

Skicinuwimiyewakonon:

Minuwoskonuwasik Wolastoqeyal Kehkituwakonol

Weaving a Wolastoqey Resurgence of Education

*Ktassokitahamol naka kinitahamolon: mecimi-te ktoloqitahamak
possesomuk, naka kciksotomuwan nit niktok elokehkimosk.
Kikuwosson Skitkomiq kmilkun psi-te keq kisokehkimsiyeq 'ciw
kpomawsuwakonon, psi-te keq skat ewikhasinuhk wikhikonihkuk.*

You truly amaze me and I admire how you are always reaching for the stars and listening to their teachings so that you are able to build your spirits with their sacred knowledge. Many teachings come from the stars and all around us. Mother Earth provided us with the original lesson plans and provides us with everything we needed to learn about this thing called life. These are teachings and experiences that you could never get out of a textbook.

*Sakom Shelley Sabattis
Wolastoqew, Welamukotuk
August 3, 2021*

This work is an Ancestral revival and our worldview teachings do not come from a book, but rather from the uncovering of Ancestral knowledge and teachings. This work comes out of the depths of former attempts at assimilation and punishments for speaking our language and cultural teachings.

Nikanaptaq Allan Sabattis-Atwin

Wolastoqew, Welamukotuk

March 21, 2022

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by

Nikanaptaq Allan Sabattis-Atwin

Bachelor of Arts, University of New Brunswick, 2011
Bachelor of Education, University of New Brunswick, 2013
Master of Education, University of New Brunswick, 2015

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the Graduate Academic Unit of the Faculty of Education

Supervisors: Margaret Kress, PhD, Faculty of Education
Evie Plaice, PhD, Faculty of Education

Examining Board: Sherry Rose, PhD, Faculty of Education,
Imelda Perley, Elder-in-Residence, Faculty of Education
Elizabeth Mancke, PhD, Department of History

External Examiner: Sylvia Moore, PhD, School of Arctic and Subarctic Studies & Faculty
of Education, Memorial University

This dissertation is accepted by the
Dean of Graduate Studies

UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

April, 2022

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Territorial Acknowledgment

Kulahsihkulpa Wolastokuk askomi tpeltomuhtit kihtahkomikumuwa Wolastoqiyik.

I acknowledge that the land on which this research was conducted and written is the traditional, unceded and unsundered territory of *Wolastoqiyik*. This territory is covered in Treaties of Peace and Friendship, which the *Wolastoqiyik*, *Mi'kmaw*, and *Passamaquoddy* peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with the surrender of lands and resources, but in fact recognized *Wolastoqey*, *Mi'kmaq*, and *Passamaquoddy* title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations (*Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey* Centre, 2019).

I would also like to acknowledge our six *Wolastoqey* Chiefs: *Sakom* Shelley Sabattis (*Welamukotuk*), *Sakom* Alan “Chicky” Polchies (*Sitansisk*), *Sakom* Patricia Bernard (*Madawaska*), *Sakom* Ross Perley (*Neqotkuk*), *Sakom* Gabriel Atwin (*Pilick*), and *Sakom* Tim Paul (*Wotstak*), for your leadership in *Wolastoqey* territory. In these trying times, you all have stepped up, ignited a strong sense of unity in an effort to protect the future seven generations. *Woliwon!*

Abstract

As an Indigenous scholar and leader who is fully dedicated and committed to the healing and well-being of Indigenous peoples and communities, I questioned the equity found in our current education system, and my heart told me that, to properly seek the answers to my questions, I would need to consult my Elders, my community, and my mentors. In this engagement, I entered into a re-searching ceremony. Re-searching is the application of doing research through an Indigenous lens and implies re-searching for knowledges that we have always had since time immemorial. Re-researching can be seen as a process of *Tuhkiye Ncocahq*/Spiritual Awakening. The ceremony of this research is especially close to my heart because it is critical to the improvement of education for Indigenous peoples, and for me especially, the *Wolastoqey* peoples and my home community of *Welamukotuk*/Oromocto First Nation.

This work is founded in or based upon elevating the voices within my community (past, present, and future) in an effort to weave together a *Wolastoqey* resurgence of knowledge for my community and the future generations. I believe it is necessary to provide our future generations with the tools to ensure the survival of our nation and our beautiful *Wolastoqey* language and culture. Such work began with the premise that, historically, education has been designed from a western perspective and, therefore, has not afforded Indigenous peoples an equitable or fulfilling education. Through a considerable review of the literature (specifically Indigenous education), I have learned a great deal from many insightful Indigenous scholars who have been doing this work for a long time. Of crucial importance, this research brings volume to Indigenous voices, and particularly, the voices of youth, parents of children in the public school

system, and Elders from my home community of *Welamukotuk*. My research question investigates how the use of oral knowledges, Elder teachings, and Storywork can create a framework for a positive *Wolastoqey* resurgence of education to help generate youth engagement and wellness. The research design employs Indigenous research methodologies, and as it teaches us that research is ceremony, it advances Storywork and stories, Talking Circles, and Storywalks as methods of both data collection and reflective analysis.

My research project honours the teachings of *Ksakutomakon*/relationality, *Tetpi Pehqitahamsuwakon*/relational accountability, *Nusseyuwakon*/respect, *Tetpi Wiqsonuwakon*/reciprocity and *Mawankeyutomakon* responsibility. Although these teachings are reflective of the work of Shawn Wilson (2008) and Margaret Kovach (2009) in their sanction of research as ceremony, it was through my re-searching that I secured a place for myself and my *Mawi Nucikahsicik*/co-researchers to work as a collective. This meant working to ensure all involved understood the protocols associated with a Sacred Medicine Wheel model—one that I developed as part of exploring the meaning of Indigenous research methodologies.

In coming to this research, I met with Elder Imelda Perley to discuss the process and to identify the *Wolastoqey* name for co-researchers: “*Mawi Nucikahsicik*.” These members were then recruited through an open invitation to a Talking Circle in my community. This initial circle oriented these members to the research I wished to conduct, and it became the pivot in defining the remainder of this fluid research process. The co-developed questionnaire used in all interactions with participants was sanctioned by community members prior to engaging in future circles that supported youth and

Elder sharing. The data collected was videorecorded, transcribed, and shared with the *Mawi Nucikahsirik*/co-researchers prior to use. The dissemination and protection of this research is community-based and includes a presentation sharing of my dissertation with Elders. All data belongs to my community and will be given to the Elders for safekeeping at the conclusion of the study. The intent of this research is to ensure a *Wolastoqey* framework for education that honours the voices of all of my community members and to improve the educational futures for our Indigenous peoples.

Dedication

In loving memory, I dedicate this work to my father, Gary Atwin, who has brought me comfort and encouragement through Spirit. To my grandmother, Terri Sabattis, who pushed me to pursue a higher education and whose Spirit continues to guide me in this work. To my soul sister, Jade Sabattis, who was capable of obtaining the same academic success but was taken far too soon, this work honours you.

To my mother who has provided unconditional love and support, always offering up an ear to my trials and tribulations. To all my beautiful siblings (both biological and Spirit) who each offer me powerful teachings, Brittany, Dymond, Desirae, Drae, Trisha, Mary, Jade, and Kyla. To my niece and nephews, Alyvia, Sam, and Storm, you three have provided me with the strength to overcome many barriers in my life. To my *Ntus*/daughter, Faith Elizabeth Hope Sabattis, this work also honours you and will show you the way to your own success. To my *Nqoss*/son, Sammy, you have been put in my path to help me realize to enjoy life and all its gifts. Sammy and my brother Drae, both of you have held my hand and walked me back into my childhood, where I could think more clearly about my life and the experiences that have helped shape who I am. You are both truly a gift, and I am honoured to have you as teachers in my life. I must also honour my stepfather, Joe, and my spiritual Godfather, Chad.

Finally, I also dedicate this work to *Ksahtuwessit*, Shawn Sabattis-Atwin. You are my *Nisiyeq*, which translates to “One who lives with me in a lifelong partnership, shares my Earth Walk in breath, in heart throbs both good and bad, in passion and especially in sharing each other’s Spirit form” (Imelda Perley, personal communication, September 30,

2016). This work has been given that extra breath of life through your grounding and assuring love and support.

Also, to those not born yet, you all have provided Spirit and heart in this work. Upon your arrival, I kindly ask you to please heed the lessons of the Elders and those of your Ancestors!

Finally, I offer up my most heartfelt gratitude to all above-mentioned, for without you, I would not have been able to complete this calling.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation has been guided through the support of *Psi-te Ntolonapemok*/all my relations. I must honour all of Creation and pay tribute to both physical and spiritual beings who have guided this work. Before we start, it is crucial that I acknowledge those who are not physically here, our *Cocahqi Tpinuwinaq*/Spirit Guides, our *Kinsuhsok*/Ancestors, *Kci Kikuwosson*/Mother Earth, all of Creation and our *Skicinuwi* 'Pisunol/Traditional Medicines.

I have been blessed to cross paths with my supervisors and lifelong friends, Dr. Margaret Kress, Dr. Evie Plaice, and Dr. Elizabeth Mancke. Your passion, allyship, and commitment to stand with our Indigenous brothers and sisters has spilled over into my purpose, and I am forever grateful for your influence. Without the three of you, I would not have come this far. Your positive encouragement has impacted me in ways unimaginable. This work would not be possible without you, 'koselomulpa / I love you all!

I must also give gratitude to my Elders for their wisdom. I am honoured to carry your words forward, and I am committed to protecting your knowledge for our future seven generations.

To my Pal, Starlit, despite my sometimes stressful and hectic life, you have never strayed from our Palship, which I hold very close to my heart, *Koselomul*/I love you! To my other Pals, Julie and Jeff, Woliwon for talking me through some pretty stressful days!

To my committee who have lifted me up and held me in their circle of love and light!

To my mentor Elders, Dr. David Perley and Dr. Imelda Perley, it has been a true blessing to be guided and mentored by you throughout my life. I have learned so much from both of you, and I am committed to carrying your love, passion, hard work, and positive change forward, *'koselomulpa /I love you both!*

To my family for loving me through this process that at times was chaotic, *'koselomulpa /I love you all!*

To two of my many role models: Dr. Marie Battiste, for sharing your stories with me and guiding me to this research, and Dr. Fyre Jean Graveline, for offering up your time in editing and supporting my aspirations—your words have a way of leaving a beautiful imprint on my heart.

Finally, to the youth, adults, and Elders who wrapped this research in love—without you, this research would not have been possible. I am particularly moved by the involvement of our youth—they have all participated in a ceremony talking about their personal stories using oral traditions through the ceremony of a talking/sharing circle. They now know their thoughts and feelings as youth and are part of our history by using one of our strongest traditional teachings methods: oral traditions. Each and every one of the youth left the ceremony with a brighter vision of themselves. *Woliwon*/thank you, for openly accepting me and this work and for your commitment to seeing this work through. This is not the end—there is still much to do and I look forward to working with all of you.

I acknowledge that, as permitted by the Faculty of Education at the University of New Brunswick, this doctoral dissertation was edited by Patricia Simmons in keeping with Editors Canada's guidelines for the ethical editing of graduate student texts.

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Chapter 1

Nkisacikotu 'Sotumuwakon Kolusuwakonol

Introduction: Weaving a *Wolastoqey* Resurgence of Education

Education by and for Indigenous peoples has never stopped in our communities. It has, however, been severely disrupted by settler society, and Indigenous knowledge keepers increasingly passed on their wisdom with extreme discretion to avoid retaliation by settlers. Over many centuries, but particularly during the century of residential schools (ca. 1890-1990), my Ancestors were punished for preserving their knowledge. Their children were taken from them and placed in residential schools, beaten when they spoke their Ancestral language or practiced Ancestral traditions. We, the *Wolastoqey*, are, however, a resilient nation. To heal from centuries of violence and suppression from settler schooling, we are finding ways to reclaim our Ancestral knowledge and to pass it down openly and proudly to future generations (Augustine, 2017).

This study asks how *Wolastoqey* people can reclaim and revitalize the education of their children. It is based on principles of relationality and communication, both of which inform the entire work. Of first importance to the *Wolastoqey* people is relationality, our connections to each other and to the land, waters, and other living beings in our ancestral territory. At the centre of this study's methodology are the relationships and communication between myself and the *Mawi Nucikahsicik* / co-researchers from my community of *Welamukotuk* who embraced the opportunity to work together to discuss and analyze the education of our children. Another key relationship is among the study's *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, the community of *Welamukotuk*, and other

communities in the *Wolastoqey* nation. Many people extended their trust to us, and in turn we have tried to reciprocate that trust in identifying educational practices that reflect *Wolastoqey* values and can heal our community and educate our youth. Another relationship is between me and diverse members of a global scholarly community who are committed to educational revitalization among Indigenous peoples. This last relationship connects me back into the world of higher education, and my own attempt to find a way to serve as an intermediary, to explain *Wolastoqey* educational imperatives to a broader academic audience, and to explain western higher education to my community.

Throughout this study, I emphasize the *Wolastoqey* importance of *Loskonuwewakonol* or weaving. In each chapter, I weave together my community's vision for education, the knowledge of *Wolastoqey Kcicihtuwinuhticik* or Elders, the wisdom I have drawn from the scholarly community and all those Elders, and the *Atkuhkakonol* or stories that my community shared with each other to make their educational vision a reality. Early in my research, I spoke and wrote of "building." In consultation with one of my mentors, Dr. Fyre Jean Graveline (whom I call Mama Bear), she reminded me that building is more of a colonial notion, that perhaps we are not building, but rather providing a place (a ceremony) for knowledges to be shared and ideas to be woven together to create a strong fabric of *Wolastoqey* education. I refer to weaving throughout this work and every part reflects that interweaving. From a *Wolastoqey* perspective, by invoking the idea of weaving, I am bringing together the knowledge, teachings, and stories from my own experiences as well as from *Mawi Nucikahsicik* / co-researchers, and I attempt to weave them together like an intricate work of basketry that can hold our knowledge and allow us to share it with future generations.

Also key to this study is the *Wolastoqey* language, a primary repository of *Wolastoqey* worldviews, including our views on relationality. Our language reflects the importance of honouring relationships in all we do. In this study, language revitalization is emphasized as critical to knowledge revitalization and to positioning relationality as a key part of that process. Throughout this study, I introduce and use *Wolastoqey* terms to reinforce the kind of educational values we want to revitalize and adapt for the 21st century. Finally, this study is methodologically and philosophically committed to ending the silencing that our people endured for too long and that played such a central role in the schooling that settlers imposed on us. We must empower our people to share their stories and to lift their voices once again for *Wolastoqey*-led education.

Throughout this study, I invite the reader into my positionality and that of my *Mawi Nucikahsicik*. By doing this, I hope to provide the reader with some insight into the social context of who I am, where I come from, who my people are, where they live, what their language and worldviews are, and why this work is important to us. I invite the reader to learn about the research that I undertook with members of my community—why I deem it ceremony and how it came to be. I begin with a brief introduction of myself, followed by a glossary of key *Wolastoqey* terms, and then provide an outline of the chapters so readers might develop an understanding of what to expect in this study.

In keeping with the teachings of my Ancestors, I begin by acknowledging my Ancestral language and Ancestral land. I am a proud resident of Turtle Island, and the *Wabanaki* Confederacy. *Wabanaki* refers to “People of the Dawn,” and the confederacy is made up of the five principle Eastern *Algonquian* nations: *Wolastoqey*, *Mi’kmaw*, *Passamaquoddy*, *Penobscot* and *Abenaki*. Of these nations, I more specifically identify as

Wolastoqi. We are people of *Wolastoq*, the beautiful and bountiful river, with whom we are in relationship. Along the river, where the water is the deepest, my community of *Welamukotuk* is situated. My people encompass all the identifiers mentioned above. In *Wolastoqey* territory, the communities are situated along the *Wolastoq* and its tributaries, which have provided for our people since time immemorial. Our living speakers are stewards of the *Wolastoqey* language and work tirelessly to pass the language down to our future generations. Their work and all work like it aim to strengthen the relationship between our Elders and speakers with our youth and community in an effort to pass the language and cultural teachings down to seven future generations.

Our worldview includes a deep reciprocal connection to Mother Earth and all of Creation. We believe in the interconnection of all things, and each have a duty to protect and preserve our language and cultural teachings for the next seven generations. As a *Wolastoqi Nucikahsit/Wolastoqi* researcher, I undertake this important work because in the process of revitalizing of our Ancestral knowledge, we must empower our people to share their stories and be collaborative in the strategies and ceremonies needed to do so. The co-research for this study served as a form of ceremony, a re-establishing and repairing of *Wolastoqey* relationality around education. The findings presented here continue that ceremony, bringing readers into the ceremony of knowledge renewal and knowledge transference. My positions as a leader, a change maker, and an Elder-in-training give me voice in this work of reclamation and resurgence.

Indigenous languages are vital, to our existence. Despite the many efforts to kill our language, the *Wolastiqiyik* people have managed to grasp it tightly, but we are hanging on by the same tight grip our Ancestors had, and they asked the same of us.

Language makes up our identity, it honours our interconnectedness to all things. Our language tells us about the world around us. Without our language, we cannot fully understand our stories, which are connected to the land and all of Creation. The *Wolastoqey* people have a lot to share about ourselves and about all of Creation, but we must find a way to do so in our own language. The learning and sharing of our language are healing for our communities and a critical part of knowledge revitalization. The learning and use of our language is a process of re-searching that is vital to reclaiming our education, while the learning and sharing of our language also promote knowledge transfer amongst our people and to future generations.

The *Wolastoqey* language has undergone attacks through colonization, residential schools, and day schools. In my lifetime, my community has experienced and suffered from this loss. My father, about whom I will talk more later, was a victim of day school and there are others like him in my community. Therefore, the work of this study that seeks to reintegrate our language into education is critical. The *Wolastoqiyik* are resilient, and the work of this study is done in collaboration with my community with the intent of promoting healing and reclaiming education as our own. The foundations for a resurgence of *Wolastoqey* education are the *Wolastoqey* language and *Wolastoqey* culture. The voices of my people reiterate the importance of language and culture, which in turn reflect core principles of relationality. Through a ceremonial process of breaking the silence around education and consulting with my community, many voices have come forth and shared experiences in the K–12 public school system that help us identify how broken settler schooling is for Indigenous students. The voices of all my people have

echoed the need for a reclamation of our education, and most specifically, our language and culture.

My people speak about two distinct kinds of knowledge transfer. The first is western schooling. Most of our people have experienced western schooling, such as a residential school, day school, or the public school system. These settler attempts at schooling us have been less about attempts at education than about blocking knowledge transfer from Indigenous sources and prioritizing western skill building. The government objectives were to eliminate the “Indian” problem.

This study, in contrast, explores the second kind of knowledge transfer, namely the reintegration Indigenous knowledge into K–12 education, and particularly about reaffirming *Wolastoqey* values and ethics. Contributing to that goal is an honour.

***Wolastoqey Latuwewakon* / Language**

Throughout this study, I integrate our beautiful *Wolastoqey Latuwewakon* / language as much as possible. While I am not a fluent speaker, I am dedicated to learning and sharing our *Latuwewakon*, both to keep it alive and well and to emphasize its importance to *Wolastoqey* knowledge revitalization and transference. In honouring my community of *Welamukotuk*, I use the terms *Wolastoqiyik*, *Wolastoq*, and *Wolastoqey*, which in my *Latuwewakon* refer to the Indigenous peoples in our territory, the river, and our worldview. The root word, *Wolastoq*, means the “beautiful river,” along which the *Wolastoqiyik*, or *Wolastoqey* peoples, live.

This study begins with terms in the *Wolastoqey Latuwewakon* that I will be using. I intentionally use the *Wolastoqey* term first in italics, followed by the English translation. I have chosen to use the *Wolastoqey* term to help the reader become familiar

with the language. All of the words and terms have been identified with the assistance of Elder Dr. Imelda Perley. I am proud to use this language, and Imelda's words have left an imprint on my heart: "Those who carry our language are the first scholars" (Imelda Perley, *Wolastoqi Kcicihtuwinut*, personal communication, December 18, 2018). I capitalize certain words throughout this study because of their significance to the findings.

As a prelude to the list of the *Wolastoqey* terms, it is important to reflect on what to expect in a *Wolastoqey* worldview. According to Alison J. Gray, "A worldview is a collection of attitudes, values, stories and expectations about the world around us, which inform our every thought and action" (2011, p. 58). As readers journey into this study and into ceremony, I reiterate the words of Jioanna Carjuzaa and W. G. Ruff who say, "there is no universal accepted worldview; however, a western paradigm is imposed in academe" (2010, p. 73). I invite readers to open your thinking to a *Wolastoqey* worldview. I ask that you avoid framing any expectations for success from your own worldview, that you open your mind, heart, Spirit, and body, allowing the ceremony to guide your thinking. This study and ceremony are from a *Wolastoqey* worldview which operates from a place of honour and respect for reciprocity, relationality, relevance, and relational accountability. Relatedly, this work is undertaken through a *Wolastoqey* lens and a framework of relationality. Honouring my *Wolastoqey* worldview is crucial and keeps me answerable to all my relations. Carjuzaa and Ruff expand on this thought when they observe that "culture provides the blueprint that determines the way an individual thinks, feels and behaves in society" (2010, p. 73). My work and the work of my *Mawi Nucikahsicik* / co-researchers is influenced by our *Kinsuhsok* / Ancestors,

Kcicihtuwinuhticik / Elders, family, and community. The worldview of an Indigenous student in the 21st century involves balancing the demands of western higher education with our distinctive Indigenous worldview: “for many American Indian students in higher education, meeting the expectations and conforming to the standards framed in the dominant worldview while respecting traditional ways of knowing, being, and doing, requires a delicate balancing act” (Carjuzaa & Ruff, 2010, p. 73). Part of that balancing is achieved by foregrounding our language and the knowledge it carries.

Language foregrounding achieves two other objectives. First, using our own language is a critical path to Indigenizing our education. By Indigenizing, I do not mean taking anything and making it Indigenous. Rather, it involves using with pride what is already ours. It includes re-searching the meaning or the context of a critical notion through a culturally informed lens and honouring our Indigeneity by applying the teachings from our *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* / Elders. In some cases, we do have to Indigenize aspects and pieces within the colonial structures and systems and attempt to make them more respectful and inclusive of Indigenous perspectives through a process I view as *Etuaptmumk* / Two-Eyed Seeing (Hatcher et al., 2009). This notion of Two-Eyed Seeing, as defined by *Mi'kmaq* knowledge keepers, Murdena and Albert Marshall (2009), has found its way into my positionality, and it has grounded me in seeing the strengths of both Indigenous and western knowledges and ways of knowing. As has been true since the beginning of colonization, Indigenous peoples find themselves obliged to adapt to new settler ways, while in other circumstances, we look for ways to maintain our cultures, and we strategize on ways to reclaim our spaces. For this re-searching ceremony, it has been critical for me to keep Two-Eyed Seeing in mind. My doctoral work begins in a

university, but my research destination is back within my community, and thus I have had to be careful to view my community from their perspective and their needs (Marshall, 2015).

Indigenizing our education is a critical tool for decolonizing our education. *Mi'kmaw* scholar and Elder Marie Battiste describes decolonizing as the “Destruction of the effects of colonization” (Battiste, 2013). I kept this definition in mind throughout the research process. Notably, however, one of my mentors observed that the word “destruction” reflects a colonial mindset and that I should consider a different definition of decolonizing for the work I am doing. Thus, the definition of *decolonizing* used in this study emphasizes a re-enlivening and affirming of the *Wolastoqey* cultural realm; decolonizing involves a process of closely examining everything, even the smallest details, and viewing them through our own cultural lens. We must be cautious of everything, especially at this academic level; we must look thoroughly and see what works with our culture and what aligns with the teachings of our *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* / Elders. We must also be aware of what stands in the way or clouds the visions, actions, and words of our *Kcicihtuwinuhticik*. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, a Mississauga *Nishnaabeg* cultural commentator, observes that “through the lens of colonial thought and cognitive imperialism, we are often unable to see our Ancestors” (2011, p. 17). Her observation resonates with my thinking and teachings, and I am constantly reminding myself of it.

Glossary of *Wolastoqey Latuwewakon* / Language

Thus, I begin by integrating key *Wolastoqey* terms into this study. The glossary below of key concepts offers definitions and contexts for *Wolastoqey* term that I will use

frequently as a way to contribute to the indigenizing, decolonizing, and weaving anew a *Wolastoqey* educational system.

1. ***Wolastoqey***: *Wolastoqey* is an adjective to refer to the Indigenous communities that live along the *Wolastoq* River, in our *Wolastoqey* territory. The *Wolastoqiyik* have five major communities. These include *Welamukotuk* / Oromocto, *Sitansisk* / St. Mary's, *Negotkuk* / Tobique, *Kapskuksisok* / Madawaska, *Pilick* / Kingsclear, and *Wolastokuk* / Woodstock. My home community of *Welamukotuk* translates to “deep waters” or “where the river is deepest,” and other variations include “good fishing,” which refers back to deep waters.
2. ***Kci Kikuwosson*** / Mother Earth: *Kci Kikuwosson* is the giver of life and a source of knowledge. In everything we do, we must honour and respect *Kci Kikuwosson*. In my Sacred Medicine Wheel designed for this work on *Wolastoqey* education revitalization, I place *Kci Kikuwosson* at the centre.
3. ***Kinsuhsok*** / Ancestors: Our *Kinsuhsok* have been guiding the way since time immemorial; we must always acknowledge and respect them and be open to the different ways they can communicate teachings with us.
4. ***Kcicihtuwinuhticik*** / Elders: For the *Wolastoqiyik*, *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* are our knowledge holders, our teachers, our access into the past, our guiders, and our scholars. Our *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* have been central to this work because their stories have shaped this work and have provided direction and support in the goals of this *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* (ceremony). It is important to note that by *Kcicihtuwinuhticik*, I do not mean seniors. In Indigenous worldviews, our Elders are knowledge keepers and they have accepted their roles as Elders and their

responsibility to share, teach and guide our people. With a study such as this one, I have also relied extensively on scholarly Elders whose work has guided me. When I refer to these non-*Wolastoqey* Elders, I use the English word, Elder, but when I refer to a *Wolastoqey* Elder, I use our term *Kcicihtuwinuhticik*. The singular form for using Elder instead of the plural form Elders is: *Kcicihtuwinut*.

5. ***Atkuhkakonol*** / stories: *Atkuhkakonol* are at the heart of the *Wolastoqey* traditional means of teaching. We are a cultural of oral traditions, an imperative to our existence and overall well-being. We turn to stories for advice, guidance, support, and much more. This work honours *Atkuhkakonol* through the methodology of Storywork, which offers the space for our peoples to be the authors of their own stories, their own *Atkuhkakonol*, sharing them for the greater good of weaving a *Wolastoqey* resurgence in education. The existence of *Atkuhkakonol* is universal; we all have them, and we all carry many *Atkuhkakonol* with us. Our *Atkuhkakonol* are integral to our identities. It is important for readers to recognize that in Indigenous worldviews, not all stories have a clear meaning, that is up to the listener to interpret. This is an important teaching as you will find I share stories throughout this work, and it may not always be clear what the purpose or meaning is of each; the purpose is to share so that the reader can be in ceremony of their own meaning-making to come to their own conclusions and awakenings from this work and ceremony.
6. ***Kci Ntoltahkewakon*** / ceremony: Educational revitalization in Indigenous communities involves careful attention to healing, to the sharing of stories of pain and stories of possibilities. The emphasis on healing through ending the silences

around education, makes all work of indigenizing and decolonizing and revitalizing Indigenous educational systems an act of ceremony. The work I present here has been and will continue to be a ceremony as long as the words and work of this research continue to be shared with our future generations. Shawn Wilson (2008), a Cree scholar, and Simpson (2011) taught us about the sacredness of ceremonies and that researchers must always practice Indigenous protocols. They teach that through these ceremonies, we can empower our peoples to share their stories and be authors of their own lives. Through a specifically *Wolastoqey* lens, when I say this work is *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*, I mean that it must be respected as part of a complex circle of healing and revitalization, that it must honour *Wolastoqey* protocols. I ask that the reader enter this *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* with an open mind, heart, Spirit, and body.

7. ***Loskonuwewakonol*** / weaving: As I noted above, in this study's early phases, I referred to "building" to describe the work being done. But after discussing my work with Dr. Graveline, I decided that the *Wolastoqey* word *Loskonuwewakonol*, which applies to the literal act of weaving as well as the figurative act of interweaving ideas was the more appropriate term. Throughout this study, the *Welamukotuk* community and I have been interweaving *Wolastoqey* and settler educational practices to create a distinctly *Wolastoqey* educational system, a *Wolastoqey* educational basket that can hold our culture, our language, and our visions for seven generations.
8. ***Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik*** / Indigenous learners: *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* applies to all Indigenous peoples as our teachings indicate that we are all teachers and

learners at the same time. While we are on our Earth Walk, we have the relational accountability to always be learning, sharing, and teaching. In this study, I reference *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* often as a way of acknowledging and respecting the teachings and sharing by all *Wolastoqiyik*, and as a reminder that we are always on our learning journey.

9. ***Mawi Nucikahsicik*** / co-researchers: This study is woven together by many people who were empowered to guide and conduct the research in partnership with myself and all our relations. Through teachings, it became important to me to weave the voices of *Mawi Nucikahsicik* within this study, to acknowledge that I do not own the re-searching ceremonies or the knowledge that came from them. Quite simply, it all belongs to the collective. *Mawi Nucikahsicik* are equal in this work, in this ceremony. Inviting and making equal space for their voices honours the framework of relationality and elevates anti-oppressive research strategies, indigenization, and decolonization. I see *Mawi Nucikahsicik* as authors and scholars because their *Atkuhkakonol* and their visions guide this work and are integral parts of the collective work of educational resurgence.
10. ***Tuhkiye Ncocahq*** / spiritual awakening or awakening our Indigeneity: This teaching is important to my research because, to move forward in a positive way, we must look at our past and re-search our histories, identities, and purpose. We must be affirmed in our *Wolastoqey* identity and use our cultural lenses to advance our knowing. *Tuhkiye Ncocahq* involves listening to the voices of our *Kinsuhsok*, acknowledging their gifts, honouring cultural teachings, and carrying these teachings and our language forward.

11. ***Wewisine Ewehkiyeq Kci Ntoltahkewakon*** / Research as Ceremony: One of the most important teachings I have taken from my scholarly Indigenous Elders is *Research as Ceremony*, the title of Shawn Wilson's 2008 book. As I have already said, research by Indigenous scholars for our communities almost always requires grappling with the violence of the settler society in order to heal and thrive. That process relies on ceremonies of speaking and healing. Thus, research like this study is an act of ceremony that takes many forms. Mine included the creation of a Sacred Medicine Wheel, which adapted teachings from my *Wolastoqey Kcicihtuwinut* and from my scholarly Elders. Through it, I could weave together diverse research methodologies and methods. Through our co-research emerged the teachings and tools of *Thirteen Moons on the Turtle's Back*.

12. ***Apoqotehtasik Wiwonowestuhitimok*** / opening the Circle: A traditional *Wolastoqey* ceremonial practice is *Apoqotehtasik Wiwonowestuhitimok* or opening the Circle. I have shared and continue to share this idea with my community. In this work, I chose not to end *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*, or ceremony, because I firmly believe this work must continue to live on, both within my community and in my interactions with all Indigenous educators who are striving to indigenize and decolonize our educational systems. In this effort, I *Ntapqotehtun Wiwonuwestuhitimok* / Open the Circle to all our relations and welcome *all* the voices of the *Wolastoqiyik*, our *Kinsuhsok*, and all of *Kci Kikuwosson* / Mother Earth. This commitment is both an effort to share and an action to create room for input and support. *Apoqotehtasik Wiwonowestuhitimok* is inviting the readers into *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* with us.

13. ***Tpitahasuwakon*** / mind: Our *Tpitahasuwakon* is important; when we smudge, we smudge our heads and our *Tpitahasuwakon* for clear, positive, and good thinking. Our *Tpitahasuwakon* must always be honoured and well balanced with body, heart, and Spirit. A *Tpitahasuwakon* is a universal part of every human's existence. Yet no two minds are exactly the same and when I reference mind, I honour all perspectives and worldviews. Opening one's mind, one's *Tpitahasuwakon*, is a reciprocal process that we all must do to understand each other and the world around us. Like the weavings of basketry, our minds work together with respect. Our *Tpitahasuwakon* makes room for all thinking, a relational accountability to which our teachings ask us to adhere.
14. ***Hok*** / body: Our *Hok* is our physical body contained in the physical world; we must always honour and respect our *Hok*. In this work, when I reference *Hok*, I am referring to the physical embodiment of our mind, heart, and Spirit.
15. ***Cocahq*** / Spirit: Our *Cocahq* is a permanent existence and is equipped with everything we need to live a good life. We must remember to honour our *Cocahq* and seek the knowledge it carries. I believe that our *Cocahq* is wise and carries teachings from our Ancestors. Being in ceremony and honoring our *Cocahq* will make room for an awakening that is imperative as we work collectively towards resurgence.
16. ***Psuhun*** / heart: Our *Psuhun* is the drum to our Spirit; the drumbeats bring us strength, wisdom, and guidance. In all the work we do, we must always include room for input from our *Psuhun*, as it connects us to *Kci Kikuwosson* (our Ancestors) each other, and all of Creation.

17. ***Elsonuwakon*** / physical: *Elsonuwakon*, one of the four quadrants in my Sacred Medicine Wheel, is one of the realms of our existence and necessary to our well-being. In the Sacred Medicine Wheel, it is accompanied by emotional, mental, and spiritual.
18. ***Psuhuni-Elmulsuwakon*** / emotional: Our *Psuhuni-Elmulsuwakon* well-being is also a quadrant in our Sacred Medicine Wheel. Our *Psuhuni-Elmulsuwakon*, our emotional health is an important aspect of our well-being. Throughout this work, I strive to keep a healthy balance in all four quadrants and other aspects of our Sacred Medicine Wheel.
19. ***Elitahasuwakon*** / mental: *Elitahasuwakon* health, one of the four quadrants, is important, especially in today's climate where our peoples continue to live with the reality of systemic racism, as well as uncertain times due to the worldwide pandemic. The *Elitahasuwakon* quadrant operates from our mind and our thinking.
20. ***Wolamsotuwakon*** / spiritual: *Wolamsotuwakon* is the fourth quadrant and is critical to all work. *Wolamsotuwakon* honours *Kci Kikuwosson* (our Ancestors), our peoples, four-legged and winged ones, the fish, the sky, all creatures and insects, and all of Creation. Our spirituality teaches us about relational accountability, the purpose of life, and all of Creation. This work has been a constant reminder to keep our *Wolamsotuwakon* in check. *Wolamsotuwakon* is a key component of *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* (ceremony).
21. ***Psiw Nutulnapemok*** / all my Relations: When we initiate *Apoqotehtasik* *Wiwonowestuhtimok* (open the Circle), we open it to all present, including our

Ancestors and all of Creation. When we finish speaking, we always say *Psiw Ntulnapemok* or “All my Relations,” which is our way of honouring them. This includes all of Creation, it honours *Kci Kikuwosson*, Earth Walkers, the fish, the winged-ones, the creatures, animals, the sky, the moon and so on.

22. ***Nusseyuwakon*** / respect: Respect is one of the Seven Sacred Teachings, and it teaches us to have respect for all of Creation. In the context of this work, it emerged as one of our 13 themes. Respect is a process of connecting and understanding another entity, including all of Creation. Respect asks us to connect on a deeper level and occurs when a reciprocal relationship is created. To earn respect, we must give it.
23. ***Tetpi-Wiqsonuwakon*** / reciprocity: Reciprocity is one of the three Rs in Wilson’s (2008) work. It also emerged in our re-searching as an important teaching and aspect of a *Wolastoqey* resurgence in education. Wilson states “forming and strengthening these connections gives power to and helps the knot between to grow larger and stronger” (2008, p. 79). Reciprocity is more than just giving a gift and is closely connected to respect. Without reciprocity, one side gains power and strength over the other. Reciprocity is part of my Sacred Medicine Wheel and emerged as a theme borne on Turtle’s Back, both of which will be discussed later in this study.
24. ***Mawankeyutomakon*** / responsibility: One of the 4 Rs in Dr. Jo-Anne Archibald’s (2008) work, responsibility is also one of the 13 themes that emerged from this ceremony. In Archibald’s work, she reminds us that the 4 Rs are critical principles

to storytelling. Archibald asks us to demonstrate *Mawankeyutomakon* or care in the process of sharing or teaching knowledge from *Atkuhkakonol*.

25. ***Wolokimqot*** / relevance: Another of Archibald's 4 Rs, I have woven relevance into the Sacred Medicine Wheel. Relevance implies being connected. In this work, it relates to being in ceremony, where our connections go beyond listening to having a spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional connection.
26. ***Ksakutomakon*** / relationality: Relationality is once again an honour and tribute to all of Creation; through this teaching, we learn to respect all of Creation, with which we have a relationship. Wilson shares that relationality is at the heart of what it means to be Indigenous and that it goes beyond human relationships and is "built on the interconnections, the interrelationships, that bind us." Wilson goes on to say relationality is connected to the land and a spiritual connection (2008, p. 80). Relationality encompasses all things and includes a love and respect for all things, including to the cosmos and things that cannot be seen or touched.
27. ***Tetpi Pehqitahamsuwakon*** / relational accountability: Relational accountability is important in the context of this work because it reminds us that, in everything we do, in *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* (ceremony) and beyond, we must always be accountable to all our relations. This work honours this teaching always and has become a part of our Sacred Medicine Wheel. Relationality can be put into practice through applying relational accountability (Wilson, 2008, p. 97).
28. ***Aqami Cocahqin*** / Two-Spirit: Two-Spirit is an umbrella term used by some Indigenous people to identify as sort of a third gender, by which one honours both their female and male Spirits (Jacobs, 1997). In many Indigenous cultures, Two-

Spirit people are seen as carrying special gifts with different ceremonial and social roles in the community. In this work, I reference *Aqami Cocahqin* as a strand of my identity. Being Two-Spirited is a part of my identity that I must always acknowledge because it situates myself in the work I am doing and acknowledges my duty to nurture the gifts I carry from the Creator and share them with my people.

29. *Cocahqi Tpinuwinaq* / Spirit Guides: Our Spirit Guides consist of our Ancestors and spiritual relations that walk with and guide us on our Earth walk (Chief Shelley Sabattis, *Wolastoqi*, personal communication, September 30, 2016).
30. *Skicinuwi 'Pisunol* / traditional medicines: Our medicines are sacred and used in all ceremonies, including the ceremony of this re-search project. In this ceremony, I have used our *Skicinuwi 'Pisunol* in my engagements with co-researchers and also each and every time I sat down to write.
31. *Lintuwakon* / song: Early on, I decided that there should be tangible takeaways from this work and that its purpose would be to gift my community with something beautiful like a song. Our *Lintuwakon* are also our *Atkuhkakonol* (stories) and our prayers and when we sing them to the drum, we gift the teachings to all listening, including the Creator and our future generations. In the stories shared for this study, I identified 13 themes to highlight in a *Lintuwakon*. I present this *Lintuwakon* first in our beautiful *Wolastoqey* language and then translated into English. My *Lintuwakon* closes this study and I have passed to our community to share.

A Beginning¹

Qey! Kiluwaw, Tahn Kahk, ntoliwis nil Nikanaptaq, Wolastoqew nil. Greetings!

My Spirit name is *Nikanaptaq*, my given and family name is Allan Sabattis-Atwin, and I want to situate myself in this research. I am a descendant of the peoples of the dawn, more locally identified as a people of the beautiful and bountiful river situated along *Wolastoq* at *Welamukotuk* / Oromocto First Nation. Throughout this study, I will refer to my home community of Oromocto First Nation by its traditional name, *Welamukotuk*. My Spirit name, gifted to me by Elder Dr. Imelda Perley, translates to “one who leads with wisdom and leaves tracks for future generations” (ceremony, September 30, 2016).

I believe that identity is integral to one’s research and writing, and it is my duty to bring light to all aspects of my being. Writing on positionality is critical—it allows a person to situate themselves within the work and provides context. Further, positionality attests to the ways in which a person has been influenced by their community, and perhaps, how even the unconscious realities of Ancestor knowledges are embedded within a person’s physicality, psyche, and soul, and ultimately within a project of this nature. Therefore, I will talk here about what I refer to as my positionality, my

Latokonasikil wolimahaskiyil /Braided Sweetgrass.

In my culture, *Suwitokolasol* / Sweetgrass is a Sacred Medicine and is believed to be the hair of *Kci Kikuwosson*. *Suwitokolasol* is used in *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* as a means of cleansing, healing, praying, and promoting positive energy. *Suwitokolasol* is grass-like

¹ Throughout this study, the text appearing in Calibri is part of my Storywork, as distinct from the research analysis. This practice follows the example of Shawn Wilson in *Ceremony is Research: Indigenous Research Methods* (2008), in which he includes his Storywork in this way.

and, for the purpose of ceremony, is braided. It is believed that the braiding of *Suwitokolasol* is a sacred process in which the strands are brought together to create strength. I refer to each piece of my identity as a strand of the *Suwitokolasol* that is braided together to create who I am; just like the *Suwitokolasol* braid, together these parts bring strength and a solid place for me to speak from. I am a *Niyawig*/husband, a son, a father, a friend, a scholar, a teacher, and a learner. I am *Aqami Cocahqin*/Two-Spirit, and I am a strong Indigenous person who sees myself as a leader, both in my community and for Indigenous youth nation-wide. My *Aqami Cocahqin* identity plays an important part in my leadership because there is a legend that talks about the special gifts Two-Spirit people are believed to have (*Kcicihtuwinuhticik* Veronica Paul, *Wolastoqi Kcicihtuwinut*, personal communication, September 16, 2016). Many *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* have shared that *Aqami Cocahqin* people were known to be messengers between the Spirit world and the physical world. They are also known to be healers and possess leadership qualities. I include this legend in Appendix D of this study. In this context, I believe my *Aqami Cocahqin* identity has given me leadership tendencies and capabilities; hence, I am committed to doing the work in education and other leadership work for my community. My Earth walk has been a spiritual one in which teachings from my *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* and *Kinsuhsok*/Ancestors have provided me with guidance. However, in identifying myself and the various positions that make up who I am today, I must also acknowledge the unknown aspect of my identity; in other words, I must acknowledge the identities yet to come that will continue to transform my thinking and my scholarship. I embrace both parts of my identity, both the known and the unknown.

I am both a member of *Welamukotuk* and a doctoral student at the University of New Brunswick. As an Indigenous person and a western student, I have had the privilege of seeing from two worldviews, and I spent much of my university life focused on understanding the needs of Indigenous students and advancing Indigenous education in ways I found familiar. When I consider the notion of insider and outsider perspectives (Tilley, 2016), I face my own dilemma of identifying as an insider since some of my peoples would view me as an outsider because of my western education. In some cases, throughout this study, I will identify as an insider, whereas in other situations, I will identify somewhere in the middle between insider and outsider. Through the scholarship of Susan Tilley, we learned that there are a number of “ethical, cultural, political and personal issues that can present special difficulties for Indigenous researchers, who in their own communities, work partially as insiders, and often employed for this purpose, and partially as outsiders because of their western education” (2016, p. 33). In this research, I will be claiming first voice (Graveline, 1998) as an insider because of the groundwork I have carefully prepared around *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* / Elder knowledge and Storywork, through which I have developed the necessary, successful relationships with my *Kcicihtuwinut*. My knowledge comes from a combination of *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* teachings and my formal education. With this combined knowledge, I feel comfortable in speaking from my personal context in a way that is accountable and reciprocal to all my relations. Tilley also maintained that often Indigenous researchers like me “simultaneously, work within their research projects or institutions as insiders within a particular paradigm or research model, and as outsiders

because they are often marginalized and perceived to be representative of either a minority or rival interest group” (2016, p. 33). This resonates with me, and I can relate to feeling, at times, an insider as well as an outsider. I also acknowledge that knowledge is always evolving, and I too must always recognize myself as a learner in this evolving process. That being said, I also recognize the shifting between the realms of insider and outsider, and being aware of these changes is important to reciprocity and relational accountability. Identifying the place one is speaking from is important for those being spoken for or with—we must also elevate all voices and perspectives of our peoples. Throughout this study, “with”—when being used in the context of doing work and research with Indigenous peoples—will be in italics as an emphasis on doing work with, not on or for. With humility in mind, I feel confident speaking on research involving *Wolastoqiyik*. The knowledge of my *Kinsuhsok*/Ancestors flows through my veins and creates a critical cultural framework that seeks to give position, power, voice, and presence to Indigenous peoples within educational research. It is my conviction that the voices of Indigenous peoples must be at the centre of any Indigenous-related research and that Indigenous peoples themselves need to be in full control of Indigenous research. I believe we have individuals who are willing, able, and currently seeking to contribute to such research. With kindness I say, now is the time to ask those who have been speaking for us to step aside and support the power of Indigenous voices. However, as always, good research needs to be open to criticism from a broad perspective and, therefore, should also leave room for this openness and the formality of criticism. However, this process must ensure a protected space that allows the

research to exist as ceremony within an Indigenous paradigm. This is not to say that non-Indigenous scholars cannot or should not participate in Indigenous research; however, permission needs to be granted by *Kcicihtuwinuhticik*/Elders and community leaders, and intentions must be open and clearly in alignment with a process and an end goal that contributes to positive social change for Indigenous peoples and for *Kci Kikuwosson*/Mother Earth.

In sharing my positionality, my goal is to explain why this work is important to me. Throughout this study, I share stories collected from my experiences in education that are tied to my positionality, as well as stories from my *Mawi Nucikahsicik* / co-researchers. All of these stories help paint a picture of what experiences in education have been like for Indigenous peoples, specifically for members of my community. With this, we can begin to understand how this research ceremony has come to be and why it is important. I will share stories throughout in an attempt to show how my positionality and the stories from my *Mawi Nucikahsicik*/co-researchers are woven together to define this research.

In Chapter 2, I begin the interweaving of our *Wolastoqey* vision for education with the wisdom of scholars who have been active in Indigenous knowledge revitalization and Indigenous educational renewal. I draw on the scholarship that has been most helpful in understanding the challenges in this work. Unlike a conventional literature review, that includes discussion of the pros and cons of different scholarship, I have selected those works which support the *Wolastoqiyik* people's vision and allow them to move forward with educational revitalization. In the past, we have spent too much time pointing out what is not appropriate to us; in this study, I intentionally

emphasize what is useful. I feel that it is important to affirm what is positive. In this chapter, I also discuss in detail my understanding in what indigenizing and decolonizing mean.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I discuss how I developed and then applied an Indigenous research methodology, drawing teachings from the scholarship, most of which was by Indigenous scholars. These chapters also outline how I engaged with Elders and co-researchers and how these formed the methods of Storywork, Circle Talk, Talking Circles, Elder reflection, Storywalks, questions and my own ceremony. Through both of them, I discuss the ethical obligations inherent in Indigenous research methodologies and how I navigate this through a relationality framework.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the philosophical underpinnings needed for an Indigenous Research Methodology. To assist me with that work, I designed a Sacred Medicine Wheel that could help me visualize how all the pieces fit together. It discusses re-searching a community process and the research methodology—that is, how this research came about and how it was developed. This chapter also provides an overview of what Indigenous research methodology means from a *Wolastoqey* perspective. I examine Two-Eyed Seeing and the scholarship of Battiste and Wilson.

In Chapter 4, I discuss how those methodological principles were applied within my community. I again affirm that scholarship that can be interwoven into the community to design a strong and resilient educational basket. I articulate why I chose Storywork as methodology and how the notion of Storywork is embedded into the social context found in *Wolastoqey* territory (Archibald, 2008). This chapter is grounding in explaining what it means to be in relationship to Storywork (Archibald, 2008).

Furthermore, it shows how Storywork forms part of the data collection and exists as the start of the data analysis. Readers will gain insight on how Storywork is much more than just narrative and how it is an integral part of *Wolastoqey Kci Ntoltahkewakon*/ceremony. It also prepares the reader for entering into ceremony and is very spiritual. There will be plenty for the reader to learn and know about being in ceremony and the ethical obligations in doing so. This will give the reader an opportunity to understand ceremony, our connection to ceremonies, and our own spiritual journeys.

Chapter 5 is crucial to the development of this work as it illuminates the voices of my *Mawi Nucikahsicik*/co-researchers and shares the medicines woven into their stories. This chapter defines the themes that comes from the data. In it, I share more of my own Storywork in conjunction with the Storywork of my *Mawi Nucikahsicik*. It is my hope the reader will come to understand this research as ceremony—how my personal stories, and what I have learned throughout my life, can be woven together with the stories from my *Mawi Nucikahsicik* to bring about a meaning, a shared meaning that provides purpose for moving this work forward in education.

Chapter 6 weaves everything together in an effort to illuminate the stories in a re-examination of this work and how we can use this research to move education forward. It discusses how the 13 Moons on Turtle’s back emerged from this work as a process of data analysis and their meanings in the context of *Wolastoqey* culture.

Moving into Chapter 7, the reader discovers teachings to keeping the ceremony open. This final chapter concludes this study and provides takeaways that should serve as a point for future educators, scholars, and researchers as they make the move from a decolonized state of education to more of a *Tuhkiye Ncocahq*/Spiritual Awakening.

As you begin to navigate through the ceremony and teachings found within this study, I ask you all to have an open mind, Spirit, heart, and body. The conclusion of this chapter also deals with the transference of knowledge and how this research can be applied to the development of a school, a *Wolastoqey* resurgence of Education, pre-service teaching of teachers and emphasis on community context and the framework of relationality.

Chapter 2

Keq op Acehtasik Ihtolikehkimeq Kekitasik Tokec Ntoluhkewakon-Nqeni Kiluwahtu

Nkolusuwakon/Literature Review:

Societal Influences Leading to Curriculum Change and Research Methodology

In examining Indigenous education and the knowledge systems critical to my inquiry, the acceptance of the place for Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Speakers and the recognition of ceremonies, dreams, and oral knowledges as foundational to defining nationhood is critically important. These considerations are vital to Indigenous peoples and to establishing legitimate, generational knowledge systems that uphold their own spaces within the research methodology discourse (Graveline, 2004). By pairing the scholarly literature with Traditional Knowledges and the language of my peoples, I set out in this chapter to explain how both have led me in the direction I have taken and, further, how my positionality impacts the research.

What Is a Literature Review?

A literature review is a survey and discussion of the literature in a given area of study. Further, it is a concise overview of what has been studied, argued, and established about a topic, and in this chapter, I have organized the literature review thematically. The themes explored are Indigenous languages, Indigenous worldview, decolonization, Indigenization, relationality, and weaving rather than building. I discuss trends and developments in each area. Each section evaluates previous and current research regarding how relevant or useful it is and how it relates to my own research. It is crucial that I discuss how the research relates to other studies, how I weave these teachings into my inquiry, and how they relate to my own research ceremony. Before diving deep into the themes, I will discuss my research question and the choices that were made to arrive

at where I am today with this evolving research ceremony. I will then share why the literature review is important to this research ceremony, what Indigenous scholars have to say about literature reviews, what the implications of a literature review are, why a literature review is difficult in *Wolastoqey* territory, and finally why *Kcicihtuwinut* / Elders must be regarded as scholars.

Research Questions and Approach

In preparing to weave a *Wolastoqey* model of education, I developed the questions in collaboration with Dr. Marie Battiste, my *Kcicihtuwinut*, and my community. From my experiences as a leader in my community for many years previous to starting this work, I was able to weave together voices and stories from my community to arrive at questions that would serve its needs. From the beginning, I knew I had to continue to have discussions with community members to see how their feelings about this research area evolved over the years and what stood out as priorities for them in doing this work. Through such dialogue, we were able to develop sub-questions to support the research questions. Our primary questions evolved to the following two:

1. What is the true meaning of education or learning in the *Wolastoqey* worldview?
2. How can we develop, elevate, and implement this teaching and learning in a *Wolastoqey* model of education?

Several other questions were developed to expand our understandings of what might support *Mawi Nucikahsicik* / co-researchers to contribute their knowledge and the wisdom of their lived experience:

1. What does success look like to *Wolastoqey* youth and Elders?
2. How might this success be measured?
3. What are the challenges and barriers to learning?
4. What is oral knowledge and is it a vital part of a person's education?
5. Who is an Elder? What characteristics and gifts do they hold?
6. How might we both use and protect Elder knowledge in education?
7. What can youth voices tell us about education?

To prepare to answer these questions, I conducted an extensive literature review to see if similar questions were posed in other communities and, if so, how those communities went about seeking answers. In the literature review, I looked closely at the themes mentioned above; I was also seeking whether different authors agreed with each other on these themes and what the differing opinions were. Further, I investigated how each author and their work could support our *Wolastoqey* objectives. As I venture into the themes below, I will list and describe the sources I have read, but more importantly, I will respond to them, interpret them, and critically evaluate them in the context of this re-searching ceremony.

In undertaking this work, I realized there would be some barriers to arriving at knowledge sharing and specifically confronting the intentional blocking of knowledge transfer that Indigenous people have endured. Bearing the experiences of attempts to block knowledge transfer in mind, I have been exploring modes or methods of reintegrating knowledge transfer, particularly reaffirming *Wolastoqey* values and ethics (Perley, 2013). This process was a collaborative approach with my community, guided by *Kcicihtuwinit* / Elders and Knowledge Keepers. The voices of my community were

crucial to this work as their stories are about experiences in residential schools, day schools, and the public school system. Through Talking Circles, Storywalks, and the sharing of stories, we can begin to understand the deep impact these schooling systems have had on our people, our culture, and our language. I am aware of my participation in both groups (Indigenous people/community and academic community) and part of my aim in this study is to “expand the we,” so to speak, and share with non-Indigenous readers the kind of sharing that happens within Talking Circles and Storywalks in order to understand the magnitude of the negative impact, multigenerational trauma, that western/settler/colonial educational systems have had on Indigenous people’s lives, culture, and language.

One of the ways in which we began to reaffirm *Wolastoqey* values and ethics was through the 13-Moons-on-Turtle’s-back model that we will explore deeper later. While on this journey, an exploration of the literature on Indigenous education and pedagogy was necessary to engage in discussions about what is working in other Indigenous communities and to identify any gaps in the research as they pertain to my community. Tuck and McKenzie’s (2015) work on place, Storywalks, and empowering youth has had an immense influence on me—I learned how Indigenous peoples can and should take pride and ownership in participatory action research. Important in this review was Dr. Jo-Ann Archibald’s (2008) contribution to Storywork and its vitality in Indigenous education and research. Many other scholars have advanced knowledge in the Indigenous realm, too many to name, but I must mention Dr. Margaret Kovach and Dr. Bagele Chilisa, both of whom have helped me better understand Indigenous research methodologies.

Throughout this work, I have been privileged in hearing the voices of Indigenous peoples. Their voices, coupled with my own experiences, gave me the impetus to explore what is really happening in education for our peoples. To clarify for the reader, when I refer to voices, I will distinguish between the following voices: 1) the academic researcher/scholar who undertakes research with/about Indigenous peoples; 2) the Indigenous voices (individual “ordinary” people voicing their own experience in educational systems); 3) the Indigenous Elders (Indigenous scholars who are the keepers of traditional knowledge); and 4) the Indigenous stories themselves that are passed down orally (Indigenous knowledge). All of these voices—and of those who granted them their stories—have breathed a fire into my Spirit, one that seeks to build on continuing the scholarship and research necessary in creating the societal shifts needed to influence the changes in education for Indigenous people. In reviewing the literature, I kept my community’s questions at the forefront. Although there are similarities in the literature with what the voices of my community are saying, such as basic Indigenous principles, my problem with the literature is that there are no *Wolastoqey* voices— particularly, no voices from my community of *Welamukotuk*. While talking about experiences and defining what success for *Wolastoqiyik* looks like, I allow *Wolastoqey* voices to tell us through their stories. In this process, I can begin to internalize experiences and envision and work towards a resurgence in education where we as Indigenous people can define what success entails.

In the practice of reciprocity, relationality, and respect, I ask my readers to consider that, although at times it may appear that there is not much to some of the stories, or a meaning or purpose is not clearly outlined, this is a part of our cultural

practice. Stories are circular in form, as Battiste shared: if readers “really understood the traditional process of making meaning through story, they would see that stories are quite powerful and promote an Indigenous-based journey in education” (2013, p. 1). This resonated with me as a *Wolastoqey* person because, in *Wolastoqey* culture, stories are our traditional ways of educating. In our Talking Circles, many of the *Kcicihtuwinut* / Elders would share through story, and at times I would wonder how the story pertained to the topic; but after reflection and ceremony, I realized that I would journey into my own meaning-making, and sometimes the answers or lessons were evident, while at other times it took longer to realize them. Stories are critical to education and, as I mentioned previously, through attempts to block knowledge transfer “by means of colonization and banning of our important cultural traditions and ceremonies, a lot of that was denied to our people” (Battiste, 2013, p. 1). Battiste professed that it is important to make space and acknowledge all ages of our storytellers. There are no set criteria for how a story should be shared or what kinds of stories should be shared. Battiste reiterated this when she shared, “there are traditional stories but then there are also life-experience stories—stories of resilience, of overcoming problems, making connections and building family and community relationships” (2013, p. 1). This reminder was important in our Talking Circles as many youths felt as though they could not contribute to what was being discussed in the Circle. I reminded them that speaking from the heart about what was on their minds, even without direct correlation to the topic, was just as important as the direct discussions on the questions/topics. The stories will not tell you what to do or provide solid answers; there is no one right answer and everyone’s answers are valued, which is a form of inclusive education (Battiste, 2013, p. 1).

This is why the review of literature is important to this work, so long as there is a weaving in of our *Wolastoqey* voices. Through my academic training, I have discovered that elevating the stories and experiences of Indigenous peoples is critical for social change and the elevation of Indigenous knowledges. As I learn through ceremony on my re-searching journey, I have discovered that the answers we are searching for are within us, as people. These answers can be found through ceremony, the sharing of stories, Elder knowledge, and a spiritual awakening that allows Indigenous people to begin our resurgence in education. In conducting the literature review and sharing my own story while listening to the stories of others, I noticed that there was a gap, an area into which this research ceremony could move into.

As an act of resistance to the view and control of the colonizer, this research has been created as a ceremony so we can keep in line with Indigenous worldviews and be wary of how this research data will be used, shared, and protected.

Why Is an Indigenous Literature Review Necessary for This Work?

The literature review is important to supporting this work as I present my sources in terms of their overall relationship to my re-searching ceremony. Within this section, I highlight specific arguments and ideas in the field of Indigenous literature. By highlighting these arguments, I am attempting to show what has been studied in the field and where the weaknesses, gaps, or areas needing further study are, as they pertain to this work. I will also demonstrate to the reader why this research is useful, necessary, important, and valid in the weaving of a *Wolastoqey* resurgence of education.

To date, there have been advancements in the literature about *Wolastoqey* languages and knowledge preservation. To build on this foundational work, it is

important to review it so as to privilege the voices of my community in order to integrate and position my community of *Welamukotuk* in the body of literature about *Wolastoqey* language and knowledges. Some significant discoveries have been the lack of attention, care, and funding to preserve and protect our *Wolastoqey* language and knowledges. One of the main arguments in the review of the existing literature in the field of Indigenous studies, has been to elevate our voices so that we can be empowered in the process of language revival and resurgence in education. I have found Dr. Imelda Perley, Dr. David Perley, and Andrea Bear Nicolas (and their lifetime work) to be the pillars of *Wolastoqey* language revival and education resurgence. Much of this work relies heavily on the inclusion of *Wolastoqey* people through methodologies that honour *Wolastoqey* ways of knowing, being, and doing. What I have noticed is that, over time, *Wolastoqey* voices have been the strongest in articulating the need for change and the gaps within education, language, and funding to support them. Also noteworthy is that, slowly, there has been advancement in the literature by other scholars and up-and-coming *Wolastoqey* scholars. This is why this re-searching ceremony is important for our *Wolastoqey* communities, as it will contribute to and build on the literature in this area through the empowering of community voices. With regard to the current literature, we have not looked closely yet at what the literature means to my community of *Welamukotuk*. This work is among the first that elevates the voices of my community specifically, which aims to fill that gap in the literature. I believe this to be crucial to the development of literature and, as time goes on, I am hopeful we will begin to see each of the *Wolastoqey* nations continue to add to this body of literature in their own voices from the perspectives and contexts of their communities.

What Do Indigenous Scholars Say About Literature Reviews?

While literature reviews are a crucial piece to research, Indigenous scholars have taken a decolonizing approach to this process. Wilson shared that

critiquing others' work does not fit well within my cultural framework because it does not follow the Indigenous axiology of relational accountability. Criticizing or judging would imply that I know more about someone else's work and the relationships that went into it than they do themselves (2008, p. 43)

Through a decolonizing approach to traditional literature reviews, we have moved away from critiquing the work of others in an effort to weave past, current, and future works together, as Wilson also shared: "by doing the review in a style that is not critical, but builds upon the work of others, it can also form the context for relational accountability in working from an Indigenous paradigm" (2008, p. 44).

In this work, I am working at replacing a traditional literature review with an Indigenous literature review, one that is relational in its approach (methodology). The image of weaving works well to express the idea of integrating the work of others into the model of knowledge that I am building. Barnhardt and Kawagley talked about complexity theory:

It provides an emergent system that melds the formal and Indigenous knowledge systems. Applying this theory allows for better negotiation in defining Indigenous education systems. As I understand the theory, one of the greatest strengths that Indigenous scholars bring with them is the ability to see and work within both the Indigenous and dominant worldviews. This becomes of great importance when working with dominant system academics, who are usually not bicultural. As part

of their white privilege, there is no requirement for them to be able to see other ways of being or doing, or even to recognize that they exist. Oftentimes then, ideas coming from a different worldview are outside of their entire mindset and way of thinking. The ability to bridge this gap becomes important in order to ease the tension that it creates. Research that emanates from, honours and illuminates their worldviews. . . challenges Indigenous scholars to articulate their own research paradigms, their own approaches to research and their own data collection methods. (2017, p. 54)

This is an important consideration to the gaps within the research. This consideration articulates the importance of elevating Indigenous voices through their own worldviews. This provides a strategy for thinking about how to address the gap in the literature, the gap being the lack of representation of *Wolastoqey* voices/knowledge. Many Indigenous scholars, especially those up-and-coming like myself, are seeking to find place within the world of academia. In finding our place, we should not have to be constantly arguing why there is a need for Indigenous voices and for an acceptance of an Indigenous paradigm. Rather, we should be able to begin the work of discovering our roots, our voice, and our purpose as it pertains to the work with our communities:

Indigenous scholars are in the process of shaping, redefining and explaining their positions. They are defining the research, outlining the ethical protocols and explaining the culturally congruent methodologies that can be used at the behest of their communities. (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2017, p. 54)

As Indigenous scholars with lived experiences, we remain at the centre of all research inquiries that aim to support Indigenous peoples: “Indigenous peoples are at a stage

where they want research and research design to contribute to their self-determination and liberation struggles, as it is defined and controlled by their communities” (Barnhardt & Kawagley (2017, p. 54). Unfortunately, for me and other Indigenous scholars like myself, much of our time has been spent learning the western ways of conducting research. Even within the writing of this study, I have had to take much criticism and critiques, and much of my time was spent articulating an argument for why Indigenous perspectives and ways of doing should be upheld as stand-alone methodologies. Navigating two worlds that seem to be in constant battle becomes draining on the Indigenous scholar, as feelings of “less than” continue to create a downward spiral. I compare these feelings and this ongoing battle to another form of knowledge-transfer blocking. Barnhart and Kawagley reiterated this in their work: “Unfortunately Indigenous researchers have often had to explain how their perspective is different from that of dominant system scholars; dominant system scholars have seemingly needed no such justification in order to conduct their research” (2017, p. 55). Barnhardt and Kawagley’s work continues to resonate with me:

The idea that knowledge is approached through the intellect leads to the belief that research must be objective rather than subjective, that personal emotions and motives must be removed if the research results are to be valid. We do what we do for reasons, emotional reasons. That is the engine that drives us, that is the gift of the Creator of life. Humans—feeling, living, breathing, thinking humans—do research. When we try to cut ourselves off at the neck and pretend an objectivity that does not exist in the human world, we become dangerous, to ourselves first, and then to the people around us. (2017, p. 56)

In the navigation of the two worlds, I am constantly reminded that I am answerable to all my relations when I am doing research. With this, I must point out that I privilege this teaching over being accountable to institutions. The work first must serve my community and meet their needs; the institution is secondary. This misunderstanding or failure to honour Indigenous paradigms will continue to serve as a barrier for Indigenous scholars and their work being respected the same way as western research within academia. It is my hope that western researchers will begin to stop asking us to become experts in western academia and allow us to continue our work without having to construct arguments for why we choose to conduct research in ways that align with our Indigenous ways of knowing, ways of being, and ways of doing. Wilson's work made this point:

One major difference between those dominant paradigms and an Indigenous paradigm is that those dominant paradigms build on the fundamental belief that knowledge is an individual entity: the researcher is an individual in search of knowledge, knowledge is something that is gained, and therefore, knowledge may be owned by an individual. An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all Creation. It is not interpersonal relationships, or just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of Creation. It is with the cosmos; it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge (2008, p. 56).

Why Is an Indigenous Literature Review More Difficult in This Territory?

Shawn Wilson's (2008) work has been essential to my own development in Indigenous research methods, which helped me weave together his teachings with our *Wolastoqey* cultural protocols to develop a grounding framework for *Wolastoqey* research methodologies. Despite having conducted an extensive literature review, I found very little literature from *Wolastoqey* academics. This is important because, although there was an extensive literature review, there are no *Wolastoqey* voices (e.g., from *Welamukotuk*) represented/documentated in the literature. I found very little literature from *Wolastoqey* academics. With that being said, the absence of voices from our territory is a gap in the research and, in order to contribute to the literature, *Wolastoqey* scholars must work to start documenting the voices of the *Wolastoqiyik*. I believe this work will contribute to the change and resurgence in education in our territory. Through the lens of Storywork, we can empower our people to author their own stories that will contribute to the collective change. Storywork about relationality of the *Wolastoqiyik* honours our speakers, our youth, our Elders, and our community members. Storywork elevates voice and validates ways of knowing, ways of being, and ways of doing for *Wolastoqiyik*. Relationality allows us to give elevation to all voices and value them as equal contributors to this work. It is also my ethical obligation to bring their work forward as crucial contributions. My writing and sharing of stories are from the oratory; I am a speaker as a potential and upcoming Elder-in-training, and I have the genetic code that pre-determines me as a speaker. With this responsibility, though, I have to remain accountable to all my relations and challenge colonial constructs that devalue or disrupt opportunities for *Wolastoqey* voices. In our community, the majority are not aware of

research projects and another barrier can sometimes be the language in which these works are written. I believe all of this work is critical to a resurgence for all Indigenous peoples, but my question is how can we make academic work more accessible to our communities? One of the barriers to success, as stated by community members, has been the inaccessibility of these kinds of work and opportunities to learn and share with Elders.

The struggle I have found in *Wolastoqey* territory, where literature is not as advanced as in other Indigenous territories, not enough *Wolastoqey* people are creating “literature” as scholars/academics. Our spiritual connections are more than just ideas or stories; they are our identity. As Graveline explained, “that which the trees exhale, I inhale. That which I exhale, the tree inhales” (1998, p. 57). This reiterates that our relationships and interconnectedness to all things guide our work, but also that our work must serve all of our relations. When we conduct our literature reviews, it is more than exploring the body of published literature, but rather, honouring our oral traditions and Knowledge Keepers and all of Creation. What we learn is not all based on what we can read, but rather an honouring of relationality and a listening to all of Creation.

Relationality

Relationality has come to be the framework for this re-searching ceremony, and it works to ensure that all of our relations are respected while on this journey. Littletree et al. (2020) shared that “relationality is what distinguishes Indigenous ways of knowing from western knowledge in a fundamental way” (p. 415). Littletree et al. also expressed that “Indigenous peoples, through our relationships, we belong to our landscapes, places, languages, histories, ceremonies, peoples, families, nations, and clans” (p. 416). While

operating within an Indigenous paradigm, we must honour and be accountable to all of our relations; relationality opens up a space for an authentic understanding of knowledge: “from the vantage point of relationality, we are able to more ethically and precisely evaluate expressions of Indigenous knowledge” (Littletree et al., 2020, p. 416). This has taught me a lot about myself, my Indigenous worldviews, and my obligation to honour this teaching for not only all Indigenous people, but more specifically for my community of *Welamukotuk*. I learned quickly that this was very much a community-invested *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*/ceremony and, as I learned through Lambert (2014) and Strega (2015), I had to be prepared to negotiate values, conceptual frameworks, methods, and dissemination strategies with my community. Littletree et al. (2020) added to this idea by saying, “it is knowledge that is based on cognitive understandings and interpretations of the social, physical and spiritual worlds” (p. 416).

This proved to be difficult to balance with a western research paradigm because the ways in which our communities conduct ceremony keep us accountable to all our relations and Mother Earth, and our peoples are always at the centre of any inquiry (Graveline, personal communication, February 20, 2020). The core teachings of *Tetpi-Wiqsonuwakon*/Reciprocity, *Mawankeyutomakon*/Responsibility, *Wolokimqot*/Relevance, and *Ksakutomakon*/Relationality are the foundational concepts that guide Indigenous research, but they are not widely understood nor accepted within western university graduate research ethical protocols. This is a discussion that institutions must confront and make space for: “centering relationality is a decolonizing technique that allows Indigenous ontologies to emerge in otherwise colonial institutions” (Littletree et al., 2020, p. 423). Exploring the teachings of relationality and how these teachings could be

extended to the western practice of doing research became a focal point in the literature review. Littletree et al. (2020) stated that “relationality is dynamic. It allows us to actively participate in our world, ensuring that our interactions are compassionate, loving, and caring, as we become accountable to those whom we relate” (p. 418).

As I share in other parts of this work, bridging Indigenous and the dominant paradigms through a Two-Eyed Seeing approach has exposed some difficulties. These difficulties are addressed throughout this work, and, in the conclusion, core teachings are defined as recommendations in moving forward. A commitment to challenge dominant western structures is imperative for social change, as it informs the relationship of Indigenous people, culture, and knowledge with non-Indigenous (western) people, culture, and knowledge. This is the responsibility of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars—anyone who undertakes research about Indigenous peoples and any aspect of Indigenous peoples’ life, language, culture, history, traditions, values, goals, and aspirations—to question, resist, and ultimately transform aspects of the western research process that do not honour our cultural and spiritual teachings.

It is an important survival strategy to always keep the teachings of Muskrat in mind. Muskrat, whom I will talk about later in this work, teaches us about persistence (Simpson, 2011). Although I have faced challenges and struggles, and many arguments or rules have had to be negotiated on my journey, the greater purpose of this study is for those coming behind me to have a little less of a challenge reweaving our cultural resiliency. Having a critical lens on western research methods is a necessary tool and instrument of change. In this decolonizing re-searching ceremony, we are taking an active approach to responding to the strengths and particular needs of a specific Indigenous

community. Furthermore, this disruption to traditional power dynamics can work to empower Indigenous peoples to be the driving force for all Indigenous-related research.

Relationality is crucial to creating opportunities for social change because it empowers my community members in being agents of change. Considerable research attention has been devoted to social change theories and their effectiveness, particularly for minority or marginalized peoples. Recent researchers, such as Guajardo (2008), have explored the recruitment of youth and community members as co-researchers in an attempt to shift power. They have measured social change as a result of including these voices and have provided ample evidence regarding the power in building strong relationships; in work originating from self, place, and community; and in engaging in meaningful work. Further, Guajardo shared that, when these are “integrated into a seamless practice, this combination of guiding principles yields a certain power that youth and adults alike begin to negotiate within and between their peers, teachers, and community for change” (2008, p. 3). I have also learned that instilling these ways of thinking about ownership help to foster a sense of self, purpose, efficacy, and power that continues to inform work from youth to adulthood. This same sense of ownership and empowerment is equally important for our *Mawi Nucikahsicik*/co-researchers. Throughout this work, I talk about lifelong impact and how this project became more than just a research project—rather, it has become a lifelong re-searching ceremony that will bring about positive changes for generations. Among these positive changes are empowerment and other aspects of personal growth for all of those involved in the process.

These impacts are far-reaching and demand engagement from community members and commitment to setting aside their sense of doubt in themselves with regard to their ability to design and carry out research projects. For too long, settler educators have silenced Indigenous educational knowledge. Guajardo shared a similar experience—one of their participants had mixed feelings when she realized that her stories were important: “she was emboldened by the fact that her narrative was respected” (2008, p. 4). I believe this process of realizing that our voices matter is part of the ceremony and personal journey of *Tuhkiye Ncocahq*/Spiritual Awakening. Guajardo shared that the process and work are “multilayered and interdisciplinary,” and co-researchers show it “through a series of stories that guide us into an articulation of methods, theory and data” (2008, p. 4). Storytelling is a critical mode through which day-to-day work is conducted, and it influences how curriculum and enhanced pedagogies are developed. It is important to remember consistently and continuously to implement a reflective process as a strategy for inserting *Mawi Nucikahsicik*/co-researchers at the centre of their own stories, individually and collectively. Further, Guajardo stated, “we must employ a different way of thinking, one that is more consistent with Spirit and the realities of the community in which we live, work, and research” (2008, p. 7).

In social change research, one focus has been recognizing the relationships between dominant groups and marginalized peoples (Strega, 2015). Many concerns have been raised about the role, place, or legitimacy of non-Indigenous researchers who study Indigenous peoples; some critics have argued that non-Indigenous researchers should not even be involved in the preliminary stages of developing research questions and areas (Strega, 2015). As Indigenous peoples, we know where we need to make positive

changes and where growth and attention should be focused. Communities must always be in charge of their research areas, and western methods of conducting research, which have been problem-focused, must be challenged and adapted to a “strengths-focused” approach. Indigenous communities know where their strengths are and have grown tired of researchers and governments coming and trying to “fix” what is “wrong” with their communities. We have been colonized in many ways and, in some cases, have become detached from our cultural teachings. Doing respectful research (Tilley, 2016) includes *Skicinuwimiyewakonon*/returning to the principles and practices of our cultural realm and our own *Tuhkiye Ncocahq*/Spiritual Awakening.

Guajardo’s research project resonated with me because it mirrored the work we are doing in our community; through Guajardo and his co-researchers’ project, Guajardo viewed their experience and work as “a process of culture, politics, and building power within the context of a community’s life and narrative” (2008, p. 9). Additionally, Guajardo (2008) maintained that the work was about honouring peoples’ dignity and building hope for their children, families, and communities. I feel the same way about our research project, as not only has it empowered our peoples and given hope, but it also satisfies the longing within each *Mawi Nucikahsicik*/co-researcher to honour their commitment to protect and to take an active part in *Loskonuwewakonol*/weaving narratives, cultural teachings, and knowledge in the process of creating a *Wolastoqey* resurgence of education. Being an agent of change and a part of honouring our cultural teachings in preservation for future generations has been a satisfying and fulfilling experience for all of our *Mawi Nucikahsicik*/co-researchers.

Social change theory and strategies that empower Indigenous peoples are foundational to creating positive changes. Thus, the stories shared by our *Mawi Nucikahsicik*/co-researchers must be respected, used to challenge dominant institutional cultures, and can be perceived as the “literature” to transform and re-culturalize spaces. Datta (2013) built on this by adding, “a relational ontology puts relationality at its centre. Actors, both humans and non-human, living and non-living, and their actions are not only explained as relational, but also as spiritually interconnected, which makes one actor responsible to the other actors” (p. 103). Further to this, Datta added that “a relational ontology also refuses hierarchical relationships among actors” (2013, p. 105).

In our communities, it is becoming easier to implement changes and design our own education models, but to bring these knowledges to public schools is more difficult. We need to work harder to interrupt institutional equilibrium, or “business as usual,” as it is these shaking-up processes that allow peoples’ perspectives to be challenged to make room for positive changes. What actually constitutes “positive changes” can be very broad, but as we learned from Daniel, one of our *Mawi Nucikahsicik*/co-researchers. The idea of unsettling the settlers is important because it opens their eyes and ears to the *Atkuhkakonol*/Stories of our peoples. Datta honoured stories and interactions within a relational framework, which advances this notion of relationships:

This framework suggests that things are materially and spiritually connected through interactions with each other. . . . A relational ontology is the conceptual framework within which I suggest meanings of traditional land, nature, and sustainability such as traditional experiences, cultures, and customs, are important issues for Indigenous lives and environment. (2013, p. 102)

In elevating the voices of our *Mawi Nucikahsicik*/co-researchers, we too, like Guajardo (2008), “were informed by constructivist principles, critical pedagogy, and practices useful for building strong cultural identity. This process and theoretical premise informed youth, adults, and Elders about their history through oral histories, life histories, ethnographies, genealogies, and storytelling sessions” (2008, p. 17). For example, Drae, a *Mawi Nucikahsicik*/co-researcher, came to understand that his own personal narrative and his family history informed his education, and by understanding more clearly the conditions of his community, he had the freedom to take back ownership of his own learning. Recognizing this is an empowering awakening of relations to all of Creation too. Romm (2015) shared that “within Indigenous knowledges systems is the recognition that knowing is something that is socially constructed by people who have relationships and connections with each other, the living and the nonliving and the environment” (p. 421). Daniel, *Mawi Nucikahsicik*/co-researcher, who considered himself lucky for having close relationships with his Elders, also felt empowered by seeing our collective stories inform our education, and he was proud to be contributing his own voice in defining what success looked like for him and his peers (personal communication, December 17, 2019). The youth all acknowledged that success looks different for each person, but many cited some common themes, which will be presented in chapter six. All of these notions are equally vital pieces to be woven into a *Wolastoqey* resurgence of education. Turning up the volume of the voices of the *Mawi Nucikahsicik*/co-researchers, Drae and Daniel, their voices and recognizing their words as part of the literature review is an integral part of this process and elevates the idea that “research should be guided by

the principles of accountable responsibility, respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation, and rights” (Romm, 2015, p. 421).

Including these Indigenous voices in the literature review simultaneously challenges the traditional research practices of the dominant western model of knowledge creation. Also, relationality and relational accountability guides us and reminds us that “communal knowledge ensures that knowledge is not collected and stored for personal power and ownership by individual specialists, but is rather developed, retained and shared within Indigenous groups for the benefit of the whole group” (Romm, 2015, p. 421). While the benefits can be a wide range of advancements, for the purpose of this work, we can begin to implement voices and ideas within education.

While we investigate relationality, we can begin to understand the next steps in weaving together the voices of Indigenous people to insert them into our *Wolastoqey* resurgence of education. Relating curriculum to diverse perspectives of knowing and being is a first step to effective curriculum development. According to Wane, “an understanding of diverse ways of knowing and seeing will assist curriculum planners to clarify the purposes of education reforms, and their relevance to local as well as global issues” (2008, p. 176). Literature that examines Indigenous research in the development of curriculum, as it is Indigenized and decolonized, needs to include both education authorities and the input of Indigenous peoples. Elder knowledge needs to be sought and included in creating curriculum, and Elders should sit on writing committees together with Indigenous educators because, in our culture, they too are our scholars (I. Perley, personal communication, September 30, 2016).

In our re-searching ceremony, *Mawi Nucikahsirik*/co-researchers had many ways to address the theme of inclusion of Indigenous voices and perspectives. For example, Daniel and Drae, *Mawi Nucikahsirik*/co-researchers, both felt strongly that education only exists in the stories of our Elders and that the curriculum must make room for these voices, which must be the foundation to education (personal communication, December 17, 2019). The youth all valued Elders and their knowledge, had great respect for them, and felt the education system must also have the same value and respect. Drae was suspicious of education if he could not see it relate back to Elder knowledge and be culturally rich and tangible enough to share and pass on to others. Dymond, *Mawi Nucikahsirik*/co-researcher, had had many conversations with our *Skicinuwi Kehkimsirik*/Indigenous learners, and she expressed that some of her dialogue with *Skicinuwi Kehkimsirik*/Indigenous learners involved getting them to realize how curricula and content would be valuable to them (personal communication, December 17, 2019). Dymond stated that this work is crucial because she believes if *Skicinuwi Kehkimsirik*/Indigenous learners have an active role in designing education and what success looks like, then more of them will have buy-in and feel empowered in reaching their own successes. Dymond was inspired by this work, and she has made it her own personal goal to write *Wolastoqey* curricula for the people of our territory and to make it easily adaptable by other Indigenous groups (personal communication, December 17, 2019).

Relationality also requires some inner reflections to take place, reminding us that, before moving forward, we must evaluate our current relations, particularly our connection and relationships to our communities. This is why there must be an evaluation

of researchers, where their relations are rooted, and how and where they received their teachings. Jimmy and Andreotti warned us about the kind of researcher to avoid: “one who wants to claim Indigenous positionality despite having no community relationships and having only learned Indigenous knowledge from books” (2019, p. 30). Wilson continued this thought in saying, “identity for Indigenous peoples is grounded in their relationships with the land, with their ancestors who have returned to the land and with future generations who will come into being on the land” (2008, p. 80). Relationality is not something we honour through merely reading, but as Wilson stated, “relationality and the relational way of being is at the heart of what it means to be Indigenous” (2008, p. 89). We also learn from Wilson that, “in reality, spirituality is not separate but is an integral, infused part of the whole in the Indigenous worldview” (2008, p. 89).

When I invite my readers into the ceremony, I ask for space for a spiritual realm. Creating a space for spirituality is a necessity to glancing into the world of Indigeneity: “for many Indigenous people, having a healthy sense of spirituality is just as important as other aspects of mental, emotional and physical health” (Wilson, 2008, p. 89). Entering the ceremony without any idea of what is at the heart of relationality requires readers to also take the time and make the effort to create a relationship not only with the work, but with all of Creation. Wilson (2008) in his work asked the same, reminding his readers that “there is a lot of work, dedication and time spent in building up the relationships with the cosmos that allow the visible ceremony to happen” (p. 90).

Elders as Scholars

Elders are Indigenous knowledge holders. Their teachings through stories and oral knowledge are mandatory aspects of the Indigenous literature review. In this work, the

reader is getting a literature review when I share stories about the themes of Indigenous languages, Indigenous worldview, decolonization, Indigenization, relationality, and weaving rather than building. “Elders do not often have their knowledge legitimized by academic degrees, denying them recognition within the academic world. This denies value to their knowledge and expertise, knowledge for which we are working to bolster appreciation. It is an important and significant task to begin to accredit Elder knowledge” (Taylor et al., 2005, p. 97).

As I have stated multiple times already, there is little *Wolastoqey* literature (literature by *Wolastoqey* Scholars). We as scholars need to acknowledge and think and talk about that first before exploring extensive literature reviews. We do not need to hear others to build on or frame our thinking; we should discuss first what our community voices are sharing and then listen to other voices. This has been important to me on this re-searching journey—I have constantly reminded myself that Elder knowledge and the voices of my community are the most significant part of my literature review:

We as Indigenous scholars who wish to participate in the creation of knowledge within our own ways of being must begin with an active and scholarly recognition of who our philosophers and prophets are in our own communities. These are still the keepers and the teachers of our epistemologies. (Atkinson, 2001, p. 60)

I recognize that my positionality and my Spirit Name require me to uphold these teachings and ethical standards within academic institutions. Further, although we should not have to articulate why and what guides or drives our work, I know we are still in an era where this is necessary. It is my ongoing commitment to do just that: “Indigenous scholarship reflects inherited Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, and it is the

responsibility of Indigenous researchers associated with a university to maintain and continuously renew connections with our ancestors and our communities through embodiment, adherence and practice of these” (Atkinson, 2001, p. 60). Therefore, this work and all my future work will honour these teachings with “an awareness and connection between logic of mind and the feelings of heart as the source of the research project is the heart/mind of the researcher, and checking your heart is a critical element in the research process” (Atkinson, 2001, p. 60). This section closes with a reminder from Wilson that “Indigenous research is a life changing ceremony” (2008, p. 61).

The Importance of Indigenous Languages

Through my lived experiences as an Indigenous person and through my positionality and Spirit Name commitment, I have come to understand the crucial need to support the work that has been done to protect and preserve our Indigenous languages. In addition, there have been many scholars whose work has been critical to the development of my understanding of the importance of Indigenous languages and Indigenous epistemologies. I will continue to do my part to elevate these teachings and understandings in preserving our Indigenous knowledge. Scholars such as Battiste have reiterated this: “language is by far the most significant factor in the survival of Indigenous knowledge” (2002, p. 17). From Battiste’s work, I have learned that understanding language is important to identity and the survival of our Indigenous knowledges. Language assists us in understanding our identity and should be an integral part of our educational system. Battiste and her guidance in developing this re-searching ceremony have contributed to the work my community is aiming to achieve. Through Battiste’s scholarship, I have learned that nourishing the learning Spirits of our future

generations requires being embedded in our language and cultural teachings. Simpson's work complements these notions—she told us as storytellers “to remember the ancient stories that made their ancestors ‘the people they were,’ and that requires a remembering of language” (2011, p. 33). Simpson reminded us that “educators cannot stand outside of Indigenous languages to understand Indigenous knowledge” (2011, p. 17), which reiterates the importance of language being a strong theme in the weaving of a *Wolastoqey* resurgence of education. Simpson went on to share, too, that “the need is to embrace and support the diversity of languages currently held by students and find ways to share the multiple ways communities shape, function, and transmit their languages” (2011, p. 148).

This teaching is important to our resurgence in education. Firstly, it asks how has our language survived in our community? Secondly, it asks who were the key players? Thirdly, it asks how was our language maintained? In this re-searching, we utilize the literature (scholarly and community voice) to enhance preservation and this process of resurgence. I have also learned from Simpson that “learning a language means, among other things, to learn to use a language to socialize, to learn, to query, to make believe, to imagine, and to wonder” (2011, p. 149). Another strong message from Simpson in the weaving of our *Wolastoqey* resurgence of education is that “First Nations schools need to have their own certification requirements for their schools which embrace national and local competencies in Indigenous knowledges, not merely provincial standards” (2011, p. 34).

Andrea Bear Nicholas, of *Wolastoqey* nation, reiterated these ideas, warning that, “unless drastically different action is taken very soon, the rapidly declining state of our

languages will ultimately lead to their extinction before the end of the present century” (2009, p. 4). Bear Nicholas went on to say,

For Indigenous students in provincial schools, the indoctrination amounts to another form of cultural genocide since the social, economic, political and spiritual values of the dominant society imposed on them are generally not only alien, but also usually destructive of Indigenous forms of life. (2001, p. 4)

Through the critical work and call for action of Bear Nicholas, we learn that these are not just trending topics, but rather are crucial to the preserving of our language and culture. We learn that we as Indigenous people have not got ourselves into this mess; rather, the mess is the result of direct attacks on our language and culture:

As the most knowledgeable scholars in the field will attest, the critical state of Indigenous languages in Canada, as in the rest of the world, is not the result of natural processes, but the direct product of official government policies and practices that have been systematic and sustained over decades and generations (Bear Nicholas, 2001, p. 4)

Sadly, these actions have attempted not only to erase us completely, but also to ensure that the dominant settler language and ways of being are more powerful. Bear Nicholas shared how through these attempts, Indigenous peoples have come to believe that “Indigenous language has less value than the dominant language, each passing generation of speakers tends to use their own language in fewer contexts, and the dominant language in more contexts” (Bear Nicholas, 2001, p. 5). This is alerting and troublesome for our people because, if we do not act now to carry these preservation attempts forward, then we risk extinction: “the possibility of extinction for any language means extinction, also,

of the history and cultural knowledge of its people for all time” (Bear Nicholas, 2001 p. 4).

Through attempts to assimilate Indigenous children, such as residential schools, day schools, and the public school system, Indigenous knowledge transfer has been intentionally blocked. This has had significant impacts on the Indigenous population. In *Wolastoqey* territory, many of our Indigenous children were forced into residential schools where they were separated from their families, communities, language, and culture. Many of our community members were forced to attend the Shubenacadie residential school, the Sussex day school, and other day schools located in our community and other local communities, like Kingsclear First Nation. These efforts by the Canadian government to assimilate Indigenous people were an attempt to create government workers. In this process, Indigenous people—including the now Elders of my community—experienced a loss of identity and a disconnect from their language and culture.

Schneider and Perley’s work with stories and Indigenous language resurgence has provided a motivating focus and reminder that “when *Wolastoqi* peoples are using English there is an absence of sacredness, an absence of a relationship with the earth, people, and all of creation” (2012, p. 4). In the Indigenous worldview, relationality is one of the main pillars and losing any kind of relation to Creation is endangering our identity. As such “[language] should be treated like natural and ecological resources, a precious reserve of information to be respected and protected” (Schneider & Perley, 2012, p. 5). This rings true in the work I am doing because it just reiterates this idea of relationality and relational accountability. These relations stand to keep us connected to who our

Ancestors were, who we are today, and what our future seven generations will require to carry these teachings forward. Our resurgence in education must honour these relations in order to pass on our language and traditional knowledge to future generations. Schneider and Perley have reminded us that “each language reflects a unique encapsulation and interpretation of human existence and without knowledge of the language of our ancestors our relationships with our past and our world are broken” (2012, p. 5).

“The intent of over a century of federal day and residential schools for First Nations students was to isolate children from their families and communities, sever all ties with their languages and cultural traditions, and to assimilate them into the dominate culture” (Schneider & Perley, 2012, p. 5). Schneider and Perley indicated that the “integration of First Nations students into Anglophone and Francophone provincial schools also perpetuated language loss” (2012, p. 5). This is why it is so important that Indigenous voices frame the research questions and focus—to accommodate and advance our own research agendas that will work to preserve who we are as a people. We need to remind our children through education that our Ancestors endured acts of genocide and still enacted resilience as they carried our Indigenous language and culture forward for future generations. Schneider and Perley have reminded our people to have gratitude for the bravery and intelligent strategies to keep our language and culture alive: “Today, some people are angry with our Grandparents for letting our language go, but I want to thank them for carrying our language despite everything they went through” (2012, p. 5). As we move in the direction of resurgence in education and language revival, Elders like Perley emphasize that language is more than a school subject; she is adamant that her language is not lost: “If I can still name my world in my language, then my language is

very much alive. What's missing are the language carriers" (Schneider & Perley, 2012, p. 5).

Much of the work that needs to be done in our communities is linked back to language—not only the importance of language, but our right to language: “language rights, of which language reclamation is part, are fundamental to nation building and sovereignty” (McCarty, 2014, p. 109). It is crucial that stakeholders understand that “the project of language reclamation is not merely or even primarily a linguistic one but is profoundly linked to issues of educational equity, Indigenous self-determination, and the (re)construction of community well-being via culturally distinctive worldviews, identities, and life orientations” (McCarty, 2014, p. 107). Ball and McIvor also point out that “a basic Canadian value is that regardless of where children live, programs for promoting their optimal development should be accessible. Available, and linguistically and culturally appropriate to them” (2013, p. 1).

Indigenous culture is land-based: *Wabanaki* ways of knowing are tied to the *Kci Kikuwosson*/Mother Earth and the interconnectedness of all things. Our ways of knowing are intertwined with the stories we carry, the teachings passed on from our *Kcicihtwinuhticik*/Elders, and the Ancestral blood flowing through our veins (Archibald, 2008; Graveline, 1998; Palmater, 2015). Our guidance and teachings come to us through ceremonies and visions (Mitchell, 2018; Perley, 2016; Simpson, 2011; Talaga, 2018; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015), and as Chief Sabattis (2021) stated, in public school, our children are not given all the tools and support to fully reach this state of being. Chief Sabattis went on to talk about how working towards providing these supports for our students in the public school has been somewhat of a struggle, primarily because it is

seen as our responsibility to invest funding into schools to nourish these cultural states and this knowledge. In a perfect world, our cultural teachings that empower these changes/visions/awakenings would be woven into the curricula.

The Creator has given us special gifts that are interconnected with all of Creation. Our ability to discover each gift comes in time and in the practice of our cultural traditions. Battiste made mention of the Sacred Medicine Wheel Teachings and how the gifts associated with these teachings may go unnoticed if we do not practice cultural traditions and nourish them (1995, p. 106). Most notably, our ceremonies and our languages are connected to the land, and until land-based opportunities are experienced and shared with students, a language that is currently endangered may be further diminished. Elder Dr. Imelda Perley has taught us that our language is sacred; it is tied to the land and can be understood and learned through ceremonies (Fiola, 2015; Mitchell, 2018; Simpson, 2011; Stonechild, 2016). By embarking on a journey of learning and understanding the language, one shines light on true *Wabanaki* perspectives because ultimately the connection to land will help people come to understand our culture, our *Latuwewakon*/language, and therefore our perspective or worldview (Lambert, 2014; Wilson, 2008). Through an extensive literature review, I have found the work of my mentors Dave and Imelda Perley to be significant contributions, and much of my teachings from them have been in person. Both Dave and Imelda Perley put emphasis on language, and their life work has been creating and advocating for more language resources and opportunities to gather and learn our language together as a *Wolastoqey* nation.

Another major player in *Wolastoqey* linguistic resurgence is Andrea Bear Nicholas. Bear Nicholas (2001) stated that there is a linguistic decline in education and identified this as a gap in the current education system. Bear Nicholas credited the linguistic decline to “the imposition of a dominant language as the medium of instruction for Indigenous children, which occurs wherever there is no option of education in the medium of the mother-tongue” (2001, p. 2). The work of all three language warriors is crucial to the resurgence of a *Wolastoqey* education.

Bear Nicholas also stated that there is a small population of fluent speakers in our territory and recommends that we as a nation pull the fluent speakers who are currently teaching in federal and provincial institutions and bring them together to develop language curriculum. Bear Nicholas produced a list of recommended strategies to close the gap in our linguistic decline:

- full jurisdiction over Indigenous education and languages
- positive linguistic rights legislation for Indigenous languages
- public education into negative effects of subtractive education, and the positive benefits of mother-tongue education
- funding for mother-tongue program development
- immersion teacher-training
- curriculum development
- development of mother-tongue publishing and printing capacities
- massive programs of language and teacher training
- support for adult literacy needs and potentials

Bear Nicholas (2001) also signalled the “fundamental racism that lies behind current educational policies for First Nations peoples” (p. 1) as one of the major challenges that we, as Indigenous and more locally *Wolastoqey* people, face in education. What I found to be a common thread in the works of the Indigenous scholars mentioned throughout is that we, as Indigenous people, must lead our efforts for the revitalization and resurgence of our language and culture. While many Indigenous scholars have done much work to draw attention and disrupt colonial constructs, it is up to the people, the communities, to share their stories and to work collaboratively in the territory to advance education for our future generations. A resurgence is the elevation and empowerment of Indigenous voices.

According to Schneider and Perley, “only about 500 *Wolastoqey* speakers remain” (2012, p. 5). Also alarming is that “less than one-fifth of Aboriginal children in Canada are learning their ancestral languages, and this number is dwindling” (Ball & McIvor, 2013, p. 1). As stated many times throughout this work, these statistics pose a threat to Indigenous peoples because “our language holds our culture, our perspective, our history, and our inheritance. What type of people we are, where we came from, what land we claim, all, are based on the language we speak” (McCarty, 2014, p. 111)? Ball and McIvor advanced this notion: “Indigenous language speakers are concerned that, as fewer children learn their ancestral language, not only their languages but also their cultures will be lost” (2013, p. 4). The theme of language and stories must be linked: “Many First Nations storytellers use their personal life experiences as teaching stories in a manner similar to how they use traditional stories. These storytellers help to carry on the oral tradition’s obligation of educational reciprocity” (Archibald, 2008, p. 112).

Worldview

Through Battiste (2002) we learn the importance of considering the concern for different ways in which Indigenous literature differs from western constructs. “In the context of Indigenous knowledge, therefore, a literature review is an oxymoron because Indigenous knowledge is typically embedded in the cumulative experiences and teachings of Indigenous peoples rather than in a library” (Battiste, 2002, p. 2). I remind the readers that, when I make reference to “research,” I am referring to the re-searching of our path, looking again at where we have been (Graveline, 2004). Thus, the early title of this re-searching ceremony was “*Skicinuwimiyewakonon*,” which refers to the process of returning to our cultural realm, a place that our *Kcicihtuwinuhticik*/Elders tell us we once were before colonization (Chief Shelley Sabattis, *Wolastoqi, Welamukotuk*, personal communication, September 30, 2016). Before contact and being displaced in some cases, our peoples were in tune with *Kci Kikuwosson*/Mother Earth and our cultural teachings. Lambert (2014), Strega (2015), and Fiola (2015) shared the importance of rekindling the sacred fire, using research as resistance, and—for Indigenous survival—attempting to bring our peoples to a process of re-searching and a *Tuhkiye Ncocahq*/Spiritual Awakening. This is carrying us back through our teachings and helping us return to our cultural realm. Within this cultural realm, we can begin to align our thinking more closely with a *Wolamsotuwakon*/spiritual process.

Indigenous education has received a lot of research attention, such as the need to decolonize or Indigenize; the works of Indigenous educators and scholars (Battiste, 2000, 2013; Graveline, 2004) have led to a renewed interest in the reclaiming of education by processes of re-searching our cultural histories. In a sense, this re-searching of the true

meaning of education for our peoples can only be seen through an Indigenous lens. In this re-searching ceremony, I proudly situate myself as an insider to the community; as I have lived in my community almost all of my life, I have been closely connected to members and have maintained a respected leadership role. This work is important to me because I have a story to tell, one that empowers me in the sharing of it. I believe that my story will assist with this collective work of *Wabanaki* knowledge retrieval, and hopefully it will provide empowerment for others to join in the work. My own story and the stories of our peoples will fill gaps in the literature, mainly because they provide contexts and create a place for voices that have been longing to talk about and share their experiences.

Therefore, understanding my journey, my experiences, and my goals can assist the reader in seeing and understanding my personal, social context and the work I have undertaken. Further, my voice can blend with other *Wolastoqey* voices to pick up the work of other scholars and elevate our voices further to fill the gaps and honour the future seven generations of our peoples. I value this work personally and collectively as I believe it will promote a more authentic approach to education for my community.

In the writing of this study, I have shared some experiences and feelings from my educational journey, as well as the literature that I have examined. I disclose times when I felt proud and other times when I rejected my identity because it did not align with being successful in this western system, which I now see as broken. After completing high school, I decided to pursue higher education and, surprisingly, it was here where a reunification with my culture occurred, where I re-embraced my identity and realized that change was possible. Through several positive experiences and the

deepening of meaningful relationships with significant Elders, educators, and mentors, my narrative evolved, and I embraced my role as an agent of change. Of course, before all of this positive change occurred, there were some obstacles to overcome.

While reflecting on the gaps defined by Archibald (2008), Battiste (2000, 2013), Grande (2004), and Graveline (2004), I began to examine my role of working in the Bridging Year Program at the *Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey* Centre, the program for Indigenous students who are exploring a university career; it is a program that allows students to brush up on subject skills and meet the requirements of their desired programs. Was my role effective in meeting the needs of students coming to the university? Was the service provided doing what we advertised? Was it building skills, knowledge, confidence, and courage in the student body, in the individuals who arrived on campus, full of hope and fear? In this thinking, my own personal story merged with my current reflection. Below, I share my experience with the Bridging Year Program. As a young person, I was encouraged by my mother to take this program. Essentially, it was a requirement for me to attend university because in high school I was moved to a level-three math class due to my "behavioural" issues with the classroom teacher. As I did not have behavioural issues before or since, I was left wondering if this was just a case of having a racist teacher who did not want me to succeed. Evidently, she did not want me in her class and, at that time in my life, it seemed her needs were deemed more important than my future. I remember feeling embarrassed to go to the Bridging Year Program because of what others said about it. Coming from an already difficult educational experience where I had been marginalized as an Indigenous student, I was

fearful of stereotypes, and I feared the stigma of this program, which defined it as a watered-down and easier program than others at the university. I remember feeling that this was only taking the easy way out and that I was not a real university student—I was a fraud. Not only this, but it also brought back memories of being pulled from regular classes, and this served to rekindle feelings of anxiety and frustration. I felt as though my quality of education would not be like that of “regular” university students. These internalized feelings of “less than” made me feel hopeless, and I felt perhaps the same as many other Indigenous students.

However frustrated and anxious I was at the beginning, it turned out that this particular program was where I learned the most about myself and about the need for an Indigenous or *Wolastoqey* resurgence of education. So, it was at the University of New Brunswick (UNB) that I realized change was possible, and maybe I did not have to stay in the feeling of “self-hating” as an Indigenous person: I could change to love Indigenous knowledge, culture, Elders, and myself. It was here I knew that I could play a role in creating change for myself and for others, here I truly experienced what a culturally inclusive curriculum was. I met Elders and I was able to take more culture and language courses. This is where I found more nourishment for my learning Spirit and took my first baby steps in beginning to understand that social change was possible and how my path, and the paths of other Indigenous peoples, could be enhanced by working collectively towards an authentic and traditional education. These experiences, founded on the pedagogies and the milieu at the *Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey* Centre, helped me to

reflect on an Indigenous way of knowing, being, and doing, which inspired me to move forward, turning to deepening my understanding of social change.

Before stepping out into my community in a re-searching ceremony, I was asked to satisfy the academic world, to essentially prove that I understood the nature of research methodology, particularly Indigenous research methodologies. I will share the Indigenous methods that I have reviewed and explore how these methods are more appropriate than Eurocentric research methods that have failed to support Indigenous peoples in the past, and still do today. Academic researchers have to remain cautious about methods and methodologies in research with Indigenous peoples to ensure that they are not appropriating knowledge, but rather are empowering Indigenous peoples to lead projects that align with their own needs and with their cultural teachings. We must question any methodology or method that is based on—or results in—disrespectful treatment of Indigenous knowledges, sometimes at the hands of well-meaning Eurocentric researchers who have benefited from their research while the Indigenous communities have not. Strega (2015) told us that any researcher approaching communities needs to understand the power dynamics and must also be clear about what their intentions are and what they have to gain from doing the research. In addition to this, with our critical lens, we researchers must ask if we are in any way problematizing Indigenous peoples, especially given the western colonial history of research as a tool of acculturation, used to get Indigenous peoples to fit Eurocentric norms. Academic researchers continue to silence Indigenous peoples when we cannot hear the strengths and value in what peoples are actually saying because it does not resonate with our own experiences. It is also important for Indigenous peoples to be our own authors to produce the literature, the

stories, that need to be shared in order for Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars to better understand Indigenous worldviews and methodologies. When outsiders attempt to retell our stories through their own observations or through witnessing and reproducing stories, ceremonies, and community events through their own lens, most often the meanings get lost in translation.

While investigating the literature about worldview, I found many scholars' work helped me understand and articulate my frustrations with trying to honour my identity by navigating my own Indigenous worldviews while respecting and adhering to the processes of a dominant western worldview. According to Joseph & Joseph,

any Individual within a culture is going to have his or her own personal interpretation of the collective cultural code; however, the individual's worldview has its roots in the culture—that is, in the society's shared philosophy, values, and customs. If we are to understand why Aboriginal and Eurocentric worldviews clash, we need to understand how the philosophy, values, and customs of Aboriginal cultures differ from those of Eurocentric cultures. (2019, p. 25)

While maintaining this notion of understanding, it is important to remember that “the many sovereign Indigenous Nations of Turtle Island have lived here since time immemorial in complex relationships with each other and the lands, waters, plants, and animals within their territories” (Palmater, 2015, p. 1). McGregor reminded us that “we have listened, learned, recorded, and passed on knowledge in our own ways since time immemorial” (2013, p. 57).

In the review of literature about worldview, I wanted to highlight the differences in Indigenous worldviews and the struggle often faced by Indigenous people, having to

always define our work through both worldviews to cater to multiple audiences: “as Aboriginal academics we constantly struggle with the symptoms of power-based relationships where we feel the sting of cognitive imperialism and structural violence” (McGregor, 2013, p. 122). One of the most important aspects of our worldview is that “ceremony is our epistemology and methodology” (McGregor, 2013, p. 38). I have also pulled from the work of Barnhardt and Kawagley (2017) who shared the teaching of a “basic respect for nature and the recognition of the need for ecological balance and sustainability—an approach that Western societies are now struggling to learn” (2017, p. 223). Through work like this and the evolution of elevated and respect for Indigenous voices, we are beginning to see a paradigm shift and acceptance of that shift.

Actions currently being taken by Indigenous peoples in communities throughout the world clearly demonstrate that a significant “paradigm shift” is underway in which Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing are beginning to be recognized as consisting of complex knowledge systems with an adaptive integrity of their own. As the shift evolves, it is not only Indigenous peoples who are beneficiaries, since the issues that are being addressed are of equal significance to non-Indigenous. (Barnhardt and Kawagley, 2017, p. 226)

As I reviewed the literature about worldviews, important contributions that resonated with my work asked questions about ethics, including ownership, control, access, and possession of any research conducted with Indigenous people. Taylor et al. (2005) in their work raised the same questions: “Who owns the research? Who controls the process? Who is involved in implementing the research? Who benefits from the research and, in this case, the ethics review process” (Taylor et al., 2005, p. 95)? They pointed out

a few flaws in the research and proposal process, such as “the intellectual property and privacy rights of participants are not equally protected, or respected” (Taylor et al., 2005, p. 96). Also, “as it currently stands, the UNB policy does not adequately allow for, and does not sufficiently specify, the need to have cultural diversity, nor Indigenous peoples as members of the REB [Research Ethic board]” (Taylor et al., 2005, p. 96). Taylor et al. made the argument that there should be at least one *Wolastoqey* person involved in the review process of research projects:

Given the history of *Wolastoq* First Nations people in the local area, and that UNB operates on land once occupied entirely by *Wolastoq* people, there is certainly right for at least one *Wolastoq* person to review research proposed to be done in historically *Wolastoq* territory. (2005, p. 96)

The work of Taylor et al. (2005) resonated with me because, first of all, I know the authors personally and have had the opportunity to view their work, to process and hear about their experiences, while navigating the research process. Their work is important to me and the work I am doing because many of their concerns are the same that I have thought about. There was much consideration in the process of designing the research process, and I will share what I feel relates directly to the work I am doing in hopes that I can build on this knowledge and its use within my own re-searching ceremony. Another important question raised by Taylor et al. concerned the research question and sub-questions and improving the research experience for participants: “sub questions: how can we improve research experiences for participants? How can we practice the greatest respect for those whose knowledge on which our research depends?” (2005, p. 95).

Further, Taylor et al. provided me with great insight for how we can involve participants in the critique process:

However, we rarely ask participants for their own critiques of the study. By initiating such a survey, we could better respect participants' intelligence, improve our relationships, deepen the significance of the work, and improve how we do social research in the future. (2005, p. 3).

To provide authentic voice from participants, we should include a follow-up with participants so that they are given time to reflect and readdress content. Here is an outline of the questions:

- Have you felt that your knowledge and experiences (culture/traditions) have been honoured?
- What do you think are the strengths of the research experience?
- How could we improve the interview process? What could we do differently?
- Have you felt comfortable throughout the interview(s)? Is there anything we could do to increase your comfort?
- What do you think is fair compensation for your involvement/work?
- Would you be involved again in a similar study? Why or why not?
- Are there any other topics or stories you would like to talk about?
- What would you like done with the recorded stories, language, and knowledge?

(Taylor, Plaice and Perley, 2005, p. 98)

Taylor et al. (2005) put emphasis on the experiences of the participants, and this is so important to me too because we have an ethical obligation in Indigenous research methodologies to ensure that our participants are safe, respected, and involved in the

process with just as much ownership, control, access, and possession to the work. These teachings honour relationality and relational accountability, which are very important pillars to constantly reflect on in the projects. Honouring these teachings will ensure research is done in a respectful and Indigenous way:

Perhaps we will further open up discussion regarding aboriginal participants rights and experiences, and help participants better know the research process, and their role(s) in it. This could even raise interest and appreciation in the research process from communities in which we work, and help to grow a new generation of researchers. (Taylor et al., 2005, p. 98)

This reminds me of Wilson's (2008) words when he said that doing Indigenous research is a constant checking of your heart, which includes a check on our relational accountability and how our participants feel: "while our primary research goal is to actively collect knowledge and information on culture, language, and traditions, perhaps we could also ask questions and collect information on how the participants feel about their part in the research" (Taylor et al., 2005, p. 98). Lastly, it is important that we continue relationships with communities and Elders to ensure the work is living on and making impacts in our communities. It is also important to consider the ways in which our Elders would like to see the work used. Taylor et al. reminded us of this when they share, "Elders with whom we work also have expectations from the research, such as having books or films made with their teachings" (2005, p. 97).

To further thinking in *Wolastoqey* scholarship, I will now review the work of Kress et al. (2019); three co-authors, David Perley, Imelda Perley, and myself are *Wolastoqey* scholars heavily involved in community work, while the other two

co-authors, Margaret Kress and Evelyn Plaice, have contributed significant work in Indigenous education. In a tribute to our *Wolastoqey* territory being unceded and unsurrendered, Kress et al. (2019) ask, “if this is your land, where are your stories?” (p. 1). This work resonated with me because it elevates the important questions and matters. I will be sharing some important passages that have also served as a guide to the re-searching ceremony I have been working in:

Ntokehkikem, Notokehkims “I teach, I learn,” this phrase emphasizes the dual nature of teaching and learning where teaching becomes learning and learning becomes teaching. These are one and the same, coexisting in a fluid relationship between student and mentor, elder and youth, *Wolastoqi* and settler, allies and kin.

...

I teach, I learn explores our journeys into knowledge, and our sharing of wisdom.
(Kress et al., 2019, p. 8)

As I learn this from my Elders, it is important that it contributes to my own work, and I am constantly reminded that knowledge is relational and that it belongs to the collective. Relatedly, Kress et al. (2019) have reminded us that, “for *Wolastoqiyik*, our worldview, oral histories, territories and waters, air, ceremonies, traditions and language form a woven braid of sweet grass” (p. 2). This woven braid of sweetgrass becomes strong as it is woven together with teachings. Such teachings also remind us that, in everything we do, we need to be enacting seven-generation thinking: “for the *Wolastoqiyik*, time is of the essence as our lands and waters, language and culture, are collectively being diluted through the processes of colonial policy and practice, and ultimately through lost stories and the loss of *Wolastoqi* speakers” (Kress et al. 2019, p. 1).

I believe that good, respectful research led by Indigenous people will empower Indigenous people and will assist in the exploring and elevating of our Indigeneity. Kress et al. have shared with us that “Indigeneity is self-governance; it is knowledge and identity, all of which are intellectual, political, energy focused and even radical” (2019, p. 3) and that “*Wolastoqiyik*, or the peoples of the river, call upon their grandmother, *Wolastoq* and the Stone Medicine People of the *Wabanaki* nation to buoy our clan in this awakening, and through reclaiming of Indigeneity” (p. 3).

As we navigate the journey of understanding, Kress et al. (2019) remind us that “the life histories of *Wolastoqiyik* are embodied within our territories, our language, our artifacts, our symbolisms, our ceremonies and our traditions” (p. 6) and also “*Elawsultiyeqpon* refers to the ways in which we lived. The wisdom and the words of our ancestors are carried in the wampum belts and the blood memories of our peoples. This history lives through both oral and written knowledges and in ways we come to know and be” (p. 6). These are important considerations when working within the *Wolastoqey* territory because these teachings have been shared by Elders and scholars not only to guide future research, but also to remind the western minds of the difference in worldviews (Kahakalau, 2004). Much of Indigenous work will not be found in traditional literature reviews, but in the teachings from our Elders and teachings of the land and all of Creation. Our Elders remind us to refer back to our traditional teachings when seeking knowledge and guidance. Kress et al. (2019) taught us that “the resurfacing of *Wolastoqi* blood memory helps our ontologies generate a *Wabanaki* thinking and walking, that which is done in a good way” (p. 3) and “the resurfacing of *Wolastoqey* blood memory

prepares our thinking for an epistemology which honours our ancestors' words and wisdoms, and it empowers our ontologies to move us to a pathway of peace" (p. 5).

In the checking of my heart and through the reminder of the signs and messages from my Ancestors "the recent re-emergence of a petroglyph along Grandmother *Wolastoq* has particular significance as a foreshadowing of the changes to come" (Kress et al., 2019, p. 7). This foreshadowing is also a reminder of the work we need to do and our ethical obligations, not only as Indigenous people, but as children of Mother Earth. When I shared my Spirit Name that I was gifted and its meaning of "one who leads with wisdom and leaves tracks for future generations" (Perley, personal communication, *Wolastoqi*, September 30, 2016), I also shared my responsibility and commitment to live in a good way that honours these teachings. Kress et al. reminded me that "the restoration of our ancestors' wisdoms in our daily lives becomes our earth walk" (2019, p. 7). As an Indigenous scholar, I am reminded that I will always be both teacher and learner: "Ntokehkikem, Notokehkims/I teach, I learn" (Kress et al., 2019, p. 3). Further, "Skicinuwitahasuwakon is the embodiment of our heritage. It is the rebirthing of our ancestral ways through the discovery of the gifts of our land and waters and in the messages of our peoples" (Kress et al., 2019, p. 6) and "the *Wolastoqey* word *Sankewitahasuwawsuwakon* embodies *Sanke* which is 'peace,' *tahas*, which is 'thinking' and *waws*, which is 'life.' Collectively this understanding is an embodiment of peace; a pedagogy of peace for all" (Kress et al., 2019, p. 5).

As I ventured further into the literature about worldview and the scholars who shared their insight into the Indigenous worldview, I became increasingly aware that it is the duty of researchers like myself to always be challenging and making the argument to

make space for the Indigenous worldview. This, as many scholars have professed, can be a daunting task. Carjuzaa and Ruff (2010) shared, “research exists within a system of power. What this means for Indigenous researchers as well as Indigenous activists and their communities is that Indigenous work has to ‘talk back to’ or ‘talk up to’ the power” (p. 226). These challenges Indigenous scholars and communities face are quite different than what other non-Indigenous researchers may face. For example, while I was the lead investigator in putting this work together, I also had to carry other community duties; while working with community members, I had to be relationally accountable as these community members are also family members. There is extra duty and care to ensuring the re-searching ceremony reflects what Indigenous communities want and engaging the community along the process. This particular passage from Carjuzaa and Ruff rings true to me:

Getting the story right and telling the story well are tasks that Indigenous activists and researchers must both perform. There are few people on the ground and one person must perform many roles—activist, researcher, family member, community leader—plus their day job. (2010, p. 226)

Although I stated I was the lead investigator, I also acknowledge that “recognition of ever present issues of power and privilege are necessary for the instructor and student to successfully engage in truly collaborative and reciprocal relationships” (Carjuzaa & Ruff, 2010, p. 75). Further, making space and understandings for connections go beyond human relationships: “many Indigenous scholars emphasize the importance of relationships, not just the current human relationships, but the connection Indigenous peoples have to their ancestors, the future generations, nature, and to the land” (Carjuzaa

& Ruff, 2010, p. 76). My final two points to share from Carjuzaa and Ruff deal with the battle between worldviews and a reminder to non-Indigenous scholars to be respectful and open: “practicing respect demands a negotiation that addresses cultural standards and a repositioning of the instructor from interpreter to listener with an openness to learning from non-dominant perspectives rather than judging based on dominant assumptions” (2010, p. 75). This is an important advancement to the literature on worldviews as it will be helpful to people like myself who are navigating two worlds to conduct, engage, share, learn, and teach about my re-searching process. Carjuzaa and Ruff reiterated this in saying,

The most important responsibility for instructors is a willingness to learn from rather than about those who primarily think and operate from a non-Western epistemological system. This creates opportunities for a re-conceptualization of assessment standards that recognize issues of sovereignty, identity, culture, and place” (2010, p. 75).

In my literature review, while I was considering worldviews and the constant battle and need to articulate the argument for dominant worldviews to be more respectful and inclusive of Indigenous worldviews, I came across the work of Jimmy and Andreotti (2019). I found Jimmy and Andreotti (2019) to be incredibly insightful in their articulation of the very idea of balancing these differing worldviews. Jimmy and Andreotti shared that we “have to know, when and where to use Indigenous literature and when and where to use western canon to build legitimacy and credibility for Indigenous thought and experience” (2019, p. 25) and that “often, we don’t even recognize that the frameworks we use, compromised of desires, intentions, plans, and actions, are the wrong

starting points altogether” (2019, p.8). While examining this work, I was reminded even more of the importance of reflection in the re-searching process. I have learned throughout the process that, even though my intentions were always coming from a good and authentic place, I probably should have challenged more of the process so that it would have better fit the work my community and I are working towards. I think this idea goes back to the duty to always be checking our hearts and what feels right. Sometimes we are guilted or tricked into thinking that our Indigenous ways are not intelligent or advanced enough in a dominant western culture. It is my hope that I, myself, and other Indigenous scholars have this re-awakening that our ways are intelligent and advanced. For me, it was a daily battle, but I have learned to remember that

intellectually we may have the desire to braid, but effectively are still invested in one form of knowledge and way of being that gives us security and pleasure often sourced in highly problematic ways. Loosening these ties is a process of unlearning, of letting go, and of trusting what takes place. (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 93)

Another important aspect of Indigenous worldviews is that we remember that “in Indigenous communities, it also takes several decades for someone to master skills and no one is ever an expert as everyone is continually learning until they die (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 49).

Another resonating point for me is the idea of what it means to be Indigenous—the different parts of being Indigenous that make up our identity. I think it is important for Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people to understand the different layers to

Indigeneity. We are not all the same, and although it is not my intention to create division or privilege some Indigenous people over others, it is important to remember that

for Indigenous people who claim their Indigenous identity later in life, or who can and choose to pass as non-Indigenous, it is also complicated to claim Indigenous spaces without having the experience of struggle, pain and resilience that disenfranchised Indigenous people embody. (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 49)

Many of us have deep and diverse stories to share, but it is important that we are not all grouped together all the time; by this I mean that, if someone has the lived experiences of living in a community and the daily struggles that entails, these voices and stories should be privileged in situations where deep feelings of feeling “less than” are discussed. The other voices are important as well and could be used to support the voices of those who have not been able to “escape” the racism and living conditions that most of the time they have no choice in. Another important reminder from Jimmy and Andreotti is that our work is more focused on the path than the destination—the path is guided by our Ancestors and the Creator:

Dear reader, we invite you to come with us, not knowing where it will lead or if and how we will arrive. The path itself, not the destination, is what will change us—and this is the gift of this journey (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 94)

To conclude the review of literature about worldviews, I thought it would be important to remember that stories are integral to our identity and our worldviews. Stories connect us to the land, which plays a pivotal part in learning about our Ancestors and the direction we must take to honour and revitalize these ways of knowing, being, and doing: “our relatives have taught us that the land gives us specific place names that identify for

us certain landforms and stories to help us find our way” (Goulet & Goulet, 2015, p. 188). This connection to land has been elevated through the work of Tuck and McKenzie: “we became interested not only in how humans perceive or understand places, but also how various aspects of places themselves are manifested as well as influenced through human practices” (2015, p. 100).

When considering stories, Simpson reminded us that “the relationships between the storyteller and the listeners become the nest that cradles meaning” (2011, p. 104) and that we can also learn through and receive responsibilities from our dreams:

But once one has received an important dream, he or she has a responsibility to act on that vision. That responsibility is in essence a treaty we make with the spiritual world when we place our tobacco down and ask for help. (2011, p. 146)

These teaching and responsibilities are gifts and must be treated as such. Wall Kimmerer reminded us that these come to us on their own: “a gift comes to you through no action of your own, free, having moved toward you without your beckoning” (2013, p. 23); and Simpson reminded us that “to build our fire we need vision, intent, collectivization and action” (2011, p. 147).

Decolonizing

While journeying through the literature around decolonization, I reviewed what scholars were saying about decolonization and what their work meant for my re-searching ceremony. I have drawn on many scholars to engage in a discussion about what decolonization is and what it means for this work. Chilisa (2012) described decolonization as “a process of centering the concerns and worldviews of the colonized Other so that they understand themselves through their own assumptions and

perspectives” (p. 18). Tuck advanced this thought by saying, “decolonization brings about repatriation of Indigenous land and life; it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools” (2012, p. 1). Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) added, “where decolonization looks to transform existing institutions, to remake colonial structures in a new image, resurgence is a parallel movement focused on rebuilding and strengthening Indigenous culture, knowledges, and political orders” (p. 224). To further this knowledge, Simpson reminded us there is much deeper work in the area of decolonization that pertains to how we parent and raise our future generations:

If we are truly interested in decolonizing, then we must critically evaluate how we are parenting and educating the next generations because it is one of the few areas of our lives where we can assert a certain degree of control and it is critical to the decolonizing project. We must rethink how our great leaders of the past were made. (2011, p. 127)

Thus, decolonization requires some reflection and emphasis on relationality and re-establishing relationships with all of Creation. Gaudry and Lorenz argued that we must “facilitate a re/connection to the land, language and people of this land” (2018, p. 224). Laenui suggested “five distinct phases of people’s decolonization 1) rediscovery and recovery 2) mourning 3) dreaming 4) commitment 5) action” (2000, p. 150).

A history of change defining the education of Indigenous children has been well documented, and there are many who have contributed to both pedagogy and research. I examined the scholarship of many Indigenous and ally contributors, and I found one of the most influential Indigenous education scholars in *Mi’kmaw* academia—Dr. Marie Battiste, whose work (2000, 2013) has looked at decolonizing education, protecting

Indigenous knowledge, and Indigenizing academia, treaties, narratives, and so much more. Another critical scholar is Dr. Shauneen Pete. Critical to my work is Pete's guidance; through the use of traditional storytelling and processes that support Indigenization within a classroom, she showed the necessity of moving towards decolonization. Shawn Wilson's (2008) work has been integral to my own development in understanding Indigenous research methodologies and methods, helping me to weave together teachings within our *Wolastoqey* cultural protocols as I developed a grounding framework for *Wolastoqey* research methodologies. In examining the work of Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2007, 2012), most notably on decolonizing methodologies, I have gained experience in supporting others from my community who are engaged in research; this has resonated in my alignment with community members, and, in a sense, Smith's work has provided a foundation of both inspiration and cultural grounding within my re-searching journey. I have also learned a great deal through the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2007, 2012) most notably, her work on decolonizing methodologies, which was very culturally grounding and inspired me on my re-searching journey.

Through Dr. Fyre Jean Graveline's scholarship (1998, 2000, 2004) and through my close relationship with her, I have learned so much about being more critical of colonial language, processes, organizations, and the ways in which I myself have been colonized. This relationship with Graveline has influenced my understanding of self and, in turn, deepened my personal relationship with myself and my culture. Her work and teachings have made their way into my work, and I am proud to carry them forward. The voices of Indigenous scholars have inspired me to build on their scholarship and to work towards making the societal shifts that are needed to bring about the changes needed in

education for Indigenous peoples in general and, more specifically, for *Wolastoqey* people and my community of *Welamukotuk*.

As a response to colonization and the endured genocide of our people, language and culture, country-wide calls to action have been made from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, including the following calls to action concerning education:

- We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians;
- We call upon the federal government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education funding for First Nations children being educated on reserves and those First Nations children being educated off reserves;
- We call upon the federal government to prepare and publish annual reports comparing funding for education of First Nations children on and off reserves, as well as educational and income attainments of Aboriginal peoples in Canada compared with non-Aboriginal people;
- We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles;
- We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking post-secondary education; and

- We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2009, pp. 62-65).

On the one hand, the Government of Canada has ethical obligations to address the inequities in education for Indigenous peoples; on the other, Indigenous peoples must work together to empower all Indigenous voices to revitalize our language and cultural ways. This means sharing all work in a circular motion that allows for the inclusion of all voices and, in this particular case, the inclusion of *Wolastoqey* voices. I have taken on the responsibility of filling the gaps in the literature by making the knowledge and teachings accessible and providing opportunities for my community to engage in and contribute to the work in a way that will service our *Welamukotuk* school and children. These kinds of changes can only be done successfully through the inclusion of community voices.

As a result of Indigenizing and decolonizing practices, and as a form of adopting a strongly non-assimilationist stance, Indigenous scholars and leaders have been taking a role in developing Indigenous-relevant curricula (Battiste, 1995). In the process of creating such curricula, ways of knowing need to be understood from many perspectives because ways of knowing in one culture may be very different from those in other cultures. Understanding foundational beliefs is critical because context and meaning-making entail processes that allow meaning-making to expand and contract according to the social, political, historical, and spatial dimensions of individuals, the group, interactions with outsiders, and environmental conditions. Knowledge becomes more than just information or facts, but is taught and learned in certain contexts, in certain

ways, and at certain times. Knowledge is therefore purposeful only to the extent to which it is used; if it is not used, then it is not necessary (Martin, 2003, p. 23). It becomes a new approach to thinking about different (heterogeneous) ways of knowing that takes specific processes and specific contexts into consideration.

Everything we do as Indigenous peoples is rooted in place and built on relationships. These are key foundations to doing respectful research, which non-Indigenous researchers need to learn about before partaking in any research with Indigenous peoples. In the final chapter, I will return to reiterate this understanding because I and others believe that, as we move into an awakening realm of Indigenous research, non-Indigenous researchers must either step aside completely or research collaboratively, complying with our cultural teachings and ethics. Kress (2014) advanced a re-learning for westerners and a place for Indigenous peoples to lead in this decolonizing practice:

As “ways of knowing” (Martin, 2003) are defined through orality, voice and story, Battiste (2014) asserts the principles of research connected to Indigenous knowledges must be intricate to the land, languages, customs, traditions and ceremonies of the peoples. Indigenous peoples own these knowledges and [educators and] researchers are obligated to engage in responsible, respectful practice when accessing and being guided by these knowledges. In order for an outsider or westerner to learn from these knowledge *keepers*, an awareness of, a respect for and an adherence to the protocols and practices found within traditional knowings are imperative. (p. 90)

This is critical to Indigenous learners and researchers because it shows us that our culture is valid and thus being included and respected. As an agent of change, I have been, and in my re-searching ceremony remain, focused on finding the answer to this question—*Keq op acehtasik ihtolikehkimeq kekitasik tokec?*/what societal influences lead to curriculum change? (Bautista, 2015)—while simultaneously taking action to implement culturally relevant forms of change. The short answer is to elevate the voices of those impacted. Our peoples can articulate their experiences and the changes needed; they just need a safe place to share these stories and be an active part of the positive changes.

Movements like Idle No More and Extinction Rebellion are huge societal influences that have promoted change to take place; the coming together of Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations to take a stance against anything that threatens the overall health of the environment and its peoples is transformative. The methodology of social activism can be adapted to fit the idea of the changes required in education by creating a theoretical framework to identify both the change required to have an impact on the wellness of Indigenous learners and the agents necessary to implement and sustain this change. In applying a social change approach that empowers our peoples, we begin to come up with powerful learning tools and inclusive and respectful environments for our *Skcinuwi Kehkimsicik*/Indigenous learners.

I believe we are now in the time of embracing alternative education, culturally relevant pedagogies, and land-based programs. In the creation of such programs with a critical lens, we must evaluate the current dominant western models and document the gaps. A good starting point for myself was to consider my own narratives and experiences: I went through the public school system as an outsider, my ways of knowing

unvalidated and my language and culture not represented (or when represented, inaccurately so). Not only have I lived the experience, but I have also researched it, and I consider myself an activist in addressing and resolving such issues for future generations. Our efforts to decolonize education will require us to look within ourselves to peel away the layers of colonization that dwell within us, to understand our identities on a deeper level that honours the Spirits of our Ancestors and promotes our knowledge. Personally, I honour my Ancestors by carrying my Spirit Name and the responsibilities that the name carries.

Jimmy and Andreotti (2019) have presented what I consider to be groundbreaking knowledge around decolonization and the systemic changes that need to occur in order to arrive at a true state of decolonization. Their work has guided me in my thinking and ideas for future work and has helped me articulate some ideas and feelings I have been having along my re-searching process. As a starting point, it is important that we remember that the process of decolonization must not become the role of only one person or only the Indigenous people at an organization or institution: “unrealistic expectations are put on the Indigenous employee to tackle issues in every aspect of the organization, which often amounts to the expectation that one employee will take on multiple full-time jobs” (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 8). In order to avoid tokenism, we must also remember that hiring or using an Indigenous person as a poster child to create the illusion that an organization or institution is decolonized can also be troublesome: “the mere presence of an Indigenous person is meant to Indigenize and decolonize the public image of the organization” (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 7). For true

decolonization to happen requires us to “interrupt the cycle” (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 9).

I have found Jimmy and Andreotti’s metaphor of construction bricks and knitting threads to be extremely helpful in visualizing decolonization:

A social cartography using the metaphor of construction bricks (transcendence) and knitting threads (immanence) proved very useful in engaging Indigenous artists in conversation about the tensions of working in non-Indigenous institutions and the essential steps that could enable possibilities for new forms of collaboration. Brick sense and sensibilities stand for a set of ways of being that emphasize individually, fixed form and linear time. Where the world is experienced through concepts that describe the form of things and places them systematically in ordered hierarchical structures. Thread sense and sensibilities stand for a set of ways of being that emphasize inter-wovenness, shape-shifting flexibility and layered time. . .where their self-worth is grounded on their connection with something beyond the individual self, but also found within it. Conversely, thread sensibilities are oriented towards relationality. They require that we sense entanglement in order to weave genuine relationships, which will in turn command responsibility for collective wellbeing as grounding force for adequate (new) political and institutional systems. In modern institutions/relationships, which are ordered by brick sensibilities, thread communication and sensibilities tend to be muted/rendered unintelligible. Therefore, those from the thread space who want to be heard in those institutions

need to learn to translate their message into the mode of communication that is legible to the dominant brick sensibility. (2019, pp. 13–16)

Both sides, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, have to be willing to put in the work: “adequate relationships will build adequate capacities to work together” (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 15). Both sides must be ready to face the reality that complications could arise: “this requires patience, humility, generosity and a decision on both parts to take a risk, knowing that it might not work” (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 9). We must also be cautious of the emotional labour that this work has on Indigenous people:

We often demand that marginalized peoples recount or perform their pain for us in order for us to believe them or see our role in causing it. An empathy premised on our ability to relate to or feel other people’s pain is not only conditional, but it also both exploits their pain, and is not a generative space from which to make change and build relationships. We should stop reducing people to their pain, address our own simultaneous discomfort with pain and our fetishization of it in others, and recognize the full spectrum of humanity in all of us, pain just being one dimension. However, we should hold space for individual/collective pain when it emerges. (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 81)

This work contributed to my re-searching ceremony in many ways. Although there is literature about many of the themes I engaged for a literature review, community voice and context play into this, and providing my community voice aims to fill these gaps. Battiste reminded us of this: “although these methodologies vary according to the ways in which different Indigenous communities express their own unique knowledge systems, they [Indigenous methodologies] do have common traits” (2002, p. 2). Lambert (2014)

adds to this point by stating “Indigenous knowledge or epistemology is tribal and place specific and that is one of the first elements of Indigenous research methodologies” (Lambert, 2014, p. 202). In all the work that we do, we need to remain accountable to all our relations, and this sometimes asks us to disrupt our thinking to require further reflection. Strega asked us to reflect on how “we contribute to the conditions creating poverty in our own community” (2015, p. 24). We must be authentic with our intentions and the research must serve our communities; as I have stated many times, the knowledge is relational and our research then belongs to our communities: “in Indigenous communities, knowledge that is acquired from the research is owned by the community” (Lambert, 2014, p. 202). The community can then use the research as they see fit, to serve their needs. Equally important is that the knowledge lives on and is not just stored on a bookshelf. The knowledge is always evolving. The collective work of storying and dreaming will evolve and contribute to the work in ways that serve the community: “Dreaming is most crucial, allows us to dream forward” (Laenui, 2000, p. 5).

Indigenizing

While exploring the literature about Indigenization and further investigating how it pertains to my work, I found the work of Jimmy and Andreotti (2019) to be particularly interesting. What I have noticed along my journey is that the work of Indigenization is usually a directive spearheaded by Indigenous people, and in my experience, the work seems to fall on the shoulders of Indigenous people. While it is important that we lead the work, it will not be as effective as it could be if all stakeholders were to participate and support the work. When navigating between the Indigenous worldviews and the western construct of the university, I often felt alone in advocating for understandings and

challenging the western construct. While I know this is not uncommon for Indigenous people within organizations and institutions, it speaks to the issue of a lack of vested interest in Indigenization:

The Indigenous person feels instrumentalized for an agenda that is still fundamentally colonial in an organization that fails to imagine that other ways of working, collaborating and relating are possible. . . . By creating a continued and controlled space for Indigeneity to be expressed, organizations re-assert their territoriality and normativity. Thus, Indigenous peoples are made to feel like they should perform to expectations, avoid conflict, and feel grateful for being allowed to exist in brick spaces. (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 8, p. 28)

While I reflect on that passage, I can most certainly relate. I can remember times when I had conflicted feelings, when something did not feel right, but at the same time I knew there was an attempt to Indigenize or be more inclusive of Indigenous perspectives, and the idea of being able to sit at that table made me feel as though I should be satisfied with that. Most recently, in receiving feedback on my dissertation from my committee, I felt these same emotions. I received the following feedback: “the committee recognizes that there are tensions between documenting Indigenous knowledges within the norms of western institutions, and although we cannot diminish nor eliminate these, one is required to meet the standards set out by the academy, namely the University of New Brunswick.” When I read this, I had to take a second read, and although I respected that the committee raised this point, I also felt a little discouraged because the underlying message was that the western worldview is still the domain worldview. With that feedback, I did raise my concern and decided to pull back for a few weeks to reflect. After much reflection, I

knew that I could not let this discourage me from my work because the work belongs to my community, and I had to see it move forward for them. I realized, too, that as long as I acknowledged it and expressed my concern and included my thoughts here in this work, maybe that could have an impact on future changes. Or maybe someday another Indigenous student would read my experiences and thought process and it could encourage them.

While this sets in and I allow time for reflection, I also realize that maybe this work will be reviewed by non-Indigenous readers who develop feelings about the experience and perhaps can contribute to making changes. Jimmy and Andreotti have reminded our non-Indigenous supporters of the position they should take in the process of making space for Indigenous worldviews: “don’t try to teach, to lead, to organize, to mentor, to control, to theorize, or to determine where we should go, how to get there and why” (2019, p. 39). Furthermore, for the support to be authentic, Jimmy and Andreotti asked that non-Indigenous allies “do it only if you feel that our pasts, presents and futures are intertwined, and our bodies and spirits entangled” (2019, p. 38). Jimmy and Andreotti (2019) also asked the questions:

- “How much of an effort are you, and others in your organization, willing to put into your own learning (and unlearning)?” (p. 45)
- “How equipped are you to have difficult conversations without relationships falling apart?” (p. 45)
- “In what ways are you taking these complex power relations, and different modes of communication into consideration when you invite an Indigenous perspective?” (p. 47)

- “What kinds of attachments and assumptions might be blocking you from hearing, how might these be related to/rooted in larger colonial patterns, and what is your plan for addressing these blockages, if any?” (p. 47)
- “To what extent are you instrumentalizing and/or appropriating Indigeneity for your own gain?” (p. 48)
- “Are you committed to addressing the individual and group conflicts and anxieties that will probably arise?” (p. 49)
- “What practices of engagement might enable relationships to be maintained even in moments of conflict?” (p. 50)
- “Do you recognize that it may be only through long-term engagement and relationship building that difficult and uncomfortable, but meaningful and important conversations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people might become possible?” (p. 48)
- “How can you ensure strategies don’t rely on Indigenous peoples’ emotional labour?” (p. 50)
- “Which Indigenous perspectives are present and which ones are absent?” (p. 54)

All of the above are important considerations, reflection points, and questions that should be asked in the spirit of authentic Indigenization. Jimmy and Andreotti (2019) also shared that “experiences of Indigeneity cannot be conflated” (p. 53) and that “these are not concepts but lived practices” (p. 74). I ask that my readers take all of this into consideration, and I remind the readers and examining committee that with this work, we are in ceremony. This means respecting it as such and not privileging western worldviews

over Indigenous. Instead of evaluating through a western lens and trying to make the work fit, take a step back, reflect, and accept the invitation into this sacred ceremony.

I have found Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) to be helpful in exploring Indigenization, particularly when they share “Indigenization is a three-part spectrum, on one end is Indigenous inclusion, in the middle reconciliation Indigenization, and on the other end decolonial Indigenization” (p. 218). Within their work, I found many helpful teachings that I have infused into the work of weaving a *Wolastoqey* resurgence in education for my community. Gaudry and Lorenz explained reconciliation Indigenization as

a vision that locates Indigenization on common ground between Indigenous and Canadian ideals, creating a new, broader consensus on debates such as what counts as knowledge, how should Indigenous knowledges and European-derived knowledges be reconciled, and what types of relationships academic institutions should have with Indigenous communities. (2018, p. 219)

Decolonial Indigenization “envisions the wholesale overhaul of the academy to fundamentally reorient knowledge production based on balancing power relations between Indigenous peoples and Canadians, transforming the academy into something dynamic and new” (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 219).

In dealing with the challenges present in academic institutions, “many Indigenous scholars, for instance, argue for an Indigenization that provokes a foundational, intellectual, and structural shift in the academy, requiring the wholesale overhaul of academic norms to better reflect a more meaningful relationship with Indigenous nations” (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 218). Part of this deals with Indigenous inclusion: “Indigenous inclusion is a policy that aims to increase the number of Indigenous students,

faculty, and staff in the Canadian academy” (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 218). This means more than just the recruiting of Indigenous students, faculty, and staff:

The Canadian academy has rhetorically adopted an aspirational vision of reconciliation Indigenization but is in fact largely committed to Indigenous inclusion; in essence, post-secondary institutions are attempting to merely increase the number of Indigenous people on campus without broader changes. (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 219)

The other part to this, in fact, deals with engaging both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to implement changes in the system that value Indigenous worldviews. This does not mean making changes to help us fit into their world, but rather making changes to help us co-exist in a space that honours Indigenous worldviews and sees them as equally important as western worldviews:

The academy typically perceives that we come with a deficit in our preparation for higher learning, so they must develop special programs to help us fit into their world. . . . Postsecondary education has generally expected that Indigenous students and faculty leave their ontological and epistemological assumptions and perceptions at the gates of the university, to assume the trappings of a new form of reality. (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 220)

In their discussion on Indigenization, Nadeau and Jackson (2014) affirmed that “embodied decolonization and Indigenization begins with facilitating relationships with family, community, and land” (p. 77) and that “Indigenous knowledge systems are the heartbeat of Indigenous methodologies” (p. 70). Much like this re-searching ceremony, Indigenization and decolonization are also ceremonies. There is an acknowledgment that

there are ceremonial protocols and practices that organizations and institutions must adhere to. What that means for this re-searching ceremony is that the community voice needs to be heard and respected. Because I am the lead in this ceremony, it is my duty to ensure that these voices are respected and that I voice the concerns of the community to more than ears—to an open heart, Spirit, mind, and body. It is important to note that protocols, although similar in nature, can vary from community to community: “our process combines enacting protocols in partnership with local communities and elders, with making space—not taking space—for oral traditions of the territory” (Nadeau & Jackson, 2014, p. 74). With making space, we must also do so for experiences and ceremonies that the dominant worldview may not entirely understand or respect as ways of knowing, being and doing, such as “dream tradition and inward knowings as well as the role of myth, story, and spirit” (Nadeau & Jackson, 2014, p. 70), with a “commitment to centring the body in the process of decolonization and Indigenization along with an affirmation of bodily wisdom and experience as critical component of Indigenous methodologies” (Nadeau & Jackson, 2014, p. 77). These teachings are reiterated in my sharing of teaching on relationality and our interconnectedness to all things, including relations to Spiritual, dreams, and visions. These teachings relate to my Sacred Medicine Wheel model that will be presented in the next chapter. The work by Nadeau and Jackson has grounded my project, providing the framework of relationality for weaving a *Wolastoqey* resurgence in education.

Another key contributor to the work about Indigenization that I found helpful in guiding my work in *Welamukotuk* is Pete (2016), who introduced 100 ways to Indigenize and decolonize. Pete shared the following definition of Indigenization:

The transformation of the existing academy by including Indigenous knowledges, voices, critiques, scholars, students and materials as well as the establishment of physical and epistemic spaces that facilitate the ethical stewardship of a plurality of Indigenous knowledges and practices so thoroughly as to constitute an essential element of the university. It is not limited to Indigenous people, but encompasses all students and faculty, for the benefit of our academic integrity and our social viability. (Pete, 2016).

It is refreshing, encouraging, and empowering to up-and-coming scholars like myself to see the contributions that scholars like Pete have made to Indigenous scholarship. As I have been taught by my Elders, it is important to stand on the shoulders of our Ancestors, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and scholars to carry their work forward. From Pete's list of 100 ways to decolonize, I found the following to be relevant to the needs of my nation:

- “Key priority areas that include student success, community engagement and research impact.” (p. 1)
- “Promote the inclusion of diverse parties in the process of academic program reform (i.e. local Indigenous educators, Elders, students, faculty colleagues from FNUniv, Indigenous alumni, and community members)—addressing governance early on may ensure that academic programming reform reflects the priorities, interests, concerns, and experiences of local Indigenous peoples.” (p. 2)
- “Review your academic program. Consider how Indigenous programs are administered and delivered through the structures of Departments, Faculties and Colleges. (student support, capable and committed supervisors).” (p. 3)

- “Develop and sustain programmatic approaches to the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges.” (p. 3)
- “Prepare a Faculty response to allegations that Indigenous content somehow diminishes the perception of a quality higher education.” (p. 3)
- “Indigenous peoples seek skills, knowledge and experiences which will support their leadership toward community resiliency and nationhood.” (p. 4)
- “Recognize that Indigenizing our teaching is not just about culturally relevant teaching; Indigenizing our teaching aims to challenge the dominant narratives about our collective histories, contemporary aspirations, and challenges. Indigenizing our teaching is also about supporting Indigenous peoples and community’s goals for self-determination and sovereignty.” (p. 5)
- “Deconstruct the construct of racism.” (p. 5)
- “Deconstruct the neutrality of whiteness.” (p. 5)
- “Actively challenge racism, Eurocentrism and dominant assumptions of knowledge, voice, quality and delivery of academic programs.” (p. 6)
- “Disrupt the idea that Indigenous ways of knowing are subordinate to dominant ways of knowing.” (p. 6)
- “Consider the role that elders and traditional knowledge keepers can play in course reform and delivery.” (p. 6)
- “Consider the role that ceremony may play in your course design, and Department/Faculty norms.” (p. 7) (Pete, 2016)

Finally, in this section on Indigenization, I found the work about Indigenizing education by Pete, Schneider, and O’Reilly (2013) to be a significant contribution to the field. I

have come to better understand my responsibility to build on the work they have done, and I have used their teachings to frame my community context and the work we are carrying forward. As I have become more familiar with the work of Indigenous scholars throughout Turtle Island and the world, I have learned to embody a sense of pride and to take a firm stance in doing the work we need to do in my territory and doing it unapologetically. The following passage shared by Pete, Schneider, and O'Reilly (2013) resonated with me because it validated my own feelings in doing the same: "I have unapologetically re-centered Indigenous knowledge ways, privileged Indigenous scholars in my resource selections, structured learning activities and designed courses to ensure that my students will learn to teach Indigenous children and youth more effectively" (p. 101). Pete, Schneider, and O'Reilly (2013) had many points to share on what Indigenizing education, their teaching, and their classrooms looks like:

- "Indigenizing my teaching is about resistance and persistence: resistance to the colonizing tendency to erase First Nations peoples; and doing my part to support the persistence of Indigenous peoples and their ways of knowing." (p. 103)
- "Indigenizing works hand in hand with decolonizing. It's not enough to challenge both colonial and colonizing curricula, we must also recognize that it's about affirming the relevance of Indigenous knowledge." (p. 103)
- "Indigenizing education is about re-centering Indigenous knowledge ways in the core of our instructional practices." (p. 103)
- "Indigenizing my teaching is about relationships, curriculum choice, anticipating and correcting racism and it's also about pedagogy." (p. 103)

- “Indigenizing your teaching means going even further. It means getting to know your students as people and through your relationships you’ll also learn about their families—their aunts, cousins and grandparents. It also means allowing them to learn about you and your relatives.” (p. 105)
- “Indigenizing my teaching is about expecting and confronting racism.” (p. 108)
- “claiming Indigenous knowledge in the classroom is about affirming the relevance of Indigenous knowledge in the disciplines we teach.” (p. 103)
- “the inclusion of stories is an act of resistance to the dominant constructions of First Nations identities.” (p. 110)

Weaving Rather Than Building

Weaving is an Indigenous way of creating. Weaving is similar to the process of braiding; it is the bringing together of all aspects: “Braiding is not an endpoint, but rather an ongoing and emergent process” (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 22). Jimmy and Andreotti defined weaving and braiding as

a practice yet-to-come located in space in-between and at the edges of bricks and threads, aiming to calibrate each sensibility towards a generative orientation and inter-weave their strands to create something new and contextually relevant, while not erasing differences, historical and systemic violences, uncertainty, conflict, paradoxes and contradictions. (2019, p. 21)

Jimmy and Andreotti also stated that

braiding is premised on respecting the continued internal integrity of both the brick and the thread orientations, even as neither side is static or homogenous, and

even as both sides might be transformed in the process of braiding. Braiding opens up different possibilities for engagement. (2019, p. 22).

Like being in ceremony, engaging in braiding and weaving requires openness:

Before braiding can happen: (1.) A deep understanding of historical and systemic harms and their snowball effects needs to become common sense, and not something to be avoided, dismissed, or minimized out of fear of hopelessness, guilt or shame; (2.) a language that makes visible the generative and non-generative manifestations of bricks and threads needs to be developed, without becoming rigid, prescriptive or accusatory; (3.) a set of principled commitments towards the long-haul of this process needs to be in place, including a commitment to continue the work even/especially when things become difficult and uncomfortable” (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 23).

As we weave our resurgence in education, we are open to the process and opening up with a sense of vulnerability. Relationality in terms of weaving also means “the quality of the process and the outcomes will depend on the quality of the weaving of relationships and this weaving depends on people engaging in good faith, being open to the unexpected and allowing themselves to be transformed” (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 58). It is my hope that we continue to advance the area of Indigenous literature, particularly relationality, so that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can understand the importance of developing and maintaining respectful relationships. This is essential to the preserving and resurgence of our Indigenous language and culture. Jimmy and Andreotti echoed this by saying, “decisions made together in mutually defined process that centres the people impacted (in terms of decision and power); collective accountability; attention

to different sensibilities” (2019, p. 34). It is these respectful relationships that will begin the process of healing and moving forward, as Jimmy and Andreotti (2019) shared: “working towards braiding is about working towards the possibility of a very different way of being together that requires the interruption of the dominant colonial habits of being” (p. 69) and doing so carefully, “moving slowly while healing together, different temporality and negotiated idea of forward” (p. 32).

In conducting a literature review through both western and Indigenous methods, I explored Indigenous languages, worldviews, decolonizing, Indigenizing, relationality, and weaving rather than building as important reference points. Through this exploration, I framed my own literature review question for each of the themes. Particularly, I was interested in evaluating contributions that many scholars have shared and advancing how they could apply to me and my nation. I explored many scholars and their recognition of the distinctiveness of Indigenous worldviews. All of these teachings have provided great insight into the work we are doing in *Welamukotuk* and the continuing work of weaving a *Wolastoqey* resurgence in education. I believe the future direction this research should take is implementing and weaving community voices, as our Elders tell us that all of our answers we seek are within, and that to find them we need to return to our cultural realm and nurture our learning Spirits. What I would like to reiterate most from this review of the scholarship is that Indigenous communities must be given authority, space, and resources to articulate their own needs, and that where collaborations with non-Indigenous researchers are required, they must have done their part to research the local protocols and needs of the Indigenous communities. There are improved methodologies, and they emphasize community collaborations with the community in the lead. Our

Indigenous communities know what we need, so our work is in addressing the needs to make time and space for Indigenous voices. Grande (2004) shared,

I was acutely aware of the presence of difference, especially in school. While I lacked the vocabulary to name the injustices I endured as “institutional racism,” I found school to be dull, spiritless, and deeply irreverent to the life and experiences of Indigenous peoples. (p. 4)

As we move in this direction, it is important to consider that “working towards different kinds of relationships will require humility, surrender of control, and an intention to stay with and learn from the difficult moments” (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 71). We need to be acutely aware of the emotional labour this work has for Indigenous peoples, as Strega shared: “what I failed to consider was the emotional impact of listening and sharing stories when the characters are family” (2015, p. 193). This work is a co-learning journey, as Marshall et al. shared: “acknowledge that we need each other and must engage in a co-learning journey” (2015, p. 2). Jimmy and Andreotti added to this by highlighting the importance of being cognizant of and sensitive to differences: “Further, we ask how we can adjust braiding work to be more cognizant of and sensitive to these differences and their implications for building relationships” (2019, p. 87). In the closing of this section, I will leave you with a quote from Jimmy and Andreotti: “Everything we learn or unlearn is one small part of a large metabolism that both nurtures us and unburdens us” (2019, p. 93).

Chapter 3

Ntahcuwi Minuwapotomon Nkisi Mawolukhotiyeq Skicinuwiwkuk/

Re-Methodology: Re-Searching a Community Process

When you ask Elders the question—“how would you explain *Wabanaki* worldviews?”—most Elders, like many of mine, will say that you must answer that question on your own. You likely will not find the answer in any textbook or article. You will find the answer in living through your culture, speaking in your languages, and practicing ceremonies (Elder Clarence “Timer” Atwin, personal communication, 2018).

I never imagined being an academic. I went to university because that was what I was told I had to do, and I did not have a choice in the matter. At times, I felt resentment towards my mother for being the voice of authority and forcing me into university. Luckily, I was able to realize she was doing this from a place of love for me, and she clearly knew what my journey would be before I came to understand myself. In addition to the push from my mom, I had my father tell me before he died that he wanted me to get educated. I also had many other people encourage me along the journey, and many people inspired me. In hindsight, I can see they all had pivotal roles in keeping me on track and motivating me to meet success. My first degree was the hardest because I had a different mindset in those years. I am forever grateful for the support, encouragement, and—to put it candidly—the swift kick in the ass from my mother. At its foundation, my education is relational. At their foundations, *Wabanaki* worldviews are relational.

If I never envisioned the path of academia, I certainly never imagined myself doing research. I had reservations about research and how it seemed like another colonial

form of controlling our peoples in a way that gave the researcher the power and authority to dictate the research agenda, how the research would be conducted and what would be done with the findings. I still have some caution about research and researchers with regard to ethical obligations and authority. It was not until I was asked to be a part of a research project that I began to see how it could be a tool to elevate the voices of Indigenous peoples and contribute to positive change as we move into an era of healing for our peoples. As scholars such as Susan Strega (2015) have noted, researchers have had a shameful history with Indigenous peoples. However, many Indigenous scholars have pointed out that, if done ethically, using Indigenous research methodologies, and in collaboration with Indigenous peoples, with Mother Earth at the centre of all inquiries, research can be healing for our peoples. For this reason, I decided to pursue higher education and work with my community to determine what would be a useful research project for our community. This process involved allowing me to step out of an authoritative role and really consult and listen to the voices of my community. I knew that I did not have to go searching for a research project. Rather, everything my community had been sharing with me over the years in my capacity as a leader applied as a research starting point with them involved.

I shared this understanding over dinner with Dr. Kress, my supervisor, and Drs. Marie Battiste and James Youngblood Henderson. Through deep discussion they helped me bring life to the ideas and voices of my community. This conversation was critical to the forming of the research objective that then guided the community in developing the important questions they were seeking to answer for our future generations. Elder Dr. Imelda Perley shared important teachings with me that carry a

cultural context throughout this work—specifically, why I chose to do things a certain way or why I hold Elder knowledge and guidance in a higher regard than some academic work. Also, it is very important that I share that most of the scholars I highlight in this work are themselves Indigenous, Elders, advocates, agents of change, mentors, and key people in this field. Elder Dr. Imelda Perley teaches us that we are always a teacher and a learner. Kehkimsicik / Education in our *Wolastoqey* language refers to this idea of I teach / I learn and the circular motion that keeps us in a continuous mode of learning, sharing, and teaching. Elder Dr. Imelda Perley has given me gentle reminders to always stay culturally grounded in this work; this whole process for me has been a reminder that I teach and I learn throughout. She has also reminded me that this work is a ceremony always, and we are related and accountable to all our relations while on this journey and forever.

In honouring the circular notion of teaching and learning, we are reminding ourselves to remain open to learning at every stage of our lives. In decolonizing and revitalizing education, we are making space to return to our cultural realm which is a place where we always operate with an open mind, heart Spirit and body to the many ways in which teachings, visions, dreams, and our ancestors continue to teach us through. The process of decolonizing becomes a very intimate relationship and process with oneself and a returning to our indigeneity. Through this process, we learn about our ancestors, we accept and commit to our responsibilities as Indigenous people and we plan, work and dream for the future seven generations. It is this seven generational thinking and acting that begins to inspire cultural revitalization and a return to our true identities. Therefore, I teach / I learn reminds us of this relationship between the

awakening of our Spirit, our identities while learning from our ancestors and teaching our communities- in a way that honours both the teacher and learner in all of us.

After reading the work of established scholars on the challenges of decolonizing and revitalizing Indigenous education and after talking with people in my community, I began the process of understanding the key principles in doing Indigenous research and developing a re-searching methodology that would allow me to contribute to decolonizing and revitalizing K–12 education in my home community of *Welamukotuk* / Oromocto First Nation and make it once again *Wolastoqey*-centred. Important were the teachings from an Indigenous perspective of Marie Battiste and Shawn Wilson, *Mi'kmaq* and *Cree* scholars, respectively, the idea of “two-eyed seeing” from Murdena and Albert Marshall, *Mi'kmaq* knowledge keepers, and the importance of Indigenous stories from Joseph Bruchac, a *Nulhegan Abenaki* storyteller. I also drew on the insights of Grace Getty, a settler nursing scholar who has worked with *Mi'kmaw* men on community-based participatory action research. She reflected on her “journey between Western and Indigenous research paradigms,” (Getty, 2010, p. 7) which helped me understand how postcolonial theory could provide “a lens through which to examine underlying issues of power and the structural and historical institutions that benefited from the domination” (Getty, 2010, p. 7). Getty acknowledges that many Indigenous scholars have been suspicious of postcolonial theory because it appears to be yet another way in which western researchers maintain control over the research that is related to Indigenous peoples and communities (Getty, 2010). Indigenous people understand through our everyday lived experiences that there is nothing “post” about colonial relations in Canada today; colonial powers of domination are alive and well and still greatly impacting our

lives. But by applying the “two-eyed seeing” of the Marshalls, I could appreciate Getty’s work.

Taken together, these scholars and others guided me in developing a proactive research plan that included my community. The other part of my research plan was to think intentionally about how to decolonize my work. For this task, I relied particularly on Leslie Brown and Susan Strega (2015), Margaret Kovach (2009), and Bryan Brayboy (2012) who underscore in their work the critical obligation that researchers have to put Indigenous people at the centre of all Indigenous research. This centring of Indigenous peoples as agents of research within their communities is a shift in power in terms of who decides what gets researched and what the outcome should be. As *Lumbee* educator Bryan Brayboy notes:

Indigenous scholars have been calling for Indigenous communities to (re)claim research and knowledge-making practices that are (1) driven by Indigenous peoples, knowledges, beliefs, and practices; (2) rooted in recognition of the impact of Eurocentric culture on the history, beliefs, and practices of Indigenous peoples and communities; and (3) guided by the intention of promoting the anticolonial or emancipatory interests of Indigenous communities. (Brayboy, 2012, p. 1)

At the same time, these same scholars aim to educate communities about how to identify research that does not come from a place of good intentions and does not work to honour the goal of contributing to or bringing about positive change for Indigenous people and communities (Strega, 2015).

This scholarship also affirmed what I knew from long experience—that western education too often assumes, notwithstanding any acknowledgment of two-eyed seeing, that Indigenous graduate students should put a patch over our Indigenous eye so as to keep the western eye focused on western paradigms. Recognizing that danger, I created my own Sacred Medicine Wheel in which I symbolically capture the teachings of different scholars that are particularly important to me, a visual tool that became a mnemonic device to reground me when I felt pulled too far towards western paradigms. In this chapter, I explain how I developed a methodology for educational research in my community, beginning with the scholarly teachings I drew on to compose my Medicine Wheel and my initial methodology, how to assure at the outset that my methodology was Indigenized. In the second part, I explain how I strove to assure that the research methodology was decolonized and would facilitate further decolonization in my community. In the last part, I discuss how I introduced my methodology to my community members and adapted it so I could incorporate them as *Mawi Nucikahsicik* / co-researchers.

Defining an Indigenous Methodology

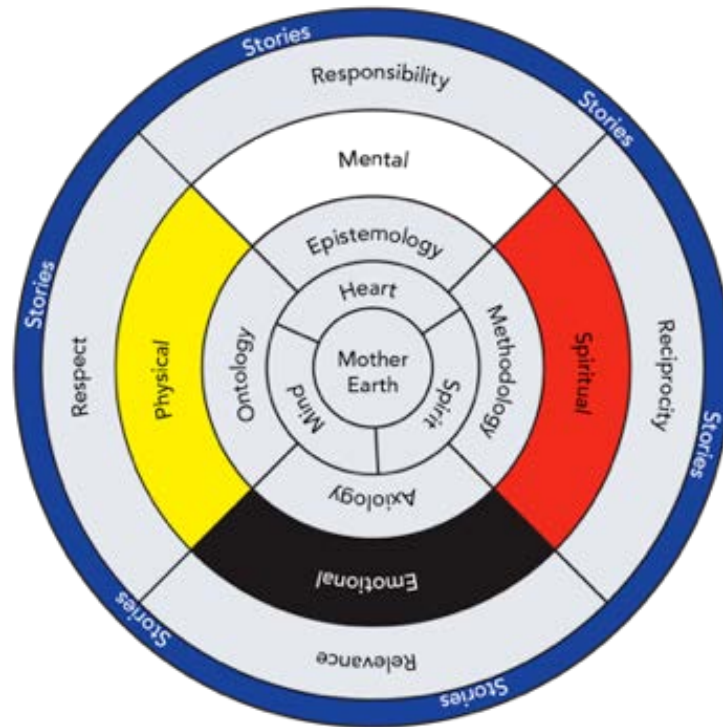
My Sacred Medicine Wheel represents the key tenets of Indigenous methodology as I use them, a personal reminder of how to be in a harmonious relationship with my Indigenous teachings while also maintaining academic status. It offers a tribute to those scholars who preceded me and worked tirelessly to make a place for Indigenous knowledges within the academic world, a reminder to myself that I work in community with Indigenous scholars across Turtle Island, as well as many in other parts of the world. I acknowledge that some Indigenous scholars have concerns about the use of Medicine

Wheel teachings, because they initially originated from peoples from the Prairies and Plains of Turtle Island. But the Medicine Wheel as used in Indigenous scholarship provides a way to emphasize that our healing from a half millennium of imperialism depends on reintegrating key elements of each of our cultural teachings. Thus, I have actively chosen to weave together teachings that would be helpful as a guide to this researching and healing work in my community. Scholars such as Graveline (1998), Perley et al. (2016) and Wilson (2008), amongst others, have guided me in this process of honouring the Medicine Wheel as a model of circular knowledge that has transferred itself from physical entity to a spiritual guide of Indigenous wisdom.

At the centre of my Medicine Wheel is Mother Earth, a reminder of *Wolastoqey* beliefs that “Mother Earth provided us with the original lesson plans and provides us with everything we needed to learn about this thing called life.” As Chief Shelley Sabattis reminded me, “These are teachings and experiences that you could never get out of a textbook.” Initially, I had placed the *Wolastoqey* people and communities at the centre, but influenced by the work of Dr. Fyre Jean Graveline, a Métis (*Cree*) educator whom I call Mama Bear, I have placed Mother Earth at the centre (Graveline, 2018). Mother Earth is responsible for all of Creation. Keeping a respectful relationship with her promotes respectful relationships with all of Creation. Our Indigenous people, their futures, and the well-being of Mother Earth must always be at the core of the research being conducted with Indigenous communities.

Figure 1

Sacred Medicine Wheel



Encircling, or hugging, Mother Nature are “mind”, “heart”, and “Spirit.” Jo-Ann Archibald of the *Stó:lo* Nation in British Columbia advises us that we should always listen with an open mind, open heart, and an open Spirit (Archibald, 2008). Similarly, Wilson emphasizes that in doing research as Indigenous scholars, we must honour all of our relations, including Mother Earth and the cosmos (Wilson, 2008). The words “Mind,” “Heart,” and “Spirit,” remind me that to do good research with my community, my mind is not enough; I also need to approach my research through my heart and my Spirit. These words remind me to be kind with myself and with others. To remain ethical and accountable, we must embody the same respect for all of Creation, honouring the

interconnectedness of all. This spiritual connectedness, the connecting with the heart and mind, is a form of accountability that is not acknowledged within western academic worlds and may be difficult to translate into research proposals and practices in ways that are understood and validated. Depicting it in my Medicine Wheel gave me a way to remind myself of the importance of this principle of maintaining the connections among heart, mind, and Spirit.

Drawing again from the teachings of Wilson, I then encircled the mind, heart, and Spirit with “axiology, epistemology, ontology, and methodologies.” Wilson explains that “these beliefs include the way that we view reality (ontology), how we think about or know this reality (epistemology), our ethics and morals (axiology) and how we go about gaining more knowledge about reality (methodology)” (2008, p. 13). Taken together, that “entire circle is an Indigenous research paradigm . . . Its entities are inseparable and blend from one into the next (emphasis added).” It has no forward or backward and no isolation. This circle also reminds me of the challenges of “two-eyed seeing,” of working in both Indigenous and western worlds, as explained by the Marshalls, while at the same time assuring me that I am using a decolonized methodology. In depicting ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology as connected, each circling back with the others, I could remind myself to avoid the tendency of many aspiring young scholars, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, of separating ontology and axiology from epistemology and methodology. We are often told in university that our view of reality, our ontology, and our ethics and morals, our axiology, do not fit within western approaches to research, in other words, western epistemology and methodology, which can have the effect of re-colonizing our research. To complete our degrees, we often

conform to that standard. At the graduate level, when Indigenous students are learning to be professional researchers, keeping our ontology and axiology connected to epistemology and methodology becomes a central challenge and responsibility (Wilson, 2008, p. 70), a central way to remind myself of the responsibility to enact decolonization. It became important for me to have a way to see that imperative in my Medicine Wheel.

The circle that surrounds Wilson's "Indigenous research paradigm" of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology is made up of mental, physical, emotional, and Spiritual quadrants. In this circle I think of the teachings of Frye Jean Graveline who as a Métis (Cree) situates herself between Indigenous and western worldviews: "I am located in the intersection of Aboriginal and western cultures. I walk with one foot in both worlds" (1998, p. 80). Throughout this work, I have sought to demonstrate this idea of balancing the relationship between Indigenous and western worldviews for the purpose of conducting respectful and meaningful research. This circle reminds me of David Perley (2007) and Dr. Imelda Perley's (personal communication, January 18, 2018) reminder that in every decision we make as Indigenous peoples, we need to nurture all four aspects of our being – mental, physical, emotional, and Spiritual – and keep each of them strong, rather than emphasizing one at the expense of the others. The relationship among them promotes a healthy balance in decision making and day-to-day existence.

The ring surrounding the four quadrants holds the Four Rs shared by Archibald: "respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility" (2008, p. 1). While I have used Archibald's words in this part of the Medicine Wheel, I also was drawing on the work of the Botswanan scholar of Indigenous research methods, Bagele Chilisa. She visualizes her research paradigm as composed of three connected pillars, which I think of like a

frame for a tent. One pillar is the theoretical framework, one relevant literature, and one research practice. These three pillars need to be built from appropriate assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge, value systems, and ethical principles, which resonate with Wilson's Indigenous research paradigm. Additionally, Chilisa (2012) discusses how accountability is achieved, and captures them in her 4 Rs, "respectful representation, reciprocity, rights, and responsibilities."

I also draw on material from *Research Is Ceremony*, in which Wilson shared the 3 Rs he sees as critical to healthy relationships and relational accountability: respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. Wilson has helped me to think about the different components of relational accountability: "building relations with people, relations with the environment/land, relations with the cosmos and relations with ideas" (2008, p. 80). Further, we can begin to understand relationality as being the heart of what it means to be Indigenous. Through interconnectedness and interrelationships with all of Creation, we can begin to understand Indigenous worldviews and research methodologies. In the evolution of this work, it has become increasingly clear that relationality has become its framework with the 3 Rs shared by Wilson, the 4 Rs shared by Chilisa and the 4 Rs shared by Archibald, all powerfully informing my own research approach (Wilson, 2008; Chilisa, 2012; Archibald, 2008).

The outside ring of the Medicine Wheel represents our stories, the soul of most Indigenous research paradigms, including mine. Stories are listened to and told from the mind, the heart, and Spirit. Stories are who we are as *Wolastoqiyik*. In listening to stories, we braid together the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual parts of ourselves. With these teachings and aspects of listening braided together, we can begin to understand

fully all the teachings of how a story that can be expressed in multiple ways. First, hearing is a sensory process, as well as a mental process; therefore, I view hearing as engaging processes of both the body and mind. The traditional art of storytelling is very embodied (with hand gestures, voice tone, and facial expressions); it is also embodied in that much of what we are empowered to tell relates to our direct lived or embodied experience, which some storytellers describe in such physical terms that we could be experiencing it within our own bodies through visual metaphors, sounds, smells, etc. With these embodied experiences in focus for the active role of listening to stories, they situate the body to be involved also.

In Indigenous research, stories are also the transition between research planning and research application. The teachings shared by Kovach (2009) and Smith (2012) remind us that the fluidity of stories honours Indigenous forms of ontology, axiology, epistemology, and methodology. Stories leave space for any Indigenous group to make a research methodology into a re-searching, a revitalization, of their specific knowledge systems; they can help guide culturally specific research, which in my case is *Wabanaki*, and more locally, *Wolastoqey*. Thus, my ontology, axiology, epistemology, and methodology take form through the speaking of and listening to *Wolastoqey* knowledges, *Wolastoqey* stories.

A common thread throughout the scholarship on Indigenous research methodologies is that the participants are not subjects to be researched; rather, they are honoured with *Mawi Nucikahsicik* / co-researcher roles. This powerful approach provides a more equitable distribution of power and authority within a research project, in alignment with relational accountability. Wilson shared with us one of the teachings he

had from a close colleague: “Wombat talks about deeper and contextual relationships in her research. It is all about forming a relationship at a different level than we are accustomed to in our everyday lives” (2008, p. 113). Wombat’s observation about relationships is key to Indigenous methodologies because it warns researchers to be prepared to step out of dominant western models. Understanding the principles of relationships in Indigenous worldviews is a crucial process that not only will promote healthy research but will also help the researcher grow as a person. Affirming these principles, a critical part of decolonization, was also a critical step for me as I applied my methodology to the actual re-searching, the storytelling with my community.

Applying anti-oppressive research with integrity means committing to social justice and taking an active role in social change, a process that requires a shift in thinking and, more importantly, a shift in power regarding how research is carried out. Further, it includes critically analyzing how oppression occurs through the various activities and social practices in which conventionally trained western researchers engage (Strega, 2015, p. 15). Engaging in anti-oppressive research requires researchers to challenge the dominant western research ideas and processes and to bring voice to those whose lives and experience are being researched and who usually have been left voiceless. There must be a relationship between Indigenous peoples and the research process. When working with an anti-oppressive methodology, western researchers should ask themselves the questions: Who determines the questions to ask in our research? Who determines if the questions are worth asking? Who are all the parties involved and what do all stand to gain or lose in the research? What will be done with the knowledge when the research is completed? Another important aspect of anti-oppressive research is to

“ensure equitable distribution of any money, credit, and direct benefits generated by the research group” (Strega, 2015, p. 19). Anti-oppressive research requires critical reflexivity and relational accountability from the researcher to the people or communities being studying. The people being researched should be engaged from the outset as active participants in the research, so to promote a sense of ownership of the research for all the people involved.

Any aspiring anti-oppressive researcher must also be prepared for the uncomfortable exploration of their underlying motivations and intentions. It requires us to have “a critical analysis of colonialism and an understanding of western scientific research as a mechanism of colonization” (Strega, 2015, p. 4). When I undertook this exploration, I realized that I must acknowledge that I have much to gain from conducting this research, including learning the process of conducting research and gaining credit for the research conducted within my doctoral program. Through this self-discovery, I realized that to honour our cultural teachings I must give back and that my *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, my co-researchers, must have just as much or more to gain from the research than I have. For the research to be foundational in my community, the *Mawi Nucikahsicik* needed to participate in developing the research questions, deciding on the research goals, and determining what would happen with the results when the research was completed. For my community, this research was not to be linear—ideally, it would not have a start and a finish; rather, it would become part of a living quest that will continue to give back to my community and Indigenous peoples.

Through this learning journey, I had to understand and then interpret what the scholarly literature might mean from a *Wolastoqey* perspective. Understanding

Indigenous methodologies is not as easy as I first thought. As a person with an Indigenous lived experience and educational background, I had thought it would be relatively easy to develop and apply an Indigenous methodology to my research. What I had not considered was the ways in which I have been colonized and the influences of western worldviews. I had to think carefully about the relationship between a researcher and an Indigenous community so that I was actively applying a decolonized research methodology rather than lapsing into a western research framework.

Thankfully, many Indigenous researchers have written about their own struggles and their words can guide me. John R. Sylliboy, for example, completed his research through a critical race theory lens, but he applied a *L'nuwey* / Indigenous lens to explore his own personal narrative, for himself and for other *Wabanaki* people who identified as Two-Spirited or LGBTQ. His *L'nuwey* and Two-Spirited lenses served as counterweights to “dominant ideologies by challenging cultural paradigms that oppress marginalized peoples in academics.” Through his own narrative of coming out he came to “understand how language and lived experience can develop knowledge that is transmitted through story-telling.” Sylliboy uses a storytelling approach because it is relevant to his Indigenous epistemology, and stories are “integral foundations of our *L'nuwey* worldview” (Sylliboy, 2018, p. 47). Sylliboy then collected and shared other stories, effectively meshing anti-oppressive and Indigenous methodologies as Storywork. As Sylliboy describes it, “in critical race theory, voices from oppressed people through story is a powerful manifestation of self-determination” (2018, p. 96). Chilisa and Tsheko in Botswana also discuss Indigenous mixed methods as requiring first a change of mindset that “problematizes, critiques, and challenges the marginalization and exclusion of the

ways of knowing and seeing the world of marginalized communities” (2014, p. 224). Indigenous mixed methods can be understood as “inviting different voices to participate in dialogue that embraces all cultures and promotes the social validity of research studies” (Chilisa & Tsheko, 2014, p. 224). As Chilisa notes, “by combining current qualitative research practices with specific aspirations of Indigenous communities in a mixed method strategy, it may be possible to build appropriate theoretical tools and ethical practices for Indigenous research” (2012, p. 313).

As I prepared to begin my research, I kept Marie Battiste, from the *Potlo'tek* First Nation in Nova Scotia, in mind. She is high on my list as both a key player in Indigenous academia and a personal hero. Her story began when she was a young girl and experienced educational injustices. This compelled her to seek a career in education, with the hope of working towards a more equitable education for Indigenous peoples. Battiste talks frankly about the trauma Indigenous people experience as a result of the failed education system. Her scholarly work has raised awareness about the need for educational changes, and her teachings have helped to form the basis for moving into a new educational future for Indigenous peoples. Battiste's concerted efforts to decolonize classrooms across North America have been crucial to raising consciousness about the need to Indigenize institutions and decolonize common teaching practices (Battiste, 2014). Battiste shares teachings on learning bundles from a *Wabanaki* framework (2014), and through that sharing is a power instigated through my work as I consider the learning bundle I carry for myself as well as on behalf of my community.

As part of the decolonizing process, Indigenous research methods should keep researchers, co-researchers, and research projects aligned with the Indigenous teachings

of relationality, relational accountability, respect, and reciprocity. These principles are critical because they promoted healing in our Indigenous communities and hope for future generations. We must remind ourselves that research is ceremony: it is alive, it has a Spirit, and most importantly, it does not belong to anyone. In the past, research left our communities at a deficit. Indigenous scholars and critical race theorists now raise questions about knowledge production: Who is entitled to create meanings about the world? How are some meanings and not others accorded the status of knowledge? How do race, gender, and/or class factor into these epistemological entitlements? Moving away from an era of oppressive research requires us to have “a critical analysis of colonialism and an understanding of western scientific research as a mechanism of colonization” (Strega, 2015, p. 4).

Similarly, Indigenous scholars need to face the issue of being both insider and outsider. We may come from Indigenous ancestry, but our western education can make us outsiders. I come from Indigenous ancestry and upbringing; however, western perspectives ask me to have reflection on my own perspectives. A delicate balancing act between satisfying the academy and honouring my indigeneity is required. It is important to me that I stay true to my commitment and ethical obligations of my community and this I privilege over expectations from the academy. My challenge in reflexivity is balancing what the academy expects verses what my community needs.

In this re-searching ceremony, I started with my positionality and a critical reflection of my life journey, my life’s experiences, and my work as a leader. This is why I included my own Storywork, to show how my lived experiences and the multiples strands of my identity are braided together to form my identity and how these influence

the research process. I also acknowledge my leadership position and my mother's leadership position and how they could impact the research. I believe earning a leadership position and working for my community for many years was to enable me to build a trust and relationships that were crucial to recruiting my community to have trust in me in our shared goals, my abilities to move this work forward in a good way, and my commitment to seeing through the healing and tangible changes in education. Within this reflection, I also deal with my delicate balancing between insider and outsider. As discussed, I have found myself to sometimes feel like an outsider for the sole reason that I am engaged in a research project that in some ways is western and also that I am enrolled at a university that operates from a dominate western structure. With conversation around these outsider characteristics and a commitment to uphold Indigenous knowledges as stand-alone knowledges and methodologies, my community is entrusting me to fight the good fight in making room and a comfortable place for Indigenous ways of knowing, of being and doing to co-exist equally from an institution that I am also representing. I consider myself as an insider because I am a member of the community and have been trusted to help elevate the voices of my community and work together to bring about educational healing, affirmation, and revitalization.

As a result, Indigenous researchers have to demonstrate our understanding of cultural knowledges and our commitment and loyalty to the Indigenous community. In turn, western universities, and especially institutional research ethic boards, need to re-examine what constitutes a conflict of interest when working within our own community. We must be prepared to explain relationality and relational accountability as key aspects of Indigenous methodologies. This means that we have our own cultural

responsibility to work within our community first to bring about positive change. In academia, western research ideologies will remain a powerful force and, therefore, Indigenous scholars must be able to articulate the need for Indigenous paradigms and Indigenous methodologies. We must be prepared to argue why Indigenous methodologies are valid and can be stand-alone methodologies for conducting research with Indigenous communities.

One of the easiest ways for me to understand the role reversal in colonized methodologies is the reference that Smith shared about research being like a scientist looking through a microscope at the subject, giving the researcher direct “power to define” (2012, p. 60). When researching Indigenous peoples, it is critical that researchers review their role in the research and their relationship to the subject(s), thus changing the role of the subject in a way that welcomes their voice and authority. Decolonization involves a shifting or sharing of power, especially when it comes to Indigenous methodologies.

Re-Searching and Implementing a *Wolastoqey* Methodology

In western institutional practice, a doctoral student has a long journey to complete a PhD. Early in our programs, we are told to be thinking about research questions. Yet, I always felt that it was not my role to choose the research questions for my community, which the scholarship on Indigenous methodologies and decolonization validated. Research agendas needed to be initiated from within an Indigenous community. I truly believe that a researcher generating a research question for a community is another oppressive tactic that researchers need to avoid. Drawing on my own professional experience in education and as a leader within my community, I had many informal

discussions with community members, educators, Elders, and non-Indigenous educators who support *Scikinuwi Kehkimsicik* / Indigenous learners. Through these discussions, I knew the issues on the hearts and minds of our people, and in particular, the importance of understanding education from a *Wolastoqey* perspective. Elevating the voices of *Scikinuwi Kehkimsicik*, through stories would be central to my research.

Throughout the many preliminary conversations, I took field notes, and with the assistance of my supervisors, my Elder Imelda, our leaders, and other Indigenous scholars, I put together an initial set of research questions. Together, we carefully crafted these questions, and then, as an important early step, I invited the community, through a widely distributed public notice, to have a dialogue about the questions, with the objective of establishing a set of questions the community could sanction. Significantly, we did not call the project *research*. Past experiences make this word intimidating to many Indigenous peoples. So, we worked with our Elders to initiate the project as a ceremony, and we used our *Wolastoqey* language to name the ceremony:

Kci Ntoltahkewakon. I followed local *Wolastoqey* protocols and treated each subsequent session as an ongoing ceremony. We smudged with medicines and asked Elders to offer prayer when and where they could. A meal accompanied each session, with a Spirit plate prepared for our *Cocahqi Tpinuwinaq* / Spirit Guides, the Creator, and our *Kinsuhsok* / Ancestors. These ceremonial protocols honoured our teachings about relationality, relational accountability, reciprocity, responsibility, respect, and relevance.

Questions Towards a *Wolastoqey* Resurgence in Education

The initial research objective that I presented at the first gathering was:

What is the true meaning of education or learning in the *Wolastoqey* worldview, and how can we develop, elevate, and implement this teaching and learning in a *Wolastoqey* model of education?

We developed several other questions to support the *Mawi Nucikahsicik* in contributing their knowledge and wisdom:

3. What does success look like to *Wolastoqey* youth and Elders?
4. How might this success be measured?
5. What are the challenges and barriers to learning?
6. What is oral knowledge and is it a vital part of a person's education?
7. Who is an Elder? What characteristics and gifts do they hold?
8. How might we both use and protect Elder knowledge in education?
9. What can youth voices tell us about education?

In preparing these questions, I sought the advice of my supervisor, Margaret Kress, who helped refine the project for the academy, but it was also problematic because the wording chosen was no longer *plain language* and so would not be accessible to all community members. Thankfully, many of the scholars whose work I used to plan this methodology could also guide me in the transition from planning to implementation.

In consultation with my Elders and my community, it was decided that a Talking Circle would be the best way to enact a re-searching ceremony and to have meaningful dialogue. The Talking Circle itself is a ceremony so this resonated with me and my purpose for this work. Lavallee (2009) and others use Indigenous Sharing Circles, also

referred to as Talking Circles, as a way to Indigenize research. The Talking Circle process is more egalitarian and less hierarchical, more within an Indigenous worldview. Participants sit in a circle, with the circle representing the holism of Mother Earth. Usually, a Sacred item is used to signal who may speak, and someone may only speak if they are holding the Sacred item. Members are asked to speak from the heart and respect other members (Graveline, 1998). Members must also comply with their own cultural teachings or Sacred Medicine Wheel models (Wilson, 2008). In my community, Talking Circles have been a useful tool for discussing important issues or trying to make important decisions and thus seemed appropriate for addressing our educational needs. Lavallee shared, “increasingly research involving Indigenous peoples is being undertaken by Indigenous researchers, who bring forward worldviews that shape the approach of the research, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and the epistemology, methodology, and ethic” (2009, p. 21). The Talking Circle is a community-based research approach with each person following similar rules, while still being given the freedom to share their perspective or concern about a topic without interruption. In Lavallee’s research, “the core values, beliefs, and healing practices of the Indigenous community are incorporated throughout the research process” (2009, p. 23). A Talking Circle honours relationality because we are in Circle and everyone is encouraged to speak from the heart and have respect for each member of the Circle. Our Elders remind us that when we are in Circle, we must honour all our relations, and we do this at the end of each time we speak as the Eagle feather or Sacred item is passed.

In shifting from research planning to research implementation and data gathering, I first recruited *Mawi Nucikahsicik* / co-researchers primarily from members of my

community through an open recruitment process. I created a poster to invite people, hand-delivered it to community members, and posted it in all offices and businesses within the community. The *Mawi Nucikahsicik* all made helpful suggestions for modifying specific research methods leading up to the open community Talking Circle that would sanction the research process and questions. They decided that we would break into three focus groups based on age and keep the Talking Circles for each group separate. They wanted one *Mawi Nucikahsicik* from each group to be selected to do the Storywalk in the community, but this selection would be a group decision in the Talking Circles. They also decided that, for the youth who would be recruited, it could be open to any who were interested, but the primary recruitment focus should be on the *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* /Indigenous learners at our *Kinapuwi Kehkitimok*/alternative education centre. The *Mawi Nucikahsicik* decided this because they felt that these students potentially had the most to say about how the current public school system had failed them, what the *Kinapuwi Kehkitimok* / alternative education centre did differently, and how it accommodated their needs as *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* / Indigenous learners. They also agreed it would be okay for me to facilitate and share what the other groups had talked about.

My *Mawi Nucikahsicik* carefully reviewed and discussed each method with me before we used it. Everyone in each Talking Circle clearly understood and co-designed how each of the above questions would be discussed and used in the context of our community and purpose of the work. Sometimes data collection can have challenges that must be considered in the process. McMillan suggested that the interview-type process might make participants “uncomfortable, inarticulate, or uncooperative” (2012, p. 296).

Additionally, the information received can be viewed as indirect and not naturally occurring (the guiding of what participants share). These challenges stood out for me and led me to invite my *Mawi Nucikahsicik* into a ceremony, one where they would have the authority to design the process; we took steps to ensure their comfort and cooperation by using processes that were in line with our cultural teachings and local *Wolastoqey* protocols.

Each of the methods were aspects of a ceremony each time we met, and each time, we exchanged medicines and smudged and asked the Creator for to help guide our discussions and allow them to flow from the heart. In sharing the decision-making with the *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, I remained very upfront about the research being a requirement for my doctoral program and that I had things to gain, including earning my doctorate. While the PhD degree would be a major accomplishment personally, I remained clear that it would not be at the cost of our community, promising to put the needs of our community first. Community ownership included encouraging participants to share the researcher role with equal decision-making power and making it very clear that the findings belong to the community. In my proposal I indicated that the research findings would belong to our community and would be stored and held by the Elders of the community at their Elder complex. Additionally, I vowed that the research would result in a tangible outcome for the community, stating that I wanted this *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* / ceremony to have benefits and gains for our whole community and for our future generations. I took the time and created the space to ensure that I heard everyone out, and they encouraged and relieved me when they affirmed the project's importance to our community and our future generations, and that they were happy to be a part of the work.

Through community dialogue, it became evident that they wanted us to have our own school in the community and wanted to help determine what a *Wolastoqey* resurgence of education would look like.

The initial community Talking Circle in *Welamukotuk* began with a traditional meal to honour reciprocity and local *Wolastoqey* protocols. In the Talking Circle, I presented the title of the research project, a description of the project's purpose, and the research questions. Participants provided feedback, thus assuring that the project included their input and was sanctioned by the community. I was delighted that the community and all participants agreed that all Talking Circles could be recorded to preserve their voices, and we would prepare transcripts from them. Following our initial open Talking Circle, I sent out a community notice, posted it on our social media page, and personally delivered invitations with flexible schedules for Talking Circles for three groups: youth, adults with school-age children, and Elders.

During Talking Circles, some questions were difficult for participants, so I often provided examples from previous Talking Circles and discussions with Elders. At each Talking Circle, I was fully engaged and took copious notes while still maintaining a respectful level of engagement. Responsibility for filming I delegated to a videographer so I could concentrate on the discussions. Listening is a deeply powerful Indigenous medicine, and I strove to practice in the Talking Circles the same type of listening that I learned to do through my gift of leadership, which requires more than just a listening ear, but also a listening heart, Spirit, and body. I applied this skill to the engagement with all *Mawi Nucikahsicik*. It was extremely important to me that I followed ceremonial

protocols and incorporated our Sacred Medicine Wheel model, that I listened with an open *Tpitahasuwakon*/mind, *Psuhun*/heart, *Cocahq*/Spirit, and *Hok*/body.

As I ventured further into Indigenizing research through the Talking Circles and Storywalks, I found myself wishing that I could have been more prepared for the co-facilitation process (Graveline, (2000). Even though I made every attempt to make it clear that I was not the voice of authority and that I was there to listen and document their voices, at times I felt as though the *Mawi Nucikahsicik* still treated me as the lead. Given my leadership role in the community, my education, and the fact that the project was generated for my PhD, I accepted that I was the lead. I have learned through this experience that sharing power is not as simple as just telling another person that we were now equal, or that they now had a voice. Some people need constant reassurance that they had the opportunity to share what was on their minds and hearts and that the questions did not have to be answered in a certain way. In retrospect, while I gave plenty of reassurance that the questions I prepared were just guiding questions, I wish that I had simplified them even more. I did not want academic language to serve as a barrier to participants expressing what was in their hearts. I realized during sessions that the questions—even though they had been edited in partnership with the community and sanctioned in advance by the *Mawi Nucikahsicik* and the community—could have been expressed in even more relatable terms. Experiencing this language barrier reinforced the need to balance studying and writing in an academic voice for the academic world to achieve a PhD on the one hand and speaking to the community in the Indigenous world in a way all members could understand one another. As a result, I have committed to rewriting the dissertation in a more relatable version for the community, without all the

academic jargon. While I realize my doctorate is being earned by respectfully following the process and writing at an academic level, for *Mawi Nucikahsicik* to benefit from this work, I must write it in a way so that they can feel truly included; so, I will develop two versions of this work.

We agreed that I would provide the questions for Talking Circle participants ahead of time and allow them to have a private discussion before I came to facilitate the Talking Circle. The youth group recommended that we hold the Talking Circle at our *Kinapuwi Kehkitimok* / alternative education centre, advice that echoed Miguel Zavala (2013) an educational scholar in the US who is the son of Mexican immigrants; he emphasizes paying attention to “the spaces that make decolonizing research possible” (p. 55). Each group discussed the research objective, the supporting questions, and offered responses that were specific to their experiences and needs. In each gathering, we followed *Wolastoqey* Talking Circle protocols. After the gatherings, the *Mawi Nucikahsicik* reviewed the transcripts of the discussions to verify they were correct. (Their participation in analyzing the data will be discussed in Chapter 5.) Many *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, however, were not interested in watching the videos, but rather chose to wait to view the final edited video that was presented to the community. In honouring people’s right to determine the amount and type of contribution they would make to the re-searching ceremony, I noted that two kinds of *Mawi Nucikahsicik* evolved: the ones who wanted an active part in the *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*/ceremony and the ones to whom I will refer as key informants who did not want to have their names attached to the project, but rather just offered guidance and input.

In the research proposal process, I realize now that I had not left room for how the early content from the *Mawi Nucikahsicik* would be collected and used, which resulted in these informal discussions being recorded as personal field notes. They became important parts of the research process and in guiding me in my overall process. In retrospect, since many of these key informants were Elders and Indigenous scholars, a more substantial initial process of recording and analyzing the contributions of key informants could have been a significant contribution. All of these discussions and community-building processes prior to starting research were a crucial part of the re-searching ceremony. These conversations continued throughout the process (and still to this day), and I am sure they will continue on well after. Honouring this process is honouring my relationality and relational accountability. This approach was a decolonizing and a culturally revitalizing strategy that, as Wilson (2008) taught, promoted working within a network of known relations, which is a more Indigenized approach in line with our Sacred Medicine Wheel model. The community really appreciated this approach as it was different than outsiders parachuting in to either study some exotic culture or document some problem, which has been the common research approach that anthropologists, historians, health authorities, and educators have used for decades.

Empowering our people and illuminating their voices and stories to effect positive social change in education has been our goal. This collaborative work is crucial for our peoples' ability to move from a colonized state to more of a healing, empowered, and spiritual realm of functioning. We agreed that anti-oppressive and participatory action research methodologies through Talking Circles, Storywork and Storywalks would be the best for this work. In the following chapter, I will share the principles and processes of

Storywork that I used to engage respectfully with my community members as we developed a research protocol and design that would aid in gathering data to help our peoples. Thus, I end this discussion of our research methodology with my own story.

As my personal narrative and lived experiences have informed my quest for knowledge, I am continually growing to be more culturally grounded in the work I carry out. My personal experiences have helped me to understand what our communities are going through and how research could serve our Indigenous communities if implemented with their needs uppermost and that honour the pillars of relationality, responsibility, reciprocity, relevance, and respect. I know many other people for whom it took many years to gain respect and trust in the community, so it was important to me to make sure that I was trusted and accepted by the community to start a research project. I remember talking to Elders, leaders of the community, educators, youth, and other community members, and through all of this dialogue, I kept informal field notes about priorities from the community. I was also lucky enough to work in the schools with our youth, and over the years I earned a Bachelor of Education degree as well as a Master of Education degree. These accomplishments, my role as a leader, and my work in education put me in the best possible position to undertake this re-searching ceremony.

Chapter 4

Kisacikotu Skicinuwi Elawsultimok naka Kcicihtuwinuhticik Nikanihptuhtit Skicinuwi Kekitasikil / Storywork, Setting Social Context, Cultural Inclusivity

Relationality requires that you know a lot more about me before you can begin to understand my work.

(Wilson, 2008, p. 12)

In *Wolastoqey* culture, as in most Indigenous cultures, teachings come from oral tradition, making education intrinsically relational. Many Indigenous scholars emphasize the importance of stories to knowledge revitalization, to education, and to strengthening relationships within Indigenous communities. The adaptation of these traditions to community-based research has come to be known as Storywork, the telling of stories to educate, to heal, and for knowledge revitalization. Jo-Ann Archibald, an educational researcher from the *Stó:lō* First Nation, in British Columbia, assisted me in understanding Storywork as a powerful means of pedagogy, as well as an Indigenous method of research. The stories we collect, whether as Indigenous learners from our Elders, or in my case as an Indigenous researcher, comprise our Storybaskets, the spaces in which we carry the stories of our identity, our teachings, the honourings of our Ancestors, and the messages from our Ancestors and Elders that shape our future.

Marlene Atleo (*Ahousaht* First Nation, *Nuuchahnulth*) explains that “basketwork focuses on weaving an understanding of aspects of learning in the context of traditional narratives” (2001, p. 10). Both she and Archibald describe a basket’s many parts: the base represents the teachings from our Ancestors and the tops represent the children who

will carry the traditions forward. In preparing myself for undertaking research with my community, I decided to use Storywork as the primary applied research methodology. Scholarly Elders, like Archibald and Atleo, provided me guidance, and I could understand how to adapt their teachings to my community, how the *Wolastoqey* tradition of Talking Circles fit well with Storywork. In this chapter, I describe how I used Storywork in applying research methodologies and objectives discussed in the previous chapter and including my community in the research. The chapters that follow this one discuss the research findings and results that my *Mawi Nucikahsicik* / co-researchers and I derived from engaging our community in Storywork.

Archibald and Atleo's teachings first encouraged me to look into my Storybasket at the stories that have shaped who I am and to have the courage to share the stories that define me and my purpose. A key idea is that all our stories have important teachings, whether they have a place or meaning now or are something to be absorbed and used later in our lives. We should never feel shame for not having specific uses for all stories.

Leanne Simpson describes the importance of reconnecting with those stories and how,

I began to realize that shame can only take hold when we are disconnected from the stories of resistance within our own families and communities. I placed that shame as an insidious and infectious part of the cognitive imperialism that was aimed at convincing us that we were weak and defeated peoples, and that there was no point in resisting or resurging (Simpson, 2011, p. 14).

This wisdom of scholarly Elders also supported me when I explained to my community the importance of Storywork through the Talking Circles, and how Storywork is more than just narrative. It is part of an integral ceremony of *Wolasoqiyik* (Archibald, 2008;

Atleo, 2001), the weaving of knowledges. These stories are important to the work that came from my community, and they can lose meaning when taken out of the context of this work. Another important note is that the stories do not belong to anyone, but rather to the collective (Graveline, personal communication, 2019).

When discussing the power of story, we need to remember the importance of understanding oral knowledge as valid knowledge. This understanding is another crucial topic. Archibald, in using the term *Storywork*, a methodology she helped refine and bring into the academy, emphasized “respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness and synergy” (2008, p. 1). She adopted these seven principles related to storytelling from three *Stó:lō* Elders and explained the importance of these principles when using storytelling in education. Storytelling requires those listening to use their “auditory and visual senses” as well as their emotions, minds, and patience (Archibald, 2008, p. 76). Archibald talked about the idea of three listening ears, the two on either side of our head and the third being our heart. Traditionally, the meaning of stories was not revealed to listeners. Our Elders did this intentionally, sharing stories for specific teachings and situations. Therefore, it was important to develop good listening skills, which meant combining the heart and the mind together to determine purpose or meaning.

Archibald shared the idea of “story intuitiveness,” a responsibility of the storyteller. The storyteller reads the energy from the audience and holds the responsibility of knowing which story to tell and when to tell it. The relationship between storyteller and listeners is an important aspect of relaying knowledge orally. The intuitive storyteller-listener relationship cannot be replicated or adequately conveyed, dramatized,

or replaced by a written account. Part of the power of knowledge conveyed orally is the affective dimension of the oral transmission and the presence of both storyteller and listener. Oral knowledges are a key component of Indigenous histories, worldviews, and perspectives (Simpson, 2011). The act of storytelling, and generating oral traditions more generally, has been a way of education, sharing, guiding, and healing for our peoples. In my own *Wabanaki* teachings, stories have been a vital part of understanding my ancestry, my place within my culture, and my purpose on my life journey. This is also the case for many Indigenous peoples. Thus, scholars are recognizing that storytelling, or the oral tradition, to teach has to be adopted, accepted, and validated as a meaningful form of knowledge transfer: “Our Elders tell us that everything we need to know is encoded in the structure, content and context of these stories and the relationships, ethics and responsibilities required to be our own Creation story” (Archibald, 2008, p. 33).

Atleo talked about understanding the relational power that is found in applying the process of Storywork. She thinks of the “4 Rs: Respect, Responsibility, Reverence, and Relations” and the “4 Ds,” which refer to the relational dynamics of “reciprocity, holism, inter-relatedness and synergy.” For Atleo, “the 4 Rs and 4 Ds provide clues about social protocols in which the ‘figure of the story’ leaps out of the background of the cultural context so that it can be examined for learning strategies” (2001, p. 14). In dissecting the meaning behind each, Atleo taught us:

Respect allows one person to see the other and oneself in the context of the web of kinships. Relations are critical to understanding how to fit into the family, the group, and the world. The dynamics of the interrelatedness are continually balanced through the process of reciprocities in the web of interrelatedness, which

creates a synergy in which the holism is again One-ness. Hence, the salutation: all my relations are structured by the 4Rs and animated by the 4Ds. (2001, p. 25)

Atleo's teachings ring true for me. There have been many stories in which I had to understand and interweave many parts; by this, I mean the teachings that applied to different forms of Creation, such as the teachings from the rocks, also known as "The Grandfathers," that generate their significance for understanding the land and what the land has to teach us. In addition, personally relating to stories that involve other natural elements like trees or water is a process of understanding that Atleo refers to as "oneness" (2001).

Storywork is built on understanding the teachings that I incorporated in my Sacred Medicine Wheel, namely the interconnectedness of all Creation and all our relations. Understanding each part of the wheel and the significance of these stories promotes balance, and with balance comes the awakening of our Indigeneity: "Storywork is important in de-colonizing Indigenous sensibilities in the process of self-determination in education, counselling, life career development, and healing" (Atleo, 2001, p. 3). I feel a tugging within to bring light to the different forms in which we receive Storywork. In addition to traditional forms of storytelling, there are more spiritual forms. Stories can be shared through Spirit, whether it be our Spirit Guides or other spirits who are communicating with us. This type of communication can come through feelings, intuitions, Spirit visits, dreams, visions, signs, and symbols (Archibald, 2008; Grande, 2004; Graveline, 2004). Uzendoski shares that, within the Amazonian culture, teachings can come in diverse forms:

Rivers, mountains, and other soul-possessing beings, even plants, can and do speak in this way, and sometimes spirits send messages through feelings, dreams, and images that are then converted into discourse when peoples recount their experiences to others. Images, feelings, and experiences are converted into words, but peoples also use words, gestures, and sounds to recreate the images and experiences for others. (Uzendoski, 2012, p. 62)

When exploring the *Elsonuwakon* (physical), intuitive, and spiritual dimensions of Storywork, we recognize that openness to listening is just as important as, if not more than, speaking. Through listening, we begin to understand that to which we are responsible to speak and how and when to speak. Lewis teaches that “in order to speak, one must first listen, (we) learn to speak by listening” (2008, p. 2). I think this is a powerful tool to practice and understand deeply.

One of my Elders, Mary Veronica Paul, told me that some of the most respected knowledge holders are the ones who first learned and mastered the art of listening. Oftentimes, in conversation with Elder Mary Veronica Paul, she has shared stories and asked me to record word-for-word, or to record her. She does not want her voice to get lost in translation. Many times she has gone silent, and she has taught me that this is a tool of Storytelling, too. In order to speak, we must listen to our Spirit Guides and to our hearts. The pause, the silence, is an indication of this deeper listening and processing before communicating to others. The communication which comes from hearts and spirits to our minds and voices is necessary because this is how our stories and teachings live. Through Q. R. A. Thomas (2016) we have learned that, because of the intentions storytellers embedded in the telling or relaying of stories, the stories may attach their

spirits to our Spirit and heart. When recalling a story, we can often accurately retell it, and because of the emotional attachment to the story, we can often feel the same emotions we felt when we first heard it; we may even hear the voices of those who told it: “Simply by thinking of these questions, I can hear her voice telling me stories” (Thomas, 2016, p. 177).

Currently in my Storybasket work, I see my role as carrying the traditions forward and revitalizing them for the future generations. The outcome from Storybook research cannot belong to the researcher; it belongs to all our peoples, past, present, and future. When I include my Elders, I identify a power shift that puts the Elders in charge of their stories and the storytelling process. Thomas also acknowledged this power dynamic in her scholarship: “Storytellers hold the power in this research methodology – they are in control of the story and the ‘researcher’ becomes the listener or facilitator” (2015, p. 186). This is a crucial point as it is at the centre of Indigenous research methodologies:

At a higher level are sacred stories, which are specific in form, content, context and structure. These stories themselves must be told at different levels according to the initiation level of the listener. Only those trained, tested and given permission to do so are allowed to tell these stories, which must never vary in how they are told. They are sacred and contain the history of our peoples. The second level stories are like the Indigenous legends that you may have heard or read in books. There are certain morals, lessons or events that take place, but different storytellers shape them according to their own experience and that of the listener. The third style of a story is relating personal experiences or the

experience of other peoples. Elders often use experiences from their own or others' lives to help counsel or teach. (Wilson, 2008, p. 98)

Thomas teaches that “when we listen with open hearts and open minds, we respect and honour the storytellers” (2015, p. 186), which resonates with the scholarship of Archibald (2008) and the discourse of Atleo (2001) when we understand the Four Rs and Four Ds of Storywork. Thomas had this to say:

In fact, not only do I share these stories, but now I understand that they are vital to the survival of First Nations peoples. As with the voice of my grandmother, these stories leave us with a sense of purpose, pride, and give us guidance and direction—these are stories of survival and resistance. (2015, p. 178)

In carrying these knowledges forward in my scholarship, in addition to the knowledges from my local *Kcicihutuwinuhticik* / Elders, I also refer to the scholars who have been key figures in charting my direction. As I move forward, I keep in mind what Thomas taught us about locating ourselves and understanding our power within the work, not allowing that power as a researcher to take the lead:

It was imperative that the stories remained the storytellers' stories and did not become mine. My story needed to remain separate. I had realized early on that as the researcher, I had such incredible power to shape the final work that I was doing. For example, had I decided to use interview questions for the most part, the thesis would have covered the areas that I deemed important enough to ask questions about. Another source of power to shape the work occurred once the interviews had been completed. I could have taken the transcriptions, wrote the

stories myself, and finished the work necessary to complete my thesis. But I was determined to authentically represent the voices of the storytellers. (2015, p. 189)

When we carry these Storybaskets (Atleo, 2001), we carry a responsibility through the traditional teaching of reciprocity: “we each have a responsibility for conducting ethical research that makes a difference in the lives of those whose life opportunities, health, safety, and well-being are diminished by conditions of poverty” (Denzin, 2017, p. 253). Therefore, we must be honest and authentic to ourselves and our Storytellers. We as researchers must promise that the knowledge and teachings will be properly used for the effort of creating positive change for the communities we work for, with, and around.

Through these teachings we can begin to understand how stories form the process of data collection and analysis. We need constant reminders that stories are our means of healing, of learning, and of teaching, that stories have a life of their own and are like shapeshifters that can shape and shift in different teachings for different audiences of peoples (Chief Shelley Sabattis, *Wolastoqi, Welamukotuk*, personal communication, May 1, 2019). Stories are ceremony and, when treated as such, amazing transformations will begin to unfold (Elder Timer, personal communication, 2018). In the next chapter, I will be sharing the voices and stories from our community. I remind you all to be in ceremony, to listen with an open mind, Spirit, body, and heart. Also, remember, there are teachings that you may take away, which relates back to your expectations as a reader in sharing this ceremony.

We must always be reminded of our stories and that we all carry Storybaskets. Stories have been critical to my development and growth. As a child and an adult, I have enjoyed listening to and sharing stories that I have heard. I could not share this critical

work without permission to use the stories of those who have shared with me. As a reminder of the ceremony we are in, the stories you find in this writing will be embedded throughout. Stories are woven into the chapters, carefully selected to fit each chapter. Many stories were crystallizing moments in my life where meanings were explored, visions were born, and a purpose arose. While the stories I share are mine, they also are to convey that each of us has a Storybasket that carry meaning. Our Elders have their individual Storybaskets, but they also carry one of our collective Storybaskets. In each story, I attempted to share details to provide a clear social and cultural context. In some stories, the reader will find other stories embedded; so, please be open to this idea. It may appear to be confusing when stories merge or collide but know that this was done intentionally. Indigenous knowledges are built from the stories of the peoples, and as they often provide a message or a directive, sometimes a great deal of reflection is required to come to a full understanding (I. Perley, personal communication, 2019).

To analyze and now relating the stories from my community I used the techniques of emotive coding laid out in the work of Johnny Saldana (2016), listening for underlying themes and patterns in what people said. This work resulted in the identification of the thirteen themes on the moons on Turtle's back, that are discussed in Chapter 6. In most cases, these themes are ones I first used in my Sacred Medicine Wheel, but in this case, they are brought forward first through the telling and listening in the Talking Circles that were a core part of the research method and then in the intricate weaving together of themes from stories that people shared. These themes also emerged from the relationality of the Talking Circles. Often a participant would say they had nothing to say, but then after listening to an Elder, they would realize they did have a contribution. In this way,

the Elders in my community have a powerful emotive relevancy to how Storywork unfolded. This process of sharing allowed for participants to make connections and in making those connections to engage in healing and growth. In listening to the tapes of the Talking Circles, I paid particular attention to those themes that allowed people to connect, that opened their Spirits, enlivened their voices, and restored respect to community members. In this way, I also checked and double-checked the research principles I had articulated in my planning, and which I incorporated in my Sacred Medicine Wheel. This approach also is consistent with the work of Indigenous scholars. As Kwame shared, “Indigenous research should demonstrate relational accountability, interconnectedness, reciprocity, and multiplicity of reality, where both the spiritual and physical realms are interconnected with the ultimate aim of giving recognition to Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of knowing” (2017, p. 2).

I welcome each reader into *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* / ceremony. With this writing I am *Apoqotehtasik Wiwonowestuhtimok* / opening the circle to you the reader as earlier I welcomed each research participant from my community in the Talking Circle. For us as *Wolastoqiyik* to be in ceremony, we engage in the process that we refer to *Apoqotehtasik Wiwonowestuhtimok*. I call upon the readers, here in this moment, to purify your thoughts and open up your minds, hearts, Spirit, and body to the teachings about to be shared. Just by reading and experiencing any feelings or emotions that come from these words, the readers become part of the ceremony. Being in ceremony implies expectations; all *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* ask those who participate to recognize a process of reciprocity and obligation. The expectations are not always obvious, and, in this case, they are shared through stories for the readers’ interpretations. The teachings and expectations are for the

readers to take with them as a means of honouring our Nation or Elders' teachings or, in fact, as a way to learn about and enter into reciprocity.

When *Apoqotehtasik Wiwonowestuhtimok* for myself, I have learned through *Wolastoqey* teachings that I firstly honour my mother, who is the centre of my heart, and so when we smudge, we do so with our left hand as it is closest to our heart (I. Perley, personal communication, 2016). Before I go further, I pause here to honour my mother with a brief story. I will also talk a bit about my father, my sister, and my grandmother because, for me, opening the ceremony means sharing my relationality. Although this section could go into great detail about familial relations and the teachings I have been gifted, I wish to keep it brief and return to these stories in the coming chapters.

My mother is my best friend, and her guidance has been and will always be integral to my purpose; not only am I living my own purpose and carrying my own teachings but, as a *Wolastoqi*, I must always represent her and share her teachings with those who cross my path. In many ways, my mother has been my greatest teacher. In gaining insight into who I am and where I come from, you first have to learn of my mother. In opening the circle, I am smudging my circle and she is directly to my left, closest to my heart. My mother grew up in our community, in one of the first houses built in the community. Her father was her first teacher, and he was very grounding for her. She has many old stories that were shared with her that light up her eyes when she relays them to others. My mother met my father, Gary, when she was young, and she fell in love with him instantly. Sadly, their relationship was unhealthy at times. However, despite what she went through, she remained resilient and always cared for her children

first. I never witnessed my mother put her needs before any of us, and I am forever grateful for that. Nevertheless, I recognize her place in the circle; it is now time for her to put herself first, while her children carry on the legacy of her life work. She has instigated the impetus for wellness among our members and for our Nation, and the continuation of this work is my personal promise and commitment to my mother.

Koselomul / I love you.

Because of the trauma my father experienced as a child, he suffered with alcoholism in his adult life. My mother saw that young boy within my father, and she opened her *Psuhun* / heart and life to him and provided the most stability and sense of normalcy my father ever had. Today, I recall some of my happiest moments in my life as those being with my mother, my father, and my older sister. I truly value and cherish these memories because of how intimate and rare these experiences were. They were rare because, as I mentioned, my father battled alcoholism, and he held in a lot of trauma that he had experienced. He opened up to my mother about some of the things that he had endured in Indian Day School and in living a life of poverty. My mother has only recently started sharing some of these *Atkuhkakonol* / stories with me, and that is why I dedicate this work to her as well as to my father's memory. My father was the victim of a failed system, one that led to many other problems. He died when I was just ten years old, and my sister Brittany and I developed very different coping mechanisms. My sister was a "Daddy's girl," and I was a "Mama's boy." Although we both loved our parents unconditionally, and the same came from them for us, we experienced different bonds. My mother held me close in protection and still does to this day. I have always

done the same for her and will continue to do this as that circle continues to unfold. My mother was a single mother and raised my sister and I mostly on her own. When my sister got older, she encountered many problems in life, and she never properly dealt with our father's death. She did not fit within a broken educational system. My sister went down the path of self-destruction and has struggled with a life of addiction; this left a deep wound on our *Pshun*, and it continued to bring pain to my mom as she dealt with the guidance and physical supports to ensure that my younger siblings and I were on the right path. My mother has been the head of our family and our rock. I have always been amazed at how she is constantly able to rise above hardship. Her heart is gentle, forgiving, and kind. She has overcome many obstacles in her life, and she continues to do this and help others do the same. Some of her greatest teachings for me are resilience and hope. My mother and I heal differently—she is strong and holds on to hope, whereas I sometimes feel lost to hope. Through her, I am learning to be strong and have hope as well.

In *Apoqotehtasik Wiwonowestuhtimok* / opening this circle, I also pay tribute to my grandmother, Terri. She encouraged me to seek the highest education and has left little signs and messages for me throughout my life. She has since passed, but I still feel her Spirit guiding me and that is the warmest and most comforting feeling. I make mention of her throughout this study, which has itself been inspired by and continues the work of her own Master's thesis, *Tutelage and resistance: The Native post-secondary experience*. This is my way of honouring her and her work and continuing the work that she began when I was a young child. I believe this engagement will bring us

full circle, and I believe my commitment to her vision will ensure that a *Wolastoqey* resurgence in education is passed down from generation to generation.

In *Apoqotehtasik Wiwonowestuhtimok*, we use our medicines, we consult our *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* / Elders and *Kinsuhsok* / Ancestors, and we honour *Psiw Nutulnapemok* / all our relations. The *Mawi Nucikahsicik* / co-researchers have said this is important to them. We smudge ourselves: our head, for clear and good thinking; our eyes, so that we see the good and have clear vision; our mouth and nose, so that we speak the truth and use our words to bring about positive change. We also smudge our hearts for purification, our legs and feet for our Earth Walk, and our back for our future generations. Many of our *Mawi Nucikahsicik* contributed to my understanding of ceremony. As previously mentioned, youth were recruited through an open call to the community, special individual invitations, and visiting their learning centre in the community. In *Apoqotehtasik Wiwonowestuhtimok*, all the youth accept being in ceremony and honour traditional teachings. Additionally, in being in ceremony, the youth understand they are in a safe space where their voices and stories are respected. Drae, a *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, stressed that “when he smudges and enters ceremony, that he asks to rid all negativity and to allow him to think clearly and in a positive manner” (personal communication, 2018). Dymond, also a *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, reminded herself (and therefore the group) that, if there were any feuds, tensions, or negative thoughts about each other, we are letting them go as we enter into *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* / ceremony. While reflecting on this idea, Daniel, another *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, acknowledged Dymond’s observation, but felt strongly that “there are some negative feelings, but that is

towards the education system for failing our peoples” (personal communication, 2018). In *Apoqotehtasik Wiwonowestuhtimok*, we were allowing the *Mawi Nucikahsicik* to confront their feelings, to use the medicine and the eagle feather to cleanse these feelings of anger, and to transform them into a passion and fire that will ignite the change needed for our *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* / Indigenous learners.

This research project is being honoured as *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*. As such, I, the *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, and our readers must honour this process as a *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*. Therefore, *Mawi Nucikahsicik* and I are in *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*. All of this work honours *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*. Together, we entered into *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* when we asked the research questions and sought answers. For those new to *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*, especially one done in this way, it is important to understand the process and protocols. To guide myself and others along this journey, I begin each day by lighting my smudge with *Skicinuwi ‘Pisunol* / Sacred Medicines. By direction of my *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* / Elder, Imelda, I also rub *Muwin* / bear grease on my hands before beginning to write my words, thoughts, and notes. I ask *Muwin* for direction, for clarity, and for strength to take on the task of bringing this work full circle. Before each Talking Circle, and before each writing session, I pray to my *Cocahqi Tpinuwainaq* / Spirit Guides, to our *Kinsuhsok* / Ancestors, and to those yet to be born. Each time this is done, I use medicines. I use the medicines my *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* have taught me about: Sage, Sweetgrass, Tobacco, and Cedar. As part of my teachings, I carry these medicines in my Sacred Bundle. My Sacred Bundle is made up of items that were gifted to me and things that I have collected—those that are meaningful to me on my journey. While I have been gifted many things that give me

purpose, I am also always prepared to gift an item in this bundle to someone who may need it more than I do. The basket that carries this bundle was gifted to me by my mother.

In *Apoqotehtasik Wiwonowestuhtimok* / opening the circle, I once again have to cite a scholarly Elder, Shawn Wilson (2008), whose work *Wewisine Ewehkiyeq Kci Oltahkewakonol / Research Is Ceremony* has helped me to open my thinking and learn to echo the teachings of my *Kcicihtuwinuhticik*:

We are beginning to articulate our own research paradigms and to demand that research conducted in our communities follows our codes of conduct and honours our systems of knowledge and worldviews. Research by and for Indigenous peoples is a ceremony that brings relationships together. (Wilson, 2008, p. 8)

He also goes on to talk about his writing style and how he realized that writing in the dominant style, to an anonymous reader, did not live up to his standards of relational accountability. I think it is important to always remember and consider our audience, and by that I do not mean those who may possibly come across our work, but those whom we actively want to read our work, those who can use it, contribute to it, and help keep it alive with intentions for positive change. This is in alignment with the purposes of *Wewisine Ewehkiyeq Kci Oltahkewakonol / Research is Ceremony*. As we learn from Wilson, “the purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves” (2008, p. 11).

When deepening our understanding of research as ceremony, we acknowledge that a research paradigm should reflect the beliefs that guide our actions as researchers. Wilson also teaches us that “these beliefs include the way that we view reality (ontology), how we think about or know this reality (epistemology), our ethics and morals (axiology)

and how we go about gaining more knowledge about reality (methodology)” (2008, p. 13). Further to this, Wilson (2008) and Archibald (2008) introduce us to the “3 Rs” and “4 Rs” that adapt as 6 Rs in my Sacred Medicine Wheel model. These six Rs are common Indigenous teachings that honour the interconnectedness of all of Creation. These, too, ring true with *Wolastoqey* culture, as explained in the previous chapter. Furthermore, some of these teachings emerged as themes in this research ceremony. They are *Nusseyuwakon* / respect, *Ksakutomakon* / relationality, *Tetpi Pehqitahamsuwakon* / relational accountability, *Mawankeyutomakon* / responsibility, *Wolokimqot* / relevance, and *Tetpi-Wiqsonuwakon* / reciprocity.

In preparing to present the findings from this study, I place another reminder for the reader—my loyalty in this work belongs first to my community. It is important that I am protective of this work and those to whom it belongs and where it is stored. As part of the dissemination, I hand the data and the dissertation to the Elders of my community in reciprocity and for safekeeping. It is they and the future leaders who will determine if it will be used for future developments deemed important and needed. Here I prepare to present much of it to you the reader.

Chapter 5

Sharing the Voices and the Medicines of *Mawi Nucikahsicik* / Co-researchers

The research that we do as Indigenous peoples is ceremony that allows us a raised level of consciousness and insight into our world. (Wilson, 2008, p. 11)

This chapter begins the analysis of the data with quotes from the stories told by my *Mawi Nucikahsicik* / co-researchers, as we talked through the questions I had posed and the issues they brought to our Talking Circles. After discussions with them, we decided to use just their first names, followed by *Mawi Nucikahsicik*. In addition to sharing their voices within this study, we have together edited a video (see Appendix F) that will allow the reader access to experience some of the conversations. We thought this was crucial to the work as it will give the reader some insight into the emotions felt with the words and stories shared. Finally, in the closing section of this chapter, I will weave the voices of the *Mawi Nucikahsicik* together to briefly answer the research questions of this ceremony.

Working Together:

Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* / Indigenous Learners as *Mawi Nucikahsicik

In my own narrative, and in the many narratives that I have had the honour and privilege of listening to, the role of our *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* / Indigenous Learners in the development of curricula has been largely overlooked. Much of the human subject scholarship advises us to be reflective about our own positionality, and to honour the perspectives of the people we are studying. Thus, before I move into more literature or

voices from the academic world about what *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* want or need, I want to introduce the readers to the narratives of the *Mawi Nucikahsicik* / co-researchers in this re-searching ceremony. This section begins with amplifying the voices for our *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik*. It has become increasingly evident that these things have been on their minds for a long time, they have a lot to say, and it is time to hear them.

Youth Mawi Nucikahsicik

Our youth were brought together in *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* / Ceremony through Talking Circles in their own space at our *Kinapuwi Kehkitimok* / Learning Centre. Multiple Talking Circles were conducted with youth leading the conversation while discussing the research questions. It is important that I honour relationality by using their real first names. Not all of the youth who participated wanted their information and contributions shared, so here I will introduce the youth who wanted to be included and a short social, cultural, and community context. The youth are all very close, so the Talking Circles were intimate and Sacred.

Dymond is a young educator. She is an Educator's Assistant who works closely with our youth to ensure their educational needs are met and that they are enriched with language and culture. Passionate about education, Dymond is also studying at UNB to be a credentialed educator. Dymond shared many instances of her educational journey where she did not feel validated and was made to feel as if she were not smart enough to survive the public education system. She encountered racism at all levels, and this has inspired her to stand up to make positive changes in education. She is dedicated to her *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* and passionate about implementing our cultural knowledge and teachings into curricula for them. In relationship to the community context, Dymond is seen as a

leader in many aspects and is well respected as a strong Indigenous woman who lives the traditional life and is dedicated to preserving our *Wolastoqey* language. Dymond comes from a line of educators and leaders and welcomes her future of being an agent of change and leader in education.

Drae is a young man who did not fit within the construct of the public school system. He felt singled out by teachers and felt labelled before even getting an opportunity to build meaningful relationships with his teachers. Drae struggled in his subjects in high school, and the school created many labels, including behavioural issues, and because of this, Drae was a candidate for our community's pilot project to create an Alternative Education space in the community. Since enrolling, Drae's marks in all subjects have significantly improved, and he does not see himself ever returning to the public school system. Drae has communicated that he feels validated and more closely connected to his language, culture, Elders, and peers who have similar stories. In community context, Drae works on the community's Warrior Program, which is a security program created within the community to make for a safer community. This program allows Drae to build up his confidence, and he feels valued within the community as he works hard to keep our community safe with his fellow colleagues.

Daniel is a very wise young man who is culturally fluent due to being raised by his grandmother. Although his grandmother has since passed, he still remains connected to his culture and language, and he honours the teachings his grandmother has passed down to him. With losing his grandmother, Daniel puts emphasis on the importance of creating, building, and maintaining close and positive relationships with Elders. Daniel accepts the responsibility of learning, sharing, and passing on cultural teachings and

language. This has earned him respect in the community, and he is viewed as a wise young man with a purpose and potential.

Sarah is a young woman who has also been very vocal in sharing her narratives about challenges in the public school system. She has experienced many life obstacles that have helped to shape her into a caring young woman. She has recently graduated and is pursuing a post-secondary education. Sarah is very resilient, the community sees this, and she is also respected in the community.

Denver is a young man with similar experiences as the other *Mawi Nucikahsicik*. He comes from a family of educators, so he appreciates education but also acknowledges the changes that need to happen for our *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik*. He is wise in his thinking and acknowledges the teachings he has been handed. For Denver, success looks very different; his success amounts to being happy, and for him this does not necessarily mean he has to go to post-secondary school, but rather he can find purpose through his cultural teachings and ceremony. Denver is not a member of our community but is closely connected with other youth, and his contributions to this work are respected just the same.

Adult Mawi Nucikahsicik

The adults who made up the Talking Circles all had a vested interest in the *Kci Olatahkewakon / Ceremony* and our *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik*. Adults are valuable in this process for multiple reasons. First, they have been through the public school system, and all have had different or shared experiences that have shaped who they are today and their views on the current system. Second, they have children or family who are in the current system and have much to share concerning their feelings about how things have

changed or not changed at all. These are valuable pieces as we work towards capturing snapshots of different experiences over time and the work needed to improve education. I also participated in the Talking Circles; therefore, my voice is also represented in the data collected and shared.

Chief Shelley Sabattis is a leader in our community and has been for over 20 years. Her input is important because she has worked as an educator for many years and acknowledges the systemic racism that exists in our public schools. It was her vision to open our *Kinapuwi Kehkitimok / Alternative Education Centre* to better service our youth who seem to get lost in the western school system. Her vision has brought hope to many of our youth and their parents, families, and community. Chief Shelley Sabattis is dedicated to our language and culture and is a strong agent of change in addressing the different levels of change that need to happen for the overall health and wellness of the community. In her Storybasket, she carries her own experiences as a *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik*, her experiences as an educator in a broken system that failed our peoples, and the stories of her five children who all have had similar experiences but very different outcomes in their personal journeys. She now is raising her three grandchildren, all of whom are in the public school system, so she is very aware of the progress, but also of all the work still ahead of us to better serve all our *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik*. In relation to the community, Chief Shelley Sabattis has earned respect and her leadership position; she is a political figure, but remains grounded in cultural teachings, language, and an investment in building brighter futures for our *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik*.

Brittany is a young adult with three children for whom her mother cares. Her stories and input are important to this work because the system failed her, and she has a

lot to say about how this happened and what needs to change to protect others from it happening to them. In community context, Brittany has struggled on her journey, and the community values her stories and purpose in this work because her story could deter others from going down the same path. She is able to speak from a confident place and has an investment in being a part of the positive changes for our youth.

Paula is our Health Director in the community. She has spent most of her life living out of the community, so she feels as though her story is a bit different because she did not face the same stigmas as members who have lived in community. Her perspective is important because her social role within the community is promoting health and well-being. She has her own stories and through her position has been able to hear many other stories, and she feels an obligation to be a part of positive change in the protection of future generations.

Charlotte is an educator's assistant who has spent the past 15 years working in the public school system. Charlotte is culturally grounded and partially fluent in our *Wolastoqey* language. She also works diligently with youth, helping them create regalia from their own visions, and this has instilled a sense of pride in our youth. More recently, Charlotte accepted the position as Cultural Coordinator in our community. Her life work and purpose have been to share language and culture and to assist our youth in education. She has the respect of the community and has proven her commitment to empowering our youth.

Kcicihtuwinuhticik / Elders Mawi Nucikahsicik

I have always honoured the gifts, wisdom, teachings, and guidance from our *Kcicihtuwinuhticik*. I am lucky to have been named a leader in my community and

always listen to my *Kcicihtuwinuhticik*. Before all this work even started, I had been keeping my own notes about what the *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* had taught me about education and what changes we needed. So many *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* have been following this work and have expressed interest in being a part of the ceremony. When I made the initial announcement for a community Talking Circle, I personally delivered invitations to all the *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* and had discussions with them about how they would like this *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* / ceremony to be organized. *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* then planned about how they would be involved; however, since many *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* did not want to be on camera or join the circle, I had several informal discussions that led the *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* in a way to help them still feel involved in some capacity.

Opolahsomuwehs / Elder Dr. Imelda Perley is *Wolastoqey* from Tobique First Nation, St. Mary's First Nation, and Houlton Band of Maliseet (United States). She previously was appointed as Elder-in-Residence at UNB. Imelda holds a BA and an MEd from UNB. She is a fluent speaker of *Wolastoqey Latuwewakon* / Maliseet, her first language. Imelda teaches Maliseet language and *Wabanaki* Worldview courses at UNB and the University of Maine. She also co-teaches a Native Studies module at St. Thomas University. She is founder and coordinator of the *Wolastoq* Language and Culture Centers Inc., situated at Tobique and St. Mary's First Nations. The primary purpose of each centre is to promote the *Wolastoqey Latuwewakon* / language, culture, traditions, worldviews, and ceremonies. Each centre also conducts workshops that provide information pertaining to the historical, social, economic, political, and cultural conditions of *Wolastoq* communities. Imelda remains active in promoting cross-cultural awareness sessions within the public domain. Her traditional roles within the community

include Sweat Lodge Keeper, Medicine Wheel Teacher, Sacred Pipe Carrier, and Keeper of the Women's Ceremonies (e.g., Puberty, Naming, and Fasting). She is a cultural advisor for community organizations and both provincial and federal agencies. Her acquisition of traditional knowledge from the Elders and other cultural teachers has prompted her to remain active in environmental and cultural issues. *Opolahsomuwehs/* Elder Dr. Imelda Perley has been pivotal in my journey because I credit her for all her guidance and encouragement that has led me to the work I have been doing for our community and for the larger Indigenous community and allies. *Opolahsomuwehs/* Elder Dr. Imelda Perley has generously donated much of her time to do different *Kci Ntoltahkewakon /* Ceremony and language nests in our community. Elder Imelda Perley, *Opolahsomuwehs* is respected in our community and held in high regard. In her role, she has served more as a lifelong Elder/consultant to this ceremony. She has also assisted in translating much of this work, and it is our hope that, one day, this all can be fully translated into the *Wolastoqey* language.

Anna is a well-respected Elder in the community who prefers to work behind-the-scenes, offering knowledge, guidance, and support for community growth and our peoples. She has a strong interest in this work because she has vocalized that we need to be working harder to empower our youth and give them the tools they need to be grounded in their culture and language. Further, she recognizes that these youth and the youth to come are our future leaders, and it is our responsibility to nurture the learning spirits of our youth.

Shirley is another well respected Elder in the community. Many of our Elders are shy to share their teachings. Many of the Elders share their teachings through Shirley

because she is our Elder Program Coordinator in the community. She is privileged to work and hear the voices of our Elders every day. She has become a spokesperson for our Elders and always says when she shares in Talking Circles that it is a lot of her own feelings but also the feelings and concerns of many of our Elders. In a community context, she is respected for this role but also is held in high regard for her 20-plus years serving as a leader in the community.

Weaving My Experiences with the Experiences of *Mawi Nucikahsicik*

Having introduced much of my own early educational narrative as a *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* / Indigenous learner, as well as the educational narratives of some of the *Mawi Nucikahsicik* who are all *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* and will be sharing more of their collective wisdom later, I wish to deepen our understanding of Storywork and personal narrative as the first step required in this journey of motivating curriculum change.

Within my Storybasket, I carry many stories that make up my identity and my purpose. Further to this, I carry stories that may not necessarily be for me but are meant to be passed on. One story that I hold close to my heart, that I feel will also help others, is my story of *Tuhkiye Ncocahq* / Spiritual Awakening. As I have shared throughout this study, I have gone through many different stages of feelings in being proud of my identity, while also having times when I was not so proud. Not feeling proud came when I could feel the tensions and racist attitudes towards my peoples. Also, at some point, I did internalize these attitudes and believed what non-Indigenous people said about Indigenous peoples because some days I saw it with my own eyes—drugs, alcohol, trauma, anger, etc.—without really understanding the historical and collective contexts. During these times, I did not quite understand why I saw what I saw, but now, with

more lived experience and learning, I am beginning to recognize the effects of intergenerational trauma. I now more clearly understand why this person did this or acted this way. It hurts my heart when I think about this. Sadly, to this day, I see the effects of intergenerational trauma and systemic racism that our peoples still deal with daily.

Seeing and experiencing all of this and remembering my Spirit name and its commitment has really inspired me to work for and with my peoples to reconnect all of us with opportunities to learn and share our language and culture. In my university years, I met *Opolahsomuwehs* (Elder Imelda Perley) and got to know her and be a part of her journey to heal our communities through language and culture. I remember any time I was in the same room with *Opolahsomuwehs* (Elder Imelda Perley) I could feel a positive and nourishing energy. Her passion and love for our peoples shone bright, like the sun in the sky. I remember feeling somewhat ashamed of any previous ill feelings I may have had about my language and culture, and in these very moments, I made it my commitment to work with *Opolahsomuwehs* (Elder Imelda Perley) towards the same goals. Imelda began to teach me about my language and culture, and I felt a sense of healing in my heart. As I learned more and more, I began to beam with pride and started to share these feelings with my community. *Opolahsomuwehs* (Elder Imelda Perley) taught me how to be a leader and how to bring opportunities to my community. This work began to bring me a sense of nourishment and purpose. I have been doing events and programming that bring my community together ever since.

There were times in the mainstream university when I experienced racism, but by then my cultural pride was growing stronger, and I was better equipped to know how to respond. As I continued on my academic journey, I noticed, too, where several changes needed to occur in order to give future *Skicinuwí Kehkimisicik* a more culturally relevant and inclusive education. For me, this meant stepping up to work with all our Indigenous scholars across the globe to continue to make the argument that there is room for Indigenous worldviews, that we do not have to operate from a colonial construct in order to be successful. As there were not many other Indigenous students in the doctoral program at UNB, I knew that I had to make my time in the program meaningful to help pave the way for students to come after me.

For me, my purpose has always been to improve education for our peoples. In my first comprehensive exam, I was asked about bridging the knowledge of the academy and making room for Indigenous methodologies. I called this part of my journey, "*Nikanaptaq: Tuhkiye Ncocahq / Awakening our Indigeneity.*" I cannot mention this part of my journey without talking about *Two-Eyed Seeing* (Hatcher et al., 2009), the bridging between Indigenous and western knowledges at the academic level, led by Indigenous-language-speaking Elders, which has increasingly been seen as a highly valuable contribution to the body of academic literature. Through this two-eyed seeing, Indigenous peoples are able to maintain the integrity of the local cultural ways and to situate ourselves in the history of our peoples, just as I situated myself through our narratives in our history, family, traditions, and power relations in the local community. As I move into the topics of cultural inclusivity and the social development of the

academy, I am constantly reminded of the colonial machinations that have affected that history, with resulting Euro-cultural distortions between Indigenous methodologies and those of mainstream academia that remain firmly rooted to this day.

When exploring the language of “cultural inclusivity,” I can easily become an outsider looking in, trying to relate to other ethnicities or misrepresentations of peoples who have been on the oppressed side of education. Living and experiencing this oppression as an Indigenous person has helped me better understand current issues in education and how oppressive systems, constructs, and tendencies have impacted and excluded “minority” groups, including the First Peoples of this country now known as Canada. When engaging in conversations about inclusivity, it is important to think about different ways for educators to be prepared to dismantle these barriers. “Here Comes Everyone,” developed by the Alberta Teachers’ Association, suggested that teachers need to know “how to prepare for teaching in an intercultural setting, how to acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes necessary to adapt successfully to culturally diverse classrooms, and how to teach and communicate effectively with students and their parents, whatever their cultural background” (2010, p. 4). Many Indigenous educators feel their non-Indigenous colleagues need a deeper and more thorough understanding of what it means to have culture sensitivity in the classroom, including more Indigenous content and perspectives in their teaching (St. Denis, 2011).

Being actively prepared to dismantle such injustices is key to succeeding and providing the best education for a classroom of diverse learners. Oftentimes, the best way to prepare is to let go of preconceived ideas of different cultural backgrounds or peoples: “if you form opinions of a culture based only on your experiences with one group of

students, your opinions will affect your relations with, and attitude towards and expectations of other students you encounter from that cultural group” (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2010, p. 6). In the case of my own experiences in the public school system, even as young as I was, I felt that others held preconceived ideas about me, I felt the stereotypes and misconceptions held about me, and I experienced immediate isolation because of them.

Many other *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* / Indigenous learners like me likely felt this same isolation and detachment within the education system:

The gap in achievement between students from the mainstream culture and those outside of it continues to grow. In classrooms where teachers depend on practices based on and steeped in mainstream culture, students from outside that culture will be left behind. In these classrooms, already marginalized students are further challenged and often fail, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure. (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2010, p. 6)

When considering cultural inclusivity, Indigenous peoples must remain rooted in our Indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives, and the shaping of Indigenous curricula must be an effort and collaboration of Indigenous peoples, *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik*, and education authorities. I believe that allowing all Indigenous peoples to share their backgrounds and ways of knowing and being promotes an intergenerational learning environment that empowers all learners and promotes relationship building and understanding of one another: “The only true education comes through the stimulation of the child’s powers by the demands of the social situations in which (they) find

(themselves)” (Dewey, 2013, p. 33). I believe in this approach wholeheartedly, and it aligns with my approach to Indigenous educational research.

While exploring current literature around Elder knowledge and Storywork, I will make my own attempt to create a *Two-Eyed Seeing* (Hatcher et al., 2009) lens for the academy, for myself, and for other academics to adopt in an effort to produce the most positive, transformative research for Indigenous peoples. Through sharing the contents of my Storybasket, including stories from Elders, scholars, and many others, we will begin to understand the place Storywork and Elder knowledge could have in academia:

Stories in the oral tradition have served some important functions for Native peoples: The historical and mythological stories provide moral guidelines by which one should live. They teach the young and remind the old what behaviour is appropriate and inappropriate in our cultures; they provide a sense of identity and belonging, situating community members within their lineage and establishing their relationship to the rest of the natural world. (Wilson, 1998a, p. 24)

Through Archibald’s (2008) scholarship, we have learned that we all are carrying our stories in what she refers to as our *Storybasket*. In weaving Archibald’s teachings with Atleo’s (2001), we can then refer to the collecting of stories that identify us as Indigenous peoples, as our *basketwork* (Atleo, 2001) With Mother Earth and Indigenous peoples always at the centre of our research, by amplifying our own voices and by directing our work first to an Indigenous audience, I hope to empower our peoples within our own basketwork (Atleo, 2001) —in the restoration of our languages and cultural teachings—

and to work alongside other scholars to continue to strengthen Indigenous voice and perspectives.

Elders as Experts:

Finding a Comfortable Home for Elder Knowledge Within Academia

There is a status that comes along with age among Indigenous peoples. In old age, one is considered to have acquired (knowledge, wisdom, status) by virtue of living a long life. ... Old age is a very productive stage of life. Old people have much to contribute in that they are the teachers of history, traditions, language and philosophy. They are also keepers of the law, nurturers, advisors and leaders in ceremonial practices. (Anderson, 2011, p. 126)

Understanding this idea comes naturally for us as Indigenous peoples. We learn within our culture that Elders are our knowledge holders, and we must nurture and respect this idea. In my academic work, I have been referring back to Elders for knowledge and guidance throughout this journey. I have come across some barriers on this journey, and the main barrier has been having Elder knowledge accepted in the academy in the same way academic knowledge is accepted. The struggle with this is that Elders who do not hold a graduate degree are not valued for their knowledge in the same way as academics who do (by the academics, not by the communities). In the academic world, those who hold these degrees have proven themselves in their world of knowledge, and only those holding the paper have the proof. In our Talking Circles, we learned that our *Skicinuwí Kehkimsicik* hold our Elders in high regard; although they felt the communication and relationships needed to be more firmly formed and maintained, they shared that our Elders are seen to be just as important, if not more, than those who hold degrees. Elder knowledge is respected and must always have a place in Indigenous education.

Through Storywork, I have come to know that understanding who came before me, and their groundwork, really has had a deep impact on where I am going on my Earth Walk and where I fit within that. We all come with a purpose, and when we listen to our grandmothers, our aunties, and our mothers, we learn about those before us and those around us, and through this relational process, we learn about ourselves. It is an intimate experience that is hard to explain here in writing. What I can say is that everything I have learned that has ever been valuable and integral to my journey has come through Storywork with family and Elders.

Storywork represents a nurturing and spiritual enlightenment for our souls, and in that, it is grounding and reassuring to one's place in the world. Place is an important aspect within Indigenous re-searching ceremony because it not only refers to the specific place of the individual or community, but also represents a spiritual attachment to land and Creation. We learned from Tuck (2016) that place and its meaning and understanding has been widely misrepresented, particularly in western translations of Indigenous perspectives. That is why for me and my work, Storywork on the land is vital. Storywalks (Tuck, 2016) have been something that resonated with me as a researcher for a couple of reasons. They are a useful tool when implementing Indigenous methodologies as we acknowledge and validate that Indigenous peoples do connect ourselves, and therefore our stories, to place—that is, to land. Therefore, when interviewing Elders, I have found it useful to take them to familiar areas or to allow them to guide me to these areas. I want our Elders, and all of our *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, to realize that times are changing, and we do not necessarily have to be in an institution to record our stories—this can happen in an environment or setting that is relevant to what we are talking about. I think we all can

agree that, if we were asked to talk about our childhood in a detailed manner, we could do so more effectively in the setting of our family home, bedroom, or even neighbourhood. There is an essence that cannot be captured when telling the story in an institutional room or an environment irrelevant to what we are recalling. It is the same for our Elders; the experience is more authentic when we agree to do so on their terms, in agreed upon spaces and places comfortable and familiar for them. Denying this is a discredit to the work and should be carefully reviewed in the ethics stage. With this knowledge, we decided that Storywalks would honour our Elders, their connection to place, and respect our community space and Mother Earth. Storywalks were included as an aspect of our data analysis stage where we could reflect back on the ceremony and the work that should be represented in the ceremony.

For me, personally, my Storywork involved making the effort to understand the story of my community, past, present, and future. In doing this Storywork, many Elders began to feel their worth and rediscovered their place in the community. I, myself, and the people of my community began to understand where we came from and where we were going. This act of awakening our communal story was and is powerful for my community: “When the stories of the past of First Nations are silent, there is no baseline against which to understand the present or how to move into the future” (Atleo, 2001, p. 31). Members of my community and I were able to open our eyes and shift our understanding about what the Elders had to offer. Children started to realize that their true education was lacking a major cultural component—the connection to our Elder knowledge and Storywork. As a community, we began to realize that this connection was not a new thing; in fact, this had been the way things were prior to colonial contact:

“Traditionally, storytelling played an essential role in nurturing and educating Indigenous children” (Thomas, 2016, p. 178). Denver shared with us that “Elders hold important wisdom that needs to be shared with us and the younger generations so we can pass it on.” Further to this comment, Drae made reference to many stories he had listened to; sometimes he knew exactly what they meant, but “some stories have teachings that are not always obvious.” Chief Shelley Sabattis also commented on this in her own way:

Some stories I was told as a young girl, I haven’t had to use again till at this stage of my life where the teachings apply to current situations in my life. It is absolutely amazing that our Elders knew to plant these seeds and stories in our head because they knew we would have to refer back to them and take the teachings and apply to our lives and everyday dealings.

In my work with Elders, I acknowledge that their knowledges are at risk of being lost. By “lost,” I mean the loss of Elders who have passed to the Spirit World without telling their stories. Those are losses that can almost never be recovered; I say almost because I know they are still alive and can be revived through ceremony. Some believe that the stories still do not have the same value or life because they are not told in the teller’s voice, but I propose that the younger generations are able to step in, tell the Ancestral stories in a voice they choose, and still be authentic to the story: “The beauty of storytelling is that it allows storytellers to use their own voice and tell their own stories on own terms” (Thomas, 2016, p. 242).

Centering and Situating Myself Within the Circle

“By inserting ourselves into these stories, we assume responsibilities— responsibilities that are not necessarily bestowed upon us by the collective, but that we

take on according to our own gifts, abilities and affiliations” (Archibald, 2008, p. 41). In this work, situating myself was critical to provide some overall social, cultural, and political context. When I thought about this part of this work, I had to think critically and engage in dialogue about what was important to share. The Talking Circles resulted in very long stories that I might share; however, I broke the longer stories up, chose stories with important context and information, and embedded these parts of stories into other stories in each chapter. Throughout, I shared my experiences in my western educational journey as an attempt to set the stage for the work. That is, why am I doing this work, why is it important to me, and how did I get to this point? How do we take this work and move it forward? What does this mean for education moving forward? Through acceptance of my Spirit name, *Nikanaptaq*, I am committed to honouring it. This includes the long-term goal of making this work useful, relevant, and alive, not just for my community now, but for our future generations. I will again share the meaning of my Spirit name because it is an important reminder for myself and the reader, providing social and cultural context to my commitment and responsibilities to my community.

Nikanaptaq translates to “one who leads with knowledge and leaves tracks for future generations” (I. Perley, Ceremony, 2016). I did not choose it. And although I had free will on this educational journey, I feel as if the tracks were already laid for me, and my role is to illuminate the tracks for the upcoming generations to follow. With that being said, part of my work as I have come to understand it is to allow room for our descendants to create their own tracks as we continue to adapt to the world’s changing climate and the development of new priorities for our peoples.

To better situate myself in the story of this work, I would like first to rewind to six years ago, when I had recently obtained my Master's in Education degree (MEd). I felt empowered and inspired to make positive changes in education, and I was excited about curriculum and Indigenous-relevant pedagogies. The new buzzword around campus—"decolonization"—also motivated me. As previously noted, Battiste (2013) examined what decolonization entails and what it means for Indigenous peoples—more specifically, the work that needs to be put forth in the processes of decolonizing our practices, our thinking, our institutions, and our peoples. Decolonization is about confronting and eliminating racism, a teaching that reiterates the feelings I had had through my educational journey. With all this freshly in my head, I was determined to work hard towards making positive changes in education for our *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* / Indigenous learners. I knew it would not be an easy task; nevertheless, I knew it was important work.

Before I decided to leave the university and devote my attention and new education to my community, I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Margaret Kress. To provide some context, Dr. Kress is a firecracker; she is what some would ignorantly refer to as a "radical" or an "angry woman" when, in reality, she is one of the most thoughtful people I know, and her drive, passion, and fuel are built on her vision to assist in making positive changes for marginalized peoples and to end environmental racism. She is an advocate; she is a warrior; and she lit a flame in me that burns deeply to this day. This new relationship would prove to be pivotal in my passion to pursue my education at a higher level. It was spring 2016 when I began to consider the idea of applying to the doctoral program at the University of New Brunswick (UNB). At first, the idea was

terrifying. Would I be smart enough to embark on this journey? Would I be supported properly? Could I commit to the demanding schedule a doctoral program requires? All these thoughts shuffled quickly through my head as Margaret (I call her Marg) looked me in the eyes firmly and, using that demanding kind of voice only a mother uses, told me that it was not about me, that the *Wolastoqey* communities needed me to do this. It was that comment that allowed my thinking to shift from being about me and my fears to being about our beautiful *Wolastoqiyik*. Just like Muskrat in the Creation Story of Turtle Island (I have included a short snippet of this story in Appendix A), I knew there were many sacrifices I would make to do this work. As well, I knew I would need a deep and sustaining commitment to see all the contributions through. She was and is right; our communities do still have a lot of work ahead to improve the quality of education Indigenous students deserve.

Later that day, I shared this new interest with the three people I always turn to for advice. First, I shared with my husband, Shawn, and he was delighted to hear and encouraged me to go for it. He stated he would support me the best he could. Next, I spoke to my mother, Chief Shelley Sabattis. Her reaction was the opposite of Shawn's reaction. She immediately expressed concern that I would be taking on too much, too quickly, and she told me there would be plenty of time in my life to achieve these goals later. I accepted her concern and reflected on it before going to my friend, Star. Star's reaction was a blend of both Shawn and my mother's reactions. She felt it was an exciting goal but cautioned me to think about the commitment. While taking all of their insights into consideration, I had another conversation with Marg. Not long after that, I

applied to the program, and just a few months later, I received the word that my application had not been accepted.

Anyone who knows me knows that when someone tells me that I cannot do something, it fuels the fire within me to fight harder. I called the program director and requested a meeting. As the meeting date and time approached, I started feeling anxious and really started to question if I were doing the right thing. I knew the easiest thing to do would be to just walk out and convince myself that I had tried, that that was the best I could do. While I fought back tears, I was reminded of Muskrat and his sacrifice and desire to help others. In the Creation Story of Turtle Island, Muskrat bravely dove to the bottom of the ocean to grab earth so that he could bring it all the way back up to the water's surface and make land for the peoples. Despite my fears, I decided to pursue the meeting. By this time, Marg had been my advocate and had spoken to many people at the university, lobbying to get me into the program. She spoke to the Dean of Education and the Director of the *Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey* Centre (MWC). Both were very concerned, and I believe they started to advocate for me as well. After speaking to the director of the program, the decision had been made based on a couple of factors. The first was that I had not gone the thesis route for my MEd, and therefore there had no writing sample for the committee to look at. Marg suggested that I could write a qualifying paper to submit as consideration for the Faculty of Education doctoral program.

In my meeting with the program director, I begged for the opportunity to submit a piece of writing that could demonstrate my ability to write academically. Honestly, in

this conversation, I began to doubt myself more. What if I could not do it? What if I went through this process and wasted my energy on a fight and later someone could turn around and say, "I told you so," when I failed or when I realized it was not for me? This fueled another fire within me, namely the one of not liking to be told what I can and cannot do, the one that challenged me. So, I continued my quest to be given an opportunity to prove myself. I left the office excited for the opportunity to prove myself, but I was also fearful that just maybe I could not meet their expectations. I related my feelings of doubt and fear to those of Muskrat and his effort to dive to the sea floor. Like Muskrat, it made it less scary to think that I was doing this to help others. Looking back, I must admit, I also had my own agenda of pursuing the highest level of education and achieving the level of status a doctorate provides. So, it was about advancing myself and proving to myself I could do this, for my community, and also to prove the doubters wrong. With all of these passions and fires woven together, and with my circle of supporters and cheerleaders, I began this journey.

Before giving myself too much time to reflect, with only a short timeline of two weeks, I committed my every effort and energy to writing a piece that could serve as a qualifying paper to gain entry into the doctoral program. Almost 50 pages later and an oral story recorded, I felt I had accomplished my goal. I then went to Marg to discuss the writing piece. She immediately began picking it apart and asking me for more of this and less of that. I felt like crying and was so discouraged. I had no choice but to suck it up and work on editing it to be more academically acceptable. I remember thinking to myself, why am I writing in a way that my intended audience would never understand?

My intended audience has always been and will always be our *Wolastoqey* communities. However, because it was being submitted for academic evaluation, I had to learn more of an academic writing style. I worked on it to the point that I barely understood what I was saying, and I truly wondered if my message had been lost in the translation from reflective writing to more academic writing. I felt as though I were between two worlds: one that was authentic to who I am and one where I felt as if I were writing to an audience that needed more context to understand what I am trying to say and why I need to say it. In one world, I have my peoples, the ones with lived experiences and not just an interest investment; in that world, I have a passion and commitment to be part of positive work and needed change—a change that is crucial for the development of strong culturally grounded leaders to whom the torch could be passed. When passing the torch, we also pass bundles, Sacred items, teachings, knowledge, and the tools to keep the torch lit in preparation to hand to our future generations. This investment is very different from the kind I felt in my circle of academic friends, and that the expectations in the second world collided with the first. My intent here is not to hurt anyone's feelings or devalue anyone's life work; however, I just want to provide some context for my investment in this particular re-searching ceremony. Thus, although I value all feedback, I am more critical of academic feedback as I need constant reassurance myself that I am not being lost in the collision of these worlds. I have begun to come to terms with the idea of being able to operate from a place of *Two-Eyed Seeing* (Bartlett et al., 2012)—that is, walking with one foot in each world (Graveline, 1998), but that is a journey that may never end. I have grown to

accept that I find ways be an academic and remain grounded culturally and spiritually in my community, but it is a constant work of selective interweaving.

I was lucky to have a good relationship with Dean Dr. Ann Sherman. Anyone who knew her also had good relations with her; she was just that kind of person. Not only did she sincerely care, but she was also keen on recruiting and supporting Indigenous students. I expressed my concern with both Marg and then Ann about losing the Indigenous message of my writing in academic prose. Ann, being the supportive and encouraging type, offered to take a look at my work and make a few suggestions. I began to better grasp the idea of academic writing at the doctoral level, or at least I thought I did. Although I was still unsure of my abilities, the piece I wrote proved to be enough. I was thrilled at being accepted to the PhD program and began reading more academic work to try and prepare for my new adventure. As I reflect now on the piece I wrote as my qualifying paper, I am reminded of the purpose of my scholarship. My paper was titled “Decolonizing our practice and Indigenizing our teaching: A *Wabanaki* model of support for Aboriginal students at the University of New Brunswick.” I will share some main points and snippets from this work here to give my readers an idea of my vision in the very early stages of my program. I like to revisit and use this work because it not only is a reminder of my growth, but also keeps me grounded in my purpose. The abstract of this piece reads:

“Many parents recognized that their children would need other kinds of knowledge to get along in the white world” (Knockwood, 2001, p. 210). As a learner, teacher, mentor and leader, I have begun a journey of experiencing and

understanding education from a *Wabanaki* perspective. On my journey, I have used my experiences and gained knowledge of transformative leadership in pursuing and furthering my education in the area of Indigenizing and decolonizing teaching practices. Throughout this paper, I explore and share a *Wabanaki* perspective, a review of literature related to Indigenous pedagogies and the structuring of a *Wabanaki* model of support for Indigenous students who face barriers in education. Included in this model of support is an intentional place for oral traditions and storytelling. (Sabattis, 2016, p. 13)

When I began this paper, I was writing a response to UNB's School of Graduate Studies, wanting them to acknowledge and validate my scholarship and experience as a *Wolastoqey* educator, advisor, scholar, and researcher. I wanted my experiences to contribute to the active efforts of decolonizing the academy at UNB, including influencing them to actively make more efforts to recruit, encourage, and support Indigenous graduate students. Writing this directly to the university brought on many different emotions. I remember at one point feeling knots in my stomach at the thought of how they may receive my response. Through following the work of other scholars, I knew that this was not something new and that many others had been making these same arguments for a long time. Like Muskrat, I decided to persist and do my part for the common good, so I stood on the shoulders of other Indigenous scholars and worked to carry the collective effort of decolonization forward.

For that paper, I discussed my role in the Indigenous Bridging Year program, its significance with respect to the Indigenization of the university structure, and I explored

the creation of a welcoming service for Indigenous students. Part two of the paper drew on relevant literature, some of which I had garnered during my MEd studies, which outlined the scholarship, theories, and practices conducive to a *Wabanaki* model of support for Indigenous students. The paper's third part focused on a *Wabanaki* model itself and how the academy must transform itself through a process of decolonization, including the adoption of Indigenized policies, practices, and curriculums. I included an example of a core piece of entry curriculum to support Indigenous students.

An important aspect of centring and situating myself within the topic of the *Wabanaki* (now *Wolastoqey*) resurgence of education and the re-searching ceremony overall was the leadership role I had been holding and continue to hold in my community. At the tender age of 21, I was elected as a leader in my community, and at the time of applying to the PhD program, I was serving my third term in this role. As a child, my Ancestor gave me a special gift—the ability to understand peoples and the gift of leadership. I give gratitude for that gift, as well as the gift of being *Aqami Cocahqin / Two-Spirited*. Both of my parents are *Wolastoqey*. My mother, Shelley Sabattis, is currently Chief of *Welamukotuk* and, as I mentioned, my father passed away when I was just ten years old. With my mother being a leader, I have felt as if I have been on this journey of leadership for most of my life. She has taken me under her wing, and I have learned and continue to learn a great deal from her. Although my father is not physically here, his Spirit is always with me, and I feel his support and guidance daily.

At a very young age, through mentorship and guidance from one of my Elders, Imelda Perley, I realized I was destined to be a leader in my community. Elder Imelda

Perley was an instructor at UNB through the MWC. In her course, I learned about my language, my culture, and how I could help our communities through obtaining a post-secondary education. Imelda always told me that I had a purpose and that I was a leader. This idea was intimidating to me, and some days still is, but I accepted her words, and through her guidance, I began to show growth and better understanding of my purpose. In her course work, she tasked me with organizing community events and awareness-type work, including planning, facilitating, and hosting gatherings for my community. To this day, I have planned and hosted hundreds of gatherings within my community and larger events to promote Indigenous issues, teachings, and visions. When I look back, I see her early encouragement as weaving together my purpose, my education, and my leadership to provide a sturdy basket for this work, which is a strong commendation for the importance of the Elders' roles in educational programs. Thus, although I was not accepted into the doctoral program until the summer of 2016, I felt I had already been on this journey through a more cultural and relational lens. All of this other work has led to this re-searching ceremony, its being woven together beautifully and intricately like the skilled work of basketry, for which *Wolastoqey* peoples are well known.

In addition to my community work, my long educational journey has been a vital part of centring and situating myself in this re-searching ceremony. Immediately after high school, I sought to further my education by attending the Bridging Year program at UNB, in what is now known as the MWC. On this journey, there have been times when I was unsure of what direction to take. Upon completing my Bachelor of Arts degree, I

pursued what I felt was right in my heart—an Education degree. This decision came easily to me as I had always felt like a leader and an educator in what I had done. The Bachelor of Education degree was such a rich learning experience, and I was anxious to start teaching; upon completion, I was hired to be the First Nations Resource Educator and to teach the Native Studies 120 course at Oromocto High School.

On my teaching journey, I have met many students who held various misconceptions and stereotypes about Indigenous peoples. I have also met Indigenous students who knew nothing about their own culture and were ashamed to identify themselves as Indigenous. This last was extremely troublesome to digest. I began to do work on educating not only my students in the Native Studies 120 and First Nations students, but also the student body, staff, and educators. I had many welcoming students and educators, eager to learn and share the cultural experience. Sadly, for everyone eager to learn, I had the same or more who were not open to the idea. It was difficult to accept it when students insisted on holding onto old stereotypes and assumptions about Indigenous peoples. It was even sadder when educated adults did the same. I groomed those eager to learn, made sure their experiences were educationally rich, and provided motivation for them to speak up and correct stereotypes and/or misconceptions whenever they encountered discrimination or stereotyping in their future careers or life. For those who did not give any attention to our efforts, I prayed to the Creator for their peace and began to think about how I could make a difference in reaching those types of people.

By the end of my first semester of teaching, I applied to do my MEd. I felt building up my personal education would give me a stronger voice to speak up, improve the lives and education of Indigenous peoples, and build respectful and meaningful relationships with the Indigenous peoples and the general population. Through my studies in the MEd program, I became exposed to relevant literature and research that promoted my thinking and stance on the issues surrounding Indigenous peoples. I began to gain theoretical and practical skills that would complement my life's purpose to improve the education—and thus the lives—of Indigenous peoples, as well as to assist in building respect, understanding, and meaningful relations with mainstream society.

While doing my MEd at UNB, I was also hired as the Bridging Year Coordinator and Support Worker for Aboriginal Student Services. The Bridging Year program, then having been in action for more than ten years, was originally designed to assist Indigenous students who did not meet the academic requirements for a desired degree program. These barriers to admission have existed for a variety of reasons, such as Indigenous students having been improperly advised in high school to take lower-level courses or educational gaps due to many underlying factors, including racism and lack of understanding from the school about the intergenerational traumas Indigenous peoples experience and live with. While the Bridging Year program was created as a response to students who, for various reasons and through no fault of their own, were not quite ready for university, in some cases, students who did have their requirements for the degree program desired to use the Bridging Year as a support system to introduce them

to the university life, helping them build a relationship with the MWC and their Indigenous peers.

Through my education and in this new role, I was able through direct communication and the collection of many stories to learn a great deal about Indigenous students coming from public schools, the lack of guidance and education afforded them in their previous schooling, and the issues they currently faced in their post-secondary educational journeys. The shortcomings of educational services for Indigenous students have been ongoing. My role as the Bridging Year Coordinator and Support Worker for Aboriginal Student Services was very rewarding as I worked closely with Indigenous students and my colleagues as we attempted to Indigenize the university by sharing and promoting our knowledge through language, culture, and ceremony. This was and is a complex process that includes researching current courses and their content and working with instructors to validate Indigenous perspectives in their courses. Collectively, with students, peers, and our neighbouring Indigenous communities, we worked together towards promoting Indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives. My colleagues and I at the MWC put a tremendous amount of work into planning and executing projects to Indigenize and decolonize educational processes within our institution, as well as within the public schools from where our students come.

Through working with communities and Indigenous peoples, I developed an ever-increasing interest in the emerging area of research on Indigenizing and decolonizing education. This was yet another stepping-stone that led me to this

re-searching ceremony. It is amazing to look back at key people and key life experiences that so beautifully lit the stones on my path that I would follow. Acknowledging the weave of my spiritual name, my community roles, and my personal and professional experiences within educational settings, it was and is important for me to address the topics of critical and transformative leadership in education.

On my academic journey, I have learned the importance of conducting critiques through literature reviews; this process has also taught me to be very cautious of this approach as a colonial structure. I have learned to envision it and use it more as an opportunity to look at what is out there, who put it there, and what their intentions were and are. As literature reviews remain a critical part of research in the academic world, I am reminded of Battiste's words about the effectiveness of conducting a literature review on Indigenous knowledge:

The first point is that in the European (or Eurocentric) knowledge system, the purpose of a literature review is to analyze critically a segment of a published topic. Indigenous knowledge comprises the complex set of technologies developed and sustained by Indigenous civilizations. Often oral and symbolic, it is transmitted through the structure of Indigenous languages and passed on to the next generation through modeling, practice, and animation, rather than through the written word. In the context of Indigenous knowledge, therefore, a literature review is an oxymoron because Indigenous knowledge is typically embedded in the cumulative experiences and teachings of Indigenous peoples rather than the library. The second point is that conducting a literature review on Indigenous

knowledge implies that Eurocentric research can reveal an understanding of Indigenous knowledge. (2002, p. 2)

Keeping Battiste's words at the top of our minds and always close to our hearts while we present our positions has been critical. We believe it is important to share these teachings with our colleagues so they can begin to learn about and adopt different approaches to understanding and promoting Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. It is this collective understanding and collaborative work that will help us be successful in delivering a decolonized approach in education.

Our Sacred Medicine Wheel has been created through a literature review and through consultation with Elders, scholars, and community members. The Sacred Medicine Wheel was created as a depiction of how to be while in this ceremony. It is also a reminder for other scholars doing work in this area to understand the model and implement its teachings into all work *with* Indigenous peoples. The model is foundational to the stories because it reminds the reader once again that stories are ceremony and that there is a protocol to listening to stories. This model is strictly just a guide and sample of the other possible models. This one was developed from a *Wolastoqey* perspective—more specifically, a *Welamukotuk* perspective. This model has guided the work and has led to the Turtle's back, some of the aspects of the Sacred Medicine Wheel model becoming themes in this work. As I share in this work, the Turtle has been an important teacher and symbol in my life and on this journey. Through ceremony and being aware of spiritual teachings and Elder guidance, we decided to use the Turtle's back to organize the 13 themes that have evolved from this ceremony. The Turtle's back has become the organizing framework for the findings, and each theme has been placed according to the

teachings of each of the 13 moons. Within my own personal narrative of experiences within public school education, I have spoken from my own perspective in an ongoing attempt to provide some social context for readers. I remember having had, throughout the early years in my educational journey, “Native Class,” which was led by an Elder from my community, Elder Mary Buchanan, and another Knowledge Keeper and Language speaker, Grand Chief Ron Tremblay. At the elementary level, our cultural classes were something I valued and thoroughly enjoyed. In reflection on these times, I can say that many of the teachings from these teachers have been implanted on my heart and I have carried them throughout my life. These two teachers I still hold in high regard for sharing their knowledge and language with me and my peers.

I have recalled from these experiences that, although I enjoyed the classes, I felt as though I were different in the eyes of my non-Indigenous classmates. I do not mean different in a way that I celebrated at that time—I felt as though there were something different about me in comparison to the rest of my class. By this I mean the stigma my peers held, or the thoughts that they had, about why I went to these different classes. I felt as if there was not enough education and explanation as to why I would be pulled from other classes/subjects to go into another room and learn different things. As I mentioned, I enjoyed the learning, but what did not make sense to me was that to learn my language and culture, it had to come at the expense of another subject. These thoughts were unsettling for me, but at least I was not alone in these feelings as my fellow Indigenous peers were also experiencing similar feelings. I always felt the stigma that others thought I was different and not as smart as them when I had to be segregated into another room for learning. These feelings were then confirmed when I would return to a subject and

had gaps in the content that I had missed—gaps in my learning in comparison to my peers, and in the curricula we shared, because I was being pulled to learn about my language and culture. I had mixed feelings that I often pondered throughout my early educational journey.

I still recall comments from my non-Indigenous peers that I was “stupid” or “not good enough to be in a normal class.” Although these words had an impact on my overall well-being, I still knew in my heart that I valued the cultural teachings that I received. The true sense of love I felt in these cultural and language classes really nourished my learning Spirit. As I navigated through my early years of education, I had feelings of pride while also feeling ashamed for missing other subjects or noticing when my peers viewed me so differently. I went through phases and mindsets, such as “I’m proud and my language and culture is more important than anything else,” and thought that “I can exist in both worlds and be successful in both worlds.” I remember making that extra effort at different times to work extra hard at other subjects so that my grades could present as evidence that I was smart enough to be successful in the western educational system. When I reflect back, I see I had a strong cultural foundation in my early years, but this would slowly diminish through the unpleasant experiences of racism that I would face on my educational journey.

As I ventured into middle school, racism was alive and well, and finding my place proved to be a difficult process. My first year in middle school was rough, and I experienced an internalized rejection of the western educational model. My marks were not great, and I remember being satisfied with just getting by with passes. It was not until the following year that I was lucky to get an amazing teacher who helped me see the

potential I had. I was also lucky to have had my mother as my cultural teacher in these years. These two blessings shifted my thinking and lifted my self-esteem. I began to get good grades while being a proud Indigenous child, and I even joined a drumming group that was invited to perform for various events and groups. This brought me great pride. My navigation between both worlds (Indigenous and western) was being balanced in a healthier way, largely to do with the support I got from an amazing teacher and having my mother closely grooming my love and pride for my Indigenous culture. I do have to add, though, that the process of being pulled from other subjects to get my language and cultural teachings was a model that still existed, but by then, I had adjusted to it, and it just became the norm for me.

As I reflect on this early narrative of a colonial educational system, I can clearly see that this system did not value or validate Indigenous language and culture. Of course, I was lucky that the system was different from the era of the residential school mentality where Indigenous children were denied access to language and culture and even punished if caught speaking or practicing our cultural teachings. In reflection, I clearly see a social context of “well-meaningness” in the schools/educational system mentality—they believed that they were already doing the most that they could do for *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* / Indigenous learners. I know from conversations with our Indigenous educators within the system that, for the most part, the system was resistant to change for improving education for *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* and more so wanted gratitude for allowing language and culture in schools, rather than critical input. These early steps of “allowing” language and culture in schools did acknowledge us as Indigenous peoples, but really did not assist us to develop what else was necessary for positive change to

really evolve. We had language and culture opportunities, but they mostly were delivered within the system in ways that made me feel marginalized. Therefore, I felt as if I was not able to fully embrace myself as an Indigenous person.

I share this narrative as an effort to identify as a *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* and to situate myself in a social context of shared experiences, reflecting the quality of education we received or did not receive. We navigated through a system that is Eurocentric and does not emphasize the true value of our identity and what we valued in education. Further, it put a cost on being allowed access to our language and culture—that cost being gaps in other subjects. I consider myself lucky for being able to have had the right support to navigate the system. I believe this is largely because my mother and grandmother were in education, and there was an expectation to be successful in a failed system. Here I must honour my Indigenous brothers and sisters who did not have proper supports or fell through the failed system. This is why this work is important to our community—there are different narratives, and the failed system has led many to traumatic relationships, addictions, and problems. I remember, at the time, being called a “good little Indian” because I complied with the broken system. In these cases, I often felt like an outsider because I could have taken a stronger stance on fighting the system; but as I mentioned earlier, that was a time when critical input for change was never going to be a two-sided conversation. We were oppressed; our opinions had no value to the larger picture of what education was and could be and should be. So, I learned to accept this, and to this day, this still brings me great regret because I remember, during this time period, wanting to get out of the community, and for some time, I did not want to be Indigenous. I was colonized in my thinking, I thought success was winning at their game,

and I believe this led me to see things more personally rather than collectively. Of course, this line of thinking was not authentic to my true purpose, but I was young and in survival mode.

As I went into my high school years, there were more experiences and feelings of less than and personal feelings of rejecting my Indigenous roots. In high school, racism was more prevalent in comparison to my earlier educational experiences. There were many stereotypes and stigmas held about Indigenous peoples, many that still exist today. Sadly, experiences and colonial mindsets have not changed much over the years. As this became more evident to me, I realized more why change was necessary, specifically for *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik*. There is a history of colonization and intergenerational trauma that, for a long time, has not been addressed. Thus, *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* were not being properly understood or supported. Experiences in education were triggering for many, both *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* and their parents / guardians, when having to address issues in the system. This left many feeling defeated or voiceless and, in turn, led to many pushouts, dropouts, and failures. We have an ongoing need in our communities for education to survive and thrive in the existing colonial world, and we have a hard time making it in current systems. Hence, in this re-searching ceremony, it is critical for our community to have a voice in creating change in the educational systems we are a part of.

Atkuhkakonol / Stories

Before entering the next chapter and the 13 themes to be placed on Turtle's back, I will share a story and the voices of the *Mawi Nucikahsicik*. I will do this here because I would like the reader to hear more from their voices before making our way to Turtle's back. The reader will begin to pick up on the themes as I share through story and the

voices of *Mawi Nucikahsicik*. To better explain the themes and how they were identified, I will tell a story that weaves together the stories of the *Mawi Nucikahsicik* with my own stories. With my own stories, I have my own lived experiences and ideas. Through stories I have picked up to carry in my Storybasket, I have taken the meanings and teachings I feel are relevant to this process. Here I will share stories within a story to help paint a picture of our themes and how they were born.

It was a cold winter morning. The sky was still dark when his alarm went off. The alarm was his least favourite sound in the world. He always set it a half hour early so he could hit snooze a few times before having to drag himself out of bed. Shortly after a third time is when he would start hearing his mother's voice reminding him that he had to get up for school. School was something Drae never forgot. Not because he enjoyed it, but rather because it was like a dark cloud hovering over him. Why did school have to feel like such a chore? Why was the thought of getting off the bus and walking into the schoolyard such a tedious thing? Sometimes there were good days but most of the time they were horrible days. Arriving in class and being yelled at to get his books out and show his homework. Who enjoys waking up to this? He did not really understand the homework because he found it hard paying attention in class when all he could think about was the recent death in the community. In a small community, all deaths are difficult, but this one was even more so. His cousin, only 27 years old. His poor aunt, no parent should ever lose a child. All the questions around it. Even though it was a year ago, it is still on his mind and on his heart. "Drae!" yelled the teacher, "where is your homework? If you don't have it complete then you need to come back at lunch and finish it, that is the only way I can help you. You need to be sure not to miss too many days,

Drae.” Drae just lifted his head and zoned out, but then realized what was going on. He quickly apologized and was embarrassed because his peers were watching. Two years later, Drae’s eyes open. It’s still dark and he is quick to jump out of bed to get a session in at the gym with his brother before the school day starts. After a good workout, there is still time to have a little breakfast and head just up the road to the *Kinapuwi Kehkitimok* / alternative education centre. He enters the school, and the smell of sweetgrass and sage floats through the air as the shining sun beams in through the window. Drae makes his way to where the medicines are burning. He quickly sets his books down and begins to smudge. He feels at peace. The teacher is calm and nurturing. His classmates slowly arrive, and they each greet him with a smile on their way in. Their hearts are happy. It is almost impossible to think just two years previous that he hated the thought of getting out of bed in the morning. His days are well balanced physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. Learning his language and culture every day makes him feel happy, like he is healing, and he can clearly see what he envisions for the future. Drae describes his transformation as a “*Tuhkiye Ncocahq* / Spiritual Awakening.”

Drae’s peers feel the same. Denver tells his peers that, when he is culturally grounded, he can better focus on the subjects. Sarah has said many times that the smell of medicines burning in the morning is enough to start her day with a happy heart. Dymond feels gratitude for where she is in her life at that very moment. Just like the youth, the parents and Elders feel these changes too. *Tuhkiye Ncocahq* is being alive culturally, being alert and open to the teachings, like *The Gift* story Ruth Scalp Lock (2014) tells us about. This is the gift they are finding within, and it is so healing and liberating.

“In the web of life, we are all related, we are connected to each other, the earth, and all of Creation,” said Chief Shelley Sabattis when the Talking Circle discussed relationality. The Elder circle also talked about this being an integral part of Indigeneity. Even our youth know of these teachings. The community has unity in understanding the importance of *Ksakutomakon* / Relationality. Dymond and Sarah laughed with pride when they commented about feeling like a family because it did feel very much like one. Everyone knew each other well; they have sat and listened to each other’s stories, their trials, and tribulations. While the different groups talked about relationality in their Talking Circles, it seemed to go almost hand in hand with *Tetpi-Wiqsonuwakon* / Reciprocity. Daniel talked about hunting and how he was taught to only take what he needed and to use all parts of the animal, but most importantly, he knew that he had to leave an offering of tobacco for the animal who had offered itself up to feed him and his family. *Sakom* / Chief Shelley Sabattis talked about her own journey of *Tetpi-Wiqsonuwakon* / Reciprocity and what it meant to her as a leader. She told the story of her decision to aspire to be *Sakom*. This was a scary decision to make, but also one she had in her heart as if it were meant to be. She had spent over 20 years working as a teacher with most of the kids in the community and had worked in the public schools; she has been well aware of the changes that need to happen for our youth and for our future seven generations. For *Sakom*, she believes that, because her peoples elected her as their *Sakom*, she is always in a reciprocal relationship to the community. She knows that every day is for the community—her work, her passion, and her commitment are to see the community flourish, to bring about healing, and to provide grounding opportunities for members and their language and culture.

In the Elders Talking Circle, many of them talked about stories and the importance of them. Anna said she had many stories she wanted to share, but that her grandfather, who is in the Spirit World, had not given her permission to speak just yet. She was very humble about it and said when she gets the message to share and speak more, she would. The adults in the Talking Circle recalled traditional *Atkuhkakonol* / Stories that had been passed down to them from generation to generation and, in some cases, they passed them down to their children; however, there were still many stories they had to share, and they were waiting for the right time because each story could have many different interpretations. Furthermore, the stories could have many different lessons, both obvious and hidden within, for the listener to decipher. Dymond believes our stories hold the power to change and also the power to hope. Many of her peers agreed with her, and Sarah said she wished she could hear more *Atkuhkakono* / stories from her Elders. Amongst all the *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, it was evident that they viewed *Atkuhkakonol* as integral to their education and to their existence.

Brittany, who has been on her own path of healing, recalled times in her life when she had been in a very unhealthy relationship to drugs. She had felt completely disconnected from her family and her culture. In fact, she had had no interest in her language, her culture, or her deteriorating relationships with her family. She hit rock bottom quite a few times, but the last time seemed to have had more of an impact. It was a cold winter day, and she was at a Healing and Rehab Centre. This healing space was where her culture was integrated into the service delivery. She remembered looking out the window at breakfast and having the beautiful view of the Sweat Lodge. Her first time entering the Sweat Lodge was emotional for her as she listened to the female lodgekeeper

share teachings about the Sweat Lodge. The lodgekeeper told Brittany that she was re-entering the womb and that the Sweat Lodge was the womb of *Kci Kikuwosson* / Mother Earth. This immediately made Brittany emotional because she also felt like she was reconnecting to her own mother whom she had hurt with her addictions. Could she ever get her mother and the rest of her family to forgive her and love her again? Brittany was emotional and began to pray to *Kci Kikuwosson*. What she had learned was that she had this rooted relationship with *Kci Kikuwosson* and her own mother, and this was through her *Psuhun* / Heart. *Sakom* was home in her community working, but she could feel the prayers and the love from her daughter through her *Psuhun*. While some family members still felt hurt, they were at ease with the fact that Brittany was in treatment. *Sakom* never lost the love for Brittany; she always prayed for her and provided her support and hope. Many of the Elders in the sessions also shared stories of hope and connected this hope back to the fire within their hearts. For some this fire would run low, while for others it burned patiently, waiting to help light the *Psuhun* of our youth. Elder Shirley shared in our circle that each of the youth also had this fire in their *Psuhun* and that it was up to them as Elders to keep it lit and nourish it. She went on to say, that is why we need to gain control of our education and teach our youth what we feel they should learn, things that have been passed down from Elders. Dylan and Chandler both shared that they had close relationships with their grandparents, but they wished that their grandparents would share more teachings and that they could develop more relationships with other Elders to gain their teachings.

As the youth carried on their Talking Circle, they came upon the topic of drugs and alcohol. Some admitted they had tried either and some admitted they had at some

point had an unhealthy relationship with drugs and/or alcohol. Some also shared that they still would drink or smoke weed here and there, but they did not see it as an unhealthy relationship since it was just done socially. Dymond talked about other ways they could be social, such as drumming, beading, or even doing some cooking classes to learn traditional recipes. The group went on to talk about the importance of treating their bodies with respect and that their *Elsonuwakon* / Physical well-being was important to their overall health. The group talked about a healthy balance, and Drae went on to share that he treats his body with respect, he trains every day, and he tries his best to eat healthy foods. For his spiritual self, he smudges every day and meets with Creator with gratitude and to look for guidance. Drae and the other students in the class all have learned the importance of having a healthy balance of *Elsonuwakon* / physical, *Wolamsotuwakon* / spiritual, *Pshuhuni-Elmulsuwakon* / emotional, and *Elitahasuwakon* / mental well-being. When the youth talked about this, you could see their eyes light up and feel the emotions within the room—this was important to them. Some felt guilty for not trying harder, and this was very evident—that these teachings should be a part of their everyday lives.

Charlotte, who has devoted her life to working with youth and teaching them language and culture, shared stories of all the different ceremonies she had been in and how she would like to share more of these with our youth. Our youth looked hopeful, they smiled, and you could feel the curiosity in the room. Charlotte also reminded the youth that every day is a ceremony, we greet each day as a ceremony, we give gratitude to the Creator, and we ask for guidance and support. *Opolahsomuwehs* (Elder Imelda Perley) told the group never to ask for strength because we were already all tried with many barriers in life and strength comes through our lived experiences. Charlotte

reminded us that life is a *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* / ceremony. Some of the Elders in the group echoed this teaching and it became an unspoken rule to always treat each day as a celebration of life and as a sacred *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*. Most important amongst teachings was the teaching of *Nusseyuwakon* / Respect. Each circle demonstrated this teaching by listening with an open mind, body, Spirit, and heart to each other and by leaving pauses when needed as people reflected on the words and feelings of the Talking Circle. *Sakom* talked about the earned type of respect that she has, but also the unspoken respect that we must have for each other and for all of Creation. “If we operate from a place of respect for all, then we could live a more harmonious life and be more closely connected to Mother Earth,” said *Sakom*. This includes respect for our *Hok* / body. Our *Hok* is our vessel that our Spirits are borrowing for our Earth Walk. *Sakom* told us that we must always treat it with respect and nourish it. “If we are good to our *Hok*, then it will be good to us,” shared *Sakom*. The Talking Circles were beautiful places of sharing throughout this ceremony. Upon doing Storywalks, we were reminded of the connection to place, to the community, and to sacred areas or places where we shared many memories. *Sakom* believes that, if we keep these 13 themes close to our hearts and if we weave them together like the art of basketry, our youth and future seven generations will have a strong education of self-discovery and a hopeful future guided by our Ancestors. Embodying all these teachings illuminated our *Cocahq Lintuwakon* / Spirit song. These teachings promoted a strong, grounded connection to our cultural teachings and this embodiment will allow our hearts, Spirit, minds, and body to sing the *Cocahq Lintuwakon*.

In closing this chapter, it was my hope to share stories and the power of the voices of the *Mawi Nucikahsirik*. When collecting and analyzing data, we found that an effective emotion code was necessary to share the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual experience of the stories being told. In the next chapter, I want to talk about what this all means for the future and where other Indigenous researchers can pick up where I left off to keep the fire burning as we pass the torch from generation to generation.

Chapter 6

Maqenasik 'Cicihtuwakon Kisokehkimsi Wicuhkemit Cihqonaqc Ewehkewok

Sankuwok Kisuhok / Data Analysis Through 13 Moons on Turtle's Back

Weaving the Voices and Medicine of *Mawi Nucikahsicik* into Themes

Now, I will share the story behind each moon, expressing briefly why each moon became the home to each of the thirteen themes found in the data, and share the stories related to each arising from the words of *Mawi Nucikahsicik*. I open with the preface of my childhood book: *The Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back* by Joseph Bruchac and Jonathon London (1992):

The native people of North America have always depended on the natural world for their survival. Watching the changes go on in the natural world with each season, they also look up into the Sky and see it changing. In many parts of North America, the native people relate the cycles of the moon (called Grandmother Moon by many Native Americans) to those seasons. In every year there are 13 of those moon cycles, each with 28 days from one new moon to the next. Many Native American people look at the turtles back as a sort of calendar, with its pattern of 13 large scale standing for the 13 moons in each year. As Grandfather says to Sozap and as the Abenaki elder said to me long ago, it reminds us that all things are connected, and we must try to live in balance. Not all Native American people talk about 12 or 13 moons. In some places, like the far North and the desert Southwest, the seasons are divided, between winter and summer or between the dry time and the time of rains. Even when Speaking of the moons,

some Native American nations use several names for the same moon because so many things happen in the natural world at that time. Among the *Potawatomi*, for example, February is known not just as moon when baby bears are born but also moon of snow and moon of Wolves. In this book we have chosen just one moon story from each of the 13 Native American tribal nations in different regions of the continent to give a wider sense of the many things Native American people have taught to notice in this beautiful world around us. It is a world which, as Sozap learned, must be listened to and respected. (p. 1)

First Moon, Northern Cheyenne: Moon of Popping Trees

Outside the lodge, the night air is bitter cold. Now the Frost Giant walks with his club in his hand. When he strikes the trunks of the cottonwood trees we hear them crack beneath the blow. The people hide inside when they hear that sound. But Coyote, the wise one learned the giant's magic song and when Coyote sang it, the Frost Giant slept. Now when the cottonwoods crack with frost again our children know, unless they hear Coyote's song, they must stay inside, where the fire is bright and the buffalo robes keep us warm. (Bruchac & London, 1992, p. 1)

***Wolastoqey* Theme: *Tuhkiye Ncocahq* / Spiritual Awakening**

The idea of *Tuhkiye Ncocahq* was a reoccurring theme with our *Mawi Nucikahsicik* because they felt this was an important part of our development as Indigenous people. Further, it is a realm where we are listening with more than just our ears. We are listening to our Ancestors through feelings, visions, dreams, signs, symbols, and we are listening with *Tpitahasuwakon*, *Hok*, *Cocahq* and *Psuhun*. In this Moon of the

Popping Trees, we are reminded that guidance from our ancestors and animals is always there, we must be listening.

***Mawi Nucikahsicik* Passages:**

Dymond: “I feel a longing inside me to learn as much as I can as fast as I can. I can’t explain the feeling I feel inside when I am in ceremony and when I am learning my language and culture. This feeling inside is empowering and I feel like it guides me in the direction I am supposed to go. Sometimes I don’t realize that my path and teachings are right in front of me and I just need to be in tune.”

Drae: “I feel more concentrated when I am around Elders, like they are there to point things out to me and share teachings, I feel the same when I am in ceremony, it’s like I have voices guiding me.”

Daniel: “Through teachings from my Elders, I am more aware of my responsibilities. It is almost like I have Elders in my heart, and they have always been talking but I haven’t always been listening.”

Shirley: “I’m sad to say that for a long time I felt a sense of disconnection to my culture because the demands of each day and the colonial ways. *When I was a little girl, I was aware of my spirituality, and I remember feeling love for that.* As I got older, I sort of got disconnected but I am happy that now my heart is thriving again because I am closely connected to our culture. I now am triggered with certain teachings; they slowly have been coming back to me and I feel the urge to share them.”

Sakom: “The voices have been speaking to us and sometimes we forget that, I am constantly reminding my children, grandchildren and all youth really, that listening

doesn't necessarily mean being silent, but rather listening with all of our senses and being connected to the Spirits of our ancestors.”

Listening is critical for *Wolastoqey* because as we learned from *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, all of our teachings are all around us, in Spirit, in dreams, through signs and symbols, through stories, teachings and connection to Mother Earth. The Creator and our Ancestors are always speaking to us, returning to our cultural realm and being aware of these communications refers back to this teaching and them of our spiritual awakening.

Second Moon, *Potawatomi*: Baby Bear Moon

Long ago a small child was lost in the snow. We thought she had frozen, but when spring came again, she was seen with a mother bear and her small cubs. She had slept all through the winter with them, and from then on the bears were her family and her friends. When we walk by on our snowshoes, we will not bother a bear or her babies. Instead we think how those small bears are like our children. We let them dream together. (Bruchac & London, 1992, p. 2)

***Wolastoqey* Theme: *Ksakutomakon* / Relationality**

Relationality is a universal Indigenous teaching. It is apparent that this teaching is close to the hearts of Indigenous people, and it defines our interconnectedness to all things and exists as an important aspect in our healing. *Mawi Nucikahsicik* felt this story was touching and presented an important lesson in that we are all related, and once we are aware of our relationships to all of Creation, we come to realize that sacred relationships and connections are possible. Sometimes we forget how connected we are to bears, for example, as some may be frightened by bears; but in honouring our relationality, powerful things can happen. Such as, understanding our interconnectedness

and relationship to all of Creation. Understanding our relationship and interconnectedness will bring about teachings that can deepen our understandings of all things, for example *Muwin*/bear, what teachings *Muwin* brings and the importance of having a reciprocal and respectful relationship. Once we understand the purpose and teachings of all things, we develop respect for them and this in turn strengthens our interconnectedness to all of Creation.

***Mawi Nucikahsicik* Passages:**

Daniel: “I know that we are connected to Mother Earth and all of Creation and I always remember and reflect on that. Just like when I see some litter, I know deep down that is hurting Mother Earth and sometimes we just have to remember our relationship to Mother Earth and all of Creation. These relationships will teach us things and guide us through our lives.”

Shirley: “I know my clan is raccoon and I look for lessons and teachings from raccoon and I know our clans are all related and we all have that love for each other as one.”

Chief Shelley: “Relationality is imperative to our existence. We as one community are all related as people of *Welamukotuk*. In an even larger picture, we as *Wolastoqey* are all related and on an even bigger scale all Indigenous people of Turtle Island are connected and all people all across the world. When we focus on our relations, we can be more mindful of respect and how to coexist in a gentle way for Mother Earth and all peoples. We may not all look the same, but we are all a part of Creation and that is an unbreakable relationship.”

When stringing together the words of *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, I am hopeful that their words will have such an important impact on the future of education in our community.

The teachings they share are from the heart and deeply connected to the teachings from our Ancestors. This brings me back to the story shared from Ruth Scalp Lock (2014), entitled *The Gift*, which was a reminder that we all have this inherent knowledge within us, we just need to be awakened to their teachings and all of which is found within. We are in such a critical time now in the world pandemic where we should be awakened to the gentle reminders from our Ancestors that the teachings of relationality are crucial to the wellbeing of Mother Earth. With focus and understanding of long-term relationality, we can begin to see the web of interconnectedness of all of Creation. Through this teaching, we can continue or restore relationships with all of Creation to honour respect for all. Coming together, like the single strands of the sweetgrass braid, will make us stronger and our efforts to protect Mother Earth and each other will be greater.

Third Moon, *Anishinaabe*: Maple Sugar Moon

Long ago maple syrup dripped, thick from the trees. All year round, you just had to break a twig and lie down beneath the tree with open mouth. But the people got lazy and when Our Creator, Git-chee Ma-ni-tou, sent his helper, Man-a-bo-zho, to visit, he found their village deserted and all the people asleep under the maple trees. So, he poured much water into all the maples so that now the people would have to wake up, make fires and boil down the sap to make syrup. They would have to work hard, for that maple sap would flow just this one time a year, the time we now call Maple Sugar Moon. (Bruchac & London, 1992, p. 3)

***Wolastoqey* Theme: *Tetpi-Wiqsonuwakon* / Reciprocity**

Reciprocity is a very important teaching that we all need to be reminded of. Further to this idea, it is taking only what one needs. Traditionally, our hunters and

gatherers would only seek enough to feed their small communities and all parts of animals were used. Medicines are laid when we take, and we are respectful about how we do it and not wasting any part. In this Moon, we learn about the Maple Syrup and how the people got lazy and would take more than they needed and started to forget the important process of hunting and gathering food. In this Moon's story, the Creator had to remind the people to be grateful and honour reciprocity by having to follow a process that honors the season, the trees, and others, by not overindulging.

Mawi Nucikahsicik Passages:

Charlotte: "We as Indigenous people know about reciprocity and teach our children. We know to honour both sides of giving and receiving. We know that when we have a meal, that it is a gift from the Creator, and we should make an offering for this honour. Also, we make offerings to the Earth, Water, Sky to thank for things we take advantage of like our rivers and fish, the sun, the moon, the seasons that bring about new teachings."

Sakom: "I am always in reciprocity for the teachings I learned in life, for our beautiful community that respects me as the *Sakom* and to Mother Earth for treating us well despite what we have allowed colonization to do to her. I feel it is within our teaching of reciprocity that we must wake up to these attacks on Mother Earth, share teachings and be reciprocal to what Mother Earth has provided for us, life, nourishment."

Daniel: "Being in reciprocity is being grateful for each day."

Allan: "I had a dream on this moon, in my dream all I could see was people taking more and more from Mother Earth, getting indulgent in materialistic things, hurting Mother Earth and she was crying. In my dream, I offered tobacco to her and apologized and started thanking her for everything she has given humanity. This moon makes me think

about this reminder that we must always give thanks and give back in some way. All the people just lying and drinking the maple syrup is clearly a lesson we all need to sit back and analyze, what is excessively taken, how can we take less and do more?"

My personal reflection here on reciprocity is to always be awakened to the gifts we are given every day. We must remember that each day starts with many gifts, and I believe once we are in a process of acknowledging and giving gratitude for these gifts, then we will be more in line with the teachings of reciprocity.

Fourth Moon, Cree: Frog Moon

When the world was young, Wis-a-ked-jak, the Trickster, met with all of the animals to decide how many moons would be winter. Moose answered, "There should be as many moons of winter as hairs on my body." Amik, the beaver, said, "There should be as many winter moons as scales on my tale!" Then O-ma-ka-ki, the little frog, said, "There should only be as many moons of snow as toes on my foot". Wis-a-ked-jak decided that this was right. So it is that winter lasts only five moons, and when it ends, the small frogs sing their victory song in the moon with their name. (Bruchac & London, 1992, p. 4)

Wolastoqey Theme: *Atkuhkakonol* / Stories

Atkuhkakonol translates to stories, which could include all types of stories including trickster stories. We had a hard time with this Moon as we considered naming it Trickster and the teachings that comes along with Trickster. What became evident, is the importance of stories like this and the teachings they give. Often we hear Trickster stories and other stories about how things came to be. We decided that stories are an important theme and critical aspect of education.

***Mawi Nucikahsicik* Passages:**

Daniel: “Elders carry a lot of our stories and share them; it is their responsibility to pass them on to us, but it is also our responsibility to listen and to seek them out. I know our Elders try to teach it to their nephews, nieces and grandchildren because they don’t want to see our culture vanish.”

Dymond: “This reminds me of our Eldest Elder Timer because he always shares stories like this, and he reminds us that we are to figure out what they mean on our own sometimes.”

Charlotte: “The true meaning of education is language and culture, this was all done traditionally through stories, and we need to return to putting more value on stories, their lessons/teachings.”

Brittany: “I still hold on to many stories told to me when I was a little girl. There were many times that I was at certain points in my life where I needed help or answers on something, and I remembered certain stories, and this helped me. When I think about school, I think stories, they were my greatest lessons.”

It is evident that *Mawi Nucikahsicik* value stories and the lifelong learning they offer us. In the Sacred Medicine Wheel that I developed, the outer circle is hugging everything within in it with stories. The stories are in a circular, non-linear model that teach us that the stories are never-ending, they blend into each other and create meaning and life lessons for all peoples. This is a strong emerging theme of this ceremony and reminds us all of our Storybaskets that we all carry. We all carry stories and nurturing the learning Spirit can only be done through the revisiting and sharing of stories.

Fifth Moon, *Huron*: Budding Moon

One year Old Man Winter refused to leave our land, and so our people asked for help from our great friend, Ju-ske-ha, known to some as the sun. He knocked on the door of Winter's lodge then entered and sat by Winters cold fire. "Leave here or you will freeze" Winter said, but Ju-ske-ha breathed and Winter grew smaller. Ju-ske-ha waved his hand and white owl flew down to carry Winter back to the deep snow of the North. The lodge melted away and the trees turned green with new buds as the birds began to sing and where the cold fire of winter had been was a circle of White May Flowers. So, it happens each spring when the Budding Moon comes. All the animals wake and we follow them across our wide beautiful land. (Bruchac & London, 1992, p. 5).

***Wolastoqey* Theme: *Kci Kikuwosson* / Mother Earth**

This Moon is acknowledging the beauty of Mother Earth and appreciating all her beauty and changes, and that each comes with many teachings. Our relationship with Mother Earth is the most Sacred relationship. *Mawi Nucikahsicik* felt strongly that Mother Earth was an important aspect of education.

***Mawi Nucikahsicik* Passages:**

Sakom: "Mother Earth is our first curriculum."

Charlotte: "Every year I ask our youth what they want to learn throughout the year and it is always language, culture, dancing, Mother Earth, Medicines—our youth are very eager to learn and I find they are more in tune with Mother Earth now than a few years ago. We are in the age of healing and we cannot have healing without nourishing our relationship with Mother Earth."

Anna: “I see so many youth respecting Mother Earth but then other times when night time rolls around they think she isn’t watching; I just want our youth to carry this loving and respectful relationship with Mother Earth all the time.”

Denver: “Mother Earth teaches us about life and I think our successes, and what we think is success needs to be balanced with the needs of Mother Earth.”

Drae: “Success is love for our mothers, including Mother Earth.”

Paula: “I think we are in the times now where we have to start being more cautious of Mother Earth and I think education should focus on rekindling the connection between our youth and Mother Earth.”

In the analysis of these passages, I have placed an emphasis on Mother Earth, and it has become one of the themes. It was evident that al *Mawi Nucikahsicik* felt strongly that mother nature and respect and reciprocity for her and all her gifts is an important teaching for our youth and future generations. Thus, in the weaving of a *Wolastoqey* resurgence in education, these teachings must be woven into the education model and curricula.

Sixth Moon, Seneca: Strawberry Moon

In the late spring a small boy whose parents had died when hunting game down by the River where the Jo-ge-oh, the Little People who care for their plants live. He shared what he caught with those Little People. In return they took him in a magic canoe up into the cliffs, taught him many things and gave him strawberries. He was gone just four days, but when he returned years had passed and he was a tall man. He shared with his people what he taught and gave them the sweetness

of red strawberries. So, each year, the Seneca's sing songs of praise to the Little People thanking them for the moon's gift. (Bruchac & London, 1992, p. 6)

Wolastoqey Theme: Pshun / Heart

This was an easy one for *Mawi Nucikahsicik* because they knew heart was instrumental to love for all of our teachings and all of our relations. The strawberry is symbolic of the heart because its beauty, nourishment and it looks most like the heart as far as symbols go. This Moon honours reciprocity too which is linked to the heart. Reciprocity is a mechanism from the heart. The heart is important in our education model because the heart reminds us of who we are, who we need to be and connects us to all of our teachings which are guided by the heart.

Mawi Nucikahsicik Passages:

Charlotte: "Success for our youth is pride in their language and culture, this will fill their hearts."

Paula: "Love for ourselves starts with establishing a love for our language and culture, that is when we truly get to know ourselves."

Drae: "For me coming to school and loving the environment, my peers, our teacher, our EA is my success, I feel like I'm already successful. School doesn't feel like a chore, it's more of a support to build ourselves into what we want to be."

Shirley: "Traditionally our communities were protected with love, love for each other, love for Mother Earth and respect, we need to teach our youth these ways and I am really happy that I am seeing this happen. All my relations."

Brittany: “When I see our community, I see a big heart, sometimes it needs to be taken care of and healed, but it’s always there and I don’t want our youth to ever lose sight of that.”

Our hearts beat everyday with the teachings and wisdom of our Ancestors. Our hearts keep us grounded and remind us that we are all earth children. *Mawi Nucikahsicik* all made reference to the heart at some point in their sharing of stories. It is imperative that our future generations are reminded of the heart, its teachings and how to keep a strong relationship between heart, mind, body, and Spirit.

Seventh Moon, *Pomo*: Moon When Acorns Appear

When the world was new it was covered with water until Earth Elder, the Creator, reached down to the mud below and placed it up on turtle's back. Earth Elder shaped the sun and the stars and then sat for a moment, thinking of what was most needed, what would help the humans still to come. That was when Earth Elder made the first tree, a great Oak with twelve branches arching over the land. Then, sitting down beneath it, the sun shining bright, Earth Elder thought of food for the people, and acorns began to form. So it is, each year, when the sun shines brightest these first acorns come and our Pomo people gather this moon's coming harvest. (Bruchac & London, 1992, p. 7)

***Wolastoqey* Theme: *Elsonuwakon* / Physical**

This story is about Creation and the physical gifts that we receive in this moon. *Mawi Nucikahsicik* talked about the physical gifts we are given but also the importance of taking care of ourselves in the physical realm. They also talked about taking the physical gifts from the creator and the spiritual teachings to balance a healthy self as well. This

also sparked conversation around drugs and alcohol and how they need to stay away from those poisons and focus on nourishing themselves with the gifts from Mother Earth. The moon is a reminder that there are gifts and reasons for those gifts.

Mawi Nucikahsicik Passages:

Drae: “When I was in public school, I didn’t care what I ate or I didn’t use the gym there because of other students and how they would look at us or what they would say. I didn’t feel comfortable, and on top of that in the classrooms I didn’t feel comfortable. Since coming to *Kinapuwi Kehkitimok*, not only do I enjoy learning, but now I focus on my health, we cook here, we have a gym, and we motivate and support each other. I can’t even begin to explain how much of a difference this has made in my life.”

Dymond: “We are big here on physical health, as well as mental, emotional and spiritual, all of these need to be key aspects of our *Wolastoqey* resurgence of education.”

Paula: “Health and the physical self are very important to me. I work every day at promoting healthy lifestyles for our people and providing education around ways to stay healthy. I feel strongly that the physical self should be an exploration that our youth journey on.”

Brittany: “I didn’t take care of myself for a long time. I know the effects of putting bad things in your body, I feel it, I live it and I think we need to watch our youth closely and keep them protected. I think more people like me need to share their stories with youth so they see the effects of bad decisions. I own my bad decisions and I know I have to do that in order to heal. It is a process and I am committed to it for myself but most importantly for my kids and to be a role model.”

Sakom: “Our youth should feel empowered to take care of their physical selves, healthy eating, exercise and being strong physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. I would love to see our youth balance the Sacred Medicine Wheel Teachings, I would love to have our own school in the community with a great big Medicine Wheel painted at the entrance and throughout the space so our youth are reminded they are each beautiful gifts and they all have gifts from the Creator and that maximizing their potential is a healthy balance of these teachings. These teachings should be worked into the curriculum.”

Mawi Nucikahsirik have talked about the physical realm as a teaching to take care of our physical, which for them is our bodies. They have outlined the importance of maintain a healthy balance of spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical wellbeing. For the youth this was also a good discussion around drugs and alcohol. There needs to be education around the importance of nurturing our body with healthy things and understanding the negative impact of unhealthy things like drugs and alcohol. In addition to awareness around the toxic things that can have an impact on our physical, there also needs to be awareness around what kinds of things we should be fueling our body with. I agree with *Mawi Nucikahsirik* who feel strongly that these teachings must be a part of the *Wolastoqey* resurgence in education. Through this teaching, we can raise awareness around traditional foods and the Indigenous Food Guide (Health Canada, 2019).

Eighth Moon, *Menominee*: Moon of Wild Rice

In the old days, they say, Bear came out of the ground and became a man, but he was lonely. He called to the Sky: “Thunder Eagle, come down to earth and be my brother.” Then the giant Eagle, who made Thunder and lightning by flapping his wings and flashing his eyes, flew down and he, too, became human. Then the

Creator, the Good Mystery, made the Thunder people and the water bearers, gave them the gifts of corn and fire. To the people of the Bear, the Good Mystery gave another gift- wild rice. When the Thunder people came to visit the Bear village near the mouth of the Me-nom-i-nee River, they brought with them water and fire and corn. The Bear People gave them wild rice in exchange. And so, it came to be that those two families lived together and harvest this special food in the wild rice moon. (Bruchac & London, 1992, p. 8)

Wolastoqey Theme: Kci Ntoltahkewakon / Ceremony

Kci Ntoltahkewakon, as we have learned throughout this study, is very Sacred and we must be reminded of *Wewisine Ewehkiyeq Kci Oltahkewakonol* / research is ceremony but also that every day is a *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*, and this is something the *Wolastoqey* resurgence of Education needs to keep at the forefront. This doesn't take away from other ceremonies like Water Ceremonies or Sweat lodges to name a few. These are still Sacred Ceremonies. The *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, however, all feel strongly that our *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* must treat their physical bodies and all of their being, as *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*.

Mawi Nucikahsicik Passages:

Sakom: “We are always in ceremony and should treat every day as such. Our youth and our all our people are all beautiful gifts as I said before, we need to remind them that they matter, they have a purpose, and that they will find this through ceremony.”

Drae: “I always tell my other friends how good I feel when I participate in ceremonies. I hope one day I can learn how to conduct certain ceremonies. I am a Grass dancer and when I dance, I feel that's my ceremony, that's my identity and that's my heart.

Ceremony is important and each day should start with one, even if that's just smudging and sending gratitude to Mother Earth Creator.”

Charlotte: “Our youth love ceremony, I am lucky because my job lets me experience and guide them and seeing their eyes light up and them beaming with pride, that is what I live for, it fills my heart.”

As the voices of *Mawi Nucikahsicik* have shared, ceremony is imperative to our overall wellbeing. There is much to learn through ceremonies, and they allow us to use all the gifts our Creator has shared with us. I feel strongly about ceremony and always having place for ceremony in all aspects of our lives, including education. Learning is ceremony and therefore it is imperative to personal and collective growth.

Ninth Moon, *Micmac*: Moose Calling Moon

In this season when leaves begin to change color, we go down to the lakes and with birch-bark horns make that sound which echoes through the spruce trees, the call of a moose looking for a mate: Moo-ahhh-ahh. If we wait there, patient in our canoes, the Moose will come. His great horns are flat because, long ago, before the people came, Gloos-kap asked the Moose what he would do when he saw human beings. “I will throw them up high on my sharp horns,” Moose said. So Gloos-kap pushed his horns flatter and made him smaller. “Now, Moose”, he said, “you will not want to harm my people.” So, the Moose comes and stands, strong as the northeast moon. He looks at us, then we watch him disappear back into the willows again. (Bruchac & London, 1992, p. 9)

Wolastoqey Theme: Nusseyuwakon / Respect

Mawi Nucikahsicik all have reiterated this very idea of *Nusseyuwakon*. This is not only for ourselves, Mother Earth and each other but all of Creation. Developing a respect for everything will also build strong leaders.

Mawi Nucikahsicik Passages:

Shirley: “I couldn’t imagine a school without teachings on respect. I think respect was drilled into my head by my parents and I didn’t question it, I just learned to respect everyone and everything. It’s a journey, it doesn’t just happen overnight.”

Sakom: “I am where I am today because of respect. We don’t always have to agree with everyone, but we must always respect their opinions and perspectives. Respect is key to good communication and peacefully coexisting. Some days are harder than others, especially when we are challenged every day, especially at the government level. It is hard to have respect for government when you look at our histories, but it doesn’t have to be an I agree with you kind of respect, rather, I hear you but I don’t agree and this is what needs to be changed, how to we understand each other and get there as a team?”

Dymond: “When I first walked through the door here at *Kinapuwi Kehkitimok*, I knew my first step was to earn and give respect, that was easy!”

Respect is a universal teaching. In *Wolastoqey* culture, respect is one of the pillars to our worldviews. We learn to respect ourselves, Mother Earth, each other, and all of Creation. This creates a harmonious relationship of one. In being in ceremony with the teaching of respect, I have felt the Spirit of the teaching. Therefore, respect emerging as a theme makes perfect sense in envisioning an education resurgence that will provide our

future seven generations with the knowledge of respect when navigating their personal and collective journey as Indigenous peoples.

Tenth Moon, *Cherokee*: Moon of Falling Leaves

Long ago, the trees were told they must stay awake seven days and nights, but only the cedar, the pine and the spruce stayed awake until that seventh night. The reward they were given was to always be green, while all the other trees must shed their leaves. So, each autumn, the leaves of the sleeping trees fall. They cover the floor of our woodlands with colors as bright as the flowers that come with the spring. The leaves return the strength of one more year's growth to the earth. This journey the leaves are taking is part of that great circle which holds us all close to the earth. (Bruchac & London, 1992, p. 10)

***Wolastoqey* Theme: *Wolamsotuwakon* / Spiritual**

Mawi Nucikahsicik feel strongly that *Wolamsotuwakon* is foundational to education because of all the teachings we learn when we honour spirituality. In this Moon, we see transformation of the Trees and this is related to the transformation our youth experience when they are spiritual; we see our youth grow and shine through their spirituality.

***Mawi Nucikahsicik* Passages:**

Dymond: "Spirituality as we talked about quite a bit now is very important in education and many people disagree with that and that's okay, but I feel strongly that our *Wolamsotuwakon* journey is education. We learn from our *Wolamsotuwakon* journey and it absolutely one hundred and ten percent belongs in our *Wolastoqey* resurgence of Education."

Daniel: “I’ve always been spiritual and that has got me through a lot of hard times. I teach my nephews about it and sometimes that is a hard lesson because you can’t see the Creator or other spiritual beings all the time, but we feel them and know we are there. Spirituality is learning how to feel them even when we can’t see and it’s there.”

Spirituality, as shared by *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, is a crucial part to our identity. Through spirituality, we can ask and learn from our Ancestors. We can also honour our Ancestors and their teachings. A spiritual awakening, as talked about in this study, is the idea of returning to our cultural realm and being in relationship to all of Creation. Spiritual is often something that we cannot see or touch, but rather we can feel and this is something our youth must remember and be exposed to in an effort to empower their spiritual awakening.

Eleventh Moon, *Winnebago*: Moon When Deer Drop Their Horns

Now is the time when all the deer must band together in their winter lodges. All autumn the bucks fight with each other, each one seeking to prove himself stronger, each wanting to be Chief of his people. At one time the deer kept their horns all year, but when they entered those winter lodges the bucks continued to fight with each other. Earth Maker seeing how the deer suffered sent Na-na-bush, his helper, to loosen the horns from their foreheads in this moon of late autumn. Now, each winter, when the deer gather, just as we enter our medicine lodges, they leave their weapons outside the door. Their horns drop onto earth, white with peaceful snow. (Bruchac & London, 1992, p. 11)

Wolastoqey Theme: Hok / Body

Mawi Nucikahsicik talk about physical self as being important and they also want our *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* to learn about how to respect their bodies, especially with each other. *Hok* represented as a theme makes reference to the teachings of storytelling and how we listen with our mind, body, heart, and Spirit. This is different from the teaching of physical in this work as physical refers to one of the four quadrants of wellbeing (Emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental). Thus, one refers to the process of listening while the other refers to wellbeing and balance.

Mawi Nucikahsicik Passages:

Daniel: “We need to understand our bodies and what they do and what we shouldn’t do to them.”

Dymond: “Our bodies are our vessels, our vehicles to connected to everything else and learning how to care for and respect our own bodies is important to learn at a young age but also to remind our youth of as they get older.”

Paula: “We need to teach our youth that our bodies are ours and we are in control of them, not anyone else. When I think about this, I think about sexual education and consent as well as self-love and self-care.”

Our body, as mentioned by *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, is our vessel, our body carries our Spirit in the physical world and it is an important teaching from our Ancestors, Elders and *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, that we have to offer the same respect to our physical being as we do to spiritual.

Twelfth Moon, *Lakota Sioux*: When the Wolves Run Together

Long ago, an old wolf came to that time when his life on earth could last no longer. “My people,” he said, “you can follow my footsteps when the time comes for you to join me in the Skyland.” Then he left the earth, climbing higher and higher, and each place he stepped the sky filled with stars. Shunk man-i-tu tan-ka, we call the wolves, the powerful spirits who look like dogs. When they climb the hills to lift their heads and sing toward that road of stars, their songs grow stronger as they join their voices. So, in this moon, we climb the hills, lift our eyes toward the Wolf Trail and remember that our lives and songs are stronger when we are together. (Bruchac & London, 1992, p. 12)

***Wolastoqey* Theme: *Cocahq*/Spirit *Lintuwakon* / Song**

We all have a *Cocahq*. We all have a *Lintuwakon* that’s our own. We share many songs together, but it is important that we all have our own song that our Spirits have been singing, our Ancestors have been singing to us. Our *Mawi Nucikahsicik* worked together to write a song that was born from this *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*. This is an important part of our identity, and we want to remind our *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik* to learn their songs, their personal songs and sing them every day. The song is shared in the *Wolastoqey* language and the English translation can be found in Appendix D.

***Mawi Nucikahsicik* Passages:**

***Sakom*:** “We have talked so much about what we would like to see for our *Wolastoqey* resurgence of Education. I would like to see a song, I would like to see the words, in our language played into a beautiful song. We all have shared so much, so many stories,

talked about education priorities and our cultural teachings. I believe we can put this altogether in a song and gift it to our community and future generations.”

Dymond: “I love the idea of a song and using it as our anthem every day. Never mind standing to O’ Canada, let’s stand to our own words, our visions, our future and let’s do it together!”

Anna: “I love hearing our youth sing our songs in the language.”

Charlotte: “Let’s have something specific to *Welamukotuk*, we all share *Wolastoqey* songs but I haven’t heard of a song yet that our community or someone in our community has written in the language. I think this is exciting and one of the greatest gifts we can ever gift our people.”

Lintuwakon/Song

All my relations

Honour and preserve their teachings

Language at the heart of our identity

Land and waters

Protected for seven generations

All my relations

Remember our commitment to Mother Earth

Protecting all of her beauty

Land and waters

Protected for seven generations

Mother and child

First treaties that teach our children

Remind our Elders of their duties
Be kind and respect all of Creation
Tobacco for our prayers
Honour four directions
Decolonize our classrooms
Determine our own priorities
We don't fight with anger
That is not our ways
Passed down from our Elders
Supporting and guiding our way
We must step up
Now is our time
To ignite the eighth flame
Lighting the way for our future
Thank you Creator
We love you
Turtle for truth and long lasting life and good health

Our Indigenous songs are a beautiful part of our identity. Songs are more than just music for *Wolastoqiyik*; they are connection to all things, they are in beat with our Earth Mother's heartbeat, they are teachings, they are stories. Through weaving together the teachings our *Mawi Nucikahsicik* have shared, it warms my heart to see song emerge as one of our themes.

Thirteenth Moon, *Abenaki*: Big Moon

The Elders say our land was shaped by Oh-zee-ho-zo, the Changer, who formed himself out of the dust which fell from Creator's hands after making the world. He pushed against the earth to rise and great mountains rose up on either side. Then the waters flowed into the place where he stood and made Lake Champlain, the lake we call Peh-ton-ba-gok, the waters between. When Oh-zee-ho-zo's travels on this earth were done, he came back to rest by this lake once again, making the circle complete. So it is that our own People of the Dawn place one final moon at the end of the cycle. We call it Kit-chee Kee-sos, Big Moon. Its name is the last in our circle of seasons, thirteen moons on the Turtle's back.

(Bruchac & London, 1992, p. 13)

***Wolastoqey* Theme: *Kcicihtuwinuhticik* / Elders**

Kcicihtuwinuhticik and their role in our lives and communities are key to positive growth. We had a lot of dialogue around Elders. Many talked about what an Elder meant to them and the impacts Elders have had on them and the impact they have on our *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik*. When the Elders spoke, they longed for more opportunities to engage with Youth. *Mawi Nucikahsicik* all felt strongly that we need to continue to make space for Elders in education and in the community. We can also encourage community members to help Elders when they can or even visit so that their stories and teachings can continue to be passed down. In our own school one day and within our *Wolastoqey* resurgence of education, Elders will have a place. The youth are eager to learn and build relationships, and our Elders are eager to share.

Mawi Nucikahsicik Passages:

Daniel: “They (Elders) have a lot of knowledge and carry it on but, an Elder tries their hardest to keep their language going for as long as they can. They try to teach it to us and it is up to us to also put that effort forth. We can’t have education without Elders.”

Sakom: “Our Elders are Sacred and we must honour and protect their knowledge. I believe we as leaders in education can implement Elder knowledge into our schools. We have been working on having an Elder-in-Residence at our schools, I think when we open our own school, this will be an important position to keep as a priority.”

Dymond: “An Elder for me is someone who I highly respect, somebody who sees the lesson and positive in every situation. I think they need to be more active in sharing and that is also up to us too to create a platform and opportunities for relationship building between Youth and Elders.”

I have always had a deep connection, love respect and understandings of our Elders and the knowledge and teachings they hold. I have often reflected on my own life and purpose in life and in these situations when needed, I seek the guidance of my Elders. I have been very blessed to have powerful and loving relationships with many Elders. I have drawn on many teachings from my grandmother’s work that asked future generations to heed the lessons of our Elders in an effort to empower our future seven generations with the teachings needed to navigate the evolving world. *Mawi Nucikahsicik* had a lot to share about Elders and it became very evident that there has to be a place for Elders in our everyday lives and in education. It was suggested that when we do open our new school, that we have an Elders wing, where there are not any expectations of them other than just being present and doing what they feel is important in the moment each

day. Therefore, Elders as a theme in the resurgence of education is vital to the success of our youth and future generations.

The process of data analysis was sort of backwards for me. I say this because I was in relationship with the data from the time of each ceremony. Therefore, the words spoken, ideas and the stories shared, were on my heart. I used the Sacred Medicine Wheel to place my research questions and then input all the data within the model. At that point, by looking at the data organized in this way, I still was not sure what to make of it. In gathering thematic notions, I referred to Saldana (2016) in a process of preliminary jottings, which is the process of coding as I collect data. This felt more authentic to me because as I was in the moment, in ceremony, I felt connections to words shared by *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, often I took notes and highlighted these special moments in the process. It took paying attention to signs/symbols and teachings strategically placed throughout my life to come to the realization that the turtle had to be a tool of data analysis. So, through this sacred and spiritual process, the Sacred Medicine Wheel evolved into the turtle and the Thirteen Moons on the Turtle's Back. At this point it became increasingly obvious that the Turtle was placed on my journey to help in this regard. This realization and awakening were a beautiful spiritual awakening for me. From this point I put focus on effective emotion coding because I knew that I was in relationship with Storywork and had a reciprocal obligation to listen with heart, mind, Spirit, and body. Angus (2017) shares, "Recent studies suggest that it is not simply the expression of emotion or emotional arousal in session that is important, but rather it is the reflective processing of emergent, adaptive emotions, arising in the context of personal storytelling and/or Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) interventions, that is associated with change" (p. 253).

This closely mirrors teachings of traditional storytelling and the art of listening with an open mind, Spirit, heart, and body. As I was connected to each story, I kept this in mind, body, Spirit, and heart. Angus (2016) also reiterates the same kind of ideas that I talked about earlier in this chapter: “Recovery is consistently associated with client storytelling that is emotionally engaged, reflective, and evidencing new story outcomes and self-narrative change. Implications for future research, practice and training are discussed” (p. 253). In other words, empowering the storyteller to firstly acknowledge their own authorship and power and secondly being able to see and experience how these stories can contribute to healing and social change.

So, while we navigated from The Sacred Medicine Wheel model to the Turtle’s back, we carried all of these emotions into the teachings of each moon on the Turtle’s back. I believe the Sacred Medicine Wheel model is a representation of effective emotional coding because it serves as a reminder for how to stay connected to the stories through an Indigenous paradigm. I feel such strong emotions when I think about this way of data analysis and how empowering it is to those sharing their stories. Our Ancestors and Elders are always teaching us that we are equipped with everything we need to navigate life, that everything is deep within ourselves.

Chapter 7

Nikanaptaq Leading With Wisdom and Leaving Tracks for Future Generations

As my conclusion to this work, and in cooperation with my community members, I have developed a short summary devised from our original questions. This summarization comes before my final thoughts on how we might move forward as a community of Indigenous learners and *Wolastoqiyik* nation builders.

- *What does success look like to Wolastoqey youth and Elders?*

Success is being grounded in one's identity, their language and culture. When our youth arrive at this state of being, they have a glow about them (Perley, personal communication, 2016).

- *How might this success be measured?*

This can only be measured through ceremony and with Elders. A spiritual awakening is difficult to measure and document on paper, it is a spiritual state of being that is felt through our mind, body, Spirit, and heart (Sabattis, personal communication, 2019).

- *What are the challenges and barriers to learning?*

In this day and age, the barriers and challenges we face are the colonial contrast of education. We are weary of constantly having to argue and show why these changes are needed. We have been speaking and sharing since time immemorial, we are at a point in history where our voices need to be heard. We are challenging the colonial constructs and the powers that be. They need to support our voices and step aside. We are more than capable of explaining and planning for our future generations.

- *What is oral knowledge and is that a vital part of a person's education?*

Oral knowledge is everything in our culture, many aspects of our learning is oral, and these oral histories must always be woven into our resurgence of education.

- *Who is an Elder? What characteristics and gifts do they hold?*

An Elder is someone with traditional knowledge and they hold the gift of sharing and passing on this knowledge to future generations. Our Elders need to be respected more for their knowledge as they are the scholars in our culture.

- *How might we both use and protect Elder knowledge in education?*

Dymond and Shelley both strongly feel that, when our school is built and designed, these teachings will be woven throughout. They envision a wing of the school to be for Elders who are always there for support and teachings. We can't fathom a school without having Elders-in-residence to support learning through passing on of stories, language, and traditional teachings.

- *What can youth voices tell us about education?*

Our youth are the future, our youth are who we are holding the torch for, when they are ready, we hand them the torch and the torch must continue to be passed from generation to generation. Our youth are the dreamer generation, they are dreaming of our past and of our future, our Ancestors are speaking through them. Our youth voices are everything and must be heard and utilized in education.

A Reflection for the Future

For future planning, and in thinking about Indigenous research methodologies for our community, there are some critical issues to think about. Talking Circles, Storywork, and Elder knowledge hold vital keys to the learning within our nation and we must

continue to have discussions of where and how these fit within the scope of our work within the academy. Personally, this has been a struggle for me, because early on in this process, I found myself immediately dismissing non-Indigenous knowledges. At times, I have been feeling anger towards the academic world for not making room for Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous knowledges. As I mentioned earlier in this study, I even once considered myself to be a voice of authority and insider to all Indigenous research. With that being said, I must be clear in why. The sole reason is to ensure that research involving Indigenous people adheres to local protocols and that the right people are consulted. Through self-discovery of my Sweetgrass braid of identities, I began to realize that my stance needed to be reconsidered. It has been a learning process, but I now understand myself better and my place within the academy. Through *Tuhkiye Ncocaḥq*/my spiritual awakening, I have learned, my role is to stand on the shoulders of previous scholars, advocates, and Elders, to carry their teachings forward, and in some cases, create a more peaceful place for them to exist in the academic world. In this discovery, I refer to the work of Hatcher et al. (2009) and their work on “Two-Eyed Seeing”: “inherent in the Two-Eyed Seeing approach is a respect for different worldviews and a quest to outline a common ground while remaining cognizant and respectful of the differences.” While engaging in this work, I came to realize that I must also adhere to the same self-reflective protocol that Venkateswar (1998) arrived at: “Locating me as Indigenous, while differently located to Sita, does not give me the mandate to speak for all Indigenous peoples; we are not homogenous...So I want to remind myself, as much as anyone else that as I join this conversation, I am a, not the, Indigenous voice” (p. 247).

When I reflect back on my experience thus far, I acknowledge the hardships and obstacles I have faced. Doing so has been a teaching I earned through Storywork and my own Basketwork. In moving forward, there will be more obstacles and barriers in the effort of bridging knowledges in a Two-Eyed Seeing approach to Indigenizing our institutions, but I will work to consciously embrace the barriers, because they too, come with important teachings. For every door that has closed on me, I have been able to transform the energy into a learning process, which always led me to another door. Earlier, I storied about being initially rejected for the Master of Education and the PhD program, with a little work and within a short time, I was able to get accepted. This found success encouraged me to carry my education a step further and learn even more about myself. These stories are carried in my personal Storybasket and they help keep me grounded, and I believe that someday they can be used to help others reflect and learn more about themselves too. Through these stories, I have found my place, and now know where I fit, in the area of honouring Storywork, Elder knowledges and helping them find a peaceful place to coexist with the other knowledges of the academic world.

I see my own Storybasket as healing and as ceremony, as a process of transformation, and the foundation to my *Tuhkiye Ncocahq*. Wilson (2008) shares with us the idea of research as ceremony, and this has been a lived experience for me, a theme that weaves through my work:

That's the spiritual part of it. If you talk about research as a ceremony, that's the climax of the ceremony, when it all comes together and all those connections are made. Cause that's what ceremony is about, is strengthening those connections. So maybe when research as a ceremony comes together, when the ceremony is

reaching its climax, is when those ideas all come together. Those connections are made. (p. 89)

However, I don't see my journey as complete or even close to being complete. As my journey goes on, I remain open to the unknown, to the teachings and the path the Ancestors create for me. My research will continue to be ceremony for me, as well as a significant part of my everyday life and community relationships. Wilson (2008) shares Elder teachings that really make sense to me, and apply directly to the re-searching ceremony that just unfolded:

The importance of the spirituality in ceremony as well as everyday life was stressed to me by one of my Elders. He always said that the part of a ceremony that people see, like the sweat lodge, the communion or whatever, is only the period at the end of a long sentence. There is a lot of work, dedication and time spent in building up the relationships with the cosmos that allow the visible ceremony to happen. (Wilson, 2008, p. 90)

In moving forward with openness to growth and change, we can begin to better understand our purpose, and thus, for me, I am growing to better understand the necessity at this time for collaboration and working to explore the process of bridging knowledges more deeply to peacefully coexist. That is, I am being challenged by this work, not to view my worldviews and Indigenous perspective as the dominant perspective, but rather to respect all knowledges and how they collectively piece together to promote a better understanding for all sides. My Elders have taught me that we all are interrelated and together we create a balance that creates peace, and this is what I want for the academic world. Hatcher et al. reiterate the need for balance: "The Two-Eyed Seeing approach

used in Integrative Science seeks to avoid knowledge domination and assimilation by recognizing the best from both worlds” (2009, p. 141).

I have described my journey as learning to “play the game” that is, I am learning the system: how to write and how to be heard in a Western world and informing myself and my work by learning the foundations of social research (Crotty, 1998). On this journey, I had to learn to survive in a world where my perspectives weren’t always respected and validated, and this has had a cost. I often felt I had to sacrifice part of my identity to survive and get to where I am today. As I anticipate completing this part of my journey, I realize that all I have been through, and all that I have learned, has put me in a place where I can now pave a path for the generations behind me: a path that continues the work of validating, respecting, and honouring our Elders and Stories within the academy.

Thomas (2016) talks about her journey and experience with this too, and it really resonates with me when I hear her talk about her calling: “The message I received from the Creator and my Ancestors was that I was not to use words that justified an academic process of meeting my thesis requirements, but to believe in and use the integrity of a storytelling approach throughout the thesis” (p. 195). For me, this was an ongoing struggle I faced, where I needed to meet academic standards of writing and researching, while still trying to make valid, our Indigenous methodologies and stories. I did not want to get lost in the translation, from story to research, and worked towards respectful reciprocal actions where we can give to each other for the greater good. Within a ceremonial practice, and for me, within this re-searching ceremony, everything lies in the intentions. I am not doing my doctorate degree just for personal gain or for the academic

status, I am on my own personal journey to understanding my purpose, which is vitally connected to giving back to my Ancestors, my people, and my future generations.

Luckily, our Ancestors have resisted colonization, in their efforts to keep our people alive and strong, and left a strong presence. It is now up to us today, to honour the work of our Ancestors, and to carry forward these teachings. Personally, this role comes first for me, while obtaining the degree is secondary, and beneficial to my primary role, serving its own purpose of bringing more volume to my voice. Now is the time to make room for our own voices, and empower our people to be proud, and to pass on all the rich, vital teachings and wisdom of our Ancestors. May we stand tall and proud on their shoulders, and bring forth room for Indigenous knowledges, in a collective effort to revitalize our people, and to contribute to resolving the current larger global issues looming regarding our shared relationship with Earth Mother.

As I have outlined throughout this study, as researchers, we have a responsibility to conduct respectful research. For me, respectful research acknowledges all our relations, how they contributed to our work and how they will be impacted. When I speak of relations, you must know deeper understandings exist, far beyond the physical research or the publications that a writer and the audience to which they speak view, there are relations in all of Creation that must be acknowledged. Often as researchers, we forget to pay tribute to the other aspects of Creation but reflecting on research as ceremony can teach us just that. Wilson (2008) shares his thoughts:

An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a

relationship with all of creation. It is with cosmos; it is with animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge...you are answerable to all your relations when you are doing research. (p. 56)

Furthermore, I feel the need to reiterate, researchers have a duty and responsibility to ensure that when people are doing work with Indigenous peoples, the intent must be clear. As a researcher, I will continue to accept the responsibility of being critical of my own and other research to ensure intent and goals are clear, and I will challenge other researchers to do the same. Oftentimes it seems that Indigenous communities previously researched have lost their voice in the process, and it is left up to us as researchers, whom are often the audiences for each other's work, to speak up and question our colleagues about reciprocity and relational accountability: how has their research impacted positive change for Indigenous communities? Walter and Anderson (2013) are upfront about how a Two-Eyed Seeing approach is linked to benefits for our communities: "our essential point is that if, as Indigenous researchers, we want our research to be effective in achieving positive change and direct benefits for our people and communities, then we need to be able to confidently use research tools and methods that are both valued and deemed valid within the political policy spheres where such changes can be made" (p. 134).

I have consistently situated myself in my research through my own use of narrative or Storywork, and through my life, and by my multiple roles within and for my community, I have built a foundation for a solid place to speak. I understand my positionality as a transforming identity, one that is like a shape-shifter, with many

dimensions to explore and understand. Moving forward in Indigenous-based research, I plan to carry the ethical teachings and the spiritual connections that honour the use of Storywork, Elder Knowledges, Indigenous perspectives, and methodologies. By honouring Indigenous knowledges, we potentially provide a comfortable place for them to co-exist within the academia, with a mutual understanding, acceptance, and respect for Indigenous epistemologies. Through a Two-Eyed Seeing approach, we can continue to work to understand the processes of respectfully co-existing and honouring our relationality, in an attempt to create balance for all perspectives. Such balance is a teaching from the Sacred Medicine Wheel, and it is imperative at this time of global crisis and transformation, for the diverse nations of the world to peacefully share our Earth. The ongoing journey of honouring Indigenous knowledges, and bridging Western and Indigenous knowledges, has already played and will continue to play an important role in restoring respectful relationships with Earth Mother, and all our relations.

All of the research strategies used, and the stories and teachings I shared, bring voice and place for both Indigenous peoples as a wider group, and our *Wolastoqey* knowledges, and as such can fall under the more general umbrella of decolonization. As Tuck and Makenzie (2016) share, “Indigenous perspectives must be at the center of decolonizing theories and practices” (p. 49). Storywork is the key to understanding and rewriting history, and to including and respecting Indigenous perspectives, past, present, and future. My true intent is for the revitalization of Indigenous knowledges, preserving them and passing them on to future generations, and empowering our people, the Wolastoqiyik, to use our voice for positive social change, and for a more respectful relationship with Mother Earth. Moving forward, I commit my life work and Earth Walk

to this process and intend to be honorable and respectful to my people, always putting their best interests first, within the overall value of respect and reciprocity with Mother Earth, thus, creating positive social change. *Tuhkiye Ncocahq*, the awakening of Indigeneity, means finding my pride and helping others find their pride. My life commitment is instilling pride into our people, helping provide safe environments and positive futures for our youth, in harmony with Mother Earth and all our relations.

Welamukotuk / Community

In *Apoqotehtasik Wiwonowestuhtimok*/Opening the Circle, and introducing this “research” as *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*, a collaborative re-searching ceremony, it came natural to the community to participate. An ongoing challenge is the need to regularly remind our *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, including myself, that we were and are all capable of this work. Empowering *Mawi Nucikahsicik* was easy when we treated this as *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*/ceremony. Through re-searching as ceremony, our *Wolastoqey* community has respectfully been introduced to “research”, and through carrying out this work in a collaborative manner, they have collectively woven together, *Loskonuwewakonol*, the words/teachings/stories of our community. Through this *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*, we have learned a lot together, and we have been empowered to define our educational content and process and work towards a *Wolastoqey* resurgence of Education. It was such a beautiful process to empower and recruit our *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik*, and our *Kcicihtuwinuhticik*, as *Mawi Nucikahsicik*, who have taken ownership of this work; so many good things have come as a result. We now feel confident, that in the process of realizing a longstanding vision to open our own school, we now can have more of a true meaning of what education is for our people, what

barriers to success are and what success can look like for each *Skicinuwi Kehkimsicik*.

Together, we have written a song to gift to the community. Over the next few months, we will work on singing it and creating a video to capture the *Lintuwakon*/song and our community singing it together. We will all cherish this work and this *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* forever.

University

There were some aspects of the “research” process as defined by the University world, that created barriers to conducting the project following Indigenous methodology and local *Wolastoqey* protocols. I did experience some resistance from the university around developing the research question with my community. Mostly, this was due to walking in two worlds, and here in particular, university ethics collided with ethics of relationality and relational accountability, when I was told to have developed the question prior to working with my community. As I shared earlier in this study, this was a struggle and I felt as though the process was backwards. Within the university world, relatively little is understood about our own local protocols in our *Wolastoqey* territory, and so it was challenging to find ways to communicate my concerns, and actually be heard, so that I could continue to prioritize community collaboration with *Mawi Nucikahsicik*. At the University level, we have had discussions about developing an Indigenous ethics watch, and I feel this is instrumental for future Indigenous doctorate students, and even more important for our Indigenous communities. As we learn through Indigenous worldviews, we must always be accountable to all our relations as well as the other teachings shared throughout this dissertation.

One of struggles between Indigenous worldviews and the colonial ethics of the university is an individual versus collective mentality, and personal privacy versus ethics of *Ksakutomakon* /relationality. Specifically, in our Indigeneity, we understand our communal consulting, our *Ksakutomakon*, as the first stepping stone in re-searching ceremony. Fully informed community knowledge and consent are more important than the “results” or finishing the research. Another important consideration in understanding Indigenous re-searching processes, is the question of who owns the knowledge. Knowledge is relational (Wilson, 2008) and our stories that we share, although are our own, they also belong to the collective (Graveline, personal communication, 2020). It therefore belongs to us collectively and collaboratively, as Indigenous people and communities. Our “research” data doesn’t belong to the institution, or any one person. As such, this *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*/ and its bundle, belongs to our community of *Welamukotuk*. It will be kept by our Elders and used as determined by our community.

There were times I felt timid in my own personal journey of challenging aspects of the colonial process, but I knew it was my truth and my purpose to speak up and share concerns. It is because of the past history of research as a tool of colonial power that I knew I had to be an agent of change in helping the University to do better, as I highly value my indigeneity and our community. I knew this was an opportunity to take something that needed work (the doctorate process) and really view it through a critical and cultural lens to ensure “research” moving forward can benefit our communities first and foremost, and to place more value on community voice. I am hopeful that this study can be used as a steppingstone to bridge the worlds of Indigenous knowledge and methodologies, and the colonial constructs of the university. Our communities must

always lead and be equal partners for the most beneficial outcomes. In recent years, through much effort on the part of many Indigenous scholars and activists before me, researchers have become increasingly interested in buzz words like decolonization and reconciliation. Numerous studies (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015; Strega, 2015; Grande, 2004; Wilson, 2008; Tilley, 2016; Lambert, 2014; Smith, 2012) have investigated decolonizing education and indigenizing curricula, and the study of decolonization, Indigenization and reconciliation have become key aspects of Indigenous education. The voices of our community can bring insights into both the effects of colonization and the processes of decolonization of mind, body, Spirit, and heart. These are critical teachings for a process of reconciliation with our community, and between our communities.

Through the scholarship of Pete (2015) and the Assembly of First Nations (2010) we learn about the importance of recruiting Indigenous academics, supporting our work, and allowing Indigenous people to be in control of our own education and research, thus reinforcing Battiste's (1995) earlier work emphasizing the importance of Indigenous people reclaiming our voice and visions. Outsiders claiming a position of authority can become a barrier to allowing Indigenous people to speak for ourselves. We never want others' voices to be in place of an Indigenous voice(s). When conducting research involving Indigenous people, there are certain cultural ethics and understandings that Indigenous peoples hold (Battiste, 2002) which must be respected. Indigenous scholars tend to be accepted more easily (Merriam, 2008) in comparison to non-Indigenous scholars because it is assumed that Indigenous people have lived experiences and connection to Indigenous worldviews. Furthermore, there tends to be more of a connection, and a deeper understanding of shared cultural forms of communication and

expression: “The participants and researchers held similar views on race and gender issues. There were silent understandings, culture-bound phrases that did not need interpretation, and non-verbalized answers conveyed with hand gestures and facial expressions” (Merriam, p. 406). The insider cultural connection serves as a more effective means of understanding the stories from participants, and this understanding builds the foundation of Indigenous voice, in any academic world.

In my personal experiences working with communities, I have sometimes noticed a sense of resistance from Indigenous communities when being approached by non-Indigenous peoples. However, in some cases, I have seen non-Indigenous peoples establish strong relationships with Elders/leaders, and other community members, and make a real effort to engage in the language and culture. These people are accepted easier than those who make no attempt to establish real heartfelt reciprocal relationships or take part in cultural activities. It is relationships like this, or lack thereof, that make a significant difference in being able to speak on behalf of Indigenous peoples. Dr. David Perley (2016) talks about the importance of having partnerships and relationships with non-Indigenous people, however, he makes note of the importance of non-Indigenous people to take caution, and not speak for us, but stand beside us and support us and our own voices. Furthermore, for non-Indigenous researchers, this also includes understanding their own intentions and positionality, in supporting Indigenous-led research, and respecting the relationship boundaries. Milner (2007) talks about developing these kinds of understandings of respect within diverse forms of relationality: “the premise of the argument is that dangers seen, and unforeseen, can emerge for researchers when they do not pay careful attention to their own and others’ racialized and

cultural systems of coming to know, knowing, and experiencing the world” (p. 388). In further understanding one’s place, non-Indigenous researchers must also recognize the need to make sense of the research process and findings, or knowledge, through the development of their own cultural knowledge and weaving relationships with the people, determining “whether the researcher has the cultural knowledge to accurately interpret and validate the experiences” (Milner, 2007, p. 388). Through developing a deeper understanding of cultural knowledge and *Tetpi Pehqitahamsuwakon*/relational accountability, the researcher will come to realize the importance of not taking away voice and become an advocate for insider interpretations and reflections; the authority to speak for our own experiences and knowledges as Indigenous people, to be encouraged and supported. Thus, it is important for outsiders to understand their place within Indigenous research, and to respectfully understand the importance of not speaking for Indigenous people.

The cause and effect of trying to do good by speaking for, can in turn work against the goal of empowerment, by suggesting one’s own voice is stronger or more effective in speaking, thus, promoting oppression amongst those who are being spoken for. I don’t want to discredit or shame those who come with good intentions, rather, I want to simply ask for such people to stand beside in a place of support and respect. This idea of insinuating one group of people cannot speak for themselves, I think, does not come from a malicious intent, but in most cases, it can come across this way in the eyes, ears, and hearts of the one’s be spoken for. Furthermore, I urge researchers to really explore their positionality in their research, and examine their good intentions, and to be sure these intentions are not tarnished by the colonial practices, obvious and more hidden,

of claiming voice over a group of people. A fuller understanding Indigenous people is possible, along with the power that can come with situating that place of authority as remaining within this group.

Once again, I feel a tremendous pressure to highlight the importance of Indigenous voice. As I previously mentioned, I am not communicating this message from a negative place, but rather from a place of pride for my peoples. I believe Indigenous peoples have a lot to say, and us speaking is not a new thing, in fact, our voices have always been speaking, but unfortunately, in a time when the world wasn't ready to listen. Given the current global climate catastrophe, I believe the world may finally be ready to listen to what our people have to say, as we have a lot to share and a lot to teach. Our resistance to assimilation has been consistent and its time that people begin to understand and accept this. Palmater (2015) shares "it is time Canada accepted the fact that we will not be assimilated...whether you call it 'aggressively contrary', 'insurgency', or 'criminal'- we will continue to protect our cultures and identities for future generations" (p. 18). She continues:

If only Canadians could leave their minds open long enough to see the incredible strength of our diverse peoples, the beauty of our rich cultures and traditions, the unique ties we have to our territories, and the incredible pride we have in our identities-then they will see why we refuse to give up. (p. 18)

Through the scholarship of Graveline (1998) and Battiste (2000) we learn about this idea of society being "marinated and normalized in Eurocentrism"; speaking for us and telling us how to live and/or how to think has been a common Eurocentric approach.

In rejecting Eurocentric and oppressive attempts to speak for Indigenous peoples, we acknowledge the harmful effects of such approaches and welcome the voices that have always been there, to speak loud and clear. The effect of this amplification comes with the silencing of other voices that have been long speaking in place of or over our Indigenous peoples' voices. Handing this right to speak, and authority over our knowledges, to us as rightful owners, will begin the process of reconciliation, of restoring a respectful and harmonious relationship amongst our people and the rest of the world. This relationship of respect will promote a greater understanding of our people and our vision of a more respectful and reciprocal relationship with Earth Mother and all our relations.

In summary, I will list the actions and questions that have been proposed from our re-searching ceremony—what we must think about in going forward:

1. Research, and research questions, that will involve any Indigenous community need to be sanctioned by the community first. Each community has their own research agendas and areas of focus. Please be courteous and respect that communities know what they need. A researcher should not create questions prior to developing and maintaining a personal relationship with a particular Indigenous community. The researcher and the questions must be guided by the needs and desires of the community, with a shift in decision-making power over the process and the results to the community.
2. Welcome and support Indigenous researchers or researchers working *with* Indigenous communities to have flexibility in the Western academic processes of conducting research. For example, relationships need to be developed with the

Indigenous community first, and their local cultural protocols need to shape the research process. The universities must place value on the importance of this relationship and the necessity of ongoing and respectful communication between both parties; the researcher will never feel alone with a community's support behind them. Universities can develop protocols and processes that require the community to sanction the researcher, research topics, and questions before accepting the proposal from the individual or group.

3. Establish due process for ensuring that researchers who identify as Indigenous are in fact Indigenous is an emerging concern, complicated by colonial history of acculturation and assimilation policies. How we establish Indigeneity is important as we need to do more than self-identify as Indigenous—protocols of *Ksakutomakon*/relationality, *Tetpi-Wiqsonuwakon*/reciprocity, and *Tetpi Pehqitahamsuwakon*/relational accountability need to be honoured, rather than driving personal agendas.
4. Establish an Indigenous ethics watch committee to be led by Indigenous peoples/Elders.
5. Invest in having language supports/editors/translators so that work can be completed as much as possible in Indigenous languages.
6. Understand that Indigenous communities have emerging needs, and deal with different types of challenging situations every day, generated from poverty, racism, systemic racism, environmental racism, or intergenerational trauma, to name a few. In these cases, research projects take a backseat, as the needs and personal wellbeing of our peoples and communities are our top priority.

7. Have policies and protocols to protect Indigenous knowledge and make it known that it does not belong to the University.
8. Recognize and have more supports for Indigenous students, faculty, and support staff who are walking with a foot in both worlds, Indigenizing the academy.

In conclusion, I go back to the question about how societal changes influence curriculum changes. After much work and reflection, I have come to realize that the societal attitudes that effect change most are empowering our peoples to become the agents of change. In this, they help us determine our priorities and to work towards creating a bright future for our future seven generations. My request for future researchers and to all members of society: please make room for our peoples to be the leaders of our own realities. All of the answers to our questions are within us, and to answer them, we need to return to our cultural realm and our teachings. Let's together empower Indigenous peoples to be their own authors and scholars. The answers to research questions at the start of this work have been woven throughout the discussion within this study; while some have been stories, others are stories embedded within stories. To simplify the answers briefly, below I weave together all voices of *Mawi Nucikahsicik* in response to the questions sought out in this *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*.

When we learned about Storywork, we learned about what it means to be in relationship to Storywork, which is also being in relationship to ceremony. This dissertation was laid out a bit differently than most you might see—primarily because I am telling these stories from an Indigenous perspective, through an Indigenous construct, and from the personal context of my life. Traditionally, when we share teachings, we do this through story. Elders will share stories and it might be the same story they shared

with many others, perhaps with a few changes to adjust the purpose they are sharing with us in that moment. I mirrored this throughout my study; I talked about the reader being in ceremony and having an obligation to the *Kci Ntoltahkewakon* and the future of this work. I cannot spell out what you have to do as the reader, or as one who has a responsibility to these stories and teachings. Rather, I am the one to share the stories and the teachings that I felt necessary to create change.

Defining Truth Within Teaching and Learning From a *Wolastoqey* Worldview

In my own personal journey and the positionality that I've shared throughout this study, I've given the reader some context of who I am, where I have come from, and where I am going. Through reflecting on what I've learned in my education and through my own self-discovery and identity, I have discovered that I am able to answer these questions on my own. For the purpose of this *Kci Ntoltahkewakon*, I take what I know and take into consideration my *Mawi Nucikahsicik* and what they bring and offer to me. I wove together our understandings to answer the research questions in a way that I feel is most authentic to the purpose of this work. What I have learned is, the true meaning of education coming from a *Wolastoqey* worldview cannot be explicit. Quite simply, within the honouring of our traditional ways, our language, and our ceremonies, it is still an individual journey of self-discovery and spiritual awakening. This process is different for everyone, and we cannot begin to define education as one model for everyone. However, we can weave together knowledges to illuminate a path of supports to help one another upon that path. Just like the message within the story from Ruth Scalp Lock (2014) entitled *The Gift*: we as humans all have the gift from Creator within. Our life purpose is about searching for it and finding it when we are ready. Being ready isn't necessarily an

age or a grade, but rather, it's an individual journey defined by ourselves. We as leaders and agents of change can begin to develop, elevate, and implement change by providing a framework, that is, weaving a *Wolastoqey* traditional resurgence in education. The sharing of knowledges, telling of stories, and teaching our youth about balance are all vital. In order to nourish our learning Spirit, we must have healthy balance in our *Pshuhuni-Elmulsuwakon, Elsonuwakon, Elitahasuwakon* and *Wolamsotuwakon* well-being. As educators, we are obligated to provide our youth with the tools and teachings to care for each other and to teach ways to promote a healthy balance. That is what education looks like for us from a *Wolastoqey* perspective. Currently, many Elders, youth, and others feel strongly that our education should focus firstly on identity as Indigenous peoples, and then academics come second. Adopting a Two-Eyed Seeing (Hatcher et al., 2009) approach to survival is also important as we move forward. As much as we would love to return to our traditional ways, the reality is we must survive in a society that is not congruent with our ways. To survive and thrive, we must seek balance through this Two-Eyed Seeing approach.

Nit Leyic (May that be the truth) and *Woliwon!*

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Appendix A

Creation Story

Dancing on Our Turtle's Back

Re-creation: *Niimtoowaad Mikinaag Gijiying Bakonaanwo (Dancing on Our Turtle's Back)*. In the last section of the Seven Fires Prophecy, there is a mirroring of the cycle of creation-destruction-re-creation within *Nishnaabeg* thought. This cycle sets the stage for interpretation of re-creation as a new emergence or resurgence. This theme is also echoed to current generations through our Re-creation Stories. Within Indigenous thought, there is not a singular vision of resurgence, but many. Elders direct our people to live their lives in a way that promotes positive relationships with the land, their families and all of Creation. This is performed by individuals within the web of the *Kokum*.

Dibaajimowinan, having courage; *Dbaclencliziwin*, humility; *DebwewiQ*, truth or sincerity; *Mnaadencliwin*, respect; *Nbwaakawin*, wisdom; *Gwekwaadiziwin*, honesty; and *Zaagiclewin*, love (these are discussed in detail in Chapter Seven). Using the theoretical foundations presented in Chapter Two, it means that we all carry responsibilities in terms of re-surgence; and that we are also responsible for re-creating the good life in whatever forms we imagine, vision and live in contemporary times. The process of starting over, *Aanji Maajitaawin* is embodied in our Re-creation Stories. This narrative starts with a phase of destruction: the *Nishnaabeg* had lost their way; they're relationships were imbalanced; and the lives were permeated with violence and conflict. As a restorative measure, *Gzhwe*

Mnicloo brought a large flood to the lands, not as a punitive act, but as purification designed to re-align the *Nishnaabeg* with *mino bimaaciziwin*.

Waynabozhoo managed to save himself by finding a large log floating in the vast expanse of water. In time, more and more animals joined him on the log. Floating aimlessly in the ocean of floodwater, *Waynabozhoo* decided that something must be done. He decided to dive down in the water and grab a handful of earth.

Waynabozhoo dived down into the depths and was gone for a very long time, returning without the earth. In turn, a number of animals—loon, helldiver, turtle, otter, and mink—all tried and failed. Finally *Zhaashkoonh* (muskrat) tried.

Zhaashkoonh was gone forever, and eventually floated to the surface, dead.

Waynabozhoo picked the muskrat out of the water and found a handful of mud in *Zhaashkoonh*'s paw.

Mikinaag (turtle) volunteered to bear the weight of the earth on her back and *Waynabozhoo* placed the earth there. *Waynabozhoo* began to sing. The animals danced in a clockwise, circular fashion and the winds blew, creating a huge and widening circle. Eventually, they created the huge island on which we live, North America.

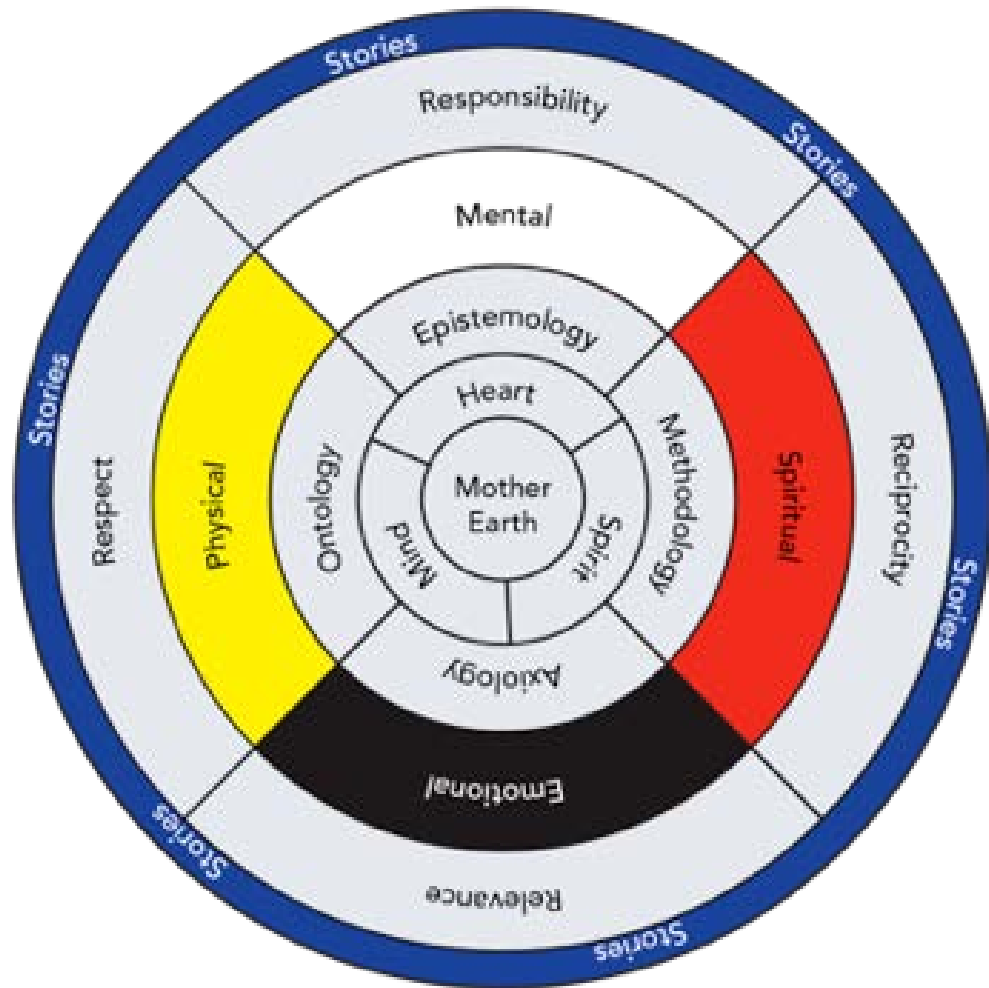
Although I have heard this story a number of times, I wasn't able to relate it to resurgence without the help of Edna Manitowabi. In her retelling of it, she asks us to think of ourselves as *Zhaashkoonh*, the muskrat. This emphasizes the idea that we each have to dive down to the bottom of the vast expanse of water and search for our own handful of earth. Each of us having to struggle and sacrifice to

achieve re-creation is not an easy process. We each need to bring that earth to the surface, to our community, with the intent of transformation. Colonization has shattered the fabric of our nation to such an extent that each of us must be *Zhaashkoonh*; each of us must struggle down through the vast expanse of water to retrieve our handful of dirt.

Once we have brought our paw full of dirt to the surface, it is then our responsibility to also ensure that our action is collectivized. We need to ensure that the other members of the community act on our actions and carry the vision forward. Resurgence cannot occur in isolation. As the animals danced the new world into existence on the turtle's back, the land grew into a large island. It also demonstrates that we need to ask the implicate order for assistance to re-create. If we are doing our work to the best of our abilities, doorways and opportunities will open to us that previously did not exist. After *Mikinaag* came forward and volunteered to carry the weight of the world on her back, the implicate order acted such that the earth and the Turtle's back grew into the great expanse of North America, because individual and collective responsibilities had been met. In order to dance a new world into existence, we need the support of our communities in a collective action. This story tells us everything we need to know about resurgence. Together, we have all of the pieces. In *Nishnaabeg* thought, resurgence is dancing on our turtle's back; it is visioning and dancing new realities and worlds into existence. (Simpson, 2011, p. 68)

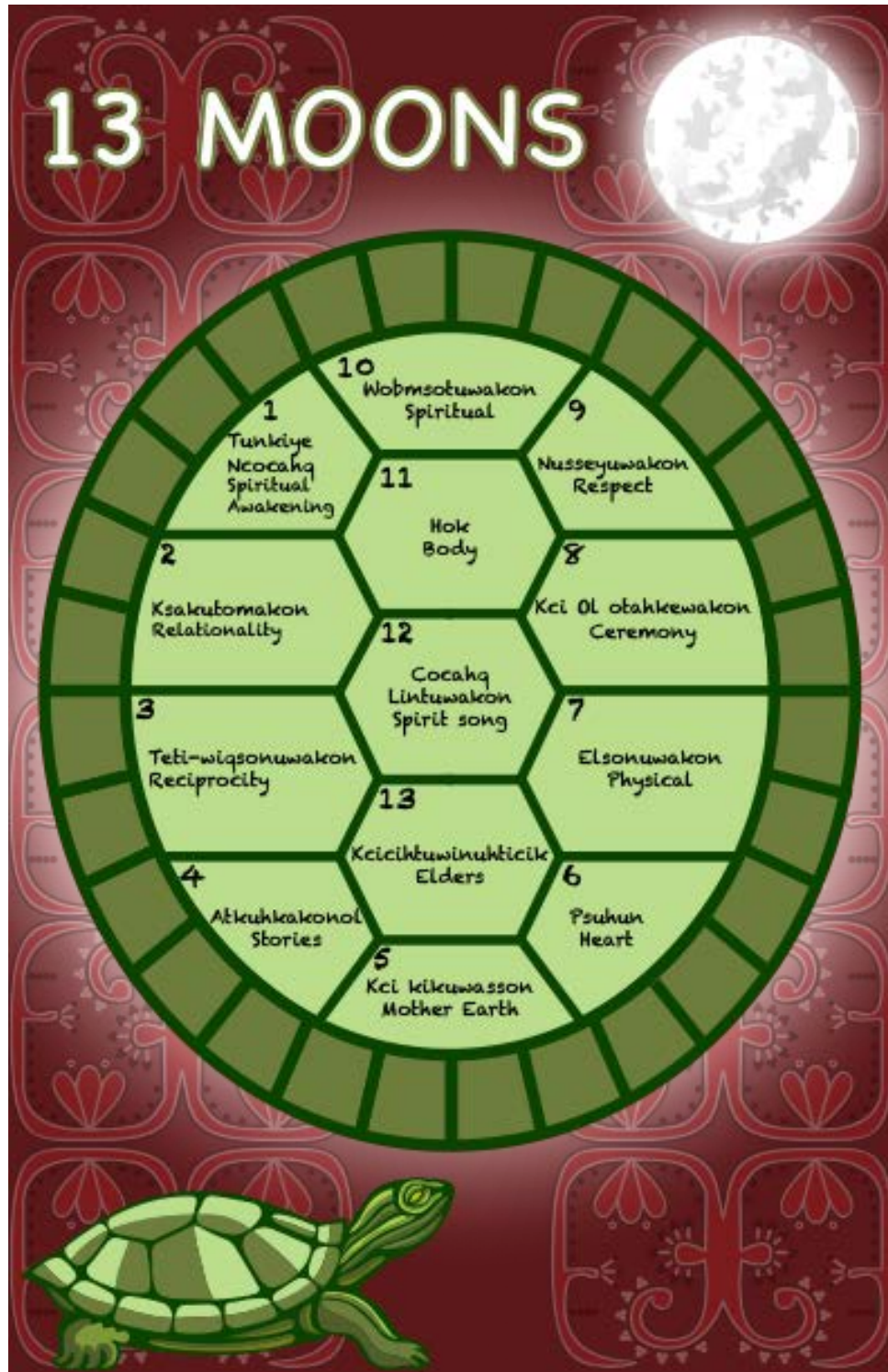
Appendix B

Figure 1: Sacred Medicine Wheel Model 2016-01, Sabattis-Atwin, 2020



Appendix C

Figure 2: 13 Moons on Turtles Back 2020-02, Sacobie, 2020



Appendix D

Lintuwakon / Song

All my relations
Honour and preserve their teachings
Language at the heart of our identity
Land and waters
Protected for seven generations
All my relations
Remember our commitment to Mother Earth
Protecting all of her beauty
Land and waters
Protected for seven generations
Mother and child
First treaties that teach our children
Remind our Elders of their duties
Be kind and respect all of Creation
Tobacco for our prayers
Honour four directions
Decolonize our classrooms
Determine our own priorities
We don't fight with anger
That is not our ways
Passed down from our Elders
Supporting and guiding our way
We must step up
Now is our time
To ignite the eighth flame
Lighting the way for our future
Thank you, Creator
We love you
Turtle for truth and long-lasting life and good health

Appendix E

Two Spirit Legend

Two-Spirit people, identified by many different tribally specific names and standings within their communities, have been living, loving, and creating art since time immemorial. It wasn't until the 1970s, however, that contemporary queer Native literature gained any public notice. Even now, only a handful of books address it specifically, most notably the 1988 collection *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology*. Since that book's publication twenty-three years ago, there has not been another collection published that focuses explicitly on the writing and art of Indigenous Two-Spirit and Queer people. This landmark collection strives to reflect the complexity of identities within Native Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Two-Spirit (GLBTQ2) communities. Gathering together the work of established writers and talented new voices, this anthology spans genres (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and essay) and themes (memory, history, sexuality, indigeneity, friendship, family, love, and loss) and represents a watershed moment in Native American and Indigenous literatures, Queer studies, and the intersections between the two. Collaboratively, the pieces in *Sovereign Erotics* demonstrate not only the radical diversity among the voices of today's Indigenous GLBTQ2 writers but also the beauty, strength, and resilience of Indigenous GLBTQ2 people in the twenty-first century.

Contributors: Indira Allegra, Louise Esme Cruz, Paula Gunn Allen, Qwo-Li Driskill, Laura Furlan, Janice Gould, Carrie House, Daniel Heath Justice, Maurice Kenny, Michael Koby, M. Carmen Lane, Jaynie Lara, Chip Livingston, Luna Maia, Janet

McAdams, Deborah Miranda, Daniel David Moses, D. M. O'Brien, Malea Powell,
Cheryl Savageau, Kim Shuck, Sarah Tsigeyu Sharp, James Thomas Stevens, Dan
Taulapapa McMullin, William Raymond Taylor, Joel Waters, and Craig Womack. (Cruz,
2011, pp. 66-70)

Appendix F

Link to Video

Please email Allan.Sabattis-Atwin@ofnb.com for a link and password to the video.

The content in this video comes from the Talking Circles, each one of which was recorded by a videographer. The editing was done by Jenica Atwin, who at the time was our community Well-Being Director and has an extensive background in Indigenous education and respectful research and is an active member of our community. The video was first shared with the community on National Indigenous Day, June 21, 2019. The overall feedback from the community was pride, as well as a sense of hope that this work would illuminate the words of our community to weave a *Wolastoqey* resurgence of education. Not only did I feel the same feelings, but my *Mawi Nucikhasicik* / co-researchers also felt these emotions and were proud to be involved. All research data belongs to my community and will be held for safekeeping by our Elders at their Elders' complex in our community.

Curriculum Vitae

Allan Sabattis-Atwin
Oromocto, New Brunswick
Allan.Sabattis-Atwin@ofnb.ca
506-476-9978

CURRENT POSITION

Director of Operations, Oromocto First Nation

EDUCATION

- Bachelor of Arts, UNB (2011)
- Bachelor of Education, UNB (2013)
- Master of Education, UNB (2015)
- PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, UNB (current)

PREVIOUS POSITIONS

- Oromocto First Nation: Band Councillor Elect
- Co-Manager, Education Portfolio
- Manager, Fisheries Portfolio
- Community Events Coordinator
- Bridging Year Coordinator (*Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey* Centre)
- Aboriginal Student Advisor (*Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey* Centre)
- First Nations Resource, Liaison and Native Studies 120 Teacher (Oromocto High School)

SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS

Kress, M., Perley, I., Perley, D., Plaice, E., & Sabattis-Atwin, A. (2019). "Ktuhkelokepon" Awakening our Indigeneity: A Wabanaki Story of Truth, Justice and Reconciliation. *Antistasis*, 9(1) [Ntokehkikem, Ntokihkims – I Teach, I Learn: Transformative Indigenous Practice in Education].

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KEYNOTE ADDRESSES AND INVITED PUBLIC LECTURES

- Elder-in-the-Making Panel, University of New Brunswick
- Red Shawl Campaign Panel, University of New Brunswick
- Secret Path Panel, University of New Brunswick & Theatre New Brunswick
- Congress 2017
- Aboriginal Education Research Forum, University of Winnipeg
- Indspire Co-Presenter
- Peace and Friendship Treaty Conference
- River of Pride Co-Presenter
- New Brunswick Education Research Symposium
- Congress 2018
- National Inquiry of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Youth Panel

FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS

- SSHRC 2019
- Indspire 2013
- Indspire 2016
- Indspire 2017
- Lorne Simon Award
- Sir George E Scholarship

UNIVERSITY TEACHING

- ED 3045 Indigenous Education 2019 (UNB)
 - Classroom Assistant to Professor Margaret Kress for ED Inclusionary Practice & ED Indigenous Education, 2016, 2017, & 2018 (UNB)
 - ED 3043 Indigenous Education, Early Childhood (UNB)
 - ABRG 3056 Leadership and Community Projects, First Nations Governance and Leadership Program (UNB)
-

HIGH SCHOOL TEACHING

- First Nations Resource, Liaison and Native Studies 120 Teacher (Oromocto High School)

COMMUNITY TEACHING

- Oromocto First Nation Literacy Camp
- Oromocto First Nation Language Revival Program
- Oromocto First Nation Land-Based Numeracy Program
- Oromocto First Nation Book Club
- Oromocto First Nation Spirit Bear Program
- Oromocto First Nation University Prep Course Fall 2018

ADDITIONAL PRESENTATIONS, WORKSHOPS, & GUEST COURSE LECTURES

- Gender Studies, Dr. Fredericks, St. Thomas University

SERVICE

- Red Shawl Campaign Chair
- Founder, Oromocto First Nation Powwow Chair
- Oromocto First Nation Community Events Chair
- Founder, Oromocto First Nation Language Revival Program
- Founder, Oromocto First Nation Land-based Numeracy Program
- Curriculum Developer for Oromocto First Nation Spirit Bear Program
- Coordinator Oromocto First Nation Elders Council
- Coordinator Oromocto First Nation Youth Council
- University of New Brunswick Indigenous Doctorate Student Cohort
- District Education Council
- First Nations Education Enhancement Committee
- *Mi'kmaw* Lead Consultant, Equity in Action Project, Nova Scotia