Northern Aboriginal Girls and Their Mediated Worlds

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Abstract

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This thesis explores how northern Aboriginal girls use media in their daily lives and identity negotiations. Using participatory action research methodologies, namely Photovoice, I examine how a group of Tłı̨chǫ girls in the isolated community of Behchokö, Northwest Territories engage with and discuss media, particularly as it relates to their conceptions of themselves and their community. This research demonstrates that participants are deeply engaged with media and the global discourses it transmits. Drawing on critical scholarship in girlhood studies, critical indigenous studies, rurality, resilience and identity studies, I argue that these youth have a tendency to see their traditional culture as inconsistent or incompatible with this media and dominant culture, resulting in a fractured sense of identity. To aid in dealing with this conflicted identity and bolster their self-concepts as strong, resilient people, I argue, participants draw narratives of strength out of the many different types of media they encounter. These narratives of strength contribute to an emergent sense of injustice that relates to global discourses on marginalization, structural racism, and the past, present and future experiences of Aboriginal peoples.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Behchokö, Northwest Territories, lies a lonely hour's drive northwest of Yellowknife at the tip of the north arm of Great Slave Lake. The community is made up of two town sites: Rae and Edzo, connected by a 24-kilometre stretch of the Mackenzie Highway, the main artery connecting the Northwest Territories with parts of Canada south of the 60th parallel. In 2005, Rae and Edzo were incorporated and renamed Behchokö, meaning `big knife' in Tłı̨chǫ. The community is at the heart of the ancestral territory of the Tłı̨chǫ, part of the Dene First Nation; almost 90% of the population is Dene ("Community Profile: Behchokö," 2006). Behchokö is the largest and southernmost of the four Tłı̨chǫ communities and the centre of community government. Like many small communities, terminology is slow to change: residents still say they live in either Rae or Edzo, and many refer to their people and their language as Dogrib, the colonial-era English-language term for the Tłı̨chǫ ("Tłı̨chǫ: As long as this land shall last," 2015).

My first field visit for this project was in December, when several feet of snow blanketed the ground threaded by snowmobile tracks crisscrossing the sides of the highway. Just before the turnoff to Rae on the Mackenzie Highway, a sign warns that alcohol is prohibited in Behchokö. A right turn off the highway leads towards Rae, where the forest of stunted northern pines gives way to a series of squat, colourful buildings. The Tłı̨chǫ Government flag, a brilliant yellow sun rising over a flowing river and four red tents, flies on many of them. I began my visit at the Tłı̨chǫ Research Institute, an organization formed by the Tłı̨chǫ Government to encourage and support northern academic research. The Institute is an arm of the Tłı̨chǫ Government, which was formalized in 2005. The Tłı̨chǫ Community Services Agency (TCSA) is another, created by the government to manage health, social services, and education ("Tłı̨chǫ intergovernmental services agreement," 2005). The TCSA is widely considered to be a success and was recognized with a Public Service Award from the United Nations in 2006 for its holistic, integrated model and its emphasis on cultural relevance ("UN Public Service Awards," 2007). Behchokö and the other communities of the Tłı̨chǫ are known for their strong community government and cultural programming.

At the Institute, I met my government-designated research contact, Cecilia Zoe-Martin. Cecilia was invaluable in the development of my research project, helping me to navigate the processes of development and to gain access to my participants and Chief Jimmy Bruneau Regional High School in Edzo, where my project took place. Cecilia and I first visited the school during its lunch hour, when the sun was just peaking in the sky, about to begin its descent. In midwinter, this part of the world sees the sun for only a few short hours, meaning that people make their way to and from work and school in the dark. Youth who live in Rae board a bus in the winter darkness that takes them back to the highway, for the 15-kilometre journey into Edzo to attend Chief Jimmy Bruneau Regional High School (CJBS). Cecilia and I followed the same route, crossing over the Edzo bridge, while she told me about the school. Named after the prolific Tłı̨chǫ Chief Jimmy Bruneau, the school was opened in 1972 by the eponymous leader and former Prime Minister Jean Chretien, then Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The school, according to Cecilia, is a significant source of pride for the community, in part due to its strong cultural curriculum. Students are taught traditional Dene hunting and fishing skills, history, and language. In fact, the Tłı̨chǫ language is the healthiest of the Northwest Territories' Aboriginal languages, though it does show some signs of degradation ("Tłı̨chǫ Language, Culture and Way of Life," 2013).

Edzo is closer to the highway than Rae and in spite of the biting December cold Elders huddled at the junction, waiting to hitchhike a ride to Rae or Yellowknife. A few hundred metres down the road, Cecilia and I arrived at the sprawling, one-story building of CJBS. Younger kids were playing outside, running back and forth in their snowsuits, while older youth stood around in bunched circles, backs against the wind. Cecilia used to be a cultural studies teacher here, and was a class favourite; several students ran up to greet and hug her as we walked down the school corridor. She spoke English with them, but when we passed one of her former colleagues, she paused to catch up in Tłı̨chǫ. In a small conference room, where my workshop took place over the month, my participants gathered for our initial meet and greet.

The project and participants

My thesis research explores the interplay between media and identity for northern Aboriginal girls. To that end, in December 2014, I facilitated five participatory media workshop sessions over three weeks at the CJBS. Between five and eight girls met in each session to

discuss different types of media, how participants use them, and what they think and feel about dominant media narratives in relation to their unique subject locations as Tłı̨chǫ girls in Behchokö. Mixing focus groups and Photovoice methodologies, workshops centred on creating a photo album that represented my participants as individuals and as a group. The final product, titled *#AboriginalGirls! Dis Generation Doe*, is attached as the first appendix to this document. Together, these workshops and this book provided the data for this masters' thesis, *Northern Aboriginal Girls and their Mediated Worlds*. Throughout this thesis, I have placed photos of participants taken during the workshop. These photos are intended to act as a form of presence for participants, to ensure that their voices and experiences are first and foremost in the minds of the reader.

Originally, eight participants were selected by their principal to attend the workshop. However, only five participated consistently and submitted both their personal and their parental consent forms. These are the girls that I focus on throughout this thesis, and I am indebted to them for their active engagement, interest, humour and camaraderie throughout my research.

Figure 1: From left, Boronica, Kaiyra, Kailyn, Mavis, and Pearl.

Boronica (13), Kailyn (14), Kaiyra (14), Mavis (13), and Pearl (14) are all grade eight and nine students at CJBS. They are all Tłı̨chǫ, and have all lived in Behchokö their whole lives. Out of the group, Pearl is the only one who lives in Edzo; the rest live in Rae and take the bus to

school. When I first met them, they were excited to be out of class, and their enthusiasm bubbled over in their conversation. Insofar as anyone can be `typical,' their conversation was particularly typical of teenage girls: flitting from Justin Bieber's latest racy photo shoot, to who was going snowmobiling that evening, to gossip over the brawl that broke out at last spring's high school graduation ceremony.

Congruently with other Aboriginal populations, Behchokö's population is significantly younger than that of the rest of the country, with an average age of 25 years as opposed to Canada's average of 39 years ("Tłı̨chǫ Language, Culture and Way of Life," 2013). My participants are part of this swelling cohort of youth, who are often seen as problems rather than products of their surroundings. Like many other First Nations youth across Canada, Behchokö's young people shoulder a much higher burden of risk than the mainstream Canadian population ("Community Profile: Behchokö," 2006; Hopkins, 2011a, 2011c). The social ills of Behchokö ring familiar: gang and domestic violence, sexual assault, substance abuse, and broken families are all familiar tropes to those acquainted with discourses around Aboriginal communities in Canada. The resource boom in the territory over the past few decades has contributed to these problems. A 2005 Government of the Northwest Territories report from the Department of Health and Social Services found that since the regional influx of diamond mines beginning in the late 1990s, Behchokö, along with other northern communities, has experienced significant increases in alcohol and drug use, violent and nonviolent crime, and sexually transmitted infections ("Communities and Diamonds," 2006). While the small populations of Northwest Territories' communities make statistics difficult to come by, youth suicide is a consistent affliction in the region. In spite of their age, my participants are no strangers to suicide: in the summer of 2014, a few months before my arrival, a boy in their age group took his own life.

While I do not want to contribute to paternalistic handwringing over the state of Aboriginal youth, these social ills are undoubtedly interwoven into the everyday lives of my participants. The aforementioned graduation fight, for example, provides an example of how youth in the community are often seen as a source of trouble. The incident began with a dispute between groups of teenage boys that spiralled into a public dust-up, captured on young people's camera phones and uploaded to YouTube[1]. The police, according to my participants, slammed

1 http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x10dx6w_behchoko-n-w-t-youth-posting-fight-videos-online_news

down hard on community' s young people, and Elders and leaders publicly lamented the state of youth in the community today ("Youth violence rising in Northwest Territories community," 2013). According to my participants, all youth in Behchokö were tarred with the same brush and publicly maligned as being violent, drunk, and troublesome. Through this singular incident, their peer group has come to represent the many social ills of the community. Media coverage of the event contributed to their sense of being misjudged and misunderstood. The fact that the graduation fight, along with other youth fights in the community, were captured on a mobile phone and uploaded to YouTube is a telling element of the story. Unlike many communities in the Northwest Territories, Behchokö has full Internet, satellite and cable access, as well as 3G mobile phone service. This technology is entwined into the everyday lives of participants; as they tell me this story, several of them pull up the fight on their smartphones, eager to show me the video. It is this integration of new and traditional media into the lives and daily experiences of my participants and how it plays in to their self-concepts that I seek to explore through this project.

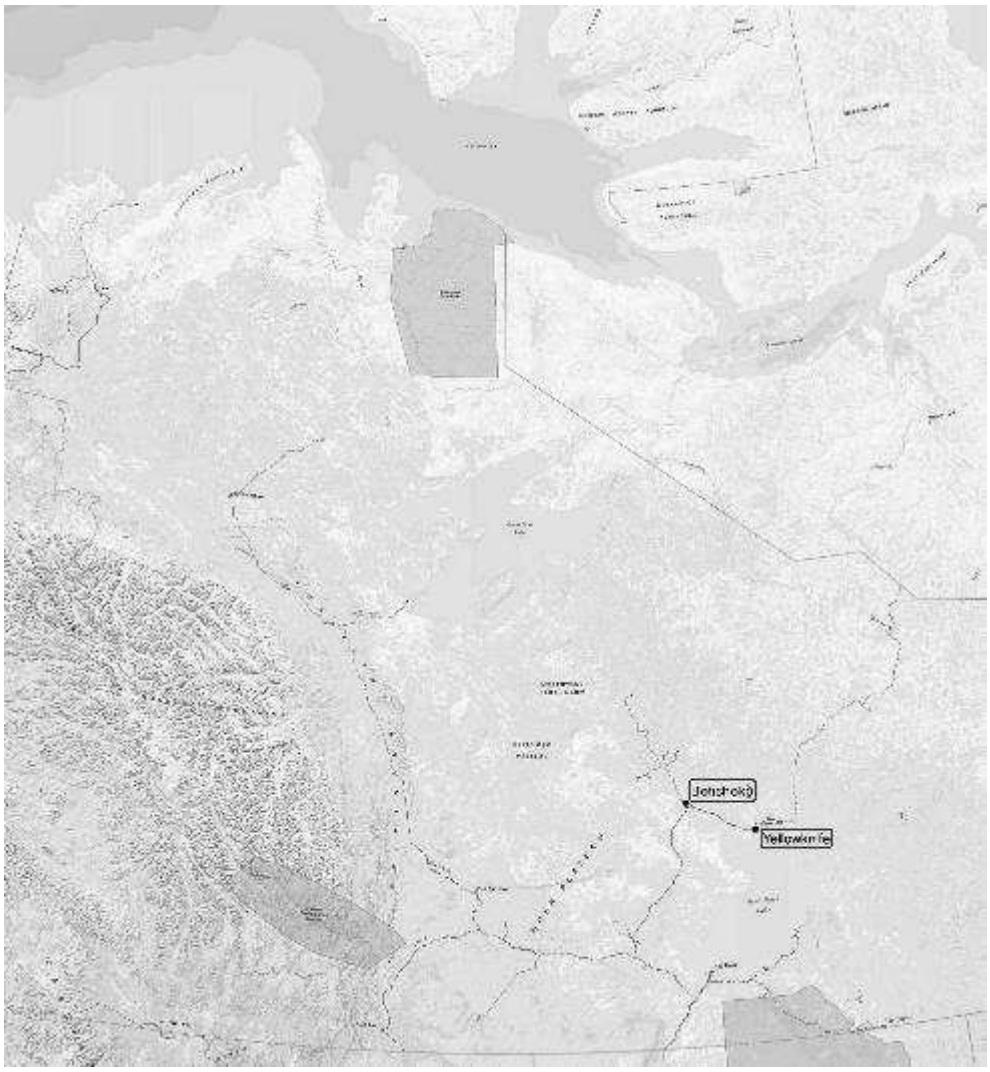

Figure 2: Map of the Northwest Territories featuring Behchokö and Yellowknife. Courtesy of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Research question and premise

In the example of the graduation fight, Boronica, Kailyn, Kaiyra, Mavis and Pearl resisted what they read as misrepresentations from regional media, asserting that news coverage of the graduation fight made all youth look violent, while in reality it was only a small subset of their peer group who acted this way. These representations, they argued, make outsiders see young people in Behchokö as delinquents. In the same conversation, two of the participants discussed their own experience fighting others, and the entire group asserted the importance of keeping videos of fights from being shared on social media and thus from the judgmental eyes of outsiders and authority figures. Rather than considering media portrayals as signifying static

representations of meaning, instead I consider the ways in which my participants create meaning for themselves as individuals and a group. This group regarded representations of youth violence conveyed through the coverage of the graduation fight as unfairly judgmental. By reading media coverage in this way, participants solidified their belief that outsiders were critical and not to be trusted, and shifted their behaviour when fighting and concealing video evidence of other fights. The example demonstrates a way in which media representations form part of the iterative process of meaning making for my participants, coming to shape aspects of their lived realities (Hall, 1997).

From the premise that media representations are part of the meaning making process, I question how that might play in to the development of self-concepts, or identity, for my participants. A significant body of research in girlhood studies shows that girls form their identities in part through identifying with the different groups they see in the media, as well as through communicating and negotiating relationships with their peers. Northern Aboriginal girls may feel unfairly represented in regional news media, but they also have countless other types of media to consider, from Hollywood films to multiplayer online games to local entertainment media. Complicating the paradigm, the advent of web 2.0 and the increasing access to and integration of online and mobile media has shifted much of the control of online discourses to audiences. With this in mind, I consider the following research question: How do Aboriginal girls in rural Northern communities negotiate their unique identities through the media they create and consume, especially online and social media?

This exploration is intended to contribute to the research literature primarily by shining a light on a part of the population that receives little attention – northern Aboriginal girls. As I will outline in the literature review, girls are often the source of much cultural angst. Racialized girls in particular frequently find themselves at the centre of debates about changing national culture. In Canada, First Nations and Inuit peoples, including and especially Aboriginal women, are at the heart of fraught debates over Canada's historical and future identity. However, it is less often that we hear their voices and explore their lives from their own perspectives. Canada's north is so widely understudied that much of the popular imaginary is replete with exoticized views of untamed wilderness and traditional peoples, when thought about at all. Grounded in critical pedagogy, this study strives to give voice to northern Aboriginal girls.

Recent technological changes have significantly influenced the lived realities of northerners. This is especially true of communication technologies such as mobile phones, computers and online access. In contrast to the empty tundra imagined by much of Canadian cultural discourse, many communities in the north are fully connected to the Internet and have full cell phone service and satellite access in their communities – including Behchokö. Within this context, the present research adds to the growing body of literature on the way girls are using the Internet and new technologies to negotiate their relationships and their identities.

Why participatory methods?

In pursuing this research, I decided on participatory methods for two reasons. Foremost, I find my own work most rewarding and fruitful when it directly involves people who utilize and share their perspectives. In addition, Participatory Action Research (PAR) is considered to be a methodology of choice when working with marginalized groups, especially indigenous groups. For this reason, PAR emerged as the clear choice of methodology for this project. As I read more about PAR, girls and media, resilience, and bicultural identity, it became obvious that Behchokö would be the perfect location for my research. With its strong cultural programming and unique geographic and sociocultural location, Behchokö suited my need for relative isolation, technological access and integration, and a strong community culture. I also knew that the Tłı̨chǫ Government was supportive of research in their communities, and that their buy-in in addition to the support of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment would likely lead to on-the-ground support for the project. Through the support and facilitation of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, the Tłı̨chǫ Research Institute, and Chief Jimmy Bruneau Regional High School, this research project was made possible.

It is important that I note that, while my theoretical grounding strives for emancipatory research, my research still took place within the various structures of power that constrain the voices of my participants. Because of my position and these influences, the stories contained in this thesis are, necessarily, sanitized. While my aim was always to be true to participants' voices, ultimately, I am responsible for any misjudgments that may occur as a result of my work.

In the spirit of critical pedagogy, I have tried to acknowledge the individuality of each participant, resisting homogenizing their identities by simply referring to them as a group. Instead, I have used their names and their voices whenever possible and acknowledged differing

perspectives. When sensitive issues are discussed, I use pseudonyms to ensure the privacy of my participants. My desire with this thesis is to create a narrative that weaves together the voices and insights of a small group of participants living their own unique lives. Through focused qualitative participatory research I believe individuals and groups who find themselves pushed to the margins can be better heard and valued. Canada's northern Aboriginal girls are frequently left out of the narrative and represented as being at the whim of the forces that govern their lives: the state, mass media, local authorities, their parents. Too often they are stripped of their agency. I hope to challenge these assumptions by presenting a three-dimensional picture of the media negotiations of a vibrant, agentic, funny group of girls.

Insider or outsider? Subject location and White privilege

As I facilitated these workshops, listened to and got to know the participants, I was continually impressed by their humour, energy and intelligence. Their vivacity and individuality made writing this thesis even more compelling. This was not the first time I have worked with northern girls. In 2011, I began volunteering at Girlspace, an after-school YWCA drop-in program for girls in my hometown of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. I count this time as personally transformative. The participants' sharp intelligence when talking about issues such as body image, peer pressure, and media made a deep impression on me. The time I spent with them shifted the direction of my future work, making me want to combine my career in communications and activism in northern women's issues to work in empowerment-focused youth-centred programming.

At the same time as I was beginning to think about how to move forward in a social change-focused career path, four indigenous women in Saskatchewan were developing an unprecedented social movement: Idle No More. Since its inception in December 2012, the grassroots movement has spread worldwide and sparked important dialogue on many levels. I found myself paying more attention to Idle No More and recognizing a burgeoning sea change in Canadian cultural discourse that went beyond addressing Aboriginal issues. More and more, I feel, space is being made in Canadian cultural discourse, albeit not always willingly, to discuss inclusion, social justice, and the construction of a more equitable society based on the recognition of the injustices meted out to indigenous peoples through mass genocide, the theft of their lands, and destruction of their cultures.

Growing up in Yellowknife as a non-Aboriginal person, I was aware of, but have always felt separate from, Aboriginal issues and culture. The changing face of social activism in the last five years has made me shift my paradigm towards one that is more inclusive and aware, one that believes that only when the unique experiences of marginalized groups are publicly recognized and valued, will lasting change happen. That, broadly, is why I decided to focus on northern Aboriginal girls in my work. However, while I share a geographic location and am familiar with the sociocultural contexts, I am cognizant, nonetheless, that their experiences are vastly different than my own. Reflecting on my own subject location, I have always found that the northern voice is missing from much of the Canadian public conversation. The diversity and unique culture of the north is often erased, replaced by ideas of barren emptiness peopled by sparse clusters of Aboriginal peoples living traditional lifestyles, reinforcing the Canadian frontier psyche.

As this project is based in an Aboriginal community and draws from critical indigenous studies, it is crucial that I consider my own position as a white researcher. Richard Dyer's book *White* (1997) provides a good place to start. Beginning to interrogate my own whiteness is an uncomfortable prospect, one which I have had the privilege of avoiding much of my life. In studies of media representation, where I began to lay my project's foundations, whiteness is the default setting – the norm against which representations of difference are measured. Dyer remarks that "at the level of racial representation [] whites are not of a certain race, they're just the human race" (p. 3). By acknowledging whiteness as a racial category while simultaneously emphasizing the biological invalidity of such categories of race, Dyer attempts to "mak[e] whiteness strange" (p. 4). Increasingly in the social sciences, the silent norm of whiteness is being questioned and deconstructed, "to dislodge them/us from the position of power" (p. 2). It is not enough to simply acknowledge that I do not share the burden of representation that marks the representations of Aboriginal women I am dealing with in this paper, but rather to step back and attempt to make space for the agentic voices of other groups. I do not presume to say that I have accomplished this in this thesis, but I hope that I have taken steps in the right direction. By studying northern Aboriginal girls, I do not mean to imply that they are a departure from the "natural, inevitable, ordinary way of being human" (p. 141). Rather, I hope to emphasize and celebrate their lives and lived experiences. Acknowledging and interrogating one's privileges is a

continual project, and throughout this paper I have tried to check and re-check myself and, when reflecting, have considered my own subject position as a complicating factor.

From a more practical stance, it is necessary to reflect upon the ways in which my subject location affected my research on the ground. The overall structure and the expectations I brought to the project were doubtlessly informed by the privilege I carry with me. While my intentions are always to empower my participants and strive for a just and equal society, as a white settler researcher, I have access to unearned opportunities. As Peggy McIntosh writes in "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (2008), white privilege is "an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day (…)" (p. 388). In the Northwest Territories, with the relatively recent influx of a settler population, ongoing legacy of residential schools, and continual treaty disputes, being a white Northerner may be even more fraught. During the development of the project, my status as a white Yellowknifer and personal connections gained through my work experience at the Government of the Northwest Territories allowed me to access the appropriate people and organizations who supported and facilitated my access to the community. Being from the north, I understand how to work in the northern context, and throughout the workshop, I positioned myself as a northerner and emphasized my northernness through my dress, language, and the ways in which I related to my participants' stories. It is important to note that in my case, northernness is something I feel I can, to an extent, switch on and off – a privilege not afforded to Aboriginal northerners. My white privilege protects me from hostility, bias, and other negative reactions that would make developing and facilitating this type of research more difficult for others. When entering into the workshop, I knew relationship building would have to take place, but I naturally could assume that the school staff and the participants would be neutral or nice to me – an assumption steeped in privilege (McIntosh, 2008). While encouraging my participants to be open and honest with me, and discussing issues like police abuse in their community and colonial structures of dominance, the types of critique that come naturally to me might have been transgressive, even dangerous, for my participants living as Aboriginal youth under a mainly white outsider authority structure.

I walked a line between insider and outsider status, often switching between the two in the course of one conversation. While I was often able to relate to my participants on a regional level, I also faced challenges throughout the workshop. Yellowknife, as the capital city and

regional centre, occupies a dominant position vis-à-vis other communities in the region. This is consistent with research in rural southern Canada, which demonstrates opposition between urban centres and smaller, rural surrounding areas (Cairns, 2014; Creed & Ching, 1997; Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2003). While throughout my life I have referred to anywhere south of the 60th parallel as `down south', I was, perhaps naively, surprised to find that my participants referred to Yellowknife as `down south'. Yellowknife residents are often seen as looking down on or being too good for the communities, as well as being predominantly white, in opposition to the Aboriginal communities. At one point in my research I witnessed my status lead to self-censorship from one of my participants. I had asked the participants to write down words that they associated with their community. Over half of them wrote the word `ghetto'. I asked them if this was how they felt, or if they felt that that was a word that other people used to characterize their community. They agreed that it was a word that outsiders thought and would use to describe Behchokö, and this exchange followed:

> Rachel: Why do you think people think that?
>
> Boronica: Because they're ghetto [laughs]. Because they think they're better than us.
>
> Rachel: Do you mean, like, people from Yellowknife or just down south in general?
>
> Boronica: From Yellowknife.
>
> Another girl[2]: Yeah [other girls nod in agreement]. `Cause they're all white! [Looks at Rachel, gasps] Sorry!
>
> Rachel: No, it's good, I'm here to talk to you guys, not to make any judgments. Why do you think people think that?
>
> Another girl: I don't get why people from N'dilo[3] say Rae's so ghetto when N'dilo looks just as ghetto as us.
>
> Boronica: Yeah, cause I've been to N'dilo before and it looks more ghetto than here (personal communication, December 2014).

2 This participant's name has been redacted because while she completed her personal consent form, she stopped attending after the third session and did not submit a parental consent form.

3 N'dilo is a small Dene community on the outskirts of Yellowknife with a population of approximately 200 people. Along with nearby Dettah, N'dilo is the home of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation.

It is clear here that my subjectivity as a white person from Yellowknife hindered the flow of the conversation and led to a subject change of people from N' dilo (Aboriginal people from Yellowknife) thinking Behchokö is `ghetto' rather than white people from Yellowknife. While this is the clearest example of self-censorship due to my subject location, there are other instances in which I felt my outsider status altered the conversation. While I find my northern upbringing to be a crucial part of my identity, in Behchokö my whiteness was emphasized by participants. However, by emphasizing my experience as a northerner through activities such as snowmobiling and discussing my experiences with the impact of drugs and alcohol addictions on northern communities with participants, I found some success in building credibility. I also found that my status as a relative youth helped me in relating to my participants. As our conversations revolved around media, I found my familiarity with social media platforms and most of their media consumption habits allowed me to relate to them on a user or fan level, which eased our conversations. At times I found that I did hold back on my personal views with my participants in order to encourage conversation or present a non-judgmental face to them. For example, several of my participants regularly used the words `gay' or `retarded' to describe things in a negative way. Normally when working with youth I would explain why these terms offend people and ask participants not to say them. In my workshops, however, I wanted my participants to speak freely and comfortably so I held back from bringing up the issue.

I have tried to examine and acknowledge my privilege, but often feel the task of trying to eliminate it is Sisyphean. McIntosh describes the advantages afforded to whiteness, and asks the question: "' Having described it, what will I do to lessen or end it?' " (p. 388). She continues:

> Though systemic change takes many decades, there are pressing questions for me and I imagine for some others like me if we raise our daily consciousness on the perquisites of being light-skinned. What will we do with such knowledge? As we know from watching men, it is an open question whether we will choose to use unearned advantage to weaken hidden systems of advantage, and whether we will use any of our arbitrarily-awarded power to try to reconstruct power systems on a broader base. (p. 388)

At the risk of grossly overstating the importance and implications of my project, I believe that creating space for alternative narratives is a small step towards a more equitable sharing of voice and power in society. I acknowledge the irony that I, a white researcher, am the one trying

to give voice to my participants through this thesis, but I hope that in some small way my participants felt their voices were legitimized through our workshop, and that in time their voices find more venues for expression and validation. In the meantime, my personal struggle to continually acknowledge my own privilege and give some of it up to create a more just society is ongoing.

Figure 3: From left, Mavis, Kaiyra, and Kailyn.

Chapter breakdown

In telling the story of how this project unfolded and what these girls had to say about their media use and their reactions to dominant media narratives, I have organized the thesis as follows**.** In the next chapter, "Mediating Identities in Canada's North", I present a comprehensive review of the literature, providing theoretical grounding for my project and laying the foundation for how northern Aboriginal girls see themselves reflected in the media and why this might be important to their evolving identities. The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first part, I introduce the literature on media representations for marginalized groups and how they might matter in both broad cultural discourses and individual identity formation processes. I discuss some of the burgeoning research on girls and the Internet, particularly web 2.0, and trace the influence of critical indigenous thought on my viewpoint. In the second section, I discuss the different ways in which northern Aboriginal girls might see discourses that relate to them in the media, and why this might matter. Finally, I localize these concepts, considering identity formation in Behchokö specifically, drawing attention to the existing research on resilience in the community.

In the third chapter, “Methodological Framework and Reflection on Methodology”, I describe the basis of my methodological grounding in participatory action research and Photovoice techniques, and discuss the concept of empowerment underpinning these methodologies. I outline some similar studies from which I draw upon in developing my methodology, designing the workshop sessions and data analysis. I consider ethical issues surrounding working with Aboriginal youth and conclude by reflecting on the lessons learned in the research process.

“Digital Natives and Narratives of Strength”, the fourth chapter, is split into four parts. The first section introduces the ways in which my participants are using media to play with self-presentation and negotiate relationships, with a focus on online gaming and mobile web 2.0 technologies. It presents a picture of my participants as engaged, fully connected and negotiating relationships and identities via the media as a seamless extension of real-life negotiations. The second section discusses the reported tensions participants feel between global dominant culture, often represented through media technology, and their local culture. This tension reveals a conflicting bicultural identity for participants, which can complicate identity formation. I consider the Behchokö community motto `strong like two people' as it relates to participants' identities. In the third section, I continue this vein and consider how participants view strength as crucial in dealing with the problems in their lives and communities, which they see as linked to the tensions discussed in the previous section. I discuss how participants read aspects of media narratives across different types of media to select, draw out, and identify with narratives of strength and resilience. I consider how this plays into their identities and conceptions of their community as a place requiring strength and resilience. I conclude by considering the ways in which these types of narratives could bolster the identities of my participants, supporting and motivating their personal self-concepts as strong, resilient people. In the fourth section, I offer an analysis of an event that demonstrates the points touched on in the previous three sections. This incident offers an example of the type of lived experience that contributes to a fractured bicultural identity, and the ways in which experiences connect in meaningful ways to global social and cultural discourses. It also demonstrates the ways in which participants use media to connect to these discourses, and what that might represent.

In my final chapter, I offer a reflection on my research and its key findings, discussing limitations, contributions, and implications for future research.

Chapter 2
Mediating Identities in Canada's North

How does the media context in which northern Aboriginal girls live influence their negotiations of identity? The objective of this chapter is to lay the foundations of my project in two sections. I begin by describing why media representations are indeed important to the identity formation of northern Aboriginal girls. I do this first by looking at theories of media representations and how they come to constitute cultural discourses, then by exploring media and identity formation theories, highlighting research into the use and implications of new technologies for identity formation. As the online and mobile media juggernaut continues to develop and take hold, these technologies provide an exciting and shifting landscape from which to consider media use in everyday negotiations of identity and relationships. I conclude the first section by presenting the theoretical underpinnings of the critical lens through which I explore issues of media representation. In the second section, I highlight the ways in which my participants, as northern Aboriginal girls, might see themselves and their peers represented (or not) in popular contemporary media. Drawing from studies of media representation, girlhood, Aboriginality and the North in the media, I describe the theoretical assumptions underlying the principal discourses concerning my participants and their particular subject locations. I then conclude by localizing these ideas and sketching out elements of cultural and community identity in Behchokö.

Section 1: Complicating concepts of representation and the media

Why do media representations matter? In *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, Shohat and Stam (1994) draw from media theory and cultural studies perspectives to argue that debates over cultural representations in media signify deeper issues and shifts in global cultural discourses. The authors look at different types of media representations, including alternative and non-Eurocentric media, to consider the significance of media discourses and the power structures that produce them. Eurocentrism in media texts, they argue, creates an implicit hierarchy that positions the West as epicentre of culture. This hierarchy often excludes the lived realities of marginalized groups or reduces their identities to stereotypical tropes that reinforce hegemonic power structures.

In “The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media”(Hall, 1981), Hall outlines how the media are both a powerful source of ideas and concepts about race and ethnicity and a place where these ideas and concepts are transformed, negotiated and iterated in culture. Hall explains that contemporary media representations of race demonstrate a subtle, non-explicit racism rooted in colonial conceptions of the `other' that function to re-produce these ideas and solidify them in cultural discourses. These types of misleading or exclusive representations make implicit claims about the real world, which are woven into the global cultural fabric. Given then that media representations represent profound relationships of power, can the cultural consequences of these discourses be mitigated by more diverse representation of lived realities? Shohat and Stam consider the futility of striving for truth in representations, when the concept of truth is itself slippery, diffracted and complex. “An obsession with `realism' casts the question as simply one of `errors' and `distortions,' ” they write, “as if the `truth' of a community were unproblematic, transparent, and easily accessible, and `lies' about that community easily unmasked” (1994, p. 178). While more control over representation could complicate simplistic assumptions about marginalized groups, what constitutes truth or reality within that group is still a matter of perspective, dwelling within multiple interlocking layers of power structures and sociocultural contexts. However, the acknowledgement that a singular representative `truth' cannot exist does not make the question of media representations and stereotypes a moot point. “That films are only representations does not prevent them from having real effects in the world (…),” Shohat and Stam argue (p. 178). Something is at stake when communities and individuals are invested in the truths that are believed about them. A poststructuralist perspective “reminds us that we live and dwell within language and representation, and have no direct access to the `real' ” (p. 179). The very real significance of misrepresentations requires a perspective that acknowledges them and their consequences without assuming that there can be truth in representation. This lens interrogates stereotypes, uncovering insidious prejudices and demonstrating how misrepresentations function as a tool of hegemonic power. A stereotype-focused approach also “highlight[s] the psychic devastation inflicted by systematically negative portrayals on those groups assaulted by them, whether through internalization of the stereotypes themselves or through the negative effects of their dissemination” (p. 198). Representations of marginalized groups can also be problematic in that they often carry a “burden of representation” (p. 183), wherein a subaltern character is seen as representative of his or her community, as

opposed to a character from the dominant group who is seen as an individual within a diverse community. Even portrayals hailed as positive or transformative can function to perpetuate hegemonic power structures, for example, by showering a character achieving success by conforming to dominant societal norms.

Representations, Shohat and Stam argue, are necessarily mediated versions of an already mediated experience of the world. "The issue, then, is less one of a pre-existing truth or reality than one of a specific orchestration of ideological discourses and communitarian perspectives," they write (p. 180). Through perpetuating and reproducing existing power structures, media subtly represents the "invisible but dominant consensus" of what is right and acceptable in a culture (Jiwani, 2006, p. 37). As northern Aboriginal girls in the contemporary moment, my participants find themselves immersed in a media landscape that has a significant impact on both cultural discourses and lived realities in Canada today.

Media representations and identity formation for marginalized groups

I have discussed how misrepresentations in media come to constitute cultural discourses, which in spite of their intangibility have a real influence on people, particularly marginalized groups. While I endeavor to avoid overstating media effects, it is undeniable that the media context in which my participants form their identities is significant in that it provides cultural scripts and reference points through which girls define themselves. My aim is not to indulge in a simplistic cause-and-effect correlation of media representations and identity, but to understand how these media messages might be negotiated in the processes of identity formation. Cultural and national identities are shifting more drastically than ever before. Hall writes that cultural identities are composed "not only of cultural institutions, but of symbols and representations. A national culture is a discourse – a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and our conceptions of ourselves" (pp. 292-293). The content of cultural discourses, then, forms a set of shifting meanings that make up our conceptions of who we are, informed in large part by media representations. In the latter part of the 20th century, the very idea of identity changed, Hall argues, wherein static identities based around the nation-state are being replaced by "a new articulation between `the global' and `the local'" (p. 304). New types of identities are shared, iterated and negotiated through global media faster than ever before. Shifting discourses

around national, regional, local and cultural identities may be especially relevant to Aboriginal girls in the north, who access these discourses from a unique, understudied subject location.

Research demonstrates that youth develop their senses of identity through making choices about which groups to affiliate themselves with, and that adolescence is a time where identity is at its most fluid (Erikson, 1968; Jensen & Arnett, 2012). Dominant media narratives form a large part of the cultural scripts available to girls during adolescent identity building (Driscoll, 2008), and the research shows that the highly social nature of girls' development in adolescence includes relationship building and negotiation through media consumption and discussions (Currie, Kelly, & Pomerantz, 2007; Duits, 2010; Kelly, 2006). However, I do not wish to over-emphasize the potential negative effects of exclusion or misrepresentation. Girls are not passive subjects of media domination, reduced to non-existence when they do not see themselves reflected in the media. Hall's (1980) concept of encoding and decoding in media messaging draws attention to how audiences read communications messages. Hall groups readings into three types: dominant, negotiated, and oppositional. An audience member can acknowledge their exclusion from a representation, oppose it, and still take pleasure in a media text, internalizing and celebrating some messages while critiquing or adapting others to their own contexts, as demonstrated by Duits (2010) and Currie et al. (2007). Research in media psychology demonstrates how audience members can pull messages out of different types of media, including media that may not represent them at all, to help them apply motivation and focus to their own personal goals (Prestin, 2013). This type of research shows how audiences pick and choose narrative threads that they can apply to their own lives and contexts, thereby underscoring their own agency.

In an eight-month ethnographic study in the Netherlands, Duits (2010) found that conversations about media played an important role in relationships and identity for a group of eighth grade girls. Duits describes how the television show *Charmed* played an important role in daily conversations, allowing girls to establish standards for group members and create status hierarchies. “Media talk is always a negotiation, it is constitutive of identity, and it is a way to formulate norms and standards,” she writes (p. 250). These conversations are performative; girls negotiate their positioning in relation to each other through touchpoints established by group discussions around the show. In one conversation, for example, one girl in the group raised her

status by sharing privileged pop culture information about the stars of *Charmed*, cementing her friendships with higher status group members. Duits posits that the standards drawn from media conversations are not always imitated from the text in question, rather, they are negotiated and created through iterative group discussion. "Through media talk the girls reflected on, but also cited different subject-positions, making these their own," she writes (p. 250). Rather than replicate the media texts, girls draw ideas out of them to consider and negotiate as part of their evolving identity formation. Girls negotiating media to make subject positions their own is a point taken up by Currie et al. (2007) in a study of girls and feminist subjectivity. In one of their interviews, a white middle-class girl referred to as GG tries to emulate black hip-hop artist and activist Lauryn Hill. By citing a strong affinity for Hill and comparisons made by others, GG "signals attraction to a category that results in a feeling of association rather than actual membership," they write (p. 384). GG describes Hill as her hero and states admiration for black people in general, showing pride in being compared to a black person. While not living the subject position of a black person, the participant uses her affinity for Hill to claim elements of that subjectivity and creates her own unique subject position.

These two examples demonstrate Hall's theory of media representation, wherein he argues that representations are constitutive – meaning that they are part of the meaning making process rather than a representation of meaning (1997). Using media discussion and negotiation, the girls in the examples above position themselves relative to their peers and discourses in popular culture in a way that creates and asserts their subjectivities. Representations come to constitute the available scripts and models to be emulated, opposed, adopted and adapted as girls form their identities (Griffin, 2004). As I will discuss later in the chapter, mainstream media entertainment tends to be dominated by a white, middle-class girlhood rooted in neoliberal ideals of consumption, raising the question as to the implications for racialized or otherwise marginalized girls as they form their identities.

Correa (2007) uses the example of rites of passage to consider difference in race and representation for girls and their identity formation. She argues that in Western media culture, traditionally white upper-class celebrations of womanhood such as a debutante ball or a prom tend to be portrayed as a normalized part of girlhood, in spite of the fact that many white girls of other classes would be barred economically from participating. In contrast, she writes, a Bat

Mitzvah or Quinceañara is much less likely to be represented in Western media. Through this omission, one type of girlhood is normalized, and girls who fall outside the dominant conception of girlhood may begin to feel that their experience is less valuable as a result. For marginalized girls, Correa writes, "the recognition of being `other' may become internalized as another aspect of life in which their identities as members of society are erased, silenced, or simply denied" (2007, p. 117).

Statistics are not available regarding what types of media girls in Behchokö utilize and consume, but there is little doubt that they are steeped in a media culture where youth spend a great deal of time in front of a television or computer screen (Mark, Boyce, & Janssen, 2006). Data from the present study, which will be discussed later in this document, show that a sample of Aboriginal girls in Behchokö engage primarily with southern entertainment media, including online games, with local and Aboriginal media being considered educational. For northern Aboriginal girls, navigating gender, race, and place is an already complex process complicated by the media context in which they find themselves, with a dominating southern media culture dwarfing local programming. My participants are also heavy users of online and social media, recent technology that has already dramatically shifted concepts of media and identity play.

Media 2.0, girls, and identity

The advent of Internet and web 2.0 technologies over the past few decades have led to a radical shift in the global media landscape. New mediascapes require attention and focus to be put on how girls are using this media and how it might influence their identities. The conceptual shift brought about by web 2.0, writes Nakamura, has altered the way we think about the possibilities of identity and the Internet:

> Web 1.0, or "cyber" space, conceptualized the Internet as an alternative reality, a different place in which one could exercise agency and live out fantasies of control. This control extended to all aspects of personal identity, including and especially race. Web 2.0 comes with a different imaginary. While it neither posits a postracial utopia based on racial abolitionism online nor envisions racialized others and primitives as signs of cosmopolitan technofetishism, it does make claims to harness collective intelligence by allowing everyone to participate in a more or less equal fashion. (Nakamura, 2008, pp. 1678-1679)

Web 2.0, that is, media that goes beyond static, one-to-one messages to multiple diffracted dialogues including countless viewpoints and users (O'Reilly, 2005), has vastly diversified the types of discourses accessible in Behchokö. As 13- and 14 year-olds, my participants have never lived in a world without cell phones or the Internet. Their interactions with others and the world around them are mediated through these devices and services, meaning important parts of their identity negotiation and access to cultural discourses take place online (Mazzarella, 2010; Roth, 2013).

From the early days of the Internet, online technologies have been hailed as liberatory. As Lemish contends, "the unique characteristics of the Internet – its expansiveness, accessibility, and decentralized nature – feed the aspiration and hope that it will serve to facilitate breaking down traditional power structures" (2010, p. x). The acceleration of communications has meant that people all over the world are now connecting, in real time, to people and discourses they may otherwise have never accessed. Moreover, despite some technological and financial barriers, the Internet is remarkably accessible and democratic – with a computer, connection, and basic skills, any user can become a producer of content. Compare this to the relative inaccessibility of television production, for example. This unprecedented inclusiveness has raised important questions for the field of media studies: "Does the Internet platform enable marginalized groups to be present? Does it serve as a tool for participatory democracy and empowerment?" (Lemish, 2010, p. x).

Early theorists of the Internet argued that the web' s open and accessible lines of communication allow for all voices to be heard, encouraging new communities to arise and new collective identities to be formed (Nakamura, 2005; Tyler, 2002). Web 2.0 added a new level of interactivity and user control, blurring the lines between users and producers of content. Social networking sites (SNS) and virtual worlds have become communities where meaning and awareness is created and shared among users, and where identities are performed and played out for invisible, omnipresent audiences (boyd, 2007). "These sites and worlds are becoming part of a public sphere, where ideas and intimacies are exchanged, relationships formed and maintained, and identities are constructed and sometimes policed," Nakamura writes (2010, p. 337). New online communities offer users literally countless new cultural discourses and opportunities for developing their self-concepts. In a study of online communities created through girls' blogs,

Vickery argues that blogging and similar online activities can go beyond local identities to create communities (2010). This idea of virtual spaces as creating identities that transcend geographic obstacles can be extended beyond blogging to things like SNS and online multi-player gaming.

Research shows girls are among the heaviest users of social media and view it as existing for communication and self-expression (Bortree, 2005; Leage & Chalmers, 2010; Tufekci, 2008). Self-presentation online blends idealized versions of the self and the realistic self, allowing users to consider their identities both as they are in their offline and online worlds and as aspirations of who they might like to be (Pearson, 2009). The speed and malleability of SNS expressions of self (through both communications and static elements like profile pages) allow for a rapidity of identity play that has not been seen before. Youth are experimenting with self-presentation and positioning the self through relations to discourses as they always have, but at a much more immediate pace (Bortree, 2005; Thiel, 2004).

Identity play online allows for users to experiment with the relation between the offline and online body and concepts of gender, race, and culture. Nakamura writes that "racialization has become a digital process" (2008, p. 1681). I would extend this argument to posit that identity negotiation itself is now in many ways a digital process. Punyanunt-Carter and J. Smith argued that "it has never been easier to define your persona and find a community as in the Internet age" (p. 72). The authors compared girls' online activities and social networking in Thailand and the U.S., finding that the Internet opened up new avenues for girls in both cultures to play with their cultural identities in ways that had not been seen before. Cultural and racial identities, previously seen as static and relatively immutable, become malleable through the Internet (Bae, 2010; Punyanunt-Carter & Smith, 2010). Unlike adult users, youth view their online identities, as they shift and evolve, as no less real or authentic than their offline identities. Offline and online worlds blur together, with users using SNS to manage and negotiate their offline relationships, switching between multiple apps and services with ease (Denner & Martinez, 2010). To adolescents who have grown up in a web 2.0 world, social networks and online presentations of self are an unquestioned part of their whole reality, not a separate, virtual one.

While the Internet has opened up vast new space for identity play, it is not void of the power structures that govern the lives of different bodies (Thiel, 2004). The Internet, including and especially online multiplayer games, are often explicitly racist and sexist spaces (Nakamura,

2008, 2009). Focusing on race, Nakamura writes that web 2.0 technology risks masking itself as a non-racial space through the concept of passing, adopting and adapting concepts of race through user control over content. "The ability to manipulate the `look and feel' of race by online role-playing, digital gaming, and other forms of digital-media use encourage and feed the desire for control over self-construction and self-representation," she writes (2008, p. 1675). By playing with the relationship of race (among other identity factors) to the online body, users can construct a new body and identity from a variety of choices. However, Nakamura argues, a post-racial Internet is an illusion. This "technologically enabled disembodiment," she writes, is not free of racial considerations on- or offline, but was and is deeply integrated into offline racial and cultural structures and discourses of power (2008, p. 1677). For example, the options for avatars in online games are frequently limited to normative ideals of whiteness and exaggerated forms of masculinity or femininity. In addition, many players have been shown to select the default characteristics of whiteness and maleness in order to avoid online racism and sexism, particularly in online multiplayer games (Nakamura, 2010).

The Internet, especially and most famously online gaming culture, remains a largely dangerous and violent place for women and minorities (Nakamura, 2014, 2015). Typically, Nakamura writes, gamers advocates one of two strategies to deal with the racism and sexism inherent in online gaming. One is to encourage female and minority gamers to achieve excellence, arguing that by showing a high level of skill, other players will be forced to reconsider their discriminatory stances. Nakamura critiques this approach for its neoliberal suggestion that being free from racism and sexism is a privilege rather than a right (2015). The other approach is to diversify the producers and programmers of games, arguing that by changing the industry and the products, the imbalances can be addressed. The argument for more diversity in media industries and projects is common across media studies, positing that "the presence of more female and racialized bodies will immunize products from inequality" (Nakamura, 2015, p. 2). Shohat and Stam write that the danger of misrepresentations comes from when marginalized groups are unable to "control their own representation," essentially, to create and produce media texts and products (1994, p. 84). Certainly a diversification of media production is happening across the Internet; it is clear that users are becoming avid and active producers of content. Could, then, the Internet hold some emancipatory potential to disrupt the hold hegemonic power has on the means of media production? While the Internet is certainly not

a utopic space where all users are equal, it does create space for users to create interactive content that destabilizes formerly rigid norms of gender, race, and culture.

A critical lens: foregrounding marginalized voices

Indigenous and other critical scholars have argued that disrupting the mainstream narrative is a political act, and that "critical personal narrative as counternarrative" questions and complicates traditionally accepted narratives that perpetuate hegemonic power structures (Delgado, 2000; Denzin, 2005; Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008, p. 12; Durham, 2002; Kearney, 2006; B. T. Williams, 2004). Thus, this project is informed by critical pedagogy and critical indigenous studies, which privilege counternarratives and the disruption of traditional Western thought through tools such as the Internet and web 2.0.

Critical indigenous studies, aimed at decolonizing Western intellectual thought, are experiencing a significant groundswell (Denzin et al., 2008). A number of scholars have highlighted the political and intellectual movement of Indigenous scholars engaging with anti-colonial thought and popular discourse, including work that focuses on cultural, political and intellectual representations of indigenous peoples in global discourses (Alfred, 2009; Coulthard, 2014; Denzin, 2005; Sandoval, 2000; A. Simpson, 2007; L. Simpson, 2011; A. Smith, 2010; L. T. Smith, 1999). "Indigenous pedagogies are grounded in an oppositional consciousness that resists `neocolonizing postmodern global formations,'" Sandoval writes (Sandoval, 2000, pp. 1-2, in Denzin et al., 2008, p. 10). These global formations include local, regional and national cultural discourses and mediascapes. Critical indigenous thought's influence on the field of contemporary media studies is still at a relatively early stage, but it is crucial that projects such as this one consider the awareness of situated knowledge and experience, power structures and socio-historical context required by indigenous methodologies (Denzin et al., 2008). Representations of Aboriginal girls in Canada, then, need to be considered in terms of how they signify underlying meanings within dominant Canadian cultural discourses. Further, a critical perspective must acknowledge that representations are markers of a social, historical, cultural and political context in Canada that contributes to inequality.

"Critical personal narratives" are similar to Simpson's (2011) concept of `presence' as part of indigenous resistance to negative global discourses (Denzin et al., 2008, p. 12; L. Simpson, 2011). The disruption of traditional narratives, misrepresentations, or stereotypes

brings attention to voice and the lived experience of the narrator. This is consistent with Shohat and Stam, who argue that a focus on "voices" and "discourses" rather than on images would allow for a more rounded analysis of race and diversity in the media (1994, p. 214). By taking into account what is being said by and to whom, a focus on voice allows for an emphasis on experiences and the type of discourses that circulate in a specific context, rather than on a supposed representation of factual truth.

> The point, we would argue, is to abandon the language of `authenticity' with its implicit standard of appeal to verisimilitude as a kind of `gold standard,' in favour of a language of `discourses' with its implicit reference to community affiliation and to intertexuality. (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 215)

Focusing on discourses enables a deeper contextualization of a media text that takes into account sociohistorical relationships of power, shifts in configurations of local and global identities, and how media can reveal society's intrinsic values. This type of approach is exemplified by Kellner's concept of cultural studies as diagnostic critique (2003). From the premise that our society is built around media spectacles, Kellner advocates an approach that closely reads media texts and their reception, engaging in "critical interrogations of what key examples of media spectacle reveal about the contemporary condition, combined with critiques of the ways that certain media spectacles promote oppression of various sorts" (2003, p. 16). For example, in Kellner's diagnostic critique of the 1995 O.J. Simpson media spectacle, one of the aspects he discusses is how the case came to both represent and allegorize race relations in the United States. He argues that both the murder itself and the sensationalistic trial coverage it generated revealed deep fissures in American race relations and how they are structured in society. Differences in how black and white Americans read the coverage is equally important as the coverage itself, he argues, exposed the very different realities in which different groups live their lives and decode media texts.

Taking into account the contributions Hall, Shohat and Stam, Kellner, and of the field of contemporary critical indigenous studies, the lens through which I will be considering media representations and media use is a critical one that highlights the voices and subjectivities of my participants. This critical lens takes into account the complex power structures that govern their

lives and the shifting contexts in which they are consuming, critiquing, creating and engaging with media.

Section 2: Northern Aboriginal girls and their reflections in the media

Having developed an understanding that media both represents important cultural discourses and influences the identity formation for my participants, I move towards painting a picture of the media context in which they live. When interrogating identity, I do not mean to hierarchize my participants' identities into layers, as in the following order: first they are girls, then they are Aboriginal, lastly northerners. This does not acknowledge the ways in which gender, race and place, along with the myriad other elements of identity, intersect, intertwine and inform each other in the iterative processes of identity building. Looking at how media representations of gender, race and place intersect in the lives of northern Aboriginal girls offers a frame through which to analyze the deeper struggles that are occurring with regards to both their lived experiences and cultural discourses of nationhood and national identity. Racialized women and girls are often constructed as signifiers of cultural failures or national identity crises (Bannerji, 2000; Jiwani, 2006). One telling example is that of Cindy Gladue's murder. Gladue was a First Nations sex worker in Alberta who was brutally murdered in 2011. Outrage spread across Canada in March 2015 after the acquittal of Bradley Barton, who admitted to the sex acts that caused her death and to walking away after finding Gladue bloody in a bathtub. Both the acquittal and the use of Gladue's preserved vagina as evidence in the court case were widely criticized[4]. Gladue, a First Nations sex worker, became a site of meaning making for the public to debate issues around the many failures of the Canadian nation-state, including the reserve system, the increasing numbers of missing and murdered indigenous women, and the lack of protection for sex workers in Canada. The media spectacle around the Cindy Gladue case, to use Kellner's terminology, extends to the reception of the case, which was wildly divergent in different circles. While Aboriginal Canadians were outraged by the trial in news coverage across

4 For examples, see:
http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/reduced-to-a-body-part/article23790508/
http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/cindy-gladue-case-sends-a-chilling-message-to-indigenous-women/article23609986/
http://www.torontosun.com/2015/04/02/verdict-in-cindy-gladue-case-prompts-appeal-nationwide-protests
http://maisonneuve.org/post/2015/04/2/seeking-justice-cindy-gladue/

Canada, for example, others in the media focused on the legal parameters of the case[5]. The dynamics of these different interpretations are indicative of deeply different lived experiences for different groups in Canada. Media discourses at the intersection of gender and indigeneity in Canada, then, go beyond the experiences of the specific women in question, speaking as well to profound questions about indigenous and Canadian nationalism(s), colonial history, gendered violence, and the justice system.

When looking for representations of Aboriginal women and girls in media discourses, stories like Gladue's tend to be the rule rather than the exception, in entertainment media as well as in news media. Dominant media representations of girls in popular culture tend to neglect the experiences of marginalized and racialized girls, universalizing a white, middle-class experience (Taft, 2004; Ward & Benjamin, 2004). Girlhood narratives tend to fall into one of two categories: idealized girlhood, which is often positioned as a neoliberal girlhood that requires consumption as a norm (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005; Deutsch & Theodoru, 2009; McRobbie, 2008; Rentschler & Mitchell, 2014; Taft, 2004); or as a period of chaos, pressure and crisis. Girls are depicted as being torn apart by the varying pressures of media and hormones, losing their identities and generally existing in crisis and needing rescue or as perpetrators of `bad' activities (Aapola et al., 2005; Correa, 2007). This tension is largely racialized: when minority or lower-class girls appear, they are often seen as "failing subjects" who are of lesser value, perpetually exploited or needing rescue as compared to their ideal girl counterparts (Finney, 2014; Jiwani, 2014; Rentschler & Mitchell, 2014, p. 2). A wide body of scholarship in girlhood studies suggests that these types of representations function to limit the perceived agency and subjectivity of girls by not providing them with cultural scripts that they can realistically apply to their experience (e.g. Aapola, 2005; Correa, 2007; Driscoll, 2008; Gonick, 2009; Griffin, 2004; Kearney, 2006; Mazzarella, 2002; McRobbie, 2008). When girls are unable to see their realities reflected in representations of girlhood, a tension is created that can complicate identity formation vis-à-vis the media.

As Aboriginal girls, my participants experience a media culture that both disseminates exclusive representations of girlhood and perpetuates a dominant narrative of Canadian indigeneity that reduces indigenous histories, cultures, politics, and modes of resistance

5http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Simons+Public+outrage+over+Cindy+Gladue+verdict+legal+basis+appeal/10933103/story.html

(Berkhofer, 1979; Downe, 2006; Francis, 1992; Harding, 2006; Jiwani & Young, 2006; LaRoque, 2010; Pierro et al., 2013). For example, a 2002 analysis of Saskatchewan newspapers found that approximately 42 per cent of the representations of Aboriginal peoples was negative, which the study defined as portraying Aboriginal peoples as "demanding, unreasonable, corrupt, devious and criminal" (Maslin, 2002, p. 32). Twenty-eight per cent were determined to be stereotypical, defined as portraying Aboriginal people as "typical Indians", victims, or as needing to be managed (p. 56), and the remaining 30 per cent fell under positive or mixed categories. Positive portrayals of Aboriginal people were consistently presented as individual success stories standing in contrast to `other' Aboriginals, who caused problems to themselves or others (Maslin, 2002). Other studies have concurred, finding portrayals of Aboriginal people in the Canadian media to be regularly stereotyped and negative (Harding, 2006; Maslin, 2002; Pierro et al., 2013; Ronson, 2012). Aboriginal women especially are often constructed as deserving of victimization, particularly as promiscuous and thus deserving of sexual violence (Jiwani, 2009). Media representations of Aboriginal people in Canada reflect persisting colonial attitudes in national cultural discourse (Coulthard, 2014), acting as an extension of the governmental structures of oppression that constrain and regulate indigenous peoples, such as the Indian Act. Lawrence (2003) argues that such discourses function to disrupt and degrade indigenous identities in service of the goals of colonization, normalizing oppression and framing social ills in Aboriginal communities as individual failures. For example, by positioning domestic violence on reserves as a `native problem', structural power works to position Aboriginal women as victims of Aboriginal men, thereby occluding the colonial history and systemic racism that installed the disastrous reserve system in the first place[6]. One need only look at a sample of the aforementioned Cindy Gladue case and the coverage of other missing and murdered Aboriginal women to understand how the lives of Aboriginal women and girls have come to stand for debates over national identities and who is deserving of the protection of the nation-state. The framing of contemporary Canadian media discourses allows violence against Aboriginal women and girls to be normalized and images of Aboriginal women and girls as victims and deviants to solidify in the public consciousness, subtly reinforcing dominant cultural hegemony (Jiwani & Young, 2006; Kallio, 2006; Razack, 2002). Jiwani terms this type of frame a "discourse of denial", that is, the explanations, negotiations, and omissions that reduce, negate

6 http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/tories-suggest-missing-aboriginal-women-related-to-domestic-violence/article23222654/

and eliminate racism and sexism from discussions of violence, or privilege one over the other, "strategically deflect[ing] attention from the violence of systemic and structured inequalities" (Jiwani, 2006, p. 202).

As mainstream media discourses around Aboriginal peoples serve to homogenize their identities and rationalize systemic racism, Aboriginal communities in Canada's north find themselves additionally othered. Northern Canada has a strong hold in the Canadian cultural imaginary as a `frontier' of sorts, invoking images of an empty hinterland on which exoticized views of Canadianness can be projected (Roth, 2005). Place is traditionally a primary factor in identity negotiations for indigenous peoples (Lawrence, 2003), and therefore, how the north is represented in the media intersects with gender and Aboriginality as a factor in the identity negotiation of my participants. Representations of northern life in the mainstream media are limited. However, research on rurality has found that an implicit opposition between urban and rural lifestyles can be seen in popular culture, and that urban lifestyles are seen as progressive and valued above rural life, which is equated with an idyllic past (Creed & Ching, 1997; Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2003). Similarly to Aboriginal peoples, rural or northern life is portrayed as unchanging and frozen in time (Creed & Ching, 1997; Roth, 2005). These types of mainstream representations do little to show what actual lived experiences might be like in Canada's north, even though a limited amount of northern-made programming is available.

While television and radio were originally imposed on the north by southern broadcasters, the latter part of the 20th century saw Aboriginal media pioneers assert their voices and create their own media (Roth, 2005). These pioneering projects led to the creation of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network in 1999, which recently began a series on Dene language and cultural revitalization in the Northwest Territories called *Dene: A Journey* ("Aboriginal Peoples Television Network," 2014). Smaller-scale northern media projects include the Behchokö-based Community Action Research Team and the Western Arctic Motion Picture Association, which actively produce local media content for local audiences ("Community Action Research Team," 2014; "Western Arctic Motion Pictures," 2014). The examples above are important illustrations of local, cultural and regional media, however, their size and reach are dramatically outweighed by mainstream global media.

There is very little research exploring the influence of media programming in the identities of northern Aboriginal youth. Condon's (1988) seminal anthropological study found that in the space of one generation the lives of Inuit youth had changed drastically from that of their parents, in part due to the imposition of southern television access. Having studied the population both before and after television was introduced, Condon notes that television programming had significant social effects on Inuit youth culture. For example, public displays of affection between young Inuit couples, previously unheard of in Inuit culture, became commonplace. Condon found that while television had an influence on identity and culture, Inuit youth drew out elements of both their traditional culture and southern media to form new identities. More recently, Peddle's (2008) dissertation draws from critical scholarship in rurality to explore how Aboriginal youth in isolated Labrador communities negotiate race and sexuality in their identities. In a participatory action research project across four Labrador Métis communities, Peddle found that her participants used and blended elements of popular culture to create a unique local cultural identity . While both Condon and Peddle find a similar incorporation of elements of popular media culture into the identities of indigenous youth, it is notable that the media landscape has changed drastically since they conducted their research. Although Peddle's participants were likely familiar with the Internet, the advances in mobile technology and social media have dramatically shifted how Aboriginal youth use media (Roth, 2013). Little research has been undertaken exploring how Aboriginal or rural youth engage in identity formation online. Behchokö, with full access to the Internet, is an interesting place to consider the ways in which northern Aboriginal girls use online and social media as part of their identity negotiations.

Behchokö and bicultural identity formation

Having discussed relevant research on what media representations mean and why they might matter, I now turn to the specific local context of Behchokö and what cultural identity formation might mean in the community. Behchokö provides an interesting context from which to consider local and cultural identities. The community's culture is interwoven into local politics and social life (Martin, 1990; Scott, 2012). In a survey of over two thirds of Behchokö, 92 per cent of respondents felt proud of Tłı̨chǫ and Dene culture, 90 per cent had participated in traditional Dene activities in the past year, and 64 per cent had taken part in cultural activities such as

hunting or fishing. In addition, 96 per cent of the respondents said they respected the teachings of community Elders, and 63 per cent had visited an Elder in the past year ("Tłı̨chǫ Baseline Survey," 2007). The Tłı̨chǫ Government has also demonstrated interest in academic and community projects that focus on Tłı̨chǫ identity. In a research project, Tłı̨chǫ researcher John B. Zoe outlined the cosmology of the Tłı̨chǫ people and created a "Tłı̨chǫ Identity Model" that outlined five core tenets of Tłı̨chǫ individual and community identity. These include: independence or self-reliance; survival through adaptability; caring for others; respect for the land, language and culture; and peace, reconciliation and healing (Martin & Wedzin, 2010).

While Behchokö's community cultural identity is strong, the community's youth experience significant challenges that hint at a complex story. In the introduction, I described instances of youth violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide that exemplify commonly told tales about youth in the community. The continuing colonial legacy, including and perhaps especially, the more recent development of diamond mining in the region, is felt keenly by the community. In Canada, Aboriginal youth are nine times more likely to experience depression and three times as likely to engage in substance abuse as youth in general (Voski, 2015). These statistics back up the tales told by the participants in the present study, explored in detail in the fourth chapter. Their stories are also echoed by Hopkins' (2011c) study, a rare example of qualitative research in the community. Hopkins explored a concept that is integral to the Tłı̨chǫ's notion of cultural identity - that of being `strong like two people'. Tłı̨chǫ youth, according to their elders, must both maintain their traditional ways and learn to thrive in the global society, becoming `strong like two people.' These words were spoken by elder Elizabeth Mackenzie in 1990, paraphrasing prolific Dene Chief Jimmy Bruneau's 1971 speech, and have become an unofficial community motto (Hopkins, 2011c; Martin, 1990). Hopkins' inquiry involved in-depth interviews with 11 Tłı̨chǫ high school graduates that sought to understand how they storied their lived experiences and developed resilience in their lives. Hopkins focuses on identity and resilience theories, finding that youth experience frustration at being expected to live up to being `strong like two people'. This tension is consistent with other research in bicultural and multicultural identity that often finds a dissonance between local identities and that of the dominant culture[7]. A similar tension can be seen in research in rural studies, which shows that

[7] Identities are deeply complex and multiply situated. The term `bicultural', while useful in this context, does not describe the multiplicity of influences, feelings, thoughts and actions that make up my participants' identities. However, due to the nature of

young people, especially girls, feel a strong attachment to their hometowns while also aspiring to futures that require mobility (Cairns, 2014). While the challenges experienced by Aboriginal youth in the north are endlessly complex, multifaceted and individually negotiated, this tension can have resonating implications. If Behchokö's youth have fractured identities, what might that mean?

Benet-Martinez and Haritatos offer a social psychological perspective on bicultural identity that speaks directly to this discord and to the concept of `strong like two people' (2005). From the premise that people who dwell in multiple cultures often feel a complicated and ambivalent relationship to their cultural identities, Benet-Martinez and Haritatos posit that whether an individual perceives his or her multiple identities to be compatible or not is a crucial factor in a positive overall identity. Working from a large sample of Chinese-Americans, the authors argue that a `blended' identity, wherein the two (or more) cultures are seen to function together, is much healthier than a more conflicted identity, wherein cultures are seen to oppose each other. Similarly, Jensen and Arnett apply immigrant acculturation theories to concepts of cultural globalization. The authors adapt Berry's 1997 model of immigrant acculturation in their research on cultural or ethnic minorities that live alongside a dominating culture and are exposed to multiple media influences (2012). The model presents four patterns of acculturation: assimilation, wherein an individual adopts the dominating culture; separation, wherein an individual places more value on maintaining their original or local culture and separates him or herself from the dominating culture; integration, where both cultures are seen as valuable and compatible; or marginalization, where individuals do not hold on to their original culture, but do not adopt the dominating culture (1997). They, like Benet-Martinez and Haritatos and other social psychologists, argue that integrated cultural identity formation has the most positive associations for identity, which is correlated with resilience, or the ability to deal with adverse contexts (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Jensen, 2003; Jensen & Arnett, 2012; Kankesan, 2010; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). For example, integrated bicultural identities have been found to "buffer[] the negative impact of experiences of discrimination", such as depression and hopelessness (Kankesan, 2010, p. 14; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997; Romero, Carvajal, Valle, & Orduna, 2007). The tension reported by

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writing and the necessity for a cohesive narrative, I use this term throughout the thesis when discussing the conflicted nature of participants' identities.

Tłįchǫ graduates in Hopkins' study is felt on multiple levels: within the self, within and towards the community, and within and towards the dominant mainstream Canadian identity (Hopkins, 2011b, 2011c). If youth in Behchokö experience conflicted bicultural identities, they may be less able to deal with individual and structural discrimination, difficult social lives, and a variety of other challenging contexts.

The ability to deal with such challenges is described by Hopkins as `resilience', which echoes the literature on positive bicultural identity (2011c). Resilience can be defined as "healthy resistance, autonomy and nonconformity, and the continual construction and development of identity" (Kiel, 2010, p. 231), or, in the Tłįchǫ identity model, as `survival through adaptability' (Martin & Wedzin, 2010). It requires a fortification of Aboriginal identity in the face of a context that has devalued Aboriginal culture and lives for centuries, describing, in effect, a blended bicultural identity. A wide-ranging 14-year study of resilience and identity in Canadian Aboriginal communities drew strong parallels between individual and community or cultural resilience (Lalonde, 2006). Lalonde defines community resilience as positive adaptation to an adverse context, arguing that through Canada's colonial legacy, contemporary First Nations communities live in a context of adversity and face more risk than the non-Aboriginal population. Youth who are able to associate positively with their culture and sense that it has a strong future demonstrate a stronger resilience and a strong sense of both individual and group identity; these communities also had a much lower risk of youth suicide (2006). Lalonde's emphasis on community identity and resilience is appropriate to the context of Behchokö; in Hopkins' study, Tłįchǫ youth were acutely aware that they constantly "oscillat[ed] between multiple social worlds" (2011c, p. 237). Both Lalonde and Hopkins note that the concept of individual resilience, in the Aboriginal context, is deeply intertwined with community resilience and cultural identity (Hopkins, 2011b, 2011c; Lalonde, 2006). Resilience, then, can be defined as the ability to survive or thrive in transitioning between these multiple relations to the world, or, having a strong blended bicultural or multicultural identity. Similar results have been found in studies of indigenous peoples in the United States (Markstrom, 2010; Wexler, DiFulvio, & Burke, 2009; Wexler, Gubrium, Griffin, & DiFulvio, 2013; Wexler, Jernigan, et al., 2013). For Behchokö's youth, both individual and community blended bicultural identities might encourage resilience and foster the ability to be `strong like two people.'

Cultural, community and individual identities are "fractured, multiply situated and historically discontinuous" (Shohat, 1995, p. 176). The ongoing negotiation of identity is a crucial part of youth, and includes the integration of multiple types of media representing the myriad shifting discourses with which my participants are engaging as they consider, form, reject, and adapt their identities. In beginning this review with literature on media representations and how they form important cultural discourses, I have tried to make the case that these discourses can be deeply important to the identity formation of northern Aboriginal girls. With the unprecedented spread and integration of web 2.0, the way we think about local, national and cultural identities is shifting. Cultural globalization, argue Jensen and Arnett, could in fact encourage healthier multicultural identities due to the diversity of narratives thereby allowing for new combinations of identity associations that could lead to altogether new cultural identities (2012). For example, the global spread of indigenous movements such as Idle No More could encourage youth to position themselves in a collective struggle. This would allow for more positive identities to be formed and blended together while still opposing discrimination from the dominant Canadian culture (Markstrom, 2010). The contemporary moment is an exciting and important time in which to consider identity formation and media through a critical lens that considers power and broader cultural discourses. Northern Aboriginal girls' sociocultural, historical, and geographic contexts make them unique, and worthy of study. The North is growing in political, economic and social importance to Canada, and unprecedented media connectedness allows its residents to be part of the contemporary shifting discourses about nationhood, indigeneity and gendered identity.

Chapter 3
Methodological Framework and Reflections on Methodology

In December 2014, over three weeks, I met with participants at Chief Jimmy Bruneau Regional High School (CJBS) in six separate sessions. These sessions acted as informal focus groups and primarily centred on creating a group photo album with the goal of exploring how participants incorporated media into their negotiations of identity. In this chapter, I provide a basis for my grounding in Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Photovoice methodologies, including a discussion problematizing the idea of `empowerment' through this type of research. Next, I

provide background on the development of my specific methodology, touching on the core literature that inspired the project structure. I also draw attention to some of the ethical issues that need to be considered when working with Aboriginal youth, and describe how these influenced my methodology. Finally, I outline the logistics of workshop development, data collection, and coding and analysis, and conclude with reflections and lessons learned.

Figure 4: Mavis and Boronica.

PAR and Photovoice

Grounded in feminist and critical theory and stemming from Paulo Freire's concepts of critical pedagogy and empowerment education, PAR emphasizes experience, feelings and active agency of participants (Cahill, Sultana, & Pain, 2007; 1970, 1973; J.-A. Lee, 2006; Maguire, 1987; McHugh & Kowalski, 2009a; McTaggart, 1991). A consistent theme in the literature is allowing subjects' voices to speak through the research findings, as PAR assumes that research subjects, particularly oppressed groups and marginalized communities, are "the best informants on their own lives" (Peddle, 2008, p. 70). Research has found that participatory media projects that encourage youth to tell their own stories contribute to the formation of individual and social identity (Kelly, 2006; Somers, 1994; Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004; Wang, 2007; Wilson et al., 2007). Media engagement can be a tool for youth empowerment and the development of a

concept of self. Creating a space where marginalized populations can tell their own stories and counter media stereotypes is legitimizing and helps youth create a positive idea of who they are (Currie et al., 2007; Flicker et al., 2008; Somers, 1994; Stack, 2008; Strack et al., 2004; Wagg, 2004; Wexler et al., 2009; Wexler, Gubrium, et al., 2013; Wexler, Jernigan, et al., 2013). Photovoice is a PAR-based method developed by Wang and Burris (1994), wherein photos are taken by research participants and used as discussion points to gain insight into participants' lives and experiences. Strack, Magill and MacDonagh argue that Photovoice is especially effective when working with youth because "adolescence is a period of identity development in which youth are actively shaping their personal identity while being challenged to begin the process of forming their social identity" (2004, p. 50). Using directed but open discussion around photos selected by youth allows them to create a structure through which they can negotiate these different aspects of their identities.

PAR, Youth and Empowerment

Much of the literature on PAR posits that shifting the research framework from a traditional, linear, researcher/researched paradigm to a mode that considers people's experience as a valuable resource can function to empower marginalized individuals (e.g. Kelly, 2006; Macdonald, 2012). Wang's (2007) "Youth Participation in Photovoice as a Strategy for Community Change" outlines ten projects that use Photovoice to empower youth to effect change in their communities. While her focus is primarily on community changes rather than identity negotiation, she notes that involvement in Photovoice helps youth exercise autonomy and empowers marginalized youth to have a positive influence in their communities. Ethnographic participatory projects towards youth empowerment have been undertaken in a variety of media, including radio, documentary video, and social media (Flicker et al., 2008; Stack, 2008; Wagg, 2004; White, 2012, to name a few). However, the term `empowerment' is a loaded one and not without controversy. The grounding of PAR and Photovoice methodologies in empowerment theories could lead to a simplistic assumption that using these research methods provides an easy way for a researcher to clear his or her conscience about any questionable power dynamics with their research participants. Peddle (2008) provides an interesting analysis of empowerment as it relates to PAR, youth and power. She argues that "[T]he term implies that individuals and groups undergo a process of becoming powerful, assuming that those involved

engage from a point of powerlessness and thus lack agency," (p. 50). Critiques of the concept of empowerment as neoliberal and as glossing over complex structural power dynamics have been thoroughly explored by a number of researchers (e.g. Cruikshank, 1994; Gore, 1990; Mayo, 2004; Riger, 1993). However, Peddle's assertion that participatory methods and self-representation "does something" for participants is, in my opinion, important:

> While I do not think that power is arbitrarily created, and I critique the idea that people move from a state of powerlessness to having power, working with youth in engaging ways that are respectful to their experiences does something. It builds something creative, and a space where youth's experiences are valued and their perspectives taken seriously. These kinds of spaces can be potentially transformative. (2008, p. 54)

It is this kind of empowerment, creating a space where my participants felt their lives and experiences were valuable and important, that I have tried to enact in my work.

Similar studies

In developing the methodology for my project, I drew from work that demonstrated the importance of community and individual identity to resilience among indigenous youth. Though there are few studies on youth in northern Canada, research concerning suicide prevention in northwestern Alaska using PAR with Native Alaskan youth offers encouraging results (Wexler et al., 2009; Wexler, Gubrium, et al., 2013). This research, led by Wexler, used a digital storytelling methodology originally designed by Lambert (2010) to ask 566 Alaskan youth to create short multimedia projects over a three year period. They found that a digital platform was particularly effective due to the ease of use and the participants' familiarity with new media technologies. Based on the premise that adolescent identity formation requires both positive relationships with the community and opportunities for expression, the research team argues that these projects encouraged a sense of empowerment and held potential for youth to combat stereotypes of indigenous peoples in Alaska (Wexler et al., 2009). Results of the study were evaluated through exit surveys, with a largely positive response from participants. While the study included quotations from youth, it highlights the confines of working with such a large body of participants by providing generalized positive findings but little insight into the narratives of participants' lives. In comparison, a related study also led by Wexler gathered 20 youth narratives through open-ended, semi-structured qualitative interviews in a small Alaskan

community (Wexler, Gubrium, et al., 2013; Wexler, Jernigan, et al., 2013). The research focused on strategies that Alaskan Native youth used to resist problems like suicide, drug use, or family conflict. The researchers noted the importance of narrative as a self-positioning tool for youth, similar to the digital storytelling projects in its ability to offer alternatives to stereotyped dominant narratives. While the study was limited in scope, with only 20 qualitative interviews, the richness of detail in the findings, including a range of quotes from participants describing their feelings about the research and its effect on their lives, demonstrates the potential of small-scale research to provide profound insight into the lives of the participants. It is this richness that I have sought to exhibit in my own research.

Three PAR projects with Canadian Aboriginal youth were useful in shaping the methodology of my project (McHugh & Kowalski, 2009b; Peddle, 2008; Shea, Poudrier, Thomas, Jeffery, & Kiskotagan, 2013). Each study (re)positioned participants as creators and critics of media, allowing them to create their own narratives in the face of a culture that excludes them. These studies offer a sample of participatory media projects, including Photovoice, digital storytelling, and writing, and how they might be used to engage Aboriginal youth in telling their own stories to foster a stronger sense of self.

McHugh and Kowalski's year-long participatory action research project in a Saskatchewan high school found that the high school environment was an effective place for PAR projects due to its existing structure and familiarity (McHugh & Kowalski, 2009a, 2009b). This health promotion project sought to gain insight into young Aboriginal women's conceptions of body image issues. Aboriginal teen girls were encouraged to develop their own projects related to body image issues in an after-school club. In addition to education and activism (such as lobbying the school for healthier vending machine options), students also engaged in a writing club, which led to some students publishing their work in an urban youth journal. The popularity of the writing club demonstrates the effectiveness of providing a venue for youth to create their own narratives from an Aboriginal youth perspective, which are typically overlooked in the research on body image. Qualitative discussions with students showed they found this both exciting and empowering.

Shea et al.'s (2013) body image study in Saskatchewan included Photovoice, art collages, interviews and surveys with Aboriginal girls in an effort to re-frame body image issues from an

Aboriginal girl perspective. In this case, researchers drew from L. T. Smith's decolonizing methodological framework (L. T. Smith, 1999), Photovoice, and community-based participatory research to design a PAR project that would position participants as collaborators rather than subjects. In both of the above studies participants found representing themselves through stories fun and empowering, especially when those stories were shared with a larger public (McHugh & Kowalski, 2009b; Shea et al., 2013). These two studies emphasized flexibility in terms of letting participants choose what activities they would engage in and the resulting discussions. Both studies also included an emphasis on self-representation in the face of exclusion.

Peddle's (2008) previously mentioned study used Photovoice with Aboriginal youth in isolated Labrador communities. She drew from critical scholarship on rurality to explore how her participants negotiated race and sexuality in their identities. Through a two-month workshop series, Peddle demonstrated that, while underrepresented in popular culture, northern Canadian rural youth actively create local culture and use it to understand their identities, negotiating race, class, gender, the media, and their unique rural environments. Her emphasis on the self-determination of youth through media projects strongly influences how I have decided to approach issues of identity as they relate to race and gender. In her conclusion, Peddle states that, through Photovoice and qualitative interviews, she discovered that negotiations of identity with regards to race were much more nuanced than she had anticipated (p. 212). This finding echoes J. Lee in her caution against universalizing experience based on race as an analytic category (2006). It is notable that PAR has been found to be such an effective method with marginalized groups such as Aboriginal youth, as it offers an individualized opportunity to create alternative narratives against assumptions of homogeneity. In shifting the research paradigm and valuing marginalized voices, PAR allows groups that are often assumed to be homogenous to express their own diversity. Throughout her dissertation, Peddle provides thoughtful analysis of issues such as this. She also noted instances in which her participants challenged her assumptions and expectations of what the data would be. Her honest appraisal and continual Foucauldian critique of her own research and analysis is something that I have tried to reflect in my own work.

As I was developing the methodology for this project, I struggled to find a media activity for my participants that would be engaging enough to hold their attention while being flexible enough to allow them full control over their narratives. Finding Jalea's (2009) participatory

photography project with a group of Montreal high school students offered me a solution. *Full Exposure 2009*[8] is the result of a Photovoice project that used photography and creating a photo album to encourage discussion on class identity and differences for a group of youth in Montreal. The resulting photo book, organized into themes selected and narrated by participants, provides visual insight into the lives and experiences of her participants, which inspired me to follow a similar methodology in my own research.

Ethical considerations of PAR with Aboriginal youth

McHugh and Kowalski (2009b) maintain that PAR, rooted in feminist theory, leads to local knowledges that are "grounded in the experiences of women" and cognizant of power dynamics in communities. While researchers such as Ouellette (2002) and Weenie (2000) have argued that feminist theory is at odds with the issues of Aboriginal women, McHugh and Kowalski argue that distinguishing Aboriginal rights and women's rights creates a false dichotomy and that feminist theory "recognizes the intersection of gender, class, and ethnicity, and the role that such intersections have in shaping women's experiences" (2009b, p. 221). In this spirit, I have, through trial and error, endeavoured to engage in research that is in line with best practices in both feminist and critical indigenous theories. Using their words, I have tried to hand as much power as possible over to my participants; however, the themes I have put together are pulled from fragments of conversations and moments of perception that I as a researcher have determined to be of relevance. In selecting themes, excerpts and narratives, I have aimed to be as true as possible to the voices of my participants in this final layer of mediation and represent them in the ways that they chose throughout our sessions. The emphasis on self-representation and self-narration in PAR, I argue, offers an alternative to the overwhelmingly negative focus that is pervasive in most traditional research dealing with Aboriginal communities. In light of these critiques, the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) recommends a shift in traditional research processes to recognize the history of colonialism and separation of Aboriginal peoples from their traditional knowledges, and in fact requires that PAR must be considered as an approach when conducting research with Aboriginal peoples ("Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal People," 2008).

8 Full Exposure 2009 is available online at http://lifestoriesmontreal.ca/fr/publications/full-exposure-2009-photography-book-gracia-jalea.

While PAR is widely accepted as being well suited to marginalized communities, there are, of course, methodological cautions when working with these groups. Working with racialized girls in Victoria, British Columbia, J. Lee outlines several of these cautions in "Locality, Participatory Research and Racialized Girls' Struggles for Citizenship" (2006). The first is to acknowledge the complex relations between a locally, relationally, and historically constituted citizenship and the variety of life contexts of subjects, who may be lumped together through categories of location or race, for example, but have vastly differing experiences. Multiple influences from both mainstream and alternative culture, family life, and situated knowledge (Haraway, 1991) play a role in shaping personal and citizenship identity formation, particularly with regards to racial minorities whose backgrounds are rendered invisible by dominant white culture. In using PAR, it is crucial to recognize the heterogeneity within these groups while also being aware of racial differences. I would add that, in a northern Canadian context, a continual recognition of the legacy of colonization and residential schools is a crucial consideration when working in Aboriginal communities. As will be outlined in the next chapter, the legacy of colonization, residential schools and continued racial tension in Canada is an integral and visible part of my participants' identity, making recognition of these issues crucial to understanding their unique lived experiences.

Many researchers emphasize the importance of building relationships within Aboriginal communities before any official research takes place, as well as prioritizing knowledge-sharing with the community throughout and after the research period (Cahill et al., 2007; Denzin et al., 2008; James, 2011; McHugh & Kowalski, 2009a; Shea et al., 2013; L. T. Smith, 1999). Consistently, much of the research that has been done with the Dene First Nation notes that building, maintaining, and understanding relationships are crucial to successful research outcomes (Hopkins, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d; James, 2011; Scott, 2012). While the development of my methodology was done with a great deal of input and support from community partners, it has been a challenge to maintain relationships and get input from my partners and participants since the completion of the research phase of this project. Participants and community partners were very enthusiastic about the *#AboriginalGirls!* book; I look forward to sharing this thesis with them upon completion.

On a more personal level, a consideration of the ethics of personal relationships with participants is required. During the workshop sessions, trust developed between myself and the participants and very personal information was shared. While these relationships are incredibly rewarding, ethical concerns arise when information involving illegal activity or private family issues is revealed (Tilley, 1998). Throughout my analysis and writing, I have chosen to obscure or eliminate information that I felt my participants would not want me to reveal, as I have committed to sharing this thesis with their community. Out of respect for that relationship of trust, I have excluded certain anecdotes and pieces of information.

Methodology in practice: Logistics, data collection and analysis

I designed, developed, and implemented my research project with the support of the Tłı̨chǫ Research Institute and the CJBS staff and administration. With funding support from the Northern Studies Training Program and the Concordia International Graduate Student Mobility Grant respectively, I was able to coordinate travel to Yellowknife from Montreal and to and from Behchokö over the course of three weeks. Three digital cameras and a card reader were purchased and shared among the participants. Originally I had planned to do the work at the school computer lab with Adobe Photoshop, but the room provided did not have computer or Internet access, so this was eliminated. In the end, I found that a more low-fi approach probably increased the focus of the participants, as the Internet provided a distraction when we did work on computers.

My research support from the Tłı̨chǫ Research Institute included a dedicated project contact, Cecilia Zoe-Martin. Cecilia was invaluable in providing me early insight in the development of the project, as well as connecting me to the staff and administration at CJBS and facilitating initial personal introductions. As a former teacher and a favourite among students, her status with my research participants was advantageous to me as I was being introduced by someone they liked and respected. Originally, Cecilia was supposed to co-facilitate the workshop with me, but timing was such that she had family commitments throughout the three weeks in which the sessions were held. However, I found that participants were forthcoming with me and that perhaps not having an authority figure from their community present enabled us to have more frank and open conversations.

Workshops were held at CJBS in the Elder's Room. Five sessions in total were held, as well as an initial meet and greet on December 2nd, 2014. Sessions were held on December 4, 9, 11, 12 and 15, and were between 2 and 4 hours long. Initially I thought each workshop should focus around a different theme and follow traditional Photovoice methodology, wherein I guided conversation around specific images, but I quickly found that participants' interest waned with this method. I found that conversations were richer and participants were much more engaged when I let the topics flow naturally and did not try to force the conversations to follow a theme. While the first two sessions after the initial meet and greet focused more on discussing the media they consumed, the final three sessions were focused on taking and discussing photos, and on designing and writing the text for the final product. The final photo album, *#AboriginalGirls! Dis Generation Doe* was printed after the workshops and copies sent to the participants, the school, and the Tłı̨chǫ Research Institute. Each session was audio recorded (with the exception of December 4th, due to technical issues) and transcribed within the next day. These transcriptions provide the majority of the data set, supplemented by the photos, text and quotes on participants' individual and theme pages in the group photo book, as well as `word clouds' done in brainstorming sessions in the initial sessions.

Throughout workshop instructions, activities and conversations, I tried to focus the conversations on both individual and community identity. This was particularly relevant in my workshop context, as much discussion centered on Behchokö and the different perceptions of insiders and outsiders. This emerged as a crucial part of participants' lives and identities throughout the research. In addition to community identity, individual self-presentation is an important theme throughout this research, and throughout the workshop I emphasized to my participants that their words and photos were intended to represent themselves and their community as they saw it.

Qualitative thematic analysis was my primary analytical tool (Boyatzis, 1998; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). During the workshops, participants were asked to group the photos into sections for the photo album, choosing themes that represented them as a group. This functioned as a cursory examination of the data and allowed the participants to draw attention to what they felt was most important to include in the album. After data collection, I engaged in a more thorough reading of the data. While the themes I discuss are different than the themes

participants chose for the book, their themes function as landmarks around which I have organized my consideration of the data. Thematic analysis was the most appropriate method for this type of data due to the frenetic and sometimes chaotic pace of discussion. Reading for themes across data allowed for an analysis of themes that arose through different avenues but spoke to similar deeper meanings. A thematic analysis enabled me to consider different types of data, such as the quotes selected for the photo album, discussions around photos, the subjects of the photos themselves, and general discussion, while at the same time to be open to the possibilities within the data. Once all the sessions were transcribed, I read and re-read each session, using an open coding approach and taking notes on quotes and topics that could represent a deeper theme – either from my previous reading and research (deductive), or arising organically from the data (inductive). This allowed me to discover and conceptualize the themes as they appeared in the data, rather than reading for a specific theme. Once I drew out the initial themes, I read the data horizontally, reading for themes that arose across the data and checking them against my notes. This allowed me to define the dimensions of the themes and identify relevant excerpts of data. As Boyatzis (1998) describes, a "good code" is one that allows for interpretation and fullness of experience to be included (p. 1). In being open to the data, I tried to allow for different experiences to be represented under each theme. After determining the primary themes to be presented in my analysis, I arranged them in a visual thematic network (Attride-Stirling, 2001). A version of this network is presented below. This step helped me visualize the narrative that I will present in the following chapter, weaving the different themes together to provide insight into my participants' lives.

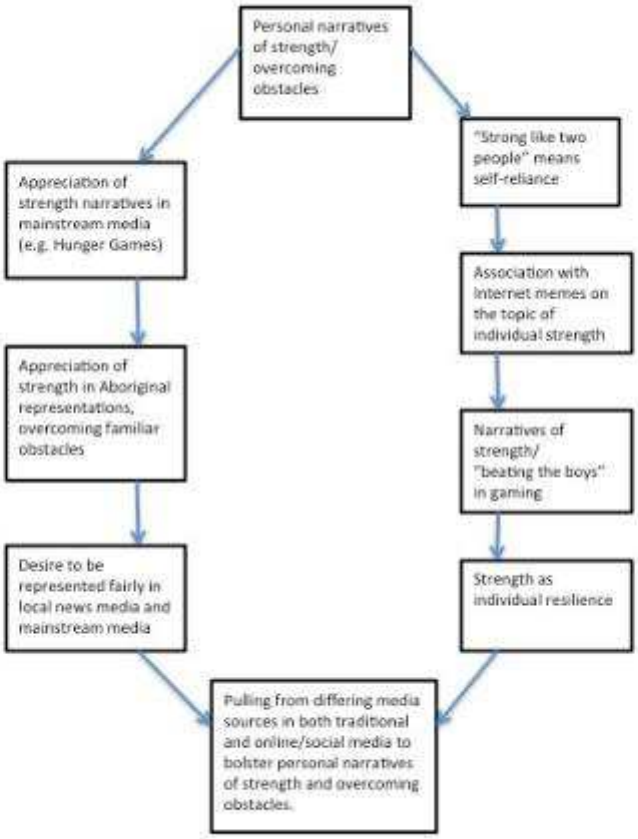

Figure 5: Thematic network.

Throughout the analysis, I have considered my participants as an `interpretative community', creating shared meaning through interacting with mainstream, online and local media as well as each other both in real life through online communications media (Mitra, 2010; Radway, 1984). This is consistent with Kellner's diagnostic critique approach, which considers the deep context of media and what it signifies (2003). While Kellner privileges close readings of media texts as well as reception, in my analysis I chose to focus on how my participants read and negotiated the various media texts that were discussed. This angle enabled me to both foreground and contextualize the unique perspectives of my participants. Specifically relevant to this thesis are discourses of race, the contemporary colonial legacy, gender, online gaming culture, Tłı̨chǫ culture, and police brutality. In the following chapter, ideological discourses surrounding each of these elements are drawn out from my participants' readings of media texts. Throughout, I have

tried to acknowledge power relations within the group of participants as well as with me as a researcher and within the school and community structures that govern their lives.

Reflection and conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have provided support for the methodology I developed and the decisions I made throughout the research and analysis process. As a researcher, I found critical self-reflection throughout the process to be crucial to gaining genuine insight into my data. PAR and Photovoice provided the basis for me to consider self-representation, empowerment and power within my project, and my experience echoes findings that PAR is an effective method when working with Aboriginal youth. In considering the challenges of PAR, it is important not to overstate its transformative potential and to recognize that power imbalances and hegemonic knowledge are easy to recreate in academic research. I have endeavoured to acknowledge this and to continually incorporate self-reflection into my research.

There were instances in which my methodology did not work as planned and had to be shifted to work within the realities of my participant group. Most clearly, my desire to centre the workshop sessions on the kind of data I wanted to get was swiftly deflated. When a group of between five and eight girls between the ages of thirteen and fourteen get together, staying on topic can prove difficult indeed. During the first two sessions, participants showed little interest in the activities, screenings and discussions I had planned. Through critical reflection I realized that if I truly wanted this project to be participant-led and offer my participants the chance to tell alternative stories about their own lives, I had to let go of my preconceived themes and expectations and allow them to tell the stories they wanted to tell, whether that fell into my definition of `on topic' or not. This led to a messier, but much more fruitful process. In the latter sessions, participants were reluctant to ascribe a deeper meaning to their photographs when asked. They were very interested in taking photos, but much less so in discussing them and why they took them. When I directly questioned the meaning of a photo, participants tended to blow off their image as `random' or `whatever.' I found that in avoiding this type of questioning and instead listening to the conversation sparked by looking at the photos, or about other topics in general, I was able to observe in a more natural way. The richest insights came from unguarded moments and discussions that didn't stem from questions or photos at all, but rather from natural conversation flows. Similarly to Peddle's (2008) findings, I think workshops that focused more

on creative activities rather than on discussion would have garnered more on-topic data. However, my lack of success when trying to get participants to complete specific tasks or activities emphasizes how important it was for me to allow my participants to lead the workshops. The challenge for me was to let participants and discussions speak for themselves, rather than the data that I felt that I should be collecting for my planned thesis. This process of letting go, while uneven and uncomfortable, led to the last two sessions being by far the most rich and worthy of analysis.

I was fortunate that the administration of CJBS chose the participants for me, and that the students were considered accountable to the school for their attendance. During our initial session, the principal emphasized that the students were selected as a privilege, and that while they did not have to participate if they didn' t want to, if they chose to participate they would be expected to engage fully and not use the workshop as a chance to skip school. While I greatly appreciate the support and this probably led to more accountability from the participants, it makes me hesitate to say participants were truly volunteers, as they remained accountable to their principal for their participation. Attendance was an issue, with only five participants out of the original eight completing their consent forms and attending all or most of the sessions. While three of the participants handed in both their parental consent forms and their personal consent forms, two participants did not hand in their parental consent forms and instead arranged a brief phone conversation between me and their guardians to obtain permission.

The relationships I built throughout the workshop, especially with the four participants who attended every workshop, were very rewarding. By answering questions about my own life, participants were able to see me as a real person and open up about themselves. The importance of relationship building raises an important question: how to balance practical considerations with limited time and resources, particularly in a project with a narrow scope, and the desire to build a relationship of trust over a longer period of time. By the end of the workshop, I felt that the relationships were just getting to a point where more personal information could be discussed and more direct questions could be asked. Unfortunately, the school was closing for Christmas break and practical considerations of keeping participants out of school and my own timeline for writing my thesis restricted the amount of time I could spend with participants. However, the

time spent together did forge relationships of trust and sharing, which led to the insights I present in the next chapter.

Chapter 4
Digital Natives and Narratives of Strength

Figure 6: From left, Mavis, Kaiyra, Kailyn, Boronica, and Pearl.

This chapter features five participants: Boronica, Mavis, Kaiyra, Kailyn, and Pearl, all between the ages of 13 and 14 and in grades eight and nine at Chief Jimmy Bruneau Regional High School. While a total of eight girls participated in aspects of the workshop, these five completed both consent forms and attended almost all sessions. It was easy to select data featuring them, as they were consistently engaged in interesting discussions throughout the workshop, and took a strong interest in taking and selecting the photos and words for the final photo book that we produced together.

I have organized the chapter into four overarching sections, each building on the other. In the first section, I present and describe the group photo album created in the workshop, attached digitally as an appendix to this document. Using the photo album and observations made during the workshop, I discuss the thorough integration of media in the lives of my participants, their use of memes and selfies to represent the self and how participants use web 2.0 extensively to negotiate relationships and express themselves. The observations made in this section

demonstrate how they are truly "digital natives"[9] (Prensky, 2001) who live in a world where the boundaries between the real and the virtual are permeable and few. Understanding how participants use and consider media in their everyday lives, from mobile phone apps to online multi-player games, allows us to better understand their engagement with the media messages to which they are exposed.

The second section presents excerpts from conversations in the workshop to describe how participants report feeling a tension between their local culture and dominant power, represented in part by global media culture and technology. It describes participants' bicultural identities and their relationship to their community and local culture. Understanding how participants sense opposition between different facets of their identities and how they connect those feelings to larger discourses of societal power sets the stage for an exploration of their negotiations of different types of media.

Having argued that participants are thoroughly connected to global media discourses and experience conflicted bicultural identities, the third section lays out my central argument in this thesis. Through reading and coding the workshop data, it became clear that the primary theme my participants had singled out throughout each type of media discussed was narratives of strength. From personal storytelling to Tumblr memes, Hollywood blockbusters to local educational films, participants consistently underscored narratives of strength. This section is dedicated to considering these narratives of strength in terms of how my participants relate to them and why they might be important to their identities as they negotiate the challenging period of adolescence. Building on the first two sections, I argue that participants use these narratives as `emotional fuel' to bolster their identities as strong people.

Concluding this chapter, I describe an occurrence that demonstrates each of the previous points made in the chapter. In this section, a family incident involving police brutality deeply affected one of my participants. The way she and her peers created meaning from this event using different types of media demonstrates their high level of media integration and awareness of broader global discourses. This situation provides a telling example of the type of reality that both stems from and helps to create fractured bicultural identities, and the type of situation in

[9] This concept, given the present context, is potentially worthy of deeper exploration and consideration. I hesitate to use it, however, due to the occasionally pejorative use of the term `natives' in Northern Canada.

which narratives of strength might come to bolster the identity of a girl in a difficult position. I offer a cultural diagnostic of this incident and conclude by considering Raymond Williams' (1997) concept of structures of feeling and applying it to this case.

It is important to note that my workshop was small, with only five participants fully participating, and therefore I do not claim that this analysis is in any way representative of their peer group. I hope, however, that the discussion below can provide some insight into the unique experiences of my participants and the contexts in which they are negotiating their identities.

Section 1: Media integration in the daily lives of northern Aboriginal girls

The photo album *#AboriginalGirls! Dis Generation Doe* was the primary activity on which the workshop centred and the final product that participants were able to take home and keep. The title of the book came from a brainstorming session led by Kailyn and Kaiyra.

Rachel: What do you want to call this book, guys?

Kaiyra: This generation though…

Kailyn: Let's call it `you know what I mean brah?' Just kidding…let's do hashtag Aboriginal Girls.

Kaiyra: I said Doe, D-O-E

Rachel: Ok, #Aboriginal Girls, Dis generation doe?

Kailyn: For me it doesn't look like English, but whatever it's fine.

Kaiyra: Native girls though?

Kailyn: It sounds very gay, Native, just say Aboriginal.

Kaiyra: Ok.

Rachel: Why do you say Dis Generation doe?

Kaiyra: Why not? It's about us.

Kailyn: Cause it's about our generation and how we are.

Rachel: Ok. And why #AboriginalGirls?

Kailyn: Why not? (personal communication, December 2014).

This discussion indicates how seamlessly participants integrate Internet language into their lives. Our project, which used digital photography but was primarily an offline endeavor, was still made to include a hashtag and a popular meme[10] simply because participants thought they would make good titles. This is an early indication of my participants' status as `digital natives.'

> What should we call these "new" students of today? Some refer to them as the N-[for Net]-gen or D-[for digital]-gen. But the most useful designation I have found for them is Digital Natives. Our students today are all "native speakers" of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet. (Prensky, 2001, p. 2)

`Digital natives' refers to people born in the digital age who have never known a world without digital technology. Born between the years 2001 and 2003, my participants are more than digital natives – they are web 2.0 natives. They have grown up with social networking and mobile technology at their fingertips and in their back pockets. In spite of their geographic isolation, full technological access means participants are connected in meaningful ways to global information flows. Using hashtags and Internet-speak as part of their regular speech demonstrates how integrated online discourses are into their lives.

All participants had smartphones, either iPhones or Androids. Their phones were constantly in their hands or being checked surreptitiously in their pockets. All phones had data access, though some participants did not have plans that included data and had to rely on wireless Internet, which was blocked at school. Participants used their phones both for text messaging and to stay up-to-date on their social networking apps. This perpetual connection is consistent with literature on girls and web 2.0 (Bortree, 2005; Denner & Martinez, 2010; Leage & Chalmers, 2010; Thiel, 2004; Tufekci, 2008), and is only natural for what Schofield Clark dubbed the "Constant Contact Generation" (2005). Schofield Clark's qualitative interviews with teen girls demonstrate that the Internet and text messaging allow adolescent girls to stay in touch with their friends on an almost constant basis. My participants were most certainly of this generation, and not only were their phones and devices allowing them to instant message their friends constantly, they were also enabling them to engage with the Internet and smartphone

10 The website Know Your Meme offers a definition of the "Dat - Tho" meme. Though my participants used alternate spelling, this is the meme to which they are referring. http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/dat-tho.

applications on a level that would not have been imaginable at the time of Schofield Clark's writing. For example:

> Rachel: Would you normally check it [Facebook] on your phone or on your computer?
>
> Boronica: On my phone.
>
> Kailyn: Computer, actually phone.
>
> Mavis: I have an iPad (personal communication, December 2014).

Participants access the Internet through multiple avenues simply and regularly. Most published research has focused on traditional web pages created for and by girls, rather than the relatively new avenues of social networking apps and web 2.0 spaces. My participants, however, reported accessing apps and SNS almost exclusively, showing little interest in traditional websites or blogs. Participants listed the ways they access the Internet as follows: Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and Skype. One participant also used Twitter. Participants stated that they primarily view the Internet and mobile technology as a way to communicate with their friends, which is consistent with existing literature on girls and Internet use.

Representing the self through selfies and memes

#AboriginalGirls! Dis Generation Doe included an individual page for each participant made up of images that each girl selected from the photos taken during the workshop and the photos available on their smartphones and social networks. Of the images on the individual pages, 14 out of 20 of them are selfies. In fact, `Our Selfies' was the first of five themes selected by participants to focus on in the photo album. The term `selfie' came to mainstream prominence in 2013 as Oxford English Dictionary's word of the year. Defined as "a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website," selfies have become a genre of their own and are inextricable from web 2.0 and social networking sites and applications ("The Oxford Dictionaries word of the year 2013 is …," 2013). Selfies have their own visual and artistic conventions: carefully posed, with little context, often edited for flattering angles and lighting, they tend to be accompanied by self-deprecating captions. Taking a selfie from above, for example, with the face angled slightly, is among the most popular types of framing, as is `duckface', a pose with exaggerated eyes and pursed lips

(Erickson, 2013; Marwick, 2015). Images are often edited and manipulated to adhere as closely as possible to conventional conceptions of attractiveness.

Figure 7: Bathroom selfie with Kailyn.

Two dominant discourses around selfies are relevant to this discussion: the first views selfies as currency in an economy centred on `likes' and attention; the second positions selfies as a self-reflexive expression of identity. These two views are not necessarily contradictory; rather, they complement each other and describe two facets of selfies as an important tool for adolescent identity negotiation. The first approach positions selfies as tools of economic exchange in a system centred on attention. Schwarz (2010) takes a cue from Bourdieu to argue that selfies allow users to leverage their corporeal capital (bodily representations), and their cultural capital (the knowledge of how to take, manipulate, and share selfies) and convert them into social capital (selfies which will get likes and attention from peers). He argues that photos are a tool to get likes and attention of friends and strangers, making them subject to market demands and audience expectations. Marwick (2015) focuses specifically on photo-sharing app Instagram and concepts of microcelebrity to argue that selfies function as currency in a social economy that centres on attention. Similarly to Schwarz, she writes that likes, friend requests, and comments are a new form of social exchange of capital. While `duckface' and flattering angles are fairly ubiquitous across my participants' selfies, some specific local photographic conventions arose in their selections. Participants' knowledge of what is considered cool or appealing in their school

functions as a form of knowledge capital, leveraged to make selfies that will get attention and likes from their peer group. From a discussion during the assembly of the photo album:

> Kailyn: I want to do the selfies page, I want this one in my LG pose.
>
> Rachel: What' s LG?
>
> Kailyn: LG! It' s like, all good, like All G. It was ever funny, my LG pose.
>
> Boronica: The most common pose is the one like this [covers mouth, pops out hip]...that' s the most common pose in this school. You ask any girls to take a picture and they' ll be like [imitates it] sticking their butts out (personal communication, December 2014).

All of the participants are familiar with the specific poses that are popular in their peer group as well as with broader selfie conventions. Some popular critics and authors, such as Twenge and Campbell (2009), have lamented that the explosion in selfies is the sign of a generation steeped in narcissism. The attention-based economy, where likes, comments, and friend requests are valued above all else, is seen as a sign of a shallow, navel-gazing generation. However, others have framed selfies as a potential tool for identity exploration. The second dominant discourse in the limited body of work dealing with selfies treats the images as a tool for users to play with their self-representations and identities. Rather than hail digital photography as a wholly emancipatory technology wherein a user can fully control her reputation, this discourse argues that selfies are only the newest method through which users, usually youth, are experimenting with their identity representations (boyd, 2007; D. Lee, 2010; van Dijck, 2008). Certainly, when directly asked to represent themselves photographically, my participants gravitated towards a series of similarly framed and executed selfies. When asked why they chose to take selfies and highlight them in the photo album, their response was:

> Boronica: To feel beautiful.
>
> Pearl: For fun.
>
> Rachel: Any other reasons?
>
> Pearl: To be weird and silly.

[Following up the next week.]

Rachel: Last week, we said we would do a section for selfies so I was hoping today we could write the words for what you guys want on that page, like to think about why you take selfies.

Boronica: `Cause it' s our faces, and they have to know we made it.

Rachel: Ok, and last week someone also said to feel beautiful, and someone also said when you' re feeling weird and silly.

Boronica: Bored.

Rachel: Or bored (personal communication, December 2014).

These excerpts indicate that selfies are taken both for entertainment and to represent the self. Taking self-portraits to feel beautiful or be silly, I argue, falls under self-representation in that it presents an idealized version of the self through the image. Selfies are a common-sense way to represent the self for my participants.

Boronica' s comment above on letting others know who created the photo album indicates that unknown audiences are a consideration when selecting images to represent the self. Indeed, participants were consistently aware that their photos would be seen by undefined others. The awareness of an omnipresent and invisible audience can be seen as a recent reconfiguration of social relations, a result of the ubiquity of social networks and accessible digital photography technology. The development and integration of social media and its conventions, such as selfies, into modern social life has led to a fundamental shift in the nature of photography; Schwarz (2010) contends that "we are witnessing a shift from photographing others for self-consumption to documentation of the self for consumption by others" (p. 165). Indeed, my participants carefully curated their selfies, in spite of the fact that they were intended for a photo book that would not have a wide audience. More than once, only one acceptable selfie would result from a half-hour long bathroom selfie-taking session:

Boronica: I' m going to go take a selfie, it' s going to take a while to get my hair perfect.

Kaiyra: I' m going to take a selfie too.

While it would be simple to dismiss this attention as narcissism, scholars such as Van Dijck (2008) argue that the advent of digital photography and the ease of taking multiple photos speaks to the user's desire to control his or her identity and self-presentation, allowing for continual communication of new iterations of self. Indeed, my participants directly connected their selfies to self-representation as well as to fun and entertainment, similarly to D. Lee's (2010) findings in interviews with a group of Korean digital camera users. Participants reported that self-portraits were both entertaining and, more importantly, allowed them to express who they were and their unique perspectives. While identity has always included elements of performance, Gabriel (2014) argues that social media and selfies have perhaps shifted the nature of that performativity by requiring a constant visible performance of identity. During my workshop, Boronica, Mavis, Kailyn, Pearl and Kaiyra were notably not interested in planning a singular series of representative photos when asked to represent themselves. Rather, they chose to use their cameras and phones to continuously document their faces and their daily lives, including scenes they referred to as mundane or irrelevant. Gabriel suggests that social media's omnipresent invisible audience has created new structures of display, making the selfie a crucial part of self-exploration and performance for the potential public. While my participants thoughtfully considered what they would present in their selfies, their continuous documentation of their lives indicates a culture with limited and permeable boundaries between the private and the public, wherein anything can be shared at any time through the constant presence of smartphones and digital camera technology. Beyond representing the self, selfies also provide a cultural activity around which participants can position themselves. During a conversation about creating text for the photo album, the following ensued:

> Boronica: Ok, let's write about our selfies. Can I use your laptop for internet? Like quotes…selfie quotes. [Looking for quotes on Tumblr/ I like this quote: For every good selfies there are 47 bad ones.
>
> Kailyn: Oh my god, ever sad, Rachel listen!
>
> Boronica: [reading a quote] She died doing what she loved. Taking a selfie in traffic.
>
> [All laugh]
>
> Kailyn: Ever sad!

Boronica: Let' s look for Marilyn Monroe quotes.

Kailyn: She' s ever pretty eh.

Mavis: Yeah.

Boronica: She has ever lots of photos.

Rachel: We can include any quotes you guys want.

Boronica: Biggie Smalls…We should take funny selfies and use this: it' s better to be absolutely ridiculous than absolutely boring (personal communication, December 2014).

Figure 8: Tumblr quote, found at https://www.tumblr.com/tagged/marilyn-monroe-quote

In selecting the text to describe the selfies page, the discussion demonstrates how the multiple media influences converge to provide a selection of messages from which participants can draw. Tumblr quotes allow participants to identify themselves with messages that are funny or empowering, as well as with admired celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe and Biggie Smalls. They were able to represent themselves individually and as a group by identifying with online memes, quotes and images, speaking to both their individual identities and shared cultural landmarks around which they connect and develop their relationships to each other.

Negotiation of identity and relationships through online gaming and social media

Another element of individual and group identity that arose unexpectedly was the importance of online gaming to participants. Expanding on what I had initially framed as entertainment media,

participants were adamant about their status as gamers. My initial research neglected gaming, possibly due to my own lack of experience in the area, but my oversight was quickly corrected by participants' assertion that gaming was very important to them.

Rachel: Pearl, what would you want a movie of your life to say?

Pearl: That I'm a gamer.

Rachel: Do you usually play games on the weekends, or most days, or what?

Mavis: Most days, almost every day.

Kaiyra: Most days.

Pearl: I play every day, but today I don't know `cause we have the all-nighter (personal communication, December 2014).

Pearl felt that gaming was a crucial part of her identity. She reported gaming nearly every day, and said it was her favourite thing to do. Her media activity was an important aspect of her identity, allowing her to define herself relative to her peers as a good player and an avid gamer. All other participants agreed that gaming was a frequent activity, and that usually they played several times per week. All participants shared the same favourite game: *Call of Duty Black Ops*, part of the very popular *Call of Duty* line of first-person-shooter games. Participants played hooked in to the Internet, with headsets, communicating with each other and other gamers. All participants played with both offline friends and fellow online gamers that they didn't know in real life, and shared stories about standing up to male players both online and offline.

Rachel: Do you ever experience sexism in gaming?

All: [emphatically] Yes!

Boronica: They just say you're not good at playing.

Pearl: And then we beat them.

Boronica: Yeah, and then we beat them.

Kailyn: And they like to talk crap.

Boronica: Well you gotta talk crap back to them.

Mavis: Yeah, defending yourself.

Rachel: Like if some guy talks to you online…

Kailyn: You say shut up!

Rachel: Do guys in your real life do that too, be weird about you being gamers?

Boronica: They just say we're no good but they didn't watch us play before.

Kailyn: I play with my guy friends.

Boronica: I play with like three guys here and a girl (personal communication, December 2014).

Much has been written about the toxic and sexist online gaming culture. Nakamura (2015) writes that often, responses to sexism and racism in this type of online gaming are met with an attitude that if marginalized players excel they will gain respect and dismantle sexism and racism by beating the sexist and racist players. While she rightly critiques this view as perpetuating that being free from sexism and racism is a privilege rather than a right, my participants seem to view their own skilful playing as symbolic, as proving that girls are indeed as good as boys at the game. They relate to each other through standing up for themselves and beating the boys. This type of `girl power' moment allows participants to connect to each other and to their identities as girl gamers in opposition to the people who harass them online and in person. Participants thus position themselves as tough, talented girl gamers. They also demonstrate integration between their connections to online gaming communities and other gamers in real life.

This type of media-focused discussion is an example of the ways in which girls use media talk to explore and negotiate their relationships and identities. This negotiation takes place both online and offline, shifting fluidly between them as smartphones and computers act as extensions of everyday communications and real life relationships. Girls have been demonstrated to consistently use the Internet to negotiate their friendships with people they know in real life as well as in online communities (Denner & Martinez, 2010; Leage & Chalmers, 2010), building communities and playing with their identities and relationships (Bae, 2010; Mazzarella, 2010;

Mazzarella & Pecora, 2002; Vickery, 2010). My participants are clearly no exception, in both gaming and social networking.

Rachel: Do you guys all have each other on Facebook?

Kailyn: I don't think I have Kaiyra.

Kaiyra: Obviously. Do you have Pearl?

Kailyn: [To Pearl] Do I have you?

Pearl: I don't know, I have like 1000 people.

Kaiyra: She adds randoms (personal communication, December 2014).

The exchange above demonstrates how offline and online worlds blur when it comes to negotiating the relationship between Kailyn and Kaiyra. While this exchange did not go any further than the comments above, possibly because they were in a classroom setting, it is clear that Facebook friendships are an extension of real life relationships for participants. Kaiyra's comment about `adding randoms' at the end of the exchange indicates that these negotiations are not always limited to the people with whom participants have an in-person relationship.

Kailyn: I only have friends that I know on there. I don't have randoms.

Kaiyra: I know, me too, like a couple randoms, but I have mostly friends. I know everybody who I have as a friend (personal communication, December 2014).

The idea of `adding randoms,' that is, adding people they don't know offline to their social networks, marks a contested theme for my participants. In general, participants' online relationships were extensions of their real life relationships, and their friends on social networking were their friends in real life. Most participants said that as a rule they did not add people they did not know offline, though they admitted it could happen in certain circumstances. Specifically through gaming, all participants had experienced situations where strangers had tried to connect to them through social networking. While all participants engage in gaming hooked in to massive online communities of gamers all over the world, they expressed differing opinions about connecting with fellow gamers outside of that world. All agreed `randoms' online could be creepy, but some added them to their other social networks while others did not.

Mavis: Some *Black Ops* guy talks to me and I don't like him, he always says something so creepy.

Pearl: This guy messaged me. I forget his name.

Kailyn: So frickin' scary, some guy from some country messaging me, but I changed my privacy so he can't search me.

Boronica: I always get messages from those people.

Pearl: From what people?

Boronica: Random people.

Mavis: They always want to be Facebook friends and like all my pictures and all that.

Rachel: So you're saying guys from *Black Ops* do this or Facebook?

Boronica: Mostly just Facebook, they try to add us on Facebook.

Mavis: And you're like: `nope'.

Kailyn: I just accepted my friend request. I didn't know I added him.

Pearl: Lots of people do that.

Boronica: Yeah like I played online with this one guy, and he tried adding me, he's trying to put me in that clan, that `Faceclan' thing but then I didn't `cause I didn't approve his request.

Rachel: Would you ever be friends with someone from Facebook that you met doing *Black Ops*?

Mavis: No, my brother though met this guy from Australia and they're talking on Facebook and they Skyped and stuff (personal communication, December 2014).

The excerpts above show how different online activities and social networks blur together in the online and offline worlds of participants. Participants consider online communities as separate, even as they extend their offline relationships into the virtual world. Online gaming communities, while making up an important part of how participants spend their time, are not

extended into other social networks. Rather, participants negotiated their relationships with each other through telling stories about gaming and dealing with `randoms' online. While participants seamlessly move their offline relationships online, most participants generally avoided developing friendships online with people they didn't know in person. One participant, however, shared a different perspective. Mavis had developed meaningful online friendships based on Justin Bieber fandom through Twitter and shifted them to other social media networks and communication via Skype. Judging only from her interactions with other participants, it seems that her peers were not as enthusiastic in sharing her admiration of Justin Bieber. Mavis has connected to fellow `Beliebers' on Twitter and developed close relationships with them based on their mutual interests.

Mavis: [To Rachel] Do you have Twitter?

Rachel: I have it, but I never use it. Do you have it?

Mavis: Yeah.

Rachel: Do you post a lot?

Mavis: Yeah.

Rachel: What kind of stuff do you write?

Mavis: Nothing, just stuff.

Boronica: She just stalks Justin Bieber and that.

Mavis: Yeah, I say stuff.

Rachel: Do you have other people from Rae as your friends?

Mavis: No, I don't have any people from Rae. I have ever lots of online friends.

Rachel: How do you meet them?

Mavis: We like the same stuff.

Rachel: How would you become friends with someone on Twitter? Talk back and forth?

Mavis: Yeah.

Rachel: Tell me about some of your friends.

Mavis: This girl, I have her on Facebook and Twitter, her name is Gabby, she's a Belieber. And this other girl named Kayley Rae, and Gabby's like, we have the same interests and things.

Rachel: Like Bieber, and TV shows and stuff like that?

Mavis: Yeah.

Rachel: And you mostly talk through private messaging?

Mavis: Yeah, and we mostly Skype to talk too (personal communication, December 2014).

Mavis' relationships to her online friends demonstrates one way in which in the Internet and the broader trend of cultural globalization have allowed for new markers of individual and community identity to form. Many researchers argue that the Internet creates space for previously isolated individuals and communities to come together and create different collective identities around cultural touchpoints (e.g. boyd, 2007; Tyler, 2002; Vickery, 2010). Mavis' friendships, based on popular culture and other interests, act as a way for her to engage in Justin Bieber fandom with like-minded fans. Her access to social networks such as Twitter and communications apps such as Skype allow her to do this with relative ease, something that would not have been possible in her community even ten years before. Echoing Vickery's (2010) findings with regards to girls' blogging collectives, online communities provide a safe place for Mavis to express her identity and associate with other members of her community in a way that differs from her offline relationships. By associating with groups of like-minded fans, Mavis is able to reinforce her fandom as part of her identity. Connecting to online friends via social networking could be a way for girls like Mavis to fill gaps in their offline communities, exploring and bolstering an important part of her identity. The Twitter Justin Bieber fandom provides a community that "transcend[s] the necessity for place as an indicator of community" (Vickery, 2010, p. 185).

Section 2: Global media culture, local identity and bicultural tension

The relationship between individual and community identities is especially significant when considering bicultural identities. In *#AboriginalGirls! Dis Generation Doe*, participants chose `Our Selfies,' `Our Families,' `Our Friends,' `Our Culture' and `Our School' for their themed two-page spreads intended to represent them as a group. The text was written by the participants, with different girls contributing different sections, but all agreed on the final text for each page. The text for each page is as follows:

Our Selfies: We take selfies to feel beautiful and when we're feeling silly, weird, or bored. We wanted to include our selfies `cause they're our faces and we want you to know we made this book.

Our Families: "Family by chance, friends by choice." Family comes first. Our families are important to us and a big part of our lives.

Our Friends: Our friends are important to us. Some are fake and some are real, you just gotta find the loyal ones.

Our Culture: Our culture is important to us because it was almost lost due to residential schools and we are still losing it today due to technology, drinking and drugs. But it is still part of us and we are trying to keep it for the next generation.

Our School: We chose to include the school to show our appreciation to Patti for letting us do this workshop. It is also important to us because we spend most of our time here!

While selfies, friends, families, and school were straightforward themes to select as a group, `Our Culture' sparked more conversation:

Mavis: For culture what are we doing?

Rachel: Well, we have pictures you guys took on the first day, like of Chief Jimmy Bruneau.

Kaiyra: Yeah, we should go take a picture of the head and pick his nose.

[All laugh]

Mavis: We don't need to do it?

Rachel: No, you don't need to. It's up to you guys if you want to include it. Do you feel like you want that page? Or no?

Mavis: I don't know…yeah…it's important because we almost lost our culture.

Kaiyra: But this generation's losing it.

Mavis: We almost lost it from residential schools. That's what I did my heritage fair project on.

Kaiyra: Hailey's doing residential schools.

Rachel: Do you guys feel like your culture is, like….

Kaiyra: Slipping away.

Rachel: Do you feel like it's hard to maintain your culture while you have all your other interests?

[No response; Boronica, Kailyn and Mavis come back in the room]

Rachel: Ok, we were just talking about culture, and Mavis was saying, well we almost lost our culture and that's why it's extra important to us.

Mavis: Well and right now we're losing it too.

Rachel: Do you think those are the right words to say?

Kailyn: Yeah.

Rachel: What do you think, Boronica?

Boronica: We're still losing it. At our age our parents would start speaking Dogrib[11] and doing stuff around the house, and right now, this generation is messing us up right now, we don't know any part of the language, we don't know how to speak, well I can a bit, we don't know how to understand, we mostly do…

Kailyn: I do.

11 The local dialect, officially known as Tłı̨chǫ.

Boronica: Yeah, but we're losing it from this generation, cause of iPods, drinking, drugs and everything.

Mavis: Because of the technology and everything I think (personal communication, December 2014).

In the above excerpt, Boronica and Mavis are tapping into an important theme represented throughout the literature on bicultural identities – an assumed opposition between traditional cultures and technology and the dominant culture spread by that technology. Both Kailyn and Boronica made sure to assert that they did in fact understand some Dogrib, but in general, participants were in agreement that their generation was not learning or living up to their traditional culture. While participants all live lives that are fully tapped in to global media technology and discourses, this is not an uncomplicated relationship. This conversation is indicative of a sense of tension between global dominant culture and their traditional local culture. The contrast was also present in the discussions around the entertainment media they consumed. In the first two sessions, conversations centred on the types of media that participants consumed in their leisure time. When asked what kinds of television shows and movies they watched, all their answers referred to southern-based entertainment media, with the most popular being television shows such as *The Vampire Diaries* and *One Tree Hill*. When asked about Aboriginal movies or television shows, there was consensus that these types of programs were more educational and that they would typically watch them in school. This is consistent with observations from other researchers in the North (Roth, 2013), and echoes the sense that traditional culture is separate from dominant culture.

In Behchokö and at CJBS, youth are encouraged to learn about their traditional culture and history through activities like the heritage fair. Mavis, for example, is doing her heritage project on residential schools, engaging in learning about her traditional culture and its recent history while still ascribing a tension to that culture and the technology that is thoroughly integrated into her life. The school environment at CJBS is, indeed, steeped in history. Historical documents and cultural artifacts such as handmade canoes and Dene drums adorn the walls, creating what can be assumed to be a positive cultural environment for students. However, as my participants show, traditional cultures are seen as at odds with the modern technologies also present in the school. While culture is thoroughly prevalent in participants' lives, they still see it

as conflicting with their lived realities. This tension supports Hopkins' findings that Tłı̨chǫ graduates experienced a sense of frustration at being `strong like two people' (Hopkins, 2011b, 2011c). While participants may express pride and interest in their traditional culture and show deftness and skill with modern technology and the dominant media culture, these two sides of who they are do not sit comfortably side-by-side. Recalling the literature on bicultural identities, I argue that this sense of opposition is indicative of a conflicted sense of bicultural identity for participants, rather than an integrated biculturalism; their cultures are seen to oppose each other rather than function together. Social psychologists such as Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2005) and Jensen and Arnett (2012) argue that this type of bicultural identity is less likely to support resilience to adverse contexts such as individual and structural discrimination. The sense that participants have of culture loss in their communities hinders their ability to connect with that culture and sense that it has a positive future. According to Lalonde (2006), this type of relationship to culture has more negative associations for youth mental health in Aboriginal communities, especially given that individual identity is deeply connected to community identity.

Bicultural tension and the local cultural relationship

Boronica, Mavis, Kailyn, Kaiyra and Pearl all reported feeling that their traditional culture is threatened by dominant culture. This dominant culture is both represented and perpetuated by media technology and hegemonic power structures, including Federal government authority, colonial history, and systemic discrimination. When critiquing aspects of dominant power in the workshop sessions, such as Hollywood and the news media, systemic discrimination, and government authority, participants showed awareness of the interlocking structures of dominance that relate to the ongoing marginalization of communities like Behchokö and Aboriginal peoples more generally. Hegemonic power, according to participants, is directly connected to the social ills of drugs, alcohol abuse, and violence that they identify as significant problems in their community. When participants discuss the significant social challenge of alcoholism in Behchokö, they look to historical structures of power:

> Boronica: It's because of the French people that came to the NWT and brought alcohol to the NWT.
>
> Mavis: For real?

Boronica: Yeah.

Mavis: You might not want to say that…

Boronica: My dad said it was the French (personal communication, December 2014).

While Mavis demonstrates a reticence to speak against the dominant culture, represented in this case by historical colonizers, Boronica shows her resistance by naming colonial power as the source of alcohol and associated problems in Behchokö. In one of the workshop sessions, conversation centred on what the participants named as the primary social problems in the community. As an activity, participants were asked to brainstorm words or phrases they associated with their community. Four participants (out of six, the number of girls in the workshop session) wrote "ghetto".

Rachel: What do you mean by ghetto?

Boronica: It doesn't mean we are ghetto, just that we're raised ghetto (personal communication, December 2014).

Participants had mixed feelings on the word `ghetto,' and avoided defining the term. All participants appeared to agree with Boronica's statement above, a sign of support from the group for her assertion that they, as individuals, are not `ghetto', but that the environment in which they are raised could be considered `ghetto.' As a descriptive term, `ghetto' can be teased out from their descriptions to mean relating to financial poverty and social challenges such as violence, drinking and drugs. There were also several mentions of violence, alcohol, and drugs in this conversation. Other words they chose to describe their individual and community identities included: alcohol (3 mentions), gay (3 mentions), bullies (2 mentions), gangs (2 mentions). One participant also wrote `doesn't care about kids'. While there were a few positive words such as `kinda fun', `bad ass', and `chill', the discussion following the exercise focused mainly on the larger first group of words. When asked, participants emphasized that those words did not always characterize Behchokö, but rather that those words represented some people in Behchokö and especially highlighted what outsiders thought of them.

Kailyn: People always judge in Rae.

Boronica: Yeah, lots of people judge, but they don't know.

Kailyn: About Rae.

Boronica: People think we live in the slums or something.

Kailyn: I' d rather say it' s not Rae. It' s the people that live in Rae, how they are, drunk people.

Mavis: Most of them.

Kailyn: And like, elders and old people are drinking.

Mavis: Yeah (personal communication, December 2014).

While participants freely identify substance abuse and violence as prevalent and pervasive problems in Behchokö, they begin to reject the characterization when these actions are generalized to the community as a whole. There is a strong impression that outsiders tar them with the same brush as those who drink or are `ghetto.' Participants' conversations demonstrate a nuanced interplay between individual and community identities, noting that they may be "raised ghetto" but it is the people who drink and behave in ways they consider negative that are the problem in Behchokö, along with the outsiders who generalize and impose their judgments on the community as a whole. In this way, participants accentuate their individualism and resist what they see as the negative aspects of community identity unfairly ascribed to them by others.

Throughout all of the sessions, an implicit sense of opposition between Behchokö and the rest of the world, especially Yellowknife, threaded its way throughout conversations. The capital city, in discussions, was frequently invoked as the source of media coverage, government control and social judgement and discrimination against Behchokö and its residents. Here, research in rurality provides an interesting analogue to consider the Behchokö/Yellowknife opposition. Research shows that subtle social and cultural discourses value urban lifestyles above the rural, associating rurality with primitivity against urban sophistication (Creed & Ching, 1997; Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2003). Social conceptions of rural and urban life often exaggerate these differences, ascribing cultural meaning to markers of one or another type of lifestyle. This opposition becomes incorporated into identity construction, felt most keenly by rural identities. Creed and Ching suggest that "the urban-identified can confidently assume the cultural value of their situation while the rural-identified may experience their marginalization as both invisibility

and as a spectacularly exaggerated denigration" (1997, p. 4). Thus, rural dwellers feel that city dwellers both demean and ignore their realities. My participants certainly feel this way.

Mavis: Most people think we're lame.

Boronica: They think Rae is bad.

[Later]

Rachel: If you had a movie about your life…

Boronica: Like a positive story?

Rachel: Or it can be negative, whatever you want. I just mean like if you wanted to show a story of your life to people down south[12], people who watch movies or whatever…

Boronica: If people down south talk about us, I'm going to go there and punch them.

Kailyn: Me too like [redacted] [All the girls agree].

Rachel: Well if you could show people one thing…

Boronica: That we're not really ghetto (personal communication, December 2014).

Creed and Ching write that in the face of the denigrating opposition and cultural condescension faced by rural-identified people, many engage in "the radical embracing of that marginality [] in order to contest the late twentieth century's hegemonic urbanity and its associated socio-political structures […]" (1997, p. 5). While the authors are specifically discussing rural rejection of urban intellectualism, academic urbanity is inextricably linked to other forms of urban elite culture. For my participants, Yellowknife is symbolic of the various structures that oppress and devalue their community. Thus, their vehement rejection of outsiders talking about them, particularly those from Yellowknife, functions to reject the culture and opinions of the urban elite[13]. This anti-urbanity is folded into the identity politics of Behchokö; the rejection of outsiders is a way for participants to assert their social and cultural value and strength. However, this rejection of outsider opinions and culture could add to the feeling that the local culture is incompatible with the dominant culture.

12 As noted previously, participants colloquially refer to Yellowknife as down south.

13 As Creed and Ching (1997) note, urbanity and rurality are relative.

Participants reported feeling that regional news media, typically produced in Yellowknife, is an exacerbating factor in the opposition between their community and outside culture. They expressed a strong desire for fair representation on a community level, highlighting both their community identities and their desire to be seen as individuals within that community. Participants saw the local news as selecting negative stories unfairly and portraying Behchokö as a bad place, as in the previous example of the graduation fight that came to represent out-of-control youth violence in the community. The privileging of violence and crime by the local news is recognized as a factor in the tension between local culture and dominant culture.

Boronica: They represent us as bad people, because some people do bad stuff.

Kaiyra: But it' s just certain people who do that stuff.

Mavis: They need to find more positive stories, they always pick bad stories over good stories.

Boronica: They think we' re bad (personal communication, December 2014).

Participants felt that news media coverage of issues in their community were, at least in part, to blame for outsiders' negative opinions of them and the community. They resented the generalization of negative representations to all community members and recognized that these representations become woven into a cultural discourse. Mavis' desire for positive stories, in this case, represents a desire for balance. To her, a balanced portrayal would even out the number of bad stories and good stories and mitigate the unfair representations. A desire for balanced news coverage is also a desire to be seen as a heterogeneous community: while participants freely discuss social problems in Behchokö, they emphasize that it is not all residents who do this. Thus, fair news coverage would highlight those who are engaging in other, more positive activities.

Section 3: Drawing on Narratives of Strength across Media

Having discussed my participants' connectedness to different types of media and their conflicted relationship to their culture(s), I now turn to an analysis of how participants draw elements out of different types of media to negotiate their individual and community identities. The different types of media discussed in the workshops included social networking services and apps, selfies,

memes, online gaming, mainstream media role models, Aboriginal films (both local and non-local), and personal storytelling. Throughout the discussions regarding the different media, one theme consistently arose - narratives of strength and resilience. Out of the jumbled noise of many different types of media, participants unfailingly zeroed in on and drew out narratives of strength and identified them as particularly important.

A telling example of how participants drew on narratives of strength was in their selection of quotes to accompany their pages in the photo album project. When asked to represent themselves on their individual pages, participants tended to emphasize their uniqueness rather than their community identities. While Kaiyra and Pearl wrote their own descriptions, the others preferred to go on the social networking site Tumblr to search for an appropriate quote to represent themselves. The incorporation of memes into self-definition relates to Du Preez and Lombard's (2014) research on memes and social media. They argue that memes form an active part of the online identity of a user, which in turn bleeds into how offline personae are perceived and negotiated. This is consistent with other researchers who argue that social networking sites, including Tumblr, are a space where both online and offline identities are negotiated through tools such as memes and photos (e.g. boyd, 2007; Gabriel, 2014; Pearson, 2009; Tufekci, 2008). Boronica, Kailyn and Mavis, when asked to represent themselves, turned to Tumblr memes as a means to select messages that they felt testified to their personalities. In this case, online content blends with personal images and self-description to create a curated representation of the self. The text selected for the individual pages are as follows:

Mavis: "Wake up every day strong[er] than yesterday. Face your fears and wipe your tears." – Anonymous

"I'm pretty but I'm not beautiful. I sin but I'm not the devil. I'm good but I'm not an angel." – Marilyn Monroe

Boronica: "Behind every female there's a man who did her wrong and made her strong." – Anonymous

Kaiyra: Just being myself

Pearl: Weird/Crazy/Annoying/Gamer

Kailyn: “I am strong because I know my weakness. I am beautiful because I am aware of my flaws. I am fearless because I learned illusion from real. I am wise because I learned from my mistakes. I am a lover because I have felt loss. And I can laugh because I have known my sadness.” – Anonymous

Figure 9: From left, Mavis, Kaiyra, Pearl, and Boronica.

All participants, in their own way, assert their individuality through their page text. Pearl's `just being myself' and Kaiyra's `weird' emphasize their standing out from the crowd, while the other three select Tumblr memes that stress their personal emotional strength. This is an indication that individual strength is crucial to participants' self-concepts, and that they often draw messages of strength out of the various types of media they encounter, such as these Tumblr memes.

`Strong like two people' and personal storytelling

When designing this project, I envisioned the community motto “strong like two people” to be a pivotal node around which our conversations would coalesce and connect to ideas of bicultural identity. However, participants were less interested in discussing bicultural identity as I had conceptualized it and instead interpreted “strong like two people” as strength and self-reliance.

Rachel: What does `strong like two people' mean to you?

Mavis: It's like, never give up, be strong.

Boronica: Yeah, I don't know how to explain it.

Mavis: Yeah, it means, like you don't have to depend on anyone.

Boronica: But yourself (personal communication, December 2014).

Participants have drawn messages of strength and independence out of their mediated local culture. `Strong like two people' becomes a culturally-supported way to bolster their individual strength in dealing with the bicultural tension they feel; this also reflects the importance of self-reliance and survival through adaptability in the Tłįchǫ Identity Model (Martin & Wedzin, 2010). While self-reliance within their community context was important to participants, it also reflects membership within that community. Being able to overcome obstacles in their community independently has a cultural importance to participants, reflecting a complex relationship to their cultural identities.

In the exercise where they were asked to write down different words to describe their communities, the conversation eventually turned from outsiders generalizing about Behchokö to the ways in which they dealt with drinking, drugs, violence and bullying. All the participants emphasized individual strength as crucial in dealing with these challenges.

Rachel: So when you wrote `not happy people', do you think that's true or do you think that's something people think?

Boronica: Because they grow up in a town where people drink and their lives get difficult when they drink.

Kailyn: Oh yeah, violence! [Adds violence to her list of descriptive words for Behchokö.]

Rachel: How do you deal with the negative stuff then?

Boronica: Most of the kids here cope with smoking marijuana and drinking.

Kailyn: I don't do that.

Boronica: Me too, I'm clean (personal communication, December 2014).

In another conversation, we discussed what types of media representations they would want to create. Boronica in particular emphasized her individual strength:

Boronica: My life story, I would have so many people crying. I been through so much stuff (personal communication, December 2014).

Later, in a conversation about bullying, Kailyn described her physical dominance over an aggressor:

Kailyn: I beat up a boy that always teases me every day, even though I do nothing to him, and only as a one-time thing I beat him up because he started punching me for no reason, then I went home, and the next day he stopped teasing me ever since that I beat him up (personal communication, December 2014).

In these excerpts, participants emphasize their individual strength in overcoming obstacles. By stating that they don't drink or do drugs, Boronica and Kailyn set themselves apart from the larger trends of their peer group. In the second quotation, Boronica states that she has been through a lot in her life, but that she was strong enough to get through it; in the third, Kailyn tells a story that highlights her ability to fight a bully. All of the above quotations exemplify how participants emphasized their strength as an individual factor, not as a community factor. Considering their sense that self-reliance is key to coping in their community, this privileging of individual strength in personal storytelling could support them in building their self-concepts as strong people. When discussing the overarching social problems in Behchokö, participants emphasized individual change over community change:

Kailyn: I think Rae's not going to change, only people change.

Mavis: I would say in 2014 or 2015 things would change.

Boronica: You can't change the world, you can only change yourself. Biggie Smalls quote.

Kailyn: Yeah! I seen that quote.

Mavis: Yeah (personal communication, December 2014).

Strength was seen as an individual feat and a crucial element in coping with the various challenges in their community, which were not seen as something that participants could change. Participants view the social ills they experience in their community as the result of the tension

between local culture and dominant culture, and require strength to reinforce their resilience to these adverse contexts.

Narratives of strength and overcoming in entertainment media

In addition to emphasizing their personal strength through their self-representations and stories, participants look to narratives of individual strength from the global entertainment media as well, associating with strong female protagonists most of all. During the first workshop, all participants were asked to identify their favourite television shows and movies. In the discussions that followed, one theme emerged: participants liked television shows and movies that portrayed strong women and girls.

> Boronica: Katniss [in the popular *Hunger Games* trilogy] is awesome.
>
> Pearl: She's awesome because she can fight (personal communication, December 2014).

Participants unanimously selected Katniss from *The Hunger Games* as a favourite movie character, as well as Tris from *Divergent*, a similar dystopian franchise featuring a strong young woman leading her community in a fight against an oppressive fascist government. Participants said they liked Katniss and Tris because they were fighters, and because they protected others. In the same conversation, Kailyn brought up Pakistani girls' education advocate Malala Yousafzai and explained her story to the other girls[14]. All participants agreed she was an excellent role model and shared admiration for her. In all of these examples, a lone girl learns to fight (Katniss and Tris using force, Malala using voice) to combat oppressive structures that try to control them and render them voiceless. Participants felt inspired by the strength shown by these three characters. Katniss, Tris and Malala demonstrate strength, integrity and leadership, qualities identified by participants as making good role models. Having demonstrated their awareness of colonialism and structural oppression, participants may also admire these protagonists for their roles in leading a struggle against a dominant power that tries to marginalize them. Participants are engaging with social, political and historical discourses in their appreciation of these figures from their temporal, sociohistorical contexts of Behchokö and Aboriginal Canada. While I will elaborate on this with Kellner's (2003) cultural diagnostic approach later in this chapter, I

14 Malala Yousafzai is a young Pakistani woman who gained international acclaim for her activism on female education in parts of Taliban-controlled Pakistan. She was shot in the head by the Taliban in October 2012 and survived, going on to continue her advocacy and become the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate ("The Malala Fund," 2014).

suggest that participants may go beyond simply appreciating these protagonists' physical and emotional strength and ability and see their situations as emblematic of underdogs fighting for their communities against oppressive authorities. As northern Aboriginal girls, participants experience real and mediated marginalization every day, resulting in conflicted bicultural identities. Thus, they can also relate on an individual level to the protagonists of these stories, who demonstrate individual strength under the oppressive thumb of dominant political, social and cultural power.

Figure 10: Portrait of Chief Jimmy Bruneau, beaver hide, and paddle. Taken by Kailyn.

In their third session, participants were shown a section of *Reel Injun*, a documentary by Cree filmmaker Neil Diamond discussing representations of Native Americans and First Peoples in Hollywood and the development of a burgeoning Indigenous film industry in North America. In general, participants were less interested in discussing Aboriginal representations, and were more interested in talking about the media they did like, such as *The Hunger Games*. However, participants did express a strong desire to be realistically represented and critiqued stereotypical representations of indigenous peoples shown in *Reel Injun*.

Boronica: It' s dumb. They think we use those [headdress gesture].

Rachel: Do you think people still think that?

All: Yes.

Pearl: You know what I don't get? How does Pocahontas dress warm for winter? (personal communication, December 2014).

Participants reject misrepresentations of Aboriginal people, and as with regional representations, appreciate honesty and diversity. Discussing a clip later on in *Reel Injun*, which showed a new body of indigenous media work that highlighted and discussed more nuanced, diverse representations of Indigenous peoples, participants emphasized realism:

Boronica: They showed the native women, and it was really sad at first.

Rachel: Sad but good?

Boronica: Yeah but it was really good.

Rachel: Why?

Boronica: Because they're real Aboriginal people.

[Later on]

Rachel: If I'm going to ask you to take pictures later to tell me a story, what kind of stories do you want them to be?

Mavis: Happy stories.

Boronica: Truthful stories.

Rachel: Like as people instead of stereotypes?

Boronica: Yeah, normal people. Stereotypes are like medicine man like we all have powers or something and talk to the spirits (personal communication, December 2014).

The exchange above brings to mind Shohat and Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (1994), particularly their consideration of the importance of stereotypes in representations of marginalized groups. While Mavis would like to see more positive representations of Aboriginal girls in the media, such as a story that features an Aboriginal movie star, for Boronica, truth is more important. Both participants acknowledge that representations of Aboriginal girls and women are problematic, recognizing the burden of representation on Aboriginals when they are represented in a stereotypical way. Combined with the first quotation in this block where

Boronica criticizes the idea that Aboriginal people still use headdresses, it is clear that to her, stereotypical representations of Aboriginal people in entertainment media come to constitute parts of the discourses around Aboriginal peoples in Canada. This focus on realism demonstrates another one of Shohat and Stam's points: "Realistic `positive' portrayals are not the only way to fight racism or to advance a liberatory perspective" (1994, p. 210). Truthful stories, rather than stereotyped stories, were desired by participants. While participants also expressed a desire for happy stories, more emphasis and discussion was placed on truth. For my participants, the power of these representations is not in showing supergirl role models, but in showing strong individuals who overcame obstacles present in their own lives.

Rachel: So what do you think about Aboriginal movies in general?

Boronica: They're sad but good (personal communication, 2014).

"Sad but good" was a term used throughout this session to describe representations of Aboriginal peoples that did not fall into stereotypical warrior or medicine man tropes. Participants acknowledged that such representations of Aboriginal peoples, in general, were sad, but appreciated the strength and resilience the protagonists showed in dealing with the obstacles in their lives. In contrast to the mainstream entertainment media examples given, protagonists' strength was found in surviving and adapting to these personal circumstances, rather than in leading transformative movements for social change. The `sad' parts of the representations, the obstacles that Aboriginal characters came up against, were taken as a given. This demonstrates an acknowledgment of the continuing repercussions of colonial history on Aboriginal lives and communities. Participants appreciated when characters were represented truthfully, as well as hopefully – `good' stories of individuals overcoming inevitable `sad' circumstances. This is evident in discussion around a local example, *Breaking the Silence*.

Breaking the Silence, a local Tłı̨chǫ film that covers a violent sexual assault and its aftermath in the community, is an excellent example of a marginalized group controlling its own representations to offer critical perspectives on issues relevant to their communities. That participants listed it as a favourite Aboriginal movie demonstrates the point that relatability and individual strength, rather than positivity, is what they find most appealing.

Kailyn: [On her phone, comes across Facebook link to *Breaking the Silence*] Oh my god, *Breaking the Silence*, it' s an ever good movie.

Rachel: I don' t know it.

Kailyn: [Reading] *Breaking the Silence* tells the story of Ori, a sixteen-year-old Tłįchǫ girl from the Northwest Territories who is a victim of a violent assault. The film explores the lives of young Aboriginals living in the north as they struggle with finding their identity in a world that is quickly spiralling out of control.

Rachel: Why did you like that one?

Kailyn: It was ever sad, sad but good.

Mavis: It showed how she was strong.

Rachel: What did it make you feel like to see a Tłįchǫ girl in a movie?

Kailyn: It was cool.

Mavis: It was really good.

Rachel: Did you watch it in school or on your own?

Mavis: In school.

Rachel: Would you watch it on your own if you didn' t watch it in school?

Mavis: Maybe.

Kailyn: Maybe (personal communication, December 2014).

Even though participants reported a very positive reaction to *Breaking the Silence*, they still placed it within the realm of educational media and categorized it as `sad but good' along with other Aboriginal-made and –focused movies. It was taken as a given that these movies would be sad and include tough situations such as violence, teen pregnancy, or drugs and alcohol, consistent with many morality-focused films shown as part of school lessons. Participants seemed to recognize a default setting of sad circumstances in Aboriginal representations, in response to which protagonists must demonstrate strength. The strength shown by the character in this movie in overcoming her obstacles was seen by participants as

inspirational strength in a realistic context. The obstacles in the lives of Aboriginal characters in movies seem to reflect many of the issues participants felt were present in their own lives. Considering the dominant types of representations of Aboriginal women in Canada, of which participants were very aware, a representation that showed a single subject from their First Nation overcoming an assault through personal strength and resilience was seen as a refreshing, positive alternative.

Narratives of strength as "emotional fuel"

The themes discussed above demonstrate how narratives of physical and emotional strength, overcoming obstacles and resilience in adverse contexts seemed to resonate with participants across different types of media. I suggest that in light of the fact that the participants, in many ways, demonstrate conflicted bicultural identities and consider their environment an adverse context due to social problems such as drinking, these narratives of strength may function as ways of bolstering their senses of themselves as strong people. These narratives may also shore up their community cultural identities as Tłįchǫ people, particularly through their affinity with elements of independence or self-reliance and survival through adaptability as outlined in the Tłįchǫ identity model.

In studies exploring the effects of media on audiences, much attention has been paid to negative emotions. This can be seen in much of girls' media research which focuses on the pearl-clutching over girl-targeted media marketing aimed at impressionable, fragile young ladies, particularly on the subjects of body image and beauty ideals. While these studies have made significant contributions to the girlhood studies literature, they have also been critiqued for their narrow focus and minimal regard of audience agency. Privileging instead the more positive potential consequences of media, Abby Prestin (2013), links the popularity of underdog characters in entertainment media to audiences' feelings of hope. Defining `underdog characters' as media characters "struggling to meet a goal despite unfavourable odds" (p. 318), such as Harry Potter or Katniss Everdeen, Prestin found that stories of underdogs who overcame their obstacles through "tenacity, persistence, and effort" (p. 318) were connected to increased feelings of hope as well as increases in motivation towards pursuing and achieving personal goals. Prestin determined that viewers who were consistently exposed to underdog narratives felt more hopeful and motivated than those exposed to comedy, nature, or to an absence of media

narratives, and that these emotions were associated with pursuing action towards personal goals. Narratives of overcoming obstacles, she argues, can augment a viewer's capacity to deal with adversity by providing models of underdogs achieving their goals, as well as make viewers' challenges and struggles seem manageable in comparison.

For my participants, I argue that narratives of strength function in a similar way to Prestin's narratives of hope, in that they show characters struggling to overcome obstacles. These narratives offer my participants cultural scripts privileging strength and resilience in various contexts, narratives that they can single out and relate to, and that support them as they withstand their perceived conflict between their local traditional culture and the dominant mainstream culture. For participants, strength and resilience functions on both a community level, needed to combat the judgmental gaze of outsiders, and on an individual level, to cope with challenges of growing up in Behchokö. `Strong like two people' took on an unexpected significance: to participants it signifies self-reliance in the face of tension between Aboriginal and Canadian identities, an important facet of Tłı̨chǫ identity. To bolster that sense of self-reliance, participants emphasized strength as important parts of their identities through Internet memes, quotes, and personal storytelling. In mainstream entertainment representations, their favourite pieces were those where a strong girl fought back against structural injustice, while in Aboriginal representations participants underscored resilience as a response to difficult situations that they felt related to their own community context. These narratives, found across media, might provide them with needed "emotional fuel" (Prestin, 2013, p. 319) to be resilient in a challenging environment, to fight back and speak truth to oppressive power, and find the strength they need to be, in their eyes, `strong like two people.'

Section 4: Connecting local realities to global discourses

I now turn to an incident in the life of one participant which exemplifies the type of lived experience in which narratives of strength offer a needed resource to bolster a participants' sense of self as a strong person. This example allows me to highlight many of the points touched on previously: media integration in daily life, conflict between cultures, and awareness of and engagement with global discourses. While I have no other details of the incident, I am representing it as my participant experienced and narrated it. As mentioned previously, I chose to

replace all participants' names with pseudonyms and obscure identifying data in this case due to the sensitivity of the issue.

Strength as standing up to oppression: Police brutality in Behchokö

Throughout this chapter, the social issues of substance abuse and cycles of violence that participants highlighted in their workshops have been a primary theme. In northern Canada, where European residential schools lie within generational memory and treaties are still actively disputed, the effects of the colonial project and systemic racism are often visible. The impacts of drinking, associated violence, and structural discrimination on participants' lives were thrown into sharp relief during the last session of the workshop, when one participant's father was beaten up by the police on being arrested while intoxicated. How this story was narrated and handled by the participant provides a telling example of both the level of media integration in her life, and the kind of context in which narratives of strength come into play in participants' lived experiences.

During the first few minutes of our final session, Jane, a participant who had previously been vivacious and engaged, was silent. It was clear something was wrong. After hanging back from the conversation for a few minutes, she erupted:

Jane: Cops in this town suck! (personal communication, December 2014).

It was revealed that Jane's father had been beaten up by police the previous evening after a domestic disturbance call at her home. Jane was, understandably, upset, and launched into a description of the event and its aftermath at the medical centre.

Jane: [Showing the picture to the other participants on her iPhone] See, look at all that blood. They gave him a big nose.

Sarah: How'd you get a picture of him?

Jane: We were there.

Jane: [Showing the picture to Rachel] Look. That's what the cops did.

Rachel: Is that on Facebook?

Jane: Yeah, I posted it and I got a lot of shares.

Rachel: Well, I'm sure the CBC will see it.

Jane: Last night I got 1300 views, that's how much people saw it, `cause I did it public so other people could see it.

Sarah: You'll probably see Jane on the news.

Jane: If you don't post them publicly no one will be able to share it (personal communication, December 2014).

The participant used the images from her phone to help explain the story and show evidence of the abuse, as well as trying to spread the images around social media in hopes that the police would be held accountable. To her, social media was the obvious tool to publicize and thereby contest what was happening to her family. Spreading these pictures and audio recordings on social media allowed her to feel like she was doing something.

Sarah: My brother saw the video, just saying.

Rachel: There was a video of the cops?

Jane: Just the audio. The cops thought my dad was going to punch them, but he refused to get arrested and wanted a warrant and they thought he was going to punch them so the cops just pushed my dad down and punched him and kicked him in the ribs. It's online right now. His eye is all messed up and his nose too.

Rachel: It's online like on CBC?

Jane: On Facebook.

[Later]

Jane: I like reading CBC.

Rachel: Do you read it every day?

Jane: Just on Facebook…they're trying to send that video that I posted online to them, so they can find out who the cops are and charge them (personal communication, December 2014).

While it would be presumptuous to say that Jane was directly inspired by specific cases of speaking truth to power via social media, it is clear that she is harnessing the tools available to her to combat injustice and protect her family. Jane is fighting back against oppressive authority – while not leading a revolution in the same way as Katniss or Tris, she is using her voice to challenge dominant authority. She is also demonstrating self-reliance, ignoring her status as a youth and not relying on existing structures to offer recourse. Jane's awareness of social media's omnipresent, invisible audience, in this case, goes far beyond the supposed narcissism of selfies. Rather, she is trying to use that audience to fight back, demonstrating awareness of her own potential power to create conversations and discourses through online tools.

This particular event also demonstrates a wider awareness of global cultural and political discourses that have been taking place on social and traditional media recently. Participants linked this case, and other stories of community police violence, to international news stories that were occurring at the time. Specifically, participants showed awareness of the Mike Brown and Eric Garner police killings in Ferguson, Missouri and New York City, respectively[15]. One participant also brought up *Fruitvale Station*, a fictionalized movie covering the true story of the police killing of Oscar Grant in Oakland, California.

> Rachel: Well that's pretty serious, and police abuse is such a big story right now internationally, with all the stuff in America.
>
> Mavis: Like "I can't breathe?"[16]
>
> [Later]
>
> Kailyn: Did you watch *Fruitvale Station*?
>
> Rachel: Yeah, I saw it.

15 Michael Brown was a young unarmed black man who was shot by a police officer in August 2014 (Cohen & Suhr, 2014). Eric Garner was another unarmed black man who died after being in a chokehold by a police officer in July 2014 ("'I can't breathe': Eric Garner put in chokehold by NYPD officer - video," 2014). Both cases became touch points for protest and debate on police brutality and race relations in the United States and went viral on social media.

16 The death of Eric Garner was caught on video and spread widely through social media. In the video, Garner exclaims "I can't breathe" multiple times before losing consciousness while in a chokehold ("'I can't breathe': Eric Garner put in chokehold by NYPD officer - video," 2014).

Kailyn: It was ever sad huh, this guy he was black, his names Oscar, `cause he was killed at that station, he was getting in a fight with that white dude. Why' d he get in a fight with that white dude?

Rachel: I' m not sure, I don' t remember that well, but it' s interesting because we were talking about police abuse today.

Kailyn: They were beating him up.

Mavis: It' s a movie or a true story?

Rachel: It' s a movie, but it is also a true story.

Boronica: I want to become an advocate and fight for the rights about that.

Rachel: There' s a lot of police abuse out there, especially for people of colour and minorities, like black people, native people.

Mavis: I seen that on the news, like last week I think (personal communication, December 2014).

This shows awareness of global trends and relation to other marginalized communities. Participants used media to navigate the multiple layers of an issue (in this case, police brutality) and shifted with ease between local, global news, and entertainment media contexts to understand and discuss police brutality. This demonstrates how media narratives, including use of social media in a real life context with real life goals and actions, become integrated into discussions and lived experiences to contribute to how participants understand and deal with a difficult subject.

Taking a cultural diagnostic approach (Kellner, 2003) demonstrates how the participants are engaging with significant dynamic cultural discourses. First of all, the use of smartphone and social media technology in citizen journalism is a pivotal recent shift in journalistic practices that has already deeply changed the nature of media reporting and discussion in this country and around the world. On no topic is this more apparent than in late 2014 - early 2015 media wildfire of American (and Canadian) police violence against young black men. As of the time of writing, it remains one of the most crucial and controversial issues in North American social discourse. Photographs, audio recordings and video of police brutality have sparked an international

conversation about racial profiling, use of force, and structural discrimination that could have unprecedented societal impacts. In Canada, those conversations have included and often highlighted Aboriginal Canadians, who have made their experiences with Canadian police a central part of that discussion. Participants, who access their news mainly through Facebook links, are aware of these conversations, and of the power of social media to start them. They are expressing solidarity with other marginalized, racialized communities with whom they may otherwise have little in common, and accessing the deeper power of the social networking sites and digital technology they engage with on a daily basis.

This event also provides a telling example of the lived sense of opposition between local traditional culture and dominant culture. Throughout discussions, dominant culture was equated with government authority, including the local police force and historical structures of colonialism. These factors, along with mainstream media and technology, are seen by participants as many facets of the same dominating hegemony, a structure echoed by some of their favourite entertainment media texts. Debates over police brutality and systemic discrimination are swelling at a time when dystopic fictions, such as *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, are experiencing an unprecedented peak in popularity. Dystopian narratives project modern anxieties about global world order and almost always feature an authoritarian government marginalizing and mistreating an underdog class (Kellner, Leibowitz, & Ryan, 1984). While ideologically complex, both *The Hunger Games and Divergent* feature oppressed and marginalized groups living under rigid social and political control and disenfranchisement. They therefore make a critical commentary on authority, inequality, and social organization in the contemporary moment that informs the ways in which my participants view these texts. My participants are very aware of the disjuncture in the lives of Aboriginal Canadians, particularly in their community, and the ideal Canada perpetuated by dominant media. Thematically, the Canadian colonial project might be seen by participants as similar to the structures of authority operative in these fictional worlds, and thus they relate to it on a deeper level than simply admiration of the protagonists. While her actions were never openly related to entertainment media narratives such as those referencing Malala or Katniss Everdeen, Jane's actions demonstrate a similar desire for justice and transparency, as well as a David-and-Goliath-esque confrontation of a power imbalance.

Kellner (2003) posits that a cultural diagnostic can reveal deeper meanings in texts, including aspirations and yearnings for how a subject wants the world to be. Participants' focus on narratives of strength, within their current social, political, cultural and historical moment, I argue, represents a desire to be strong individuals who can thrive in the multiple worlds in which they live – to be resilient bicultural individuals. Further, it taps into a deep, though not explicitly articulated, desire for societal change. As Kellner and Hall (1996), among others, argue, recent shifts in global discourses brought on by globalization have disrupted traditional configurations of local, national and global culture and identity. As web 2.0 natives, my participants are at the vanguard of these new explorations of local, cultural, and national identities.

Structures of feeling and shifts in Canadian culture

Raymond Williams' (1997) concept of structure of feeling is another way of exploring participants' nascent desire for change. Structure of feeling describes the connection and relationships between participants' agentic feelings and the many forces of social, collective and historical experiences and structures that make up the environment in which those feelings are formed. It is similar to Kellner's cultural diagnostic critique in its deep contextualization, but privileges the agentic subject's feeling and how it fits into global discourses rather than the media text itself. Participants emphasize both historical and contemporary government authority as social structures that are linked to the social ills they report in their community. This authority, represented as it is by the dominant media culture and technology, systemic discrimination, and the local police force, is seen as at odds with their local culture, contributing to their sense of fractured bicultural identities. This conflicted identity, along with their lived experiences of individual and community marginalization, interacts with their awareness of broader conversations about Canadian social justice and global marginalized communities. These circumstances intersect, iteratively making up the backdrop of my participants' experiences, resulting in a `structure of feeling', which makes narratives of strength resonate with participants. Williams posits that structures of feeling are emergent, as opposed to dominant, modes of presence, meaning that they express a feeling before it is articulated into a thought; he also argues that marginalized peoples are the most powerful sources of these emergent structures of feeling. My participants' experiences are on the margins, and while their feelings and thoughts are distinct and authentic, they also extend far beyond the individual, drawing from and engaging

with multiple discourses and communities of thought. Thus, my participants' appreciation of media texts demonstrating strength in fighting and overcoming oppressive structures, social problems, and discrimination functions both on an individual identity level and on the multiple intersecting planes of Canadian cultural, social and political discourses in this temporal, historical moment. Their appreciation of these texts and engagement with these discourses indicate, perhaps, a structure of feeling that represents an emerging shift in local and national cultural discourses around northern and Canadian Aboriginal realities.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Figure 11: From left, Boronica, Pearl, Mavis, and Kaiyra.

This thesis has explored the media interactions and negotiations of a group of Aboriginal girls in a small community in the Northwest Territories. Throughout, I have included transcripts of participants' discussions in an effort to make their voices heard through this thesis, positioning them as agentic participants. I have examined the ways in which they use media in their everyday lives, as well as how they negotiate the decoding of different media messages. While in my initial research and development of this project, I imagined more direct discussions on media representations and negotiations of identity, in the field I found a need to shift focus and let participants take the reins. Through having participants lead discussion and conversation, I was able to explore their lived mediated experiences in terms of both daily media use and negotiation

as it relates to identity formation processes. Building on the integration of media use in their daily lives, I explored a reported tension in their cultural identities and how that informed the types of media messages and discourses they were engaging with in their negotiating their own identities. In the following conclusion I will focus on some key points of this work and discuss its limitations, contributions, and directions for potential future research.

Participatory methods: Simple in theory, less so in practice

My theoretical and personal commitment to participatory methods was one of the first hurdles I ran into. Due to the geographic remoteness of Behchokö, I was only able to be in the community for a total of three weeks, during which I met with participants six times. While the frequency of meetings was appropriate, at the end of the workshop, participants expressed the desire to continue meeting. Unfortunately, as school was ending for the holiday break, this wasn't possible. Our best conversations happened in the last two sessions, and could have continued and deepened given more time.

Having a truly participant-led process led to a less focused set of data than I originally expected. The Photovoice and PAR projects that I had read about in my initial research perhaps had a stronger facilitator role, where in my workshops I tried to act as an observer more than a facilitator. I found that this led to less organized, while still valuable, conversations, and question whether a stronger facilitator role could have been considered. With more time and stronger facilitation, these workshops could have achieved more for participants, such as more instruction in photography or more focused discussions around thoughtful representations. The transformative space I sought to create, wherein participants were empowered to speak their truths and represent themselves, was only beginning to germinate and take root as my research was coming to an end. However, it is encouraging that participants enjoyed their time in the workshop and expressed their opinions freely.

Analysis: Narrowing focus

In a thesis of limited length, it was necessary to restrict my focus. By focusing on the three dominant themes that arose from my findings (integration of media into participants' everyday lives, bicultural identities, and narratives of strength) I was able to touch on much of my initial research. However, given unlimited time for research and writing, there would be an almost

endless and rich ground to cover. I would have liked to explore the concept of resilience with my participants in a much more meaningful way. I would have also liked to explore the concept of self-continuity (Lalonde, 2006), and discuss future aspirations with my participants through a media-focused lens. As photos were used as a sparking point for conversations, I have treated them as secondary to participants' discussions, which were much more varied and fruitful. However, where themes in photography did emerge, as in selfies, they became a theme of their own through which I discussed the ways in which participants negotiated their self-concepts through web 2.0 and social media conventions. This approach is consistent with my theoretical grounding, which focuses on giving voice to marginalized youth, valuing their unique subject locations and the ways in which they choose to express themselves.

Media integration into the everyday lives of participants

I found that my participants were never far removed from personal digital media. The integration of web 2.0 into their lives was at a level I did not expect, in spite of my own personal experiences in nearby Yellowknife. Their negotiations of their relationships and self-concepts transitioned seamlessly between real life encounters and web 2.0 technology. While all participants connected to people they knew in real life through social networking services and apps, participants differed on whether or not they connected with people they did not know in real life. Some participants forged strong connections with other likeminded people through the Internet, while others only connected with strangers for the purposes of gaming and did not pursue the relationships outside of gaming.

While my research sample is small and not representative of their demographic as a whole, the practical implications of this data are clear – in order to reach northern Aboriginal youth, particularly girls, future researchers and educators need to be aware that they are as fully integrated in using and consuming media as their southern peers. Accessing this group on its own terms will likely lead to a more engaged response. For example, when *Breaking the Silence* was brought up in focus group discussions, participants said they liked it but did not care to elaborate when asked. Later, however, when Kailyn saw the link come up on her Facebook page, she brought the film up independently and sparked a conversation on her own terms about the strengths of the film. Research and programming rooted in assumptions of rural and northern

idyll and Aboriginal cultural nostalgia may find itself summarily disregarded in favour of integrated web 2.0 media platforms.

Bicultural identities

Consistent with the small amount of other research in Behchokö, young people in the community reported feeling tension between their local cultural identity and dominant culture, represented in part through media and technology. This is indicative of conflicted bicultural identities, as participants live in both worlds but feel they are not compatible. Traditional culture loss and social problems in the community are, for participants, the result of that tension and the imposition of dominant hegemonic structures and institutions. Participants, in many ways, view their community as a difficult context containing social ills such as substance abuse and violence, but express a strong desire for the heterogeneity and different experiences within their community to be acknowledged.

In terms of bicultural identities, Behchokö is well placed for future research into the growing indigenous resurgence movement and how it is shared through global media platforms such as social networking sites. How these discourses evolve and involve geographically isolated communities and youth will be very interesting. A fascinating potential project in Behchokö could explore ways to bridge local traditional culture with the tools of web 2.0 and social networks, reaching youth on their own terms while honouring and exploring local cultural identity.

Narratives of strength across media

While media integration and cultural identities were themes I set out to explore and examine, the other central finding of this thesis arose inductively from my observations during the workshops and after reading and analyzing the data. In every media discussion, participants consistently identified and gravitated towards narratives of strength. From interpersonal storytelling, to Internet memes and web 2.0, to local films and blockbuster entertainment media, participants pulled out and appreciated elements of strength and resilience. Research shows that media narratives of hope can increase personal feelings of hope and resilience. I argue that privileging strength narratives helps bolster my participants' own senses of strength and ability to succeed in their community, which is perceived as a complex, sometimes-negative context. My participants

are using narratives of strength and hope to fuel their own senses of being strong, resilient young women. As exemplified in the incident concerning police brutality, participants are accessing many deep, significant global discourses when they negotiate these issues. Their feelings and sense of combatting oppression through individual strength can be described as a structure of feeling that may represent an emerging set of discourses in Canada.

In terms of future research, it would be interesting to see what kind of narratives participants would create if allowed to do so via film or video. In our limited photography workshop, self-representation was encouraged, but took place mostly in the form of selfies or `random' pictures. Given a different format wherein narratives are encouraged and could be fictionalized, such as short films or videos, my participants could be given an opportunity to create different kinds of self-representations that might still include narratives of strength and resilience. Future work with this group could include different formats that encourage and empower participants to tell more stories and engage more explicitly with themes of marginalization, oppression, and identifying what traditional indigenous cultures mean for young Aboriginal Canadians today.

Contributions to the research literature

This work contributes to the research literature in several areas. First and foremost, northern Aboriginal youth are so understudied that offering insight into their lived experiences shines a light on a marginalized group at the forefront of social change in Canada. As critical indigenous politics continue to gain steam in Canada, and Canada's north becomes an important site of resource development and associated counter-activism, northern Aboriginal youth may find themselves at the epicentre of upcoming shifts in Canadian cultural discourse. They will be at the vanguard of bridging the gap between their local cultures and the rest of Canadian culture, working towards less conflicted bicultural identities for individuals and communities. This research helps to understand the ways in which they live, both in ways that are consistent with other research literature with rural youth and in ways that might not be. This research contributes both to girlhood studies and critical indigenous studies in that it strives to give voice to a group that is marginalized in mainstream Canadian cultural discourse and values their unique subject locations.

This research also contributes to the burgeoning body of literature in girls and web 2.0, showing consistency with research from around the world that explores and highlights how girls use the Internet to extend and negotiate their relationships with their real life peers, as well as find new communities online. Participants negotiated their relationships and identities through both discussions around traditional entertainment media and through things like selecting memes and using Snapchat with each other and their peers. This offers an exciting new direction for future study. As global online and mobile technology advances rapidly, youth from around the world are on the front lines. How they integrate that media into their lives will be fascinating and enlightening to observe.

This degree of media integration also has implications for the future of PAR research methodologies. The final methodological reflection I have for this project is a practical one: what does self-representation mean in the age of selfies? Given the modern spread of smartphones and digital photography technology, I question if Photovoice as it has been practiced will continue to be a relevant methodology. I suspect that expanding the Photovoice method beyond photography will be a significant focus in the future of PAR, as the ubiquity of photos in people' s lives may dilute the discursive potential of photographs. I suggest focusing on narratives and voice rather than on images will, perhaps, allow for the methodology to continue to explore and provide insights into the experiences of marginalized groups and individuals. In my research, I found the `everydayness' of picture taking perhaps reduced the importance participants ascribed to the pictures they took. However, I also found that many participants used photos from their smartphones, Facebook and their personal cameras in the project, which allowed them to expand the scope and have more control over what pictures were included. While the speed of technological innovation is exciting and provides fascinating and ever-changing opportunities for connection, its influence on things like self-representation remains to be seen.

The consequences of the colonial legacy and its resonating echoes in Canadian discourses and lived experiences are understudied. Much of the research I referenced in my initial research focusing on media representations discusses southern Aboriginal populations. This project offers insight into the everyday lived realities of one small group of Aboriginal girls in a remote northern location. This focused, small-scale type of research is not meant to draw broad conclusions about the state of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, but rather to explore the daily lives

of northern Aboriginal girls and the processes through which they decode the countless, distorted media messages they receive every day. This youth-centred approach highlights their voices, positioning my participants not in opposition to southern or urban Aboriginals or non-Aboriginal girls, but as unique, valuable members of society who deserve to be given a voice. Those voices have much to say and, if contemporary indigenous and wider social movements are any indication, will be important voices for all Canadians to hear in the coming years. Their seamless adoption of evolving media technology could be the means through which they make their voices heard.

Figure 12: Clockwise from left, Mavis, Kailyn, Boronica, Kaiyra, and Pearl.

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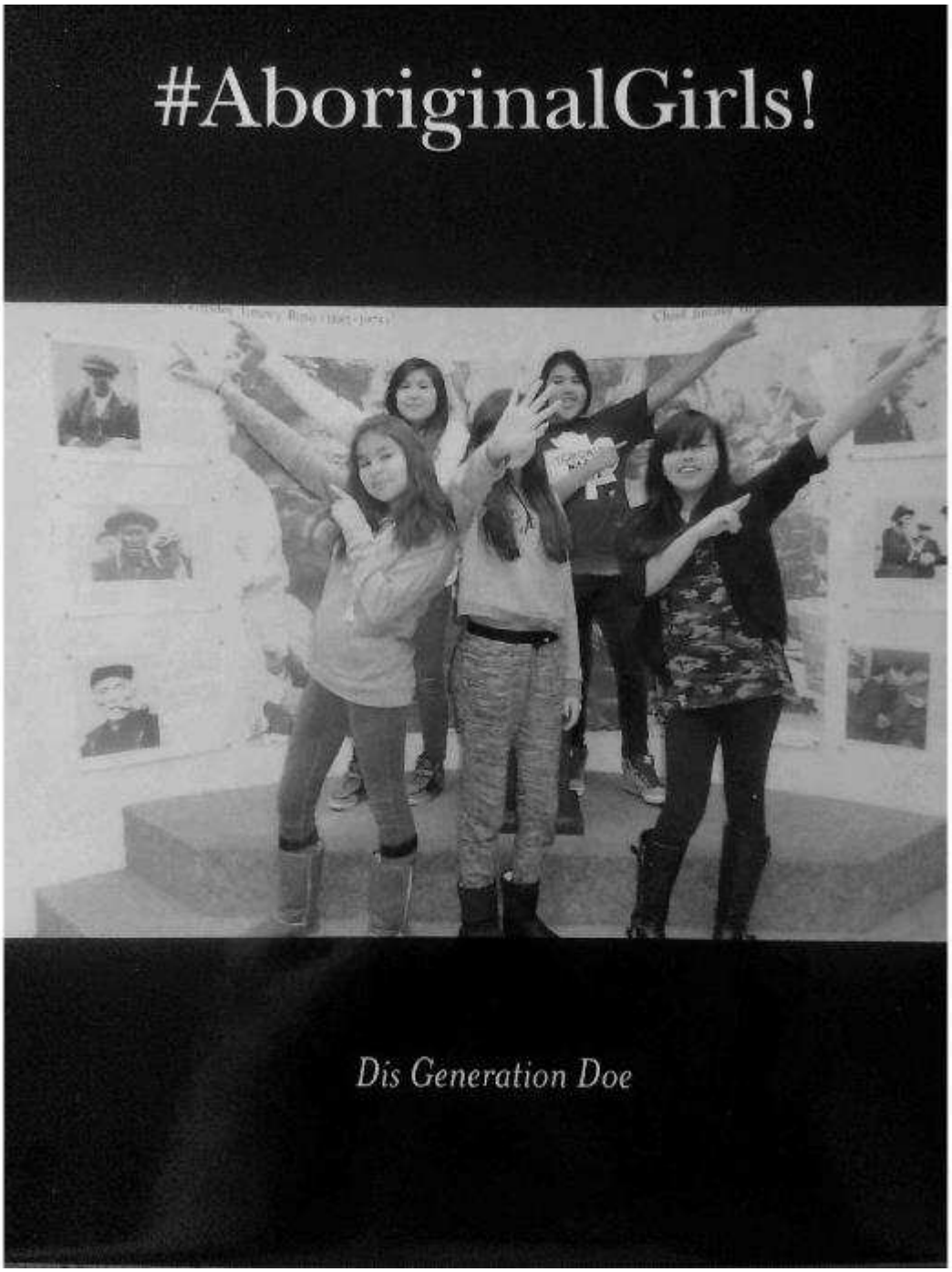
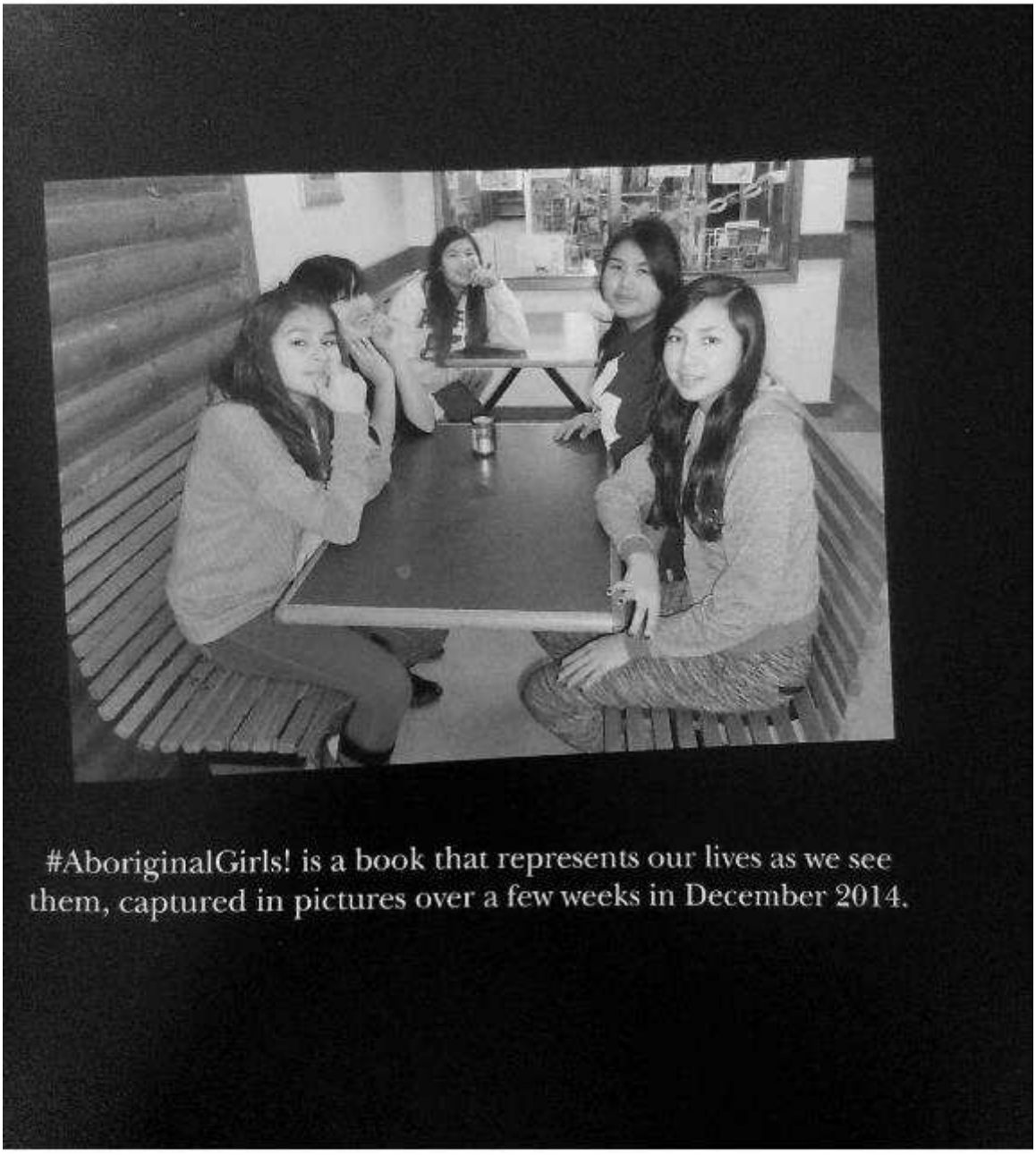
Appendix A: #AboriginalGirls! Dis Generation Doe


#AboriginalGirls!
Dis Generation Doe



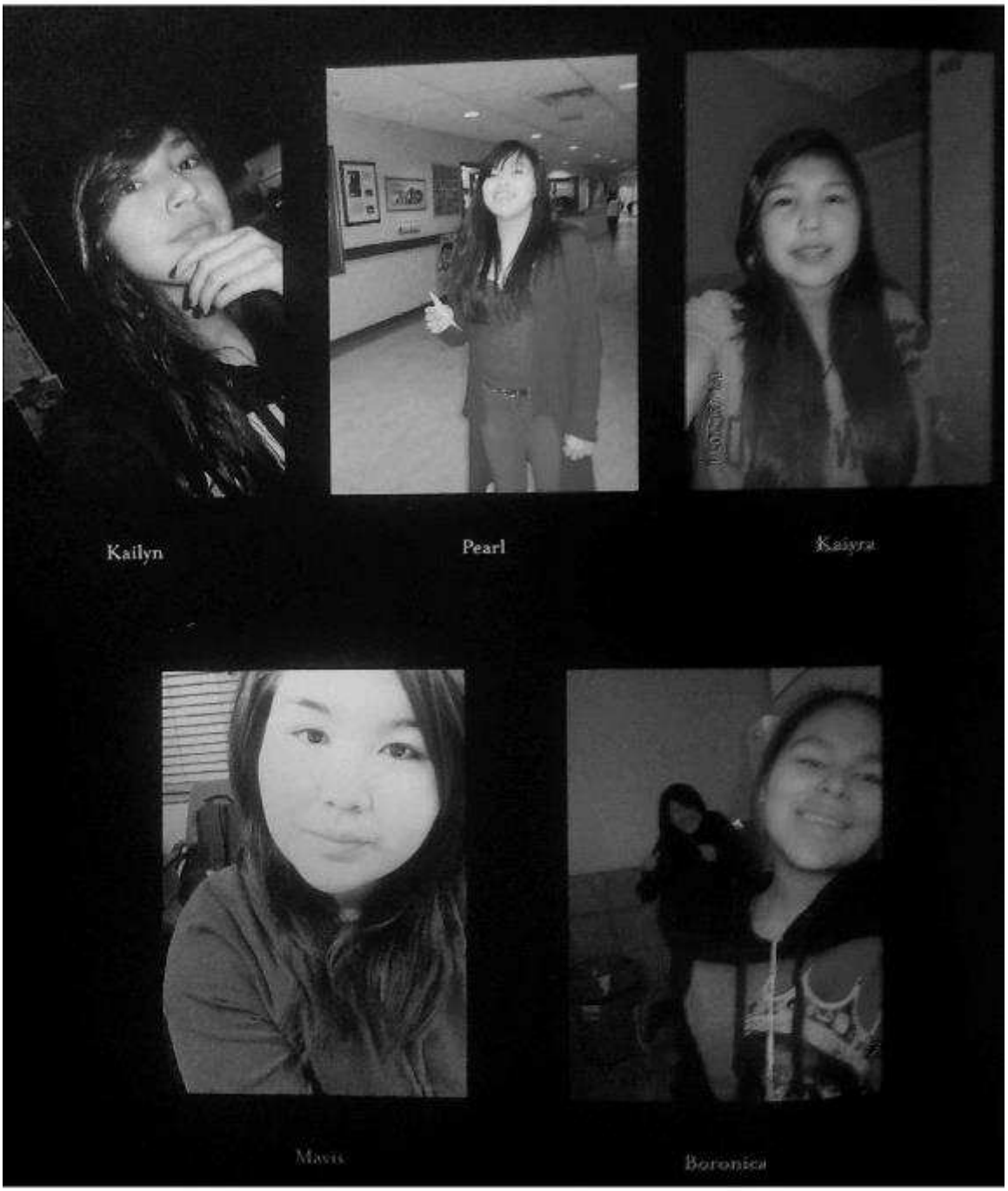
#AboriginalGirls! is a book that represents our lives as we see them, captured in pictures over a few weeks in December 2014.

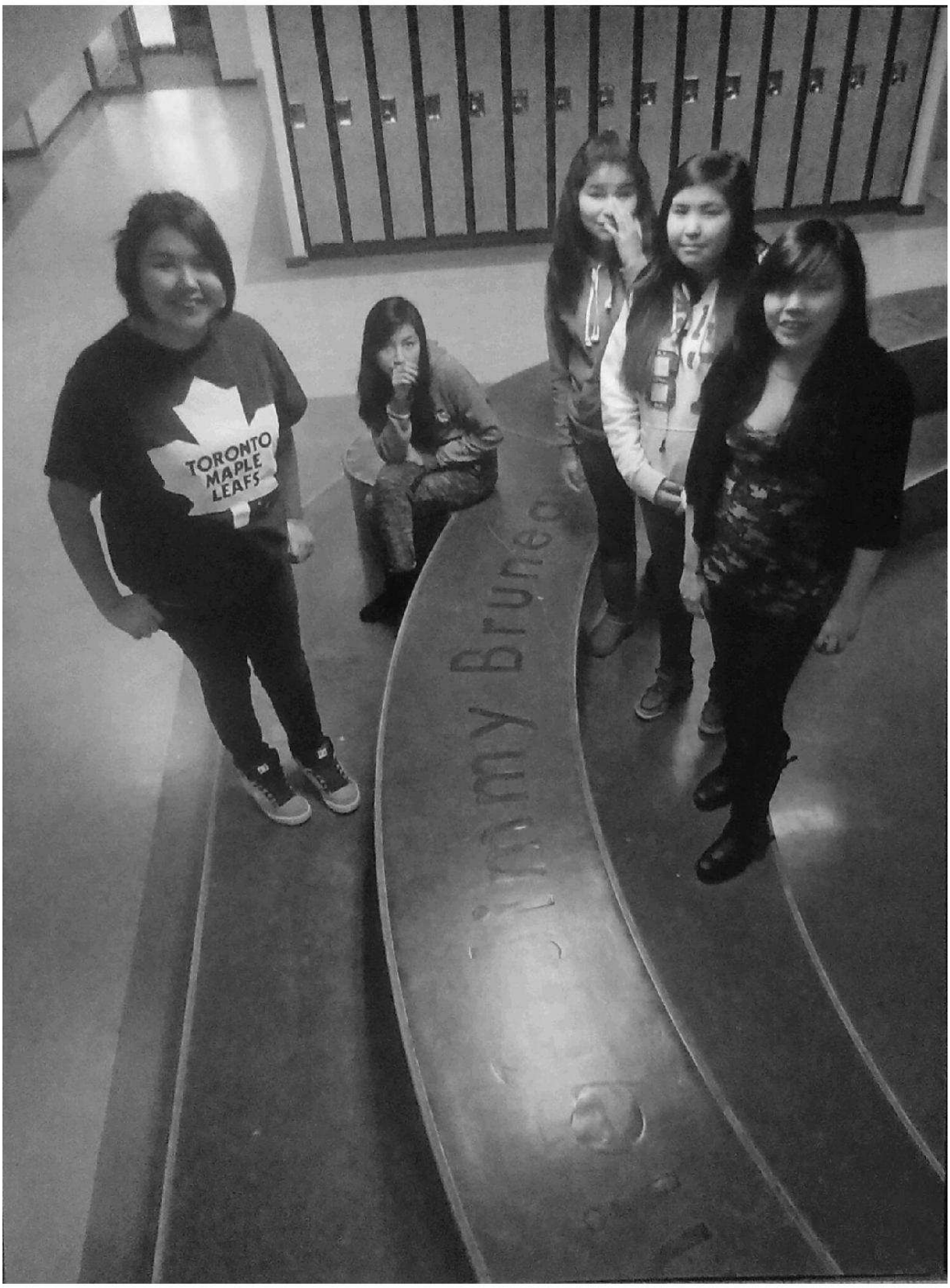
Northern Aboriginal girls and their mediated worlds

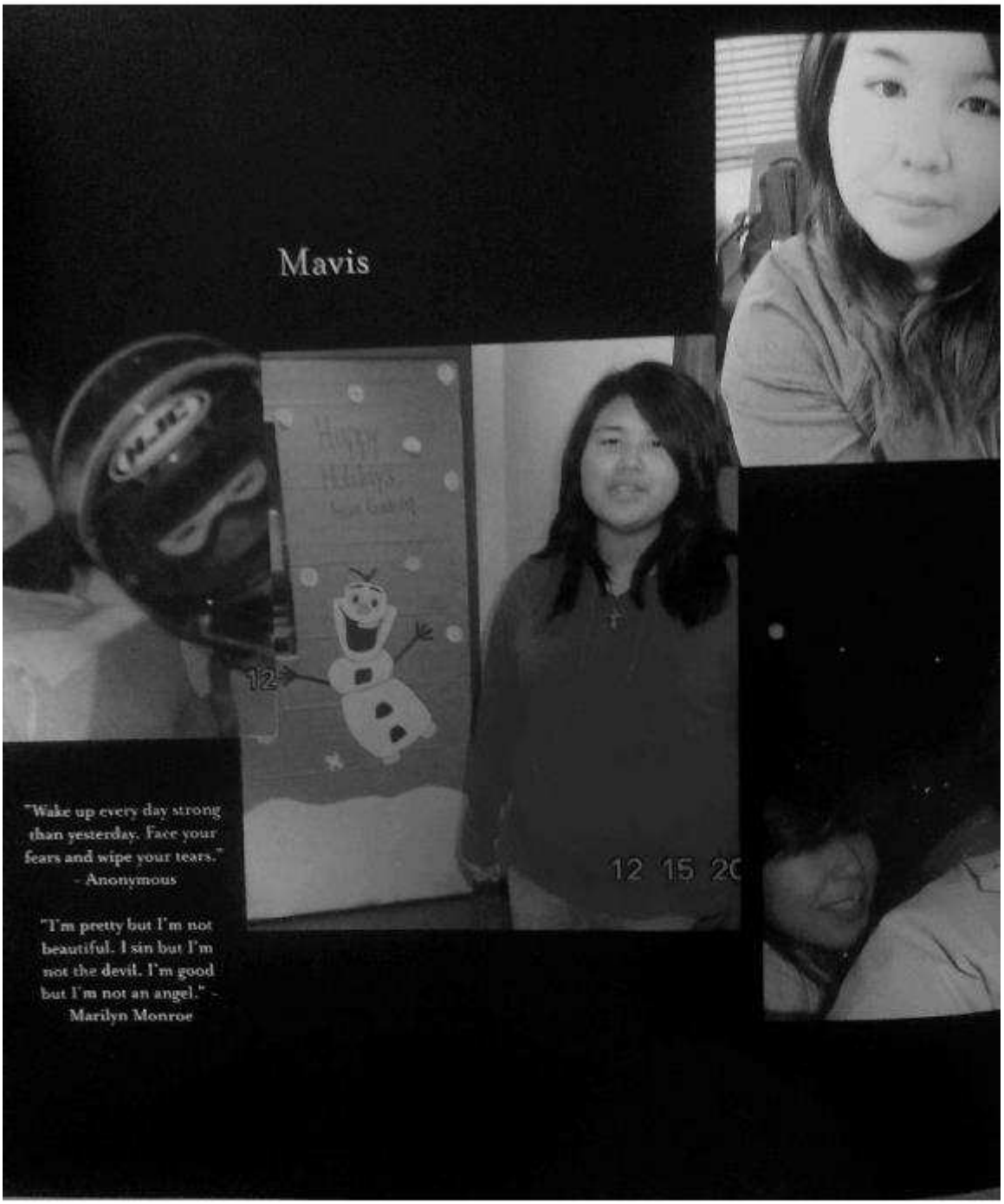
This project is a participatory action research workshop for a group of 13 and 14 year old Aboriginal girls in Behchoko, Northwest Territories. It was created by Rachel MacNeill, a graduate student at Concordia University in Montreal as part of her Masters' thesis research.

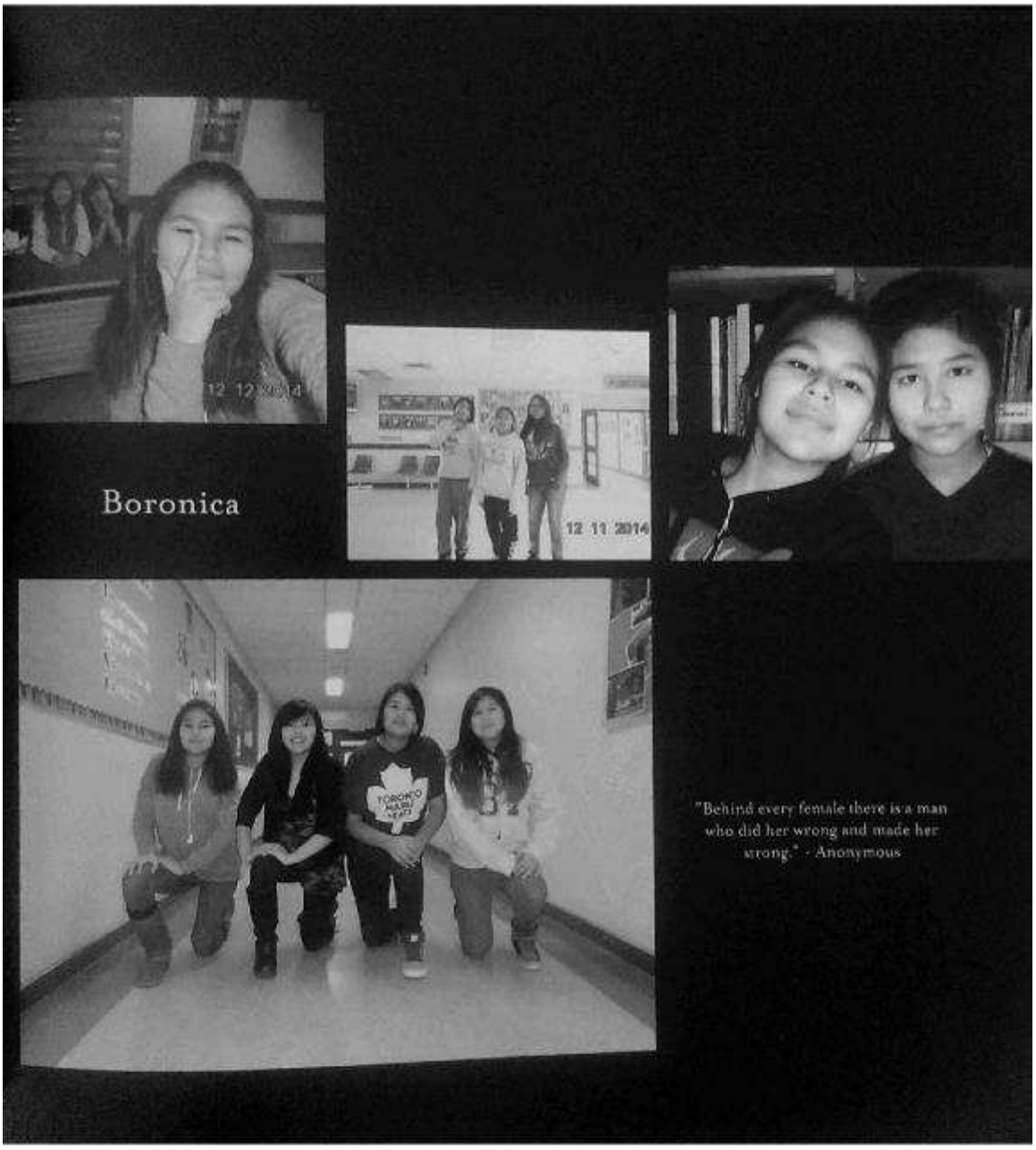
The workshop took place over five sessions in December 2014 at Chief Jimmy Bruneau Regional High School in Behchoko, Northwest Territories. Sessions were participant-led and sought to explore the ways in which northern Aboriginal girls see their lives and identities mediated through traditional, online, social, and alternative media. The project sought to encourage participants to take photos that they felt represented their individual and community identities, and use those photos to spark reflection and conversation about media, identity and community. Drawing from the photovoice methodology, this book seeks to give voice to participants, allowing them to choose how to represent their individual lives and their place in their community.

This research could not have been completed without the support of Jim Martin and Cecilia Zoe-Martin at the Tlicho Government, Patti Turner and Sasha Sage at Chief Jimmy Bruneau Regional High School, and Professor Yasmin Jiwani at Concordia University. Special thanks especially are due to Boronica, Kailyn, Mavis, Kairya and Pearl for being in this book, and to Jasie, Jayanna and Joyce Ann for their participation!

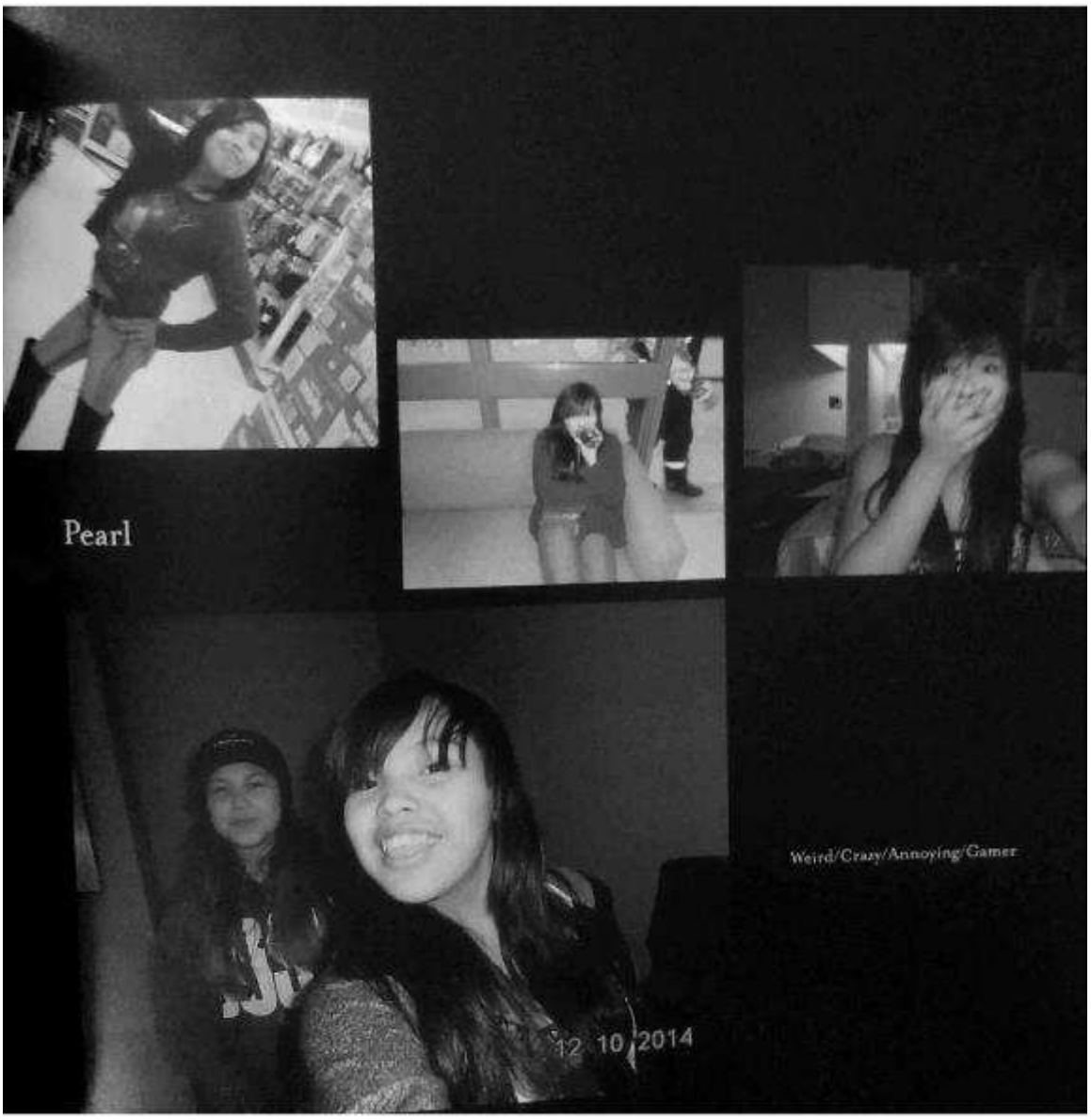

Kailyn
Pearl
Kaiyra
Mavis
Boronica

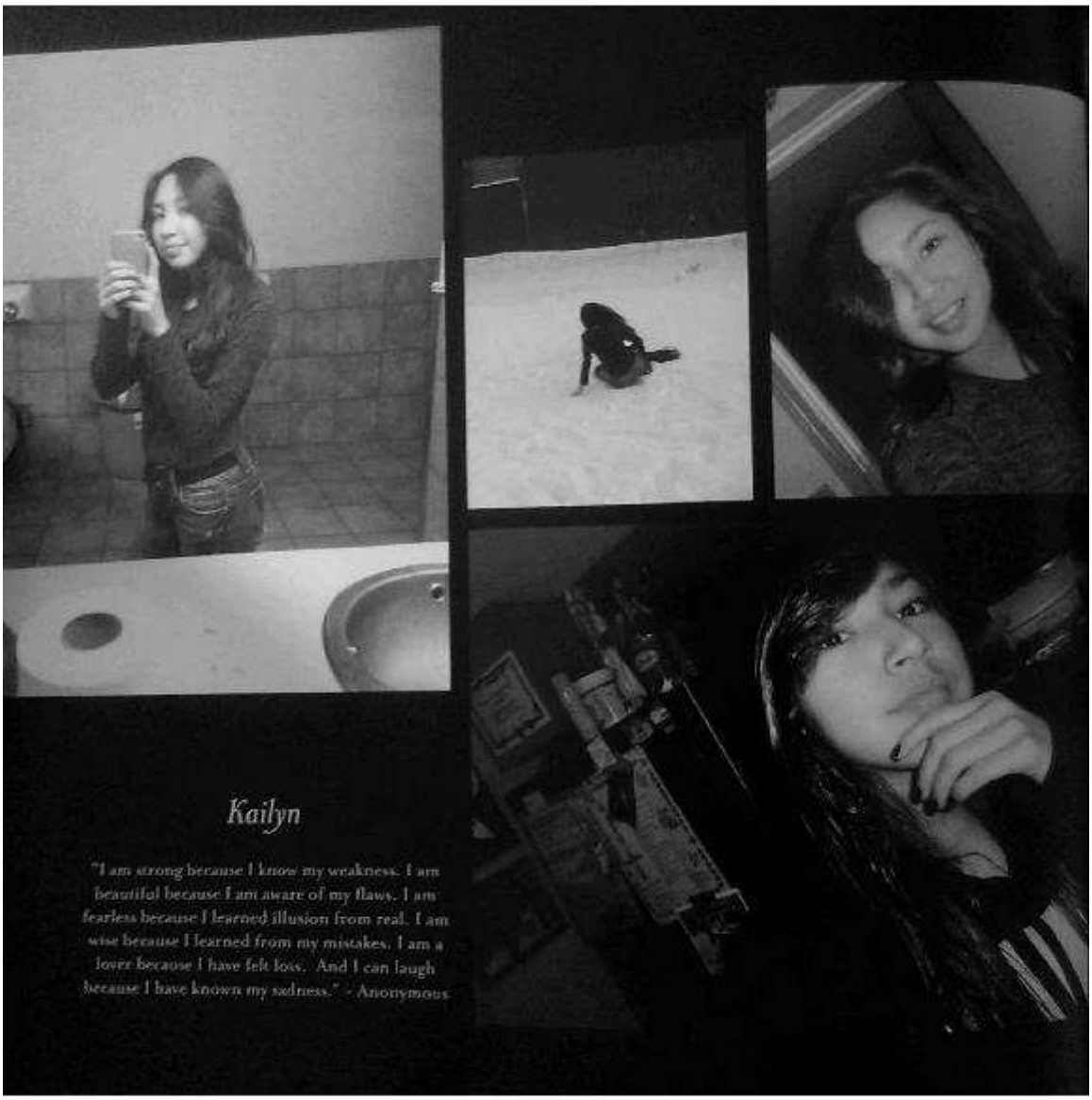

TORONTO
MAPLE
LEAFS


Mavis
"Wake up every day strong than yesterday. Face your fears and wipe your tears." - Anonymous
"I'm pretty but I'm not beautiful. I sin but I'm not the devil. I'm good but I'm not an angel." - Marilyn Monroe


Boronica
12 11 2014
"Behind every female there is a man who did her wrong and made her strong." - Anonymous

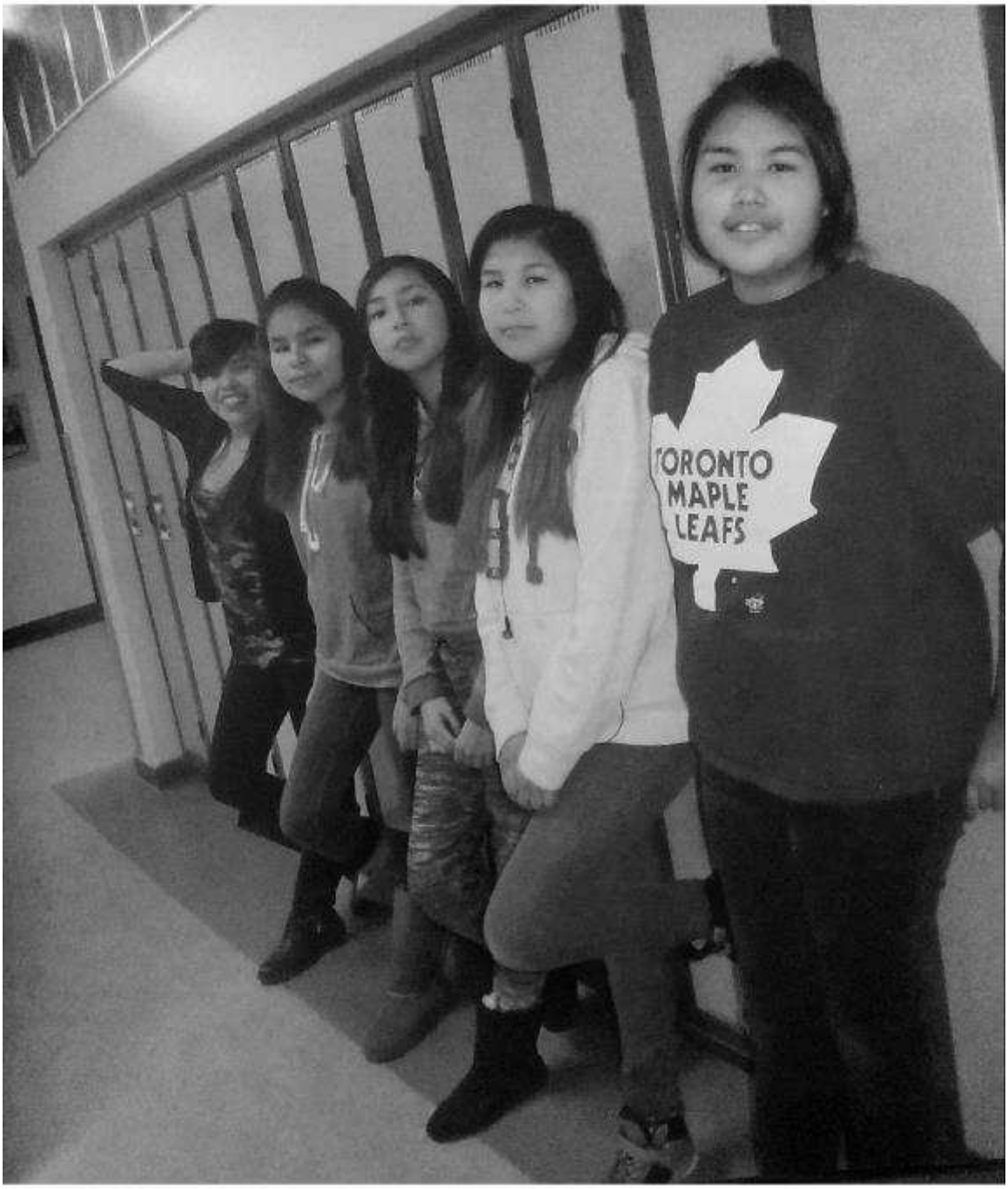

Kaiyra
12 16 2014
Just being myself.

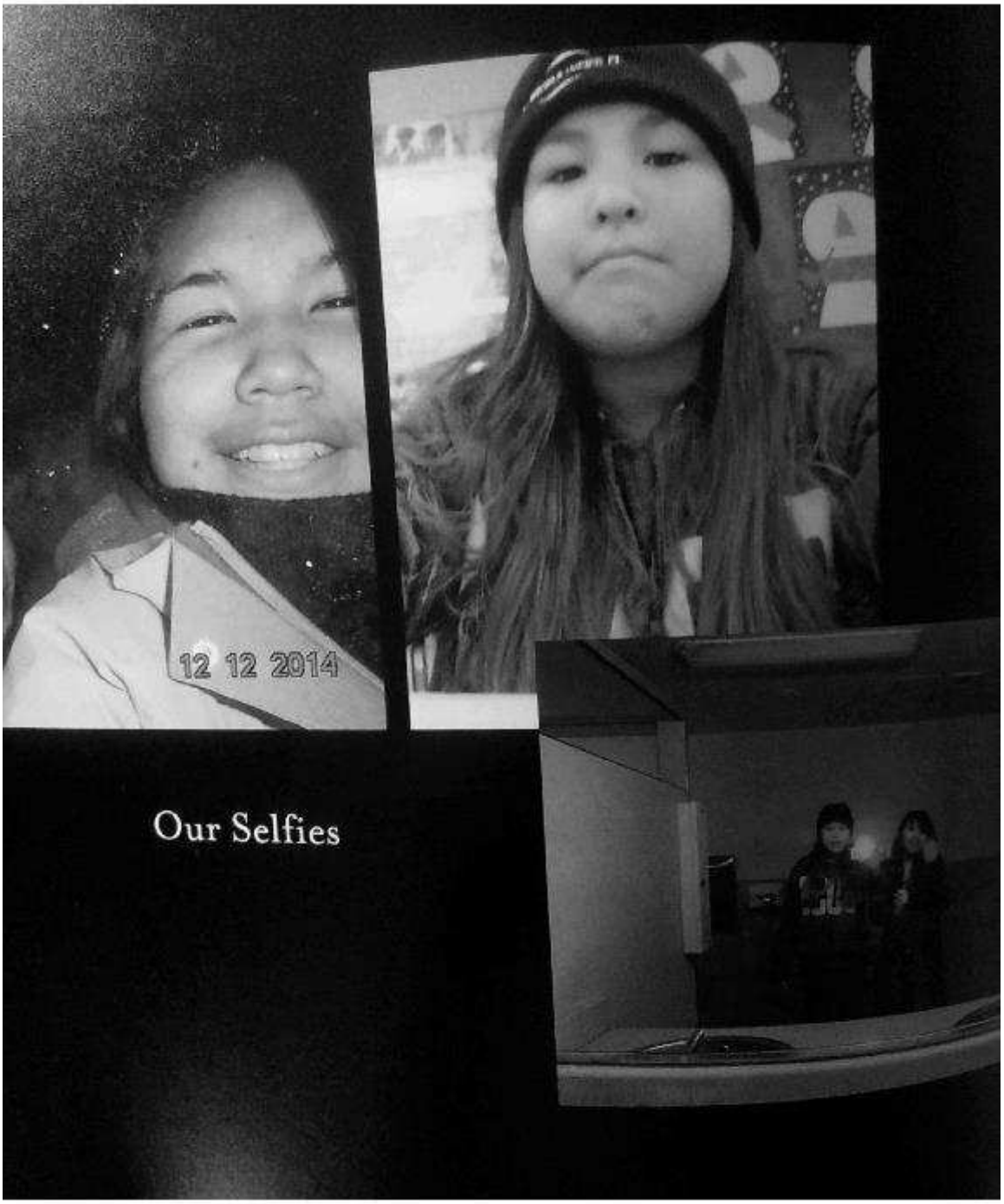

Pearl
Weird/Crazy/Annoying/Gamer
12 10 2014

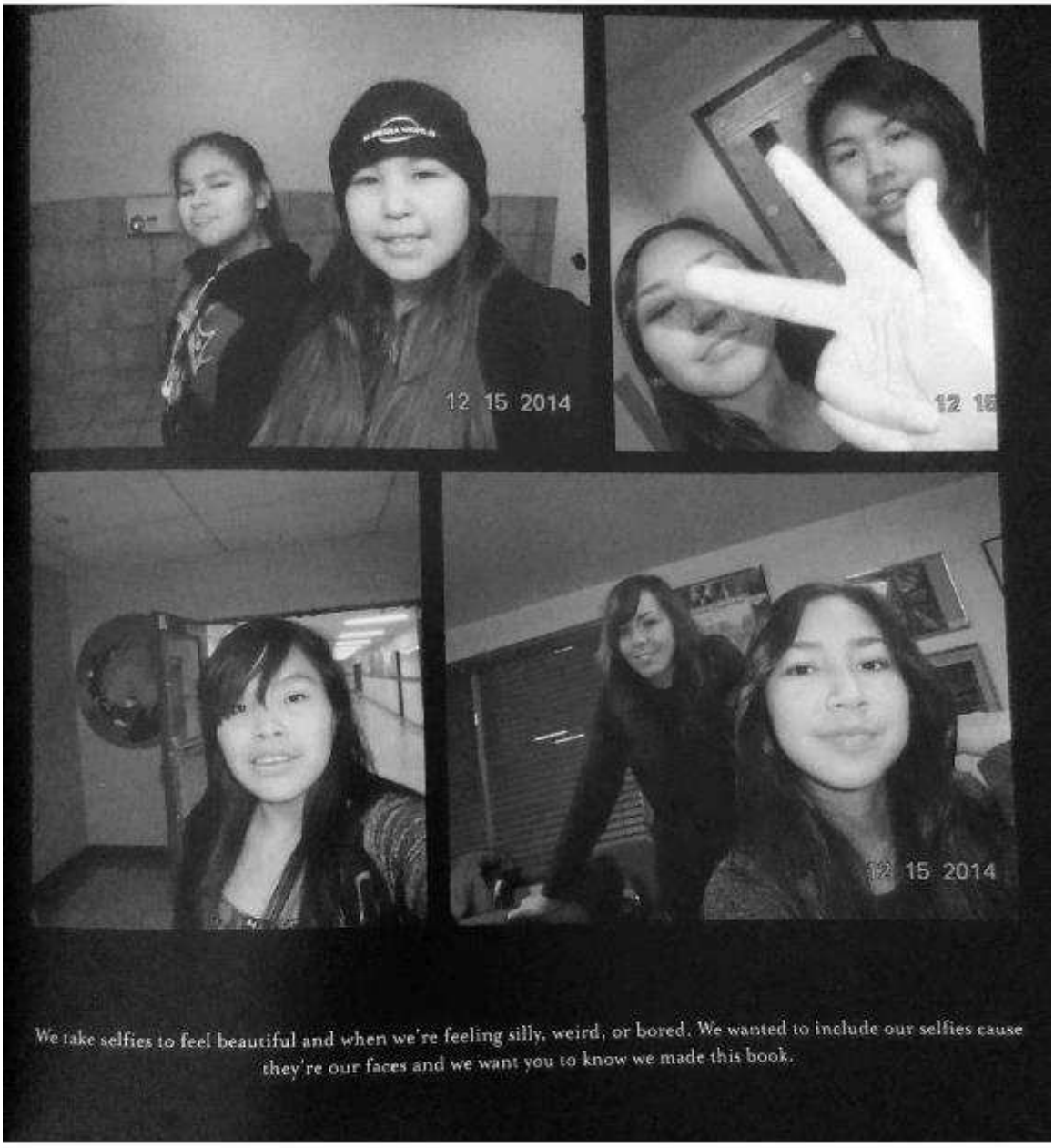


Kailyn

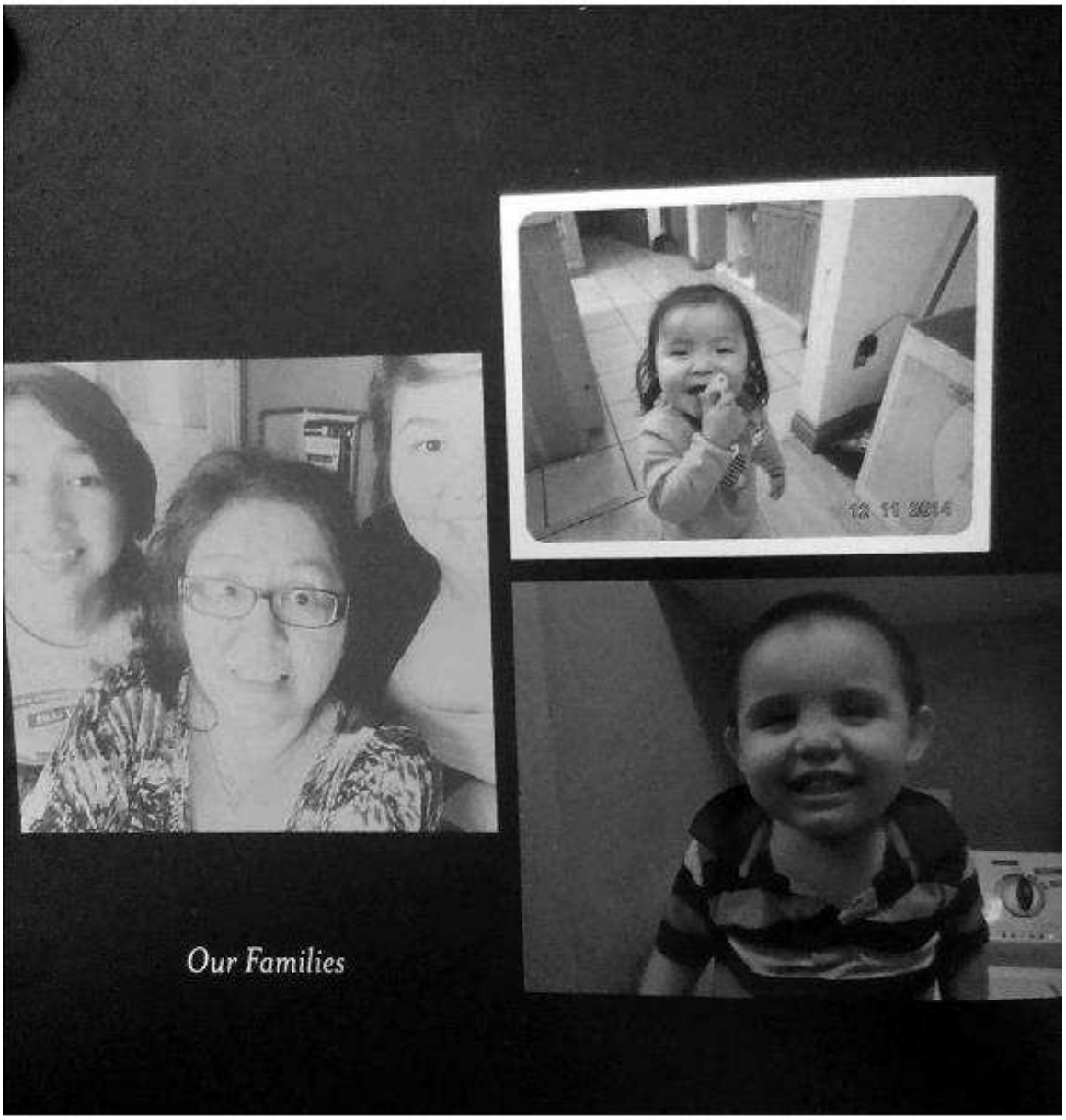
"I am strong because I know my weakness. I am beautiful because I am aware of my flaws. I am fearless because I learned illusion from real. I am wise because I learned from my mistakes. I am a lover because I have felt loss. And I can laugh because I have known my sadness." - Anonymous

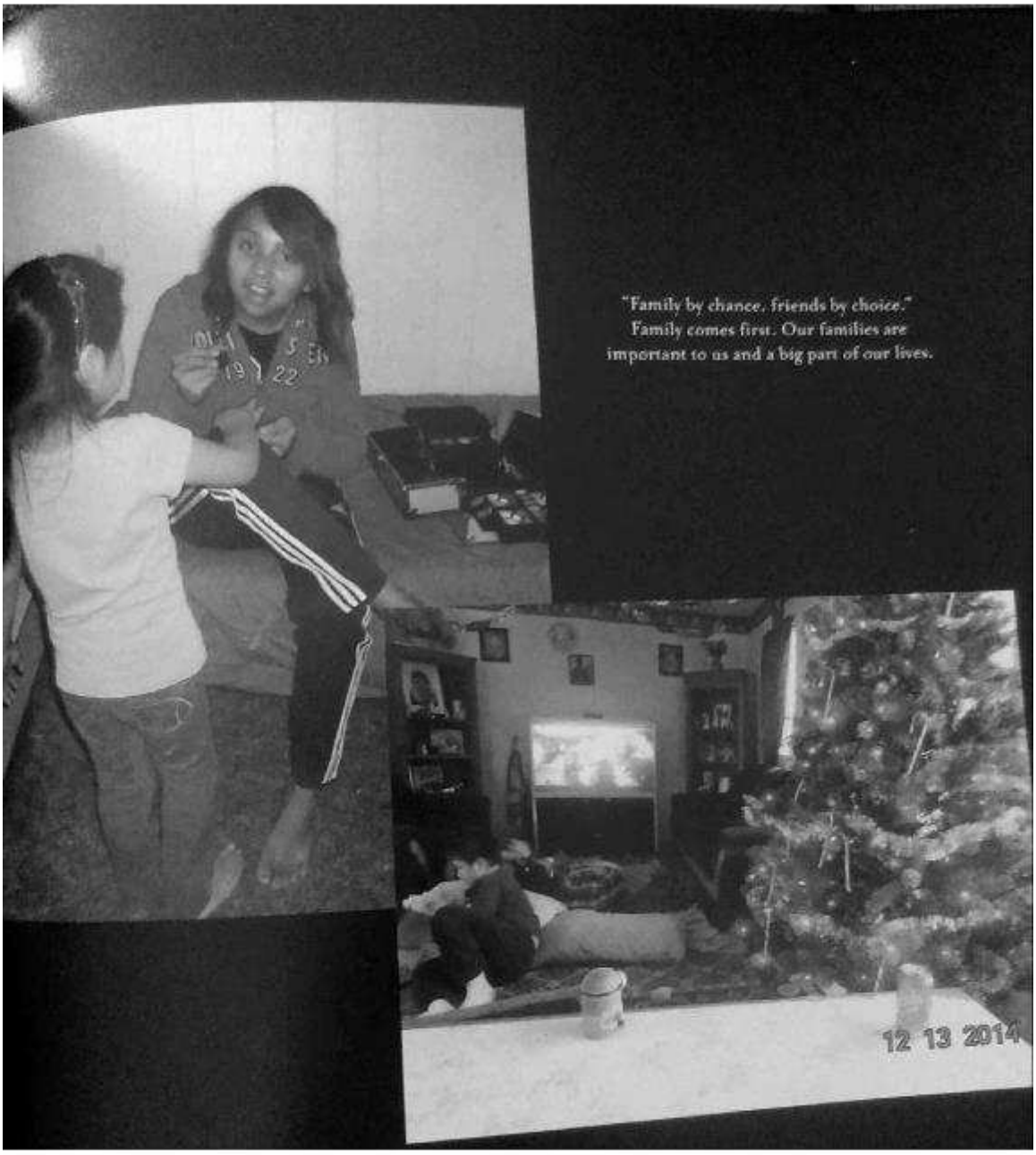

TORONTO
MAPLE
LEAFS

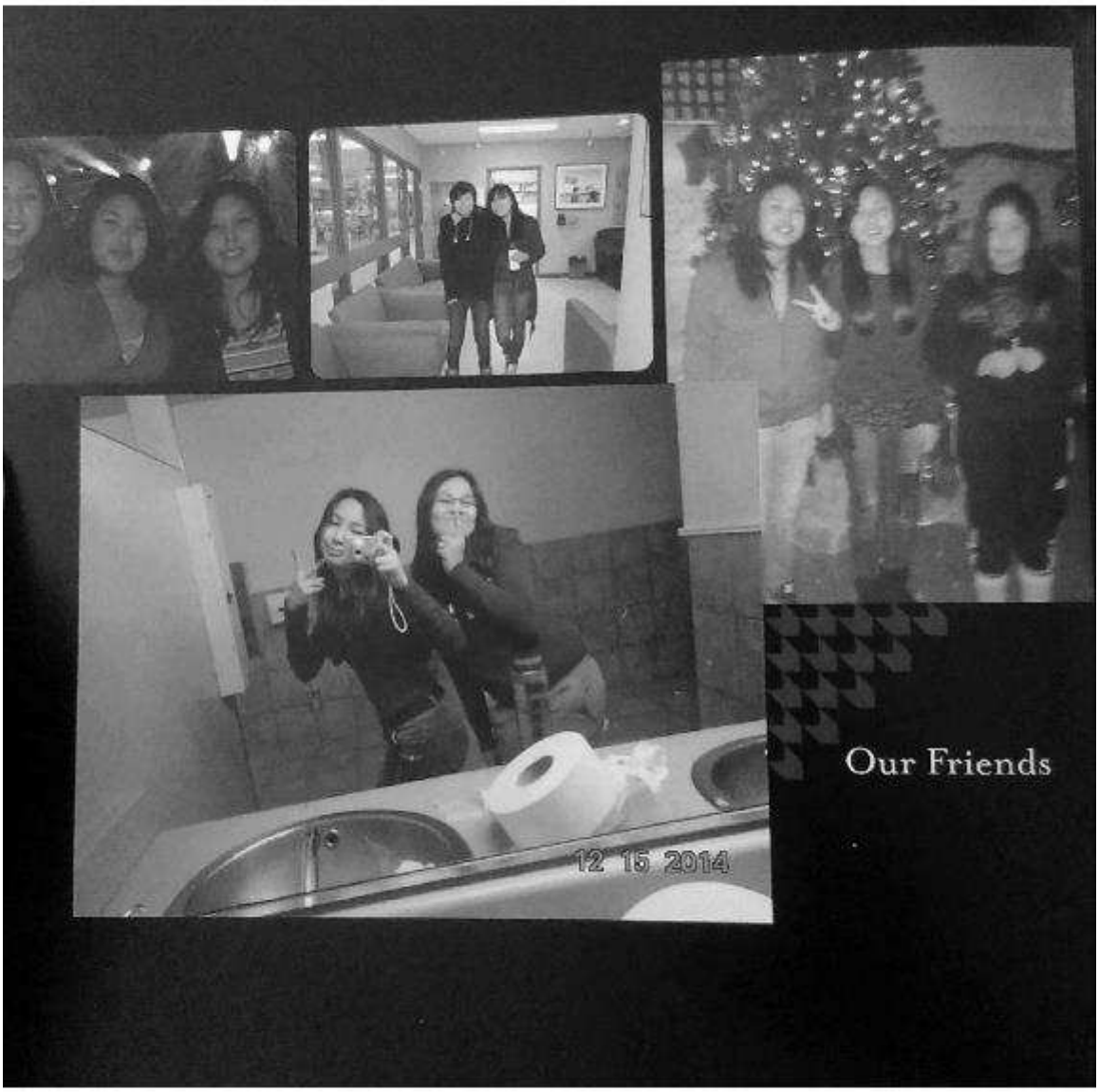

12 12 2014
Our Selfies

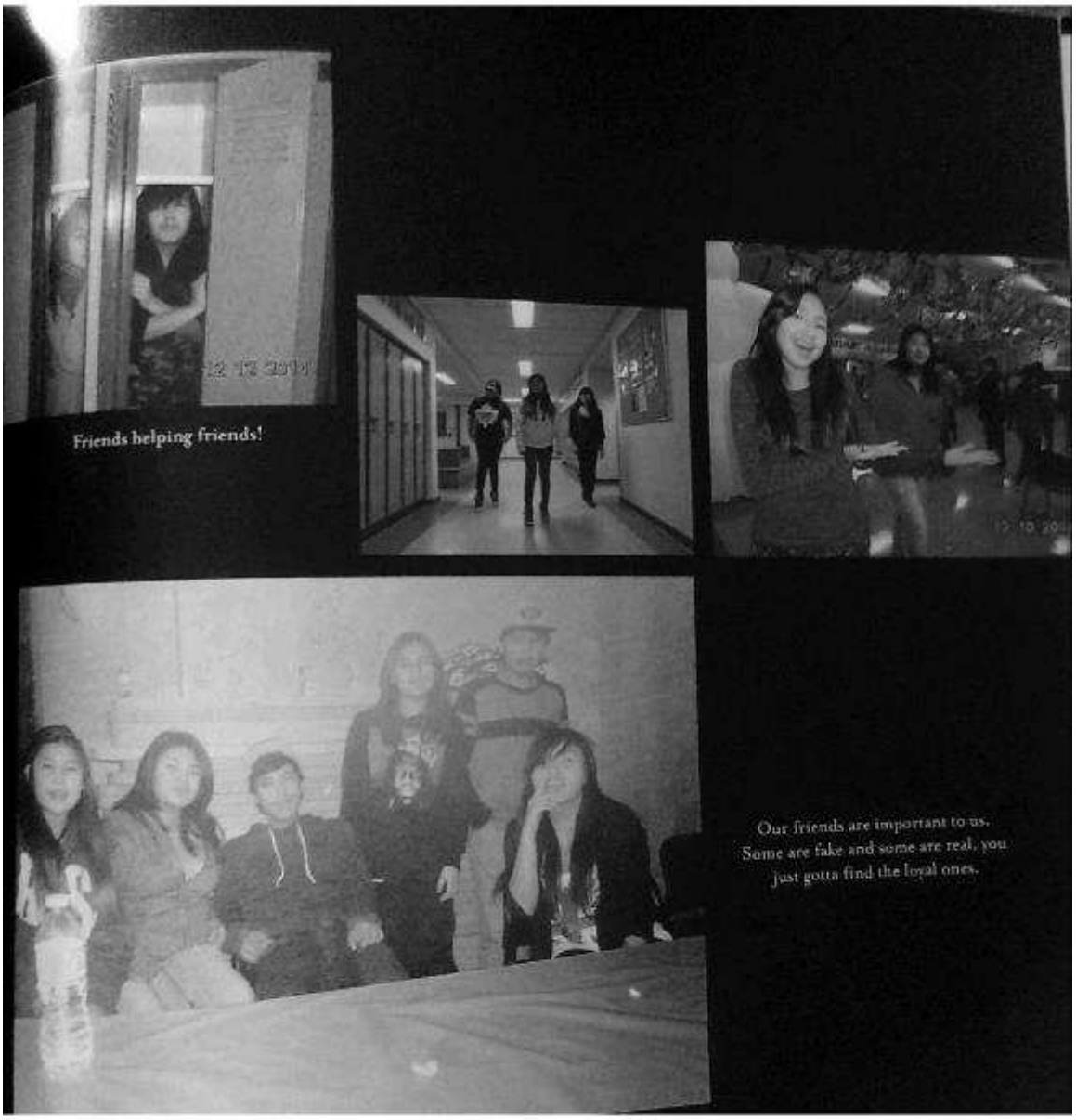


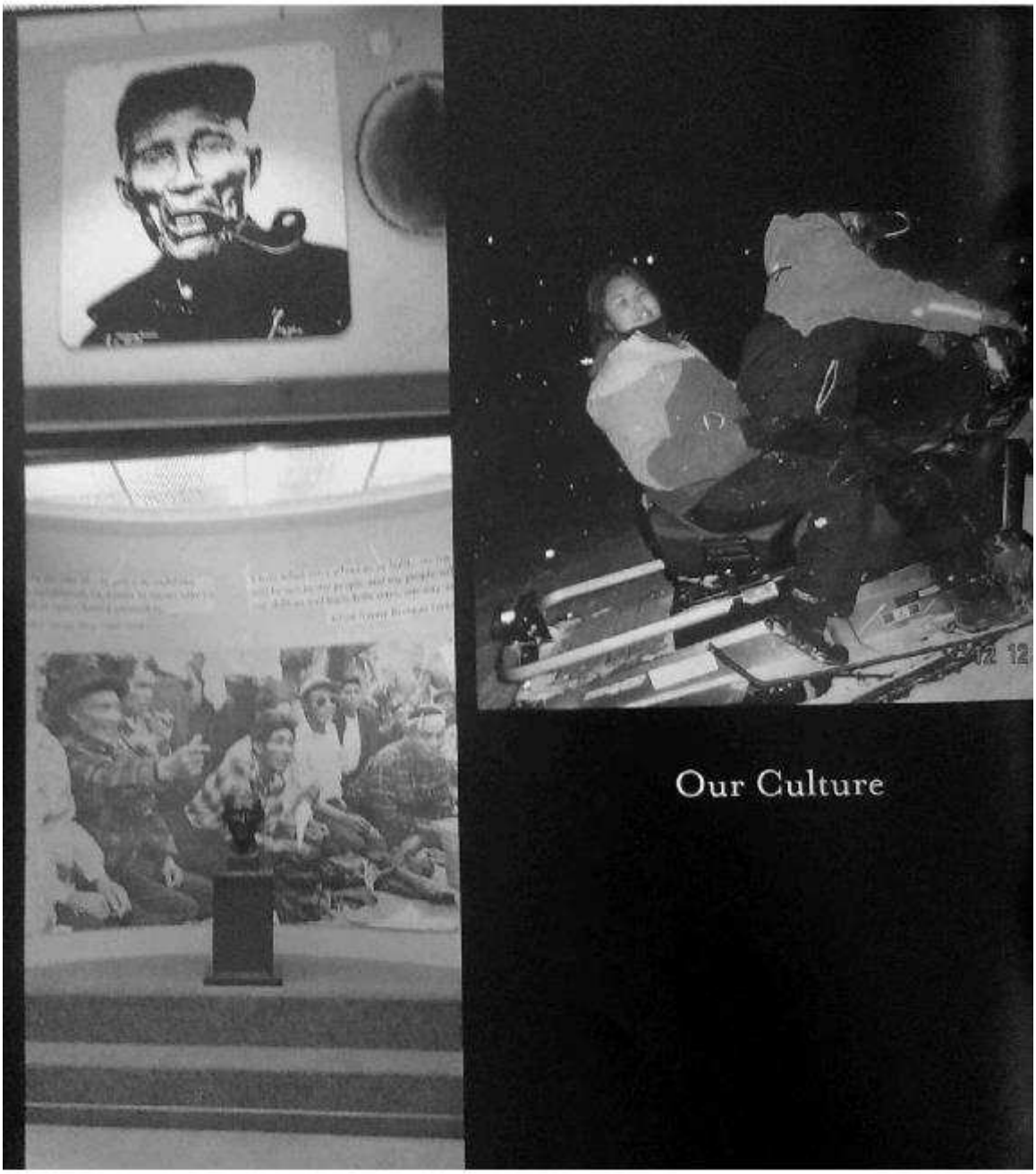
We take selfies to feel beautiful and when we're feeling silly, weird, or bored. We wanted to include our selfies cause they're our faces and we want you to know we made this book.

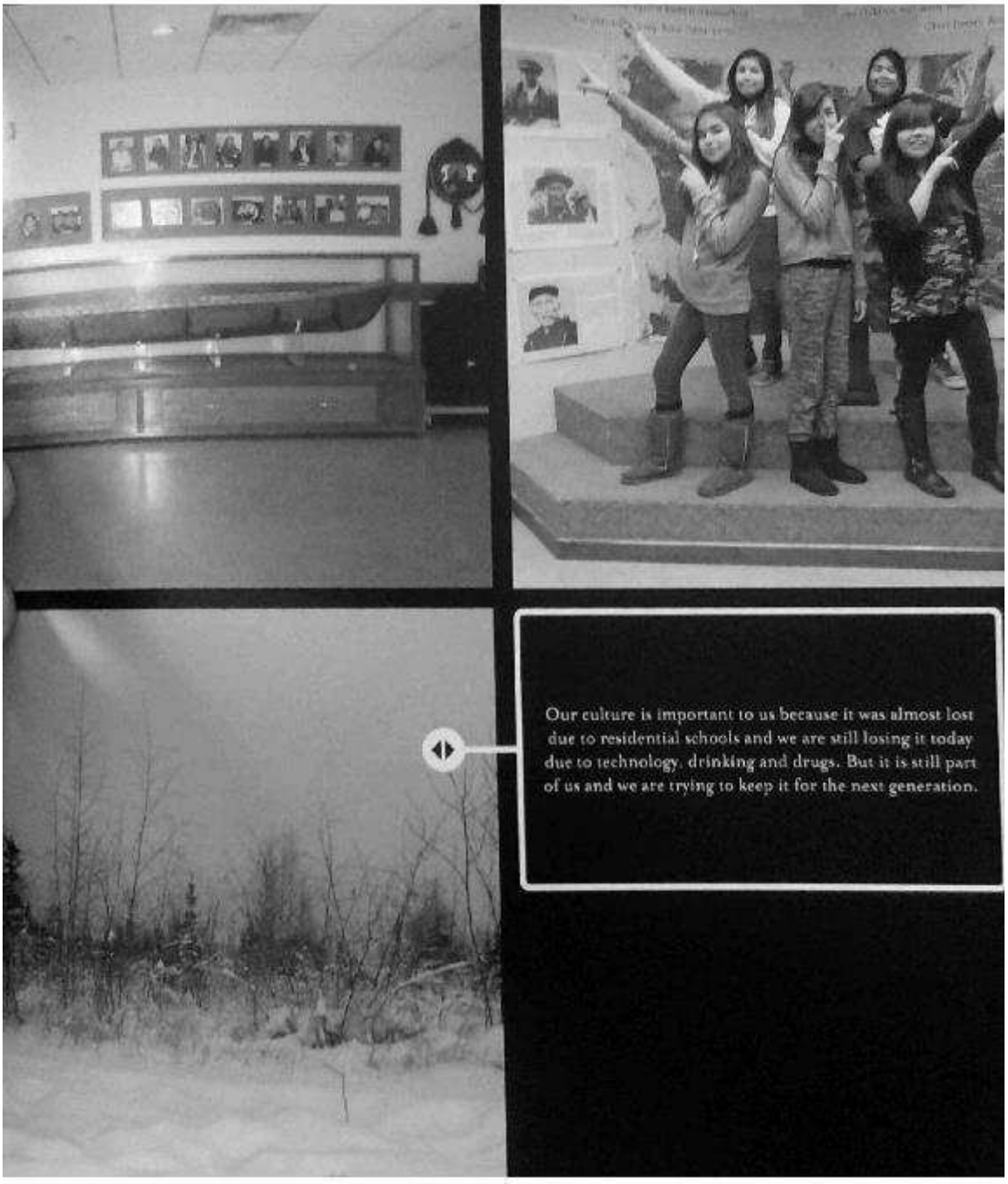

Our Families

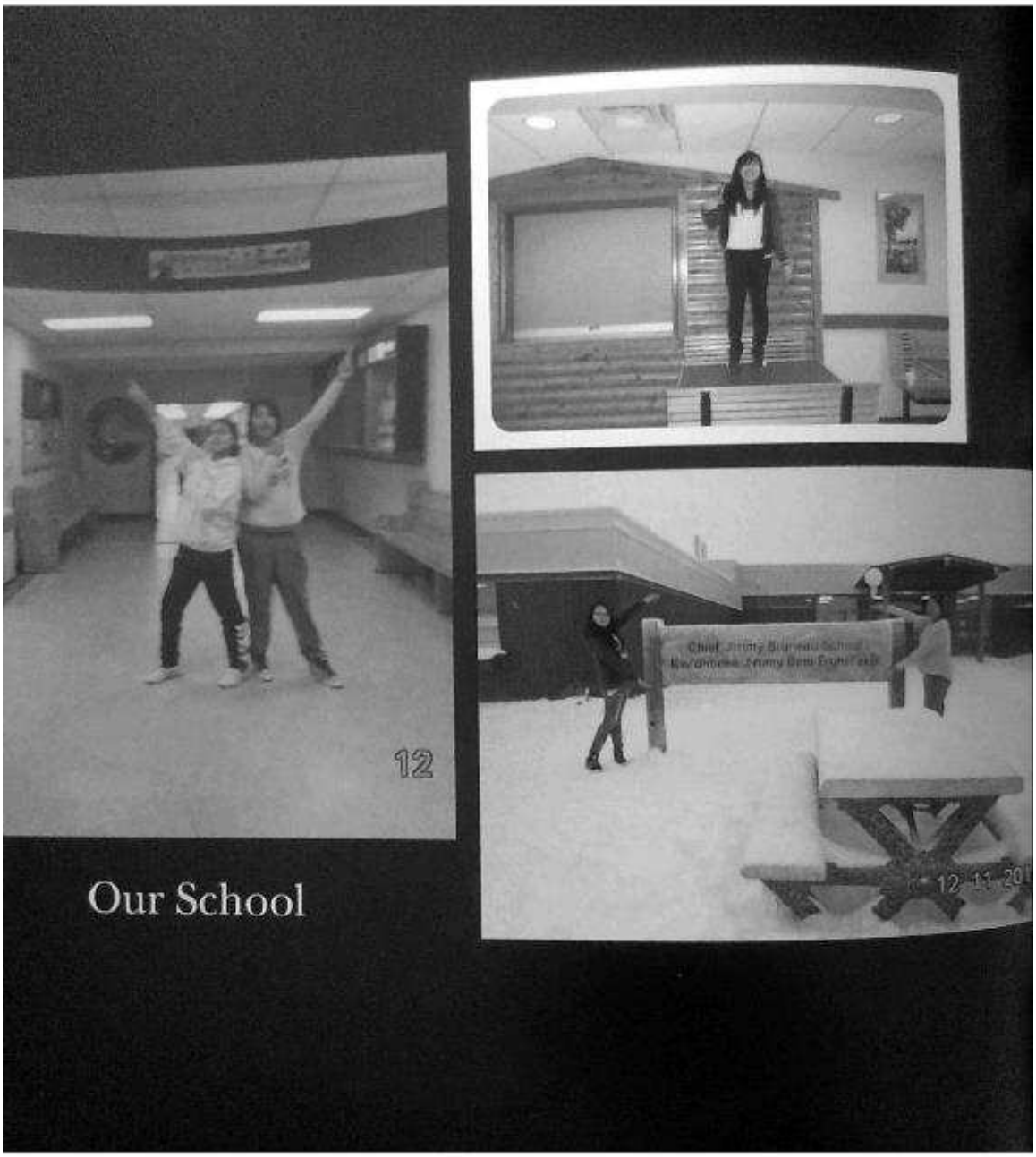

"Family by chance, friends by choice."
Family comes first. Our families are
important to us and a big part of our lives.
12 13 2014

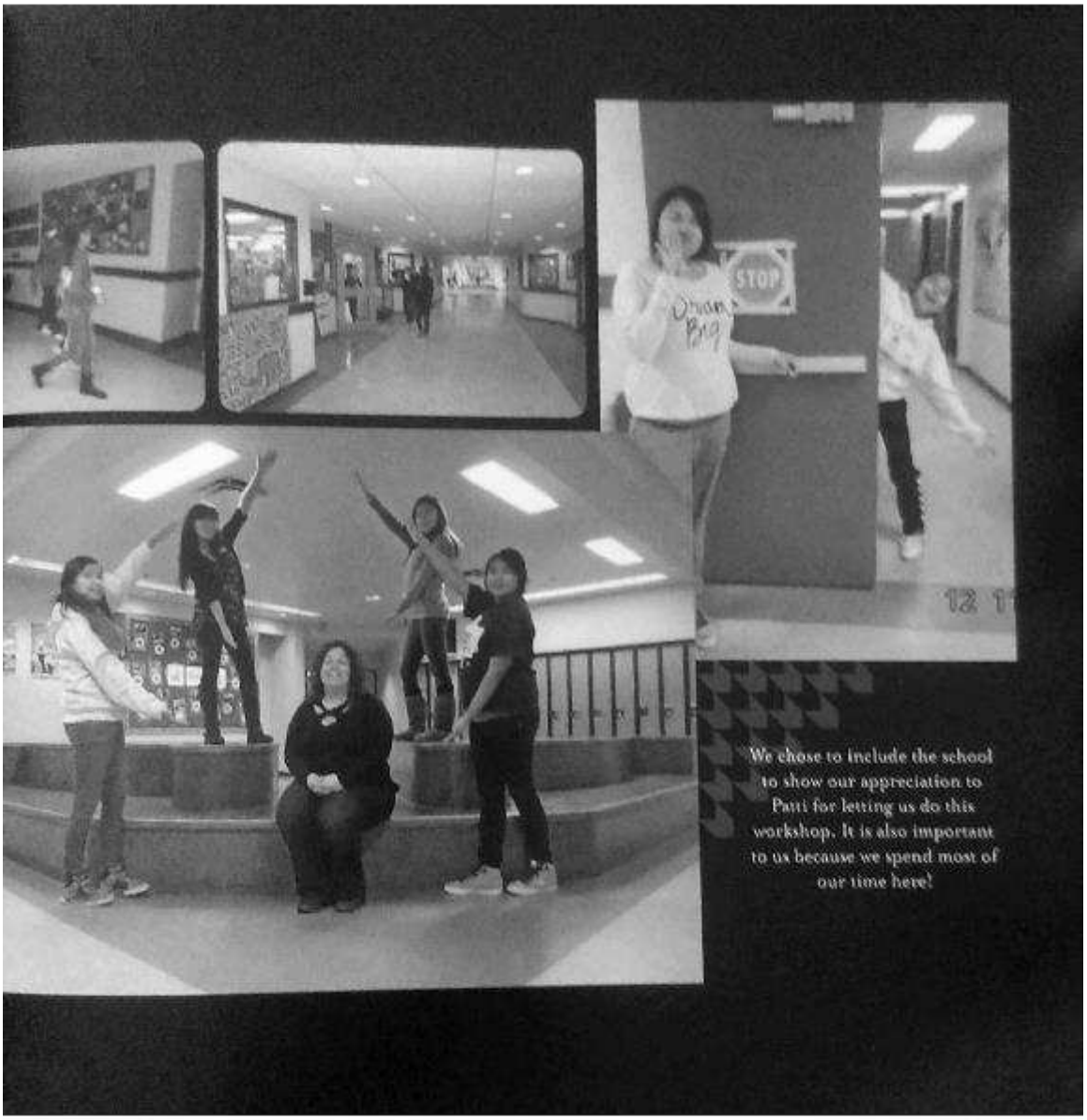

12 15 2014
Our Friends

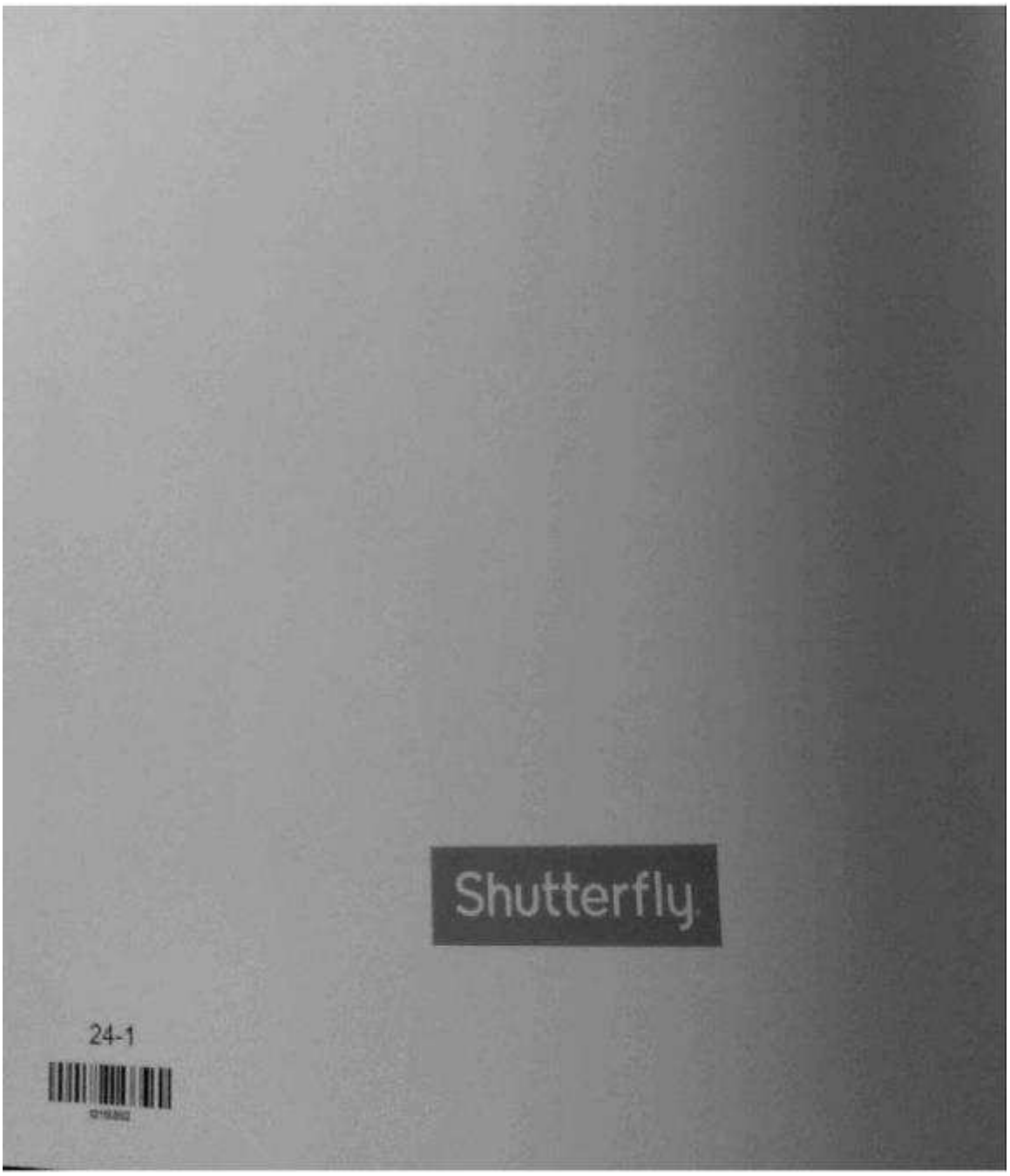

Friends helping friends!
Our friends are important to us.
Some are fake and some are real, you
just gotta find the loyal ones.


Our Culture


Our culture is important to us because it was almost lost due to residential schools and we are still losing it today due to technology, drinking and drugs. But it is still part of us and we are trying to keep it for the next generation.


12
Our School


STOP
We chose to include the school to show our appreciation to Patti for letting us do this workshop. It is also important to us because we spend most of our time here!


Shutterfly
24-1

Appendix B: Consent forms

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN NORTHERN ABORIGINAL GIRLS AND IDENTITY: RACE, PLACE AND GENDER IN PARTICIPATORY MEDIA

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research project being conducted by Rachel MacNeill of the Department of Communications of Concordia University, under the supervision of Professor Yasmin Jiwani, of the Department of Communications of Concordia University.

Rachel MacNeill
Tel: 1-514-929-7622
Email: Rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

Professor Yasmin Jiwani
Tel: 1-514-848-2424 EXT. 2583
Email: yasmin.jiwani@gmail.com

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is: to explore how Aboriginal girls in Northern Canada use media to negotiate their identities, particularly as relates to race, gender and place, and to empower participants to tell stories about their lives using media.

B. PROCEDURES

I understand that I will attend a month long workshop meeting twice a week after school. I will also be asked for one-on-one interviews with Rachel on at least 2 occasions. These interviews will be informal. While Rachel will have guiding questions and a list of topics to discuss, I will guide the interviews and have the right to choose not to answer questions if I do not wish to.

In the workshops, we will create our own media projects, such as a blog or online magazine. I understand that I will be able to choose my own media project. I also understand that in the workshop we will talk about media literacy (understanding and discussing pop culture and media), and talk about how we relate our personal identities to media. I understand that I have the right to bring up issues or topics that I choose and to be treated as an equal co-researcher in this project. I understand that after the group sessions, Rachel will check in with each of us to ask how we are feeling about what we talked about, what we learned, and if there is anything else we want to discuss.

The workshop will take place over one month, and Rachel will finish all interviews and sessions within two weeks after the end of the workshop. We will be able to contact Rachel at any time throughout and after the project with any questions or concerns.

1

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that through participating in this workshop I will create my own media project with support from Rachel. I understand that I will be sharing this media with the rest of the participants, and will have the choice of whether or not to share it beyond this group. I understand that I will be asked questions about myself and my identity and about how I use media.

REMINDER: Participants will be expected to follow their usual parental internet use rules throughout the project.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is confidential, and that I can choose if I want to be identified by my first name or by a pseudonym.
- I understand that if, after my participation, I decide I want some or all of my information and participation removed from the study, that I have the right to do so. I can ask to have my data removed up until January 31, 2015.
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) [illegible]

SIGNATURE [illegible]

I WOULD LIKE TO BE IDENTIFIED BY:

☒ My first name

☐ A pseudonym

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator:

Principal Investigator:
Rachel MacNeill

Tel: 1-514-929-7622
Email: Rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Yasmin Jiwani
Tel: 1-514-848-2424 EXT. 2583
Email: yasmin.jiwani@gmail.com

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 oor.ethics@concordia.ca

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN NORTHERN ABORIGINAL GIRLS AND IDENTITY: RACE, PLACE AND GENDER IN PARTICIPATORY MEDIA

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A. PURPOSE

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The workshop will take place over one month, and Rachel will finish all interviews and sessions within two weeks after the end of the workshop. We will be able to contact Rachel at any time throughout and after the project with any questions or concerns.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that through participating in this workshop I will create my own media project with support from Rachel. I understand that I will be sharing this media with the rest of the participants, and will have the choice of whether or not to share it beyond this group. I understand that I will be asked questions about myself and my identity and about how I use media.

REMINDER: Participants will be expected to follow their usual parental internet use rules throughout the project.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
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- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) Kailyn Richardson

SIGNATURE Kailyn Richardson

I WOULD LIKE TO BE IDENTIFIED BY:

☑ My first name

☐ A pseudonym

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator:

Principal Investigator:
Rachel MacNeill

Tel: 1-514-929-7622
Email: Rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Yasmin Jiwani
Tel: 1-514-848-2424 EXT. 2583
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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN NORTHERN ABORIGINAL GIRLS AND IDENTITY: RACE, PLACE AND GENDER IN PARTICIPATORY MEDIA

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Tel: 1-514-929-7622
Email: Rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

Professor Yasmin Jiwani
Tel: 1-514-848-2424 EXT. 2583
Email: yasmin.jiwani@gmail.com

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- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) Kaiyra MacKenzie

SIGNATURE Kaiyra MacKenzie

I WOULD LIKE TO BE IDENTIFIED BY:

☑ My first name

☐ A pseudonym

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator:

Principal Investigator:
Rachel MacNeill

Tel: 1-514-929-7622
Email: Rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Yasmin Jiwani
Tel: 1-514-848-2424 EXT. 2583
Email: yasmin.jiwani@gmail.com

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 oor.ethics@concordia.ca

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN NORTHERN ABORIGINAL GIRLS AND IDENTITY: RACE, PLACE AND GENDER IN PARTICIPATORY MEDIA

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Rachel MacNeill
Tel: 1-514-929-7622
Email: Rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

Professor Yasmin Jiwani
Tel: 1-514-848-2424 EXT. 2583
Email: yasmin.jiwani@gmail.com

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is: to explore how Aboriginal girls in Northern Canada use media to negotiate their identities, particularly as relates to race, gender and place, and to empower participants to tell stories about their lives using media.

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1

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REMINDER: Participants will be expected to follow their usual parental internet use rules throughout the project.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

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- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) Mavis Eleta Wedzin

SIGNATURE Mavis Eleta Wedzin

I WOULD LIKE TO BE IDENTIFIED BY:

☑ My first name

☐ A pseudonym

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator:

Principal Investigator:
Rachel MacNeill

Tel: 1-514-929-7622
Email: Rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Yasmin Jiwani
Tel: 1-514-848-2424 EXT. 2583
Email: yasmin.jiwani@gmail.com

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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN NORTHERN ABORIGINAL GIRLS AND IDENTITY: RACE, PLACE AND GENDER IN PARTICIPATORY MEDIA

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Email: Rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

Professor Yasmin Jiwani
Tel: 1-514-848-2424 EXT. 2583
Email: yasmin.jiwani@gmail.com

A. PURPOSE

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C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

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REMINDER: Participants will be expected to follow their usual parental internet use rules throughout the project.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is confidential, and that I can choose if I want to be identified by my first name or by a pseudonym.
- I understand that if, after my participation, I decide I want some or all of my information and participation removed from the study, that I have the right to do so. I can ask to have my data removed up until January 31, 2015.
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) Emily

SIGNATURE Emily Rolzin

I WOULD LIKE TO BE IDENTIFIED BY:

☐ My first name

☑ A pseudonym

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator:

Principal Investigator:
Rachel MacNeill

Tel: 1-514-929-7622
Email: Rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Yasmin Jiwani
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If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 oor.ethics@concordia.ca

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN NORTHERN ABORIGINAL GIRLS AND IDENTITY: RACE, PLACE AND GENDER IN PARTICIPATORY MEDIA

I understand that the child under my care has been asked to participate in a research project being conducted by Rachel MacNeill of the Department of Communications of Concordia University, under the supervision of Professor Yasmin Jiwani, of the Department of Communications of Concordia University.

Rachel MacNeill
Tel: 1-514-929-7622
Email: Rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

Professor Yasmin Jiwani
Tel: 1-514-848-2424 EXT. 2583
Email: yasmin.jiwani@gmail.com

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is: to explore how Aboriginal girls in Northern Canada use media to negotiate their identities, particularly as relates to race, gender and place, and to empower participants to tell stories about their lives using media.

B. PROCEDURES

I understand that my child will be asked to attend a month long workshop meeting twice a week after school. She will also be asked for one-on-one interviews with Rachel on at least 2 occasions. These interviews will be informal. While Rachel will have guiding questions and a list of topics to discuss, my child will guide the interviews and have the right to choose not to answer questions at any time.

In the workshops, the participants will create their own media projects, such as a blog or online magazine. I understand that my child will be able to choose her own media project. I also understand that in the workshop they will talk about media literacy (understanding and discussing pop culture and media), and talk about how they relate their personal identities to media. I understand that my child has the right to bring up issues or topics of her choice and to be treated as an equal co-researcher in this project. I understand that after the group sessions, Rachel will check in with the participants to ask how they are feeling about what was discussed, what they learned, and if there is anything else they want to discuss.

The workshop will take place over one month, and Rachel will finish all interviews and sessions within two weeks after the end of the workshop. Participants and their parents or guardians will be able to contact Rachel at any time throughout and after the project with any questions or concerns.

Thursday the 17th & 18th will be held at the Learning Building in Rae.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that through participating in this workshop my child will create her own media project with support from Rachel. I understand that my child will be sharing this project with the rest of the participants, and she will have the choice of whether or not to share it beyond this group. I understand that my child will be asked questions about herself, her identity, and how she uses media.

REMINDER: Participants will be expected to follow their usual parental internet use rules throughout the project.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my child's participation at any time without negative consequences, and that my child is free to do so as well.
- I understand that my child's participation in this study is confidential, and that she can choose if she wants to be identified by her first name or by a pseudonym.
- I understand that if, after participating, my child or I decide that we want some or all of her information and participation removed from the study, that she and I both have the right to ask that it be removed. Data can be removed up until January 31, 2015.
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO ALLOW Bonnie Martha TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME OF GUARDIAN Alfred Thomas

SIGNATURE Alfred Thomas

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator:

Principal Investigator:
Rachel MacNeill
Tel: 1-514-929-7622

Email: Rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Yasmin Jiwani
Tel: 1-514-848-2424 EXT. 2583
Email: yasmin.jiwani@gmail.com

If at any time you have questions about the rights of a research participant, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 oor.ethics@concordia.ca

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN NORTHERN ABORIGINAL GIRLS AND IDENTITY: RACE, PLACE AND GENDER IN PARTICIPATORY MEDIA

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Email: yasmin.jiwani@gmail.com

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is: to explore how Aboriginal girls in Northern Canada use media to negotiate their identities, particularly as relates to race, gender and place, and to empower participants to tell stories about their lives using media.

B. PROCEDURES

I understand that my child will be asked to attend a month long workshop meeting twice a week after school. She will also be asked for one-on-one interviews with Rachel on at least 2 occasions. These interviews will be informal. While Rachel will have guiding questions and a list of topics to discuss, my child will guide the interviews and have the right to choose not to answer questions at any time.

In the workshops, the participants will create their own media projects, such as a blog or online magazine. I understand that my child will be able to choose her own media project. I also understand that in the workshop they will talk about media literacy (understanding and discussing pop culture and media), and talk about how they relate their personal identities to media. I understand that my child has the right to bring up issues or topics of her choice and to be treated as an equal co-researcher in this project. I understand that after the group sessions, Rachel will check in with the participants to ask how they are feeling about what was discussed, what they learned, and if there is anything else they want to discuss.

The workshop will take place over one month, and Rachel will finish all interviews and sessions within two weeks after the end of the workshop. Participants and their parents or guardians will be able to contact Rachel at any time throughout and after the project with any questions or concerns.

Thursday the 17th & 18th will be held at the Learning Building in Rae.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that through participating in this workshop my child will create her own media project with support from Rachel. I understand that my child will be sharing this project with the rest of the participants, and she will have the choice of whether or not to share it beyond this group. I understand that my child will be asked questions about herself, her identity, and how she uses media.

REMINDER: Participants will be expected to follow their usual parental internet use rules throughout the project.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my child's participation at any time without negative consequences, and that my child is free to do so as well.
- I understand that my child's participation in this study is confidential, and that she can choose if she wants to be identified by her first name or by a pseudonym.
- I understand that if, after participating, my child or I decide that we want some or all of her information and participation removed from the study, that she and I both have the right to ask that it be removed. Data can be removed up until January 31, 2015.
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO ALLOW Kailyn Richardson TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME OF GUARDIAN Lily Ann Richardson

SIGNATURE Lily Ann Richardson

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator:

Principal Investigator:
Rachel MacNeill
Tel: 1-514-929-7622

Email: Rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Yasmin Jiwani
Tel: 1-514-848-2424 EXT. 2583
Email: yasmin.jiwani@gmail.com

If at any time you have questions about the rights of a research participant, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 oor.ethics@concordia.ca

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN NORTHERN ABORIGINAL GIRLS AND IDENTITY: RACE, PLACE AND GENDER IN PARTICIPATORY MEDIA

I understand that the child under my care has been asked to participate in a research project being conducted by Rachel MacNeill of the Department of Communications of Concordia University, under the supervision of Professor Yasmin Jiwani, of the Department of Communications of Concordia University.

Rachel MacNeill
Tel: 1-514-929-7622
Email: Rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

Professor Yasmin Jiwani
Tel: 1-514-848-2424 EXT. 2583
Email: yasmin.jiwani@gmail.com

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is: to explore how Aboriginal girls in Northern Canada use media to negotiate their identities, particularly as relates to race, gender and place, and to empower participants to tell stories about their lives using media.

B. PROCEDURES

I understand that my child will be asked to attend a month long workshop meeting twice a week after school. She will also be asked for one-on-one interviews with Rachel on at least 2 occasions. These interviews will be informal. While Rachel will have guiding questions and a list of topics to discuss, my child will guide the interviews and have the right to choose not to answer questions at any time.

In the workshops, the participants will create their own media projects, such as a blog or online magazine. I understand that my child will be able to choose her own media project. I also understand that in the workshop they will talk about media literacy (understanding and discussing pop culture and media), and talk about how they relate their personal identities to media. I understand that my child has the right to bring up issues or topics of her choice and to be treated as an equal co-researcher in this project. I understand that after the group sessions, Rachel will check in with the participants to ask how they are feeling about what was discussed, what they learned, and if there is anything else they want to discuss.

The workshop will take place over one month, and Rachel will finish all interviews and sessions within two weeks after the end of the workshop. Participants and their parents or guardians will be able to contact Rachel at any time throughout and after the project with any questions or concerns.

Thursday the 17th & 18th will be held at the Learning Building in Rae.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that through participating in this workshop my child will create her own media project with support from Rachel. I understand that my child will be sharing this project with the rest of the participants, and she will have the choice of whether or not to share it beyond this group. I understand that my child will be asked questions about herself, her identity, and how she uses media.

REMINDER: Participants will be expected to follow their usual parental internet use rules throughout the project.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my child's participation at any time without negative consequences, and that my child is free to do so as well.
- I understand that my child's participation in this study is confidential, and that she can choose if she wants to be identified by her first name or by a pseudonym.
- I understand that if, after participating, my child or I decide that we want some or all of her information and participation removed from the study, that she and I both have the right to ask that it be removed. Data can be removed up until January 31, 2015.
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO ALLOW Mavis Elsie Wedin TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME OF GUARDIAN Jean Chille

SIGNATURE Jean Chille

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator:

Principal Investigator:
Rachel MacNeill
Tel: 1-514-929-7622

Email: Rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Yasmin Jiwani
Tel: 1-514-848-2424 EXT. 2583
Email: yasmin.jiwani@gmail.com

If at any time you have questions about the rights of a research participant, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 oor.ethics@concordia.ca

Appendix C: Northwest Territories Scientific Research Licence

Licence No. 15553
File No. 12 410 1003
October 20, 2014

2014
Northwest Territories Scientific Research Licence

Issued by:	**Aurora Research Institute – Aurora College** Inuvik, Northwest Territories
Issued to:	Ms. Rachel J MacNeill Concordia University 51 Calder Crescent Yellowknife, NT X1A 3A9 Canada Phone: (514) 929-7622 Email: rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com
Affiliation:	Concordia University
Funding:	Northern Scientific Training Program Travel Grant (Concordia University)
Team Members:	
Title:	**Northern Aboriginal Girls and Identity: Exploring Race, Place, and Gender through Participatory Media**
Objectives:	To explore how young Aboriginal girls in the north understand and use media to create a sense of who they are. Analyze how participants think of and use stories in their construction of identity, and how media might impact the stories that participants tell about themselves.
Dates of data collection:	October 21, 2014 to December 31, 2014.
Location:	Behchokò

Licence No.15553 expires on December 31, 2014
Issued in the Town of Inuvik on October 20, 2014

*** original signed ***

_____
Pippa Seccombe-Hett
Director, Aurora Research Institute

Aurora Research Institute - Aurora College
PO Box 1450 Inuvik NT X0E 0T0
Phone: 867-777-3298 **Fax:** 867-777-4264 **E-mail:** licence@nwtresearch.com

October 20, 2014

Notification of Research

I would like to inform you that Scientific Research Licence No. 15553 has been issued to:

Ms. Rachel J MacNeill
Concordia University
51 Calder Crescent
Yellowknife, NT
X1A 3A9 Canada
Phone: (514) 929-7622
Email: rachel.joy.macneill@gmail.com

to conduct the following study:
Northern Aboriginal Girls and Identity: Exploring Race, Place, and Gender through Participatory Media (Application No. 2779)

Please contact the researcher if you would like more information.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH
This licence has been issued for the scientific research application No.2779.

The objectives of the project are:
1) Explore how young Aboriginal girls in the north understand and use media to create a sense of who they are. Analyze how participants think of and use stories in their construction of identity, and how media might impact the stories that participants tell about themselves.
2) Empower participants to develop skills while telling stories about their own lives. Create a supportive environment in which participants are encouraged to tell their own stories and discuss and critique the popular media targeted at their age group. Emphasize participants as co-researchers, agents, and as experts on their own lives.

This project will be based in Participatory Action Research methodologies. Through contacts at Chief Jimmy Bruneau Regional High School and the Tlicho Government, the Principal Investigator will select eight to ten volunteers who are self-identified Aboriginal girls between the ages of 13 and 16. Participants will be engaged in a twice weekly month-long after school workshop. The 2-hour workshop will be loose in structure, but be based around the creation of individual new media projects based on interest, such as blogs, zines or photography projects. Media projects will be used as a jump off point for discussions during the workshop, as well as at least two one-on-one interviews with each participant. Discussions and interviews will be participant-led, relaxed in tone and open-ended, lasting approximately one hour. The PI will follow the lead of the participant, while prompting discussion on issues of identity and media. Discussions and interviews will be recorded for transcription.

In the final thesis, the voices and stories of the participants will be used whenever possible. This approach recognizes participants as valuable holders of knowledge and emphasizes the importance of storytelling to the project.

Because this project is focused on individual and community empowerment, local involvement is very important to the project. Conversations have already begun with the Tlicho Government and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, and the intention is to keep both of these organizations engaged throughout the project. The hope is to conduct the workshop at Chief Jimmy Bruneau Regional High School, so school administration will be consulted and kept informed throughout each phase of the project. Formal letters of introduction to Behchoko's Chief, the Grand Chief of the Tlicho, and the principal of Chief Jimmy Bruneau High School will be sent in the next few days. At the participant level, the volunteers in the workshop will help lead the workshop and decide what they want to talk about. The project will treat participants as co-researchers rather than as subjects. Ongoing dialogue with both participants and the community will be a key part of the workshop. Socially and culturally, the project's emphasis on storytelling could, if led by participants, bring

in a connection to cultural oral traditions.

The PI will be offering community presentations through the Tlicho Government. The PI will also be available for in-person, telephone and email question and answers throughout the project. All presentations and communication will be in plain language to ensure they are accessible to any community member who is interested in learning more about the project. Community input will be encouraged throughout every stage of the project through dialogue with the Tlicho Government and any other interested parties, and the final thesis will be available to participants and the community organizations.

The fieldwork for this study will be conducted from October 21, 2014 to December 31, 2014.

Sincerely,

_____
Jonathon Michel,
Manager, Scientific Services

DISTRIBUTION
Akaitcho Territory Government
North Slave Métis Alliance
Northwest Territory Métis Nation
Tlicho Government
Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board

Appendix D: Concordia Certification of Ethical Acceptability

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant:	Rachel MacNeill
Department:	Faculty of Arts and Science \ Communication Studies
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	Northern Aboriginal Girls and Identity: Negotiations of Race, Place and Gender through Participatory Media

Certification Number: 30003224

Valid From: October 15, 2014 to: October 14, 2015

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Dr. James Pfaus, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee