Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BA (Queen’s University, 2013)

“‘It’s Something That Runs through Your Blood’: Urban Indigenous Identity-Making and the Victoria Native Friendship Centre”

Department of Anthropology

Friday, August 19, 2016
10:00AM
Victoria Native Friendship Centre
Amphitheatre

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Margo Matwychuk, Department of Anthropology, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Robert Hancock, Department of Anthropology, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Jeannine Carrière, School of Social Work, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Robina Thomas, School of Social Work, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

This thesis examines the processes of urban Indigenous identity-making at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC), and within Greater Victoria, B.C. more broadly. The diverse experiences of VNFC staff and community members are explored in relation to colonial narratives that fix Indigenous identities to ‘traditional’ ancestral spaces (Wilson and Peters 2005). This project contributes to the newly-emerging bodies of anthropological literature that focus on urban Indigenous identity construction and place-making. I carried out 8 semi-structured interviews with 11 Indigenous women (both VNFC staff and community members over the age of 18) and conducted informal participant observation at various locations around the Centre. While evidently representing a range of different backgrounds and life histories, the women brought to light shared experiences of resistance, relationship-building, and finding balance that permeate identity-making at the Friendship Centre and in Greater Victoria. In addition to challenging discourses that assume “Indigenous people simply cannot be Indigenous in the city” (Watson 2010:269), discussions with these women also highlight the resilience and adaptability of Indigenous identity-making that transcend spatial boundaries.