

## **Women's Narratives from the St. John's Native Friendship Centre: Using Digital Storytelling to Inform Community-based Healing & Violence Prevention Programs**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), violence against women, particularly sexual and intimate partner violence, is a major public health concern (2013). In the Canadian context, it is estimated that half of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incident involving either physical or sexual assault from the age of 16 (Statistics Canada, 1993).<sup>1</sup> Violence against Indigenous women is widespread and is a daily occurrence for many (Standing Committee on the Status of Women [SCSW], 2011). Indigenous women experience rates of violence that are 3.5 times higher than those for non-Indigenous women.

While there is consensus that violence against Indigenous women is a national crisis, and government funded initiatives exist to combat and prevent violence, a gap remains in the knowledge of what specific strategies and services women find useful, and why. This community-based project uses the arts-based decolonizing method of Digital Storytelling to explore the lived experiences of violence of women clients of the St. John's Native Friendship Centre (SJNFC). This will be accompanied by informal open-ended interviews on experiences and perceptions of women's programming at the Centre, in the context of violence prevention and healing. Participant observation research has been an on-going process for the Principal Investigator (PI), who is a member and a volunteer at the SJNFC. This research project will analyze the digital stories and informal open-ended interviews for themes in order to identify needs, strategies, and challenges for the Women's programming and services (Violence Prevention programming)<sup>2</sup> at the SJNFC.

### **Context: Violence and Indigenous Women**

The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (WHO, 2013, para. 1). Canadian Indigenous women experience higher rates of health inequalities compared to non-Indigenous women, including higher rates of violence. Reports from 2009 suggest 13% of all Indigenous women over the age of 15 have experienced some form of violence (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2007).

It is suggested the huge disparity between the health of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can be linked to the historical and intergenerational traumas that are a production of racist systematic and systemic policies, assimilation, and cultural genocide (Goudreau and Wabie, 2011). Examples of prevailing inequalities such as a lack of educational attainment and health status when combined with institutional racism, inadequate access to resources, and a break in cultural traditions are directly linked to

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<sup>1</sup> Recent data would be preferable, however no current Statistics Canada survey has asked women about their life-time experience of violence.

<sup>2</sup> Although most of the Women's programming and services fall under the heading of Violence Prevention Initiatives, in this proposal we use the titles interchangeably. Due to the sensitive nature of violence, activities and services are not always labeled as Violence Prevention.

violence against Indigenous women (Amnesty International Canada, 2004; Harper, Khoury & Taïbi, 2010; Stout & Kipling, 2003). Violence is generational, systemic, and interpersonal. The intricacies of the political, historical, and socio-economic contexts of oppression demand attention when understanding how Indigenous women experience violence (Harper, Khoury & Taïbi, 2010). It is estimated that 56% of violent incidents committed against Indigenous women are conducted by someone known to the victim (Violence Prevention Initiative, 2009).

There are numerous community-based programs that have been developed to address the needs of female victims of violence (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2007). In spite of these efforts, studies continue to demonstrate that violence against women is a persistent concern (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2007).

A myriad of formal social services are offered to women who are victims of violence (Sinha, 2013). In Canada, violence prevention programs are distributed across the nation with over 550 shelters existing for women and their children (Taylor-Butts, 2007). Other services include: counsellors, crisis lines, and community centres. According to the 2009 General Social Survey, 26% of female spousal abuse victims seek tertiary services, such as crisis centres/lines and community/family centres. These services are vital, as they are second only to individual counselling as the most frequently accessed resource (Sinha, 2013).

For Indigenous women, efforts are increasingly being made to initiate programs that go beyond the emergency and second-stage sheltering and counselling models, incorporating traditional cultural practices as part of the healing process (Bopp, Bopp, & Lane, 2003; Lamontagne, 2011). This type of community-based traditional programming has been recognized as an important part of an effective healing strategy (SCSW, 2011). Healing programs allow communities to begin to address the underpinnings of violence by providing an opportunity to utilize the strengths within the community (SCSW, 2011).

The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) are an important source of community healing programs. The Centres serve over 2.3 million individuals on a yearly basis, offering 1,493 programs across Canada to approximately 700 000 urban Indigenous peoples during 2011/2012 (NAFC, 2012). A staggering 62% of off-reserve Indigenous peoples live within a catchment of a Friendship Centre (NAFC, 2012). However, the participation in traditional activities is lower amongst urban Indigenous peoples. Urban Indigenous populations are on the rise and a concern is whether or not facilities are equipped to provide programming for Friendship members. When individuals move into urban dwellings, there are cultural challenges that make newcomers more vulnerable; the ability to access community-based programs may be hindered due to insufficient supports (Goss Gilroy, 2013). Studies demonstrate that even though availability of and support from community agencies may vary, overall individuals feel positive towards the organizations that they were a part of (McGillvray and Comaskey, 1999). This is important to highlight because research suggests the most effective way to address violence against women is through persistently investing in front line services through community-based organizations. Moreover, research conducted by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) provided evidence suggesting that most cases of missing and Indigenous women occur in urban settings (2011). With most Indigenous women going missing in urban centres, priority for funding is required to not only support victims of violence, but to also support family members and promote

violence prevention initiatives.

The use of community-based traditional programming is important because Indigenous women under-access mainstream health and social services; due to the effects of colonization and residential schooling many Indigenous women do not feel comfortable or safe seeking mainstream care. Moreover, Euro-American approaches to healthcare may feel foreign and intimidating to different groups (HCC, 2003). The literature demonstrates that culturally based services that are designed to respond to the community needs are required and must be encouraged (HCC, 2003). There are many studies to support the benefits of culturally appropriate-based services, however problems exist when lack of funding and capacity-building are not always feasible, especially in urban settings (Goss Gilroy, 2013).

Research has pointed to over-worked staff and short-term prevention project funding being key obstacles to program evaluation (Bopp, Bopp, & Lane, 2003; Lamontagne, 2011). There is still a substantial amount to learn about whether and how community-based prevention initiatives are effective in their efforts at violence healing and prevention (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2007; Brownridge, 2009).

### **Research Project Objectives**

The St. John's Native Friendship Centre (SJNFC) has designed violence prevention initiatives aimed to provide services that empower women through mentorship, education, and culturally rich experiences. This research project aims to understand the meaning of violence for women who use programs and services at the SJNFC. Using Digital Storytelling, this research will collect women's narratives in the context of their life story. This will be supplemented by open-ended interviews. We will: (1) identify needs, strategies, and challenges for violence prevention services at SJNFC; (2) create a tool for violence healing strategies for the SJNFC; (3) make recommendations for community-based healing and violence prevention programming nationally; and (4) advance academic theory on decolonizing methodologies for research with Indigenous communities.

### **Methodology**

An important aspect of a decolonizing project is the specific need for appropriate methods that give primacy to the research needs and approaches identified by the community partners (Hendry, 2007). It is fitting to apply a narrative-based participatory research method because Digital Storytelling echoes the oral traditions and practices of Indigenous peoples, it is capacity-building and it has been demonstrated to be an effective instigator of dialogue on sensitive topics, and it is based on a research model of community collaboration (Lambert, 2013).

Digital Storytelling is an emerging decolonizing method for Indigenous research. From its inception during the early 1990's, creator Joe Lambert saw a "need to provide mechanisms of community engagement and self-determination for communities that self-identified as having need for support and solidarity"(Lambert, 2013; p.117). Digital Storytelling is the development of personal stories through a medium of film using artwork, music, photographs, audio/video clips, and text. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, the New Zealand Indigenous theorist who has been at the forefront of decolonizing methodologies, states: "Storytelling, oral histories, the perspectives of elders and of women have become

an integral part of all indigenous research. Each individual story is powerful” (1999, p.144). Digital Storytelling is a compelling approach to research because it explicitly attends to the context of historical marginalization of Indigenous communities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Wilcox, Harper, & Edge, 2012; Lambert, 2013; Lundby, 2008). This process is not just about gaining rich data; it is equally about using digital media to function as a potential healing tool for the women involved.

### **Inclusion criteria**

Women who are members of the SJNFC will be invited to take part in the research project. Approximately 10-15 women will be recruited, which is the number required for saturation of themes. All ages (18 years of age to elders) will be eligible.

A minimum time period of membership at SJNFC is not an inclusion criterion. For example, members may be visiting from Labrador to access healthcare, visit family, or attend school and may avail of services and programs at the Centre. Similarly, women who live in St. John’s may only attend Centre activities sporadically. One of the objectives is to better understand if the SJNFC women’s programs meet the specific and diverse cultural, social, and economic needs of various communities of women; therefore, it would skew the results to exclude women who do not regularly attend the programs.

Staff members will not be excluded on the basis of being staff. Several staff members started volunteering at the Centre when they were young women and have since moved up to leadership roles. It is evident the SJNFC has played a large role in shaping their lives. Therefore, it is possible that staff, too, may want to be participants in this research project. The Community Lead and PI discussed whether this may inappropriately alter the nature of the group project, and it was felt that the spirit of friendship between managers, volunteers and participants is such that other women will not be intimidated or constrained by having managers as co-participants.

Ability to be interviewed in English is a criterion for inclusion, given the funding and logistical restraints of having an Inuktituk translator.

Friendship Centres are ‘status-blind’; registered status is not a requirement for membership. Individuals access programming at the Friendship Centre for a variety of reasons, one such reason may be to learn about their cultural heritage. If a potential participant informs us that she is Indigenous, it is not an issue if she cannot prove her ancestry through bloodlines or status. Self-identifying Indigenous women meet the requirements for this research project. This demonstrates the changing nature of what it means to be an Indigenous person and the movement away from the Euro-American definitions of status.

Additional women may be participating as support persons, rather than research/storytelling participants (see “Participant Supports”). Therefore, if the situation arises that more than one woman from the same family would like to participate and we can only accept one, the non-participant may become a support person to the other.

In the event that more than 15 women volunteer to participate, first come first served will be the general selection criteria, but taking into account the diversity of experiences, ages, and communities of origin. The Community Lead will help with selection of candidates if the need should arise.

### **Recruitment and First Contact.** The PI’s role as volunteer and member<sup>3</sup> of the

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<sup>3</sup> In order to become a member at the SJNFC, individuals pay a small annual fee to avail of programs and

Centre has allowed for relationships and trust to be built; that is, the PI is known to women who will be recruited. The Community Lead will also facilitate recruitment of eligible participants and function as an essential Gatekeeper throughout the recruitment process. Identifying eligible participants will be done in several ways (see below), with the timing of recruitment aimed to occur primarily at the June 2014 Women's Committee meeting. The Women's Committee is a new development and its main purpose is for women from the SJNFC to meet together one evening per month and take part in social events. The Women's Committee was formed in part to facilitate a way for elders to pass down traditional teachings to younger members. Upcoming events include the screening of the film "Stolen Sisters" as well as other events such as memory mapping<sup>4</sup> and a cultural retreat. The aim is to build a stronger network of women at the Centre and bridge gaps between age groups. The current women's group is made up of 40 women, ranging in age from 18 to 76. As the group continues to grow and become stronger, the Elders will decide on a name for the group.

The following outlines the recruitment process:

- 1. Presentation.** During the monthly Women's Committee meeting in June 2014, the PI and Community Lead together will give a short presentation on the research project. The presentation will take place during a Sharing circle,<sup>5</sup> an opportunity for women to sit around with one another in ceremony, listen to the Elder talk and discuss upcoming events. By honouring storytelling and oral history, this is a culturally appropriate way to inform the women of the potential research project (Refer to Appendix 1 for oral script).
- 2. Information Letter.** At the meeting, an information letter about the research project will be distributed. This will be useful particularly for those women who would like time to reflect on becoming involved in the research project (Refer to Appendix 2 for sample information letter).
- 3. Sign Up Sheet.** At the meeting, a sign-up sheet will be circulated inviting the women to provide their name and contact information if they would like to learn more about the research project.
- 4. Recreational Sport (Volleyball).** The Community Lead takes on a large leadership role with the SJNFC volleyball teams and she will circulate the information letter to women and invite them to contact the PI with any questions or if interested in learning more about the study.

Some members of SJNFC function at low literacy levels. Therefore, the PI and Community Lead will not simply hand out the information sheet; they will also briefly

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services. Although there are occasions in which I take on the role of volunteer, I have also often attended the Centre as a member and participated in events (e.g. arts and crafts).

<sup>4</sup> Memory Mapping is the process of writing down and drawing pictures of events that represent your life story. During the month of June 2014, this activity will be taking place at the SJNFC. It is not a part of the research project; this activity would be taking part even if there were no digital story telling research and workshop. However, Memory Mapping segues wonderfully into Digital Storytelling because it allows women to begin to think about their lives and past events. It seems as though the mapping is a natural progression to storytelling, and then finally to film. Therefore, this research will draw on memory mapping that the women have already done as part of their regular activity through the Women's Programs.

<sup>5</sup> Sharing circles are a fundamental part of Indigenous cultures. It is a time to sit, share stories, discuss, and learn from friends, Elders, family, and other community members.

explain the research project, following a recruitment script to ensure that there is no inadvertent coercion to participate (Refer to Appendix 3 for sample script).

**Ethical issues related to recruitment.** The PIs role as volunteer and the Community Lead's role as a program coordinator at the Centre mean that there may be some coercion to participate. That is, women have built relationships with both the PI and the Community Lead. We acknowledge the dual roles and understand that the power imbalance may affect the decision-making process of whether to participate. For example, participants may feel obligated to participate in order to help out the Centre or to please the Community Lead or PI. The PI and Community Lead are cognizant of these issues and they will disclose their conflict of interest at the Women's Committee meeting in which the introduction of the research project will be presented orally. Additionally, they will verbally discuss with women that participation is not mandatory and that no woman will be treated differently if she chooses not to participate.

**The consent process.** Women will begin by consenting only to the storytelling workshop (Refer to Appendix 4 for the Digital Storytelling consent). The consent form will contain a checkbox confirming that they agree to be contacted for an interview within one month after the digital storytelling workshop is complete. A separate consent form will be administered at the time of the interview (Refer to Appendix 5 for Interview Informed Consent Form).

Before each workshop and interview commences, I will discuss the purpose of the research project and obtain informed consent from each participant. There will be an opportunity to ask questions before each workshop/interview begins and the participants will be reminded they may refuse to answer any question. Participants will be informed that involvement is voluntary and they are free to withdraw at any time from the research project, with no repercussions in terms of continued access to services at the SJNFC. If a participant chooses to withdraw, she may keep the honorarium of a \$50 gift card.

The consent process will include the following points:

- 1) Women will be informed that they are consenting to both the digital storytelling and an interview, and that a second consent form will be provided immediately before the interview.
- 2) Women will be asked whether they wish to have the finished production disguise their identity (that is, be kept confidential) or be identifiable. The discussion will include discussion of the potential harms of being identifiable, particularly for those who remain in an abusive relationship.
- 3) Women will be told that they should try to not use images that might reveal the identity of others, and if that if they do choose to use another individual's image they must first obtain the written consent of that individual. Women will be told that they cannot include images of children, as children do not have the capacity to provide consent and the benefits to this research project are not worth any potential risks to children who are identified. Participants will be informed that if they choose to discuss other people in their stories, names will be changed and if need be certain parts of the story will be edited out to protect the identity of the individual.

4) Women will be informed that if they choose to include a photograph from their community, it is important to consider misrepresentation of issues and individuals as well as the potential for identifiability of the participant.

5) Women will be told that the final product is the property of the storyteller/artist. Women will be asked if they agree to be contacted for permission to use the film in research dissemination (for example, at a conference). If they check “yes”, then if the PI wishes to use the film, she will contact the woman and ask for consent, using a copyright release form (Refer to Appendix 6). Once the film is complete, a discussion will take place with the woman about whether she is willing to share the final product with the SJNFC as part of a violence prevention resource tool. This is not part of the research; it is between the woman/artist and the SJNFC and therefore beyond the scope of this proposal.

**Digital Storytelling.** The digital storytelling will take place at the SJNFC during a three-day workshop (summer 2014). Short films will be created organically through workshops that facilitate story circles, including reading stories aloud to one another, to share and receive feedback. This research project will allow for the celebration of women by honoring and respecting their lived experiences. At the end of the data collection workshops, an intricacy of detailed narratives will emerge, providing rich embroideries of women’s unique voices. The Digital Storytelling process has been outlined in detail in Figure 1.

Stories will be digitally audio/ video recorded. The PI will transcribe each verbal story (the voice over), verbatim in order to facilitate the analysis of the digital stories (images and voice over) for general themes. Preliminary themes will be identified and used to generate questions for the interviews.

Figure 1. The Process of Digital Storytelling:

The following Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling have been borrowed and adapted from Dr. Howie DiBlasi’s website: <http://www.drhowie.com/>

**Pre-production Phase**

**Step One:** Writing the script: What’s my Story?

- Brainstorm ideas: As a group, we will sit in a circle and share stories that elicit emotions in the context of our life.
- Writing the narrative script in the storyteller’s own voice is at the forefront of digital storytelling.
- This is where each woman will organize all her thoughts and begin to write them down on paper.
- A lot of thinking, planning, and combining of thoughts and feelings occurs during the creation of a script.

\*Note: Our aim is to have female volunteers at the Centre assist in the digital storytelling workshop and each volunteer will assist a woman throughout the process. Each person will sign an oath of confidentiality.

**Processes:** Memory Mapping drafting, writing, peer review, and rewriting.

**Technology Tools:** Microsoft word, computer, and printer

**Step Two:** Planning the project

- Creation of storyboards<sup>6</sup> and image/lists (much like creating an outline for an academic report).
- Having a storyboard will save a lot of frustration; each woman will be required to have an outline, so that we may save time during the Production and Post-Production phases. The outline will look a lot like a comic book.
- As the storyboard begins to unfold, women will begin to think about the music and images they will need to compile.

**Processes:** Storyboards, Images/Music, and Peer-Review **Technology tools:** Microsoft word and printing

**Step 3:** Organizing Folders

- It is important to manage all the files-texts, images, sound clips, music, and the final product.
- A properly designed system for filing is needed. Each woman requires having her own folders that contain her word documents, files, and music clips.
- Each woman will have her own USB key, which will be password protected. Each woman will be randomly assigned a password that only the PI knows; at the beginning of the workshops, she will type the passwords into the computer. There will be a master list that contains the name and the password for each woman, which will be locked in a cabinet at Memorial University each time the workshop is over.
- The process of teaching women how to organize and save files will take approximately 15 minutes. Every hour, the PI will remind women to save their files and make sure laptops are charging.

**Processes:** Managing files with back-up procedures.

**Production Phases:** Gathering and preparing digital media

- The production phase will include creating the digital voiceover from the script that was previously written during pre-production.
- The use of MovieMaker for PC will be implemented. Each computer contains the program pre-downloaded onto the laptops.

**Step Four:** Recording the Voiceover

During the pre-production period, storytellers created a written narrative script that would be recorded into a digital voiceover. Storytellers will work with a volunteer, staff member, or research team member to go over emotional tone and perform the meaning

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<sup>6</sup> Storyboard templates are graphic organizers that permit storytellers to conceptualize and outline all aspects of their story using written script, images, titles, transition slides, and music. These boards will exist before the technology is used. The storyboards will look very similar to comic books and function as rough sketches that will help each woman map out her project.

instead of reading or reciting the words from the paper.

- The storyteller's voice is meant to be emotional in order for the audience to experience the information being shared.
- Voiceovers will be created and saved as separate audio files using audio-editing software already downloaded to the computer.
- The internal computer microphone will be used for voice recording.

**Processes:** Practice Oral Speaking, performing, pace of voice and the process of living in the story as a storyteller.

**Technology Tools:** MovieMaker and Audio-Editing software (Audacity).

**Step Five:** Gather, create, and edit media resources

- Media chosen highlights, decorates, compliments, illustrates, and illuminates the storyteller's message.
- Storytellers will be encouraged to gather, create, use images, and sound/music with the intention of increasing the power and meaning of her story/message.
- This is the part where the storyboards come in handy; time spent creating the storyboards makes the process of using the image/sound lists to guide the project pay off.
- Creating and editing images allows women with the creative accessibility and opportunities to improve communication and technical skills.
- Making images, special image effects, montage, and using creative effects (unique title screens) is time consuming, however it will be rewarding if the image conveys exactly what the storyteller had in mind.
- Creating and editing music loops provide storytellers with the opportunity to learn technical skills and increase communication skills.
- Music and sound may be used as a background, however it may also be used to illuminate a storyteller's message. This sets the tone, provides emotion, and provides nonverbal meanings to the stories.

**Processes:** Using image/sound lists, better understanding of file formats, respecting copyright.

**Technology tools:** Cameras, scanning, image-editing software, audio-editing software, music-making software, and royalty-free subscriptions.

**Organize for copyright uses of media:** In all cases, the PI will ensure that media being selected will be ascertained ethically and legally.

Resources will be obtained by the PI and the Research Assistant and put into an Image/Sound/Music royalty free library.<sup>7</sup> This rich library of images/sounds/music will

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<sup>7</sup> Before the research project begins the PI and/or the Research Assistant will upload free images and music/sounds from royalty-free subscriptions. This is to avoid women going on the Internet and risking copyright infringement and it will also save time in the long run.

be on a file on each storyteller's USB key. Before uploading documents, the PI will ensure no copyright violation has occurred.

Storytellers are encouraged to bring their own images and music to the workshops. Written permissions from copyright holders will be obtained. Storytellers will be encouraged to use their own photos to avoid copyright and ethical issues. Images that are from a distance or do not show faces of other people will be highly encouraged. Additionally, throughout the editing process, faces may be altered (blurred) if necessary.

**Post-Production:** Putting it all together.

At this point women are now prepared to put their story together with digital tools (MovieMaker including multimedia slide show).

**Step Six:** Creating rough-cut first and final cut last

- The rough cut provides the storyteller with a first view of the story sequentially. This includes: inserting the voiceover, sequencing images/video/titles. Music/sounds, transitional slides, or special effects will be added yet.
- This rough cut saves the storyteller time by reviewing and determining anything that may be missing (e.g. additional editing) before creating the polished copy.
- This is the fine-tuning stage.

**Processes:** Use of storyboards, import media resources, and insert voiceovers, images, and titles.

**Technology Used:** Video-editing software

Final cut stage consists of a great amount of creativity.

This is where the script becomes alive.

- This is also the stage where some storytellers may get overwhelmed and may feel stressed.
- Depending on each storyteller's technical skills, expectations for technicalities will be kept fairly simple.
- Time is a variable, so certain elements may require alteration.
- This is an opportunity for storytellers to explore, dabble, and enjoy playing around with the almost-finished product.

**Step Seven:** Applause

- The final cut stage is now complete.
- The story becomes a living artifact; each woman leaves behind a personal legacy.
- Storytellers can discuss their experiences amongst one another and take a sneak peek at each woman's final product.

**Distribution**

The possibilities to make DVDs, post online (YouTube, Vimeo, St. John's Native

Friendship Centre homepage) are endless living in a digital age. However, the distribution process may not take place. The storytellers are sharing very intimate details and sensitive topics.

- Storytellers may choose to do something as a collective with their work or nothing at all.
- If stories are to be shared, stories will be copyright-friendly and the appropriate measures for permission to distribute will be obtained.
- Each woman owns the rights to her story, so at the end of the workshop we will discuss the dissemination process. Additionally during the informal interviews when the storytellers have had more time to reflect upon the workshops, it may be discussed then.

It should be noted that time is a variable in this research project, so certain elements may be tailored, also digital storytelling is not a linear process, certain steps may take longer or less time depending on the enthusiasm of women. It is impossible to say at this stage that each step will run exactly as planned. However, respect and patience will always be applied and if certain storytellers require additional assistance, the research team will do its best to accommodate each woman. In addition, throughout our workshops snack and lunch breaks will be provided as well. The PI and Community Lead will continuously be reminding women that participation is voluntary. The PI and the Community Lead both understand the sensitive nature of sharing personal stories and they will continuously be checking up on women, asking each woman how the process is going and if she feels comfortable.

### **Participant support persons.**

Women will be given the option of having a family support person with them to help them with the technology and providing emotional support, as well as just for sharing traditional knowledge (e.g., mother and daughter; elder and young woman). The concept behind this, is that story sharing is for everyone; Digital Storytelling is rooted in community and giving voice to those who are historically oppressed. For family members, this is a wonderful time to share, learn, and take part in traditional knowledge. These additional women (no children or men will be present) will each sign an oath of confidentiality (Refer to Appendix 7).

### **Training in Digital Storytelling.**

A female Indigenous summer undergraduate research assistant trained and experienced in digital media is in the process of being hired to assist with the research project and will be present throughout the workshop.

Derek Norman, with the Digital Research Centre for Qualitative Fieldwork at Memorial University, is a consultant and educator to this research project. Before the research project begins, the PI, Community Lead, and 2 staff facilitators, along with the research assistant, will take part in a training workshop with him. He will demonstrate how to properly use the computer software programs that will be included in the research project. Additionally, the PI will provide the team with external web-links that offer resources on how to facilitate workshop sessions.

Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman, Faculty of Education at Memorial, has documentary film experience including experience with digital media. She is a supervisory committee member and advisor to this research project.

**Empowerment and Disempowerment.** Digital Storytelling has the potential to either empower or disempower participants due to the nature of sensitive topics. Therefore, it is important to begin and end each workshop with positivity, empowerment, and celebration. Each session will begin with a traditional smudging and close with ceremony, prayer, and positive story sharing.

**Open-Ended Informal Interviews.** Women who had indicated in the consent process that they wish to be contacted for participation in the interview will be contacted by telephone (Refer to Appendix 8) and a time and place arranged for the interview. Because of the sensitive nature of the interviews, the PI will receive in-depth training from Dr. Brunger on the conduct of interviews where distress may result. As with the digital storytelling session, the social worker will be on standby and the two SJNFC staff trained in crisis intervention will be on-site and available if required. Interviews will be conducted in an office of the SJNFC with only the interviewee and the PI present in the room. Before beginning the interview, the consent form will be reviewed and signed. Interviews will be informal, conversation-style, and open-ended. The goals of the interviews are to elicit opinions and feelings regarding the phenomenon of violence and abuse, as well as their history with the SJNFC programs and activities. While the specific questions will be formulated in light of information gained from the narratives, some questions will be specific to how women perceive the programs at the SJNFC (Refer to Appendix 9 for Sample Preliminary Interview Guide). It is appreciated that some women may have changed their mind; in that case, they will be thanked for their time with the digital storytelling and no interview time will be arranged.

**Analysis and Outcome.** Using thematic coding, the interviews and stories will be analyzed together, and a refined set of themes will be identified. One focus of the analytic themes will be practical information of use for identifying strengths, challenges and strategies for the SJNFC to employ in programming for women who have lived through violence. A second focus of the analysis will be the experience of violence and healing in the context of the social, economic and cultural violence of colonialism. This emphasis will inform the academic work of advancing decolonizing theory in research on Indigenous women's health and wellbeing.

Preliminary themes will be shared with staff and participants at the Centre through an informal focus group in the context of one of the women's programs, to determine that the findings 'fit' with community members' experiences. As well, participants will be invited to show case their stories at the SJNFC Women's Cultural Retreat in Fall/Winter 2014. This important and much anticipated annual event allows women to connect with nature, share stories, and take part in traditional activities to learn new skills attributing to empowerment. The retreat will enable the researcher to observe stories about the story making, to further inform and refine the analysis. At the retreat, we will set up a video projector and women who have given written consent may present their video in front of other members at the retreat. This will be treated as a film

screening and this event will allow for women to feel proud, accomplished, and inspired having completed such an intensive workshop. The presentation seeks to inspire other women to break their silence and to speak out against violence. It will be emphasized to women that participation in this event is voluntary.

### **Ethics as Process**

Using arts-based methods may be an effective strategy to actively engage women in dialogue and to share stories of empowerment, trauma, activism, and resilience. However, the use of personal narratives, photographs, video, and other art forms may be perceived as intrusive and may lead to unintended consequences (Riley & Manias, 2003). This research project has been created to respect and adhere to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2) guidelines, with particular attention to Chapter 9 on research involving First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

The ethics procedure can be best described as a reciprocal translation of knowledge between all members (Kovach, 2009). Throughout this research project, ethics will be viewed as a process, not as a one-off consent. For example, already at the design phase, constant dialogue was facilitated between the PI, the SJNFC management and the Community Lead about how to create an ethically appropriate design to implement the research project. Decision-making about the content, ownership and distribution of the stories will include the storytellers themselves and will be at the forefront of this ongoing dialogue.

I have paid particular attention to the literature on arts-based approaches to research in designing the appropriate procedures. There are several ethical concerns that need to be considered in this research project. This study does involve a level of risk and ensuring participant safety is priority. The process of having women recall their lived experiences of possible violence may elicit triggers and stressors. Moreover, participants involved may currently be in an abusive relationship and may suffer from abuse for participating. To minimize risks, workshops will take place at the SJNFC and programs involving men will not take place at the same time. Moreover, the rooms in which the workshops and interviews will take place require swipe entry (staff members have access only and community members are required to be buzzed in). The following have been taken into consideration:

**(1) Identity.** Some participants will choose to remain unidentifiable in their films, relying on pictures or drawings, or blurring of one's face. Others will decide to be credited with their productions, for example attaching their name or filming their face. This decision about how each participant would like to be recognized will be made mutually throughout the process of filming and postproduction. If a participant chooses to remain anonymous, any identifying information will be altered to protect her identity.

**(2) Privacy of others.** If a participant would like to include the photograph of another individual not involved in the research project, consent must be sought from the other individual. This can be done through hand-written permission from an individual before their picture or video is taken. It is also possible to take photographs from a far distance or once again blur faces. However, because this is research, the use of photos of other people will be highly discouraged and the discussion as to the risks will be discussed at the beginning of the workshop. Women will be told that they cannot include images of

children, as children do not have the capacity to provide consent and the benefits to this research project are not worth any potential risks to children who are identified.

Additionally, if women choose to discuss other people in their stories, names will be changed and if need be certain parts of the story will be edited out to protect the identity of the individual. Participants will be told verbally that no one is permitted to use a photo of their community if the photo/image may identify their community or if the participant says or implies something about their community.

**(3) Misrepresentation.** Before each workshop, it will be discussed that if a participant chooses to include a photograph from their community, it is important to consider misrepresentation of issues and individuals. Using images of other people will be discouraged.

**(4) Consent for use of final product.** The final product produced during the workshops is the property of the storyteller/artist. I will obtain written consent for release of copyright from each woman before using any film, image or voice clip in research dissemination. The SJNFC will invite women to consider sharing their film as part of a violence prevention resource tool – this is between participants and the SJNFC and is beyond the scope of the research project. That discussion will take place at the end of the workshop, allowing women to discuss as a group how the stories will be disseminated and at what level.

**Risks related to emotional discussions of violence history.** This is a doubly vulnerable group: women who self-identify as Indigenous and have suffered violence. Some women may also be economically disadvantaged, and some may be elderly. Therefore, this research project on violence with these women must be done with the utmost sensitivity. A number of interventions have been put in place in the event that psychological distress occurs during, or as a result of, this research project:

- 1) The SJNFC Women's Culture Support Worker, Amelia Reimer is trained in crisis intervention and will be a volunteer present at the workshops.
- 2) A SJNFC staff member, Chris Sheppard, is trained in crisis intervention and he will be readily accessible on-site at the time of the workshops.
- 3) A social worker affiliated with the SJNFC, Jennifer Mercer has agreed to be available to this research project to provide crisis or follow-up counselling.

As well, the SJNFC Community Lead (Breannah Tulk), staff crisis counsellor (Chris Sheppard) and Women's Culture Support Worker are intimately familiar with the lives of these women and have collaborated in the design of this study. They believe that the risks of psychological distress related to this research are appropriately balanced by the benefits to women. As well, Dr. Fern Brunger is a trained crisis counsellor who has worked extensively in crisis shelters with women victims of conjugal violence, further ensuring that the design and conduct of the research has been sensitive to the needs of this very vulnerable population. Additionally, throughout workshops and interviews, women will be informed of the safeguards that have been put in place and continuously asked if they feel comfortable proceeding throughout the process.

**Privacy and confidentiality.** For data security purposes, hard copies of data will be stored and locked in the office of Dr. Brunger at Memorial University in a locked cabinet. Electronic information will be password protected and stored on an encrypted computer and only the PI and her supervisor (Brunger) will have access to the information. All

members of the research project will sign an oath of confidentiality. This includes staff facilitators, researchers, volunteers (women's support persons), and the research assistant.

**Retention of Data.** Data retention in this research project is complex, as one form of the data is art. Women will retain ownership (copyright) of their digital story, on a DVD. Women will also have the option of consenting for a DVD copy of their digital story to be kept by the SJNFC for future programs in violence prevention, with the ongoing option of having that DVD returned to the woman should she change her mind. Note that, this falls outside of the research aspect of the research project.

The PI will have the USB keys containing all of the digital stories (one USB key per participant). Those files (encrypted and locked in a filing cabinet at Memorial when not being used for analysis) will be kept for 5 years and then destroyed. The only person who will have the data from the interviews is the PI; that interview data will also be kept locked at Memorial. The USB keys will be coded, and the list of code numbers with participant names will be kept locked up in Dr. Brunger's office separate from the data itself. Once the audio recordings of interviews have been transcribed, the voice recording will be destroyed. A different (second) code will be created for the audio recordings and transcripts. The reason for this is that the Community Lead will see the code assigned to the USB keys during the digital storytelling workshop; and she is helping with thematic analysis of the interviews. However, she cannot know which woman is associated with which interview transcript. Therefore, the transcripts will not be coded with the same code as the USB keys are.

Memorial University requires researchers to keep records for a period of five years upon the completion of the study. Afterwards, a private company that specializes in paper shredding will destroy all paper data. Understandably, the woman's copy of her own digital story is her responsibility and outside of the purview of the researcher once it is complete. De-identified data, password protected and encrypted if electronic, will be locked in a filing cabinet. The only individuals who will have access to this cabinet will be the PI and her supervisor (Brunger). All materials are kept in the locked office of Dr. Fern Brunger, Division of Community Health and Humanities, Faculty of Medicine.

**Reimbursements and Payments.** Participants will be given an honorarium of \$50. Women will be told about this amount when the research project is introduced. Payment will be made after the open-ended interview is completed; if a woman decides to finish the study early, she will still receive the full amount. The rationale behind the honorarium is the time-consuming nature of this research project. Participants are asked to give 20 hours of their time for the intensive Digital Storytelling workshops. This amount is viewed as a small incentive for women to enroll compared to the time given. Given the intense time commitment for this research project, it is felt that announcing the reimbursement, as an incentive during recruitment is appropriate. Transportation, healthy foods, and childcare are provided in-kind from the SJNFC – these services are always provided for members during events and activities. The Elder (Emma Reelis) will be thanked with \$350 in gift certificates, an amount that is standard for Elder advice.

**Limitations.** Our research project is taking place at the St. John's Native Friendship

Centre. Digital Storytelling requires approximately 20 hours of each participant's time. It is a large commitment and women may be deterred from participating due to prior engagements.

### **Research Setting**

The research project was initiated at the request of the SJNFC. The PI has been volunteering at the SJNFC since September 2013 and will continue her role as a facilitator with the Elder's Tea, enabling her to contextualize the research through ongoing participant observation.

The St. John's Native Friendship Centre is the only Indigenous-based not-for-profit in St. John's. The SJNFC offers a variety of cultural/wellness programs, including sewing circles, volleyball teams, tea and healing circles, and cultural retreats. These programs provide women with a safe and welcoming environment where they can participate in traditional Indigenous skill-building activities. Healing is promoted through peer interaction and sharing experiences, combining the therapeutic value of creative arts.

The SJNFC is part of the larger network of the National Association of Friendship Centres distributed across Canada. The SJNFC is open all to community members in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is 'status blind', in other words any person may become a member of the Centre and participate in activities and avail of the services for a small annual fee. Aside from serving the needs of urban Métis, Inuit, and First Nations, those flying from northern and remote areas of the province to St. John's to access health care also avail of the services. The Centre is a 'hub' for transient populations and for patients. Improving health, preventing violence, and developing strong community leaders are just some of the important goals that the Centre continues to strive toward in its regular programming.

**Research team.** This research is being conducted in partnership with the St. John's Native Friendship Centre. An Elder Advisor and the Women's Policy Office are collaborators (Refer to Appendix 10 for the details of the Research Team).

### **Implications and Knowledge Translation (KT)**

**1. Community violence prevention strategies.** This research will provide specific recommendations in the form of a written report on the needs, strategies, and challenges of the services offered at the SJNFC. This research will aid in establishing a baseline for the Centre for future program monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, this information may be used in future applications to provincial and federal government departments to secure long term funding for violence prevention services.

**2. Community healing strategies.** Digital Storytelling, as an arts-based methodology, is in itself healing and it is anticipated that the act of participating in the research will be beneficial to participants. A specific related outcome for the SJNFC will be the collection of women's stories, which can then be used as part of future healing programs at the SJNFC.

**3. Nationally, inform strategies for healing and violence prevention.** This examination of the challenges, strategies and best practices for violence prevention programming at the SJNFC will inform community-based healing and prevention initiatives in Canada and elsewhere.

**4. Advancement of academic knowledge on Indigenous wellbeing.** Finally, this

research will constitute a Master's thesis project that advances decolonizing theories and methodologies related to Indigenous women's experiences of violence through academic publications.

Please refer to Appendices 11 and 12 for Timeline and Budget.

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