs provide stepping stones in his career - Summer jobs look good on resume and CV - Federal government has a program that pays 35 or 40 hours per week of minimum wage to a summer student - Working for Aboriginal organizations valuable as it increases awareness of other Nations - Important to be open to other cultures when working in Aboriginal communities - Most important thing to help Aboriginal youth get employment is completing high school - Important Aboriginal youth: - have resources available to help them return to and finish high school - develop practical skills - know how to apply for jobs - know how to write a resume - know to do a job interview - know about educational opportunities that

Figure 13. Participant 1445 initial story map

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Worked for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations - All jobs have been summer jobs - Worked as an intern for a large mainstream health care corporation and there was no importance of identity in the position and coworkers had different ethnic backgrounds - Employer at Metis local wanted to hire someone who was Aboriginal - Not able to contribute culturally at Metis local because he is not Metis and cultural identity was not important - Metis/peer/identity was not imperative at Aboriginal</td>
<td>- Major work experience were summer jobs - All organizations were supportive - Summer jobs were supportive - Employers at summer jobs were friendly - Workload at summer jobs was not too much - Employers hired students to help the projects and not because they needed extra help - Employers at summer jobs hired Aboriginal students because they wanted to help Aboriginal students - Summer employers did him a service by hiring him to provide him with money - Summer jobs provided more job opportunities - Summer employers provided him references - Metis researcher did not need help from him - Metis researcher got a stipend to pay his wages because she wanted to help him - Metis researcher was supportive - Worked as an intern for a large mainstream health care corporation and was paid well - Worked as an intern for a large mainstream health care corporation but the position was not specifically looking for an Aboriginal intern - Metis local open to hire non-Metis employees - When employed for Metis organization there were a few other First Nation employees - Metis organization employed a few non-Aboriginal people - Metis organization wanted to hire an Aboriginal student - When employed for Metis local gave guided tours - Aboriginal economic development organization wanted to hire Aboriginal students</td>
<td>- Used summer jobs to pay for basic necessities - Working for Aboriginal organizations was educational for learning about Aboriginal issues - Did not know a lot about Metis culture before working for Metis organization - Made a lot of friends working for Aboriginal economic development organization - Metis researcher provided summer student employee with a small publication credit - Past work experiences provided him with a good learning experience - Believes he was hired at Metis head office because of experience with Metis local, so he had an understanding of Metis issues - Self-taught himself employment skills because he did not learn about it - Aboriginal culture important so worked for a lot of different Aboriginal organizations - In his community there were not too many people employed - At economic development organization: - Traveled to different First Nation communities - ran workshops for First Nation communities - facilitated youth workshops for First Nation communities - Learned about economic challenges and struggles of different First Nation communities - Learned about sustainability issues of different First Nation communities - Employee with a small publication credit - Metis researcher provided summer student with a living allowance - Summer employers provided him references - Letters of reference from summer employers helped him get scholarships - Took Native studies courses at university - In Native studies courses at university learned about Aboriginal issues in an academic context - Aboriginal culture important to him through experiences growing up and school experiences - Aboriginal culture important to him because experienced unfairness and saw disparities - Friend thought Aboriginal people were always poor - were always ignored by society - deserved to be mistreated by society because of how they behaved - Friend went to university and got educated in the history of colonialism and how colonialism impacted Aboriginal communities - In own community there were a lot of issues with violence and/or alcoholism - Friend changed perspective of Aboriginal communities after going to university - Friend became angry at the treatment of Aboriginal communities and colonialism - Friend understood social issues in Aboriginal communities after becoming educated in the history of colonialism - After getting educated and understanding social issues in Aboriginal communities from lens of colonialism, friend returned to Aboriginal community as a teacher - Some Aboriginal youth struggle to find employment because they did not have a early intervention if they were getting into trouble</td>
<td>- Had band sponsorship during the school year, which provided him with a living allowance - Letters of reference from summer employers helped him get scholarships - Took Native studies courses at university - In Native studies courses at university learned about Aboriginal issues in an academic context - Aboriginal culture important to him through experiences growing up and school experiences - Aboriginal culture important to him because experienced unfairness and saw disparities - Friend thought Aboriginal people were always poor - were always ignored by society - deserved to be mistreated by society because of how they behaved - Friend went to university and got educated in the history of colonialism and how colonialism impacted Aboriginal communities - In own community there were a lot of issues with violence and/or alcoholism - Friend changed perspective of Aboriginal communities after going to university - Friend became angry at the treatment of Aboriginal communities and colonialism - Friend understood social issues in Aboriginal communities after becoming educated in the history of colonialism - After getting educated and understanding social issues in Aboriginal communities from lens of colonialism, friend returned to Aboriginal community as a teacher - Some Aboriginal youth struggle to find employment because they did not have a early intervention if they were getting into trouble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Workplace Identity</td>
<td>Employer help/challenge success</td>
<td>Most important thing about work for youth</td>
<td>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-When youth get to know their coworkers and boss since he was young</td>
<td>-If youth are not comfortable in the workplace, they may not be comfortable expressing themselves -Intimidating for an Aboriginal youth to be disciplined as a new worker -Some Aboriginal youth struggle to find work because they do not have any positive role models</td>
<td>-Are available after high school -Have goals -Know what they are doing in the workplace -Not just work for the sake of working -Not just work to get paid -Are comfortable in their workplace -Are comfortable with coworkers -Get along with coworkers and their boss -Enjoy their work -Are respected in the workplace -Education is important to help Aboriginal youth get employment -Challenging for Aboriginal youth to complete high school and get education needed for employment later in life -Interventions to help Aboriginal students stay in school and complete high school are important</td>
<td>-Urban Aboriginal youth have more opportunities than reservation youth for education and employment -Aboriginal youth need to get a grade twelve education to successfully enter the workforce -Hope society changes so Aboriginal youth can enter the workforce, but major interventions are required -Many Aboriginal youth leave their communities for educational opportunities do not return because they cannot find employment in their field of study -Hope for more employment opportunities in Aboriginal communities for Aboriginal youth -Creating job capacity in Aboriginal communities is hard as many adults have not completed high school -Lack of employment is harmful to Aboriginal youth as they cannot reach their potential due to external factors they do not understand or have control over -Important Aboriginal youth are taught colonial history -Youth struggle with isolation and mental health issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-When Aboriginal youth submit resumes with poor formatting it does not make a good impression to potential employers -If employees do not get along with their boss it can make the workplace intimidating, especially if it is a first job -First job can be intimidating if you do not know the other employees or your boss very well -If employees do not like their boss or coworkers it can create an uncomfortable environment -Important when an employee makes a mistake the boss can take the employee aside and explain what was wrong and s/he wants to happen next time -Important that when an employee makes a mistake that the boss can move on</td>
<td>-When Aboriginal youth are disciplined as a new worker they may: -Feel shame -That they did something wrong -That something is wrong with them -Worry about not meeting the boss’s expectations -When employees make mistakes it should be explained in a way to not make the employee feel punished</td>
<td>-Aboriginal youth would benefit from financial support or a living allowance so they have financial stability to complete high school -Need to teach Aboriginal youth employment skills at a younger age -Would be beneficial to have a larger federal government program where employers have to meet a quota for hiring Aboriginal students -Aboriginal youth need access to employment skills development when they are younger -Need earlier interventions to help Aboriginal youth get jobs and employment skills -Important to explore why Aboriginal youth do not go to college or university -Would work with other marginalized populations in the future -Wants to work with people who need help, especially Aboriginal people -If Aboriginal youth learn about the impact of colonialism on their communities they will be more likely to want to help their communities -If Aboriginal youth learn about the impact of colonialism on their communities they will be less likely to feel bad about themselves -Helping Aboriginal youth address issues of isolation and struggle with mental health issues will lead to better employment outcomes</td>
<td>-Interventions need to take place at school so Aboriginal youth will have skills to be employable -Aboriginal youth should be taught about different career paths, college, university, and trade options -Fears in thirty years: -Half of all reservation students on reserves will be dropping out of high school -Aboriginal people will not be working -Fears Aboriginal youth will not be succeeding -Fears lack of employment success for Aboriginal youth will: -Create social and economic isolation among -Perpetuate stereotypes of Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people -Hopes some Aboriginal youth who complete university return to their community they can help their community with issues they struggle with -Hopes for more jobs in First Nation communities to create more capacity and sustainability -Fears Aboriginal youth will: -Not reach their employment potential -Be relying on social assistance and unemployed -Face health and mental health issues related to lack of employment -Not know what they could have become -Not learn about employment opportunities -Not enter the workforce in the numbers they can -Aboriginal youth would benefit from seeing career counsellors to find out about employment opportunities -Addressing issues of isolation and mental health will help Aboriginal youth not drop out of school -If Aboriginal youth drop out of school they potential is cut off -Need more education on the impact of colonialism in Aboriginal communities for all people in Canada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
he changed the point to read “Most jobs have been summer jobs.” The second modification was that he wanted to clarify one point by adding additional information to indicate that while working for the economic development organization, they were seeking out an Aboriginal student for the position because they wanted someone who could relate to First Nations people. The final addition was that he wanted to clarify while he was not raised culturally, as he grew-up in a reservation community he experienced Aboriginal culture everyday, so he was familiar with Aboriginal culture.

He also made three changes to the Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth heading in the past. The first point was a new addition to explain that his friend struggled with internalized racism, which made it challenging for her to understand what her mother experienced in residential school. The second change was a clarification that his friend only changed her own perspective of Aboriginal communities after attending university. He wanted to ensure people did not misunderstand and mistakenly think she changed his perspective. The final addition was adding onto an existing point to explain that while youth need intervention, that intervention can take the form of youth having someone take notice of them, care about them and then act as role model to help guild them in the right direction.

Under the heading Employer help/challenges success in the future, he wanted to add a point that when Aboriginal youth are disciplined as a new worker it may also lead them to feel isolated in the workplace. The final addition was under the heading Most important thing about work for youth in the future, where he added a point about role models. He stated that role models are needed badly in the workplace to guide youth in the right direction and help them succeed. These changes were noted in Figure 14 and are indicated by the italicised text.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1445</th>
<th>Workplace Identity</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
<th>Most important thing about work for youth</th>
<th>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>-Worked for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations</td>
<td>-Majority of work experience were summer jobs</td>
<td>-Used summer jobs to pay for basic necessities</td>
<td>-Had band sponsorship during the school year, which provided him with a living allowance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Most jobs have been summer jobs</td>
<td>-All organizations were supportive</td>
<td>-Working for Aboriginal organizations was educational for learning about Aboriginal issues</td>
<td>-Took Native studies courses at university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Worked as an intern for a large mainstream health care corporation and there was no importance of identity in the position and coworkers had different ethnic backgrounds</td>
<td>-Summer jobs were supportive, but he applied to Native organizations because he felt most comfortable there</td>
<td>-Did not know a lot about Metis culture before working for Metis organization</td>
<td>-In Native studies courses at university learned about Aboriginal issues in an academic context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Employer at Metis local wanted to hire someone who was Aboriginal.</td>
<td>-Employers at summer jobs were friendly</td>
<td>-Made a lot of friends working for Aboriginal economic development organizations</td>
<td>-Aboriginal culture important to him through experiences growing up and school experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Not able to contribute culturally at Metis local because he was not Metis and cultural identity was not important</td>
<td>-Workload at summer jobs was not too much</td>
<td>-Metis researcher provided summer student employee with a small publication credit</td>
<td>-Aboriginal culture important to him because he experienced unfairness and saw disparities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-At Aboriginal economic development organization cultural identity important because worked with First Nations peoples</td>
<td>-Summer employers hired students to help the students and not because they needed extra help</td>
<td>-Past work experiences provided him with a good learning experience</td>
<td>-Friend thought Aboriginal people:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Cultural identity not imperative at Aboriginal economic development organization because the organization's goals were based on economic development, economic capacity and economic sustainability, but they wanted to hire an Aboriginal student so he could relate to First Nations people</td>
<td>-Employers at summer jobs hired Aboriginal students because they wanted to help Aboriginal students</td>
<td>-Believes he was hired at Metis head office because of experience with Metis local, so he had an understanding of Metis issues</td>
<td>-were always poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-At Aboriginal economic development organization being Aboriginal was beneficial because went into First Nation communities</td>
<td>-Summer employers did him a service by hiring him to provide him with money</td>
<td>-Self-taught himself employment skills because he did not learn about it</td>
<td>-were always ignored by society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Aboriginal cultural identity important when working in Aboriginal communities</td>
<td>-Summer jobs provided more job opportunities</td>
<td>-Aboriginal culture important so worked for a lot of different Aboriginal organizations</td>
<td>-deserved to be mistreated by society because of how they behaved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Was not raised culturally, but understood it because raised in a Metis community</td>
<td>-Summer employers provided him references</td>
<td>-In his community there were not too many people employed</td>
<td>-did not understand what her mother experienced in residential school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Cultural doctors had to leave to get educated in medical school</td>
<td>-Metis researcher did not need help from him</td>
<td>-At economic development organization:</td>
<td>-Friend went to university and got educated in the history of colonialism and how colonialism impacted Aboriginal communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-At Metis organizations learned:</td>
<td>-When employed for Metis local, so he had an understanding of Metis issues</td>
<td>-Travelled to different First Nation communities</td>
<td>-In own community there were a lot of issues with violence and/or alcoholism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-how to register Metis people</td>
<td>-When employed for Metis local gave guided tours</td>
<td>-ran workshops for First Nation communities</td>
<td>-Friend changed own perspective of Aboriginal communities after going to university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-how to trace Metis genealogy</td>
<td>-Metis bachelor of business administration program</td>
<td>facilitated youth workshops for First Nation communities</td>
<td>-Philosophy of the treatment of Aboriginal communities and colonialism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-about Metis politics</td>
<td>-Metis organization employed a few non-Aboriginal people</td>
<td>-Learned about economic challenges and struggles of different First Nation communities</td>
<td>-Friend understood social issues in Aboriginal communities after becoming educated in the history of colonialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-about Metis aspirations</td>
<td>-Metis organization wanted to hire an Aboriginal student</td>
<td>-Learned about sustainability issues of different First Nation communities</td>
<td>-After getting educated and understanding social issues in Aboriginal communities from lens of colonialism, friend returned to Aboriginal communities as a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-When employed for Metis local gave guided tours</td>
<td>-Useful learning experience</td>
<td>-Some Aboriginal youth struggle to find employment because they did not have an early intervention if they were getting into trouble, or someone who cares about them and guides them in the right direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Aboriginal economic development organization wanted to hire Aboriginal students</td>
<td>-was a valuable experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>-Workplace identity develops over time by being comfortable</td>
<td>-Has not been employed permanently so he has not become part of the organizational structure and has been sheltered from office politics</td>
<td>-Federal government has a program that pays 35 or 40 hours per week of minimum wage to a summer student</td>
<td>-Basic job skills are lacking among Aboriginal youth as they do not learn basic job skills in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Being comfortable in the workplace helps employees be themselves in the workplace</td>
<td>-Employers help youth by having job opportunities</td>
<td>-Working for Aboriginal organizations valuable as it increases awareness of other Nations</td>
<td>-Has friends with poor resumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Need to know workplace objectives to be comfortable in the workplace</td>
<td>-Federal government has a program that pays 35 or 40 hours per week of minimum wage to a summer student</td>
<td>-Important to be open to other cultures when working in Aboriginal communities</td>
<td>-Challenging for Aboriginal youth to return to high school when they lack financial resources to pay for basic necessities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Employees need to know what is expected of them to be comfortable in the workplace</td>
<td>-Employers help youth by having job opportunities</td>
<td>-For Aboriginal youth get employment is completing high school</td>
<td>-Some Aboriginal youth want to go to college or university but they drop out of high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Employees need to know their deadlines to be comfortable in the workplace</td>
<td>-Federal government has a program that pays 35 or 40 hours per week of minimum wage to a summer student</td>
<td>-Important Aboriginal youth:</td>
<td>-Postsecondary education helps employment outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-A lot of Aboriginal youth want to return to their community and help their people</td>
<td>-Summer jobs look good on resume and CV</td>
<td>-have resources available to help them return to and finish high school</td>
<td>-Hope Aboriginal youth:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Aboriginal cultural important to him</td>
<td>-Summer jobs provide stepping stones in his career</td>
<td>-have an understanding of their history</td>
<td>-have the skills to enter the workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Working with Aboriginal people is important to him because of experiences growing up and experiencing unfairness and disparities</td>
<td>-Important for employers to be open-minded</td>
<td>-have an understanding of their Nation’s history</td>
<td>-are able to help Aboriginal people in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Some Aboriginal physicians are cultural so they</td>
<td>-Aboriginal youth are discriminated against because they have a Native last name</td>
<td>-Have office politics can be destructive, but has not experienced office politics</td>
<td>-can find employment in their communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-A lot of Aboriginal youth have not had the opportunity to learn basic jobs skills</td>
<td>-Some Aboriginal youth are discriminated against because they have a Native last name</td>
<td>-have an understanding of their culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 14. Participant 1445 final story map**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABORIGINAL CULTURAL IDENTITY AND EMPLOYMENT</th>
<th>127</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workplace Identity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Employer help/challenge success</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>offer both Western and traditional healing</td>
<td>-If youth are not comfortable in the workplace, they may not be comfortable expressing themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Aboriginal issues have been important to him since he was young</td>
<td>-Intimidating for an Aboriginal youth to be disciplined as a new worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Some Aboriginal youth struggle to find work because they do not have any positive role models</td>
<td>-Not just work for the sake of working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Future</strong></td>
<td>-Wants to offer Aboriginal people the option of traditional healing services, Western healing services or a blended model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-When youth get know their coworkers and boss and establish boundaries it helps establish workplace identity</td>
<td>-Wants to offer Aboriginal people the option of having their ailment treated by a doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Aboriginal culture important to him and goal is work primarily with Aboriginal people in the future</td>
<td>-Aboriginal youth want to help others who need help, especially Aboriginal people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-When working with Aboriginal people will not be offering cultural advice</td>
<td>-When Aboriginal youth submit resumes with poor formatting it does not make a good impression to potential employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Would not be comfortable offering cultural advice to Aboriginal people but want to offer cultural resources in a health setting</td>
<td>-Important when an employee makes a mistake that the boss can move on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-In future when working in health setting wants to offer cultural resources within the same setting</td>
<td>-When Aboriginal youth are disciplined as a new worker they may:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Wants to offer Aboriginal people the option of having their ailment treated by a doctor</td>
<td>-feel shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Wants to offer Aboriginal people the option of having their ailment treated by a doctor</td>
<td>-that they did something wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Aboriginal youth want to help others who need help, especially Aboriginal people</td>
<td>-feels isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-When Aboriginal youth submit resumes with poor formatting it does not make a good impression to potential employers</td>
<td>-that something is wrong with them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-If employees do not get along with their boss it can make the workplace intimidating, especially if it is a first job</td>
<td>-worry about not meeting the boss’s expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-First job can be intimidating if you do not know the other employees or your boss very well</td>
<td>-When employees make mistakes it should be explained in a way to not make the employee feel punished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-If employees do not like their boss or coworkers it can create an uncomfortable environment</td>
<td>-Aboriginal youth would benefit from financial support or a living allowance so they have financial stability to complete high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Important when an employee makes a mistake the boss can take the employee aside and explain what was wrong and s/he wants to happen next time</td>
<td>-Would be beneficial to have a larger federal government program where employers have to meet a quota for hiring Aboriginal students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Important that when an employee makes a mistake that the boss can move on</td>
<td>-Want to work with people who need help, especially Aboriginal people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-When Aboriginal youth are disciplined as a new worker they may:</td>
<td>-If Aboriginal youth learn about the impact of colonialism on their communities they will be more likely to want to help their communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-feel shame</td>
<td>-If Aboriginal youth learn about the impact of colonialism on their communities they will be more likely to want to help their communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-that they did something wrong</td>
<td>-If Aboriginal youth learn about the impact of colonialism on their communities they will be more likely to want to help their communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-feels isolated</td>
<td>-Helping Aboriginal youth address issues of isolation and struggle with mental health issues will lead to better employment outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-that something is wrong with them</td>
<td>-Role models are needed badly to guide youth in the right direction and help them succeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-worry about not meeting the boss’s expectations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-When employees make mistakes it should be explained in a way to not make the employee feel punished</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Final core messages and themes. The core messages and themes did not change after participant 1445 reviewed his story maps. The key narratives he discussed included the struggle many Aboriginal youth face to gain employment due a lack of employment skills including, weak resume writing, lack of formal education, and poor interview techniques. He also explained that some Aboriginal youth are unable to access employment and educational programs designed to help youth address employment skill gaps due to the fact that they are unable to financially support themselves while attending these programs. Additionally, he shared many Aboriginal youth are failing to secure employment as direct result of systemic barriers such as racism from employers, living in isolated reservation communities with little employment or educational opportunity, and Aboriginal youth believing negative stereotypes that mainstream society projects onto them. Finally, participant 1445 discussed how many Aboriginal youth leave their isolated communities to pursue educational and employment opportunities in urban areas because there is a deficit of these opportunities in many of their communities.

Systemic Barriers. Throughout participant 1445’s interview the prevailing theme that emerged was the systemic barriers Aboriginal youth encounter in the overall system of work, employer racism, historical disadvantages as a direct result of colonization, intergenerational trauma, and a lack of support at the level of management. He spoke about how many Aboriginal youth from his reservation community are disadvantaged due to isolation and a shortage of employment opportunities. He also shared the impact of colonization in his community has had detrimental effects on his people’s physical health, mental health, and self-esteem. He explained this negatively impacted the overall wellbeing of people in his community, which results in many youth dropping out of school, further limiting their employment opportunities.
For example, participant 1445 stated his brothers and sisters struggle to find meaningful employment in the area around their community as a direct result of racism from mainstream employers:

Umm, and so like until, my brothers and sisters have like umm, Native last names that like [omitted] and stuff like that, and at least back home some people are even like, discriminated against if they have in their resume, they have like a Native last name (participant 1445, p. 8).

He also shared that many Aboriginal youth who live in isolated reservation communities experience low self-esteem and low self worth because of the conditions they live in. Participant 1445 shared some people from his community struggle with addictions and isolation. As a result of the poor living conditions and personal challenges many people in his community encounter, some people hold discriminatory views about themselves and have internalized the negative stereotypes about Aboriginal peoples.

For example, he stated that one of his friends from his community thought Aboriginal people deserved to be ignored by society and moved to isolated areas because of how they behaved but she changed her perspective once she left her community and learned about the history of Aboriginal people and the impact of colonialism:

I’ve also noticed, just through education as well umm, there are a lot of Aboriginal youth umm, who don’t understand like, their own history…or their own path. Like I had, had a friend who said umm, she just always thought Native people were poor…Or she just always thought Native people were ignored by society. And it was just always like that, was kind of how she up it and it was like, in some ways when she looked at her own community she saw—there weren’t pep too many people
Participant 1445 stated the educational system is another way Aboriginal youth are suppressed by mainstream society. He shared that half of all Aboriginal youth in his community do not complete secondary school as the current educational system does not support Aboriginal ways of knowing and is often a hostile environment. However, when Aboriginal youth drop out of school, they are less likely to have the credentials employers are looking for. For example, he stated that improvements need to be made to the current education system to ensure Aboriginal youth are able to complete secondary school, and potentially postsecondary school, in order to improve employment outcomes:

Like, like I think Aboriginal youth need to be equipped with skills that will enable them to umm, enter the workforce successfully…Umm, this a lot of the times this means getting a grade twelve education. So I think that definitively umm, very, very important…Umm, and Aboriginal youth also uh, should be taught about like careers like, poss-what the possibilities are…Umm, or like, that they can go to university, that they can go to college. That they don’t have to if they don’t to, but what that might mean for them. Umm, that they can go into a trade because I think trades are something that are being stressed a lot. Umm, rightfully so. Umm, so that’s kind of what I envision…I don’t want there to be another like, in-to be thirty years and there is still like, half of all First Nations stu-students on reserves are dropping out (participant 1445, p. 13).
In another example, participant 1445 stated that if the educational system does not improve for Aboriginal youth, future employment outcomes for Aboriginal youth will not improve, which will increase the number of people depending on social assistance, and increase the number of people who are struggling with mental health concerns:

This is, if, if we just continue when you, these, you know, anywhere between like the zero and like sixteen year olds, let’s say in ten to twenty years, thirty years, when they’ll be working age, at their working age prime that they don’t, that they’re not working…That they don’t have, that they haven’t entered uh, the work field. Uh, the workforce as umm, and not kind of reach their potential that they can, or uh, that they can’t contribute meaningfully as they, as they can because umm, I think that’s damaging overall probably to the, the economy…if you have umm, people on social assistance when they could be, could be working and in a variety of maybe health, mm, health iss-more health issues…more mental health issues (participant 1445, p. 14-15)

Finally he spoke about his hope for improvements in employment outcomes for Aboriginal communities in the future. He explained that as a result of the lack educational and employment opportunities in many communities Aboriginal youth leave for urban areas. This makes it difficult for conditions to improve in these remote communities as those who are educated do not often return as they are unable to find employment in their field. For example, he stated that he hopes the employment situation on many reservation communities improves so Aboriginal youth who want to return are able to do so, and find meaningful employment which would improve the overall conditions of these communities:

Umm, I hope that they’re just umm, I hope that mmm, uh, I hope that things change.
That they’re more, that there’s more employment in First Nation communities. So that First Nations students don’t always have to leave…for good. Umm, often for good. Umm, to find a good job…To work. Umm, you know, a lot of them leave for educational reasons. Umm, and then some, I think, want to go back and help their community but there, there’s nothing that they can do…in that particular field. So, I would like to see more employment opportunities for, I don’t know…I don’t think there are any easy answers to suddenly umm, create, create jobs and create capacity and sustainability amongst the population (participant 1445, lines p. 14).

**Helping the community.** Another theme participant 1445 discussed was the importance of Aboriginal youth using their jobs as way to support their community. When participant 1445 spoke of using work as a way to support the community, he explained that Aboriginal youth should return to their communities and use their skills and education to benefit the people. For example, he stated it is important for Aboriginal youth who understand their history and culture to use their knowledge of the negative effects of colonization to help their people:

…I hope [Aboriginal youth] have an understanding of like their culture…and the history of Aboriginal people. Whether that’s their own First Nation or through umm, a cultural group. Or umm, and that some of them are able to apply this in a positive way to help Aboriginal people in the future (participant 1445, p. 13).

In another example, participant 1445 stated that while you cannot force youth who leave their communities to pursue educational opportunities to return to their communities, he does believe it would be beneficial if some youth chose to return as they could help address some of the issues the community is facing:

I know that you can’t say that, you know, some people that go to university that they
have to go back and help their people... You know, it, there’s not that expectation. But it would be good that some of, or some of them did... Because, if they go back and help their community, that obviously will help... To alleviate maybe some of the uh, issues that that particular community is dealing with (participant 1445, p. 13).

Participant 1445 also stated he is planning on returning to his community upon completion of his education. He is aspiring to become a physician, and he shared he would like to return to his community to provide the people with easier access to medical care. It is important to him to ensure the people in his community have their health needs addressed in a manner that is best for them.

For example, he stated that he would personally be uncomfortable offering cultural healing to patients, but that he knows traditional healing would be important for some people so he would like to offer a blended model with him personally providing Western services but also having a traditional healer available:

But, I hope to, I will have those [traditional] resources available... umm, for people. At the same time. Like, cultural health resources. And maybe integrated [traditional and Western healing] as well within the same setting... So people have the umm, the option. Umm, because I know here in Toronto they have a couple Aboriginal health clinics, which I have umm, toured... and shadowed at. And like, people are given the option there whether they want umm, traditional healing services or do they want strictly Western healing services... with like, a physician, or whether they want a blended model... Or whether they want, like both. Like, they can have their ailment taken care of by a doctor but umm, have the whole wellbeing and healthy aspect taken care of by the special healer (participant 1445, p. 17).
What employers need to know. The final theme that emerged in participant 1445’s interview was that employers need to understand there are unique sets of challenges Aboriginal youth encounter in the system of work. He shared that if employers become aware of the unique issues Aboriginal youth encounter in applying for jobs and in gaining successful employment, it may help employers provide Aboriginal youth with more employment opportunities and support in the workplace.

For example, participant 1445 stated that many of his friends are lacking basic job skills and do not know how to write a resume or successfully conduct a job interview:

Umm, the one other thing that I’ve noticed, umm, and I’m probably talking more so about First Nation people again…because I don’t umm, I don’t, most of my friends have always been First Nations…At least back home. Umm, I think there’s a lot of like, practical or life skills that are umm, need to be developed that-these are things like knowing how to apply for a job…Knowing how to make a resume. Knowing how to umm, knowing how to do an interview. Umm, so there’s a lot of, there’s a lot of basic skills that are just umm, that are lacking (participant 1445, p. 8)

In another example, participant 1445 stated that some of his friends do not get employed as their resumes are not well written and employers are not willing to provide them a job:

But like I mean I’ve seen umm, resumes of friends and they were like all, there’s like poor formatting and there’s like, it’s not filled in very well… And it just seem like umm, I know some, sometimes people want to give people the benefit of the doubt, but when uh, they want to hire somebody, but when you hand in stuff like that it’s not umm, it, it doesn’t make a very good impression…(participant 1445, p. 9).
For the Aboriginal youth who are able to find employment, some employers challenge their success through creating hostile work environments. Participant 1445 explained many managers and supervisors act punitively when youth employees make mistakes and sometimes this correction happens in front of other employees, which is embarrassing for the youth. Additionally, many managers and supervisors focus too much on mistakes and for too long a time period.

For example, he stated that employers could help Aboriginal youth employees by not making them feel ashamed of making a mistake, talking to them in a private setting about the mistake, and explain how the employee could improve in a respectful manner:

…let’s say if you are, if you make a mistake or umm, if you make a mistake, not being, not having like, having like uh, somebody who can just take you to the side and explain what was wrong…what they hope happens next time and umm, just move on…Respect. Not, you don’t want to like, for a young worker I think, if they make a mistake and the boss, I’m just thinking like, maybe through like, an Aboriginal lens…but, I think it can be intimidating umm, maybe if for an Aboriginal, a new Aboriginal worker to be disciplined because they, they’ll think, feel maybe some shame…or that they did something wrong…Or umm, that umm, you know, they weren’t up to expectations and what’s wrong with me. Or umm, when it, when umm, if they’re, if somebody does make a mistake I think it should be a li-explained in the right, like, in the right way to, to not make the worker feel punished (participant 1445, p. 11-12).

Finally, he explained employers could help Aboriginal youth employees succeed by ensuring their employees feel comfortable in the workplace. He shared establishing relationships
with managers, supervisors, and coworkers are very important to help Aboriginal youth employees feel like they belong. Additionally, he explained when Aboriginal youth employees feel comfortable they are more likely to express themselves and excel at their job.

For example he stated when Aboriginal youth are starting their first job it is intimidating to not know anyone and until relationships and boundaries are established, they will not feel comfortable in the workplace:

…and as well as being comfortable with, in that environment…Includes umm, being comfortable with your coworkers…And getting along with them so that means umm, getting along with your boss…Like, once you I think umm, it can be intimidating you know, entering a workplace…Or if it’s like, your first job…or your first professional job, and umm, umm, you don’t really know anybody, you don’t know your boss very well. Umm, and that can be intimidating…But I think if you ah, once you get to know them…or know your boundaries with them…or can say that, like can’t guarantee that everybody’s going to like their boss or coworkers…So that can actually create an uncomfortable en-environment…And you might not want to express yourself as much. In that, that kind of setting (participant 1445, p. 10-11).

Participant 1426

**Character Sketch.** Participant 1426 was male in his early-twenties at the time of the interview. I had not met participant 1426 prior to our interview, so in order to establish rapport, I introduced myself and explained my background prior to introducing the consent from and beginning the interview. This process of getting to know each other seemed to put him at ease as he openly reciprocated by introducing himself including his background. During the interview participant 1426 openly discussed his employment struggles. At the time of our interview, his
contract position had ended and he was unemployed. He shared his personal challenges of actively searching for a new job, and of becoming dependent on employment insurance for financial support. Participant 1426 also shared what his employment experiences were like working for both mainstream and Aboriginal organizations, and the importance of having an employer who values and trusts their employees by granting the employees independence.

**Story map.** The initial story map (see Figure 15) was constructed during the analysis phase of this interview (See Chapter Three for a detailed explanation of the process). Upon completion of the story map I identified one core message and two themes from the map and interview narrative. The initial core message for participant 1426 was **Youth employment barriers.** The themes were **Cultural identity**, and **What employees want.**

**Feedback from second interview and final story map.** Upon completion of the analysis of participant 1426’s interview, I constructed his story map and identified the core message and themes. I then scheduled a follow-up interview with participant 1426 to review the findings with him. I provided participant 1426 with a copy of his story map and I explained how I identified the core message and themes in his narrative. I asked him the following questions: “From your narratives in your interview I have constructed a story map. How does this map illustrate your views? What is missing from your story map? What would you like to add? Do you have anything else to say about your story map? In response to the questions, participant 1426 initially explained that he wanted to clarify some misunderstandings in his story map. To begin he stated while many of his friends and peers dropped out secondary school, he completed secondary school without dropping out. Furthermore, he shared that he had attended a university, but that he did not complete his degree. He explained that he left university after
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Workplace Identity</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
<th>Most important thing about work for youth</th>
<th>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Last job at an Aboriginal organization gave him/her the opportunity to become more involved in the Aboriginal community in the GTA</td>
<td>Did not mind working in more strict, less independent workplaces because as long as you do what you are told, no one bothers you</td>
<td>Never got involved in drugs, went back and finished high school, never been fired from a job because she had role model in his/her life who encouraged him/her to do more and improve from a young age</td>
<td>Raised in a home where s/he was told what to do so s/he does not struggle working in more controlled workplaces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned more about his/her own culture through last job at an Aboriginal organization because s/he became more involved with the Aboriginal community</td>
<td>Did not mind working in more strict, less independent workplace because had a good manager who would monitor him/her but was not oppressive or negative</td>
<td>Developed independence during free time while growing up</td>
<td>Developed independence growing up when s/he wanted to distance him/herself from peers who were using drugs so starting doing more activities on his/her own</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last job at an Aboriginal organization presented him/her with opportunities to learn about his/her own culture</td>
<td>Worked in more strict, less independent workplace when young so thought s/he was being monitored because of his lack of experience</td>
<td>Despite growing up on the reserve with his/her family was very disconnected from the Aboriginal community</td>
<td>Growing up parents encouraged him/her to socialize with white friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Helpful to learn about his/her own culture and connect to the Aboriginal community</td>
<td>-Appreciated working in workplace where given more independence because s/he is a youth and was trusted to complete work</td>
<td>-Important to feel like s/he is accomplishing something through his work</td>
<td>-Believes the execution of using funding needs to be more accountable with what they are using the money for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Aboriginal culture has been both present and absent in his/her work experiences</td>
<td>-Appreciated working in workplace where given more independence because s/he is a youth and was given more responsibilities</td>
<td>-Believes there are a lot of Aboriginal youth who lack motivation or drive</td>
<td>-There are a lot of Aboriginal youth who do not complete high school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Last job it was important to be Aboriginal so the clients could open up to the employees and because the clients wanted to work with someone who was Aboriginal</td>
<td>-At last job his supervisor was Aboriginal and provided him/her with learning opportunities</td>
<td>-Not much has changed in his own community</td>
<td>-Not much has changed in his own community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Last job the clients did not think employees could understand their problems if they were not Aboriginal as well</td>
<td>-Has worked at jobs where s/he was expected to be a cog in the wheel</td>
<td>-For his/her community to change more youth need to go back and make changes</td>
<td>-Mainstream culture believes Native people are given lots of money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Present**

<p>| -Tries not to base identity on past or cultural upbringing | -Values workplaces that allow employees to think for themselves | -Important to have a job that youth are willing to do | -See what is done with the funding changed |
| -Workplace identity is based on individual values and personal strengths | -Appreciates employers who treat him/her like s/he is capable of completing tasks independently | -Aboriginal youth should work for an Aboriginal organization at least once to have positive role models of successfully employed Aboriginal people | -Believe communities are given funding but would like to see what is done with the funding changed |
| -Tries not to entangle who he is as an Aboriginal person in the workplace unless he is working for Aboriginal organization that will only hire Aboriginal employees | -Enjoys working in environments where s/he is not required to ask supervisor questions before completing every task | -Important for Aboriginal youth to be mentally stimulated at the workplace | -Communities are given funding but would like to see the system change on how accountable people are who use the funds |
| -Aboriginal identity is beneficial when working for Aboriginal organizations | -Important to be able to ask supervisor questions when s/he needs assistance | -Important for work to be something s/he thinks about and work on | -In his/her community a lot of funding they receive disappear |
| -Values doing what the employer requires and being a hard worker | -Important to have a job that youth are capable of doing | -Does not want to do the same task everyday in the workplace | -Questions what happens with the money his/her community receives and why a few select people in his/her community have become wealthy |
| -Appreciates getting involved in the GTA Aboriginal community | -Aboriginal youth should work for an Aboriginal organization at least once to have positive role models of successfully employed Aboriginal people | -Important for work to stimulate employees | -People who are given funding need to be more accountable with what they are using the money for |
| -Wishes s/he had the opportunity to get more involved in his/her own community | -A lot of focus is put on getting a job with a high standard like a doctor or lawyer, but believes it is important to find a job that makes you happy regardless of how it pays | -A lot of focus is put on getting a job with a high standard like a doctor or lawyer, but believes it is important to find a job that makes you happy regardless of how it pays | -Believes the execution of using funding needs to change |
| -States in resume that s/he is an Aboriginal | -Important to feel like s/he is accomplishing something through his work | -Important feel like s/he is accomplishing something through his work | -What people say they will use funding for appropriate, but those projects remain incomplete |
| -Not currently employed, applied for employment insurance and is looking a new job | -Believes youth need to be able to think on their feet | -Believes youth need to be able to think on their feet | -Hopes more youth complete their education because education allows youth to be able to think for themselves |
| -Gratifying to complete tasks and have boss acknowledge you did a good job | -Import of work to be something s/he thinks about and work on | -Education helps youth get employed | -More youth complete their education because education allows youth to be able to think for themselves |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1426</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|       | involved in politics but is not interested in going into politics  
-Questions if s/he should sacrifice his/her passion to do what is good for the community  
-Questions if s/he should do what s/he wants and have a successful career that may not benefit the community  
-Tires not to let Aboriginal culture be too present in the workplace unless it is beneficial  
-Last job Aboriginal culture was present because s/he worked for an Aboriginal organization and it was beneficial | Still looking for own passion  
-Wants to be judges on who s/he is as a person not who s/he is as a culture | -Hopes more youth complete their education because it provides them with more possibilities  
-Western mainstream education makes people a cog in a wheel, but university gives youth the ability to think critically  
-Believes college is a good option for people who want to go into the trades  
-Hopes more youth are employed  
-A lot of people are sick of working, but s/he is not tired of working yet  
-A lot of schooling is focused on making people cogs in a wheel  
-A lot of teachers do not foster an attitude of dreaming in themselves  
-A lot of teachers just focus on the knowledge that is required  
-Fears that youth are not ambitious  
-Does not know what s/he wants to do for a career so has not gone to school yet | -Racism and negative stereotyping needs to be overcome in mainstream workplaces  
-Believes positive role models would positively influence Aboriginal youth | -For his/her community to change the next generation needs to make a change  
-A lot of youth dream of making millions of dollars and retiring, but s/he would keep working  
-Dreams that Aboriginal youth start dreaming in themselves again  
-Dreams that Aboriginal youth start feeling like they are worth a damn  
-Dreams that Aboriginal youth will start to have their own goals and dreams for themselves  
-Dreams that Aboriginal youth will focus on what they want  
-Fears that very few Aboriginal people are getting involved in Aboriginal politics  
-Fears that 50-100 years from now only other cultures will be advocating for Aboriginal people | -Aboriginal youth should work for an Aboriginal organization at least once to have positive role models to show that they are capable of doing their jobs  
-Aboriginal youth should work for an Aboriginal organization at least once to have positive role models because there is a negative side to Aboriginal employment outcomes  
-Aboriginal youth should work for an Aboriginal organization at least once to have positive role models because a lot of Aboriginal youth grew up in negative environments  
-Aboriginal youth should work for an Aboriginal organization at least once to have positive role models because grow up being told they are never going to be anything other than street rats  
-Important to find Aboriginal youth positive Aboriginal role models to show them they can accomplish something  
-If youth feel like their work has value that will make a difference in terms of their workplace performance  
-Important for youth be successful in their career even if they do not want to work for the community  
-Wants to learn about different cultures  
-Would like to learn about countries s/he does not know a lot about  
-Would like to live in other areas of the world with different cultures and political systems | -Aboriginal youth should work for an Aboriginal organization at least once to have positive role models to show that they are capable of doing their jobs  
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-Wants to learn about different cultures  
-Would like to learn about countries s/he does not know a lot about  
-Would like to live in other areas of the world with different cultures and political systems |
receiving advice from professor who recommended participant 1426 discontinue his studies to pursue a career path that would make him happy as opposed to getting an education to make his parents and community happy. This resulted in three points from the initial story map being modified. The first point was under the Most important thing about work for youth heading in the past and the information was corrected to state that participant 1426 completed high school. Similarly, under the Hopes, dreams, and fears for future of youth employment heading in the past the information was also corrected to state that participant 1426 completed high school. The third modified point was under the Hopes, dream, and fears for the future of youth employment heading in the present to reflect that he is uncertain of what he would like to do for a career so he has not pursued additional postsecondary education. A final addition participant 1426 wanted to add to his story map was that education is very important to employment outcomes. Under the Most important thing about work for youth heading in the past he added after he finished the eight grade, he moved away from his reservation community to live with his father so he could attend a better high school. These changes were noted in Figure 16 and are indicated by the italicised text.
### Figure 16. Participant 1426 final story map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1426</th>
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<th>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>-Last job at an Aboriginal organization gave him/her the opportunity to become more involved in the Aboriginal community in the GTA. -Learned more about his/her own culture through last job at an Aboriginal organization because s/he became more involved with the Aboriginal community.</td>
<td>-Did not mind working in more strict, less independent workplaces because as long as you do what you are told, no one bothers you. -Did not mind working in more strict, less independent workplace because had a good manager who would monitor him/her but was not oppressive or negative.</td>
<td>-Never got involved in drugs, finished high school, never been fired from a job because s/he had role model in his/her life who encouraged him/her to do more and improve from a young age. -Education is important for successful work outcomes so he moved away from his reservation community to live with his father so he could attend a better high school.</td>
<td>-Raised in a home where s/he was told what to do so s/he does not struggle working in more controlled workplaces. -Developed independence during free time while growing up. -Developed independence growing up when s/he wanted to distance him/herself from peers who were using drugs so starting doing more activities on his/her own. -Despite growing up on the reserve with his/her family was very disconnected from the Aboriginal community. -Growing up parents encouraged him/her to socialize with white friends. -Growing up did not socialize much with peers from the community because they seemed to rebel and behave in a way that was different from how s/he behaved. -When invited Aboriginal friends to his/her home parents would get him/her into trouble if the friends misbehaved. -Did not want to get in trouble from parents by hanging out with Aboriginal friends so stopped socializing with them outside of school. -Did not get involved in drugs, finished high school, and never been fired from a job because his/her parents discouraged him/her from getting involved with negative influences in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>-Tries not to base identity on past or cultural upbringing. -Workplace identity is based on individual values and personal strengths. -Tries not to entangle who he is as an Aboriginal person in the workplace unless he is working for Aboriginal organization that will only hire Aboriginal employees. -Aboriginal identity is beneficial when working for Aboriginal organizations. -Values doing what the employer requires and being a hard worker. -Tries not to get involved in the GTA Aboriginal community.</td>
<td>-Values workplaces that allow employees to think for themselves. -Appreciates employers who treat him/her like s/he is capable of completing tasks independently. -Enjoys working in environments where s/he is not required to ask supervisor questions before completing every task.</td>
<td>-Important to have a job that youth are willing to do. -Important to have a job that youth are capable of doing. Aboriginal youth should work for an Aboriginal organization at least once to have positive role models of successfully employed Aboriginal people.</td>
<td>-There are a lot of Aboriginal youth who lack motivation or drive. -There are a lot of Aboriginal youth who do not complete high school. -Not much has changed in his own community. -For his/her community to change more youth need to go back and make changes. -Mainstream culture believes Native people are given lots of money. -Communities are given funding but would like to see what is done with the funding changed. -For his/her community a lot of funding they receive disappear. -Questions what happens with the money his/her community receives and why a few select people in his/her community have become wealthy. -People who are given funding need to be more accountable with what they are using the money for. -Believes the execution of using funding needs to change. -What people say they will use funding for appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Workplace Identity</td>
<td>Employer help/challenge success</td>
<td>Most important thing about work for youth</td>
<td>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| - Values thinking critically  
- A lot of pressure for youth from the community to help the community improve and get better  
- Recognizes Aboriginal youth need to get involved in politics but is not interested in going into politics  
- Questions if s/he should sacrifice his/her passion to do what is good for the community  
- Questions if s/he should do what s/he wants and have a successful career that may not benefit the community  
- Tires not to let Aboriginal culture be too present in the workplace unless it is beneficial  
- Last job Aboriginal culture was present because s/he worked for an Aboriginal organization and it was beneficial  | though they will always be drunks, drug addicts, and street rats  
- Some employers also hold the view that Aboriginal people will always be drunks, drug addicts, and street rats  
- Has not personally been mistreated by employers, but Aboriginal friends have been mistreated by employers  
- It is challenging to convince Aboriginal youth that they are better than the negative stereotypes and they can accomplish something with their lives  
- A lot of people are more motivated by paycheque than the work they do  | Important for youth to recognize that it is okay for them to have dreams, wants and desires  
- Important for youth to help the community improve but not if you are not passionate about it  
- Still looking for own passion  
- Wants to be judges on who s/he is as a person not who s/he is as a culture  | but those projects remain incomplete  
- Hopes more youth complete their education because education allows youth to be able to think for themselves  
- Hopes more youth complete their education because it provides them with more possibilities  
- Western mainstream education makes people a cog in a wheel, but university gives youth the ability to think critically  
- Believes college is a good option for people who want to go into the trades  
- Hopes more youth are employed  
- A lot of people are sick of working, but s/he is not tired of working yet  
- A lot of schooling is focused on making people cogs in a wheel  
- A lot of teachers do not foster an attitude of dreaming in themselves  
- A lot of teachers just focus on the knowledge that is required  
- Fears that youth are not ambitious  
- Does not know what s/he wants to do for a career so has not pursued additional postsecondary education  |
| - There is a lot of pressure from the community for Aboriginal youth to help their communities by becoming a politician, chief, or advocate for Aboriginal rights  
- Seeing the need in his/her community is making him/her want to work in a field that will help the community  
- Is not fully committed to working in a field that will help his/her community  | - Racism and negative stereotyping needs to be overcome in mainstream workplaces  
- Believes positive role models would positively influence Aboriginal youth  | Aboriginal youth should work for an Aboriginal organization at least once to have positive role models to show that they are capable of doing their jobs  
- Aboriginal youth should work for an Aboriginal organization at least once to have positive role models because there is a negative side to Aboriginal employment outcomes  
- Aboriginal youth should work for an Aboriginal organization at least once to have positive role models because a lot of Aboriginal youth grew up in negative environments  
- Aboriginal youth should work for an Aboriginal organization at least once to have positive role models because grow up being told they are never going to be anything other than street rats  
- Important to find Aboriginal youth positive Aboriginal role models to show them they can accomplish something  
- If youth feel like their work has value that will make a difference in terms of their workplace performance  
- Important for youth be successful in their career even if they do not want to work for the community  
- Wants to learn about different cultures  
- Would like to learn about countries s/he does not know a lot about  
- Would like to live in other areas of the world with different cultures and political systems  | - For his/her community to change the next generation needs to make a change  
- A lot of youth dream of making millions of dollars and retiring, but s/he would keep working  
- Dreams that Aboriginal youth start dreaming in themselves again  
- Dreams that Aboriginal youth start feeling like they are worth a damn  
- Dreams that Aboriginal youth will start to have their own goals and dreams for themselves  
- Dreams that Aboriginal youth will focus on what they want  
- Fears that very few Aboriginal people are getting involved in Aboriginal politics  
- Fears that 50-100 years from now only other cultures will be advocating for Aboriginal people  |
Final core messages and themes. The core messages and themes did not change after participant 1426 reviewed his story maps. The key narratives he discussed included that he is largely disconnected from his Aboriginal identity and Aboriginal culture in the workplace as he would prefer to be judged based on his character and not on his background. Participant 1426 partially attributed his disconnect from his Aboriginal culture and identity to his upbringing in a reserve community that faces many challenges. He also explained that employers challenge the success of Aboriginal youth in the workplace when they do not acknowledge when youth employees are doing their job well. Similarly, he shared that employers could aid in successful employment outcomes of Aboriginal youth by providing their employees with more independence and letting their employees know that they trust them. Additionally, he stated that Aboriginal youth would be happier in their work environments if they have a sense that their work is contributing to the greater good. Finally, participant 1426 shared that a lack of formal education is a direct barrier to Aboriginal youth finding and maintaining successful employment, and that employer racism and discrimination also challenge the success of Aboriginal youth in the workplace.

Youth employment barriers. Throughout the course of participant 1426’s interview he spoke at length about the numerous barriers Aboriginal youth encounter to finding successful employment. He explained many Aboriginal youth are disadvantaged when applying for jobs as some of these youth have not completed secondary school and even fewer have completed postsecondary education. As result, employers overlook many Aboriginal youth for employment opportunities. Similarly, he explained that when Aboriginal youth are able to find employment, it tends to be temporary positions with little opportunity for advancement or they are driven out of the position as a direct result of discrimination. He also spoke about how youth are challenged in deciding which career path to pursue as a result of external pressure from the
community to work in a field that will benefit the community, even if the youth will not be happy in this career.

For example, participant 1426 stated he would like to see more Aboriginal youth get an education as it gives youth the skills they need to gain employment including critical thinking and personal growth:

Umm, quite honestly I would like to see more of our youth, and I know it’s, it’s sort of indirectly tied to employment, but I would like to see more of them actually completing their education for starts, myself included…Umm, it has, it has such a big effect on, number one, your, I think the biggest value in an education isn’t just the material you’re learning, it’s about being able to think for yourself and understand that you know, umm, well I don’t know how to say that, just like think for yourself…Umm, part of what I like about university more is that they do give you that critical, well, they’re supposed to be able to give you that critical thinking. And whereas college is more geared towar-and college is great for people who want to go, I think, want to go into like trades…Or umm, trade oriented jobs…Umm, as far as hopes for youth employment, umm, I don’t know, I guess I’d just like to see more people employed (participant 1426, p. 9).

Furthermore, when Aboriginal youth are able to find a job, they still encounter barriers in the workplace. He spoke about how he was previously employed, but that it was one-year contract position and he was not rehired after his contract ended. He also has Aboriginal friends who are unable to maintain successful employment. For example he stated, that some of his friends end up leaving their jobs with mainstream employers due to a combination of acting inappropriately in the workplace and also due to being discriminated against by employers who
believe negative stereotypes about Aboriginal people:

And umm, I think what some of my friends struggle with is that they’re doing that on their resume and they’ll get hired in places, but then umm, their employers, one way or the other, I don’t know if it’s a case of, uh, them acting rebellious, which I know some of my friends would do…And they’re not quite ready for that job, but (sigh) the way they say they’re treated it, it just seems like umm, I don’t know. The way main, the way mainstream culture seems to look at Aboriginal people, it’s like they’re never going to be anything but drunks, drug heads and like street rats. And umm, I think that sort of sometimes gets towards the employers…and they feel that way regardless of umm, what the employee is actually like (participant 1426, p. 6).

He also spoke about the pressure that many Aboriginal youth feel from the community regarding employment. He explained that most of the policies being made by the government that impact Aboriginal communities are done without consulting those communities. Participant 1426 acknowledged the importance of youth becoming involved in politics in order to advocate for their communities, however some youth are not interested pursuing a career in politics. For example, he stated that he questions whether he should sacrifice his own passion and career interests to benefit his community by getting involved in politics, despite not being interested in politics:

There is so much focus on the Aboriginal community that okay well, what are you going to do to help? Like are you going to become like, I don’t want to say a politician, but are you going to become involved in the Aboriginal community by umm, becoming a chief and that kind of thing and umm, advocating for Aboriginal rights? And in that sense, but I understand, it’s the same thing, I understand there’s a
need for that, but I also have, and I hate to say it, but no interest in going into politics. I know, I recognize there’s a need but…It’s not my passion. And it’s like, it’s one of those things. Do you sacrifice your own passion for what’s good for the entire community or do you do your own thing and become successful in something else? (participant 1426, p. 12).

In another example, participant 1426 stated that many Aboriginal youth are pressured into getting a prestigious career, however he would prefer to work in an area that makes him happy:

‘Cause there is such focus on getting a career that’s just [inaudible 29:20] doctors and lawyers are held up to such a high standard…Umm, yeah, but for me it’s about finding something that makes you happy at the end of the day…Re, umm, regardless of how it pays. Umm, and I need it to be, yeah, I need to feel like I’m actually accomplishing something (participant 1426, p. 8).

**Cultural Identity.** For this theme participant 1426 openly discussed how he has distanced himself from his culture and cultural identity as a result of the challenges he has faced in the workplace and in his own community. He explained that he tries not to openly disclose to potential employers that he is Aboriginal, as he does not want to be discriminated against. Furthermore, he shared he has distanced himself from his community and cultural identity. Participant 1426 explained that leaving his community contributed to his absenteeism of culture in the workplace. He also discussed that while he left his community to seek employment opportunities, that he was not intending to return to his community as he was not connected to his culture or the people in the community, a lack of employment opportunities, and the mismanagement of his community.

For example, he stated that in his resume that he states that he an Aboriginal person as
there are government hiring policies regarding the number of Aboriginal employees companies should have, but other than that he downplays his Aboriginal identity as wants to be hired based on his individual merits:

Umm, as part of my resume, I do add in that I am an Aboriginal person and that umm, it’s according to the government like supposed to give, or employers are supposed to employ like, some percent of Aboriginal people…but, it’s not something I try and use as like a selling point or like, this is the only part of my resume. I want to be able to be seen as an individual…as opposed to someone who is just Aboriginal (1426, 270-286).

In another example, participant 1426 stated that he tries to avoid bringing his Aboriginal cultural identity into the workplace to avoid being discriminated against. He stated many mainstream employers are negatively influenced by stereotypes about Aboriginal people regardless of the employee’s character:

The way main, the way mainstream culture seems to look at Aboriginal people, it’s like they’re never going to be anything but drunks, drug heads and like street rats. And umm, I think that sort of sometimes gets towards the employers…and they feel that way regardless of umm, what the employee is actually like (participant 1426, p. 6).

He also discussed the fact that despite being raised in his community that he did not socialize with the people in his community. He openly shared many people in his community struggled with addiction concerns and poverty. As a result, his parents attempted to shelter him from the negative issues by encouraging him to socialize with people outside of the community. For example, he stated that he spent most of his time socializing with his family or non-
Aboriginal friends:

Umm, I grew up with pretty much just my family...so a lot of times I was going out and seeing. I guess they shouldn’t have been saying this, my parents were saying, going out and seeing my white friends...Umm, yeah, I just, a lot of the time I wasn’t involved with umm, my friends in Cutler and on the reserve, just ‘cause, from very early on we started acting very differently (participant 1426, p. 4).

In another example, participant 1426 stated that he feels more youth from his community need to get involved in order to help his community address the concerns and issues they face:

Umm, but even as a grown adult now I still recognize that almost nothing has changed in my home community and that umm, for there to be that change, uh, you know, my generation or the next generation’s going to have to step up your game. And so maybe that requires me going back and doing something but, I don’t know (participant 1426, p. 5).

He also expressed concern for the way his community is run. He explained one of the reasons he does not want to return to his community is due to issues of mismanagement. Participant 1426 shared he would like to get more involved in his community but due to issues of how funding is used, there are very few job opportunities in his community. The mismanagement of his community has also contributed to his disconnection from his cultural identity in the workplace.

For example, he stated that mainstream society is often unsupportive of issues plaguing Aboriginal communities because they believe they have lots of money, but in his community the execution of the funding could be handled in a manner that would improve the community’s
economic outlook:

…there’s this sort of idea by the, by mainstream culture that umm, Native people are given all this money. And it’s true, we are given tons of funds but, what we do with them, we have to be umm, I would like to see the system change on how accountable people are because, I don’t know how it is everywhere else, but, I, I recognize that it can get pretty bad, is that umm, a lot of the funds, a lot of those funds are just disappearing…they need to be held more accountable. Like yes it’s good that we’re getting these funds and it’s for a good purpose, but what, to me what’s sort of failing is the execution of using those funds (participant 1426, p. 5).

**What employees want.** The final theme participant 1426 discussed was what Aboriginal youth employees want in the workplace. For participant 1426, he explained there are simple adjustments employers can make to the system of work in order to aid in Aboriginal youth being successful in workplaces. He shared he has always been open to working hard for his past employers, but that he would like to have his work accomplishments acknowledged. For example, he stated that when youth employees are doing well in their job, it would be beneficial if their employer rewarded their success by giving youth more independence:

And umm, for independence, that was just at my last job and it’s something I appreciated be umm, because I, I recognize like, that I still am viewed as a youth…I’m only twenty-one and umm, to be able to be given those responsibilities and just trusted to do them however…it’s umm, a gratifying experience once you actually get it done. Your boss is like ‘yeah, good job’ and you’re like ‘oh, okay, cool.’ (participant 1426, p. 3).

Participant 1426 also shared the workplaces he has enjoyed the most have been the ones
where employers displayed a level of trust over his judgement and ability. However, he also explained it is important for employers to be approachable and open to helping employees when they have concerns. For example, he stated that he enjoyed workplaces where he was able to work with minimal supervision, but that for bigger concerns it is important that employees are able to ask their bosses for assistance:

Umm, work values for me is just like, just…like working hard…and being capable of thinking and doing things on your own. You don’t always have to you know, ask your supervisor or boss or whoever’s umm, avail-available to ask questions like that…Umm, it’s important to able to ask, to be able to ask those types of questions. But not have to go to them for every single problem…For bigger questions where it’s like I genuinely don’t know what to do. This client is say umm, becoming aggressive and umm, I don’t feel safe anymore like what can I do to meet with this person? Like bigger questions…you have to ask and that kind of thing (participant 1426, p. 1-2).

Participant 1414

Character sketch. This participant was a female in her mid-twenties at the time of the interview. She recently had relocated and requested that we complete the interview using Skype. I sent participant 1414 a digital copy of the consent letter the day before our interview so she would have a copy of it to review. In an effort to establish rapport, I introduced myself and explained my background prior to introducing the consent from. Participant 1414 reciprocated by introducing herself and during her introduction, she let me know she is a single parent and may need to take some breaks during the interview to look after her child. As participant 1414 anticipated, she needed to take two breaks during the interview to tend to her child. However,
we were able to continue the interview after both interruptions and participant 1414 answered all the interview questions. Participant 1414 shared that she had limited employment experience and that she was employed in her first full-time job after completing her Master degree, but that all of her employers have either been Aboriginal or she worked for Aboriginal divisions within mainstream organizations. She spoke at length about how meeting one great Aboriginal mentor changed the trajectory of her educational and career path. This mentor exposed participant 1414 to research projects, the field of Aboriginal health, and encouraged her to apply to graduate school and to apply for an Aboriginal fellowship. The encouragement of this mentor resulted in participant 1414 getting her current job after the deputy minister for the department of health read her research report and contacted participant 1414 to collaborate on her ideas for incorporating traditional healing and cultural safety in the department of health. Following their conversations, the deputy health minister created an Aboriginal health division and participant 1414 was offered a job.

**Story map.** The initial story map (see Figure 17) was constructed during the analysis phase of this interview (See Chapter Three for a detailed explanation of the process). Upon completion of the story map I identified one core message and two themes from the map and interview narrative. The initial core message for participant 1414 was *Youth employment success.* The themes were *Youth employment barriers,* and *Cultural identity.*
Figure 17. Participant 1414 initial story map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Workplace Identity</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
<th>Most important thing about work for youth employment</th>
<th>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Worked at Centre for Aboriginal Health Research when a student</td>
<td>- Does not have a lot of work experience</td>
<td>- Just started working after being a university student</td>
<td>- Was a 1 of 12 applicants who received a fellowship for Northern Aboriginal master's students</td>
<td></td>
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<td>- All employees at the Centre for Aboriginal Health Research were Aboriginal</td>
<td>- When new Aboriginal health department was created the employees did not work together</td>
<td>- Was a sense of trust among employees at the Centre for Aboriginal Health Research</td>
<td>- The fellows became very close to each others</td>
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<td>- Wrote a policy paper conceptualizing Aboriginal health centres in the Northwest Territories</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Can be herself at the Centre for Aboriginal Health Research</td>
<td>- Aboriginal community challenged her to take on research assistant positions as a student</td>
<td>- Feeling trust, comfort and being able to be herself in the workplace was important</td>
<td>- Wanted to leave her small isolated community when young but when started working in Aboriginal health she decided to go back to her community</td>
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<td>- Felt like a member of the family working at the Centre for Aboriginal Health Research</td>
<td>- Aboriginal community challenged her to do things outside of her comfort zone</td>
<td>- Found jobs via research position opportunities</td>
<td>- When at the grocery store an Aboriginal youth asked her to buy baby formula for his baby</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Working for the government is a different environment</td>
<td>- Has been targeted for all jobs she has had</td>
<td>- Most jobs came from research supervisor</td>
<td>- Wants to understand why this Aboriginal youth was not working and not able to afford formula for his baby</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not everyone in who works for the government is Aboriginal</td>
<td>- Research supervisor was a Metis professor who took her under wing and provided her with opportunities, taught her about research and graduate school, and invited her to graduate events focused on Aboriginal research</td>
<td>- Mentor in university changed the trajectory of her life by giving her passion and understanding</td>
<td>- Learned about colonialism and residential schools in university she made connections in about how s/he grew up and why</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Working for government division of Aboriginal health and employees have different backgrounds and educations</td>
<td>- Felt like a family working at the Centre for Aboriginal Health Research</td>
<td>- Mentor in university lead her to her job</td>
<td>- She made connections about how she grew up and why it made her want to reconnect to her Dene roots</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Present | Workplace identity develops by feeling like you can trust co-workers, by feeling comfortable, and feeling like you can be yourself | - Trusting coworkers develops through relationships | - Trusting other employees is important | - Boss encourages employees to visit Aboriginal communities and build relationships so they understand what their lives are like |
| - Important to work in a positive environment to help facilitate workplace identity development | - Trust in other employees is not completely there because now has non-Aboriginal coworkers | - Feeling like you can be yourself in the workplace is important | - Raised by non-Aboriginal father so she experienced a large cultural disconnect |
| - Working with all Aboriginal employees facilitates a sense of comfort and trust | - Trust hard to establish when you need to ensure coworkers understand your Aboriginal perspectives | - Important to: - not feel judged in the workplace | - Mom is a well known knowledge holder in her community |
| - Works for a new department of health | - Employees for new Aboriginal health department all just started working in the same area, together and they are all just starting to get know each other | - feel a sense of comfort in the workplace | - People cannot develop policies for Aboriginal people when they do not understand the realities of what Aboriginal people face, and when they have not visited an Aboriginal community |
| - In her division of Aboriginal health there are opportunities to develop culturally | - Now that coworkers are getting to know each other they feel more comfortable with each other | - feel an like equal to other employees | - Aboriginal health scholars are pushing for training service providers about Aboriginal history and their social positioning and biases |
| - Is passionate about her work because she is able to make to connections to his/her culture | - Employers help Aboriginal youth when they understand the realities of Aboriginal people, including the challenges Aboriginal people face and Aboriginal history | - Opportunities key to success | - Hopes Aboriginal people are part of society |
| - Now works with Dene people | - Employers help by incorporating opportunities for employees to build capacity | - Job about helping people and achieving equity | - Hope Aboriginal people are not looked down upon |
| - Aboriginal culture is important in her work as Aboriginal health needs to acknowledge Aboriginal culture is important | - Boss helps by offering training opportunities to employees | - A healthy work environment is one where Aboriginal youth workers feel culturally safe | - Dreams that Aboriginal people are able to practice their culture |
| - In her workplace they acknowledge that culture is important for Aboriginal health and wellness | - Has not been negatively challenged by employers | - Important that workplaces do not harm Aboriginal youth employees in their culture | |
| - At the hospital where she works the elder's council advises the hospital on protocols for smudging and ceremonies, and ensures employees are doing things in a proper way | - If employers are open to mentoring youth employees they can engage and help employees | - Important that Aboriginal youth employees are respected in the workplace | |
| - Elder's council is a critical at her workplace | - Boss is working to build capacity in the Aboriginal health division | - Important that employers have a general understanding about Aboriginal people's lives | |
| - Elders on the elder's council are from all over the Northwest Territories | - Senior advisor is working to put local Aboriginal people in place with education | - The most important thing about work for Aboriginal youth is that they have a healthy work environment that is culturally safe | |
| - Opening and closing prayer in her workplace are respected and no one complains about them | - Senior advisor's actions are about systemic change | - Important that Aboriginal youth feel like their culture is being respected in the workplace | |
| - Director is Aboriginal who promotes | - Senior advisor is making big changes that are not characteristic of government | - Important Aboriginal youth get opportunities to continue their skill development | |
| - Crucial for employers to have an understanding | |

1414 stable 152
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1414</th>
<th>Workplace Identity</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
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</table>
| Aboriginal culture and supports people hunting and living traditionally  
- Goes to work wearing crow boots  
- She is very protective of being able to be an Aboriginal woman in the workplace  
- Protective of being able to not hide who she is or her Aboriginal culture in the workplace | - Exciting to have senior advisor making big changes for Aboriginal employees  
- Non-Aboriginal employees in most workplaces do not have a general understanding about Aboriginal people’s lives  
- Non-Aboriginal people treat everyone the same and that can be a barrier as it does not address inequities that occur in the workplace  
- Employers need to be aware that Aboriginal employees youth employees may need some guidance and help to succeed  
- Employers need to understand colonialism, social exclusion, racism, and self-determination are unique to Aboriginal people  
- Employers need to make the connection between health disparities, colonialism, social exclusion, racism, and self-determination  
- Examining dynamics and privilege in training at the department of health through how employees view the world based on their understanding and how they were raised  
- Some non-Aboriginal people are not receptive to learning about Aboriginal history or about how their social positioning and biases influence them | of Aboriginal history and context  
If employers do not have an understanding of Aboriginal history and context it is important for them to open to learning  
- People who work with Aboriginal people and who develop policies for Aboriginal people need to be reflective of their social positioning and biases | of Aboriginal history and context  
- People will be on par with the rest of Canadians  
- Dreams Aboriginal people are able to be respected for their culture  
- Dreams Aboriginal people are able to have the same work outcomes as everyone else  
- Dreams Aboriginal people are able to have the same opportunities as everyone else  
- Fears that in ten to fifteen years from now things will not have changed  
- Fears that in the future Aboriginal youth will not be working and she will continue to be asked to buy baby formula  
- Fears nothing will change in the future for Aboriginal employment  
- Hopes to see more intervention research that will deliver outcomes to address Aboriginal youth employment issues |
| Future | - Working with employees who come from a different background means you need to take extra steps to get comfortable working with them  
- Identity is challenged if Aboriginal youth work in an environment where they do not feel culturally safe | - Coworkers are getting to know each other, so relationships are being established  
- Boss wants to build capacity for the employees so they can move up  
- Employers or bosses can mentor employees  
- Employers need to understand the realities of Aboriginal youth employees facing inequities in the workplace and that Aboriginal employees may be more sensitive to certain things in the workplace  
- Hopes everyone will be trained how their privilege and their how they were raised influences their view of the world, especially those who interact with Aboriginal people and those who develop policies for Aboriginal people  
- Deputy minister of health is putting together a program to evaluate the receptivity of non-Aboriginal service providers undergoing training to be reflective of their social positioning and biases  
- Will examine how training non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal history, and social positioning and biases influence them will be most effective  
- Receptivity of training non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal history, and their social positioning and biases will be a key factor in the success of delivering this kind of training  
- Trying to develop more competency within the Aboriginal health department | - Hope Aboriginal people will be on par with the rest of Canadians  
- Dreams Aboriginal people are able to be respected for their culture  
- Dreams Aboriginal people are able to have the same work outcomes as everyone else  
- Dreams Aboriginal people are able to have the same opportunities as everyone else  
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Feedback from second interview and final story map. Upon completion of the analysis of participant 1414’s interview, I constructed her story map and identified the core message and themes. I then scheduled a follow-up interview with participant 1414 to review the findings with her. I provided participant 1414 with a copy of her story map and explained how I came to identify the core message and themes in her narrative. I asked her the following questions: “From your narratives in your interview I have constructed a story map. How does this map illustrate your views? What is missing from your story map? What would you like to add? Do you have anything else to say about your story map? In response to the questions, participant 1414 explained that overall the information was representative of her views and experiences. However, as we reviewed the different areas of the story map participant 1414 explained that she wanted to clarify some of the information included in her story map. To begin, under the Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment in the past, she clarified that the Fellowship award she was the recipient of was open to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Additionally, under the heading Workplace identity in the present, she wanted some information removed from her initial story map. In this section, she changed the wording of the “At the hospital where she works the elder's council advises the hospital on protocols for smudging and ceremonies, and ensures employees are doing things in a proper way” point to “An Elder’s council advises the work in her division.” She clarified that while she does work for a division of Aboriginal health, it is in the context of a mainstream hospital. Thus, the team of Elder’s works exclusively within her division, but not the other divisions of the hospitals. She explained while the details described initially were accurate, she felt that it was unnecessary to list them all out. The final point participant 1414 wanted to clarify was under the Employer
ABORIGINAL CULTURAL IDENTITY AND EMPLOYMENT

Figure 18. Participant 1414 final story map

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Not everyone in who works for the government is Aboriginal</td>
<td>-Research supervisor was a Metis professor who took her under wing and provided her with opportunities, taught her about research and graduate school, and invited her to graduate events focused on Aboriginal research</td>
<td>-Mentor in university changed the trajectory of her life by giving her passion and understanding</td>
<td>-Learned about colonialism and residential schools in university she made connections in about how s/he grew up and why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Working for government division of Aboriginal health and employees have different backgrounds and educations</td>
<td>-All employees at the Centre for Aboriginal Health Research felt like a family</td>
<td>-Mentor in university lead her to her job</td>
<td>-She made connections about how she grew up and why it made her want to reconnect to her Dene roots</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Present | Workplace identity develops by feeling like you can trust co-workers, by feeling comfortable, and feeling like you can be yourself | -Trust coworkers develops through relationships | -Trusting other employees is important | -Trust in other employees is not completely there |
|         | -Important to work in a positive environment to help facilitate workplace identity development | -Trust hard to establish when you need to ensure coworkers understand your Aboriginal perspectives | -Feeling like you can be yourself in the workplace is important | -Does not have a lot of work experience |
|         | -Working with all Aboriginal employees facilitates a sense of comfort and trust | -Employees for new Aboriginal health department all just started working in the same area, together and they are all just starting to get know each other | -Important to: | -Importantly: |
|         | -Works for a new department of health | -Now that coworkers are getting to know each other they feel more comfortable with each other | -not feel judged in the workplace | -not feel judged in the workplace |
|         | -In her division of Aboriginal health there are opportunities to develop culturally | -Employers help Aboriginal youth when they understand the realities of Aboriginal people, including the challenges Aboriginal people face and Aboriginal history | -feel a sense of comfort in the workplace | -feel a sense of comfort in the workplace |
|         | -Is passionate about her work because she is able to make to connections to his/her culture | -Employers help by incorporating opportunities for employees to build capacity | -feel an like equal to other employees | -feel an like equal to other employees |
|         | -Now works with Dene people | -Now that coworkers are getting to know each other they feel more comfortable with each other | -Opportunities key to success | -Opportunities key to success |
|         | -Aboriginal culture is important in her work as Aboriginal health needs to acknowledge | -Employers help Aboriginal youth when they understand the realities of Aboriginal people, including the challenges Aboriginal people face and Aboriginal history | -Job about helping people and achieving equity | -Job about helping people and achieving equity |
|         | -Aboriginal culture is important in her work as Aboriginal health needs to acknowledge | -Employers help by incorporating opportunities for employees to build capacity | -A healthy work environment is one where Aboriginal youth workers feel culturally safe | -A healthy work environment is one where Aboriginal youth workers feel culturally safe |
|         | -An elder’s council advises the work in her division | -Now that coworkers are getting to know each other they feel more comfortable with each other | -Important that workplaces do not harm Aboriginal youth employees in their culture | -Important that workplaces do not harm Aboriginal youth employees in their culture |
|         | -Elder's council is a critical at her workplace | -Employers help Aboriginal youth when they understand the realities of Aboriginal people, including the challenges Aboriginal people face and Aboriginal history | -Important that Aboriginal youth employees are respected in the workplace | -Important that Aboriginal youth employees are respected in the workplace |
|         | -Elders on the elder's council are from all over the Northwest Territories | -Employers help by incorporating opportunities for employees to build capacity | -Important that employees have a general understanding about Aboriginal people's lives | -Important that employees have a general understanding about Aboriginal people's lives |
|         | -Opening and closing prayer in her workplace are respected and no one complains about them | -Has not been negatively challenged by employers | -The most important thing about work for Aboriginal youth is that they have a healthy work environment that is culturally safe | -The most important thing about work for Aboriginal youth is that they have a healthy work environment that is culturally safe |
|         | -Director is Aboriginal who promotes Aboriginal culture and supports people hunting and living traditionally | -If employers are open to mentoring youth employees they can engage and help employees | -Feels good working in a government position as an Aboriginal woman and not have to hide who she is or her Aboriginal culture | -Feels good working in a government position as an Aboriginal woman and not have to hide who she is or her Aboriginal culture |
|         | -Goes to work wearing crow boots | -Boss helps by offering training opportunities to employees | -Crucial for employers to have an understanding of Aboriginal history and context | -Crucial for employers to have an understanding of Aboriginal history and context |
|         | -She is very protective of being able to be an Aboriginal woman in the workplace | -Has not been negatively challenged by employers | -If employers do not have an understanding of Aboriginal history and context it is important for | -If employers do not have an understanding of Aboriginal history and context it is important for |

- Trusting other employees is important
- Feeling like you can be yourself in the workplace is important
- Important to:
  - not feel judged in the workplace
  - feel a sense of comfort in the workplace
  - feel an like equal to other employees
  - Opportunities key to success
  - Job about helping people and achieving equity
- A healthy work environment is one where Aboriginal youth workers feel culturally safe
- Important that workplaces do not harm Aboriginal youth employees in their culture
- Important that Aboriginal youth employees are respected in the workplace
- Important that employees have a general understanding about Aboriginal people's lives
- The most important thing about work for Aboriginal youth is that they have a healthy work environment that is culturally safe
- Important that Aboriginal youth feel like their culture is being respected in the workplace
- Important Aboriginal youth get opportunities to continue their skill development
- Feels good working in a government position as an Aboriginal woman and not have to hide who she is or her Aboriginal culture
- Crucial for employers to have an understanding of Aboriginal history and context
- If employers do not have an understanding of Aboriginal history and context it is important for

- Boss encourages employees to visit Aboriginal communities and build relationships so they understand what their lives are like
- Raised by non-Aboriginal father so she experienced a large cultural disconnect
- Mom is a well known knowledge holder in her community
- Moved back to her community and now her son is learning from her mother and about their culture
- People cannot develop policies for Aboriginal people when they do not understand the realities of what Aboriginal people face, and when they have not visited an Aboriginal community
- Aboriginal health scholars are pushing for training service providers about Aboriginal history and their social positioning and biases
- Hopes Aboriginal people are part of society
- Hope Aboriginal people are not looked down upon
- Dreams that Aboriginal people are able to practice their culture
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1414</th>
<th>Workplace Identity</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
<th>Most important thing about work for youth</th>
<th>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|       | -Protective of being able to not hide who she is or her Aboriginal culture in the workplace | not have a general understanding about Aboriginal people's lives  
-Non-Aboriginal people treat everyone the same and that can be a barrier as it does not address inequities that occur in the workplace  
-Employers need to be aware that Aboriginal employees youth employees may need some guidance and help to succeed  
-Employers need to understand colonialism, social exclusion, racism, and self-determination are unique to Aboriginal people  
-Employers need to make the connection between health disparities, colonialism, social exclusion, racism, and self-determination  
-Examining dynamics and privilege in training at the department of health through how employees view the world based on their understanding and how they were raised  
-Some non-Aboriginal people are not receptive to learning about Aboriginal history or about how their social positioning and biases influence them | them to open to learning  
-People who work with Aboriginal people and who develop policies for Aboriginal people need to be reflective of their social positioning and biases | |
|       | -Identity is challenged if Aboriginal youth work in an environment where they do not feel culturally safe | -Coworkers are getting to know each other, so relationships are being established  
-Boss wants to build capacity for the employees so they can move up  
-Employers or bosses can mentor employees  
-Employers need to understand the realities of Aboriginal youth employees facing inequities in the workplace and that Aboriginal employees may be more sensitive to certain things in the workplace  
-Hopes everyone will be trained how their privilege and their how they were raised influences their view of the world, especially those who interact with Aboriginal people and those who develop policies for Aboriginal people  
-Deputy minister of health is supporting my MA research through a program to evaluate the receptivity of non-Aboriginal service providers undergoing training to be reflective of their social positioning and biases  
-Will examine how training non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal history, and social positioning and biases influence them will be most effective  
-Receptivity of training non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal history, and their social positioning and biases will be a key factor in the success of delivering this kind of training  
-Trying to develop more competency within the Aboriginal health department | -Hope Aboriginal people will be on par with the rest of Canadians  
-Dreams Aboriginal people are able to be respected for their culture  
-Dreams Aboriginal people are able to have the same work outcomes as everyone else  
-Dreams Aboriginal people are able to have the same opportunities as everyone else  
-Fears that in ten to fifteen years from now things will not have changed  
-Fears that in the future Aboriginal youth will not be working and she will continue to be asked to buy baby formula  
-Fears nothing will change in the future for Aboriginal employment  
-Hopes to see more intervention research that will deliver outcomes to address Aboriginal youth employment issues | |
| Future | -Working with employees who come from a different background means you need to take extra steps to get comfortable working with them | | | |

Future - Working with employees who come from a different background means you need to take extra steps to get comfortable working with them

-Identity is challenged if Aboriginal youth work in an environment where they do not feel culturally safe

-Coworkers are getting to know each other, so relationships are being established

-Boss wants to build capacity for the employees so they can move up

-Employers or bosses can mentor employees

-Employers need to understand the realities of Aboriginal youth employees facing inequities in the workplace and that Aboriginal employees may be more sensitive to certain things in the workplace

-Hopes everyone will be trained how their privilege and their how they were raised influences their view of the world, especially those who interact with Aboriginal people and those who develop policies for Aboriginal people

-Deputy minister of health is supporting my MA research through a program to evaluate the receptivity of non-Aboriginal service providers undergoing training to be reflective of their social positioning and biases

-Will examine how training non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal history, and social positioning and biases influence them will be most effective

-Receptivity of training non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal history, and their social positioning and biases will be a key factor in the success of delivering this kind of training

-Trying to develop more competency within the Aboriginal health department

-Hope Aboriginal people will be on par with the rest of Canadians

-Dreams Aboriginal people are able to be respected for their culture

-Dreams Aboriginal people are able to have the same work outcomes as everyone else

-Dreams Aboriginal people are able to have the same opportunities as everyone else

-Fears that in ten to fifteen years from now things will not have changed

-Fears that in the future Aboriginal youth will not be working and she will continue to be asked to buy baby formula

-Fears nothing will change in the future for Aboriginal employment

-Hopes to see more intervention research that will deliver outcomes to address Aboriginal youth employment issues
help/challenge success heading for the future. She changed the wording of one point from “Deputy minister of health is putting together a program to evaluate the receptivity of non-Aboriginal service providers undergoing training to be reflective of their social position and biases” to “Deputy minister of health is supporting my MA research through a program to evaluate the receptivity of non-Aboriginal service providers undergoing training to be reflective of their social position and biases” She explained that she wanted to be certain people understood that the deputy minister was creating the opportunity for her to conduct her research as follow-up from her graduate research and that this program was not just a coincidence. Additionally, she wanted to demonstrate how non-Aboriginal leaders are taking initiative and building relationships with Aboriginal peoples to assess current deficits in programs and practices. These changes were noted in Figure 18 and are indicated by the italicised text.

**Final core messages and themes.** The core messages and themes did not change after participant 1414 reviewed her story maps. The key narratives she discussed included the importance of integrating Aboriginal cultural identity in the workplace, and the influence her family and upbringing had on her cultural identity. Another major theme was the importance of mentors in successful employment outcome. She explained that Aboriginal mentors in the workplace help youth find their passion and guide them on a path that leads to a career. Furthermore, a positive workplace mentor supports youth employees by creating capacity for career advancement through training. Additionally, participant 1414 shared mainstream employers could create positive work environments for Aboriginal youth employees by mandating training so non-Aboriginal staff understand their position of privilege and how it influences their perspective. Similarly, she stated that mainstream employers and employees need to undergo training to understand the impact of colonialism, social exclusion, racism, and self-determination on Aboriginal people in order to make workplaces more positive.
environments for Aboriginal youth employees.

**Youth employment success.** Throughout the course of participant 1414’s interview she spoke at length about the keys to her employment success. While she did not have a lot of employment experience, she reported all of her employment experience was positive. She explained the reason all her employment experience was positive was a direct result of her interpersonal relationships with employers and coworkers as she felt more like a family member than just an employee. As a result of these positive relationships she considered one of her former employers, who aided in her success in that position, to be a mentor. This mentor helped her in her educational achievements, helped her find her passion, and helped her gain successful employment in her current position. Her mentor even aided her in her career development, as she has never had to apply for any of the jobs she has had; she has been targeted and sought out for all her jobs as a result of the mentorship she received. She explained that mentors in the workplace are invaluable for Aboriginal youth employees as they provide employees with support, encouragement, and avenues for growth in their employment skills. In all of her employment experiences she has either worked for Aboriginal employers, or for mainstream employers but in Aboriginal divisions. She explained that even her mainstream employers had been supportive by encouraging their Aboriginal employees to participate in cultural activities in the workplace, placing Aboriginal employees in executive decision making roles, and encouraging mainstream employees to undergo training to become more aware of Aboriginal history, culture, and issues as well as understanding their own biases and privilege.

For example, participant 1414 stated that she found her current job through her mentor, as her mentor encouraged her to pursue graduate studies in the area of traditional healing in Aboriginal health. The deputy minister of health read her report and subsequently created a division of Aboriginal health and invited her to come work in this new division to collaborate on
issues of cultural safety:

…I’m checking my email and there’s this email from the deputy minister, and she’s like, I read your paper, umm, I’d really like to talk to you, maybe give you a summer job…And basically just sort of wrote a couple reports around traditional healing…and umm, cultural safety…And umm, sort of we started talking about my master’s and umm, how I would like to umm, collaborate with her and do something about the department of health…So it just sort of kept snowballing to the point where umm, I guess last year they started working towards creating this division…and then I get an email from her out of the blue and she offered me an amazing job!…So yeah. I guess just basically through just meeting one amazing mentor in university, it just completely changed my life (participant 1414, p. 6).

She also explained her boss aids in the employees’ success by creating capacity for the employees that allows them to develop more skills through engaging in additional training. This is important for employees as it gives them the skills to apply for job promotions within the organization, which could result in increased pay and job satisfaction. For example, participant 1414 stated her boss creates opportunities for the employees to be promoted within the organization through their titles and training:

I have a really great boss too. She’s, she’s pretty amazing. And one thing that she tries to do with her positions umm, for instance there’s umm, an admin position. And so in, in this admin position umm, we have an Aboriginal person, and what she wants to try to do with this position is also incorporate opportunities to build her capacity…in other ways like…She’s called sort of, it’s like research specialist admin or something…So she kind of, she wants to give her more of a title but also…she
does want to, umm offer her more training opportunities…[to] build capacity through training (participant 1414, p. 5).

In another example, participant 1414 stated that it is important that her workplaces are positive, and she knows she will be treated like an equal creates positive workplaces:

…and umm, what, what works for me in, in the work environment. And I guess, I guess just the trusting relationship with people, feeling like I can be who I am…feeling like I’m not being judged…and that I’m sort of like an equal sort of playing field with everyone (participant 1414, p. 3).

Participant 1414 also discussed how mainstream employers can help Aboriginal youth succeed in the workplace by educating themselves in the realities Aboriginal peoples face and how Aboriginal youth employees may be more sensitive to certain things in the workplace than non-Aboriginal employees. Also, when mainstream employers are able to understand issues Aboriginal peoples face, they are better equipped to offer Aboriginal youth guidance to help them succeed. For example, she stated that Aboriginal youth would be more likely to succeed in the workplace if employers and coworkers understood the unique challenges Aboriginal communities face, and the history of colonialism to make the system of work less hostile:

…I think the first thing would be understanding just the realities of Aboriginal people to begin with…I think if they have an understanding of you know the contexts, umm, and the challenges…and just basically like, a general history…of what Aboriginal people have experienced. I think that would be umm, a big help (participant 1414, p. 5).

Similarly, while participant 1414 had only worked in environments that were supportive of
her cultural identity, she knows this is not the case for all Aboriginal youth employees. This is problematic as safe cultural expression in the workplace makes Aboriginal employees feel respected so they are more likely to stay in the workplace. For example, she stated that only when Aboriginal youth’s culture is respected in the workplace will they be able to have the same employment success as their non-Aboriginal peers: “…I mean my dream is that Aboriginal people are able to practice their culture…umm, be respected for practicing their culture…umm, and to be able to have the same work outcomes as everyone else…And opportunities as everyone else” (participant 1414, p. 11).

She explained that one of the key factors to her employment success in her current workplace is the fact that her mainstream employer is open to using participant 1414’s talents to improve training of non-Aboriginal employees in Aboriginal issues and history. The Aboriginal health department was created after participant 1414 collaborated with the deputy minister of health to address a need. For example, participant 1414 stated that now that she is a permanent employee, she is conducting research within the department of health assessing how non-Aboriginal people can improve their interactions with both Aboriginal clients and Aboriginal coworkers:

So people can make the connections between health disparities and colonialism…and social exclusion and racism and self-determination and all these things that are unique to Aboriginal people…And also looking at how we construct the world based on our own understanding and how we were raised…and looking at how our dynamics and privilege…The ultimate goal is to train everyone in the department of health. And I mean…everyone needs this sort of certain training (participant 1414, p. 9).
Finally, she feels like all people who are employed by the government would benefit from undergoing training like the one being offered in her workplace. However, she believes at a bare minimum training in Aboriginal history and culture needs to be mandatory in workplaces where the employees interact with Aboriginal peoples and communities. This would improve system of work for Aboriginal youth employees. For example, she stated that if employees do not participate in training programs to understand Aboriginal context and issues they will harm Aboriginal people and communities by developing inappropriate policies:

And so hopefully, eventually in my lifetime, it might be something that sort of throughout all the departments in government…but yeah basically the whole idea is that we will be training umm, service providers, anyone who interacts with Aboriginal people, umm, and anyone who develops policies for Aboriginal people…you need to understand these things because how can you develop policies when you have no understanding of the realities of what Aboriginal face?…How can you develop policies when you’ve never even visited an Aboriginal community?…So it’s, so again like, it’s just around the understanding and the training that, you need to nn, you need to know history, you need to be reflective of your social positioning in your own biases… (participant 1414, p. 9).

**Youth employment barriers.** Participant 1414 also spoke about the barriers Aboriginal youth face in trying to find successful employment. She openly shared that none of her employers had negatively challenged her employment success and only positively challenged her by pushing her outside of comfort zone to develop and progress. However, she spoke about the barriers that many Aboriginal youth encounter in regards to finding and maintaining employment. She also explained mainstream employers do not address the inequities that occur in the workplace. For example, she stated that many non-Aboriginal employers are too focused
on equity, which does not address issues that are unique to Aboriginal employees: “Like, Canadians are very much about umm, like, treating everyone the same, right?…Like we treat everyone the same…And so in many ways umm, I guess that can be barrier?…Umm, it’s not really addressing the inequities that are really occurring” (participant 1414, p. 9).

Participant 1414 also explained that many Aboriginal youth are unable to find employment. This is detrimental to an Aboriginal youth’s overall wellbeing including mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional health. It also puts a strain on their families as they struggle to provide the basic necessities of life, such as shelter and food. For example, she stated that she was approached by an Aboriginal youth in the grocery store as he was unable to buy formula for his baby and she fears the employment situation for Aboriginal youth will not improve:

…I was at the grocery store the other day, and umm, there was like, this young Aboriginal boy. He was probably like twenty or something, and he’s like, he asked me to buy him some baby formula for his baby!…I’m thinking about people like him, and why isn’t he working?…Why doesn’t he have money to pay for his you know, baby formula?…I want to understand why he’s not doing, he’s not there, working…And I want him to be able to afford formula…and food for his family…Like, I want him to be a part of society…and umm, yeah. Not to be looked down upon (participant 1414, p. 10-11).

Finally, participant 1414 emphasized the importance of developing relationships with coworkers as it allows employees to trust each other. She explained trust and a positive work environment was difficult to establish in her current workplace. Part of this was due to the fact that she was not working with Aboriginal employees who understood her cultural perspectives, but also because the employees started working in different offices and they were not able to
establish relationships with other. For example, she stated that her coworkers all recently started working in the same location so they are just starting to establish interpersonal relationships and creating a trusting work environment:

…the division only was created in June…It’s brand new, and uh there’s a issue of space in, with the department of health, and so we’re kind of all over the place and just in the end of December we all got moved onto one floor…So we’re all together…So we’re all kind of trying to get to know each other, and yeah. And so umm, now that we’re together and it’s been like a whole month, it’s definitely feeling more umm, like comfortable around, around everyone…And those relationships are being built (participant 1414, p. 4).

Cultural identity. The final theme participant 1414 discussed was the importance of being able to integrate and express her cultural identity in the workplace. For her, cultural identity was so intertwined in all aspects of her life that it would be unforeseeable to work for an employer who was not supportive of her expressing her culture in the workplace. In her current workplace, she likes to wear traditional clothing, saying traditional prayers to open and close meetings, and she is able to meet with Elders. For example, she stated it is important for Aboriginal youth employees to work for an employer who respects their culture and who understands Aboriginal history and culture in order for youth to succeed in the workplace:

…I think like a, a healthy environment is very important, and I guess healthy in the sense that umm, Aboriginal workers or youth feel that they are culturally safe…That there’s no harm to them in their culture, that they’re being respected, and umm, again just that people have a general understanding and sense of umm, the context of Aboriginal people’s lives…And so if I guess I’m just thinking if there’s an
Aboriginal youth in a work environment, where they don’t feel culturally safe…umm, I mean that just comes down to the root of their identity, and it just, it, there’s just so much wrapped up in that…(participant 1414, p. 8).

In another example, participant 1414 stated that it is important for her to work for employers in the future who will allow her to express her culture in the workplace as she does not want to ever have to hide her identity in the workplace:

I go into work and I’m wearing like, my umm, my they’re called umm, crow boots, so it’s all like, they’re hide beaded boots…Like, I wear them to work, you know, proud, absolutely…It definitively feels good knowing I can go into the government as an Aboriginal woman and not feel like I have to have hide who I am or my culture…And if anything, like I’ll be very protective of you know, keeping that element in the workplace (participant 1414, p. 12).

Participant 1414 also shared that her workplace allows her to access her traditions and connect with the members of her community, as those are the people she works with. For example, she stated that when she started working in the area of Aboriginal health, she knew it was important for her to work for her own community:

And, and uh so to be back here where I’m working directly with Dene people…umm, is so fulfilling and rewarding…And so when I was doing this work, I felt like, Yellowknife started tugging at my heartstrings, and I’m like ‘Oh, I don’t know if I’m ready to go back, I’m not sure,’ and umm, moving back was the best decision I ever made… (participant 1414, p. 8).

She explained that in her workplace culture is inseparable from her work as she is working
with Aboriginal people. Participant 1414 also discussed the reason her workplace was created was to help integrate cultural traditions into the healthcare system. For example, she stated there is a council of Elders on staff in her workplace who are there to ensure the employees are working in a way that adheres to traditional protocols, as well as to offer advice and support to the Aboriginal employees:

Culture plays an important fact, or is a, yeah. It’s an important piece of umm, Aboriginal health and wellness…And another thing that we’re doing is umm, at the, the, at the hospital they have an Elder’s council…And so they sort of advise like, things that happen in the hospital around protocols with umm, smudging, and ceremonies and stuff…And so we sort of realize that in our work we need to have Elders advise us in our work…And, so we recently umm, met with the Elder’s council and developed a new terms of reference for them to act as our umm, advisors for our work…Like anything around traditional healing, protocols, umm, they’re kind of a watchdog on our work I guess. Making sure that we’re doing things and are in the proper way…It’s a critical, critical piece (participant 1414, p. 11).

Finally, she discussed that in her workplace cultural practices are integrated into all aspects of their work. For example, she stated that opening and closing prayers are said at meetings, which makes the workplace a positive environment:

In our division whenever we have any umm, meeting or anything related to Aboriginal health specifically, we always start with like, an opening prayer and we’ll end with a closing prayer…And so those sort of practices are being dealt within the government and our division completely umm, everyone really respects that… (participant 1414, p. 11).
Participant 1357

**Character Sketch.** Participant 1357 was a male in his late-twenties at the time of the interview. When we first met he seemed a little nervous and shared that he had not participated in a research project before. To help establish rapport, I introduced myself and explained my background prior to introducing the consent from and beginning the interview. Participant 1357 reciprocated by introducing himself, and he appeared to physically relax more. During the interview, participant 1357 shared that he was in the process of completing trade school in order to become a steamfitter. While completing his training, he had been doing work in his trade. He was very honest in explaining that he only entered the trade under the advisement of his father who is also a steamfitter. Furthermore, participant 1357 was open in sharing that he was unaware of the challenges of in working in this trade or even what the work really entailed before he entered the steam fitting trade. He also shared some of his personal struggles in finding successful employment including relocating to the GTA and overcoming an addiction.

**Story map.** The initial story map (see Figure 19) was constructed during the analysis phase of this interview (See Chapter Three for a detailed explanation of the process). Upon completion of the story map I identified one core message and two themes from the map and interview narrative. The initial core message for participant 1357 was **Youth employment barriers.** The themes were **Absence of culture,** and **Employment outcomes.**
Figure 19. Participant 1357 initial/final story map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Employer help/challenge success</th>
<th>Most important thing about work for youth employment</th>
<th>Hopes, dreams, and fears for the future of youth employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Did not know what working as a steamfitter would be like when signed up for it</td>
<td>-Working in the trades as a steamfitter there is not always work</td>
<td>-Was given a chance</td>
<td>-Was not raised in a reserve community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Dad encouraged him to become a steamfitter</td>
<td>-If needed that there is not always work in the steamfitter trade, would not have entered this trade</td>
<td>-Took a chance on this career path and was given a chance</td>
<td>-Was raised in Timmins around Native and French people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Did not know what steamfitters did when applied to the trade</td>
<td>-Working as a steamfitter pays well when there is work</td>
<td>-Was difficult to network to find job opportunities at first</td>
<td>-Experienced racism as a child and learned to deal with it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Found out what dad did when became a steamfitter like dad</td>
<td>-Hard to move up financially working as a steamfitter</td>
<td>-Worked with dad on jobsites for a year</td>
<td>-Brother hasn't drank in 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-When used drugs was known to be good at his trade</td>
<td>-New to working as a steamfitter, so still learning to plan ahead financially</td>
<td>-Was offered a job and had to work without his dad</td>
<td>-Brother hasn't drank in 3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Older trade worker said he can see the difference in the him</td>
<td>-Dad works as a steamfitter and is proficient in his work so he has several jobs lined up at a time</td>
<td>-Felt off not working with his dad</td>
<td>-Sister hasn't drank in 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-If he knew what steamfitting involved he would have had second thoughts about entering this trade</td>
<td>-Does things the way dad tells him regarding steamfitting because dad is a proficient steamfitter</td>
<td>-Did not feel ready to work without dad at first</td>
<td>-Mom was on welfare before she went back to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Some older steamfitters are racist towards other</td>
<td>-Does not doubt what dad says about steamfitting because dad is a proficient steamfitter</td>
<td>-When using drugs would not show up for work or would arrive late, but when he was on the job site he worked hard</td>
<td>-As a child, he was confused by his mom going back to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Some older steamfitters are racist towards other</td>
<td>-Works well with dad because dad is a proficient steamfitter</td>
<td>-Felt good to have older worker say that he is different</td>
<td>-Mom going back to school was admirable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-When unable to find work in his trade he had to go on unemployment insurance</td>
<td>-Does not let the fact that he is different from Native people in the GTA interfere with his work</td>
<td>-Has not started a new job site and not been able to do the work required</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Has never been hired or not hired because he is Native</td>
<td>-In the workplace people hang out in groups</td>
<td>-Experience is important for youth</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-In past had employer show him what they want done and he realizes he can do the task</td>
<td>-Working in the trade employers to have find work after the job is finished</td>
<td>-Everyone is good at something</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Took a long time to build up social network within the trade because was using drugs</td>
<td>-Working in the trade need to sell yourself to find the next job</td>
<td>-Networking helps him find jobs</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Was tarnishing his reputation when using drugs</td>
<td>-Working in the trade if other workers like you, they take you with them to the next job site</td>
<td>-Is still rebuilding his reputation by going to work everyday, on time to show people he has changed</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Went through a period where he could not get work because of his bad reputation</td>
<td>-Proud of what he has accomplished as a steamfitter</td>
<td>-Aboriginal Affairs pays for his education</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Did not care if people say racist things about him because he works hard and earns his pay</td>
<td>-Working as a steamfitter is hard</td>
<td>-You are never too old to go back to school</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-People notice he works hard so he gets work</td>
<td>-Need to have a thick skin to work as a steamfitter</td>
<td>-Brother has a MA in fine arts and his artwork is in the AGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Difficult to rebuild reputation</td>
<td>-When gets to new job site is always able to do what they want him to do</td>
<td>-Social support is important</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Bad first impression still follows him sometimes</td>
<td>-Always feels nervous the day before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Workplace experience is important</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Experienced racism as a child and learned to deal with it</td>
<td>-Questions if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-When Native people see each other walking on the street they acknowledge each other</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Probably has a better job than people who make racist comments</td>
<td>-Native people know when other people are Native</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Probably drinks less than people who make racist comments</td>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Native people in the GTA are different from Native people in Northern Ontario</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-He is the only one in his family who drinks and he does not get drunk</td>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-A lot of the Native people in the GTA are from reserves in Southern Ontario</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Negative stereotypes of Aboriginal youth are disgusting</td>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Native people in the GTA have different personalities from Native people in Northern Ontario</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Sees people negatively stereotyping Aboriginal youth</td>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Native people in the GTA can tell he is from somewhere different</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Probably has a better job than people who make racist comments</td>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Native people in the GTA know he is not from a reserve in Southern Ontario</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Does not let the fact that he is different from Native people in the GTA bother him</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Always feels nervous the day before starting work at a new job site</td>
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<td>-Questions if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
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<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Mom is a drug and alcohol counsellor</td>
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<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Negative stereotypes of Aboriginal youth are disgusting</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Sees people negatively stereotyping Aboriginal youth all the time</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-There are some Aboriginal youth who fall into the negative stereotypes in Toronto</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-People believe he gets tax free cheques and he thinks that’s funny</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Mistakes if he is capable of doing what is required before starting work at a new job site</td>
<td>-Shows people that his psyche is the same as non-</td>
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</table>
ABORIGINAL CULTURAL IDENTITY AND EMPLOYMENT

|Future| -Not trying to be as good at steamfitting as dad, just wants to be as good as he can be | -Not trying to be as good at steamfitting as dad, just wants to be as good as he can be | -Older trade worker tells other that he has changed for the better and vouches for him because he knows he is trying | -Older trade worker tells other that he has changed for the better and vouches for him because he knows he is trying |
| | -Because dad is a proficient steamfitter, would be happy to be half as good as dad is | -Because dad is a proficient steamfitter, would be happy to be half as good as dad is | -Is still rebuilding his reputation | -Is still rebuilding his reputation |
| | -Has to overcome negative stereotypes to be given opportunities, to network, and to gain work experience | -Has to overcome negative stereotypes to be given opportunities, to network, and to gain work experience | -Most common stereotype he hears is that he gets tax free cheques | -Most common stereotype he hears is that he gets tax free cheques |
| | -Not using his status card makes him more like non-Aboriginals | -Not using his status card makes him more like non-Aboriginals | -Does not need financial support from Aboriginal Affairs to pay taxes | -Does not need financial support from Aboriginal Affairs to pay taxes |
| | -Is trying to show he is independent by not using his status card | -Is trying to show he is independent by not using his status card | -Is trying to show to him is not the negative stereotypes by not using his status card | -Is trying to show to him is not the negative stereotypes by not using his status card |
| | -Is still trying to be a steamfitter forever | -Is still trying to be a steamfitter forever | -Fights against negative stereotypes | -Fights against negative stereotypes |
| | -Enjoy working as a steamfitter and is good at his job | -Enjoy working as a steamfitter and is good at his job | -Does not know if steamfitting a good career choice because it has the highest divorce rate of all the trades because they have to travel for work | -Does not know if steamfitting a good career choice because it has the highest divorce rate of all the trades because they have to travel for work |
| | -Most steamfitters he knows are unhappy and it makes it difficult to work with them | -Most steamfitters he knows are unhappy and it makes it difficult to work with them | -Both his parents are Native and both sets of his grandparents are Native | -Both his parents are Native and both sets of his grandparents are Native |
| | -Aboriginal culture present in the workplace through working with other Native people | -Aboriginal culture present in the workplace through working with other Native people | -Proud of who he is | -Proud of who he is |
| | -Need to be able to deal with racism when working in trades | -Need to be able to deal with racism when working in trades | -Some older steamfitters mumble racist remarks towards him | -Some older steamfitters mumble racist remarks towards him |
| | -Has no say in who will work with | -Has no say in who will work with | -Deals with racist comments by minding his own business | -Deals with racist comments by minding his own business |
| | -When a company calls the trade local office looking for an employee, the local will send the person at the top of the unemployment list | -When a company calls the trade local office looking for an employee, the local will send the person at the top of the unemployment list | -Has no privacy | -Has no privacy |
| | -Sometimes gets work when a company calls the trade local office | -Sometimes gets work when a company calls the trade local office | -Does not like working for people he doesn't know | -Does not like working for people he doesn't know |
| | -Can be risky working for someone he does not know | -Can be risky working for someone he does not know | -Sometimes employers ask if he can do something specific and he is not sure what the employer is talking about | -Sometimes employers ask if he can do something specific and he is not sure what the employer is talking about |
| | -Is an apprentice so does not always understand the terminology employers use | -Is an apprentice so does not always understand the terminology employers use | -Employees have called managers when he has tried to use his status card | -Employees have called managers when he has tried to use his status card |
| | -Has not saw or worked with some people since stopped using drugs to show how he has changed | -Has not saw or worked with some people since stopped using drugs to show how he has changed | -Has been prohibited from using his status card | -Has been prohibited from using his status card |
| | -Racism does not bother him | -Racism does not bother him | -Employees have called managers when he has tried to use his status card | -Employees have called managers when he has tried to use his status card |
| | -People say racist things to him | -People say racist things to him | -Can be risky working for someone he does not know | -Can be risky working for someone he does not know |
| | -People have said that he is on welfare and always drinking | -People have said that he is on welfare and always drinking | -Sometimes employers ask if he can do something specific and he is not sure what the employer is talking about | -Sometimes employers ask if he can do something specific and he is not sure what the employer is talking about |
| | -Steamfitters have the highest divorce rate of all the trades because they have to travel for work | -Steamfitters have the highest divorce rate of all the trades because they have to travel for work | -A lot of the divorced steamfitters pay child support, drink a lot, and lose their driver’s licences | -A lot of the divorced steamfitters pay child support, drink a lot, and lose their driver’s licences |
| | -A lot of the divorced steamfitters have their paycheques cut in half because of the divorce (e.g., child support) | -A lot of the divorced steamfitters have their paycheques cut in half because of the divorce (e.g., child support) | -Often gets work when a company calls the trade local office | -Often gets work when a company calls the trade local office |
| | -Aboriginal people an | -Aboriginal people an | -Would be well off financially if he got tax free cheques | -Would be well off financially if he got tax free cheques |
| | -Wishes white people would just be content being white and stop trying to get status cards | -Wishes white people would just be content being white and stop trying to get status cards | -Only gets a different paycheque when working on a reserve community | -Only gets a different paycheque when working on a reserve community |
| | -Wishes he was more involved in Aboriginal culture | -Wishes he was more involved in Aboriginal culture | -A lot of Aboriginal youth do not use their status cards | -A lot of Aboriginal youth do not use their status cards |
| | -Brother speaks Cree, goes to powwows and is involved in Aboriginal culture by drumming and singing | -Brother speaks Cree, goes to powwows and is involved in Aboriginal culture by drumming and singing | -Brother lives in a reserve community in Northern Ontario | -Brother lives in a reserve community in Northern Ontario |
| | -Knows where to go to connect to the Aboriginal community in Toronto, but does not go | -Knows where to go to connect to the Aboriginal community in Toronto, but does not go | -Meets people who say they are 1/8 or 1/16 or 1/4, or 1/2 Native | -Meets people who say they are 1/8 or 1/16 or 1/4, or 1/2 Native |
| | -Wishes white people would just be content being white and stop trying to get status cards | -Wishes white people would just be content being white and stop trying to get status cards | -Wishes white people would just be content being white and stop trying to get status cards | -Wishes white people would just be content being white and stop trying to get status cards |
| | -Brother speaks Cree, goes to powwows and is involved in Aboriginal culture by drumming and singing | -Brother speaks Cree, goes to powwows and is involved in Aboriginal culture by drumming and singing | -Hopes people will stop stereotyping Aboriginal youth | -Hopes people will stop stereotyping Aboriginal youth |
| | -Hopes people will stop believing Aboriginal youth drink all the time | -Hopes people will stop believing Aboriginal youth drink all the time | -Hopes people will stop believing Aboriginal youth drink all the time | -Hopes people will stop believing Aboriginal youth drink all the time |
| | -Worries that Aboriginal status cards will become obsolete | -Worries that Aboriginal status cards will become obsolete | -Worries that Aboriginal status cards will become obsolete | -Worries that Aboriginal status cards will become obsolete |
| | -Dreams that people will stop believing the negative stereotypes of Aboriginal youth | -Dreams that people will stop believing the negative stereotypes of Aboriginal youth | -Dreams that people will stop believing the negative stereotypes of Aboriginal youth | -Dreams that people will stop believing the negative stereotypes of Aboriginal youth |
| | -Hope people will stop stereotyping Aboriginal youth | -Hope people will stop stereotyping Aboriginal youth | -Worries that Aboriginal status cards will become obsolete | -Worries that Aboriginal status cards will become obsolete |
| | -Wishes white people would just be content being white and stop trying to get status cards | -Wishes white people would just be content being white and stop trying to get status cards | -Wishes white people would just be content being white and stop trying to get status cards | -Wishes white people would just be content being white and stop trying to get status cards |
Feedback from second interview and final story map. Upon completion of the analysis of participant 1357’s interview, I constructed his story map and identified the core message and themes. I then scheduled a follow-up interview with participant 1357 to review the findings with him. I provided participant 1357 with a copy of his story map and explained how I came to identify the core message and themes in his narrative. I asked him the following questions: “From your narratives in your interview I have constructed a story map. How does this map illustrate your views? What is missing from your story map? What would you like to add? Do you have anything else to say about your story map? In response to the questions, participant 1357 explained that he shared everything about his work experiences during our initial interview. We reviewed the different areas of the story map, and participant 1357 expressed that the information in the story map accurately reflected his experience and he expressed his thanks for allowing his narrative to be shared and for providing him with the opportunity to reflect upon and explore his own experiences and influences. He did not want to add or change anything in his story map and explained that he felt his story map was full as it addressed his past, present, and future workplace narratives. As a result, no changes were made to his initial story map.

Final core messages and themes. The core messages and themes did not change after participant 1357 reviewed his story maps. The key narratives participant 1357 discussed included the importance of employers taking chances on youth employees by providing youth with employment opportunities. He also mentioned the financial instability and challenges he faces as result of not always having worked lined up after one job is completed. As participant 1357 works for a mainstream organization, he also spoke about the impact of racism and cultural oppression he encounters in the workplace. Similarly, he shared that his personal experiences of oppression have skewed his perception of discrimination in the workplace and how he address racism in both his personal and professional life.
Youth employment barriers. Participant 1357 spoke throughout the interview about the barriers Aboriginal youth encounter in finding and maintaining employment. He discussed how his mother struggled to provide for her children as she did not complete her secondary education and how many Aboriginal youth who do not complete secondary school have significantly less employment opportunities than those with secondary education. This places entire families in financially difficult situations where they are not able to comfortably provide basic necessities. Lack of employment is also damaging to Aboriginal youths’ self-esteem and mental health.

For example, participant 1357 stated that his mother did not complete secondary school until she was in her forties, which meant that she was unable to find meaningful employment and depended on welfare to provide for her family:

My mom went back to school when she was forty-something. But she was, she was on, she was on welfare for a long time. I remember when I was a child and I often, I didn’t understand it. I was, she just started going to school…Yeah and then ‘cause, I was confused. I was like why? She’s old, not old, but compared me…who was a child (participant 1357, p. 18).

Similarly, participant 1357 explained that his mother is a role model for both positive work outcomes and educational obtainment. Her positive influence is part of the reason he completed secondary school and decided to pursue further training as a steamfitter. While he is not entirely certain that he will work as a steamfitter for his entire career, he may use his mother’s example to get an education in a different field later in life. For example, he stated that now that he is older, he appreciates his mother’s efforts to return to school because she wanted to change her and her family’s reality, and she was able to get a career, which is something he admires:
And I was just confused by her going to school, and then I guess I remember like, when I was a child, the first day I’m like, ‘What are you doing mom?’ ‘I’m going to school.’ …Yeah and she just decided to get up and do something, you know?…I thought that was very, you know, something to, something to admire…for the time, you know? …Like, I still do to this day. You’re never too old, right?…It’s a beautiful thing actually…Maybe when I’m forty I’ll do the same (participant 1357, p. 19).

Participant 1357 shared his employment experience was limited to working as a steamfitter apprentice within a mainstream organization. He explained that despite being a member of trade union that he sometimes struggles to find work. Participant 1357 shared that as an apprentice he does not have a lot of seniority and the way the trade works, members with the most seniority tend to get employment first. Additionally he stated the union keeps a list of who is unemployed so when an external company is looking for a steamfitter, the person who has been unemployed the longest is sent to the job “…you’ll get hired through the hall. Like a, the company will call the hall…and they have a list of people that are unemployed, right? … and then they go up top of the list…and send them out, right?” (participant 1357, p. 8). As a result he explained that he has struggled to manage his finances, “It's hard to move up, you know. Like, uh, financially…You know, you gotta think ahead, and I'm just like kind of learning the ropes with that [financial planning]” (participant 1357, p. 3). Similarly, he stated that Aboriginal youth in general struggle to find and maintain successful employment as many employers do not provide youth an opportunity to gain employment experience, “Yeah, experience is very important and just, giving a chance for youth…Opportunity to do something [work]…Seeing everybody’s going to be good at something, right?…Opportunity’s a big one” (participant 1357, p. 10).
Another barrier participant 1357 encountered to securing work in his trade was related to his personal struggle with addiction. He explained that in his trade it is common to get jobs via networking as senior employees will be scouted out for work and they will choose other workers to bring with them to new jobsites. When participant 1357 first started working as an apprentice in the steam fitting trade he shared that he was struggling with a drug addiction. As a result, he struggled to find employment opportunities because he would not go to jobsites or arrive late. For example, he stated his poor attendance damaged his reputation despite being good at his job, and even now he is struggling to rebuild his reputation:

‘Cause I was like in the midst of like, a total drug frenzy I guess…And I wasn’t really, necessarily making a good name for myself. I was actually tarnishing my reputation…And it took me awhile to kind of snap out of it…And I, that’s why there was a certain point in my apprenticeship where I couldn’t find a job because I had a reputation. A bad reputation…For like, not showing up, being late…or but I, when I was there I, I busted my ass, right?…I was always known to be good at, when I’m there…To be, to, yeah to be a, uh, a, a good worker, I guess. And it took me, I’m still rebuilding my, my reputation…as we speak, you know? Like, umm, a long time, you know, showing up everyday…and showing that, you know, I’m not that person anymore….You know what I mean? So, it’s kind of hard, [to find work] it was, still kind of hard sometimes [to find work] (participant 1357, p. 11).

Similarly, participant 1357 encountered barriers due to the fact that he is still undergoing training as steamfitter, so he is not qualified to do all the work in his trade. He shared that he often feels anxiety before starting a new jobsite as he questions whether he will be able to do the work the employer requires. He explained that he has always been able to do the work for the job, but that he is still learning so it is a concern. For example, he stated that when he gets to a
new jobsite he always realizes he can do the job required but that he does not always recognize the technical terms as he is still going to school:

‘Cause sometimes they’re [employers are] like ‘Oh, could you do that?’ and I always say ‘Yeah.’ It was just, it’s a job, right? It like, yeah I can do that. I’ve done this before. And I was just like, ‘I have no idea what the fuck they’re talking about.’ (laughs)...I’m like ‘Okay.’ And then they show me I’m like ‘Damn. I’ve don’t this before.’...it’s just, you know they put words, you know sometimes I don’t know the certain things are. I’m still an apprentice, right?...That’s why I’m going to school. So I know these terms (participant 1357, p. 9).

Finally, participant 1357 explained that his trade puts a strain on his personal and familial relationships. He shared how steamfitters have the highest divorce rate of all the trades as they have to travel to jobsites, so they spend a lot of time away from their homes. For example, he stated that this takes a toll on the people in the trade and that many people in his trade are unhappy, drink a lot, and many of those people lose their drivers licences:

Our, our, our trade has the highest divorce rate in all the trades...‘Cause we travel to work and we go where the money’s at...I mean, and that’s, you know divorced, and they’re all you know, paying I guess child support and then, you know, like, drinking lots...and like, losing their licence and having to rely on other people ‘cause they don’t have a licence (participant 1357, p. 16).

Participant 1357 shared that his future mental health in the steam fitting trade is not positive as it is likely he will end up divorced and unhappy like many members in his trade. He also expressed concern that he will continue to be financially unstable in the future, despite becoming a more senior trade member. For example, he stated that many divorced steamfitters
lose half of their paycheque in child support, so despite making good money, they are miserable and it is challenging to work with them:

> And you know, getting their cheques cut in half due to, you know [child support]…It’s just like, it’s just not a good look to look ahead…I can just see it in the whatever, they’re fucking miserable…it’s hard to work with people like that, you know?…Like, you don’t know when to fucking tell them to fucking smile or feel sorry f-feel sorry for them (participant 1357, p. 16-17).

**Absence of culture.** Another theme participant 1357 discussed was the absence of culture in all aspects of his life, including the workplace. He explained as a result of dealing with discrimination and oppression his entire life he has tried to distance himself from his identity as a Native person. He shared that he tries to break negative stereotypes that mainstream society believes about Aboriginal people such as, they rely on the government for financial support. For example, he stated that he tries to be like non-Aboriginal people by not taking advantage of financial support offered by Aboriginal Affairs to prove he can provide for himself:

> … I don’t know to say this properly. Umm, like everybody else…You know what I mean?…I just, you know I’ll pay my taxes I don’t need you know, financial help…from Aboriginal Affairs paid my schooling and that stuff, right?…I’m trying to like not be-exactly…It’s just I’m not trying to be those stereotypes, I guess, right?…Yeah. I actually am [fighting the stereotypes]. I don’t know if it’s right or wrong (participant 1357, p. 15).

He also explained that he has distanced himself from his identity as an Aboriginal person because of racist comments people have said to him when they found out he was Native. He finds the comments especially frustrating because most of the time they are made by people who
are less successful than he is. For example, he stated that people have commented that he
probably is on welfare and drinks, but he has a career to support himself and that none of family
members fall into that stereotype either:

I’ve been on I mean like, they’re just like ‘Oh, you’re probably on welfare and
always drinking.’ I’m like, ‘Dude, I probably have a better job than you do.’ …I’m
like ‘I probably drink less than you do.’ Like, I’m the only person in my family that
drinks. How about that? Like, and I don’t even get drunk…Like, my brother hasn’t
drank in ten years, my dad hasn’t drunken in three, my mom is a drug and alcohol
counsellor, my sister hasn’t drank in five (participant 1357, p. 13)

He also shared that part of the reason he has distanced himself from his Aboriginal identity
is because he has had to overcome stereotypes in order to find employment opportunities. He
explained it is especially difficult to find employment in Toronto because most of the employers
are non-Aboriginal. For example, he stated that because there are urban Aboriginal youth who
do fall into the negative stereotypes, he has to work harder to prove he does not fall into the
negative stereotypes in order to gain employment:

…and that’s what bothers me the most and it just like, sometimes it’s just like [the
stereotypes] you know?…Yeah. To make opportunities, right? …And network and
just like, just, you know, to gain experience all like what I just said. And not just
hope, like you know that’ll just the stereo-stereotypes will just like, just us, they’re
disgusting, you know?...I see it. I see it everywhere. And people like, you know?
Actually fall into stereotypes in, in this city. And, probably a lot of uh, cities around
Canada, right? So it’s just like hard. You know? (participant 1357, p. 13-14).

Additionally, participant 1357 tries to separate his identity as an Aboriginal person from
his work identity. This is because when his fellow steamfitters find out he is Aboriginal they make inappropriate comments. For example, he stated that other steamfitters make offensive comments and believe he does not have taxes deducted from his paycheques:

Well there are some [stereotypes] that are pretty humorous. It’s like, everybody takes like a tax free cheque everywhere I go…I think that’s funny. And like (laughs) I’d pretty re-I’d be pretty well off if I got tax-free cheques…I’m like, ‘Look. My paystub’s just the same as yours.’…I get the same [taxes] like, unless I work on a reserve or whatever, right? That’s different…But like, other than that my guess is that that’s one that’s just like, most common…And the most common idea was, it’s the one where they think I get tax free cheques (participant 1357, p. 14).

Finally, participant 1357 shared that his Aboriginal cultural identity has been largely and intentionally absent from his life as a way to cope with the discrimination he has encountered. However, he explained that his brother is connected to both the Aboriginal community and his cultural identity. He shared that he wishes he was more involved in his cultural identity, and that he knows where to access the urban community in Toronto, but that he still has not come to terms with the discrimination he has faced in his life. As a result, he is not ready to reconnect to his Aboriginal roots. For example, he stated his brother’s cultural identity is large part of his brother life, and he wishes he would get more involved in ceremonies:

…I honestly I’ve been, I, I wish I was more involved [in the Aboriginal community]…‘Cause my brother’s really involved…My brother’s, he speaks Cree…I, yeah. I wish I was more like him. More involved…And he goes to powwows…He drums, he sings, he part, he participants, like, he’s in there. You know what I mean? He’s in there with those people. You know? Like everywhere he
goes…I just wish I, I wish I was more involved to be honest…And I wish I would just stop saying it and do it, you know? Yeah (participant 1357, p. 20-21).

Employment outcomes. The final theme in participant 1357’s interview was the importance of mentors or social support to aid Aboriginal youth employees in succeeding in their workplaces. He explained that his father acted as his first mentor for his career as a steamfitter. For example, he stated that his father encouraged him to become a steamfitter and that his father helped him find jobs and they worked alongside each other at jobsites for the first two years of his apprenticeship:

…my dad just told me to check off steamfitter to the, our local constituent of welders and steamfitters and plumbers, they’re all part of the same local…And he was like, ‘Just check off steamfitter.’ I’m like, I have no idea what a steamfitter is. And I just checked it off (laughs)…It was difficult at first [to find employment] just, very difficult without my dad’s like, when my, with my first job…I, I worked with him [father] for my first day till I was, I don’t know, I was almost a second year then…And then I got offered another job (participant 1357, p. 10-11).

Participant 1357 also reports having another mentor in the workplace in addition to his father. This other mentor was a more experienced steamfitter who gave him a second chance after he stopped using drugs. This mentor recognized that participant 1357 had changed for the better and encouraged other steamfitters to hire him for their jobsites. For example, he stated that having this mentor speak highly of him was especially meaningful as the mentor only knew participant 1357 from jobsites and the mentor did not have to say positive things about him to help him find employment:

‘Cause some people, you know, certain reputation, like first impression…It follows
me and it’s just like, and I got, I got one friend. Okay, he’s an, he’s an older fellow. And he knew [about his addiction issue], right?…And he’s just like, he’s like ‘I can tell the difference.’ Right? That felt good, right?…And he’s like, and he’d always tell people he’s like, ‘You know, he’s not that person anymore.’…You know? It felt really good actually, you know?…For somebody like, I barely know, like I’ve never hung out with him…Outside of work…Outside of jobsites. {S}: Yeah. He’s like, six, sixty-seven years old. And he just, you know. He knows I’m trying (participant 1357, p. 11-12).

Finally, he stated that mentors are valuable for Aboriginal youth finding employment, as mentors often are willing to provide youth with an employment opportunity: “Experience is a big thing…Someone’s gotta give them a chance…I’ve been given a chance. I had no idea, when I had signed up for what I was signing up for” (participant 1357, p. 2-3).

Summary

Across participants, the core messages and themes identified across the individual interviews are representative of what the majority of these Aboriginal youth felt regarding the factors that can promote the success of Aboriginal youth in the workplace including the influence of cultural identity, the importance of social support to succeed in the workplace, and the influence of modifications and improvements employers can make to work environments to make them more welcoming for Aboriginal youth employees. These results and the interrelatedness of these themes are represented in figure 20.
It is important to note that an across participant analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis. These preliminary across participant findings are being done as part of the larger SSHRC project, however these three overarching themes will be discussed below in relation to the participants’ narratives.

**Cultural integration and cultural identity.**

Many of the participants who were successfully employed spoke about the presence of Aboriginal culture in all aspects of their life. The majority of these participants, discussed how cultural identity was intertwined in their work identity, and how their success in the workplace was directly linked to their ability to integrate their Aboriginal culture in the workplace, by stating, “And to provide that sense of identity [at work]…That will definitively, umm, that’ll help make the work more umm, successful I think” (participant 1515, p. 6). Other participants discussed the personal benefit they experienced thorough being able to participate in cultural activities in the workplace, stating, “…people smudge everyday there anyways. Umm, an like
we have like Elders come in sometimes…they’ll uh, run different workshops and stuff” (participant 1456, p. 11-12). Additionally, some youth expressed a desire to be able to engage in more culture sharing in the workplace, and that in the future integrating Aboriginal cultural identity in the workplace will be priority, stating:

> It definitively feels good knowing I can go into the government as an Aboriginal woman and not feel like I have to have hide who I am or my culture…And if anything, like I’ll be very protective of you know, keeping that element in the workplace (participant 1414, p. 12).

Some participants discussed how they would like to work in fields that will positively impact their communities, by stating, “I know that you can’t say that…some people that go to university that they have to go back and help their people… But it would be good that some of, or some of them did…that obviously will help” (participant 1445, p. 13). For many of the participants their culture is inexorably connected to identity, which was a factor not only in the desire to have Aboriginal culture more present in the workplace, but also those who worked for employers who permitted for the safe integration and expression of cultural identity in the workplace reported being more successfully employed and satisfied with their employment outcome, by stating, “…I mean when I was working at Native organizations like, there was like a sense of pride that I had working there” (participant 1330).

Many participants who experienced an absence or suppression of the cultural identity in the workplace expressed a desire to have a stronger connection to their Aboriginal cultural identities as they did not feel as connected to their culture as could be in the workplace, stating, “…I honestly I’ve been, I, I wish I was more involved [in the Aboriginal community]… And I wish I would just stop saying it and do it, you know?” (participant 1357, p. 20-21). Of those
participants who had worked for mainstream employers, they discussed the detrimental impact of working in environments where there was a void of culture, by stating:

I practice like, Native spirituality…and I find that it helps me keep a balance…And if, if one, if one aspect is, is not, you know, you're not up to par…for what your usual self is then you're not going to be balanced…if I don't take care of myself…then I'm not going to be able to go to work, I'm not go-I'm going to end up being late, uh, I'm going to end up umm, just not being an effective worker and uh, I, I found that when I worked at a Native organization, I'd be able to, to smudge…And it's im, it's, it's important for me to do that…(participant 1330, p. 12-13).

Participants who reported that they worked for mainstream employers shared it was more difficult to expressing their culture or cultural identity in the workplace, stating “…in the context of kind of a more mainstream, uh place…like as much as I always had these [cultural] activities and these things, it was always in the context of where we were other-ed (participant 1536, p. 1). Most participants shared their struggle in finding and maintaining success employment was in the context of mainstream workplaces and was directly connected to a lack of employer understanding of Aboriginal cultures and traditions, by stating:

The way main, the way mainstream culture seems to look at Aboriginal people, it’s like they’re never going to be anything but drunks, drug heads and like street rats. And umm, I think that sort of sometimes gets towards the employers…and they feel that way regardless of umm, what the employee is actually like (participant 1426, p. 6).
Social support and relationships.

The participants who found successful employment also explained how they found those jobs through personal connections, the importance of establishing social relationships with managers, supervisors, and coworkers, and where to seek employment opportunities, stating:

Uh, I guess it was just getting to know me over the eight months I volunteered there. Uh, yeah. I’d say so [offered job]. Because I volunteered there for about eight months and they knew I was fully competent…In terms of uh, that job position. Like I knew, I knew all my job details umm, like, like, uh, like basically umm, I knew how to do the, do the job before I actually got the job…Yeah…’cause I got used to it [the job] (participant 1456, p. 2).

The participants also reported that they were supported by their family, friends, and community, which inspired them and encouraged them to complete their education and pursue work opportunities, by stating:

I think it just instilled in my brother and I, like we had kind of my grandpa as like, a mentor when it came to a work ethic…That [education] was also kind of a non-negotiable in my family. Like we always knew that my brother and I would go to university…but she [grandmother] was umm, uh really into education and apparently that was like a really-and, and she’s also a residential school survivor…She never got her own chance for education…But for her kids, she was always so, so like, so really like, um pushed it. And was really valued it (participant 1536, p. 16-18).

The participants expressed that Aboriginal youth need to be provided with more
employment opportunities and those who found successful employment had mentors or other employers who provided them with job opportunities, stating, “And he [co-worker] knew [about his addiction]…And he’s just like, he’s like ‘I can tell the difference.’ Right? That felt good, right?…And he’s like, and he’d always tell people he’s like, ‘You know, he’s not that person anymore.’” (participant 1357, p. 11-12). Similarly, the participants explained the importance of employers acting as mentors for Aboriginal youth by providing training opportunities in order for youth to apply for promotions, by stating,

I have a really great boss too…And one thing that she tries to do with her positions umm, for instance there’s umm, an admin position…and what she wants to try to do with this position is also incorporate opportunities to build her capacity…she does want to, umm offer her more training opportunities…[to] build capacity through training (participant 1414, p.5)

Additionally, many participants explained relationships are important in the workplace and it is imperative that bosses and coworkers are easy to get along with, and make an effort to get to know their Aboriginal youth employees, stating, “…having like social events where people can connect with one another…And that way you can connect people across either uh, uh, cultural values…or just kind of opening that community of sharing (participant 1515, p. 8).

**Modifications and improvements employers can make to workplaces.**

Many participants expressed the importance of employers understanding that Aboriginal youth employees face different challenges than non-Aboriginal youth employees. These struggles are especially pronounced when mainstream employers hire Aboriginal youth. Additionally, the participants want employers to know ways they could change and things they should know in order to improve Aboriginal youth employment outcomes. The participants
explained how they want their employers, bosses, and/or supervisors to communicate workplace expectations and goals to the employees, by stating “...it’s like, if we’re all working towards a common goal, that’s awesome, but you also need to help people individually and make sure that they’re happy coming in” (participant 1515, p. 9). Several participants openly shared their experiences addressing racism in the workplace as well as how the racism they faced prevented them from gaining successful employment, stating, “people would say pretty offensive, pretty prejudice, racist things...in front of me thinking...there’s only white people in the room...I’ve only been at my job two months. And already, three people have already said really racist things in from of me” (participant 1536, p. 14). Some participants discussed key items they felt is important for employers to know, and how they would like employers to change in terms of their practices and interactions with Aboriginal youth, by normalizing mistakes, communicating workplace expectations and creating a fun work environment, by stating “...if somebody does make a mistake I think it should be a li-explained in the right, like, in the right way to, to not make the worker feel punished” (participant 1445, p. 12). Some of the areas specifically mentioned by the participants as ways employers can improve workplaces so they are more positive environments for Aboriginal youth employees included equity and integration and increased employment rates, stating, “[Important work] renews our culture...While maintaining an innovative way of like of making money” (participant 1448, p. 1). Furthermore, the participants shared they would appreciate being given an opportunity to advance within their workplaces by having mainstream employers take more chances by hiring Aboriginal youth, by stating, “I think that like (pause)...Umm, I guess the [employment] opportunity, opportunity to [gain] experience...like what they [employers], have trust in them” (participant 1312, p. 4). Finally, they also shared what they enjoyed about certain workplaces and expressed a desire to work for employers who emulate these ideals in the future, stating,
…that there’s an investment in what they’re doing for a greater good…And that they’re working towards a better picture, or something. Umm, like in their work…that can definitively, umm, give people a strong sense of, umm, loyalty to their position…Or to their employer (participant 1515, p. 5-6).
This study is important to further the understanding of the economic difficulty and poverty that is experienced by many Aboriginal youth. The United Nations Social Development Index, ranks the Canadian populace 8th in the world for economic and social success, while the Aboriginal population in Canada ranks 32nd (Cooke, Mitrou, Lawrence, Guimond & Beavon, 2007). Many Aboriginal communities experience difficulties with poor quality of health, food insecurities, limited access to social services, and financial instability due to lack of employment opportunities (Richmond & Ross, 2009). Mendelson (2006) reports a link between education and employment to poverty experienced by Aboriginal peoples. Many Aboriginal communities face a substantial educational disadvantage in comparison to non-Aboriginal people in Canada, which contributes to negative employment outcomes. Successful employment has been identified as a factor that helps overcome poverty on both an individual and community level (Brown & Fraehlic, 2012). However, the results from this study demonstrate that Aboriginal youth continue to face barriers to successful employment.

**Theoretical implications**

One of the key implications of this research is the importance of cultural identity in the workplace for Aboriginal youth. Research related to the field of Aboriginal career development should continue to examine ways to blend Aboriginal culture into mainstream workplaces. The participants in this study shared the different barriers they faced in a variety of workplace experiences and the barriers to finding successful employment. The findings of this study suggest that mainstream employers in particular could help youth by educating themselves in
Aboriginal history, traditions, cultures, and by learning about the unique struggles Aboriginal youth face in work environments. The youth shared many ways this could be addressed through policy and practice modifications that will be discussed below.

The ideas and suggestions provided in this study contribute to the growing field of Aboriginal career counselling by suggesting modifications to include indigenous worldviews and pedagogy. For example, it would be beneficial to educate career counsellors on the history of Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal youth unemployment rates and the number of Aboriginal people who are unable to work in a career that interests them as result of struggling to maintain employment that will adequately support basic life necessities. The results of this study demonstrate Aboriginal youth need their employers to acknowledge the strong connection between culture and identity, and permit for the safe expression of cultural identity in the workplace.

**Implications for practice**

Another implication of the study is that there is presently a disconnection between employments services geared towards Aboriginal youth and those who access services. Many Aboriginal youth experience underemployment. It was noted by participants in this study that there is a lack of employment opportunities in many Aboriginal communities. A lack of economic development in Aboriginal communities has been linked to poverty among Aboriginal families (Fraser, 2002). As a result, many participants reported leaving their communities to find employment opportunities (Ommer and team, 2007, White, et al., 2003), however these youth often experience challenges including not having family close by to offer social support, and the experience of culture shock from moving to a large urban area. There are many programs offered in Toronto that help youth upgrade their education, gain employment
credentials, or learn resume-writing skills. However, the participants explained that many youth who would benefit from these services are not utilizing them. They explained that many organizations that offer employment programs use social media for advertising, and the youth who move to Toronto from their communities do not have sufficient computer access. For example, it was noted that youth who have left their communities may be struggling with housing and would use free, time restricted library internet access to search for shelters and meal programs as opposed to employment skills services. It was suggested that these services could increase the visibility of their services by increasing advertising on the TTC, in shelters, and at Aboriginal organizations such as the Native Canadian Centre. Additionally, the youth suggested the different organizations that offer various employment services would benefit from communicating with each to help consolidate overlapping services. Similarly, the participants would like to see more screening of youth who are selected for the programs to ensure suitability in terms of expectations and outcomes, as in this study, the participants discussed that many Aboriginal youth are not accessing employment programs due to poor advertising of services and individuals not being the right fit for programs offered which results in early termination. The participants shared that Aboriginal youth who would benefit from these programs may not take advantage of them as a result of financial instability. For example, youth may not be able to afford their costs of living to take time off work to attend these workshops. As such, youth would benefit from receiving financial support while upgrading their employment skills, which would allow them to progress in their career.

A third implication of this study is related to the importance of education to aid in career success. The participants in this study identified education as a key barrier to employment. In fact, almost all of participants in this study spoke about the importance of completing secondary school and ideally a postsecondary education in order for Aboriginal youth to match non-
Aboriginal youth in terms of credentials when seeking employment opportunities. This finding is supported in the literature as Aboriginal peoples are often more disadvantaged in society than Caucasians (Linnehan, et al., 2006). However, the education system itself is challenging for many Aboriginal youth as it continues to be oppressive (Stewart, Reeves, & Beaulieu, 2014).

Statistics imply that approximately 36% of First Nations students complete secondary school, however 72% of their non-Aboriginal peers across Canada complete secondary school (Chiefs Assembly on Education, 2012). This sentiment was echoed by participants in this study as many shared they dropped out of high school or know someone who has. Furthermore, some participants spoke about challenges to obtaining their secondary education later in life after dropping out of high school. The education system in Canada prevents Aboriginal people from participating equally in education system by having non-Aboriginal people set the standards for education (Preston, Cottrell, Pelletier & Pearce, 2011; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003).

Furthermore, the present educational system does not support Aboriginal ways of knowing, damages Aboriginal cultural identity through the devaluation of Aboriginal culture, and contributes to tensions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students by placing Aboriginal students in an environment where they are subjected racism (Preston, et al., 2011; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). The youth expressed the importance modifying the educational system across Canada to ensure everyone is formally educated in Aboriginal history to help combat systemic barriers. Aboriginal youth participants also reported feeling disadvantaged when applying to jobs in comparison to their non-Aboriginal peers. Thus, until educational institutions become safe environments for Aboriginal youth, obtaining secondary and postsecondary education will remain challenging.

An additional implication of this study is related to youth employment experience within the Aboriginal community. Many Aboriginal youth expressed these experiences were positive as
the employers had an understanding of Aboriginal issues and culture, which is supported in the literature as fostering group membership (Campbell Clark, 2002; French, et al., 2013; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Jaret & Reitzes, 1999). Furthermore, the participants were encouraged to enhance their cultural identities by participating in cultural activities, which has been found in the literature to improve workplace satisfaction (Campbell Clark, 2002; Linnehan, et al., 2006; Thompson, 2012). However, not all Aboriginal youth may be able to find employment opportunities through an Aboriginal employer as there is an increasing shortage of local Aboriginal business owners (Brown, 2002). The research participants in this study acknowledged concern for the future career paths of Aboriginal youth as Aboriginal peoples are not ubiquitously employed in executive positions (e.g., CEOs), and Aboriginal women are especially missing in these key roles. The literature also supports the participants’ concerns and indicates that Aboriginal employees are often overlooked for promotions and are rarely employed in executive positions (Dwyer, 2003). Similarly, participants expressed concern over the absence of Aboriginal peoples in prestigious careers such as law and medicine. The participants shared their suggestions for how to increase Aboriginal employment in these fields and in these positions, namely ensuring Aboriginal youth have supports in place to guarantee more educational success, including completing a postsecondary education. Increasing educational attainment for Aboriginal youth has been cited as a key factor for obtaining successful employment (Brade, Duncan & Sokal, 2003; Hampton & Roy, 2002; James, 2001). Further educational obtainment would also be important for ensuring more Aboriginal peoples have the qualifications required for executive positions (Preston, 2008).

Some participants in this study also discussed how they faced challenges finding and maintaining successful employment due to personal struggles with addictions and involvement in the criminal justice system. These personal issues were often relayed in the context of a
challenge some Aboriginal people face due to the impact of colonization in their communities. This includes living in isolation, lack of access to social services, racism, and removing Aboriginal children from their homes and placing them in non-Aboriginal households through the foster care system.

However, the majority of the participants in this study were employed at the time of their interview, and they openly shared how they found both their current jobs and previous jobs. The results suggest that social support was very important to their employment success as they found about job opportunities through friends, family members, and postings found in different Aboriginal organizations. The importance of family member support to aid in career success is also supported in the work of Neumann and colleagues (2000). Not all participants were currently working in fields they wanted to stay in long term. For those who reported they were working in the field they planned on staying in for their career, they spoke about the importance of mentors to help them identify their interests. The literature supports the notion that mentoring can be effective at improving Aboriginal employment outcomes, but it is most effective when the mentor is also Aboriginal (Burke & McKeen, 1992; Thomas, 1990). Furthermore, the participants explained the importance of experimentation to determine what field of employment they would enjoy. Many of the participants shared this experimentation could take place through volunteering. An additional benefit of volunteering is that it provides youth with invaluable experience that they may not otherwise be able to obtain.

While the majority of the participants discussed culture and identity, it should be noted that culture meant something different to each participant in the study. For some it involved connecting to Elders, participating in Aboriginal community, participating in cultural traditions and ceremonies, and understanding the history of their people and community. For others, it was about understanding the challenges and struggles the Aboriginal communities face and wanting
to fight and these injustices, or socializing with other Aboriginal peoples. However, it was something that was clearly linked to everyone in a unique and personal way that influenced his or her identity.

For the participants who were connected to their cultural roots, they spoke of culture fondly and of utmost importance to them moving forward in their career as well as all other aspects of their lives. Furthermore, for some participants, the stronger the presence of Aboriginal culture was throughout the various aspects of youths’ lives (e.g., work, identity, community, etc.), the more career success they had in comparison to the participants who were not as connected to their culture. This result is supported in the work of Gold, Meisler, DuRoss & Bailey (2004) who report a connection to community is a key factor for experiencing successful employment. Similarly, participants who had a stronger cultural identity were more likely to work in an environment that not only allowed for the safe expression of culture in the workplace, but they were protective of ensuring they would be able to continue to do this in the future (French, et al., 2013; Stewart, et al., 2014). These participants also reported that they were more likely to work either with or for the Aboriginal community (Young, et al., 2003).

For the youth who were not as strongly connected to their cultural identity, they spoke about experiencing less job satisfaction and increased difficulty gaining meaningful employment. The literature supports the finding that cultural minorities in workplaces often devalue their cultural identity as a protective factor when interacting with the cultural majority (Jameson, 2007; Sussman, 2000; Tajfel, 1978) These youth self identified as being an Aboriginal person, but also acknowledged that they could be more involved in their culture. Some also spoke about the pride they felt for family members or friends who were more involved in their cultural identity and expressed a desire to expand their own personal involvement in the Aboriginal community in the future. The work of both Sussman (2000) and
Tajfel (1978) support the finding that many individuals who have been marginalized will disassociate from their cultural identity. Some of the participants explained that they experienced an absence of traditional culture throughout their upbringing. This experience was distinct and varied for each participant. Some of these individuals were raised in their communities, some were raised with non-Aboriginal family members, and some were raised in urban areas. All of these participants responded differently to the absence of culture, namely by either seeking out cultural connections on their own in adulthood, relocating to their community to emerge themselves in culture, or continuing to limit their involvement in their culture and community. Many of the participants in this study who did not identify as strongly with their cultural identity had been negatively impacted by the legacy of colonization personally or on their families and communities.

**Implications for policy**

Across all interviews the main concern of the Aboriginal youth who participated in this study was that employers need to have an understanding of the context of Aboriginal history and demonstrate an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal cultures and traditions. Thus, it is imperative to establish a workplace that permits for the safe expression of cultural identity, which would enhance and not suppress cultural identity. In fact, the participants expressed a desire for more employer support of cultural activities in the workplace to create more positive relationships between coworkers. The importance of cultural identity in the workplace is also supported in the work of Brown and Fraehlic (2012) who report the need for culture in work environments. This research also informs us that employers are not adequately encouraging Aboriginal youth employees by failing to provide them with sufficient opportunities for skills development and promotion, nor do they praise the work they do. The finding that employers to not always provide Aboriginal employees with the tools required to perform their jobs well is
also supported in the literature (Linnehan, et al., 2006). These results could potentially explain why unemployment rates are so high for Aboriginal youth: work environments continue to be tumultuous as they do not feel supported and continue to suppress their sense of self.

Participant suggestions to improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal youth that emerged during the interviews were extensive. A common theme across interviews was the importance of employers, supervisors and management undergoing training to learn about the diversity of Aboriginal peoples including traditions, cultures, and unique issues Aboriginal communities face. The work of Linnehan and colleagues (2006) and Stewart and colleagues (2014) also supports the finding that Aboriginal employees face unique challenges in the workplace, which could be addressed through training opportunities. Coworkers would also benefit from participating in training about Aboriginal culture and communities to help address and prevent racism and negative stereotyping that the participants report encountering in different work environments, as well as training about individuals’ social position and how this influences the ways in which s/he views the world and the biases s/he holds. Cultural training for employers and employees regarding Aboriginal issues acts as a means of decolonization and protection against racism and helps the Aboriginal community promote cultural awareness and increase respect for Aboriginal people in the workplace, and help Aboriginal youth succeed in the workplace (Brown & Fraehlic, 2012; Bruner, 1990; Stewart, et al., 2014). Participants in this study explained that improving awareness of Aboriginal issues and history would permit for the safe expression of cultural identity and the enhancement of autonomy in both personal and profession identity (Blunstein, 2001; Stewart, et al., 2014).

A further implication of this study is the need for changes to be made to government polices and workplace policies in order to adequately improve the way Aboriginal youth are treated in the workplace, establish acceptable standards of practice, and allow for Aboriginal
youth to be more successful in their employment endeavours (Stewart, et al., 2014). For example, participants with a strong cultural identity discussed the importance of employers respecting and understanding Aboriginal traditions including taking time off work to attend ceremonies. Furthermore, many participants spoke about the importance of improving access to cultural resources, especially in larger organizations such as creating a space for employees to smudge, access to Elders, and saying opening and closing prayers during meetings. The importance of being able to access traditional cultural resources in the workplace is also supported in the literature (Stewart, et al., 2014). Additionally, these participants expressed an interest in working for employers who were open to creating environments where employees could engage in and share their cultures with each other.

Participants also discussed that employers need to provide their youth employees with more opportunities develop their employment skills to ensure they can be successfully promoted. This continues to be a struggle encountered by Aboriginal youth as many non-Aboriginal employers do not value the importance of hiring Aboriginal peoples (Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2004; Dwyer, 2003)). This may be related to the participants’ reporting in this study that many employers are uneducated in Aboriginal history, the impact of colonization, issues experienced by Aboriginal people and Aboriginal communities, and the employers own social positioning and biases (Dwyer, 2003).

Many of these participants also spoke about the value of their boss or supervisor acting as a mentor to them in the workplace. Mentors appear to aid in the employment success of Aboriginal youth by guiding the youth in the workplace, supporting the employee when s/he faces challenges, and providing opportunities for skills development. The benefits of having a mentor to improve upon workplace and education success is also supported in the literature (Stewart, et al., 2014). While many participants expressed the importance in having a mentor in
the workplace, they also explained the value of this individual being a member of the Aboriginal community. It was suggested that this is key in part as it would ensure the safe expression of Aboriginal culture in the workplace. Additionally, some participants shared this is valuable as the mentor also serves as a positive role model to aspire to. Participants who were both satisfied and dissatisfied with their employment experiences also explained their desire to work for an employer or supervisor who makes an effort to get to know their employees. They suggested it creates a more positive work environment.

Similarly, many participants in this study explained that youth employment outcomes could improve if employers, supervisors, and managers change the way they interact with their Aboriginal employees. An important factor mentioned by many participants is the manner in which employees are disciplined. Specifically, the participants mentioned employees should be brought to private area, away from their coworkers, and the issue should be explained in a calm manner that does not make the employee feel like s/he is being treated punitively. Some participants explained they have been made to feel as though they have done something so detrimental that their job is in jeopardy. Furthermore, this kind of treatment may lead to isolation and employees feeling as though they need to be secretive and not as forthcoming regarding what they are doing in the workplace.

Aboriginal youth reported several barriers to finding successful employment including employers not addressing systemic issues such as racism that is rooted in long standing and deeply ingrained stereotypes (Dwyer, 2003; Linnehan, et al., 2006; Stewart & Marshall, 2011a; Stewart & Marshall, 2011b), employers not addressing unhealthy competitiveness among coworkers which leads to alienation of employees who are not “Native” enough (Stewart, et al., 2014), employers not being committed to the hiring success of Aboriginal youth, and Aboriginal youth feeling as though they have to suppress their cultural identity in the workplace. Many
participants expressed Aboriginal youth do not feel supported by their employers, and that mainstream employers lack an understanding of Aboriginal issues, knowledge, and culture that hinders the employment success of Aboriginal youth. Similarly, these participants also expressed facing pressure in the form of making a decision about whether or not they would continue to work in urban areas or if they would return to their own communities. This pressure was described as a result of their communities need for young leaders to return with their experiences and education to better the community. These participants expressed a desire to return to their communities in order to use their skills and talents to improve or better their communities, but worried that there would not be jobs in their field. This desire to work with the community is supported in the work of Campbell Clark (2002) who reports that Native Americans who work for their communities are more likely to feel like they have earned a spot in the community.

Despite participants sharing that many mainstream employers do not currently promote Aboriginal cultural identity in the workplace, they expressed optimism for the future of Aboriginal youth employment. However, in order for these employment hopes to be realized the extensive employment barriers reported by participants in this study need to be addressed, namely increased education about Aboriginal cultures, history and communities, improving the colonialism in the education system to help youth succeed in completing secondary school, and addressing racism. The notion that Aboriginal youth are questioning the status quo in relationship to their historically positioned disadvantage in our society as a result of becoming more aware of the systemic factors that created these conditions is also supported in the literature (Linnehan, et al., 2006). The results of this study suggest that a lack of awareness of the needs and issues Aboriginal peoples encounter are an additional form of colonization in the workplace. Furthermore, participants expressed racism and negative stereotypes of Aboriginal
people creates insecurity in some Aboriginal people, which may discourage youth from seeking employment opportunities with mainstream employers or in fields where Aboriginal people are not well represented.

Many employers have a general lack of knowledge regarding the history of Aboriginal people, and how the current context Canadian society has lead to lower social determinants of health that are experienced by many Aboriginal people. This is important as the participants in this study explained that mental health concerns can be a barrier to obtaining employment. These concerns place some Aboriginal youth at a disadvantage in comparison to non-Aboriginal youth and can be linked to intergenerational trauma experienced throughout the history of Aboriginal people, especially the legacy of residential schools where Aboriginal people experienced cultural genocide (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report, 1996). A lack of employer recognition of these issues further perpetuates colonization and continues the cycle of trauma and oppression.

The results of this project indicating mainstream employment settings continue to produce negative experiences for Aboriginal youth through fostering racism and negative stereotypes is also supported in the literature (Stewart, et al., 2014). In some situations, unhealthy work environments were reported to be so discouraging that Aboriginal youths actually left their place of employment. Aboriginal employees leaving their current place of employment due to negative treatment is also supported in the literature (Blustein, 2001; Stewart, et al., 2014). Furthermore, many Aboriginal youth face barriers during the process of seeking out employment that are unique from their non-Aboriginal peers, such as a lack of formal education and limited employment skills. This is problematic as many services designed to address employment concerns have had limited success with improving Aboriginal youth employment statistics as many of the current models utilize a Western approach designed for
middle class Caucasian people (Dwyer, 2003; Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994; Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnson, 2003; Leong & Hartung, 2000; White, et al., 2003). Making these policy modifications will help breakdown barriers for Aboriginal youth who are employed with mainstream organizations.

**Directions for future research**

The primary way future research could expand upon the findings of this study is replication. Of primary importance would be replicate the study in different urban and rural areas across Canada. This would be important to determine the generalizability of these results within different contexts. Additionally, it would be beneficially to include the knowledge and understanding of employers, supervisors, and managers who work with Aboriginal youth regarding their workplace policies and practices.

Another recommendation is to conduct research that examines the strengths, weakness, and benefits of workplaces that have integrated access to cultural resources in the workplace. There are many Aboriginal organizations that permit for the safe expression of cultural identity in the workplace, and it would be beneficial to examine how these workplaces allow for workplace identity to develop for Aboriginal youth and how this contributes to their employment success. Furthermore it would be valuable to assess the manner in which Aboriginal youth employees form relationships with their coworkers and supervisors, and what makes for a supportive verses challenging relationship. Finally, it would be important to take this a step further by assessing the suggestion identified by the participants to create mentoring relationships between superiors and youth employees to determine how this impacts the youth’s sense of self, leadership skills, and career trajectory.
Researcher reflection

It is important to clarify my positioning as a non-Aboriginal person. I was raised in the city of Brantford in South-Western Ontario. Brantford is in the heart of Six Nations territory, right along the Grand River, and as a result I was introduced to Aboriginal peoples, cultures, and issues at a young age. My Six Nations acquaintances instilled in me an interest to become more involved in the Aboriginal community. As a result, I am deeply interested in creating and nurturing respectful relationships with the Aboriginal community. I furthered my personal involvement and understanding of barriers to Aboriginal youth during my undergraduate degree when I was involved in the University of Waterloo’s Aboriginal Student Services. This experienced furthered my interest and desire to explore these areas as a graduate student.

As a counselling psychology student, I have concentrated my area of study in Aboriginal issues. More specifically, I have immersed myself in issues pertaining to Aboriginal education, employment, cultural identity and social concerns through my involvement as a member of Dr. Suzanne Stewart’s research team. It is important that I remain aware of the harm that Aboriginal communities have endured as a result of research that was conducted in disrespectful and oppressive manners. In this project, a community-based approach was utilized to help address concerns surrounding disrespectful research. Participants were recruited through members of the urban Aboriginal community in the GTA and they were asked for their preference of interview location.

As a result of my involvement with Dr. Suzanne Stewart’s research, I have made an effort to become engaged with urban Aboriginal community in the GTA by attending cultural events such as National Aboriginal Month in Yonge-Dundas Square, joining the Aboriginal Advisory Council, and occasionally participating in social events at the Native Canadian Centre.
Furthermore, I have actively sought out teachings regarding Aboriginal traditions, cultures, knowledges, and histories to assist my own understanding of Aboriginal worldviews.

**Thesis summary**

The research question that guided this thesis was, “what are the intersections of cultural identity and work-life experiences for Aboriginal youth as they relate to employment outcomes?” A narrative inquiry was employed to allow the research participants the opportunity to explore this rich topic in vast depth and detail. Furthermore, a narrative approach is culturally appropriate when working with Aboriginal peoples as it is supportive of the oral, storytelling tradition many Aboriginal people ascribe to (Stewart, 2008; Medicine-Eagle 1989). Finally, the narrative method permitted for the ten self-identified Aboriginal youth participants to explore the topic in a unique manner while maintaining a framework of questions that were asked of everyone.

The interview process produced four key themes: the presence and absence of Aboriginal culture; youth employment outcomes; barriers to youth employment; and what employers need to know. Additionally, several meta-themes emerged which described in detail how systemic issues continue to be a barrier to successful employment, that many Aboriginal youth feel as though their cultural identities are being suppressed in the workplace, that many employers do not have an understanding of the context and history of Aboriginal peoples lives, and that many changes need to occur in order to facilitate substantial improvements to Aboriginal youth employment statistics including education, program development, and increased employment opportunities in Aboriginal communities and in urban areas.

The results generated by the individual interviews provided valuable insight to the barriers, challenges, and issues facing Aboriginal youth who seek employment in urban areas.
Furthermore, this thesis outlines the ideas produced by the participants regarding solutions and changes that need to occur in order for Aboriginal youth to succeed, especially in mainstream work environments.

**Limitations**

A qualitative approach was used in this study to facilitate an explorative approach to understand Aboriginal youth employment from the perspective of the ten Aboriginal youth participants. This methodology permitted each participant to generate a personal narrative that provided a greater depth of understanding regarding the issues surrounding youth employment outcomes. As such, the unique stories and perspectives of the participants express bold ideas regarding Aboriginal youth employment. However, it is important to note that the information presented in this research may not apply to all Aboriginal peoples, communities, or urban environments, and it should not be used to make generalizations regarding Aboriginal youth employment. For example, not all of the participants agreed that their cultural identities should be at the forefront of their workplace identity, which suggests that further exploration is needed regarding cultural identity in the workplace. Additionally, Aboriginal peoples across Canada are very diverse in terms of their culture, traditions, and geographic locations. This diversity was only partially represented in the sample of ten participants who participated in this study, who were from different communities but certainly did not include the 600 First Nations communities across Canada. Similarly, the work experiences and employment statistics will differ between urban locations (e.g., Toronto verses Montreal) and rural verses urban settings.

An additional limitation in qualitative research, and this study is the small sample size. Larger sample sizes assist in generalizing the results to the general population. However, as qualitative research is quite time consuming, a smaller sample was used.
Finally, the potential for researcher bias is also a concern in qualitative research as the investigator typically is active in all aspects of the research including conducting the interviews. I acknowledge that I was actively involved in the data collection, transcription, coding, and creation of the key themes and meta-themes. However, I took precautions to reduce this bias by using cultural informants and relying on other publications and interview data to shape the results. This project is part of larger project lead by Dr, Suzanne Stewart. As such, other research assistants are conducting additional individual interviews, and the preliminary results indicate these themes and meta-themes align with the results of this thesis. Furthermore, the some of the themes and meta-themes found in this study match those found in the focus group conducted as part of this project including: the need for cultural respect from employers, the need for access to cultural resources in the workplace, acknowledgement and prevention of racism and oppression in the workplace, and the importance of integrating cultural practice in the workplace. Finally, precautions were taken against researcher bias through validity checking with the participants, which created a triangulation of research methods in harmony with the literature review and interview data.

Conclusion

This thesis highlights the importance of cultural identity in the workplace for Aboriginal youth and the influence that employers and coworkers have on their employment experience. The participants shared their personal workplace and employment experiences to outline the barriers they encounter, the successes they have had, and to generate solutions to improve employment concerns Aboriginal youth face. This thesis has elucidated the need for drastic and immediate changes to be made to ensure workplaces are more inviting and inclusive of Aboriginal peoples and culture. This change also needs to occur across Canada to ensure that educational institutions include more Aboriginal perspectives and knowledges, and that all
people in Canada will educate themselves in their social positioning and biases to help combat systemic barriers Aboriginal youth face. The aspiration of this work is that this information will influence employers and politicians to make changes to their policies that will allow Aboriginal youth to gain successful employment in any field.
References


ABORIGINAL CULTURAL IDENTITY AND EMPLOYMENT


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Participant Consent Form

Work-life identity of Aboriginal youth: Exploring the momentum of challenges and strengths in career

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled “Work-life identity of Aboriginal youth: Exploring the momentum of challenges and strengths in career”. The research team for this project at the University of Toronto (U of T) is led by Dr. Suzanne Stewart, a faculty member at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto, and the staff of the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (NCCT) in Toronto, ON. This research is part of a larger project led by project PI Dr. Anne Marshall, a faculty member in Counselling Psychology at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. Additional research team members with Dr. Stewart at OISE/ U of T include Tera Beaulieu, Nicole Elliott, Suvankar Mohanty, Jessica Syrette and Ashley Hyatt, research assistants for this project, and community based research assistants. If you have any concerns or questions about the project, you may contact Dr. Suzanne L. Stewart at (416) 978-0723 or suzanne.stewart@utoronto.ca, Ashley Hyatt at ashley.hyatt@mail.utoronto.ca, or Nicole Elliott at nic.elliott@utoronto.ca

The present research plans to investigate the depth and the details of how culturally based work-life identity is understood by Aboriginal youth within the context of employment outcomes; more specifically, we seek to improve employment outcomes by influencing programming, policy, and supports that address the issues and solutions raised by the youth. The research question guiding this project is: “What are the intersections of cultural identity and work life experiences for Aboriginal youth as they relate to employment outcomes”. Aboriginal perspectives on work-life identity development can assist employment counsellors and other career practitioners to become aware of the hidden assumptions and limitations of current ethnocentric models of development and to identify new approaches and appropriate interventions for dealing with Native youth needs in a global context.

You are being invited to participate because you are a self-identified Aboriginal person between the ages of 18 and 30.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include two 1 to 2 hour audiotape interviews that will take place in a setting (e.g. Native Canadian Centre/residence/research office) of your choice. The total time commitment is approximately 2 to 4 hours, and participation in this study should not cause you any inconvenience other than the interview time.
Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time, or refuse to answer certain questions without any consequences or any explanation. Your involvement in the study will in no way affect your use of access to services at the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto. In the event that you withdraw from this study, your audiotape interview and all accompanying notes will be destroyed.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you through participating in this research. The potential benefits of your participation in this research include sharing your experiences as an Aboriginal person, self-reflection and clarification of your own feelings on cultural identity. Potential benefits to society include informing policy development on Aboriginal issues around cultural identity, mental health promotion, and wellbeing.

As a way to compensate you for your participation, you will be given a $20.00 gift certificate at the time of the interview. It is important for you to know that it is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants and, if you agree to be a participant in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. If you would not otherwise choose to participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline. Should you withdraw from the study at any time the honorarium is yours to keep.

To preserve your confidentiality, your name will not appear on any of the data, as a code will be assigned to replace your name on the interview audiotapes, on the interview transcripts, and in all notes. The key for all coded names will be kept separately from the interview data. Signed consent letters will also be stored separately from any data. Your confidentiality will be protected by storing interview audiotapes and the transcribed data in a locked filing cabinet. Only the research team will have access to the data. The audiotapes from your interview, the transcribed data, and any notes taken during the interview will be destroyed after 5 years.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with you and others in the following ways: directly to participants by hand delivery of results in a community newsletter; through published articles in scholarly journals; in policy reports given to Native and non-Native government agencies and health organizations, and at scholarly conferences/meetings.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and/or research assistant as above, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Ethics Review Office, 416-946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

_________________________       ______________________
Participant Signature                        Date

Participant Name (please print) ________________________
A COPY OF THIS CONSENT WILL BE LEFT WITH YOU, AND A COPY WILL BE TAKEN BY
THE RESEARCHER

Receipt For Honorarium

I, ______________________________, acknowledge that I have received a $20 honorarium
(gift card) for my participation as an interviewee in the research project, “Work-life identity of
Aboriginal youth: Exploring the momentum of challenges and strengths in career.”

________________________________________   __________________________
Participant Signature                        Date

________________________________________   __________________________
Witness Signature                            Date
Work-life identity of Aboriginal youth: Exploring the momentum of challenges and strengths in career

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW FORMATS

Interview questions:

1. How does a sense of who you are as worker (workplace identity) develop in the workplace for Aboriginal youth?

2. How do employers help or challenge the success of Aboriginal youth in the workplace?

3. What do you consider to be the most important thing about work for youth?

4. What are some of your hopes, dreams, and fears for the future for youth with regard to employment outcomes?

Prompts (e.g. “tell us a bit more about that”) and open questions will be used to facilitate the interview and process as needed.

Is there anything else that you feel is important about youth and work-identity that we haven’t talked about? Give the gift card after they sign the consent form. Need to get their email address because “in a couple of weeks we will email you with the preliminary results of your interview for you to review and get your comments on.”