INDIGENOUS ANARCHISM:
A STORY OF RESISTANCE, RECONCILIATION AND BECOMING THROUGH THE DECOLONIZATION OF WAYS OF KNOWING

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine some aspects of what is needed to work reconciliation (healing) into western academic institutions *via* the art of resistance and the decolonization of methodologies in social science. The decolonization of methodologies will entail freedom to engage in a rigorous effort to engage with Indigenous ontologies and epistemology, and Indigenous selfhood and the spirit, as well as recovering and extending particular Indigenous knowledge systems. The decolonization of methodologies will foster not only better research but also the autonomy of Indigenous graduate students and their agency to embrace their cultural, landed and ancestral selves. Decolonization of methodologies could be a sign of the seriousness of commitment by Canadian universities to reconciliation. Indigenous students need to be able to feel at home on the territory where universities are located – *their* territories. Decolonization of methodologies will reconcile the precolonial past and the still-colonized present colonization by helping to remove the hegemonic claims of the European Enlightenment to govern all knowledge production. I hope to have demonstrated how I see Michelle Hogue, Kori Czuy, Casey Eagle Speaker, Robin Wall Kimmerer and others as having fostered, in their different ways, new approaches to Indigenous theory and/or research. I take a decolonizing approach to western epistemology, ontology and methods to highlight the way that Indigenous ontology and epistemology can add value to the future of research and scholarship.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Work described in this thesis received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, as follows.

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FOREWORD

Shelly Pompana Spear Chief, MSW, RCSW, certified EMDR consultant, psychotherapist

I humbly acknowledge the Treaty 7 Territory; ancestral homes of the Kainai, Piikani, Siksika as well as the Tsuu T'ina First Nation and Stoney Nakoda First Nations. I acknowledge the many First Nations, Metis and Inuit Peoples whose footsteps have resided on the lands for generations including the many places that you are joining from across Turtle Island. I am humbly appreciative and grateful for the Elders and Knowledge Keepers with us today and those who have moved on into the spiritual realm. Mitakuye Oyasin.

It is truly an honor to be asked to write a foreword for the author Elizabeth Fox-Grey. In the time that I have had the pleasure of conversing with and emotionally supporting Elizabeth, she has prepared a masterpiece with rich Indigenous female-led research, Elizabeth has tirelessly worked with elders and knowledge keepers to support her research and personal learning journey back to her authentic Indigenous Blackfoot roots. The title "INDIGENOUS ANARCHISM: A STORY OF RESISTANCE, RECONCILIATION AND BECOMING THROUGH THE DECOLONIZATION OF WAYS OF KNOWING" is fitting for the healing journey she has been on throughout the past few years of her life. She has resisted colonized institutional thinking within the educational systems and is learning to decolonize her research. More importantly she has tackled her own personal healing journey, recognizing the colonial dimension of mental health labels, and she is moving toward the spirit of healing from ancestral trauma that has been transferred to her. She truly is a gifted woman who leads the way for many more Indigenous scholars. I am hopeful that this thesis will open up space to further support the education of

Indigenous First Nation, Metis, Inuit people; space for further decolonization, and space for education of non-Indigenous people.

PREFACE

This project is a story: a story about the experiences of an Indigenous female (re)searcher, me. It is a story about how embracing my culture has offered me a path to reconciliation in many forms during my academic journey. It is a story about gaining the ability to use Indigenous ways of knowing to engage in research, to heal intergenerational trauma and to become the researcher and scholar that I now am. Jo-Ann Archibald (2008a; see also 2008b) writes about Indigenous story-telling in *Indigenous Storywork,* explaining teachings from her nation called Sto:lo, speaking of the importance of Indigenous knowledge and wisdom, and the power they have when conveyed respectfully, through story:

> If one comes to understand and appreciate the power of a particular knowledge, then one must be ready to share and teach it respectfully and responsibly to others in order for this knowledge, and its power to continue…one cannot be said to have wisdom until others acknowledge an individual's respectful and responsible use and teaching of knowledge to others (Archibald, 2008a, p. 3).

I write this into my reality because it is important to acknowledge that my starting-point was of near-total inexperience with Indigenous knowledge, not through lack of respect or responsibility, but lack of encouragement, shared time and sacred space within my particular communities and my own life circumstances. Yet, when I was most in need, the teachings and teachers were there.

This project has taken many shapes in the course of several years. Personal struggles, abuse and a pandemic both interrupted and guided me on the path to the researcher I have become and in my work up to this particular moment. This project broke me down and helped to build me back

up. This thesis engages with current conversations about Indigenous research and ways of knowing, and with the relationships I maintained with fellow inquirers and interlocutors who are my relations, and with my elders. It explores how complex relationships with these interlocutors and relations, with myself and my spirit, and with Creator, influenced my journey through the generation of and toward dissemination of the knowledge I gained as an Indigenous graduate student. This thesis is a story of that journey and an example of how theory and research can become sites for decolonization and healing.

At the beginning of each chapter, I link my own Blackfoot heritage to the stages of research from an Indigenous perspective. I do this by using Blackfoot words and phrases to link the seasonality of human activity (which includes research and writing) to the four directions and their meanings. Similarly, I also use the cycle of seasons as iterated in the work of Michelle Hogue (2012) and the seasonal meditations of Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013) as thematic guides both to my research journey and to the chapters of this thesis. The cycles of planting, caring for, harvesting, braiding and burning sweetgrass described by Kimmerer highlight how our nonhuman relatives lend us a viable way to represent the research path, and how to act as responsible stewards of and carers for research and scholarship. Kimmerer also gave me a way to assess (through story) the impact that my own research has had over time on my identity and my experience as an Indigenous researcher

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This thesis is inspired by and begins from two important approaches to Indigenizing research, learning and scholarship. The first is the Action Research Approach as iterated by Michelle

Hogue (2012; see also Kolenick, 2012; Nutton *et al.*, 2020; Peltier, 2018; Tuck, 2009b; Weber-Pillwax, 2009), which incorporates the seasons and the four directions into an effective process for organizing and engaging in research. The seasonal and directional aspects of Hogue's work highlight how processes of understanding and doing take shape in a cyclical way, which is traditionally how Indigenous groups have learned in and through the land, and in community. This is useful in showing how Indigenous researchers can utilize their own cultural knowing to create new frameworks that foster decolonization of theory and methodology. The second approach is Critical Braiding, as developed by Czuy and Eagle Speaker (2019; see also Hogarth & Czuy, 2021), which gives strategies for discerning key distinctions between Indigenous and Western knowledge, and a path toward integrating them, employing critical awareness. I use their idea of the Critical Braid not only to analyze and reflect on my initial way into and subsequent journey through this project, but also to understand relations between Indigenous knowledge and individual/experiential knowledge, and to flag differences between these and Western forms of knowledge. In addition, I used the Critical Braid approach to indicate how renewing Indigenous ways of knowing is integral to academic decolonization generally, as well as assessing advantages and limitations of specific decolonizing strategies, and addressing different approaches to integrating Indigenous and Western knowledge.

I also employ insights from Kimmerer (2013), who shapes her reflections on the research process and the decolonization of science in terms of a five-stage seasonal journey starting from planting sweetgrass, to tending it, harvesting it, braiding it, and finally, burning it. I indicate (through story) the impact that this notion of a journey has had on my identity and my experience as an Indigenous researcher, my growing sense of the importance of narrative in

research, and my understanding of how best to act as responsible stewards of and carers for research and scholarship, and our relations to those involved with us in it. Finally, I work from my own grounding in an anthropological wisdom that says ethnography is in essence storytelling, and that all research tells a story. Western academic tutelage weakened relations between stories of human experience and those communicated by natural and social worlds, and our ability to tell research stories *wisely* and well. Those relations still need further restoration, and it will remain important to me, as an Indigenous researcher, to sustain wise relationships in all steps in the process of research and reflection, and to stay alert to diversions from that focus, including the persistence of everyday colonialism within ourselves, in our relations to each other, and in the continuing influence of the institutions, practices and culture of settler society.

The importance of positionality

Indigenous people in North America today live surrounded by Settler culture, and thus those of us in tune with our own culture are constantly code-switching between cultures. The "walking in two worlds" trope is real for me, and unsettling too, which seems an ironic thing for me to say as a person living in a settler society and dealing with my own part-Lithuanian identity. Certain iconic questions arise for me as an individual living in two worlds. The identity I became most familiar with as I grew into adulthood was an unsure one. Many of the questions I have heard from others who share my unique situation (including participants in this research) are the same as ones I have asked: "Who am I?" "Where do I come from?" "Where does my story begin?" "Where is it leading?" At the end of this research project, I do not yet have a full and clear answer to these questions; however, I can answer what it was like for me to be an Indigenous researcher surviving trauma in grad school; what it means to say that there is both a taken for

granted aspect and a burden that comes with white-passing; what it means to say that my experiences (and those of Indigenous folx[1] positioned like me) are often both complex and highly personal because we don't just walk in one place, space or time. My indigeneity always confronts a possibility of being questioned and negotiated, it is always historical and present, it is always beautiful and ugly, it is continually being contested by those who have no right to contest it. My identity has been a site for violence, for hate, for sorrow, but my identity is also a site for spiritual and personal growth, for healing and for toxic cycle breaking. My identity is vulnerable but strong; pliable but tough as sinew sewing together hide. My identity is Indigenous, anarchist, resistant and resilient. I don't claim to understand or know the struggles or journeys of all other Indigenous folx. I don't claim that we all have the same thoughts or feelings, or engage in the same actions. We are heterogeneous and we are multitudes. Indigeneity is heterogeneous in its nature but it is profoundly relational. I am humbly offering a story to all my relations and allies, and even to my critics, to honor the stories told to me and shared with me on this journey.

Indigenous ethics: reflexivity and axiology

The knowledge I have gained in this project was co-produced in part with indigenous interlocutors, which necessitated a particular kind of ethical practice. Guillemin and Gilliam (2004) refer to "ethics in practice" as *microethics*, a term initially derived from medical practice rather than research. They suggest that it "has obvious application to research ethics" (Guillemin & Gilliam, 2004, p. 265), but this application is problematized in relation to Indigenous

[1] I use the term 'folx' purposely when I want to signal that the people to whom I am referring are *subjects and agents* in their own right, not just objects of observation or analysis. The original word "folk" carries connotations of ethnic or other essentialisms, and "folks" tends to connote rusticity or quaintness, as in "old folks." I use the gender-neutral word *folx* as a way to indicate when *all identities or purposes of a particular type* held by *particular persons in common* (*e.g*. Indigenous ones) are being specifically *recognized* and spoken of, or to.

ontologies because microethics are based on a western biomedical model. Guillemin and Gilliam suggest that reflexivity can serve as a remedial tool to ensure ethical research practice in such instances. However, Peers (2018) argues that tacit values can influence disciplinary assumptions about what may be good or bad and, are inherently dangerous. Guillemin and Gilliam's claims that medical ethics have an "obvious" (axiological) application to qualitative research ethics is an example of this danger: assuming that all ethical applications are equally good and can easily be translated from clinical trials to qualitative research is naive. Guillemin and Gilliam (2004) do state that "Reflexivity in research is not a singular or universal entity but a process—an active, ongoing process that saturates every stage of the research" (p.274). However, examining "what do I know?" and "how do I know it?" does not guarantee that the answers will not assume a Westernized ontological and epistemological evaluation, nor that decisions about how to address participants will not still be laden with power. Guillemin and Gilliam (2004) claim that all things involving research design are based on the researcher's assumptions of place and time (p. 274), but *the process of reflexivity itself also begins from a particular placement*, and thus can still reflect and be limited by an unexamined social and political positioning. This is reminiscent of James Clifford's point in *Partial Truths* (in Clifford and Marcus, eds., 1986), that if research is governed by the assumptions of the researcher, then reflexivity still carries those assumptions. Guillemin and Gilliam (2004) propose that reflexivity supplement microethics in instances that are especially significant ethically. However, I experienced my research in its entirety as a whole series of ethically important instances and as ethically important *as a whole*. That required enduring ethical and reflexive considerations throughout. A present mindfulness is a constant when working with Indigenous (First Nations) co-creators. We cannot treat what we are doing with sensitive data as an afterthought; nor can we fix our assumptions about others' lived

realities to fit our desired outcome, even (and perhaps especially) when we desire that outcome to be empathetic identification.

In response to Guillemin and Gilliam, Peers (2018, p. 268) describes axiological assumptions as referring to "often-unexamined, unrecognized or mistakenly universalized values that influence our work." Through such unexamined commitments, "we can continue the imperialist tradition of imposing our knowledge systems … onto indigenous and non-Western lives, beliefs, and communities as though these were neutral and emancipatory acts" (2018, p. 274). Peers calls for a legitimation of Indigenous ontological and epistemological autonomy to assess knowledge construction (2018, p. 274). The need for this is apparent in Tuck's description (2009a, p. 412) of how damage-centered research (which treats marginalized people mainly as broken or damaged) can perpetuate colonial violence by objectifying people's lives as effects of such violence. Tuck asserts (2009a) that "[d]amage can no longer be the only way or even the main way, that we talk about ourselves" (p. 422). Images of historically oppressed groups as damaged (re)produce a cultural homogenization of pain and exclude the complex agency and resilience of such groups. An epistemological change with ontological overtones – a *desire*-based framework (Tuck, 2009a, p. 416) – is needed to undo this disparaging effect of *damage*-centered research. Bringing lived Indigenous truths into method, rather than employing a decontextualized reflexivity, would help accomplish this. In my own work, I had to consider oral testimony shared with me in this light. I also had to be aware of how to handle questions of intellectual property in terms of an Indigenous ethics, and *with* my Indigenous interlocutors. Knowledge created should align with protocols developed not only for but with co-creators, and researchers must ensure that they represent all co-creators with integrity. I was in contact with my co-creators during the

write-up of the results, and indicated that I would accept and respectfully consider their feedback or any changes they might request.

A cautionary tail: including the whole narrative body of those in the research

Tallbear (2014) stresses the importance of representing Indigenous lives respectfully and with integrity, from the point of view of those living them, writing that, "[c]hange and hope for our tribal peoples involves constituting our own narratives from our own lives and histories" (p. 3). If reflexivity is practiced in research without this commitment, it still leaves the decision making about the researcher's stance up to the researcher. Tuck (2009a) states that "[i]t is not the research that will make the difference but, rather, who participates in the research, who poses the questions, how data are gathered, and who conducts the analysis" (p. 423). While ethical reflexivity is a considerable step forward from past research protocols, extending reflexivity to include co-authorship allows Indigenous knowledge to be foregrounded and taken seriously, establishing it as a legitimate feature of both method and content in conducting and writing research relating to Indigenous communities. It means writing *with* such communities not just writing *about* them.

Where to start: subalternity, identity, and the "purity" politics of the blood quantum

We Indigenous people are still subaltern in our own land, but the subaltern is that which *survives defeat*: it remains alive under the colonizer's heel. But the ways in which those who form the "subaltern" begin to speak and act openly again may not be "pure", because they come from *specific places* in histories of resistance and negotiation, heterogeneity and homogenization.

While I see Indigenous people(s) as heterogeneous, both between and within our Nations, settler states have put a good deal of energy into homogenizing some of us under rubrics such as "full-blood" or "status" and declaring those of us who don't fit that rubric to be non-Indigenous, part-indigenous, or Indigenous only within our generation. The Indian Act of 1867 established rules and regulatory policies that have shaped the understanding of Indigenous identity for generations. As Lawrence (2003) notes,

> The regulation of native identity has been central to the colonization process in both Canada and the United States. Systems of classification and control enable settler governments to define who is 'Indian,' and control access to Native land. These regulatory systems have forcibly supplanted traditional ways of identifying the self in relation to land and community, then, must involve deconstructing and reshaping how we understand Indigenous Identity (p. 3).

This assertion by Lawrence was key to the direction I wanted to take in my research in order to develop new ways of thinking and knowing Indigeneity. Regulation and control systematically changed the way that indigenous people have come to conceptualize what it means to be "Indian." However, as much as the Indian Act has interrupted and reshaped the way that Indigenous people have come to know themselves, it could not negate the agency of Indigenous people in recovering an identity that aligns with traditional knowledge even as it orients toward the future (Lawrence, 2003). The understanding that Indigenous identity has been negotiated on colonial terms does not mean it was or is limited to those terms. It is important to remember the multiple and intersecting ways in which identity can be, has been, and is being (re)created.

Identity is neither passive nor fixed. Lawrence (2003) explains that identity can be defined in terms of what people *do* as well as what a people *are*. No matter how a group's identity is formed, it is laden with sociopolitical meaning, and those meanings were important for me to think through in relation to my proposed research. How does the negotiation and transformation of identity not only limit but reinforce indigenous agency? Racial fluidity can become an issue for government officials trying to fix and delegate identity and rights when dealing with Indigenous populations; especially in relation to land. Lines of identity get blurred and in order to control and regulate land there must be a systematic way of identifying who can gain access to it and on what terms. From a governmentalist perspective, categorization creates clarification when it comes to negotiating Indigenous identity. Through the creation and imposition of clear identities, governments can control who is who and who gets what, from allocation of reserve land or funding to band members all the way up to the negotiation of land claims and the interpretation of treaties. At the same time, these efforts at clarification are resisted, subverted, side-stepped or used in unexpected ways by Indigenous people both in government-to-government relations and in the everyday business of applying and contesting the application of policy. This context became important for me to keep in mind whilst producing a sense of what identity meant in the course of my project: how identity is personalized in ways, large or small, that test or undermine institutional and colonial constructs.

Lawrence's (2003) discussion of identity led me to ask questions about why and how colonial policies still shape and control Indigenous identity. Why do we still systematically consent to remove ourselves from existence by necessitating our offspring to fulfill imaginary requirements to fit categories of biological heredity that are products of colonialist imagery? The interesting

thing about the obsession of Canadian and American colonial authorities with "purity" of "blood" as a status marker is the way in which it focused legal and policy discourse on Eurocentric and patriarchal models of family, kinship and ethnicity (as measures of assimilation or "civilization"), but *in the very same move* diverted discourse *away* from an issue central to an *Indigenous* perspective: the *relation of identity to land*. What that meant was that in the politics of negotiating Band powers over membership, a second layer of politics was at work, unacknowledged by colonial officials. On the surface, negotiations about band membership might address funding and services, but they also reflected issues of how best to defend land and treaty rights.

Lawrence (2003) refers in several instances to the role played by the "blood quantum" in efforts by colonial and settler states to manage Indigenous populations, but the one that was most influential to me was her discussion of how blood quanta were (and in some key cases still are) meant to work *as identity markers* to measure the (disappearance of) Indigenous people as a "race." She quotes Churchill's assertion that "[i]f the blood quantum is set at twenty-five percent, and intermarriage is allowed to proceed as it has for centuries, then eventually Indians will simply be officially defined out of existence" (Churchill, 1994, in Lawrence, 2003, p. 19). Reading this was the point at which thinking through racialized indigenous identity in terms of abocide became urgent to my project. Satzewich & Liodakis (2013) define abocide as including the extermination of Aboriginal people *and/or* of their status in Canada. They argue that the elimination of the *status* of Indigenous peoples, like the physical extermination of people, amounts to an erasure of an Indigeneity defined by a people's ties to land (Adler, 2014). Indigenous identity, personal or collective, is shaped by an overarching process carried out by

governmental officials and policy makers who were and often still are not of Indigenous descent or affiliation, and that process was created in order to appropriate and control land, and to convert it into property for capitalist settlement and profit.

I did not initially have a clear understanding of how band council and band members were brought to agree to and comply with these terms. Then I began to think in terms of lateral violence and scarcity as ways of reinforcing land appropriation as not a one-time event but an ongoing requirement of colonial settlement. Lawrence (2003) discusses this in terms of the U.S. Government's Dawes Act (1887), which facilitated the legal fracturing of Indigenous lands (Reservations) in the United States by allowing their division into "allotments" held by individuals. She explains that this fracture forced Indigenous people in the United States to adapt to private property and to move away from a collective mentality and way of life. As Tuck and Yang (2012) point out, through such measures, "…land is remade into property and human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship of the owner to his property" (p. 5).This allotment of land was accomplished by enrolling "mixed bloods" as tribal members who were deemed legally-competent to handle their own affairs, with the thought that they would be more acculturated to settler ways and more likely to be "weak links" who could be cheated out of their allotments. In 1906 and 1907, the federal government passed legislation allowing any "mixed-blood" people with less than 50% blood quantum to sell their lands. However, "full-bloods" continued to be deemed legally incompetent (Lawrence, 2003, pp. 16-17). The blood quantum proved hard to determine, and thus came to be supplemented by other, sometimes "bizarre" or "grotesque" methods. Later, the blood quantum for determining "Indianness" was set federally at twenty-five percent. However, more recently, the specific parameters for membership were left

up to tribal members: tribes were then permitted to accept whomever they saw fit for Indigenous membership: in one case, a 1/256 blood quantum was deemed enough (Lawrence, 2003, p.17). Nonetheless, complications have arisen, not only with leaving Band or Tribe members to govern membership on these terms but also from continuing confusion over federal recognition (p. 18). Lawrence (2003) points out that the discourse of the blood quantum is pervasive (pp. 18-20), and that, in Canada, "the [Federal] status system ... also controls, in a rough way, blood quantum" (p. 20). Further, Lawrence notes that distinctions between "Indian" and "Metis" in Canada may affect the allocation of funding in ways that divide communities (p. 12).

Understanding that process made it clear to me how Indigenous identity has evolved not only through imposition but also local *difficulties* in imposition which then get negotiated. I had to become cognizant of this historical reality in relation to assumptions I made about membership and identity on The Blood Reserve (my reserve). This combination of historical reflection and self-reflection affected my research on how specific conditions (somewhat different in Canada than in the U.S.) forced Blood Tribe members to consider who was Indigenous in the context of the ongoing politics of land rights and funding; a politics that changed over time. We commit lateral violence by denying our own people citizenship in order to secure monetary support, yet we do not do so in a vacuum. Land is the center of our identity and citizenship; land (and funding for land) is at the center of the changing politics of identity that we face.

The obsession of Canadian and American colonial authorities with "purity" of "blood" as a status marker indicates something important about settler colonialism. It redefines Indigenous

identity in ways that *obscure any link between identity and land*. It refocused legal and policy discourse on Eurocentric and patriarchal models of family, kinship and ethnicity (as measures of assimilation or "civilization"), but *in the very same move* diverted discourse *away* from an issue *central* to an *Indigenous* perspective: the *relation of their being – their ontology – to land*. What that meant was that in the politics of negotiating Band powers over membership, a *second layer* of politics was at work, unacknowledged by colonial officials. On the surface, negotiations about band membership might address funding and services, but on the Indigenous side, they also were driven by questions of how best to defend land and treaty rights.

Scott Rutherford's "Colonialism and the Indigenous Present: An Interview with Bonita Lawrence" (2010) was an important guide to grounding my approach in a Canadian context. Rutherford discusses with Lawrence the importance of understanding the specific racialized identities of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Rutherford asks Lawrence what she would see as the most significant facets of colonialism for Indigenous people living in Canada. Lawrence identifies the consumption of land as significant, because it dispossesses people of their identity due to the loss of a tangible reinforcement of being in land-based ways of life (Rutherford, 2010, p. 10; Lawrence in Rutherford, 2010, pp. 10-12). Diminishing access to lands, loss of Indian status, and a potential for conflict over perceptions of security in and rights to land as a result of the continuing arrival in Canada of " desperate peoples of the world – victims of colonialism in one way or another" (Lawrence, in Rutherford, 2010, pp. 12-13) pose immediate—and linked—threats to Indigenous peoples' land base in Canada. She makes a point (in Rutherford, 2010) about troubled relations between different Indigenous peoples in Canada that might also apply to potential conflicts between Indigenous peoples' assertions of land rights (especially in

urban areas) and perceptions by colonized people newly or precariously settled in Canada that such assertion might mean insecurity in land tenure for them: “when you are heavily colonised, there is not much room for diversity. Difference frightens” (p. 12). Lawrence treats citizenship as a crucial component of Indigenous realization, but she notes that citizenship is not a materialized and stable concept for Indigenous peoples. Citizenship is both conditional and inter-generationally revocable, and it does not take shape equally (Lawrence, in Rutherford, 2010: 10-12). Citizenship names a process rather than a thing: a process of struggle with and between contradictory concepts. At one and the same time, we can say that “status” is a colonial concept and yet that its loss is a threat to Indigenous identity and political power.

Lawrence (in Rutherford, 2010, pp. 10-12) further details how intermarriage is a controversial and important determinant of citizenship and identity for Indigenous people. Being “Status Indian” in Canada is the crux of official Indigenous identity as defined by the settler state. The Indian Act controls that identity in legal terms, including the definition of marriage and the division of genetic inheritance. It is estimated that in several generations “Status Indians” will cease to exist under the present rules. Because “racial” identity has been a key marker for “Indianness”, blood has become and remains, officially or unofficially, an important signifier of Indigenous identity. “Marrying out” as defined in policy is equivalent to dilution. Lawrence laments that the only groups of people systematically losing their citizenship in Canada are Indigenous populations (Lawrence, in Rutherford, 2010, p. 11). Given that identity is the main focus of my thesis, I needed to pay attention to what this means to those I would be in dialogue with. Being aware of how identity works for indigenous people in Canada day-to-day was central to the shift in my thesis work, because I came to look at it in terms of agency and fluidity.

Indigenous identity has been negotiated restrictively in a colonial sense because the federal government holds the ability to revoke and measure it. Holders of Indigenous identity have been historically oppressed and their ability to self-determine identity remains limited, but it wasn't erased. I wanted to communicate the identities that my Indigenous co-creators work with and construct because I was curious to see if or how they could make citizenship a meaningful term their daily lives.

When I think about identity as an Indigenous person I am often confused and there is an element of ambiguity in my sense of self-determination. Assumptions I was making about identity started becoming more apparent to me even whilst writing my thesis proposal. I began to see that through my own uncertainty about identity I was actively trying to understand a context: a place and time both familiar and unfamiliar to me. I anticipated coming to see how a variety of identity-strategies are enabled, pursued and restricted. I hoped that by exploring the real everyday histories of First Nations (Indigenous) university students, I would be able to uncover both how deeply colonialism had reinforced my identity, and how developing an anti-colonial orientation (and ways to understand the multidimensionality of colonialism) could inform and reinforce resistance and self-determination. What I did not fully foresee at first was the extent to which even the initial process of developing my own research methodology would plunge me immediately into a struggle with how deeply colonialism had affected my own identity *as a student and a scholar*, and how developing an anti-colonial orientation would in turn inform my engagement with research methods and methodologies.

Beginning to decolonize method

Lincoln *et al.* (2011) write that "[t]here are two dangers inherent in the conventional texts of Scientific method: that they may lead us to believe the world is rather simpler than it is, and that they may reinscribe enduring forms of historical oppression" (p. 184). This highlights problems with hegemonic methodological approaches that are still apparent in the academy. However, Lincoln *et al*. (2011) suggest that there is now a crisis of authority and representation within knowledge production. While methodologies still used in the western academy continue to perpetuate colonial practices by reproducing knowledge as extractive and exploitative, new voices are struggling for new forms of legitimacy both inside and outside the academy. Lincoln *et al*. challenge the inclusivity of dominant methodological models, discuss confluence in methodologies and argue that axiology, voice, and reflexivity are under-utilized methodological assets for data collection and interpretation in postmodernist paradigms (p. 167). The issue becomes apparent when postmodern textual representations fail to remedy the modernist uneven playing field which allows unequal power relations, arbitrary assumption of authority and incorrect representation of voices to persist, "which serves to silence those whose lives we appropriate for our social science" (Lincoln *et al*, 2011, p. 184). Given that Canada's history is one of settler colonialism, it is no accident that the misrepresentation and decontextualization of Indigenous knowledges and failure to acknowledge different *ways* of knowing (epistemologies), have marked dominant methodological approaches in Canadian history and social sciences.

Extractive/exploitive colonialism operates not only by appropriating land but also by using Indigenous labor and knowledge as natural resources for personal, class or institutional gain,

economic or otherwise. Todd (2016) argues that knowledge is similarly extracted from its context (the efforts of Indigenous groups to understand the lived realities of their world) and is then retold as new or original research by settler academics in journals and at conferences. This perpetuates an ongoing denial of Indigenous thinkers and Indigenous thought as legitimate. The lack of faithful representations of Indigenous knowledge is explained by Todd as a denial that such knowledge is *tangible* (p. 7). "When *will* I hear someone reference Indigenous thinkers in a direct, contemporary and meaningful way in European lecture halls?" (p. 7).

Simpson (2009) expresses a similar sentiment in discussing how dispossession, displacement, encroachment and industrial extractivism have changed the lives of Indigenous people. Confiscation of land displaced Indigenous land-based knowledge systems. Extractive colonialism contributes to academic extractivism in depriving future Indigenous generations of access to land knowledge -- by extracting the *source* of that knowledge. Simpson adds that "[c]olonized life is so intensely about consumption" (p. 23): colonialism operates within the academy to extract what it needs from Indigenous knowledge and turning it into objects of academic consumption; for example, reproducing it within western terms of legitimacy as ethnographic material rather than as representing a legitimate and critical way of knowing in its own right. This undermines the workings of Indigenous knowledge systems when the academy fails to acknowledge that Indigenous ontologies are legitimate forms of understanding based on embodied and kinetic relations to the land. Simpson (2009) concludes that "[w]hen colonialism could not eliminate grounded normativity, it tried to contain it so that it exists only to the degree that it does not impede land acquisition, settlement and resource extraction" (p. 25). Indigenous knowledge is locked out of materialization in the academy because such materialization would

entail actualizing its grounded normativity, contradicting the hegemony of institutionalized western knowledge practices. However, actual universities, colleges, academic disciplines, museums and galleries are no longer monolithic. There are cracks within them that can be explored and widened. Simpson's (2009) work on radical resurgence (*Kwe*) is an example of resistance to colonialism within the western academy. Radical resurgence can serve as a way to challenge the marginalization of Indigenous thinkers and Indigenous thought within academia and help dismantle the exploitive/extractive colonialism of its knowledge practices.

An article by Tuck and Yang (2012), *Decolonization is not a Metaphor,* highlights the unsettling nature of decolonization:

> Decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life; it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools ... The easy adoption of decolonizing discourse by educational advocacy and scholarship, evidenced by the increasing number of calls to "decolonize our schools," or use "decolonizing methods," or, "decolonize student thinking", turns decolonization into a metaphor. ... As important as their goals may be, social justice, critical methodologies, or approaches that decenter settler perspectives have objectives that may be incommensurable with decolonization. Because settler colonialism is built upon an entangled triad structure of settler-native-slave, the decolonial desires of white, nonwhite, immigrant, postcolonial, and oppressed people, can similarly be entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and reinhabitation that actually further settler colonialism (p. 1).

Tuck and Yang highlight the importance of maintaining the integrity of *Indigenous* decolonization, a decolonization represented by those who have been colonized:

> When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future. Decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks. The easy absorption, adoption, and transposing of decolonization is yet another form of settler appropriation. When we write about decolonization, we are not offering it as a metaphor; it is not an approximation of other experiences of oppression (Tuck & Yang, 2012: 3).

Throughout this project, it became more and more important to me that my research and writing be a process of decolonizing – not as a political ideology to which I bound myself, but as a process of *freeing up* my voice, the voices of my relations, and the voices of the interviewees who became my partners in conversation; *freeing up* our understanding; *freeing up* what we were and are meant by Creator to do.

However, moving forward from such a critique of methods, there are certain things I can say concretely about the methods used in developing this thesis. My project aimed to (re)create ways of understanding specific to my needs and those of my interlocutors. This meant that my methodology was not something decided on in advance and *stuck to* consistently throughout. Rather, this work involved a practical development of a methodology *in the process of research*, adapting it to the situations in which that research occurred and to the priorities and expectations

of my interlocutors. This approach, as it developed over the course of my research and writing, was something I discovered to be in accordance with Indigenous ways of knowing and creating, and with Indigenous interests. It also accorded with my wish to resist knowledge appropriation for purposes that reinforce Eurocentrism. My research tools included dialogue, self-reflection, and mutual give and take between myself and my interlocutors.

I now consider myself a *hybrid (re)searcher* willing to use multiple methods to foster innovative ways to understand and write about lived realities. Such methods could involve assemblage and translation, co-construction, reflexive narrative analysis, and dialogue (visiting with relations/interlocutors). While I engaged in "interviewing" I ended up treating my visits to the people I talked with not simply as opportunities to gather information, but as a way to engage in dialogue. I came to see my "interviewees" as interlocutors, and as relations. We discussed matters of mutual concern. We cried together. I came to this work out of a particular history and situation, and I certainly acknowledged and incorporated that into my work, rather than trying to stand outside it. That being said, the methods I incorporated, as discussed above, were practiced as rigorously in their own way as contemporary Eurocentric research models would be.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

See Chapter 5, Part 2, "Living and expressing nitsiiksiniiitaki"

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UNDERSTANDING COLONIALISM THROUGH RESISTANCE

1. Un-braiding, starting over: the planting ground and first strand

I was part-way through my research project. Despite the COVID epidemic, I had completed a set of interviews. I was on my way. But as I faced the next step in my research, writing up and analyzing my findings, things were also falling apart. I was no longer sure how to use my interview material. As I thought about my interviews, I began to see them differently. They had been more like conversations; like sharing. But sharing what? Meanwhile, I was facing serious challenges in my personal life, as a mother, a member of a family, as responsible for a household, as someone involved in relations. These challenges were starting to impact my thesis work. And as I thought about my overall project, parts of it became clearer while other parts became less clear. Even as I began to write, I had the sense that the whole was no longer fitting together as I had thought it would.

These are not unusual problems; many graduate students face similar issues. Supervisory committees often help their graduate-student supervisees through periods of uncertainty and reorientation. The School of Graduate Studies at my university has developed policies and regulations to help students to develop and clarify workable thesis topics, or to help them, if necessary, through a period of reorientation and rethinking. One such policy is to require students to write two thesis proposals. One is to be written “post-admission” as one begins one’s

project. It is meant to help the student, with supervisory feedback, to define and clarify their project. Then, once work is well underway, the student is to write another proposal; a longer, more elaborated one. Its purpose is to help ensure the student is still "on track" and making progress, and to identify any needed changes in focus and direction. These proposal requirements are meant to help, but sometimes a student (me in this case) can come to see them as potential barriers; as intimidating; as blockages. Sometimes, a student may feel the ground continuing to shift under their project even after they complete their second proposal. Often students feel a need to fight off troubles in their personal lives that threaten to invade the time and space they need to write, or that even invade their work itself, throwing them off-track. Are these problems, or opportunities? I was assured by my supervisor that such challenges were not unusual. The School of Graduate Studies showed me leniency and understanding, especially after I met with them to discuss not only my personal situation but also the challenges faced by Indigenous students in a settler institution. But from a structural point of view, my university, like most others in Canada, can still be described as a settler academy, founded and funded by a settler state apparatus. Its administrators are well-intentioned, but some of the most basic assumptions built into its policies and organization still reflect European-origin ideas about research, teaching, and scholarship more generally – including policies defining and regulating a graduate "thesis project."

From the standpoint of the settler academy, a research project needs to begin with a clear definition of the work ahead; a *projection* that ideally will give a clear sense of focus, purpose, goals, and relevance. A thesis proposal is meant to help keep the project *on-track*. There is nothing inherently wrong with this approach and it is intended by those who oversee it today to

be helpful, but it has certain connotations and doesn't always fit Indigenous ways of knowing. In Canada, a railway-track metaphor is apt, given the centrality of transcontinental railways to the formation of the country and their role in Canadian history: facilitating settlement and the military defeat of a Metis government and its Indigenous allies; accompanying political and economic centralization (the Federal government, the National Policy, Federal oversight and control of Indigenous peoples: in short, the consolidation of a colonial state and of a national territory dedicated to settler agriculture and resource extraction). The railway, too, was a "project," pushed through from first vision to completion in the face of financial uncertainty and despite misappropriation of funds, (e.g. Pacific Scandal, 2021), natural adversity, and political-military opposition. Its right-of-way was blasted through rock millions of years old, and it bisected the Great Plains, placing a physical marker on the land that presaged future restrictions on the movement of its First Peoples. It facilitated the near-extinction of the buffalo.

Maximillian Novak (2008) traces the origin of the concept of the "project," as applied to thesis-writing, railway-building and many other things, and as itself a cultural artifact of modernity, to the long eighteenth century (1660-1789), precisely the era in which both the slave/plantation economy and European settlement of the Americas were being consolidated. As it developed in this period, the concept of the project came to embody a future orientation and a willingness to break with the past. It accompanied the consolidation of centralized national states and economies and the spread of early-modern imperialism. It was associated with theories of trade and sources of wealth, with schemes for profit – and with speculation and graft. Above all, it married these to a central idea: the future as an open space of "improvement" to be realized in acts of corporate or national will. A project involved "projecting" ahead into that future a vision

which could be refined into a timeline, a map of activity ("operations"), and a plan, and *pushing ahead* with that plan through to completion. Things that threatened diversion came to be seen as obstacles to be removed, or bypassed. The project stamped its image on the world.

Knowledge projects (or at least the policies and regulations governing them, as in research funding applications, ethics applications, and thesis proposals) still share some aspects of these kinds of projection. The ability to project a clear timeline to conclusion; to illuminate the work ahead with a clear focus; to set out a clear, straight path to the finish line; these are still seen as ideals for thesis work, even if it is known and expected that many such projects will need modification once underway. But Indigenous knowledge-gathering can sit uncomfortably with projections and straight lines, and a single-minded focus. Indigenous ways of knowing are often fluid in process and take context and relationality (and changes in them) very seriously, as I will explain later in this chapter and in the next. They may involve more than one change in direction, and research time may slow down or speed up in unforeseen ways in their course.

What the classical eighteenth-century notion of the project treated as obstacles to be removed, levelled or surmounted, Indigenous knowledge tends to treat positively, as *good things*; as *teaching things*, there for a reason. They can be taken to indicate that the wisest path is often not the most direct one. Further, Indigenous knowledge includes the knower: its ways of knowing include the idea that it is a good thing for knowers and researchers to *work on themselves*; on their ability to be consistently aware "in the round," rather than simply forging ahead toward a

predetermined goal.[2] (There are some non-Indigenous methodological approaches, including phenomenology, certain forms of ethnomethodology and ethnography, narrative ways of knowing, and autoethnography that support similar kinds of inclusion.) Researchers should be prepared, through radical reflexivity, to deepen their understanding of their own circumstances, history, positionality; their subjectivity and subject-formation; their relation to their research and to those they encounter and engage in its course.

This thesis began as a project to discover how Indigenous students at the University of Lethbridge understood their learning paths, their Indigenous identities, and the challenges they faced.[3] There was my first clue to self-awareness: that I wanted to find and interview those in similar situations to myself. A second hint arrived as I started the interviews and found them unfolding more like conversations, in which more similarities came to light between myself and the people I was engaging with more as conversation partners or interlocutors. Following that shift, I began to feel an increasingly urgent need to better understand myself, not only as a university graduate student, but as a knowledge-seeker, and an Indigenous person – in complicated ways. These concerns were highlighted by a tense conversation with a colleague that went to the core of issues that went to *my* core. What does it mean to be Indigenous? What is Indigenous identity? Is the word "Identity" problematic? What does it mean, in Indigenous terms, to be or not be "in community," to be kin, to have or not have official "status." What does it mean to face the complexities of these questions and their impacts on a search for knowledge

[2] There are, of course, some non-Indigenous methodological approaches that also support a similar inclusion of the knower, especially in the social sciences, e.g. phenomenology, certain forms of ethnomethodology and ethnography, narrative ways of knowing, and autoethnography.

[3] As it turned out, those who responded and who became part of my conversational sample were all, like me, female-identifying, and "halves" (half-white, half-Indigenous).

and connection? I gave this conversation a story form – the story of Fox and Bear – in Chapter Two, turning it into a kind of allegory though retaining the directness of the talk.

2. The thesis path: by season, by strand, by chapter

The result of these questionings, of the twists and turns in my path, is the thesis you are reading. It involves research, but now includes not only interview or conversational research but what could be called theoretical research – research into literature to help me clarify the meanings, usage and significance of concepts of Indigeneity, identity, relationality, Indigenous knowledge, colonialism, decolonizing, and so on. It also includes "inner" research – inquiry into myself and my formation as a subject, positioned in different social settings and relations as a person of different kinds. subjectivity and research as defined from an Indigenous perspective. This involves telling and discussing my own story, and making space for other stories, in this thesis.

Instead of a map, structural plan or timeline, I employ three sets of orienting tenets throughout the thesis. I see them as *not* as metaphors but as ways through which Creator and my ancestors have spoken and still speak to me and guide me. They reach me through the words and voices of other knowledge-seekers, in published work, in conversations, and online.

The first of these three orienting devices is both a seasonal and a directional analogy, drawn from my own Blackfoot heritage, as communicated to me not only through my reading, but more importantly by community members and elders. It appears at the beginning of each chapter, to

set its tone. The second orienting device is Robin Wall Kimmerer's (2013) seasonal analogy for the research process, which involves five stages: planting sweetgrass seeds, tending sweetgrass as it grows, harvesting it, braiding it, and burning it. It, too, is referenced at the beginning of each chapter, but on occasion it is also discussed further in the chapter itself. For example, the present chapter deals with the first stage, and more specifically, with the "seeds" that established the reorientation of this project and their initial leafing-out. Chapter two orients to the stage of tending-to the development of the project. Chapter Three initiates a cautious discussion of possible harvests, good and bad, and Chapters Four and Five span harvesting, braiding, and burning. The third orienting device is theoretical or analytical rather than seasonal or directional: the Critical Knowledge Braid (e.g. Czuy and Eagle Speaker, 2019; see also Kassi *et al*., 2022). It maps the process of knowledge-development both analytically and synthetically, distinguishing and then braiding together three strands of knowing (each composed of multiples fibers or threads), as follows: (1) Indigenous/Cultural/land-based or sea-centered ways of knowing, (2) Personal/Experiential ways of knowing, and (3)Western/ "Modern" ways of knowing. I introduce the first and second of these strands in this chapter, but address the second at more length in Chapter Two, and also refer to it in Chapters Four and Five. I address the third (with severe caution) in Chapter Three.

In this Introduction, I discuss my change in direction and build a case for Indigenous ways of knowing as inclusive of these other kinds of research, and for narrative, Indigenous anarchism, and radical Indigenous reflexivity as features of research, of thinking, and of their dissemination.

In Chapter One I seed the foundations of this thesis. These include discussion of the Action Research and Critical Braid approaches to Indigenous ways of research and knowledge and of some central aspects and dimensions of an Indigenous way of knowing as I understand them. I also address the need to make space for Indigenous ways of knowing through decolonization.

The second chapter is the core of this thesis and thus ranges widely over the arc of my research process and the theoretical, historical and social contexts that informed it. However, it focuses in particular on questions of identity, power and violence, and it does so less in the abstract than in their *personal and experiential* aspects. Personal and relational experience is integral to *being* an Indigenous researcher and to the process of Indigenous research; how the self is written into our academic work and how the structures and processes of both colonization and decolonization are written into the self. It also identifies the centrality of narrative – through a *particular* narrative; *my* narrative) to social and cultural research from an Indigenous perspective. Anthropology, my first "home" discipline, taught me that, regardless of the particular paradigms from which we research and write, our personal experience and our stories of it are central to ethnographic research. Thus, in Chapter Two, I tell my story and present those of my interviewees, as the stories of partners in conversation. But Indigenous knowledge puts great emphasis on context, and so these stories are embedded there within a great deal of necessary historical, political, institutional, social and personal context. This thesis is no longer just a study of the educational experiences of University of Lethbridge students who identify as Indigenous. It now has a longer narrative arc as a story about how I am coming to be what I already was – an Indigenous person in a (post-)colonial setting, making sense of myself, my situation and social location, my

experience and subjectivity. However, I think much of what I narrate in this chapter will also be true for those who recognize themselves to some degree in the experiences about which I write.

The third chapter then turns to a discussion of how Western scholarship should and should not attempt to become an integrative strand in the reconciliation braid of knowledge, using as an example a specific ethnography that, I will claim, exemplifies some of the pitfalls that can face such an attempt. Pulling together what is good in western theory and methodologies with a reinvigorated Indigenous path to knowledge is a goal worth pursuing. It could make a valid contribution to collective efforts to create meaningful ways to do, to think about, and to communicate research. However, there are still issues to be recognized and kept in awareness, especially on the Western side.

In Chapters Four and Five I refer to the need to take up all three strands of the critical braid. However, I don't come to a definitive conclusion there about *how exactly* to combine them in a way that will serve a holistic approach to knowledge and discernment, and to decolonizing the academy and its practices. It's too early for me to do that. The *goal* is important – it is *necessary* for me to hold to such a goal as an Indigenous researcher, and I think it will benefit research in general. But it will take time, and work, and vigilance, and wisdom, and endurance, and a thousand acts of connection *and correction*, to realize it. Thus, I don't map out a detailed plan or projected timeline for future research, nor a set of specific recommendations for policy projects or for institutional initiatives.

In this Introduction, I plunge more or less straight into discussion. It is time to begin exploring Indigenous ways of knowing and researching; to plant the seeds of that knowing and to watch for them to sprout, and leaf out, and to face downriver, with the west wind at my back. But right away, I face a set of issues. Indigenous ways of knowing, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) constitute huge topics, and to do them justice means providing some context for discussing them. And to see them in the round and in context means I need to step back to see the whole; to gain perspective and context. Similarly, *before* planting sweetgrass, one must identify a good, sheltered place for planting, and what the young plants will need shelter *from*, and then discern the best seeds or shoots to plant. First, then, some context for this project as it began.

3. Situating research: naming adversities and legacies

My initial statement of intent for my Master of Arts application included room for a contextual discussion of the manner in which colonial projects have affected the shaping of Indigenous identity in Canada. That intent remains in this thesis even if the way I address it has changed. Thus, it is still useful to begin with some of that context. Colonization, land theft, the Indian Act, and residential schools forced Indigenous peoples to assimilate to European standards of identity (and also made many of them dependent on commodities produced and sold in the settler economic order). Governments implemented control over Indigenous land and identity in a process that has been termed Abocide (Daniels, 1998). As Tuck and Yang (2012) point out,

> Within settler colonialism, the most important concern is land/water/air/subterranean earth (land, for shorthand…) Land is what is most valuable, contested, required. This is both because the settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and

> also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence (2012, p. 5).

This is an important point: Indigenous peoples in North America may have had concepts equivalent to "territory," but before Europeans arrived, they had no concept of land as property. By contrast, in European-derived settler cultures, land is an asset; a commodity, on which for-profit developers can build housing or transportation infrastructures, and on which agricultural and forestry commodities can be grown, or from which minerals, sand or topsoil can be extracted. For Indigenous peoples the shorthand "land" stands for a way of life lived in relation to land, sea, and the creatures who shared it with them. "Land theft" for Indigenous peoples who suffered it thus meant an attempt to forcibly remove a whole way of being and (as will be discussed subsequently in this thesis) of the ontologies and axiologies in which it was expressed.

Abocide was facilitated and legitimated in Canada by the implementation of legislation and policy through the *Indian Act* (1867) which established the colonial state's control over one's ability to identify as a member of a First Nation in Canada. Under the act, "an Indian woman who married a non-Indian man (whether non-Aboriginal or non-status) would lose her status. If she married an Indian man from another Indian band, she would cease to be a member of her own band and become a member of her husband's band" ("What is Bill C-31?", 2009; see also "Bill C-31", 1985, and "Bill C-31, 2009). This illustrates the interwovenness of settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy (Arvin, *et al.*, 2013). While the Indian Act recognized the category of "Status Indian," it was framed in terms of a policy of assimilation and "civilization" *explicitly aimed at extinguishing that status* as part of what Wolfe (2006) calls a "logic of

elimination." Thus, not only is the term "Status Indian" a colonial category; it was formulated as part of an intent to erase Indigenous identity.

Bill C-31 was a Federal amendment to The Indian Act which came into effect in 1985. Ostensibly, it was intended to propose,

> ... modifications to various sections of the *Indian Act*, including significant changes to Indian status and band membership, with three major goals: to address gender discrimination of the Indian Act, to restore Indian status to those who had been forcibly enfranchised due to previous discriminatory provisions, and to allow bands to control their own band membership as a step towards self-government" (Bill C-31, 2009).

However, while Bill C-31 did restore the status of over 100,000 people in Canada, its provisions remained problematic:

> [T]here are still many Aboriginal people who were not able to regain Status under Bill C-31. These Non-Status Aboriginal people may not have been eligible under Bill C-31 because a number of categories of people who lost Status were not included in the bill. For example, those people whose grandparents are entitled to Status, but not both of their parents, cannot regain Status because of the "second-generation" rule, which states that Bill C-31 only goes two generations back, not three. In addition, many Métis people are not eligible for Status. Thus, Bill C-31 has by no means ended the concept of Non-Status Aboriginals. In fact, in British Columbia, over 40% of the Aboriginal people are non-Status. This has caused some people to argue that Bill C-31 has increased the divide

> between Status and Non-Status, and between on-reserve and off-reserve populations, by making it clear that some people who lost Status will never regain it (Daniels, 1998).

The term “blood quantum” has been used in relation to policies of assimilation in the United States, to refer to levels of racial ‘purity’ necessary to retain Indian status; it had a relation to eugenics theory of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Howard Adler (2014) points out that while this term is not used officially in Canadian policy documents, it nonetheless has a continuing *de facto* presence there, despite the 1985 amendments:

> Even under the amended Indian Act, the status system can be thought of as inter-generational surveillance that tracks racial purity. Although the legislation doesn't specifically refer to blood quantum, this is essentially what it amounts to. For example, there are two types of "status Indians" that determine whether the children of a status Indian will have status or not. A 6 (1) Indian can pass their status on to their children, but a 6(2) Indian cannot unless the other parent also has status. This is often refereed to as the "second generation" cut-off (Adler, 2014, no. 3).

My research, as originally proposed, would have examined how University of Lethbridge students identify as Indigenous and what Indigenous identity means to them today, whilst also considering how *imposed* definitions of aboriginality have affected their ability to identify as Indigenous in “the university,” which Grande (2018) theorizes as “an arm of the settler state – a site where the logics of elimination, capital accumulation, and dispossession are reconstituted” (p. 47).

4. Different knowledge, different goals; a different path through the academy

My growing understanding of postcolonialism, the development of my own self-understanding, and my encounters with Indigenous women students (in what I originally conceived of as interviews but came to see more as conversations and mutual sharing of experience) led me to refocus on considering not only how colonialism continues to hinder Indigenous education and research, but how Indigenous people (status or non-status) *make* meaning and *exercise* their agency *as* Indigenous people in the face of such hindrance and within academic institutions. I sought to do this with a specific focus on First Nations university students, of whom I am one. Further, while I am still interested in how colonization invades personal as well as public life, preparation for my thesis work through the graduate courses I took led me to see it as important first to decolonize my own way of thinking – not only to be able *to see and to understand* this invasion more clearly, but also to *see any understand myself more clearly* as Indigenous. Simpson (2002) writes that decolonization is both a personal and a public process, and that it requires time and work by Indigenous and non-indigenous individuals. Critiquing dominant ideas about society and personhood (including dominant sociological, anthropological and philosophical ideas) in relation to *one's community* and *one's own life* is an important process in revitalizing Indigenous ways of thinking. This involves, among other things, working through what it means to have access to and to understanding traditional protocol; to understand the dedication it takes to honour and incorporate Indigenous knowledge (Simpson, 2002, pp. 17-18, 20). Thus, it means necessarily taking a position that makes it possible to honour and incorporate such knowledge. It involves making a *commitment*, even if provisional, at the level of axiology and ontology. It means adopting a position of *respect* for such knowledge and the ways in which it is transmitted, to understand knowledge itself as relational (Wilson, 2008).

Thus, my decolonization of my own status as a student and a researcher has become more than just a part, no matter how important, of how I approach my topic. It impacts *who I am* and how I will approach the world I live in. I have come to realize that Indigenous identities do not exist apart from or above lived reality. Nor are they static, historically fixed by the legacy of colonial interventions and definitions. Indigenous people have adopted the English word "traditional" to describe ways of knowing and living they have inherited and have been taken up from Creation and their ancestors. But in English, "traditional" is a word that can carry other connotations that do not fit Indigenous usage: "traditional" as premodern or non-modern; as fixed in unchanging forms; as non-rational. These notions inhabit the history of Western anthropology and social theory; part of a history of othering of Indigenous peoples, their cultures, and their ways of life, as ethnographic objects rather than as fellow-subjects. They mingle with terms like "mythology" historically used to discount Indigenous ways of communicating knowledge, in parallel with discounting that knowledge itself as forms of magical thinking. Forms of othering can still be present in some anthropological discussions of ontological diversity, and even in some decolonial initiatives that "incorporates and acknowledges the critical scholarship of Indigenous thinkers whose work and labour informs many current trends in Euro-Western scholarship, activism and socio-political discourse" without consistent acknowledgement (Todd, 2016, p.4).

My proposed research thus shifted toward understanding Indigenous identity as much more than a matter of cultural trappings, folkways, symbolisms, clothing, decoration, or even language. I have come to understand Indigenous identity as including a whole way of life; a way to know and a way to *be* that calls for *commitment*. To treat it only as a subject of detached empirical examination would be to miss the point of it. I have also come to understand Indigenous identity

as a process: it does not stand still; it is not outside history. Indigenous people are "without history" only to the colonizing eye (Wolf, 1982; Kuper, 1988). It is fluid and meaningful, responding to continued and new restrictions imposed by settler law or culture, developing strategies of anticolonial resistance, and in the process, restoring and adapting Indigenous ways of knowing. This doesn't happen only in classrooms or on public occasions, and certainly not all at once; it is ongoing in everyday life. I am interested in how present-day Indigenous identity has been produced in terms of residual and new concepts arising from but also resisting colonial projects, and how it is being (re)produced in new ways by Indigenous people and Indigenous thinkers. I realized that I wanted to focus on how identity can be (re)shaped by (re)positioning Indigenous ways of knowing, Indigenous knowledge, and Indigenous selfhood as resistance to colonized identities. I see my own process of repositioning and reshaping in parallel to processes by which other First Nations university students identify themselves in a "postcolonial" time. How do we do so in a way that respects the resilience of Indigenous identity as a lived reality rather than as fragile and benign objects: "traditions" to be studied or preserved as if only of museological interest, not central to an ongoing work of knowing and identity-construction.

Now, I was ready to plant new seeds or shoots. Which ones? The following sections indicate some of the seedlings I transplanted to grow in my knowledge garden.

Claiming Indigenous space: a site for sore eyes

The dominant world views resulting global colonialism starting in the 1500's set a stage for how reality should be conceived ontologically in academic pursuits, and shaped the implementation

of social order in Western "civilization" and its colonial extensions. These can be problematic for those who did not historically share such worldviews (Little Bear 2000, p. 77). To understand divergent world views *respectfully and critically* is imperative to decolonize and reconcile the academic world because it allows opportunity to challenge colonialism's hegemonic monopoly of axiology and methodological practice. Challenging taken-for-granted Eurocentric world views in academia can offer a site for Indigenous worldviews to be given serious consideration and incorporated into the curriculum, rather than simply being mined for metaphor or ethnographic examples. This will involve something different from asking for permission to work alongside westernized epistemologies, ontologies, theoretical perspectives and academic protocols. It will involve resistance to the preference for a singular, objective mode of thought. Asking permission continues to center Eurocentric authority over knowledge production, which, *in itself*, denies the existence of North American universities as guests (or interlopers) on Indigenous land. This is not the way to achieve reconciliation in Canadian universities. How can reconciliation be achieved with integrity in the university? By listening to Indigenous folx; by making space for them in the forefront of the pursuit of knowledge; by taking seriously the methods, epistemologies and ontologies embedded in Indigenous world views, and by taking seriously a *responsibility* – a requirement of *being on* Indigenous land – to understand that that are alternative ways to define, know and interpret reality. This will not be easy to the extent that the university remains a an agent and creation of the settler state (Grande, 2018).

These alternatives include stories, which are now are being used by Indigenous scholars to demonstrate, communicate and advance Indigenous theoretical frameworks, creating space for decolonizing and entry points for Indigenous scholarship, and fostering the reclamation and use

by Indigenous peoples of their own cultural understanding of cosmologies, ontology, and epistemology in knowledge production (Lacombe *et al*, 2016, p. 1). Decolonization was at the forefront in the call for Indigenous literature (Justice, 2018); it now plays the same role in Indigenous scholarship. Making space for Indigenous voices not only creates new strategies for resurgence; it helps to *unsettle* Western academic institutions and practices for their own good, by refusing an obligation to adapt to Eurocentric thinking and scholarly imperatives as a standard for all scholarship, challenging them in ways that do not recenter neo-colonial knowledge systems (Lacombe *et al.*, 2016, p. 2). While a desire to unsettle the academy developed out of the creation of physical or cultural spaces as "accommodations" for Indigenous students and scholars, it now is taking a step beyond that moment. Within the structure of settler academia, universities often now set aside, hold, or make space for clubs and indigenous studies, but few if any feature fully-developed co-participatory spaces and frameworks designed to over-arch and permeate *all* activities of the academy, building-*in* equal engagement by Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty, staff and students, theoretically, methodologically, and procedurally. As long as the space for indigenous peoples within academic institutions is an *allowance* that is *reserved* for certain places, assigned administratively, scholarly reconciliation will remain problematic. The call for Indigenous resistance and resurgence is the beginning, on one side, of a serious commitment to reconciliation and decolonization, long overdue within settler academic institutions. That commitment calls out for an equally serious response.

Little Bear (2000) writes that,

> In Aboriginal philosophy, existence consists of energy. All things are animate, imbued with spirit, and in constant motion…In this realm of energy and spirit, interrelationships

> between all entities are of paramount importance, and space is a more important referent than time (p. 77)

Space is *not* just metaphorical for Indigenous knowledge. The energy of its existence needs to flow through all aspects of academic life for Indigenous ways of knowing to maintain a holistic nature. Indigenous knowledge is not something that stands still and that can be put into the equivalent of a museum display case or storage unit. It is not something that needs "preservation" or curation by non-Indigenous experts. It is alive and it is continuing to develop. It needs proper nourishment for that. When treated and used only as metaphor, or when given the equivalent of "artifact" status, Indigenous knowledge is stilled, as it was when it was given a static place in a Eurocentric linear timeline (*e.g.*, a left-behind in the evolution of "civilization"). When we push to bring Indigenous ways of knowing into the *living center* of scholarship, we bring its spirit back to life, we nurture its being and growth, so that we can *reciprocate what we learn* by *tending to it* and braiding more interconnectivity into co-participatory scholarship, co-responsible knowledge systems and academic protocols, and truly Indigenous (not just Indigen*ized*) spaces that have the capacity for a future of respectful and honourable *co*-inclusion and a *just and fair* reconciliation.

However, there are obstacles in the way, and the obstacles move around. Lacombe (2016, p. 46) quotes Sákéj Henderson's observation that "colonial dominators have an answer for everything because they constantly change their level of coherence to favor their domination." Lacombe also notes that Western scholarship treats aesthetics as a *topic* but neglects or denigrates it as a *resource*. This amounts to a censorship of indigenous methodologies, and a blockage to their autonomy and to serious engagement with them that would yield less censorship and foster both

more autonomy *and* better engagement with non-Indigenous ways of knowing. But for Indigenous scholarship to develop, it also needs space *aesthetically*, and thus space that is *appropriately* aesthetic, in order to generate scholarship that fully and freely embodies Indigenous storytelling, ceremony and cosmology *within* a multidimensional academic universe rather than alongside "the" academic voice. To do so will mean not only creating spaces in which unequal relations are not reproduced but also addressing the persistence of such relations and their ability to take on new forms and disguises. And to spot and counter or subvert these new forms, both within and outside such safe spaces (because we don't intend to seal ourselves off within them) will entail constant vigilance and agility. Lacombe (2016) continues:

> Indigenous writers and scholars sometimes feel the need for a separate, safe space in which to meet and talk, a space in which a greater diversity of Indigenous storytelling traditions, a more fluid approach to Indigenous literary-critical methodologies, and a less censored critical stance can emerge. At the same time, as Plains Cree Métis scholar Emma LaRocque reminds us ... Indigenous writers and scholars also want and need to engage in necessary, productive, "unsettling" dialogue with the community of non-Indigenous academic friends and allies, but also to partake in and contribute to the pleasures and beauties of Indigenous literary aesthetics both within and beyond the academy. Such dialogue begins to change power relations and perspectives on both sides—although the conversations are seldom easy. (p. 46)

In these conditions, and despite them, can the subaltern (now) speak?

The colonial formation of the "subaltern" – and its unmaking

Historically, the inability to speak freely, has been one of the ways that Indigenous knowledge has been denied status as a tangible and legitimate way of knowing and learning, and has been misplaced and misrepresented within the halls of academia. I use Gayatri Spivak for her eloquent expression of how the subaltern is ignored. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (2010), she assesses the voice of the "subaltern" by dividing her argument into two parts. In the first, she exposes ways in which Western theoretical hegemony and its intellectual conversations are neither as epistemologically objective as they are claimed to be, nor as politically innocent. She writes that "[t]he Intellectuals must attempt to disclose and know the discourse of Society's Other, but this imperative sets up an acceptance of a dichotomy between [Othering and Othered such that they] systematically ignore the question of ideology and their own implications in intellectual and economic history" (Spivak, 2010, p. 66). Later in this thesis, I will show how this ignoring can happen even in an ethnographic study that situates itself as enlightened on such matters. Spivak uses a conversation between Foucault and Derrida to open up a radical critique of Western and colonial knowledge-production by examining the call for intellectuals to *speak for* the subaltern in order to have their voice heard (p. 66). Derrida's deconstructive approach turns that Western hegemonic understanding of the other on its head by suggesting that it involves an *ongoing production* of a systematic placement of the western "self" *against* the ethnic "other." This consequently situates the Western "self" within a contingent and political production of power and knowledge, but the *specificity of that production* in time and place, and in politics, is occluded behind the Western self's assumption of universality and epistemological truth. For Spivak (2010),

> Derrida calls the ethnocentrism of the European science of writing in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries**,** a symptom of the general crisis of European consciousness [...] part of a greater symptom, or perhaps the crisis itself, the slow turn from feudalism to capitalism *via* the first wave of imperial capitalism." (p. 89)

Spivak reads the exploration of "other" cultures by Western intellectuals as the creation of a narrative of superiority, legitimizing extractive colonial exploitation and an extractive production of knowledge about colonized others, in the interests both of control and of finding a resolution to *its own* crisis – the crisis of European consciousness.

Spivak develops the concept of epistemic violence in relation to this context. "Epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as other […] this project is also the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that the other in its precarious Subjectivity" (2010, p. 76). She states that to commit epistemic violence is to act in a way that would hinder the "subaltern's" means of knowledge production. Thus, colonial suppression of the "other's" understandings is a way to forge colonial subjects in terms of a differential 'Otherness' in which colonial subjects, paradoxically, are objectified. The hegemonic Eurocentric narrative, according to Spivak, persists as a 'palimpsest' that distorts and freezes the active historical and social consciousness of the subjugated by re-situating its narratives within a hegemonic order of meaning that serves dominant interests. Non-Western consciousness is dismissed as inadequate to construct valid ways of knowing (2010, p. 76). Spivak treats the British-induced repression of Sanskrit (in the name of its "preservation") as an example of such epistemic violence (p. 77): "In order to preserve Hindu society intact, [the] successors [of the original Brahmans] had to reduce everything to writing and make them more

and more rigid […] and [that is] what has preserved Hindu society in spite of a succession of political upheavals and foreign invasions" (2010, p. 77). This preservation excluded the illiterate peasantry and lower classes, undermining the power of Sanskrit as a *living* language while benefiting European Sanskrit scholars.

Spivak works from Gramsci's concern with the intellectual's role in the "subaltern's cultural and political movement into hegemony" (2010, p. 78), and the production of "truths" about the subaltern in hegemonic historical narratives. She invokes Ranajit Guha to explain that hegemony was achieved in British India through the Indian elite's ability to convince the "subaltern" that their best interests were the same as those of the elite. Guha treats the historiography of colonialism and also of Indian nationalism as arising from the creation of an indigenous elite by the colonial authorities. "Certain varieties of the Indian elite are at best native informants for the first-world intellects in the voice of the other" (2010, p. 79). The subaltern voice was set up in terms of the dynamics of a specific colonial project – to create a subordinate ruling class-- and then reproduced in the knowledge production of British and other European intellectuals. What was silenced in this process becomes apparent in Spivak's explanation of how the practice of *Sati* was embedded in colonial and patriarchal power,[4] and how the subaltern lost even her subordinate speech. Nonetheless, the voice of the subaltern,

[4] Spivak explores how women were emplaced as subaltern *twice over* in a European discourse on the "barbarity" of *Sati*: in outlawing *Sati*. colonial authorities appropriated widows' autonomy. "White men ... saving brown women from brown men" (2010, p. 92). In that process, women become subject to both colonial and patriarchal rule as *Sati* was taken out of the private sphere and placed in the public domain (2010, p. 94). As objects of white saviourism, women's voices were silenced not only by the patriarchal aspects of *Sati* but also by colonial intellectuals and officials explaining *Sati* as problematic from a Western standpoint that represented women as objects of male desire and protection. By criminalizing the ritual, the British were able to expand their presence beyond commerce to infiltrate the social order and to institute their rule and administration over social matters (2010, p. 94). This "salvationist" intervention did not release women from patriarchy but reinforced and complicated it.

> ... is not silenced in the *literal* sense; it simply does not have access to the same kind of power, or to the science of writing (e.g. Indigenous oral tradition). The subaltern voice is veiled by the colonial and intellectual powers and therefore a pure form of the subaltern voice is hidden amongst theirs. (Fox-Grey, 2019, p. 7).

When we consider North American colonialism, it is apparent that the subaltern voice was hidden here too – not only ignored or suppressed, but in the case of our sisters, their voices were *stolen* (see discussion of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People in Chapter Two). But the concepts of the "pure," and of "purity" of voice and being, were *not* hidden, but were voiced *by the colonial powers themselves*.[5] This occurred in two ways. First, in both the United States and Canada, the concept of racial purity shaped colonialist notions of "Indian status" that were embedded in public law but that also shaped the most intimate dimensions of First Nations family life. Second, the military overpowering of First Nations and their subsequent placement within a system of Reserves/Reservations and Residential Schools was accompanied by the development of a Eurocentric nostalgia for the supposedly inevitable passing-away of "traditional" ways of life. This nostalgia was even used to punish Indigenous people for their own subordination to a colonial system for producing "Indian" identities. Specifically, the obsession with racial purity in terms of the blood quantum was accompanied by an idea that a dilution of "Indian blood" through marrying-out was likewise accompanied by an inevitable dilution of the "*purity of traditional life*." In nostalgic iterations of this discourse, attempts by *actual* Indigenous people to adapt actively to new circumstances, or to assert themselves in new ways, were seen as departures from the cultural ("traditional") purity

[5] Thus were our voices, as were our sisters, stolen. See discussion of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People – MMIWG2S – in Chapter Two.

of their origins – a purity which Settler society deemed impossible to maintain in modernity outside of museum displays or scholars' monographs. First Nations artifacts – and the bodies of First Nations people themselves – were placed on display, and the work of Indigenous artisans and artists was treated as only of anthropological interest ("Human Zoos," n.d.; Whitelaw, 2006). This legacy continues to affect some academic treatments of Indigeneity, though, as Clough (2005) points out, Indigenous people were never completely passive victims of this museumization but retained and used an active, everyday capacity to subvert it.

Braiding sweetgrass

Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) wrote a beautiful anthology of essays that exemplify the de-museumization of Indigenous knowledge and a renaissance in Indigenous scholarship on its own terms; in her particular case, she focused on the importance of Indigenous story telling to science done from an Indigenous perspective. Kimmerer's stories show how the earth is our teacher, from which we can learn what we need to know about living on and with it if we take the time to listen to and nurture it. Kimmerer is able eloquently to use the tools of western science to show how our oldest teachers, plants and animals, can be a viable source of knowledge in contemporary scholarship, as fellow inhabitants and as subjects. She uses the stages of planting, tending to, harvesting, braiding and burning a traditional medicine, sweetgrass, to explain how these processes teach about how knowledge of the earth is given to us through our respectful treatment of the earth, and also about the gifts in the earth's knowledge and treatment of us, if we take into account *the earth's* point of view of us. Her stories demonstrate how protocol and nurturance are necessary to create and maintain a reciprocal relationship with the earth, the natural beings that share space with us on it, and the embodiment and spirit of humanity.

Kimmerer uses the five stages of preparing sweetgrass as medicine to demonstrate what is necessary for reciprocity between humans and the earth. In the first stage, planting sweetgrass, she tells stories about the importance of planting roots with care, from the point of view of the grasses, situating them where those roots are best suited to grow. In the second stage, tending sweetgrass, her stories are about the experience needed and the work involved to nurture the growth of sweetgrass, and extends those themes to discuss wise relationships with all beings. In the third stage, picking sweetgrass, her stories include relations to the settler world and the perspective of Western science; to materialism and to the difficulty of marrying the spiritual with science in that perspective. In the fourth stage, braiding sweetgrass, Kimmerer explains that we braid sweetgrass, because it is the hair of mother earth: we do this to show her that we love her (2013, p. 204). What does it mean to advocate for a science that would be an act of love? What are the implications of such advocacy? She argues that the interweaving of strands of sweetgrass is *not* a metaphor for the creation of bonds between people and land, or land and knowledge; it is *integral* to it; to working together with each other and with the earth to create harmony and mutual protection. In the final stage, burning sweetgrass, and being present in the smoke of the traditional medicine, her stories explain how the ceremonial smudge is a work of creation and of kindness and compassion. It is a ritual by which we show gratitude, taking time to remember what we are grateful for and considering what we do now, for these will determine our future. Kimmerer's approach to science privileges "*working with*" – with the earth, with rhythms of its plant and animal life, with students and members of communities, as well as with colleagues. She sees all of these as parts of a larger, living web of community; one to be respected and nurtured.

The Action Research approach and its sources

Michelle Hogue's work developing the Action Research Approach arose out of her concern for post-secondary science education and bridging western paradigms and the needs and perspectives of Indigenous students. Hogue's goal in this work was to find a way for Indigenous student's voices to be heard in evaluations of academic experience in post secondary education and to understand what it is that Indigenous students need to meet not only official expectations but *their own* expectations and needs within post secondary institutions. Hogue noticed the absence of Indigenous representation in certain fields of study, and she believed that Indigenous populations *should* be representated in all areas of social and scholarly life (Hogue, 2012, p. 77). As Hogue (2012) states, it is still too often the case that "Aboriginal students must leave their culture at the door and adopt Western approaches to education and curriculum to succeed" (p. 78). Non-Indigenous academic constraints have limited and restricted indigenous scholars to Eurocentric approaches to learning and researching, making it more challenging for the indigenous scholar to formulate and achieve their own academic goals on their own terms. Standardized testing models developed in terms reflective of middle-class and non-Indigenous expectations are used as tools for measuring Indigenous student's abilities. These tests and surveys are manufactured, conducted and graded by non-indigenous evaluators in terms of the performance and thinking of non-Indigenous students, thus creating an evaluation inequality. This is problematic not only because it does not take Indigenous perspectives and voices into account; not only because these tests do not reflect the needs or abilities of indigenous students (Hogue, 2012, p. 79), but because they make Indigenous voices, perspectives, needs, abilities, and culture "disappear" from view.

The Action Research Approach was developed to acknowledge Indigenous students' *ability* to express their needs and to enable their own academic success on their own terms. Hogue (2012) wanted to find out first what the issues were for Indigenous students and to understand the unique challenges they faced in in mainstream (settler) academia, especially in the sciences and mathematics. She wanted to bridge the gap created between Indigenous students and the sciences by a lack of Indigenous representation within the sciences. By listening to voices of Indigenous students, Hogue was able to facilitate the development of pedagogical methods and practices better suited to Indigenous students. What made the Action Research approach so important to me was that, in it, I saw Hogue (2012, p. 79) working to create a space for decolonization within the academia, and doing so by holding space for Indigenous voices.

Hogue credits Action Research to a preceding methodological approach called Participatory action research (PAR), which involved inquiry organized and carried out collectively, using active learning and an assemblage of methods that would elicit both knowledge (understanding) and action (change). This is also the foundation of the "Aboriginal paradigm" (Hogue, 2012, p. 80). Wadsworth's (2005) article, "Gouldner's Child?," explains how Action Research made its way into the sociological spectrum *via* the 1970's war of the paradigms, amidst increasingly urgent calls for social change (rather than just theorizing about it). In the same time period, positivism in the social sciences was losing ground to postmodernism, and more inclusive modalities (e.g. socially-engaged research, critical sociology, reflexivity, grounded theory, co-creative methodologies and cyclic research processes, and epistemological alternatives like constructivism) were being developed to supplant the linearity, fixation with "objectivity," and distanciation from the actual lives of research subjects, characteristic of positivist research

(Wadsworth, 2005, p. 268). These new paradigms offered meaningful inclusion to those working with researchers. They also offered to researchers a more meaningful understanding of the lived realities of local actors as well as opportunities to develop critical analysis *with* and *understood by* and *useful to* all those involved in the research process, fostering the best interests of the local actors by assisting them toward the theory-informed conclusions they needed to put meaningful change into practice (p. 268). Action research would then be geared toward *collective* effort to create *workable* theories of change for both social praxis and politics, allowing communities to work together as participants with academics in a research practice kept cohesive by shared guidance in theorizing, interpreting and disseminating knowledge and fostering changes needed to better and empower particular communities (p. 274). Wadsworth (2005) notes that reflexive sociology,

> ... had identified not so much with Marx's dualistic eleventh thesis that sociologists 'have so far only theorized about the world, the point is to change it'—but rather: 'if sociologists want to understand how the world changes, they must theorize in, with and through its always changing practices (and practitioners). (p. 275)

Kurt Lewin (1946) shared the same sentiment in coining the term "action research," arguing that good theory is best done in the process of understanding organization to change it. Rather than entering the field as observers who must avoid the perils of "going native" it is better to engage consciously, actively, even politically, and to understand engagement from the point of immersion of the self within the "field of Knowledge-practice relations (relationships) until you understand from that point, in other words, reflexivity (Wadsworth, 2005, p. 275). Wadsworth goes on to explain that action research quickly developed into PAR in the urban research

community: she herself applied it to her research working with suburban communities. Wadsworth (2005) notes that the value of PAR was its ability to adapt to different fields of research as an assemblage modality that could be used to fit it to the unique characteristics of heterogeneous societies. Community-based research methods offered ways to meet a critical need for understanding and action-based research to identify and make space for voices that needed to be heard, and to offer solutions or options reflective of community concerns and actual experience of social ills, rather than to privilege the academic voice theorizing generalizations about society. (pp. 275-277)

Hogue iterates Wadsworth's work on PAR, holding that PAR responds to a "need to know" in order to elicit change. It requires dedication to being responsive in and to the research situation and to those one engages with in it; to being flexible in that response, and to include in the research the action that makes for change. Hogue also iterates the cyclic nature of the action research method and the importance of fluidity within the stages of research and action: (1) planning, (2) taking action or putting into practice, (3) observing and evaluating the effects of that action, and (4) engaging in critical reflection prior to planning the next cycle (2012, p. 81). Hogue explains how the medicine wheel, a fundamental structuring device in Aboriginal awareness, can work as the frame of action research. The wheel consists of four quadrants that together create balance, reflecting the significance of the number four in traditional practices. Each represents a different quadrant of being, and also the four directions and the seasons of mother earth. East-Spring represents birth; South-Summer, growth; West-Autumn, harvest/death, and North-Winter, rest/renewal (2012, p. 82).

Action research finds its beginning in spring, the start of a new cycle; a time for planning and for planting seeds. This is when new ideas are birthed and the planning process begins. The second season, summer, frames nurturing and the changes brought by growth, and brings understanding of what is needed to mature. Autumn is the season of harvest, the yield of research, to see what the quality of the harvest is; what has worked and what has not; what factors affected the growth. Lastly, winter is the season for reflection, a time of rest before the cycle begins again. This is the season of narrative and narrative analysis, of discussion, to understand what will need to change in the research process or when to bring it to a close, in order to have a good, or better, or different outcome next time, next cycle (Hogue, 2012, p. 83). Hogue's action research approach also works as a framework for decolonizing methodologies and making space for new methods and alternative ways of conducting research for anyone in any of the social sciences: it is not constrained to Indigenous research. It can be also paired with the critical braiding approach, as I have tried to do to some extent in this thesis, to reinforce the effectiveness of indigenous approaches to research and scholarship.

Circling back to critical braiding

Czuy & Eagle Speaker (2019, p. 1) illustrate how the colonial apparatus, specifically the residential school system, attempted to eradicate Indigenous languages and cultural systems in order to implement a hegemony of Eurocentric rationalism. Historically, Indigenous knowledge worked in close relation to the land. Indigenous people depended on such knowledge systems for survival as well as for social and cultural direction. By contrast, Eurocentric models of logic and mathematics were based on rationalization, standardization, and *distance* from the subjects of research. As Western mathematics was standardized, it lost the cultural and relational aspects

that survive in Indigenous mathematics (Czuy & Eagle Speaker 2019, p. 2). This thesis does not focus on Indigenous mathematics or ethnomathematics as explanatory models but I acknowledge them as supportive structures for scholarly work; part of the space-making needed for indigenous scholarship, and examples for decolonizing research and theory. I use some of the same concepts that Czuy & Eagle Speaker rely on, in addition to the Critical Braiding Approach, to demonstrate how they can work in concert with elements of Action Research in the development of a decolonizing social science.

The Critical Braiding Approach utilizes three different types of knowing: (1) from the land/community, (2) from personal experience, and (3) from the European tradition (Czuy & Eagle Speaker, 2019, p. 2). Blackfoot elder Casey Eagle Speaker noted that the critical braiding approach is based on the "seven sacred teachings—respect, love, courage, honesty, truth, humility, wisdom," with the use of story as the foundation (Czuy & Eagle Speaker, 2019, p. 3). His iteration of that approach originally was intended for Ethnomathematics, but I believe it can apply to a variety of research fields. It shows that learning is possible through a careful combination of different modalities in ways that help decolonize the research process. By attending to the traditional sweetgrass braiding technique we can utilize living culture and tradition to come to know (Czuy & Eagle Speaker, 2019, p. 4).

As well as seasonality, the different strands can represent forms of knowledge and practice to be brought together. In this light, the first strand represents Indigenous worldviews; the stories that are known from the land. The second strand represents personal experience and the knower's

own history, and contextualizing what they know. The third strand represents European-origin approaches to learning. The first strand is critical because it situates Indigenous knowledge as foundational. When it is woven together with the second, it brings the strength of cultural understanding to personal experience, and also gives the Indigenous scholar and researcher the personal and cultural strength resilience that will allow them to discern ways in which to select elements from the third strand *wisely* to incorporate into inquiry, and also to understand its historical and present dominance without letting it take over the learning process (Czuy & Eagle Speaker, 2019, p. 4). I have also followed this approach in this thesis to highlight the decolonization of research as something I wish to contribute to with others, and also as part of a hard-won and continuing decolonizing of *myself* and my own experience. This, I hope, is how theory and methods can combine to inspire and shape *action* toward decolonization of scholarship in ways that will realize it – that will make it *real*, not just a metaphor.

5. Key terms and central features of discussion in this thesis

My use of the term "Indigenous"

I use the term "Indigenous" primarily to refer to peoples who descend from those present on the North American continent when Europeans first arrived, or to refer to the communities, societies or cultures in and through which these First Peoples have continued to persist and to assert themselves and their ways of life. While some definitions of indigeneity exclude the Inuit, for convenience, I include them in the sense of indigeneity I use in this thesis. However, readers will note that I also use the term Indigenous to refer to peoples outside North America who

similarly were present before colonization. For example, I refer to writing by Indigenous people in (so-called) Australia, and to ways of knowing followed by Indigenous peoples in (so-called) South America. Yet at the same time, I argue against certain forms of pan-Indianism, and refer to the importance of understanding Indigenous life and ways of knowing as land-based or sea-based in particular ways and located in specific places or regions. *We are not all the same*.

Is there a contradiction here? How can I at once assert the distinctiveness of different Indigenous ways of life and knowing, and stress its locatedness, yet then make general reference to aspects of Indigeneity, seemingly as if they are universal? Here's how: Replace "as if they *are*" in the previous sentence with "as if they *could* be." Around the world, Indigenous researchers and writers, from particular places, communities and traditions, are producing work that is being read by other Indigenous researchers and writers around the world, who find in that work all sorts of similarities and continuities, some of them widely shared. Indigenous scholarship around the world is producing not only a sense of the *diversity* of Indigenous ways of knowledge but also of their commonalities and points of connection. And this is producing a *global* conversation among Indigenous scholars and among Indigenous *peoples*. Ironically, something that might appear similar to the European Enlightenment ideal of a universal "Republic of Letters" is being realized – but very differently and on a very different basis – by Indigenous people by *and for* themselves. My more general usages of Indigenous should be read in this light: not as statements of deductive universalism, but as indications of *possibility and emergence*: the potential of a global community of learning forming around a continuing realization both of many specific differences and of some basic commonalities; around the speaking-into existence of relationalities rather than a proposition of a single identity.

A note on Indigenous anarchism

My thesis supervisor, after receiving the last of my draft thesis chapters, asked, "Should you keep the word "Anarchism" in your title? You actually say little explicitly about Anarchism in the rest of the thesis." I replied, "That's because Anarchism is *so* "there" in the thesis; *so* embedded in it, that it doesn't *need* to be explained – does it? "Well," he said, "Anarchism is an *English* word, often used to refer to movements of European or Russian origin. So, should the specific meaning of *Indigenous* anarchism get at least a signal?" *OK* ... here is my two-minute read (derived from longer meditations) on what I mean by Indigenous Anarchism.

I don't call myself a Bakuninist, Kropotkinist or any other kind of (anarch)*ist*. I've been inspired by the work of Sahlins (2005), Graeber (2002), and MacDonald (2009, 2011), but I don't lock myself into a position on anarchism derived from them. There is now a literature on if or how to distinguish Indigenous from non-Indigenous anarchism. Rudy (2002) writes about his discomfort with "Indigenous Anarchism" (from within it), while Aragorn! (2007) discussed *non*-European anarchism, and Taiaiake Alfred (2005) promoted "Anarcho-Indigenism." Jacqueline Lasky published *Indigenism, Anarchism, Feminism* (2011), and J. Kehaulani Kauanui has written "The Politics of Indigeneity, Anarchist Praxis, and Decolonization" (2021). Denisa Krásná drew on Billy-Ray Belcourt to write "Towards Horizontal Relationships: Anarch*a* [*my emphasis*] Indigenism, Decolonial Animal Ethic, and Indigenous Veganism" (2022). These were worth reading for particular insights, but I don't use them to differentiate my theoretical "position" from those of others. I like to see heterogeneity, in both Indigeneity and Anarchism.

I believe that resistance (to the legacies of colonialism) is necessary to Indigenous resurgence, and that we learn and become stronger through it, but I also think that resistance needs wisdom and an anthropological eye; a sensitivity to specific situations, cultures, and structures. I see Anarchist action as a kind of applied anthropology. I am drawn to direct action as an activist method, but not as an ideological doctrine or as a badge dividing "real" from "fake" anarchists. Nor do I interpret it as necessitating violence and provocation. I see it through Indigenous eyes as a response to two questions: "What is the most direct, most *practical* way to bring about change wisely? What is the best way to avoid being drawn into bureaucratic games?" I prefer talking to and working with people honestly and directly, and I think that's the spirit out of which "direct action" grew, though it may have been diverted away from it at times. Similarly, I'm not sure if "the state" is *the* root of *all* evil, but I surely don't see the state, the modern military, or the "thin blue line" as civilizational necessities *in principle*. I like Punk and Metal, but I don't subscribe to any particular iteration of Anarchist culture as a badge of identity.

While I like to think of Indigenous peoples as the first anarchists, I also see Indigenous peoples and their cultures as *heterogeneous* and their ontologies as flexible and adaptive to circumstance. My attraction to Anarchism – in theory and practice – lies in what I see it as its heterogeneity and practical flexibility. I also see Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous identities as *relational*, and I see relationality at work in Anarchist practice. Anarchism privileges *laterality* in relations; it emphasizes community, and co-operation, and I like that, though I don't think it necessitates working up or privileging a particular *philosophy* of "communitarianism" or "co-operativism." Anarchism works better as on-the-ground community, and co-operative *practice*. Indigenous folx relate to each other better in person, directly, in specific contexts and locations,

at times that work in the moment, and in terms of our concrete positionalities, not through abstractions, grids, comparative measurement, bureaucracy, hierarchies or silos – though if need be, we've learned to "do" bureaucracy, law, theory, or formal instruction quite well, thank you.

In a similar vein, our preferred modes of communication include story, example, ceremony, dance, song, the arts (in which I include what settlers tend to call "crafts"), prayer, smudging, and being quiet enough to hear our nonhuman relations. We prefer to visit and converse rather than to interview. We would sooner give people space to figure stuff out, leave a quiet hint, or use humour, than to issue orders. We manage to (self)-organize pretty well where we can depart from Band Council regulations, courtrooms, prison bureaucracies, and the necessities of dealing with government ministries. We run businesses, buy and sell, but we like giving and receiving gifts and *respecting* what we work on, sell or trade. Warriors in my Blackfoot tradition, as in many others, made an art of competition, and today we compete in rodeos, dancing, drumming and many other activities. But we see *co-operation* as a *fact* of natural and social life, not exotic or "niche," and it's not a surprise to us that it would be at the heart of most types of anarchism.

Yes, of course, we have also suffered dysfunctional Band councils, or reserve politics in which families are set against other families. Sometimes, members of our communities take advantage of others, and enrich themselves at the expense of the community as a whole. Lateral violence, which I will discuss later in this thesis, is a fact of life that many of us have experienced. But these are not recommended by or central to our traditional culture. We are taught in our culture that human beings have the *capacity* to be selfish, but this is done by stories warning *against* that

capacity, such as one told by a Kaaahsinnoon (a grandparental figure) that “illustrates the vanity and selfishness of humanity and the effect that these may have on one's life” (Bastien, 2004):

> Napi went to the women's dance; the women had medicine. The men were all standing in line. The women were choosing which men they wanted to marry. The head woman wanted to marry Napi. Napi did not want her. The women then went to put on their finest clothes. After they had dressed in their finest clothes, they went back to the men. Napi noticed the beauty of the head woman. He wanted to marry her. However, the head woman told the other women, "Do not take Napi for a husband." On their return, Napi stood in front of the head woman hoping she would choose him, as he found her extremely attractive. She paid no attention to him. He continued to avail himself to her, but she continued to ignore him. Napi was left alone, no one had chosen him for a spouse. (p. 94)

Bastien adds, “when we go to dance, we may often hear a man say, ‘I was never asked to get up and dance.’ The story teaches humility. Napi’s adventures also provide the history of the people, showing how the world came to be such as it is, and the characteristics of humans” (p. 94). Napi only desires the head woman when she wears her finery; a selective desire that doesn’t take into account who she is, what the dance means, or his own responsibilities as a participant. His desire cuts him off from that. He wants what he wants, in a kind of individualist freedom to desire that lacks an anarchist sense of relational or mutual care: responsibility in and for the dance.

I will come back to this story. But there are other Indigenous stories that teach how selfishness and exploitation are not just enduring facets of human being that may crop up at any time.

Situations also matter. Wendigo tends to appear in winter, in hunger timesr. Dysfunctional Band or Tribal politics occur in the context of particular historical regimes and ontologies of scarcity ("there is never enough") imposed by colonialism; of forced dependency on government funding distributed in ways that encouraged negative competition; of colonial micromanagement of Indigenous lives; of residential schools where "teachers" would at times make children fight each other for their own amusement (Fortune *et al.*, 2022).

Anarchists gravitate to modes of equity and mutuality rather than competitive acquisition; to sharing goods in common rather than regimes of private property; to grassroots democracy instead of state, religious or corporate hierarchy. They prefer open discussion to deception or force; working respectfully with others (and now with the earth) to command or exploitation; consensus to authority. Defined in these terms, Anarchism is anticolonial in its bones: we could say Anarchism is practical anticolonialism. What's not for an Indigenous person to love? But what about English words like "protocol" and "tradition," used to name elements of North American Indigenous life? Isn't Anarchism wary of tradition and disinclined to its forms? It is true that Indigenous cultures do hold to sacred protocols and ceremony deeply rooted in time, thousands of years of it, back to Creator; to Falling Woman; to First Man; to the advent of animals and plants; to water and the mud of earth on the Turtle's back; to things told in story and as old as story itself. Our ceremonies don't signal *formal* authority like settler institutions do: no police or military uniforms, no Speaker with mace; no printed regulations. But they embody serious tenets not to be bent at will, and to flout protocol, deliberately or even out of ignorance, can be deeply offensive. However, though our protocol and ceremony may go way back, we don't see them as rules imposed by a hierarchy, nor as a "dead hand" of the past. What is past

comes round again. That's why seasons are important to us, and why we re-tell origin stories and repeat our ceremonies – not to revive something but to participate in a vast always-here to which ceremony grants entry; as old and as new every dawn as the sun. Surrounded as we are by settler culture, we might gloss our commitment to ceremony and protocol with English words like "traditional" but without a connotation of being stuck in the past. Nothing could be more opposed to Indigenous ideas of time than such a notion.[6] We may use the word "tradition" to translate something from Indigenous life into settler language,[7] as a placeholder for *how we live and who we are* in terms of ontologies that teach how Creator made us and how the world is made anew as the sun returns and is greeted each day; ontologies *alive* in story, dance, songs, prayer; in bundles; in ceremony; through the drum or rattle. Non-Indigenous anarchisms may not centre on something like this, but Indigenous Anarchism surely does.

I hope these words will help you see an Indigenous Anarchism quietly but consistently at work in these pages.

Radical Indigenous reflexivity and "writing with" communities

The term "radical reflexivity" has a particular history in sociological literature. Harold Garfinkel (1967), founder of ethnomethodology, included in it a strong emphasis on reflexivity. He argued that all of us engage in reflexivity in the sense that we not only routinely engage in social action

[6] In pop-functionalist anthropology, "tradition" is often explained as a reinforcer of social order. Povinelli (1999) notes another meaning common in settler culture and equally inappropriate to Indigenous understandings. This is the notion of tradition as a *thing*; a rare, esoteric, desirable some*thing* to capture for a museum or archives, or codify in a book, film or audio recording. Povinelli notes how this sense of "tradition" can be weaponized to regulate Indigenous identity" (as does Lawrence, 2003, p. 3).

[7] This is similar to the difficulty of adequately translating words in our languages that get an English shorthand like "nature/natural" or "spirit/spiritual."

but we also routinely produce *accounts of* that action; for example, when we are asked why we did something, or when we want to make clear to others what we are doing or saying. Such accounting practices, Garfinkel (1967) said, constitute making sense – they are how we actively *produce meaning* for ourselves and each other in social situations – and how we also produce the "reality" of these situations. For example, take this sentence: "In this thesis, I advocate for radical reflexivity, but I don't mean to say that I'm simply following what it means in Western sociological literature." In the same sentence, I am (1) making a statement about (giving an account of) what I do in my thesis (advocate for radical reflexivity) , and (2) making a statement *about my statement* about my thesis ("I don't mean to say that I'm giving it the same meaning as sociologists in the Western tradition."). In Garfinkel's terms, I just gave an account of my thesis and immediately followed it by a *second-order account about what I just said* about my thesis. Garfinkel (1967) took as a key feature of accounting practices that we are always trying to peg (or as Garfinkel would say, to index) our accounts to a situational context, but that context is always a moving target, because its reality is also being practically (re)constructed (accomplished) at every moment – even in our attempts to index it. Garfinkel was particularly interested in these second-order accounts, and argued that when sociologists or anthropologists write about the people they study, they themselves produce second-order accounts, and engage in indexical sense-making. Thus *their accounts have no intrinsic definitional privilege* over other second-order accounts produced by non-scientists.

Melvin Pollner, a student and colleague of Garfinkel, termed this dis-privileging of scientific and academic authority "radical reflexivity." Emerson (2007) notes that he treated Western ideas of reality the same way, as parts of a cultural system *produced by* participants' accounts and

actions, but which participants normally take for granted as just "out there" or objectively existing, until that taken-for-grantedness is disrupted or some accepted accounts of its existence contradict others. Pollner examined how "mundane reasoning" takes place in ordinary interaction, producing a normally unquestioned certainty of a world existing (and that we assume others also see) "out there," objectively (Emerson, 2007). He saw radical reflexivity as an "appreciation of all sociological and ethnomethodological analyses as themselves socially accomplished" and added,

> Left to its own dynamic, radical reflexivity would unsettle ceaselessly. ... [But though] it is pointless, groundless, and subversive, radical reflexivity delivers to epistemologically settled communities the work through which points are made, grounds established, and versions of reality secured against subversions. (Pollner, in Emerson, 2007, para. 8)

In short, radical reflexivity demonstrates how not only everyday situations but also "science," "Western culture" and "Civilization" are products of work; practical and contingent accomplishments. They can be *unsettled*. (Do you see the anarchism in this move?)

In *Making Sense Together*, John O'Neill (1975) discussed sense-making in terms that clearly owed something to ethnomethodology's unsettling aim. For O'Neill (p. 39), "wild sociology" offered resistance to any science that "obliges us to forget what we know". As Heritage (1976) noted, O'Neill's villains were,

> ... the theoretical simplifiers, the four-cell table constructors and the conceptual legislators of modern social science who have forgotten the texture of assumptions which makes the everyday world, and social science, possible only to rediscover the shards and

> fragments of this texture in hypotheses duly confirmed and filed or in ex cathedra pronouncements. (Heritage, 1976, pp. 186-7)

Like Garfinkel, O'Neill pointed out the contextuality of sociological sense-making, but he cast a wider net for that context, arguing that sociology's star rose out of "the fragmentation of the modern world and its conventional, wisdom-bearing discourse" – sociological knowledge accumulates as collective memory is lost (O'Neill, 1975, p. 30). But sociology had done little to *serve* the communities it studied to heal this loss. Instead, sociologists "separate[d] themselves from the objects of their study through the professional apparatus of scientific method and with this separation has come an insidious imperialism" (O'Neill, 1975, p.58).

O'Neill (1975) proposed instead a sociology that would be "neither outside nor above the holy places it seeks to enter," but "aimed at appreciating the many ways in which ordinary people live their lives, and at nourishing and supporting these lives precisely through this appreciation (p. 50)." Heritage (1976) noted that what underlay this appreciative stance "is a shadowy image of the wholeness of the moral discourse of everyday life when that discourse is freed from the assaults of scientism and technological upheaval" (p. 187). The problem O'Neill had with modern sociology was that sociology's institutional embedding within an increasingly fragmented but still pervasive Western modernity meant that its own "apparatus" was "becoming large enough to constitute an additional source of social difference in its own right" (Heritage, 1976, p. 187), not least because of a "rudeness of method that lacks any respect for the community that suffers its practices" (O'Neill, 1975, p. 51). O'Neill's alternative was a moral commitment in which sociology would *give itself* to serve communities that it would *learn with*,

rather than extracting data *from* them in order to provide recommendations to those who saw them those communities as posing some sort of problem.

This emphasis on honouring the communities we research brings the Western discourse of reflexivity closer to an Indigenous way of understanding radical reflexivity, but there is still a gap between the two. Indigenous societies, especially those in challenging environments, lived at times close to the edge of survival. To make it through a poor hunting season, or a lean late winter, it was necessary for all members of a community or group to work together and to share resources, but above all, to be *aware of* each other's conditions and of their mutual responsibilities. They also needed to understand how animals and plants understood their own situations and those of the people who lived among them. Thus, Indigenous folx needed an always-on sensitivity to their own and others' needs, perceptions, thinking, and emotional states; to how they and others, individually and together, were actively making meaning *in context*. This heightened awareness fits an Indigenous ontological teaching that our being is, at every moment and at once, personal, positional *and relational*, and that it is so *in practice*. We live personal lives insofar as we both make our personhood and are given an ability to make it in concrete locations, in particular situations, and *through our relations*. We are selves in a process of constant becoming, locationally and interactionally. *This* is central to an *Indigenous* radical reflexivity, but that reflexivity also comes with an axiological commitment; a moral imperative to care for and to respect ourselves, other people, our communities, *and* the non-human world that sustains us and acts toward us. We can't "do" such care well without paying attention to

ourselves and our self-making, and to the agency and consciousness of others – to our human and non-human[8] relations and the communities they form.[9]

To revisit the story of Napi at the women's dance (Bastien, 2004), it appears that Napi ended up rejected because he was conscious of his own wants but his actions showed his unawareness of how the women were responding *to* him. We could go further and suggest that, in being *so definite* about who he does and does not want at the dance, Napi is also in a sense *not aware of himself* in the situation, in *context*, and thus *isn't aware of what he truly wants* because his awareness of himself and his wants is *in isolation* from others and from the dance; from his *relationality*. So he ends up in actual, *social* isolation, alone with a truth about himself that he *expresses* but *doesn't see*. But the women see it, and they warn each other about it. Similarly, to anticipate a discussion in Chapter Three, there is the story of Ira Bashkow, ethnographer from a major American university, who lands in the midst of a community of people in Papua New Guinea ("the" Orokaiva), and sets out to study them – and *another* story; the one Bashkow *himself* writes (Bashkow, 2006). His angle is to display a kind of reflexivity: he is not there to make sense of Orokaivan culture from a Western point of view, but to understand how the Orokaiva make sense of *him*, constructing a sense of him *for themselves* as an example of a type they call a "Whiteman." So, Bashkow sets out to produce a second-order account of the Orokaivans' production of *their* second order accounts, in which they construct a shared reality for themselves of "who this Whiteman is, in relation to us." But Bashkow is a bit like Napi at the

[8] I will discuss non-human beings as relations with agency in Chapter Three, Part Three.
[9] I am aware that many Indigenous peoples also practised warfare. This topic is beyond the scope of this thesis, but any discussion of it needs to recognize (1) that many written accounts of "wars" between Indigenous peoples refer to situations in which relations between Indigenous societies were already being destabilized by actions of European militaries, traders, settlers, missionaries, etc., who belonged to conflicting empires, and (2) that assumptions about "war" as defined and practiced in Western societies don't necessarily translate well outside of that context.

dance. He knows (at least retrospectively) *what he wants* to find out, but doesn't seem to understand fully *who he is* in dropping himself in on them and intruding himself in their midst, where they are forced to deal with and make sense of him. He knows about colonialism, but seems not entirely aware of how his construction as "other" by his Orokaivan hosts isn't a simple reversal of the othering practised by Europeans on Indigenous peoples, and that his taking Orokaivan othering practices "in reverse" as his topic *doesn't unsettle* the *institution* of othering – doesn't add (*him*) to an account of how that institution is *made*. In Orokaivan eyes, he becomes a Whiteman not by the colour of his skin but because he is yet another person who drops in among them and who will eventually take himself (and his notes) away. He isn't researching *with* or *for* them or their priorities. He is someone toward whom they might feel a need to be performatively "polite" because his powers and purposes may not be as they appear or what he represents them to be. So they give him a chair at a community meeting, tolerate his observing, respond to his questions. By contrast, an Indigenous radical reflexivity (or one willing to meet Indigenous people on their own ground) would consider lived Indigenous truths and incorporate them into its method, rather than employing reflexivity as just another tool in the box.

Indigenous storywork (as methodology and temporality)

Let's go back again to the story of Napi at the dance for a moment. The story exhibits something found in stories from many Indigenous communities. It is short and told sparingly. "Napi went to the women's dance: the women had medicine." We are not told *what* medicine the women had, what interest, if any, Napi might have had in it (if he knew of it), or what interest hearers of the story should have in it. The story is laconic. It doesn't seem to have an obvious *point*. Even Bastien's explanation of it at the end doesn't really explain it. She gestures toward possible ways

of making sense of it; that's all. What about my own explanation of it? I use the story to make a point that also fits the story. But my use of it isn't the point *of the story itself*. Others in other circumstances and positions will see something else in it and may use it quite differently.

This point also extends to the application of narrative analysis to Indigenous stories: it's not as simple as "add narrative analysis and stir." Certain kinds of narrative analysis do or don't work well with such stories. For example, to take a Napi story such as the one Bastien tells out of the contexts of its telling and to group it with other narratives as exhibiting certain intrinsic structural features characteristic of a structural type, that may say something about how structuralism works in narrative analysis, but less about how the tale works in a Blackfoot context and in terms of an Indigenous epistemology, ontology or axiology. Similarly, to understand the social function of such a narrative outside of the specific context of its telling, who it can be told to, and why, will not generate much of a functional typology nor an informative fit with one. Is it a "warning" story? An origin story? Does it facilitate social solidarity or social continuity? Admonish pride or selfishness as detrimental to social function? Provide amusement? Again, it depends on who tells it, who *can* tell it, to whom, in what context, and for what reasons. It also depends on who reads or hears it, at what time in their lives, how they are related to the teller or positioned in the social context of the telling.

An Indigenous narrative analysis, then, must take on a radical reflexivity – that is, a *relational* and *situated* reflexivity. Who am I and what is my positionality as I hear this tale? How did I come to read it? Why did I come to hear or read it? Why am I thinking about it now? How do I

relate to the teller? To other hearers or readers? What do all of my answers to these questions say about my relations to others, human or non-human, past, present and future? To my community? The "point" of Bastien's Napi story, *to me* and *to you*, will depend on *who we are in such relations*, whether as a woman, man or a genderqueer person; as Indigenous or not; as a researcher, professor, student, interested lay reader; as a mother (of boys, girls, trans kids); as a community member or someone from outside a community; as a partner in a relationship, or as single. That "point" is not intrinsic to the story as an artifact; it is a feature of such identities as given in such relations. The point is a *process* of understanding, and thus it unfolds over time and across contexts. Maybe I might read the Napi story in one context at one point in my life and think, "Ok, fine, but, well, so what?" But maybe at some point I might find myself at a dance, or some other social situation, being pressured in some way by some man, and then I might think "Oh, ok, that's the point!" Or I might pass over the point of the women "having medicine" only to find that it suddenly pops into focus later, maybe *much* later, in some other context entirely.

If the Napi story strikes you as "laconic," and if Bastien's "explanation" of it seems to pull its punches, consider whether, perhaps, the story is *constrained* so that its hearers won't decide on its meaning prematurely; that maybe Bastien also *restrains* her explanation for the same reason. Consider also a point made by Briggs (1971) about the treatment of children and adults in the Inuit community she was privileged to research: a point that I think could also be made about some other justice traditional Indigenous communities (prior to the residential school era). She noted that to *explain too much* to an adult was seen as potentially humiliating; to treat that adult like a child, or perhaps also to take away that person's *agency* (whether child or adult) to figure

stuff out for themselves, in their own time. In other words, what might seem (from a Western perspective) to be a *lack* in an Indigenous narrative may reflect *relational* rules of its telling.

Finally, I can't resist adding a point relating to a discussion of differences between Western academic rules and those governing dissemination of Indigenous knowledge, developed at more length in Chapter Two. In Western models of academic exposition – whether lecturing or writing – it is usually taken to be important to *explain* your points, and the point of your overall lecture, article or thesis, thoroughly.[10] For example, if lecturers in a Western academic context must skip an explanation because of a time limit, they often feel a constraint to apologize. Similarly, in writing something that threatens to go past a word-count limit, we might feel constrained, if we know we must leave out a potentially-relevant explanation, to indicate that, and to say why we are doing so (not only the size limit but also something like "it's not essential to my central argument," or "it's explained in this [cited] source").

Thus, I came to understand how important it is in Indigenous research to tell and listen to stories; to share our experiences and learn from one another, but I also came, over time, to understand that there were ways to do this well, or badly. Indigenous story-work cannot be done with a single-minded focus on extraction of "relevant" knowledge regardless of context and situation. Some stories need to be told, in certain ways, times and places (but perhaps not in others), to be heard and to be validated. Some pain may need to be released, and some folx may need to be

[10] As I discuss in chapter 1, this requirement to explain is not always applied equally in the Western academy. There is a politics of explanation, in which Black, Brown and Indigenous academics, especially those whose work mounts an initial challenge to an established paradigm or scholarly consensus, may be called upon repeatedly to explain and cite their points exhaustively, and then to explain and cite the explanations, while established scholars working within a consensus paradigm are allowed more leeway. See also Kovach (2021); Simpson (2014); Wilson (2008).

saved by other people's stories.[11] So sharing stories involves reflexive awareness and relational responsibility. Archibald (2008a) notes that each indigenous Nation has their own stories, and their own rules that govern which stories are designated as publicly shareable, which stories can be shared only in certain spaces and times, and which stories are sacred: "[s]tories are not just texts or narratives that deal with sequences of events in a linear progression of events" (2008a, p. 83). There are different types of stories and there is protocol to consider. It can take decades before an individual may be able to tell certain stories and share certain oral histories. The time is taken to learn how to tell the story: rather than the text, it is performance and interpretation *and situational awareness and respect* that takes time to learn.

This is not necessarily or entirely foreign to the process of gaining authority to disseminate theoretical or research work in the academy. To gain such authority, you must *earn* it by working to procure the titles that indicate learning and scholarship, such as a master's degree or a doctorate of philosophy. That being said, this story, the story that is both in and of this thesis, took its own time to be created, a lot more time, involving a different process than most M.A. theses. This story was, I hold, designed by Creator in order for me to learn and grow, to better become myself; to become a person *ready* to tell it. To disseminate the knowledge I have gained, I had to be able to have and to understand the experiences I needed to undergo. I had to develop a more grounded sense of purpose. The time needed was destined by Creator; I was on a journey following a path that was being written for me as much as by me. We must walk together to be able to create marks on the earth. So, sorry for the wait, but –I was on Indian time. When

[11] See Justice (2018) on stories that wound and stories that heal.

Duncan McCue was asked, “What top three recommendations do you have for journalists who cover news related to Indigenous Peoples?”, he replied (McCue, 2016, question 8):

1. Understand Indian time.
2. Understand ‘respect’ in an Indigenous context.
3. See #1.

What makes a good storyteller? For Archibald (2008a, p. 65), a good story teller is memorable; one who can include a little humor in the story and who can take on the *persona* of the characters of the story. *Involvement* with the story is important: the story teller becomes the story and is immersed with its specific time and place, transcending the time and space of the listeners but bringing back the moment of experience to the moment of telling. That is how lessons are best learned. And how an audience’s attention is brought into focus. Oratory skills are important to this process, especially in Indigenous culture, and more especially in some. Oral tradition was the modality of learning, and part of being a good storyteller was and is oral skill – pacing and pauses, repetition, intonation, volume (Archibald 2008a, p. 69). Also important is who tells the story; who has learned and earned the knowledge. Those who came before, Elders and mentors, are important storytellers.

Delinking and disobedience

The specific forms Indigenous (re)presentation can take in scholarship and research continue to be open to debate and development within and in critical relation to academia, as they are in my own research. Pullen (2016) advocates what she calls delinking as a mode for decolonizing

theory and practice. Delinking involves an imperative to "analyze and criticize the limits of the hegemonic structures of a Eurocentric worldview. Delinking is asserted as a mode of 'epistemic disobedience' that can be employed as a tool to remove oneself from the linkages between rationality/modernity and coloniality" (Quijano, 1991, in Pullen, 2016, p. 239). In producing textual material, delinking aims to depart from a colonial episteme for other forms of knowledge it asserts as legitimate, and to approach and discuss Indigenous histories in new ways, "rethinking temporal hierarchies" and resisting hegemonic modes of (re)presentation:

> The removal from the modern political episteme (right, center and left) inherent to the delinking project opens up the political, cultural and social world to a "pluriversality" that values, celebrates and expresses the multitude of histories and identities on a global/planetary scale (Mignolo, 2011, in Pullen, 2016, p. 239).

"Disobedience" would then allow writers and artists to engage with their material through an Indigenous but global lens (2016, p. 239). But this can be done well and *effectively* only if done in *radical reflexive awareness* of that hegemony and its context, of how the work of delinking is *situated* and who it's *for*, and how an effective disobedience and departure from Eurocentrism could occur *in that situation*.

Pullen (2016) discusses the example of Skawennati's film series *Timetraveller* as a tool for Indigenous people to critique and dismantle colonial spaces in virtual reality. In *Timetraveller*, Indigenous narratives are constructed through avatars, enabling Indigenous users to embody and take up virtual space in (re)creations of historical events. This allows racialized bodies to depart the palimpsests of colonial history, creating times and spaces of alternative knowledge to give

Indigenous users voice and agency in their own narratives. “[T]he immaterial online avatar body can act as a catalyst for the reformation of a decolonized identity that is not laden with the histories of oppression and colonization” (Pullen, 2016, p. 248). Enabling alternative narrative positions and epistemologies in research, writing and creative activity enables “minority” and Indigenous scholars, like myself, to explore different axiologies and ontological perspectives, finding ways to re-situate our embodied knowledge, allowing what was formerly “subaltern” to speak; to reassert itself as alive and active.

This is a disobedient thesis.

6. Some practical considerations

Methodological practicalities: dialogue and social engagement: visiting (interviews)

I treated those I recruited for interviews as research co-constructors, and the research situation as an opportunity for engagement with them and their narrated lives. They had to be competent (able to give informed consent for themselves), and 18 years of age or older. I looked for participants who self-identified as First Nation (Indigenous), and as University of Lethbridge students. I took note of whether they were status or non-status but did not require them to be one or the other. The interviews were semi-structured but built in opportunities for interviewees to lead with their own concerns and for dialogue to occur between us as co-interlocutors. Specifically, I used the model of the social engagement interview, in which the researcher is in

dialogue with participants as co-constructor and seeks to recognize and respect participants' social situations and personal experience, and their ability to interpret both. The semi-structured interview model gave some guidance and kept us on the general topic; however, the questions I formulated were not designed to lead the interlocutors to desired answers and I made clear to them that they should feel free to discuss matters that I don't ask about but that are important to *them* in relation to the overall topic. The questions were open-ended, and were tweaked by informal mutual agreement, as appropriate to the given situation. Interlocutors who wished to answer a question by telling a story or giving an anecdotal account were encouraged to do so: I regard narrative and anecdote as alternative rather than inferior ways of communicating knowledge, and as operating in terms of alternative rather than inferior epistemologies. "Situation" was also important. As well as employing elements of the social engagement interview model, I treated each interview situation as a "visit", according to Indigenous protocols for visiting. This made more allowance for mutual storytelling and for dialogue and discussion.

The "visiting" discussions were audio-recorded (with permission) and took place at locations chosen by the interlocutors. I was as flexible as possible in arranging times and places that suited each person. The engagement ideally lasted about an hour, but I left it up to the discretion of participants to decide when they were finished. I also adhered to the student research safety protocol and to relevant COVID protocols (the COVID emergency affected the timing of the interview portion of the research) if an interview was conducted in an interlocutor's home.

Despite COVID, it was important to me that discussion occur in person to honor the cultural importance of face-to-face interaction (including ceremony, such as the giving of small gifts); also to maintain the integrity of any oral history or oral narrative that was shared, and to ensure the best circumstances for egalitarian dialogue. Online formats can shape interactions in ways not always well understood; neglect the importance of embodied in-person relations, and raise questions about reliability in guaranteeing the security of sensitive cultural or personal information. My priority was and is to represent Indigenous oral narratives and histories with the utmost integrity. I explained all risks to my participants *via* telephone or electronic communication prior to interviews, including the risk of Covid-19 transmission, but I took numerous steps, outlined in my ethics application, to reduce this risk.

Methodological practicalities: transcribing, coding, interpreting

In any post-interview interactions, I adhered to protocols appropriate to visiting. I transcribed all of the interviews myself, either manually or using electronic transcription software. With the latter, I checked transcripts for any technical mis-transcriptions. I analyzed transcribed discussions, looking for themes that emerge from my reading, coding and interpretation. I used open coding, and for interpretation, elements of discourse analysis and reflexive narrative analysis.

Protocol practicalities

I had previous experience in setting up a community engagement research plan, working (in 2017) with Ryan Crosschild, then FNMI Program Specialist, to set up a community engagement

plan for my Undergraduate honors thesis. The plan was successful, and both Ryan and his supervisor were happy with the outcome. Mark Slomp, then Executive Director of Student Services, confirmed that his office would assist with email recruitment. The email text I proposed was as follows:

> Dear Student,
>
> I am recruiting FNMI students who identify as First Nations and who are willing to partake in a semi-structured interview. The interview will consist of questions about about status, identity and student success from your point of view. The interview would last approximately one hour. COVID protocols will be observed for in-person interviews. If you are interested in taking part in such an interview, please contact Liz Fox-Grey at either liz.foxgrey@uleth.ca or by phone: 403-382-8571.

I initially discussed a community engagement plan for this research with Roy Pogorzelski, the former FNMI Director. He was pleased with my proposed approach, intentions and methods. When Roy left that position, I asked Susan Entz of the Research Ethics Office if my previous agreement with Roy still applied. Susan checked, and responded that it did. Indigenous Student Affairs also received a copy of my ethics application, my thesis proposal, and a copy of Article 9.10 of the TCPS2. There was no formal research agreement with the student community, as there was no student in the collective at the time who could be considered to represent the campus FNMI student community officially.

CHAPTER ONE: SPRING-EAST, PLANTING SWEETGRASS

The spring-east: Motoi/Ao matap iipowa-Innaapo'ohts

Motoi, energy is everywhere**. Ao matap iipowa** is spring, it signifies that the leafing-out season is beginning; we plant a seed/**Ai sapii pomaop** in the spring/**mo aomatap iipossi. Innaapo'ohts** means downriver. It has more to do with topography than direction, but the contemporary use of the word "east," in relation to it is because the slope of the mountain is eastward, so the rivers eventually flow east (Duane Mistaken Chief, personal communication, 2022).

"She fell like a maple seed,

pirouetting on an autumn breeze"[12]

1.1 Beginning and beginning again: prologue, project, story

> Like any good guest, Skywoman had not come empty-handed. The bundle was still clutched in her hand. When she toppled from the hole in the Skyworld she had reached out to grab onto the Tree of Life that grew there. In her grasp were branches — fruits and seeds of all kinds of plants. These she scattered onto the new ground and carefully tended each one until the world turned from brown to green . Sunlight streamed through the hole from the Skyworld, allowing the seeds to flourish. Wild grasses, flowers, trees, and medicines spread everywhere. And now that the animals, too, had plenty to eat, many came to live with her on Turtle Island. (Kimmerer, 2013, pp. 4-5)

Robin Wall Kimmerer writes in *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013, p. 5) that "[o]ur elders' ceremonies are the way we 'remember to remember' and so sweetgrass is a powerful ceremonial plant cherished by many Indigenous nations." She refers eloquently to the importance of our

[12] Kimmerer (2013, p. 3)

interconnectedness on and with this planet. She begins her book with the origin story of Skywoman and how her relations (animals) helped her to survive and create the land (the Americas, known to many Indigenous peoples as Turtle Island) that we now occupy. All elements of this land and of those beings who live on it are integral parts of the cyclical and reciprocal interaction of being and creation; nothing is done alone, and we all have a responsibility to each other; to our relations, to the earth and its creatures to do well and to take care of each other. Of creation stories, Kimmerer notes, "Same species, same earth, different stories...like creation stories everywhere, cosmologies are a source of identity and orientation to the world...they tell us who we are...we are inevitably shaped by them no matter how distant they may be from our consciousness" (Kimmerer 2013, p. 7).

This is my origin story, my beginning: a co-creation of Indigenous knowledge with my relations, however insignificant it may seem. It tells the reality of who I am, of who my relations are in the knowing that we have and carry with us. Research involves telling stories; research into shared human lives involves hearing them. With the work and the experiences that gave rise to this thesis, I will show how research can also be healing, and how we can be the medicine.

> The Skywoman story…is a constant star in the constellation of teachings we call the Original Instructions…these are not instructions like commandments, thought, or rules; rather, they are like a compass: they provide an orientation but not a map…the work of living is creating that map for yourself…how to follow the Original Instructions will be different for each of us and different for every era. (Kimmerer 2013, p. 7)

Here, Indigenous ways of knowing depart from those of Western Christian and post-Christian ways of knowing. They lie at the centre of an understanding and a relationality that does not begin with a designation of objects and a set of edicts (Wilson, 2008). To understand and to undertake ceremony is to animate, to bring to life again an understanding of what it means to care about the future of existence, of our children and of the environment. For Indigenous people, that environment is not an object; not a workpiece, and not a provider of "ecosystem services" but a web of living relations. Stories are the part of ceremony that informs us of what is important so that we can create our maps; our way-finding in a good way.

First seedling: Action Research – spring-east: Ao Matap iipowa-Innaapo'ohts

Michelle Hogue (2012) writes about the cyclic nature of action research as a feature of its ongoing work; the stages that research must go through in order to be effectively interpreted and enacted within an Aboriginal paradigm of research and change (2012, p. 81). This approach is fundamental for the development of the stages of my own research and for showing how Indigenous ways of knowing constitute valid and tangible methodologies for research conducted by Indigenous scholars such as myself. There is within me an inherent understanding of research as cyclic; an understanding that seems to flow through my veins as if the cyclic, seasonal nature of my ancestral teachings are already buried deep within me. I find it helpful to conceive of my own thesis work in this way. Spring is the time when seeds are planted; a time for new beginnings and second chances (Hogue, 2012, p. 84). The springtime of my thesis work began in the Spring semester 2019 at the University of Lethbridge. My mind was set on how I would approach my project. How would I conduct my research? What exact scholarly words would I use to accentuate my discourse academically; to disseminate knowledge? I also knew I wanted to

look to my culture to provide resources to help me develop my approach thesis work, and to be able to tell the story of how my thesis began and developed.

But not every green shoot of springtime will come into full leaf, or flower, or fruit. I had to continue to learn about my culture and I acknowledge that even now I do not yet have enough understanding to be an authority in it. Part of decolonizing research and incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing is learning to decolonize the self – which I understand is not enough. For me, this part was complicated by my initial fear of rejection and ridicule, by the shame of not knowing much about the traditional ways of the Blackfoot culture or of Blackfoot ways of knowing, and by my fear that addressing my life circumstances as part of this self-decolonizing would be seen as "getting in the way" of my "academic progress" – as if this were merely a matter of my individual *choice*. It took a long while for me to begin to see that *not-knowing is the position from which everyone begins to know*, that my not-knowing was a *product of settler colonialism,* and that my life-circumstances, and those of other Indigenous people are *the point*, not an externality. It is out of our life-circumstances, and our ways of inhabiting them, whether conflicted, confused, colonized or resistant, that we *begin and undertake the struggle to know*. I understand now (though it is still hard to hold on to this understanding) that it was not my fault for lacking knowledge, and I accept that I have to find a way to come to know; a way that is at once *my own way* and *a way with others* with whom I am in dialogue or community.

If this thesis is the ending of one journey, it is also the beginning of another. It is a record of the becoming of an Indigenous researcher; of finding self and healing through research and the

decolonization of methodology. What did I know before arriving at this point? What was the thinking that got me to this moment? What of these will I take with me into my future research career, and what will I add? My first thesis proposal was a record of the germination period that Hogue (2012) talks about: "[w]hile the seeds themselves do have some resident (stored) nourishment they bring with them in the spring, it is insufficient to sustain growth in the wrong environment…therefore, we have to make sure the environment is optimum and healthy" (2012, p. 84). It is important to reflect on the environment which affected and continues to affect the likelihood of survival for seeds of knowledge beyond what their own stores can provide. For me, the environment in question includes the academic institution, Western forms of pedagogy and Eurocentric theory. It also includes a money-based economic system, forms of negative competition, bureaucracy, and social injuries affecting family and community relations. I found some nourishment in these environments, but also bewilderment and barriers. To create an environment for Indigenous flourishing and nourishment, a new space must be made and the sun and the rain must be let in. Discovering the action research paradigm, thinking about research in terms of a cycle of seasons, helped to support and foster my initial search for knowledge. Finding the Critical Braid Approach to research (CBA) (Czuy & Eagle Speaker, 2019) not only provided me with an orienting device for writing this thesis; it identified the importance of Indigenous stories and spaces to a decolonizing learning process, and thus, for research and the way of thesis-building that I was seeking. Here was another seedling.

In fact, here was *a good half* of the whole garden!

1.2 The Critical Braid approach, first strand – Indigenous ways of knowing

The importance of story

Czuy and Eagle Speaker state that "[e]ducators are responding to the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] by recognizing Indigenous cultural knowledge as a way to enhance and support purposeful Indigenous learning…through familiar contexts such as land, home and community" (2019, p. 4). The first stand of the knowledge-generation braid uses this recuperation of Indigenous knowledge as a tool for Indigenous learners, enabling the use of stories as a segue to understanding and ultimately to living. With the help of community, Indigenous learners are able to come to and absorb the underlying knowledge that the story teaches them. The important thing is that they be given space to *come to* this knowledge in their own time and their own way, rather than being examined, tested and graded at preset time intervals on proper retention and recapitulation. Czuy & Eagle Speaker (2019) note that the stories that have been taken from Indigenous knowledge keepers during colonization have been misappropriated and all too often misinterpreted; they are then incorporated into Eurocentric knowledge as cultural objects without recognition of their social, epistemological or ontological purpose (p. 4). CBA re-centers Indigeneity by placing Indigenous knowledge at the *foundation* of the knowledge and educational frameworks as the first strand of the braid; thus, facilitating an Indigenous-focused learning process, rather than one reliant on a Eurocentric methodology, as the most reliable source of research, learning, and knowledge. This re-centering enables foundational Indigenous knowledge not only to claim, but to be recognized as *having* at least equal merit to its non-Indigenous counterparts.

The first Strand of the CBA involves "braiding the threads [that make up one strand]—protocol, reciprocity and openness—on a journey toward understanding" (Czuy & Eagle Speaker 2019, 5). To understand the place and centrality of story in understanding how knowledge is created, it is important to recognize the *place* of the story's origin, and to *resist* the urge to move immediately to universalization; to the no-place so commonly assumed as a standard in Western academic knowledge. Not all communities use the same protocols, nor do they share the exact same stories. The reason to understand stories *as* knowledge is because what we know does not happen independently of ourselves and of the interconnectedness of land, community, and place (Justice, 2018; King, 2003). From an Indigenous perspective, knowledge is created through generations, and those generations remain present with and in relation to us here and now – whether we recognize it or not. This allows the knowledge and the stories that gift it onward to continue to be told and to ensure that future generations correctly pass on important cultural information. But here again, Dear Reader, bear in mind that the words "correctly", "Cultural" and "information" are all English words! In English, to "correct" has punitive overtones; "cultural" can be taken to mean a kind of decorative surplus to the 'realities' of economics and power, and "information" can be taken to mean bits of data. In an Indigenous context, all three of these words need some decolonization. Czuy and Eagle Speaker (2019) emphasize the problem with the misappropriation of Indigenous stories: it *decontextualizes* stories and the knowledge they convey, damaging insight. It oversimplifies important connections and details. It allows the *commodification* of Indigenous knowledge which further contributes to the destruction of sacred teachings – and furthers colonization in new forms (p. 5).

Indigenous ways of knowing thus must become the center of discussion about stories right from the beginning. Decolonization is given a chance to come to fruition when we can recognize at the start that we should no need to ask permission from the settler academy to learn and disseminate Indigenous stories (while honoring their locatedness) as features of a research methodology or ways to facilitate thinking and understanding. Nor should we need its permission to follow Indigenous protocols in doing so. Nor should we need permission incorporate the process of becoming our authentic selves through story into our academic work.

Seedlings from the origin stories and teachings of the Niitsitapi: the work of Betty Bastien

In this initial discussion of Indigenous ways of knowing, I want to acknowledge Betty Bastien's work. I will stay as true as possible to her written text to correctly covey its integrity and importance. This is an act of respect and relationship. It is an important part of the decolonization process for me not to want to risk misappropriation of her work, to understand myself as in relation with both Bastien and the process of learning itself (Wilson, 2008). I will give a number of direct quotes to acknowledge where the thinking in this section comes from, and then indicate how I can use the quoted material to support my own work. First, let me identify some of the words I will use.

Napi—Old Man; hero

Niitsitapi—Real people, Blackfoot, Indigenous people.

Siksikaitsitapi—All Blackfoot speaking tribes

Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin—Blackfoot way of life

Kiitomohpiipotoko—Role and responsibilities

Ihtsitaipiiyo'pa—Sacred power, Spirit or life force

A'ahksksiitsitapii paitapiiyao'ssi—to live like an Indian again, living the values

A'ahksksiistitapi ksimsstao'ssi—to go back to thinking like an Indian, Niitsitapi philosophy, the process of decolonization.

Kainai—The Blood tribe

Aapatohsipiikani—White pelt weasel real people, mistranslated as "blood' (Aaapan is "blood')

Above translations are by Duane Mistaken Chief (personal communication January, 2022) and Bastien (2004: 194).

Bastien characterizes the history of the Siksikaitsitapi as follows:

> The history of the Siksikaitsitapi, their origins, and sacred knowledge and science are the fabric from which their identity is woven…the breach from these sacred ways originated with colonialism…In its consequence, the need arises to affirm and, as necessary, to reconstruct an identity from the fabric that holds the sacred ways of the ancestors…the children of the Siksikaitsitapi must once again learn the sacred ways of their ancestors (Bastien, 2004, p. 8).

The origin of the Siksikaitsitapi begins with the world being water:

> *Napi, the Old Man, sent down four animals to find out what was beneath the surface [of the] water…first the duck, then the otter, then the badger…they didn't come up with anything…finally the muskrat came up with earth between his paws…Old Man took this small lump of mud and blew upon it, and it continued to grow until it became the earth…Napi travelled about the earth making mountains, rivers, lakes, grasses, roots, berries, timber, animals, and birds…From a lump of Clay, he made himself a wife…Together, the Old Man and Old Woman determined how they should live.* (Bastien, 2004, p 8)

When I read this story, I think about Kimmerer's (2013) ancestral narration of Skywoman falling, which, like the Cree origin story told by Tomson Highway, has similarities to this one. I like these stories, because, as Tomson Highway asserts in his lecture "On Creation" (2022b), we all have them, including our own personal or familial stories of creation and becoming.

Siksikaitsitapi occupy the great plains areas which are home to my tribe, the Blood (Kainai or Aapaitsitapi). The connection between myself and my territory is a metaphysical one, part of my Aatsimoyihkaan, which is translated as spirituality.[13] In Blackfoot, its root meaning is Aatsim which comes from Aatimapi (state). The aatsim is a harmonous balance which is always in a tenuous state, so Aatsimoiyihkaan is a way of returning to that harmony and balance later during

[13] The meanings of "spirit" and "spirituality" in English only approximate elements of Indigenous cultures. While the Latin root of both words is *spirare*, to breathe (Spirit (n.), 2001-2004), they now refer to more abstract ideas of immaterial but sentient being, or particular immaterial but sentient figures. These link to popular concepts of "soul" as a core non-material essence unique to each person, distinct from the body and outlasting physical death, reflecting a history of mind/body distinctions, and later, European romanticism. In Blackfoot, Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa, the spiritual, is a life force; sacred, personal, but *not* simply individual. It connects us, in a living web of respect, to Creator and ancestors. It is *present* and *alive* in a world interpenetrating the present one (e.g. Highway, 2022c); not divided from the material world but present in and through it. Indigenous spirituality involves *connectivity with land* and being *in community* with living others, past, present and future. See also Highway (2022a).

colonialism, the missionaries altered Aatsimoyihkaan to mean Christian prayer and religion (Translation by Duane Mistaken Chief, personal communication, 2023). Indigenous spirituality and ways of knowing can be described insofar as they include observable practices, but their meaning for Indigenous people is not captured by treating them only as cultural artifacts. They rest on ontological and axiological grounds[14] different from much of Western thought and research, and thus require different methodological approaches (Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2021).[15] (Indigenous philosophy is both deeply personal and fundamentally connective (to land/sea and to community). It requires an ability to know and to live Ihtsitaipiiyo'pa.

Bastien (2004) explains that the basic system of the Siksikaitsitapi,

> ...includes belief in the spiritual nature of the sun, constellations, birds, animals, waterflow, *etc*. and their ability to communicate some of their sacred knowledge to humans…while praying and fasting, the sacred powers may be received through dreams and daytime visions (p. 11).

The Siksikaitsitapi were gifted the Thunder Medicine Pipe Bundle which allowed them a power to call upon these forces for protection. Through this sacred ritual, a balance of power is created.

> The Siksikaitsitapi relate to the natural forces with respect, the fundamental premise of their ethical and moral conduct…balance is recognized as the natural law of the cosmic universe, and respect is based on this law…this law is acknowledged in the thought patterns and organizational behavior of Siksikaitsitapi…The pipes and bundles form the

[14] Ontology: fundamental ways of understanding what is (the nature of being). Axiology: fundamental ways of judging what is right, wrong, good or bad (value) in relation to moral, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions of life.
[15] It can also be argued that Western natural and social sciences rest on metaphysical grounds (see, e.g. Göhner & Schrenk, n.d.) that are not shared within Indigenous ways of knowing.

> societies that shape the organizational behavior of the people ... The Siksikaitsitapi organize themselves according to their observations of the natural world and the understanding of their relationships with the environment … Siksikaitsitapi culture changed as the environment changed…technological changes were incorporated into the culture just as environmental and other natural changes were incorporated within the context of creation. (Bastien, 2004, pp. 11-12)

Thus, within the Siksikaitsitapi system of knowledge, "tradition" does not mean that things are fixed and timeless. Change is always occurring; culture is in flux; time is moving always and we must learn to move with it and adapt. My work has adapted and changed with the environment in which I live and in which that work is done. As the natural environment is an important matrix in which seeds are helped to grow, it is important to note that the environment of academic institutions, and also of personal, familial and community life, are also important to the nurturing of research and theory. Also, they need to transform. We need to see more systemic inclusiveness in the understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, just as we need smudge rooms for individuals to practice ceremony. Academic institutions could benefit by, at the least, accommodating these needs and relaxing measures that reflect Western assumptions about scholarly work but can be experienced by Indigenous people as barriers to such work. However, accommodation and regulatory or policy relaxation may not be enough.

Making space for Indigenous story and knowledge: decolonization

If the Eurocentric foundations of institutions of higher learning are not identified and dismantled,

we could end up with more "inclusive" but still colonial versions of such institutions. Recall Audre Lorde's (1984) assertion. "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (p. 112). At least, they won't as long as "the master" continues to define, hold and govern distribution of those tools (policies, rules, regulations, or performative "initiatives"). Are "relaxation," "reconciliation" and "inclusion" still the master's tools? If so, are they are adequate for the job of dismantling the master's house?

Another barrier to decolonizing the academy is fear on the part of those who are defined (or define themselves) as custodians of academic standards. But decolonization does not mean sacrificing science or logic. It means opening up the academy to be able better to *engage seriously and respectfully* with Indigenous ways of knowing – and to engage with the unquestioned and even unthought assumptions built into *its own* ways of knowing and into its institutional infrastructure. It also means that instead of constantly requiring Indigenous thinkers to *explain themselves* and their thought in Western language, logic and terminology, it is time for scholars in the Western tradition to *take their own responsibility* for beginning the hard work of critically understanding and explaining *their own ways* of thinking in terms of their relationality to Indigenous land and people, recognizing how they are seen through Indigenous eyes, but doing so without appropriation (see, e.g., Greenwood *et al*, 2008). This would entail, first, a critical rethinking of the term "settler" even (or especially) by settlers who define themselves as allies to Indigenous people, as Flowers (2015) explains:

> Often, the term settler is used without a critical understanding of its meaning and the

> relationships embedded within it, rendering it an empty signifier. For example, this occurs when non-Indigenous people self-identify as settler but mean it synonymously with non-Indigenous. The main problem, then, is the reduction of a set of privileges and practices to fit within a binary of Indigenous and non-Indigenous identities rather than thinking through the term 'settler' as a set of responsibilities and action. Instead of a term that describes an individual based on what they are not (Indigenous), to my mind, 'settler' is a position of privilege and enjoyment of standing. Indeed, 'settler' is a relational term that signifies the settler's relationship to colonialism. The Hul'qumi'num' word for settlers is hwulunitum, which means the hungry people. It explicitly refers to the fact that settlers were not from the land and did not know how or where to get food, but also to the greed of settlers to accumulate resources, land, people, and wealth. The category of settler is both a structural location and a product of social relations that produce privilege. The challenge, therefore, should be the subversion of that standing by refusing what settlers are, to allow new subjectivities to emerge. (pp. 33-34)

Again, though, wording such as "refusing what settlers are" can raise fear among settlers, unsurprisingly given even the most basic consciousness of the logic of eliminationism deployed by the settler-colonial state to erase Indigenous sovereignty, Indigenous ways of life and Indigenous ways of knowing (except for museumized examples); and by residential schools to "get rid of the Indian problem."[16] These measures cheapened (and continue to cheapen) the value

[16] From a 1920 statement by Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, quoted in McDougall (2018, subsection on "Indian Affairs"). Scott continued, "Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department, that is the whole object of this Bill." By "body politic," of course, Scott meant that of the *settler* state, which Indigenous people could enter only by renouncing both their "Indian" status and any Treaty rights.

of actual Indigenous lives in the eyes of the state, its agencies, and those who committed individual violence against Indigenous people. The logic of elimination has been foundational to the settler state and its institutions. Today it has a flip side in exaggerated settler anxieties about being "told to just leave" or to "go back to Europe." But "refusing what settlers are" means refusing the *relations* that *make* settlers a social category, privileged, dominant, *and anxious* (because they have something to lose). Refusing these relations could make space for people from settler backgrounds to begin forging co-operative and equitable relations in this land *with* Indigenous people (*and* with each other, for that matter). But such a refusal must be *real*, not symbolic, and it will take hard work.

Could such a refusal, plus willingness to listen to Indigenous stories and to see things through Indigenous eyes, build bridges between Western and Indigenous knowledges, and make progress toward a reconciliation that is more than performative? Not without some other things. We who are Indigenous cannot expect non-Indigenous people to see as we do through an Indigenous lens, but we should at least be *listened to.* We should not be expected to do most of the work. Having empathy, making space for Indigenous experience to move to the forefront of engagement, could help bridge Indigenous and Western worlds. But the issue isn't if it *could* do so hypothetically but if it *will* in reality. Our vigilance and the empathy of settler allies may be necessary but they are not sufficient to ensure this result. Actual engagement with real issues and real differences over them is necessary. That reality includes *Land Back*: our right and ability to reclaim our lands in some *real* way is central to decolonization. Land acknowledgements aren't enough. Indigenous people in Canada fought hard for gains we've made in the past century, but active, continued assertion of our presence is necessary to build on them. We aren't going anywhere.

Kiitomohpiipotoko – ontological responsibility

Bastien's work on Indigenous ways of knowing demonstrates some integral elements of decolonization in an academic institution situated on Blackfoot territory. "The ontological theory of *Siksikaitsitapi* is premised on the experience with the sacred, Ihtsitaipiiyo'pa ... The Individual's experience of the sacred provides the fundamental orientation of what it means to be human among Niitsitapi" (Bastien, 2004, p. 84). The condition of Niitsitapi being is based on the interconnections of place, space and time, the experiences of which transcend generations. Yet they are also known as intrinsic to and spiritually occurring within those who are members of the Niitsitapi. The Blackfoot ontology is an intricate system that is passed on through and operates within the oral teachings passed from one generation to the next. It is taught orally to enable children (and adults) to learn in a concrete way and to retain and remember the meaning of life, the skills, values and histories necessary to live that life, and ways to explain and make sense of the natural world (Bastien, 2004, p. 84).

The meaning of life for Blackfoot people is rooted in sacred alliances, called,

> Ao'tsisstapitakyo'p which means to be cognizant and to decern the tribal connections; it refers to our sacred science and thus to the way to connect with our relations once again experientially through our ways of knowing...these ways of knowing are premised on seeking understanding of the complex levels of kinship relations that constitute a cosmic world of balance and harmony...Indigenous ways of knowing are the tribal process that align Niitsitapi ("real people," *i.e.* Indigenous people) with their alliances from which all

> knowing and knowledge is obtained...This way of knowing is of a different nature than the knowledge generated using cross-cultural or alien perspectives developed by Eurocentric sciences (Bastien, 2004, p. 1).

These relationships help shape more than Blackfoot *being*. They guide the necessary transformations involved in *becoming*. Blackfoot identity and its sense of human development are rooted in the framework of "moral and ethical relationships" (Bastien, 2004, p. 84). Through their understanding of such relationships, Blackfoot people continue to *become* the Niitsitapi. Their tribal identity is dependent upon the ongoing, active and relational aspects of prayer and ceremony, making alliances and honoring them. Prayer is integral to this process of becoming, and smudging is ceremony that legitimizes and acknowledges alliances with the sacred; these are what create Blackfoot spirituality and create the balance essential to Siksikaitsitapi identity (Bastien, 2004, p. 85).

In the course of my research journey, I spent many moments deep in meditation and prayer. I had to ask for guidance. I would talk with Creator and ground myself in the grass of my backyard. I would burn sweetgrass and spread the smoke to cover my body, I would cry and share my feelings with Creator, Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa, meaning sacred power, Spirit or life force (Bastien, 2004). So much transformation was occurring for me from the beginning of my entrance into grad school and my initial formulation of my thesis project. I have come to see these transformations as a spiritual journey, not just an intellectual one involving my thesis and grad school narrowly defined. Not many non-Indigenous people may think of their research this way, but for me, this work is part of a path that has been laid out for me by Creator and my

ancestors; a path involving a process of transcending, to A'ahksksiistitapi paitapiiyao'ssi — to live [like] an Indian again, living the values (translated by Duane Mistaken Chief, personal communication June 8, 2022). The path is generational, because it involves guidance and teachings that I not only feel within but that are also part of the Indigenous resurgence happening in this specific time and place, along with the processes of truth and reconciliation. For me, this means that it is time for ‑Indigenous resurgence, not just reconciliation, to be acknowledged in Western academia, and also for Pommotsiiysinni (to designate something, or a way of doing something, as rightfully belonging to others, or to transfer something to others as rightfully theirs — Duane Mistaken Chief translation, personal communication, January 21, 2023) to occur without our needing to ask permission to do things in our way. That reassurance would lead to a tangible reconciliation. Reconciliation will allow us to move forward on our healing journey as Indigenous folx. The guidance I feel both inside and from these wider transformations is part of what informs me of what I know and how I know what I need to get to A'ahksksiistitapi Ksimsstao'ssi – the process of decolonization – which means first to go back to *thinking* Indian; to Niitsitapi Philosophy (Duane Mistaken Chief translation, personal communication, June 8, 2022). This work is a product of my connections and relationships with many different people, voices, writings, and aspects of the universe – natural, social, and cosmic. Blackfoot knowledge is once again becoming the framework for interpreting our visions. Rather than meaning something like a dream or a cognitive illusion, for Indigenous people, "visions" refer to something much broader. The Eurocentric terms "ideas" and "cognition" may form part of what is meant by the term, but "visions" also incorporates a sense of a transformed, transforming, and relational *reality* for which Indigenous people are responsible. Our ceremonies and prayers do not simply *acknowledge* it as objectively existing, but also serve to bring it again into being; to

maintain it; to give it life as it gives us life.

Siksikaitsitapi and an Indigenous way of knowing in contrast to a western example

Bastien (2004) discusses what she sees as a key contrast between the Eurocentric worldview and her Blackfoot way of knowing, highlighting the objectifying features and disconnections that she sees as the fundamental properties of Eurocentric rationality and intellect. She notes the controls needed in undertaking natural-scientific projects in terms of a Western (that is, European-origin) paradigm to avoid "contamination" of data by the researcher's bias or interests, and to avoid cross-contamination of relevant and irrelevant data within a strictly-delimited topic. She explains that in Blackfoot ways of knowing there is no separation between humans and the natural world, and thus that we need to understand and embrace rather than to banish interconnection. Bastien also argues (2004, p. 99) that it is important for a colonized person to step out of the assumed frames of reference that are conveyed *via* the English language and to contest the disconnected and objectifying tendencies of Eurocentric (especially positivist) epistemologies. Indigenous epistemologies are integral to the survival of the culture and the well-being of the Indigenous learner. Aboriginal students must engage with their native languages and the storied philosophies told in them in order for such Indigenous epistemologies to survive the tendency of Eurocentric epistemologies to favor not only distinctions foreign to Indigenous knowledge but also universalizing language and values that weaken them through tendentious forms of incorporation (Bastien, 2004, p. 100). Indigenous ways of knowing (Siksikaitsitapi) form an important basis for research for Indigenous people like myself because they allow Aboriginal students and researchers to place themselves within their own cultural terms. "For Niitsitapi, intelligence

means participation within the world from which one has acquired the wisdom of nature and the knowing of experience" (Bastien, 2004, p. 100). Note here that research "within our own cultural terms," like any serious research, does not mean painting a picture of the world being researched in a way that avoids reason, critical inquiry, discussion, or sober second thought. It means that we undertake careful, considered forms of inquiry – a search for truth – in ways that *respect* rather than bracket off the interconnection, relationality and animacy we see as fundamental to the being of the world.

This is starting to be understood and discussed in some spaces in anthropology and sociology, but let me give a natural-science example of what happens when these are ignored. For decades, "scientific forestry" treated trees as equivalent to plants grown in commercial agriculture: each tree an individual organism that responded to soil, light, temperature and moisture "inputs" that produced growth (in board-feet of lumber and volumes of pulp) as outputs. This in turn encouraged mass plantations of single species on cutover areas. It also encouraged the view that individual trees of great height, mass and age needed to be "culled" to allow younger trees to more effectively "compete" for sunlight. "Scientific forestry" encouraged fire-suppression because fire was seen as a destructive "input" to the forest scape (Vinyeta, 2022), and chemical suppression of certain insects seen as pathological agents to be kept at bay. Some of these insects were invasive, the result of human commercial and transportation activity. But the idea that other insects could play a part in natural cycles of regrowth was not taken seriously.

The result of this approach, a combination of separating off so-called "extraneous" factors in

forestry research and not questioning assumptions about what trees are, was to seriously limit support for research into the interconnection of trees and other organisms, and of trees with other trees, in a mixed forest. It has only been in the last twenty years that such topics have begun to be researched, and the first researchers to do so were ridiculed. As a result, forestry experts have only recently begun accepting the "discovery" that, for example, eastern white pine trees do not take up nutrients through their roots alone: to function, their roots need to foster and be part of a *whole interrelated ecosystem* of other organisms. Similarly, recent research has begun to document the wide variety of ways that trees may "communicate" with each other, engaging in co-operation rather than competition (Grant, 2018). Finally, in recent years, Aboriginal people have criticized fire-suppression efforts employed by non-Indigenous governmental and other organizations against forest and bush fires in Australia and North America, arguing that control-burning is much more effective. Fire-suppression reflects a view of fires as a kind of ontological enemy of the forest, rather than as something that is relationally embedded in forest ecology. Fire suppression not only makes future fires more likely, and at higher and more deadly temperatures that vitrify the soil; it also interferes with the way many tree seeds are made available to the soil. Again, some pine tree species provide examples: forest fires are necessary to open cones and allow seeds to be dispersed. Further, while botanists have known for decades that birds and insects play a role in seed-dispersion, the one-species mass tree plantations encouraged by 20th-century "forestry science" did not take into account what ecosystems such birds and insects need to live.

By contrast, Indigenous ways of knowing would have been far more friendly to such ideas and the research they would have inspired. In Australia, control burning is now being accepted as a

valid means of dealing with the threat of wildfires, but the way in which it has been implemented still reflects some of the values that once drove fire suppression, as Rachael Cavanagh, a Minyungbal woman, Mother and Cultural Land Practitioner, explains:

> There is a lot of misunderstandings around the different techniques used for burning. The language used to label these may be different for example, hazard reduction/planned burns/controlled burns but they all have the same purpose and used with the same intent. This style of burning is a planned and deliberate fire used within control lines to manage a Forest to reduce fuel loads for the safety of people/ townships/ assets and infrastructure. One of the main reasons is for wildfire suppression.
>
> The implementation of these planned burns is to manage large amounts of land. Using a drip torch, you purposely ignite the forest by walking with the drip torch beside you drawing a line of fire in the forest within your containment. Leaving a small gap and moving on. This creates a fast-moving hot fire that burns everything in it way. Really you could almost call it a controlled wildfire?
>
> Cultural Fire practices are quite different, it is just one tool to help manage Country. Cultural Fire is used in unison with the landscape and the environment. Working with the Local First Nations community is essential. It is the local Mob who know their Country and their connection to Fire and knowledge of the local Forest.
>
> This knowledge is important to the way that fire is implemented. Using the local knowledge of reading Country an area will be selected to put in fire. The local people look at the landscape, the species of flora and fauna and the kinship connection. The kinship of Fire and Country is a complex system which includes everything.

> It is only after all these considerations is fire then placed in the landscapes using small spot fires in a mosaic style allowing for the animals and insects to be able to move away from the fire. The fire should be slow moving and cool. So, it does not scorch the soil or harm the trees. (Cavanagh, 2020, paras. 2-8)

For too long, our ways of understanding fire were disparaged as "unscientific" and even when they were incorporated into Western academic discourse, this tended to happen through a process Ahenakew (2016) has called "grafting," by which ways of knowing and being are transplanted from "a context where they emerge naturally to a context [*texts!*] where they are artificially implanted." This is done to avoid "a form of engagement that is not afraid of difficulties, complexities, impossibilities, and the limits of thinking" (pp. 323-324) – in other words, to avoid work, particularly work that would unsettle Western ontological, epistemological, and axiological frameworks and assumptions. It also sets up Indigenous ways of knowing not only for misunderstanding, but for captivity in Western texts as a kind of museumization. Indigenous reseach opens museum doors, and liberates the prisoners inside.

Breaking out of the museum: research as story and as ceremony

In *Research is Ceremony* Shawn Wilson (2008) discusses experiences from his research journey; experiences familiar to me. The experience that I identify with most is his difficulty with academic styles of writing. I want to convey my work in language that emphasizes how it is necessarily bound up with my own experience, not something distanced from it. There are precedents and examples for this experiential approach. Narrative inquiry, interpretive inquiry

and phenomenology provide methodological pathways through which personal experience can be related to research. Ethnography also involves storywork, As I discuss later in this thesis (particularly in chapter three), ethnographic reporting can take the form of different kinds of tales; for example, realist or confessional tales. I find using an objective, detached or passive voice, speaking to an anonymous figure (say, to appease academic assessors of a thesis or reviewers of manuscripts for a journal), to be an obstacle. In my experience, the scholarly work that I learned the most from was more personal in its presentation: the work of Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013, 2022), for example. I found work that foregrounded encoded language or statistical analysis, in ways that *separated off* the presentation from a sense of *purpose* or *location*, difficult to comprehend or use – difficult to *relate* to. What had more of an impact on me were the stories and lessons that ethnographers had learned by immersing themselves as authentically as possible with other people and dealing as honestly as possible with their experiences and emotions *in relation* to those people.

It was hard for me to learn theory in anthropology and sociology when I began my academic journey; it was as if my mind had a blockage. It was hard for me because I felt out of place, as I explain in chapter two. I obviously did learn from most of my reading, otherwise, I wouldn't be here now. However, I often felt out of place and removed both from things happening around me in courses organized in terms of Eurocentric perspectives or academic practices, and from things that I read as parts of Eurocentric curricula. Some of these actively erased and/or trivialized Indigenous experiences and cosmologies. I often felt very alone in pursuing my undergraduate degree. I was often the only Indigenous person in my classes, and I often felt like I had more in common with the subjects of study in ethnographies of Indigenous populations that I read about,

especially those used as examples in theory classes, than I did with the researchers who studied them or with my peers, Indigenous ways of knowing were rarely covered, Critical Race Theory (CRT) was covered briefly, and in my experience neither were given much weight in such courses. When they *were* centered, as in courses dealing with "postcolonial" topics, they were still looked at through a Western lens.

What I did find that gave me an advantage in sociology and anthropology classes was that I had insider information as an Indigenous person and a developing Indigenous worldview and a critical perspective that allowed me to identify and critique assumptions embedded in many learning spaces and curricula. This helped me come to understand what I wanted to do and helped me to become a more focused researcher and to orient my work to the Indigenous ways of knowing that I had learned and was still learning. Coming to understand Indigenous ways of knowing and living A'ahksksiitsititapii paitapiiyao'ssi, along with the spiritual Aatsimoyikaan knowledge that I had learned growing up (despite the fact that there were often barriers placed in the way of my learning, or that good teachers and guides were not consistently present to me) allowed me later to see research as something that can align with Indigenous life and ways of understanding; that Eurocentrism was not the be-all and end-all of research.

Wilson (2008) argues that research, for many Indigenous people, is ceremony. He adds that "[i]n our cultures an integral part of any ceremony is setting the stage properly…when ceremonies take place, everyone who is participating needs to be ready to step beyond the everyday and to accept a raised state of consciousness" (p. 69). The rituals that are required to have people

collectively on the same level of understanding is the ceremonial miracle through which the stages of research can take their places. Along with seasonality and the notion of braiding, the medicine wheel can also be used to illustrate the cyclic nature of research in such moments. Wilson (2008) explains that the elements of research can be located in the quadrants of the medicine wheel in ways that stress the *interconnectedness* rather than the separation of the quadrants. Wilson explains that the wheel represents the interdependence of each part of the quadrant, including and connecting ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. All of these elements are to be used in relation to each other and to all aspects of Indigenous life. Ontology informs the reality of what one is researching and of one's research as a real activity in the world. Epistemology works as a support system and a set of protocols for becoming aware of, addressing and communicating that reality as existing in the situated relationship that one has with truth, rather than being expressive of some external, universal. The 'thing' of study is not the significant part of knowledge-seeking, but rather the *relationship* we have to the "thing' in question (p. 73).

Reality and how we know it (ontology and epistemology) define the terms of which Indigenous methodology and axiology materialize in the form of a *relationship of accountability* to what is a relational reality. Peers (2018) explains the kinds of questions that axiology addresses:

> Axiology is the study of human values and our processes of valuation ... As Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba ... argued, axiology relates to three philosophical areas of study: "ethics, aesthetics, and religion" ... For researchers, axiological assumptions refer to the often-unexamined, unrecognized, or mistakenly universalized values that influence our

> work: Personal or disciplinary assumptions about what is good and bad, right and wrong, and more or less valuable, worthy, desirable, and beautiful. (pp. 267-268)

What, then, is an *Indigenous* axiology? According to Atwood *et al.* (2023), for researchers, especially those working in a Blackfoot context, it involves commitment to a "collective method of research" that seeks,

> ... to disclose a world where all things are alive, where "objects" are subjects—agentive beings in their own right. Most Indigenous cultures understand and experience the world as a network of living beings, a collective, with whom they are interrelated/connected and therefore, any efforts to collaborate with Indigenous peoples must acknowledge comprehensive relational animacy. (p. 769)

Atwood *et al.* (2023) describe comprehensive relational animacy in terms of "Blackfoot ways of knowing, being, and doing." However, the ontological and moral centrality of relationality, discussed throughout this thesis as characteristic of both human and nonhuman beings, is echoed in the ontologies and axiological commitments of other Indigenous peoples. Further, an assertion that many Indigenous ontologies claim human and nonhuman beings share in a comprehensive animacy and agency, and that their axiologies call for the agency of *non*human beings to be recognized and *respected*, is central to the work of Eduardo Vivieros de Castro, discussed in Chapter Three. Wilson (2008) adds that,

> An Indigenous axiology is built upon the concept of *relational* accountability; right or wrong, validity etc. Value judgements lose their meaning...what becomes more important and meaningful is fulfilling a role and obligations in the research relationship—that is,

being accountable to your relations (p. 77, *my emphasis*).

Thereby, according to Wilson, the researcher is to be viewed as "one" with the research, not separate from, behind, or above the subject of that research. The research, and knowledge derived from it, must be respectful in its interpretations; the researcher must be considerate of building a *relationship* with the knowledge sought (and with its holders), and with the process of finding and interpreting information (data collection, analysis, *etc*.). Thus, researchers are held, and hold themselves, accountable to and for, and respectful of, the work they conduct and (and eventually will disseminate), and the others they involve in it. (Wilson, 2008, p. 77)

Earlier, I noted that I wished to use Betty Bastien's words to tell the stories of Siksikaitsitapi so that I would not misrepresent her or risk the integrity of the knowledge she wished to convey. Wilson expresses his own ethical concern with writing that damages context by telling a story about a student who had told him of an experience she had. When he later re-told her story without checking with her, she was not entirely happy with the words he used to express her experience. *He had not learned adequately from her telling of the story how to share it*. (Compare to Robin Wall Kimmerer's sharing of her daughter's story, discussed in Chapter 2, and my own difficult reflection on the story of Fox and Bear.) When he included that story in his book, he used her own words as written by her this time, and with her permission. This indicates something important to Indigenous research. It should be part of the ethical practice of any research, but it is not necessarily a universal feature of the dominant institutional logics of academia, and Wilson's reflections on it are clearly rooted in Indigenous notions of relational accountability. It is true that, in Indigenous life, the narration of first-hand personal experience

can become, like stories that are learned and passed on, parts of an overall oral tradition that transcends time and place; a great arc of story that exists regardless of the specific time or place in which it occurs. Nevertheless, my telling of my own personal experience or your telling of yours, and also the re-telling and passing-on of ancestral or traditional stories, are activities that *do take place in specific times, -places and contexts*, and these can be appropriate or inappropriate depending on who is telling the story and to whom, in what way and for what purposes; and whether there is permission to share it (especially if sacred knowledges are referenced). Ceremony, and seeing research as ceremony, reminds us to keep that in mind. Indigenous ontology as I understand Bastien's (2004) point, places the experiences we have in *ways of being* that allow us to come to know respectfully.

This is the relationship of accountability that Wilson (2008) expresses. Wilson writes that Indigenous ontology is not a singular objective entity but encompasses multiple realities occurring simultaneously. The truth is not an external thing that we can just observe with our eyes, it involves relationships that are occurring as we actively seek truth in particular places, times and relations. It is these relations that make it *substantial*. Wilson gives the example of a chair: its "literal" use can be said to be for sitting, but not all of us always use chairs in that way. Wilson (2008, p. 73) uses a chair as a place to put down stacks of journals and I use one to set down laundry. A chair may be definable in terms of its purpose in one reality, but other purposes that arise within other ways of being are not wrong or inferior. It is our relationship to a chair in the context of what we are doing in a particular time, place and set of surroundings that allows us to articulate its importance to our understanding of what is possible to exist.

Ceremony is relational; it links us together. Research also links us, and research is ceremony in the relation I have with my supervisor, my dear friend. I do not see my experience as a researcher going well if I am not connected to him or when we appear not to be "on the same page." I feel it to be imperative to work to maintain that connection and attunement for both of our sakes, treating the supervisory relation as one involving mutual respect, both scholarly and personal. It is in my nature as a person but also in my shared culture to develop meaningful personal connections. From a standpoint that treats the supervisory function as one of impersonal and objective evaluation, this may appear "unconventional" in terms of prevailing codes of arms-length professionalism, but it is imperative to my scholarly process. My connection and relation to my work is also connected to my understanding and beliefs, not only about who I am but also how I am positioned spatially, relationally, and spiritually. When I was starting to think about graduate school, I had the opportunity to study in the United States, but that didn't feel right. I was becoming ever more deeply rooted in my community, even to the university I am presently connected to. I have built and continue to build many relationships here, and at this time, that is important to me. My spirit is connected to this land and to the people I know, I find it difficult to "just disconnect" in order to pursue an ambition or a bucket list.

Individual independence is highly valued in the Western world, but for me *inter*dependence is what I know. So, in the next chapter, when I refer to interdependence, I do so in terms of a distinction between it and codependence or "bias" or "influence" that can be sometimes difficult to express within the language of Western individualism, especially when it comes to the ethical conduct of research. I believe that, as in the example tree science discussed above, some promising avenues of theory and research in North American psychology and even sociology

may have been impacted by the persistence of certain received assumptions; in the case of psychology, by the prevailing individualism of North American settler culture (Frie, 2011). One example might be the relative marginalization of social psychology in favor of individualized models of the brain, of motivation and of needs and wants. Another, arguably, is a tendency of self-help literature in Britain and North America to be written from the standpoint of middle-class individualism, and for counselling and psychiatric practice to reflect a similar outlook (see Fisher, 2014). I can now look at myself with empathy in my struggle to come to know and to live healthy connections to myself, to others, and to an Indigenous way of knowing, and to live A'ahksksiitsitapii paitapiiyao'ssi as a connective process rather than as one of self-absorption.

Just as interdependency can be confused with codependency or seen as a threat to objectivity within a culture that prizes individualistic self-sufficiency, so the relationality central to Indigenous ontology can raise questions about whether we are introducing role confusion, contamination of research practice and data, "personal bias," or conflict of interest into our research, violating norms of objectivity. However, an Indigenous axiology can lead us to consider how social science scholarship and the conduct of research are intrinsically connected to the conduct of our lives, and how our relations to those with whom we engage in our research might have important personal dimensions. In Indigenous research as I have come to understand it, personal life and the conduct of research are not seen as separable, ideally or in reality. But this does not mean Indigenous research is an ethical free-for-all. Rather, if anything, research means constant and often strict ethical awareness, but awareness governed by a relational and situated axiology. Personal life and scholarship are intertwined dimensions of life, and *both* should be subject to accountability. But what we are primarily accountable for is understanding

that our conduct of research *is relational* and that it takes place in real time, and in potentially changeable circumstances. Indigenous ontology leads us to consider that there may be multiple realities occurring in any research situation, but these realities are understood as produced by or involving multiple *relationalities*. Indigenous axiology leads us to consider the ethics of these relations, and the value of the knowledge gained by engaging in them, not just once at the start, but repeatedly throughout the research process, out of respect for others involved, their (and our) mutual relations, and changes in the research situation. Wilson (2008, p. 73) notes that the key distinctiveness of the Indigenous path in research lies in an understanding that the search for truth is not a search for an external thing or dimension, nor is it a progressive elimination of so-called externalities. Rather, reality lies precisely *in the relationship* that one has to the truth. Because Indigenous knowledge is relational, its epistemology is innately about connecting:

> … the research collective describes this as a methodology (relations connection) of attending, which has to do with caring, bringing ones whole being to the process of engaging and communicating with the human and more-than-human entities that make us who we are…this way of knowing includes the honoring of the 'messages in our body' and the feelings in our 'heart and soul'…whereas Western academic knowledge systems privilege cognitive knowing to be external…Indigenist epistemology includes cognitive knowing as-well-as experiential understanding; sensory, emotional, and spiritual knowing; intuition; dreams; and cultural knowing" (Wilson, 2019, p. 11).

Knowing how connected I am with my research in these ways informs me that I have a relationship with my work that requires me to be aware of the process but also allows me to trust

that process. Even though that process has not been smooth, I have learned that transformation and a miracle is occurring when things I have envisioned have come to fruition. I sat many times to think and pray about what is it that I need to do in order to make meaning with my research. In that process, my research becomes ceremony as I sit with my ancestors in thought and sense the wisdom, they have blessed me with. Then I come to know and to be reminded that what is important for me as an Indigenous researcher, not analytically but relationally, is to find ways to come back to and renew traditional ways of knowing. Indigenous epistemology and ontology are realized in the ongoing relationships I have with my research, with myself, with my fellow scholars, my family, friends and community, and those I have interviewed and with whom I have developed conversations. I have also learned the importance of the Indigenous axiom that puts respect for relations and relateness at the centre of ethical commitments made in research. These affirm to me that I cannot do this work in objective detachment. I need to be present in and interwoven with my work.

Research, resurgence, and reconciliation

Michael Hart (2010) usefully summarized what one model of an Indigenous Research Paradigm could look like, but introduced it with some blunt words about what he saw as the present environment for Indigenous scholarship. Bear in mind that these words were published (only) fourteen years ago:

> For most Aboriginal students, the realization of their invisibility is similar to looking into a still lake and not seeing their image" (Henderson, 2000: 76). Indeed, Eurocentric thought has come to mediate the entire world to the point where worldviews that differ

> from Eurocentric thought are relegated to the periphery, if they are acknowledged at all (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Blaut, 1993). When they are acknowledged, Indigenous worldviews are analyzed most often through a Eurocentric point of view. This marginalization or blinding of Indigenous worldviews "has been and continues to be one of the major tools of colonization" (Walker, 2004: 531). Indeed, Amer-European educators, regardless of program level, ask daily that Indigenous peoples acquiesce to or fit within Amer-European versions of the world while ignoring their Indigenous perspectives. Society demands that we either achieve within this Eurocentric model of education or live a life of poverty and welfare as the uneducated and unemployed or unemployable. Thus, in one way or another, we are regularly forced to validate the colonialists' mythology. (Hart, 2010, p.4).

Hart (2010) follows Castellano (2000) in describing "the characteristics of Indigenous knowledge as personal, oral, experiential, holistic, and conveyed in narrative," and Maurial (1999) in identifying "three characteristics of Indigenous knowledge: local, holistic, and oral" (p. 3). These are *descriptions*: in concert with Battiste and Henderson (2000), Hart (2010) suggests that "Indigenous knowledge" should not be *defined* as one singular thing, the same everywhere (p. 4). Battiste and Henderson also suggest (in Hart, 2010, p. 4) that, "instead of trying to define Indigenous knowledge, the process of understanding would be more important. … understanding requires the inquirer to be open to accepting different realities, regardless of how one uses this term." Indigenous knowledge is rooted in particular communities and peoples, and thus can be plural in its specific forms, narratives, protocols and applications. It also (of course) actively responds to new circumstances. Nonetheless, I suggest that there are some fundamentals that

they share. In this thesis, I indicate what I believe some of these shared fundamentals are, in light of conversations I've had, reading I've done, and the experiential path I've travelled in coming to recognize them.

According to Hart (2010) and Wilson (2008; 2019), an Indigenist research paradigm is one that is that is based in, centers, and furthers a living tradition of Indigenous knowledge associated with a given people or community, advances Indigenous aims, and expresses a characteristic Indigenous ontology, epistemology and axiology.[17]. Hart links such a paradigm to what Garroutte called a "radical Indigenist" approach to American Indian scholarship that "argues for the reassertion and rebuilding of traditional knowledge from its roots, its fundamental principles" (Garoutte, 2003, p. 101, qtd. in Hart, 2010, p. 6), and resists "the pressure to participate in academic discourse that strips Indigenous intellectual traditions of their spiritual and sacred elements" (Hart, 2010, p. 6). These features shape and express who the researchers and research participants are as members of particular Indigenous communities, how they are in community, how they know the world relationally, and how they engage with the knowledge they receive. Hart (2010, pp. 7-8) includes in the ontology he iterated for his own research the presence of spiritual beings and of a spiritual realm addressed in ceremony, and a relational worldview that also informs reciprocity as a basic axiological commitment, lends itself to "an emphasis on spirit and spirituality and, in turn, a sense of communitism and respectful individualism" (2010, p. 3). He enumerates several key features of Indigenous axiology (pp. 9-11), including Indigenous control over research; respect for individuals and community; awareness of connection between logic and feelings, self-awareness, and subjectivity ("where the researcher acknowledges that she

[17] Hart (2010, pp. 2-3) adds "worldview" to this list, associating it closely with ontology.

or he brings her or his subjective self to the research process and openly and honestly discusses this subjectivity)," and a commitment to reciprocity and responsibility, to deep listening (hearing with more than ears); to reflective non-judgement, and to honoring what is shared by acting "with fidelity to the relationship between the participants and the researcher and to what has been heard, observed, and learned." He places particular emphasis on three axiomatic commitments: (1) to respect, which he referred to in terms of the Muskéko-ininiw term, kisténitámowin, "to take care to never mistreat any form of life" (Hart, 2010, p.11; Moore [*née* Brass], 2000, p. 79), (2) to the maxim that "whatever I do as an Indigenous researcher must be hooked to the 'community**"** and (3) to an understanding that "[a]ny research that I do must not destroy or in any way negatively implicate or compromise my own personal integrity … as a human being" (Hart, 2010, p. 10; Weber-Pillwax, 2001, p. 168).

Following Kovach (2005), Hart (2010) treats Indigenous epistemology as,

> ... a fluid way of knowing, derived from teachings transmitted from generation to generation by storytelling, where each story is alive with the nuances of the storyteller. It emerges from traditional languages emphasizing verbs, is garnered through dreams and visions, and is intuitive and introspective. Indigenous epistemology arises from the interconnections between the human world, the spirit, and inanimate entities. (p. 8).

Hart sees a place in such an epistemology for perceptual experience, but gives it a different definition from the Western one:

> While perception has been defined as "the extraction and use of information about one's environment (exteroception) and one's own body (interoception)" (Dretske, 1999, p.

> 654), perception is considered more inclusively within Indigenous epistemology to include the metaphysics of inner space (Ermine, 1995). In other words, perception is understood to include a form of experiential insight. … a subjectively based process described by the Cree term mamatowisin, which is "the capacity to tap the creative life forces of the inner space by the use of all the faculties that constitute our being–it is to exercise inwardness. … This exploration is an experience in context, where the context is the self in connection with happenings, and the findings from such experience is knowledge. Happenings may be facilitated through rituals or ceremonies that incorporate dreaming, visioning, meditation, and prayer. The findings from such experiences are encoded in community praxis …" (Ermine, 1995, p. 104). (Hart, 2010, p. 8)

In addition, Hart notes that "[k]ey people for this process are Elders and practitioners who have undergone processes to develop this ability" (2010, p. 8).

Following Weber-Pillwax (2001, p. 174), Hart (2010) refers to Indigenous methodologies as,

> … those that permit and enable Indigenous researchers to *be who they are* while they are actively engaged as participants in the research processes. This way of being not only creates new knowledge but *transforms who researchers are and where they are located* (p. 9, *my emphasis*).

He also suggests that an Indigenous methodology involves both talking about and practicing relational accountability, echoing Wilson's claim that "knowledge is relational. It is not just interpersonal … Knowledge is shared with all creation … you are answerable to all your relations when you are doing research" (Wilson, 2001, qtd in Hart, 2010, p. 9; see also Stan

Wilson & Peggy Wilson *et al.*, 2001). This concurs with another core feature of Indigenous methodology, "the collective … a sense of commitment to the people in many Indigenous societies. Inherent in this commitment to the people is the understanding of the reciprocity of life and accountability to one another" (Hart, 2010, p. 9). Finally, Hart proposes, with Kovach that Indigenous methodologies emphasize practicality: "one seeks knowledge because one is prepared to use it" (Kovach, 2005, qtd in Hart, 2010, p. 9).

Hart (2010) mentions two other elements of his own (Indigenous) approach to research that I also emphasize in Chapter Two. The first is that he "recognized the potential influences of the spiritual through other than conscious means. In other words, such events as dreams, day visions, and ceremonial experiences …" . The second is that he "incorporated [his] subjective insights, meaning that [he would] self-reflect, analyze, and synthesize [his] internal experiences in relation to the research… (p. 11). Looking to the future, Hart raises the possibility that English-language "philosophical" concepts of ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology "may be acting as a strainer," and thus "it is likely that, as we continue to more accurately reflect ourselves, we are likely to raise our own concepts, and in turn our practices, to the forefront of how research should occur with Indigenous peoples. This brings me to thoughts about future steps..." (Hart, 2010, p. 12). He names those steps as sharing "practical research experiences with this paradigm and … reflections on its adequacies and inadequacies," and reviewing "its relevance with other Indigenous-based research projects, particularly with other Indigenous peoples. By sharing our thoughts on such Indigenous-based endeavors, we will be acting to strengthen our Indigenous knowledges and practices (p. 12). Research thereby feeds resurgence.

Ethics in researching, evaluating research, and acting in the world

Indigenist research, then, is about a resurgence of Indigenous thought and scholarship that will meet Indigenous priorities and needs. But it is also about how we handle our research, how we carry ourselves, and how we engage in "relational accountability" (Wilson, 2019, p. 7). If research is ceremony, then we must handle it with care, as a sacred process. As Bastien noted, it is about good ethical and moral practice. Such practice follows protocols, but is meant to be innate; to become part of who we are. Wilson (2019) shares the same sentiment when he notes that when we behave ourselves, we are working in harmony with the spirit and the relationships involved in our research will be balanced: "the object of knowledge is to reunify the world or at least reconcile the world to itself" (p. 17). To understand resurgence, we cannot just think about it, we must act. But what about reconciliation? I would argue that without resurgence, there will be no genuine reconciliation, because such reconciliation depends on the settler side seeing that we are here, we have power, and we will persist in efforts to achieve justice and fairness in our own lands. Genuinely reconciliatory action must be reciprocated, most be more than symbolic or merely performative, and must involve more than policy and planning exercises, important though they might be. We must purposely act to restore healthy relations at all levels, from the purpose of research to its conduct to its results and dissemination. We must practice accountability within and to our nations and communities, to the environment, to our ancestors, to the cosmos. Indigenist research is in alignment when we act on our values (respect, responsibility, reciprocity and relationship). Wilson says that in this sense, Indigenist research is inherently reconciliation (2019, p. 17) – but it needs a response in kind.

What is the relation between research and action? In discussing methods, I have used Archibald's (2008a) *Indigenous Storywork* to make a case for storytelling as part of research. But in *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2021), Linda Tuhiwai-Smith includes a chapter entitled "Getting the Story Right, Telling the story Well" in which she claims that Indigenous research and Indigenous activism are separate entities. I must argue that claim. Indigenous research – or perhaps more accurately, Indigen*ist* research – is actively decolonizing, and Indigenous activism is experiential knowledge, because the action of resistance requires the activist to understand that there is some problem occurring, and being educated in that problem requires research into it. By using traditional ways of knowing, I, as an Indigenous researcher, am actively taking a stand against the eliminationist logic of Eurocentrism, and practicing resistance and resurgence. I am still here, and I have a voice. Tuhiwai-Smith (2021) herself prescribes that Indigenous researchers must "talk back to" and "talk up to power" (p. 282) which is exactly what Indigenous researchers are doing when they produce their work. Their very existence in the academic arena entails "talking back to" and "talking up to" power. Ladner and Simpson (2010) write that:

> Indigenous peoples and their nations have been resisting and struggling against colonialism since the very beginning. The ancestors not only fought, blockaded, protested and mobilized against these forces on every Indigenous territory on Turtle Island, they also engaged in countless acts of hidden resistance and kitchen table resistance aimed at ensuring their children and grandchildren could live as Indigenous peoples. (p. 8; see also Wente, 2024)

Indigenous ways of knowing are themselves communicated most effectively *by example* rather

than statements of abstract principle. Examples of Indigenous ways of knowing give insight to the importance of incorporating different worldviews and active reconciliation into the academy – and encouraging scholarship and research on the street and in everyday lives. That's one way in which Indigenous ways of knowing can facilitate the true holism that we struggle toward through mutual accountability; a holism that is increasingly recognized as a requirement to take seriously in disciplines such as Anthropology.

However, it is interesting that Wilson (2008), despite (or perhaps because of?) his advocacy for reconciliation and ethical conduct, states a discomfort with doing literature reviews. He is not comfortable with critiquing other people's work. It does not fit well for him, and he argues that it does not fit well with 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" (p. 43). I must also interject here, not to criticize Wilson (or Tuhiwai-Smith), but to explain that critique does not necessarily equate to (negative) criticism. It can (and should) be an opportunity to explore and engage with others' work, whether supportive or not, to have discussions, to better position one's own work in relation to other scholarship, and perhaps to engage mutually in making that work more relationally accountable. Wilson (2008) writes about the rigidity of the Westernized worldview and the competitive nature of western academia. I myself argue, in the next chapter, that negative competition and exclusionary viewpoints do still exist in what are still settler institutions of higher education in a settler society. The temptation to competitively find fault with other scholars' work too often creates a "hierarchy of worldviews" which perpetuates colonization and re-centers whiteness. However, my point is that critique *need not* involve competitive and

negative one-upping, and we can model that ethically. I also believe that Wilson's Indigenous axiology of relational accountability can include questioning others' work, especially if such work disparages the intentions and actions of other Indigenous scholars or activists, because the purpose of accountability is not and should not be denigration. But there can also be friendly, supportive and non-competitive questioning, offered in a spirit of mutual learning, clarification and exchange, between researchers and scholars with different but honestly-held perspectives on a topic or issue but committed to open and self-reflective discussion.

Accountability and questioning should ultimately be about maintaining balance and reciprocity; as Wilson states, mutual engagement and critique should not be about creating and defending a hierarchy of knowing. To propose that a critical relationship between our work and that of others is inherently negative, or that the motivation to do good research must always be kept distinct from motives for activism (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2021), is not something I see as commensurable with Indigenous axiology, because it seems to me that such judgements accept static distinctions and criteria for discussing whether researchers and activists are performing in-role and performing well. That is what the Western academy historically has encouraged in institutional policy and in scholarship: drawing and enforcing static and even universal distinctions without regard to relational context. I am not suggesting that I can measure the present state of that historical tendency, nor that I know better. However, as an Indigenous activist and researcher, I know many people in the academy (researchers) and on the street (activists) who are in communication with each other; who inform each other, and who share the same stance of "talking back to power." There are also activists *within* the academy – and researchers and scholars on the street.

1.3 In conclusion, a story

As I relate in the next chapter, in periods when I was unwell during my graduate education, I felt anger and pain. I felt lost and alone. These feelings were overwhelming and they would take over my spirit. At times, I became a shell of myself. I did not act right. I abused myself and I neglected my work. I was able to do good for my children (thank Creator that my mothering was not as affected as my academic work, and that I kept my children safe!) but not for myself. I let these feelings control my sense of myself and my thoughts, I did not present myself to the universe in a good way. I was trapped in an abusive relationship (as discussed in the next chapter) and slowly became very depressed. Eventually, I developed suicidal ideations. When that happened, I was in shock: I could not believe what had become of me. At the moment when I first felt like that, I immediately I felt something come over me. I would later come to connect my awareness of that feeling with the methodological skill of attending to ourselves: paying attention to how we are not self-constituted and self-contained but exist in a realm in which we can become aware "of our essential co-constitution as we care for, and are cared for by … myriad human and more-than-human [forms of] becoming that emerge together" (Country *et al.*, 2015, p. 270). I had a vision that said "it is you or him and you will die if you stay here." I got up and left my boyfriend's house. I went home and I smudged and prayed, talking to Creator and my ancestors. I apologized for not being connected; for wandering off my path. I asked for guidance. I expressed my gratitude for being given the capacity to be brave enough to walk away and to choose myself, I felt like that gift was my ancestors protecting me and pulling me back to my spirit. While that was not the end of the challenges I faced, I have not looked back from that moment. I have made and continue to make reconciliation to myself, to my children, to my work and to Creator. The moment I made the choice to reconnect and to honor my relationships with

myself, my children, my work, and my spirituality, my life changed. The relationships we have with ourselves and with Creator are important; they help set the stage for all other relationships. The responsibility I now have is an accountability to honor the values I have learned about relationship. I am grateful to have received the foundations of my culture, so that I could return to it and remember that reciprocity is to honor all of creation, including myself. My research and my writing have transitioned with my developing experience. The seeds of this transition were planted when I entered graduate school, but the experience I have gained during these past few years made me understand how research is about ceremony and reconciliation and seeking wholeness, and also about the relationships I have made during that time – and about the stories I have been gifted and those I can tell.

CHAPTER TWO:

TENDING SWEETGRASS IN THE SUMMER-SOUTH / NIIPOWA-SAATO'OHTS

Niipowa is summer. However, Niipowa does not mean summer *per se*. It translates into English literally as "leafed out," referring to the time of the leafing out of vegetation which generally, in Blackfoot country), is about five months of the year. It denotes a time for growth (Mistaken Chief, personal communication 2022).

Saato'ohts is south. Saat comes from the word Saatapssin/fighting (where my enemy is) and O'ohts is directional (Mistaken Chief, personal communication, 2022).

Summer is a time for growth and flourishing; when the promise of spring comes to realization. But summer storms can shred the leaves of plants that have unfolded, and summer drought can wither them. Thus, summer can be a time of peril; not only of natural peril but also of the appearance of enemies. Summer, then, is a time that calls for awareness and care; for knowing how to protect what is growing; how to recognize signs of danger, and sometimes knowing when and how to fight. And also, for learning *how not to become part of that danger yourself*.

Writing about my *experiences* helps me understand my positioning with respect to my work, my active relation to it, how it derives from my personal and educational history, and also how my story relates to a wider history of colonialism. Writing about my *work*, I learn to see as a scholar from an Indigenous perspective; I learn *to be* an Indigenous scholar, and to reflect on how and why my work *has been chosen* not only *by* me but *for* me. This process highlights the meaning added to our accounts of our own experience by our encounters with community members, fellow human, animal and plant kin, our mother the earth, our spirit guides – and with things, events, beings that can trick us; that we must learn to discern with care. It is important to know the *fundamental positionality* from which we discern what is (given to us as) important to convey. Rather than framing my work as writing *about* an indigenous person, I write *as* one, so it is important for me to think and write in terms of an Indigenous cosmology (Wilson, 2008).

In the first three parts of this chapter, I tell of my own path into a way of knowing suppressed in my previous schooling, and of how tending to its growth led to a better awareness of obstacles in my way. In the fourth part, I discuss a kind of warfare that colonialism visited upon Indigenous peoples; forms of judgement and of violence, sometimes subtle, sometimes open, that the settler-colonial order seduced us all-too-often into both accepting *and practicing* both within and beyond the academy; lateral judgement and lateral violence fed by the verticality of oppression built into settler institutions. Finally, in the fifth section, I demonstrate how the experiential and personal path of the second strand of the Critical Braid can, with a methodology of visitation and conversation, bring about a *relational* awareness of shared experience through shared narration; a first step toward the possibility of community-building among (and concerted action by) those whose indigenous identities have been challenged by a weaponization of "purity" criteria.

2.1 An Indigenous Path to Knowledge

My path took shape in attending to the footsteps of others; in what I saw as a possible convergence of three ways to understand research and the knowledge it may offer.

(1) Tending sweetgrass: honouring stories and their tellers

Nurture and care, along with innate strength, allow the living to flourish. Through the oral stories of our ancestors, we learn how we come to know what we know, and how that is important. Our experiences also inform us of who we are and how we see the world. From both our ancestral

stories and from the stories we tell of our own experiences, we can learn and teach lessons, and we learn and teach our relations. Thereby, we come to understand who we are in relation to the land, and to our non-human and our human relatives. We are connected, and we learn those connections. Stories guide us through the world and help us to understand the meaning our cosmologies and our experiential circumstances have for our hearts and minds. The stories we tell of our own lives, including those about how we relate to our work, provide ways, both for us and for those to whom we tell such stories, to learn how our experiences guide what we know, and how that relates to our ability to understand others that we wish to know – or think we know.

Robin Wall Kimmerer includes in *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013, p. 13) a story told by her daughter, titled "Witch Hazel." Her daughter tells of her memory of an elderly woman named Hazel who lived adjacent to their home. Kimmerer and her daughter both became friends with Hazel, and they all shared stories with each other about their experiences, in that way explaining their lives to each other. Hazel tended a garden and was seen as an expert on herbal medicines. She offered care to those in need. Kimmerer's daughter tells that when Hazel got to know that Kimmerer was a professor at the local college, she said that she'd had a previous experience with a professor: "some other lady professor had once come with a tape recorder to talk to her and was going to put her in a book, on account of all the old ways she knew…but the professor had never come back and Hazel had never seen the book" (Kimmerer 2013, pp. 74-75). This example shows how stories of experience matter, and also how they can be retold. Embedded within Kimmerer's daughter's story is *another* story, told by Hazel. Hazel's herbal and related knowledge, at once practical, experiential and traditional, had provided "data" to a researcher. But Hazel also told about the *relational context* in which that data was given and received; a

context that needed respecting and was not. The college professor who took the data never came back to show Hazel what she'd done with it. This gave the appearance (or at least raises the possibility) that the other professor may have *extracted* it from its context – namely Hazel's practical work – and thereby *abstracted* it by removing that context and reinserting it into another theoretical, epistemological or ontological model.

Kimmerer's daughter's story illustrates how Indigenous knowledge has been collected and how research on colonized peoples has been undertaken historically. We are now coming to understand that people who have been treated in the past as sources of interview data also need to be respected as interlocutors – as people with whom to open conversations; people who can catch our misperceptions and misinterpretations, and who therefore might be better treated as integral to the research process. Ethics boards now are starting to ask not only for confirmation that collection of information in the form of narrated experiences is permissible by communities concerned, and for details on its collection and use, but also if (when ethically appropriate) researchers should incorporate narrators or their communities into the research process.

More personally for Kimmer, her daughter's story about Hazel and the other professor allows her to see a shared experience through *her daughter's* eyes. It offered her another outlook on an experience she saw as important to narrate; one that reminded her of her own responsibilities as a researcher and a friend – and a mother. She embedded her daughter's story within her own narrative, as her daughter had embedded Hazel's story in her own. This double incorporation teaches about the promise and complexity of treating others' stories responsibly. Here, we see

Kimmerer *retelling someone else's story and trying to do so conscientiously*. This is also what I try to do later in this chapter with stories told to me by my interlocutors/conversation partners.

(2) The Action Research approach – summer-south/Niipowa-Saato'ohts

Similar to Mistaken Chief's oral commentary (2002), Hogue (2012, p. 89) writes that summer is the growing season, the leafing-out, a time when nurturing of individual seeds leads to their full blooming potential. I would add that this is an exceptionally important time to ensure that natural enemies (saato'ohts – fighting/where my enemy is) are not a threat to the growth of seedlings, so that they may reach their potential. This approach, which aligns with values of relationality and positionality, is ideal for the stories told in this chapter and the model for research it suggests, because it acknowledges Indigenous experience, both individual and collective, validating its space and spirit as unique and personal while also forming part of a larger web of meaning. Hogue (2012) writes about this in application to educational methods: "Like plants, each person is unique and may require individual attention at times; we cannot assume that each individual is the same in the way Western Education classifies students into grades" (p. 89).

(3) The critical braid, second strand

This chapter also represents the second strand of the Critical Braid approach, adapted from Czuy and Eagle Speaker's (2019) discussion of Ethno[-Mathematics]. In this chapter, I refer to this approach in showing how the second strand involves and includes personal experience, and how that strand would affect the conduct of research. The second strand re-conceives research to acknowledge and incorporate both personal and contextual experience as central to an

Indigenous way of knowing. These forms of experience are now being recognized as valid elements in anthropological research, reminiscent of James Clifford's point (Clifford, 1986), that research is governed by the assumptions of the researcher (and, I might add, the reader!) and that this is better acknowledged than banished. Hogue (2024) notes that Autotheory, which includes narrative, autobiography, memoir and critical theory, also includes this insight. The second strand of the knowledge braid shows how "personal protocol and history, senses and humility allows for the Indigenous story, especially from the land (Strand 1 [of the braiding]) to be contextualized and personalized" (Czuy and Eagle Speaker, 2019, p. 5; see also "Indigenous Land-Based Knowledge", 2023).

2.2. Basic orientations of Indigenous research

Positionality and contextuality

It is important to understand that research, like education, is inherently a social and thus an (inter)subjective process, shaped by both researchers' assumptions and the structures and logics of publishing models, granting agencies, and academic institutions (Grande, 2018; Kovach, 2021). Instead of uncritically conforming to a (post-)positivist version of research methodology that relies on bracketing (suspending) "biases," I argue that positionality is inescapable for any researcher, and so too are the *experiences* of each researcher, especially in the human sciences, which form part of the subjectivity that each researcher necessarily brings to their work and thus affecting the course of the research (Wilson, 2008, p. 16). In the human sciences, such as in anthropological ethnography (and also autotheory; see Cuthand and Fournier, 2021), taking one's own perspective into account is increasingly recognized as central to the ethical practice of

ethnographic research. A version of qualitative social science method that relies on bracketing (Tufford and Newman, 2012) as sufficient to keep bias from influencing research results may have an opposite effect, excluding from awareness features of knowledge bound up with its experiential and contextual dimensions.[18] Considering this point brings a tenet of critical race theory (CRT) to mind. By speaking in terms of (*not* "speaking for") marginalized voices, CRT justifies the personal accounts of members of minority groups, establishing those accounts as facts not only necessary to consider but fundamental in shedding light on the whiteness of the academy (e.g., Ahmed, 2012). CRT can also serve to legitimize Indigenous researchers' and scholars' experiences of reality as grounded in an ontology different from that which objectifies racialized people. It can be helpful in assessing *in what ways and what contexts* research results (and accounts of them) may be judged to be factual. It is thus useful for conceptualizing accounts of institutionalized racism that occur situationally and structurally in many areas of western academia. CRT is "motivated" – yes, motivated – to *understand*, for example, how both American and Canadian institutions have been organized along the lines of "race," and how, because of this, both societies have been shaped by enduring hierarchies of power into an unequal order. CRT aims to *change* those dynamics by analyzing and exposing such power relations (Satzewich and Liodakis, 2010, p. 53). Thus, CRT seeks to legitimize the ways in which we (Indigenous and other racialized people) can do scholarship *differently*, to come to know our own being and the colonial and white supremacist contexts within which it unfolds.

Our personal stories are part of what brings critical research to life and gives it meaning. They function as more than illustrations. Rather, they can help indicate how the research was done and

[18] As I discuss in Chapter 3, this realization is not occurring without problematic moments.

how it was affected by its setting; in what form knowledge was gathered and what that knowledge does and does not claim; from what perspective it should be interpreted, and what ontology grounds it. (It also needs to be kept in mind that throughout this thesis, I do not conflate "personal" or "subjective" with "individual," but treat it as located in, shaped by and expressive of specific contexts[19]. This sensitivity to the importance of story, personal experience, and cultural and territorial context, also affects learning. Hogue (2012) argues that Indigenous students require both a cultural and an academic sensitivity on the part of instructors to feel safe in their learning environments. Specifically, she notes that members of a dialogue-focus group involved in her study asserted as a "basic" that "[g]iven the location of the university within the Blackfoot territory … it [was] imperative that the academic community learn more about the Blackfoot culture (p. 90)." Attention to such basics, I'd add, is necessary to *produce a space* mindful of Indigenous culture and history; one in which this mindfulness can shape *effectively* the three activities of research, teaching and learning. Such a space would be productive of nurturing and guiding. Such nurturing, for Indigenous students, and for Indigenous *researchers*, would allow Indigenous academics, graduate students and undergraduates the ability to "leaf out" on their own terms; to allow the seeds of their ideas to grow with understanding and support.

It is also necessary to dismantle the requirement that Indigenous researchers must constantly and repeatedly explain their knowledge systems, thereby reproducing a perception that Western ways of knowing form a normative standard by which other knowledge systems must be judged, setting up other ways of knowing to be treated by default as deviations (Kovach, 2021; Simpson,

[19] e.g. social, historical, traditional, political.

2014; Wilson, 2008). This would go a long way to counter the perpetuation of an experiential disconnection between Indigenous students and the university. Hogue's insights into the unique needs of Indigenous learners spoke to me on a personal level – as a person of Blackfoot heritage – because of my own experience with being called on to justify elements of my research, whether it was the way I would conduct interviews (by "visiting" and conversationally, as explained below) or my intentions in developing a research process and a perspective that stood outside the expectations of "traditional" (the irony!) academia. My ability to engage in academic life – and also to treat the experiential side of that life as part of my topic – would have benefitted from a social and institutional context that more readily at the time considered the challenges I faced in navigating both personal and university life (challenges which were affected and shaped by intergenerational trauma as well as by financial, family, social, and health circumstances). Such a context would also have benefitted both my sense of integrity, my developing cultural knowledge and awareness, and the efficiency of my completion of this work – for example, by allowing me sufficient time to work solely on my project rather than searching for ways to fund it, trying to meet set timelines or applying for extensions, or taking extra time and care to explain to the unaware what Indigenous knowledge is and how it would apply in the social sciences. If it sounds like I am calling for more *individual* attention to each student's circumstances, that would not be entirely inaccurate; however, the challenges I faced are not exceptional nor unusual for many Indigenous students.

This kind of contextual consideration would foster not only personal confidence but also a more positive outlook on the possible interplay of different modes of knowledge production, and would help to decentralize (colonial, white supremacist) control of knowledge production and

consumption. Decentralization is a central tenet of Anarchism, and along with contextual awareness, it would also address the racial capitalism underpinning requirements to repeatedly legitimize methods and research processes in order to satisfy Eurocentric policy and procedural infrastructures which continue to be at work in the academy.

The work needed to develop an action research approach which would serve as a viable way to decolonize the conduct of research and the production of knowledge involves simultaneous engagement in several processes, personal, social, scholarly, and institutional. These processes can be discussed in general terms, but for researchers as persons and subjects – for me – they involve vulnerable moments in an ongoing process of becoming, as an Indigenous person, a scholar, a parent, and a member of multiple communities, including marginalized ones. These different dimensions of my experience and development might be analytically separable, but practically, they aren't, and I do not think they should be. As I write myself into reality – for that is what I am doing – I also write myself into an *Indigenous* reality that is now entering, challenging, and beginning to change Western academic institutions.

Personal *and* community experience

This process of writing-into Indigenous reality focuses attention on how Indigenous researchers come to their own understanding of their research in the context of colonial academic institutions and structures; how the research they conduct takes shape in a particular way, and how it may culminate not only in a written report but in other forms which have only recently begun to be accepted in the settler academy as valid and appropriate forms of knowledge translation; for

example, story and oral history. Czuy and Eagle Speaker (2019) use Ethno[-Mathematics] as an example to explain how *personal* ways of knowing help Indigenous students understand how to do mathematics through their own experience and understanding. The second strand of the knowledge braid involves demonstrating how personal histories can be meaningful not merely as "cultural learning" that affects only extraneous details in the learning process, but as *integral* to our coming to know both personally and *together*; to our ability to learn core Indigenous concepts through our own experience, enriching our learning, our lives, and our sense of individual and shared selfhood. Eurocentric models of teaching, learning and evaluating (academic colonialism as "enemy/south)" can hinder Indigenous students' *own* construction of culturally-appropriate ways by which subjects such as mathematics or other kinds of knowledge are best gained and retained by and *for them.* Eurocentric modes of learning, especially "higher learning," can still require Indigenous students on occasion to legitimate knowledge by resituate or replace their own perceptions or cultural knowledge with abstract categories or binaries that don't work for them and don't allow sciences (natural or human) to work effectively for them. This reproduces colonialism in education (Czuy and Eagle Speaker, 2019, p. 6).[20]

There are alternative strands within Western education that have argued similar points; for example, Ivan Illich (2000) and Paolo Freire (2017) pointed out that if you want to turn off *any* student from learning, the Western industrialized model has proven to be a remarkably efficient way to do that. But the specific trouble that the abstract, hierarchical and disciplinary aspects of the Western approach to learning and knowledge-production pose for Indigenous learners/researchers is that these require them to abandon their own ways of knowing as

[20] Similar (though not identical) issues have cropped up in terms of gender or racial bias in fields such as medical research.

insufficient to adapt to the western world. Thus, acculturated Indigenous learners become removed from or alienated from the spirit and the connectivity of *land-based* (or, for coastal peoples, sea-based) teachings and ancestral knowledge; from the idea of land *as* pedagogy (Simpson, 2014), and Indigenous learners who were deprived of such acculturation are discouraged from seeking it. Simpson (2014) highlights how colonial education systems can impact Indigenous learners, requiring that they cope "with someone else's agenda, curriculum, and pedagogy, someone who [is] neither interested in [their] wellbeing as [an Indigenous person], nor interested in [their] connection to [their] homeland, [their] language or history, nor [their ancestral] intelligence" (p. 6).

Czuy and Eagle Speaker (2019) propose instead that "by attending to the connection between senses to space, stories, and ideas, and intuitive and implicit knowledge, skills of better understanding the personal journey of coming to know can be created" (p. 6). This approach gives value to knowledge systems that are not only rooted in a thousand generations of understanding but that are also personal – that is, focused on *actual persons in context* – freeing the skills associated with such systems from a Eurocentric justification of external, standardized and supposedly objective measurement.

Niipowa refers to the leafing-out and the growth of plants: how could this image best be transposed to the leafing-out and growth of personal and community experience? What would it mean to the work of research as a form of *learning*? The environmental factors which play into the leafing-out of plants have analogues with (and also in some ways connections to) who we are

becoming and what we learn to express as we come to know and to draw upon what is around us through "complex, committed, *consensual* engagement" (Simpson, 2014, p. 15). To put it another way, closer to Kimmerer's (2013), coming to know what is around us is inseparable from coming to know what is our spirit, if we conceive of spirit as a calling that comes from not only from visions but from our surroundings to guide us on our path if we pay attention. This guidance is not free-form, not instantaneous and not necessarily easy to follow; there are protocols in Indigenous communities for how to seek guidance, how to pay attention to it and how to follow it, and there are elders and traditions to safeguard and interpret and warn of these protocols. From such a calling, we may learn lessons about how to sense, think about and respond to what is happening around us in the natural and social worlds. When we "process" this, *we ourselves become the process* through which proper understanding and interpretation may unfold the stories that are told to us. Storytelling, and learning how to attend to stories, is central to Indigenous learning and research. Anthropology, especially ethnography, also centers storytelling. It is Western academic protocols that have *limited themselves by treating knowledge through story as something inferior to "science," and by treating stories as artifacts* to be coded and organized in a linear fashion in order to yield up cultural data that brackets story as a skilled way of knowing and transformation of consciousness. Could the second season of the Action Research Approach instead work as a guide to how personal and collective experience of the world around us, in concert with story, can inform research in unique and valid ways?

Here, for a Westernized reader, a particular binary may rear its head: if knowledge is reduced to *personal* experience, how can we generalize? Where are the universals? How is this not solipsism? But Indigenous ways of knowing do not necessarily see a contradiction between the

importance of personal experience (and individualized learning) and its embeddedness in communities and within cultures. How we conduct ourselves and our research is both unique *and* dependent upon how we make sense of the world in continuity with our traditions and how we communicate that sense to our relations *as indigenous researchers/scholars*. The difference is that Indigenous ways of knowing do not presume a given standard of evaluation ("the" scientific method, however defined) but work (not always easily or quickly) toward a shared understanding with the community in question, in a particular place and time. It does not treat a workable shared understanding as fixed or off-limits to questions. This thesis does not argue for individual or collective solipsism nor for free-form speculation but for a process that, while it cannot be defined in advance, is nonetheless careful; that takes care to develop attention properly and – as Richard Wagamese (2019) put it, with humility. A shared understanding is not a goal or prize, but a process that needs no completion.

Saato'ohts (south**)** Fighting (where my enemy is) can be thought of as similar to instances in which plants fight the elements (think frost, drought, wind) in order to survive and "leaf out.' We humans fight with others, with ourselves, and with our environments. Our enemy may be colonialism or it may be each other – as in lateral violence, discussed below. South would then direct us on our paths into battle; paths we must at times take to become who we are meant to be. The direction I took with research was realized through struggle with adversarial conditions and entities, and the adversary may often be about *self*. In this process, in the struggle to become a researcher and scholar, wrestling with blockages to creativity, standards of "productivity," and impostor syndrome, all add dimensions to who we become and how we proceed through what we learn, know, or think we know. We can interact with each other and (whether we realize it or

not) with the land; with our geographical positioning (territory), our physical grounding, and our figurative positioning within our work. We must come to terms with how each of the directions informs us about who we are and what we are doing. This is done with the spirit in mind; with respect for the animacy and relationality of things, plants, animals and people; with respect for each other (Wilson, 2008), and through radical reflexivity (as defined above).

In the settler academy, establishing a career as a scholar or researcher involves competition; this is formalized in competitions for scholarships, grants, and job positions. Even informally, when students compare grades, an element of competitiveness can be present. This is part of the market orientation of modern Western societies – as can be seen in discussions about the "academic job market" that those looking for academic work discuss informally, and in articles about academic employment in periodicals aimed at academic readers. Competition may be peaceful, but it can also be adversarial: one seeks to "beat" one's competitors to get a position, a prize, or a grant. Examinations and testing, on the other hand, are often experienced by those who are examined as adversarial. The examination itself is the adversary over which the student must prevail. A thesis examination used to be called (and still is often called, informally) a "defense," and involved a formalized adversarial process which the student either passed or failed. One defended one's work against probing questions from an examination committee. Competition and examination are mechanisms by which the settler academy seeks to maintain standards and to ensure that its faculty and graduates are competent in their fields. In Indigenous cultures, ways of knowing can also involve tests, more context-sensitive, less formalized, and part of a process of helping the knowledge-seeker discern their proper path. These tests may be part of a transition to adulthood, or part of a process of becoming a warrior. Competition is not

absent from Indigenous life, as in the Blackfoot tradition of counting coup. However, neither competition nor adversarial processes are as central to the process of gaining and using knowledge wisely and well. Which way is better at ensuring the transmission of knowledge and development of skills? I am not prepared to answer this question, which is likely too broad to be answerable. My point is simply that Western academic standards and the procedures for protecting them are not the only ways to protect the integrity, transmission and use of knowledge. Indigenous cultures have their own ways of doing so, and rather than trying to judge their inferiority of superiority to the other (as if they are in a zero-sum competition only one can win) we might instead ask to what extent they are mutually-exclusive or might have something to teach each other – respectfully.

Rethinking "magical thinking"

The basic orientations of Indigenous research thus include both ways to approach it and things to watch out for, to be cautious of, to be critical of, or to avoid. One of these is the treatment of certain aspects of Indigenous experience and thought as magical thinking. Jo-Ann Archibald (2008a) writes about the beginning of a journey she was on, describing a dream she had; a dream that would help her and others discover what their purpose was. She took the dream seriously, as it was a powerful experience for her. She tells us that there were elders present; elders that she had known in the realm of this life but who had since travelled on to the spirit world. She recounts the events of the dream as not being so clear to her: she could not hear what the elders were discussing but had the sense that they knew Jo-Ann had work to do. So, they sent her back to the earthly place.

> I pondered the meaning of this dream…it occurred when I was beginning to do research about the oral tradition…I thought that the dream was directing me to go on a journey of learning to meet and learn from those who use the oral traditions, especially elders…I also felt that I needed to learn how to hear what the elders had told me in the dream…after learning how to listen to the stories, I was expected to use their cultural knowledge and to share it with others, thereby ensuring its continuation…I have come to appreciate that dreams can be a source of Indigenous knowledge and that they can provide guidance for indigenous methodology (Archibald, 2008a, pp. 2-3).

The story that Archibald shares about her dream is not unfamiliar to me, because the dream time and place is when and where I receive much of my guidance and where I often come to learn and understand myself. But again, the idea that, for Indigenous researchers, dreams could be a source of knowledge, lead to information, or serve as a guide to the methodological process, has historically been considered, in Western academia, as unscientific; veering dangerously close (again) to magical thinking.[21] In another story, Joanne Mulcahy (2010), folklorist and anthropologist, argues that the term "magical thinking" as an anthropological trope, has been used to undermine and dismiss the way people such as the *Curanderasdo* in Mexican American culture use "healing or spiritual practices". She also notes that the *Curanderasdo* historically

[21] Magical thinking is defined on Wikipedia (Magical Thinking, 2024) as "the belief that unrelated events are causally connected despite the absence of any plausible causal link between them, particularly as a result of supernatural effects. … a type of fallacious thinking and ... a common source of invalid causal inferences." The entry also notes that in anthropology, "[r]esearchers have identified two possible principles as the formal causes of the attribution of false causal relationships: the temporal contiguity of two events [and] 'associative thinking', the association of entities based upon their resemblance to one another." These point to how the term continues to be used in everyday speech. It has generally fallen out of favor in anthropological theory but is used in psychology and (as in the Wikipedia article) still has a broader currency. This currency poses an issue for those seeking to legitimate Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Allied to selective appropriation and misuse of Indigenous images, symbols and concepts in non-Indigenous settings, it could feed mini culture wars between so-called "secular" Indigenous folx and those supporting a resurgence of Indigenous art, thinking, ceremony and politics (see Garneau, 2015).

developed their modes of healing syncretically (incorporating different forms of belief or practice) even including knowledge gained from the Spanish *Conquistadores*, comparing and selecting out what worked from what didn't in making sense of their practice:

> *Curanderasdo* do not separate body from mind or spirit; they seek balance among all and between individuals and families or communities. *Curanderismo*, from *curar,* to heal, is a syncretic system. It combines extensive indigenous knowledge and herbal practices with the patchwork of healing methods the colonizing Spanish brought to Mexico in the 16th century: Hispano-Arabic medicine including the Greek idea of humors (blood, phlegm, and bile, black and yellow); the Arabic concept of health as a balance—within the body and between an individual and the environment; and Judeo-Christian beliefs and practices (Mulcahy, 2010, p. 38)

Mulcahy describes the work of a female *Curandera* named Eva, who offered this healing practice to those who experienced personal turmoil through violence, substance abuse and other social ills that Eva saw as linked to immigration and colonialism. The *Curandera* helps them to *find* their ailment, to locate where the body is storing each pain. Mulcahy (2010) describes how a particular man came to seek healing, explaining that he would awaken every night in terror: "He may be suffering from *susto* (fright), often described as "soul loss…-extreme fear can prompt this illness, but so can overwhelming demands on a person" (p. 39). Mulcahy witnessed a *Curanderasdo* healing and noted that it occurred through what was described to her as channeling the earth's four corners to balance the self and to call back the spirit, in accordance with the Indigenous belief that the earth carries harmony. Mulcahy sees *Susto*

(soul-loss) as a "culture-bound syndrome," highlighting the need for translation between the ontological understandings of Western and non-westernized medicine: "our bodies house pain, but our cultural interpretations shape suffering" (Mulcahy, 2010, p. 40). She explains that historically, *susto* was looked upon by medical researchers as "folk psychiatry," and a Freudian perspective was used to critique the *Curanderasdo* diagnosis of ailments and to deem its practice as a "quaint" way of dealing with cultural ills. Such early attempts to understand the *Curanderasdo* from a Western standpoint dismissed its effectiveness as a phenomenon attributable to "cultural beliefs" without considering the imperatives of *Curanderismo* as a medical system with its own integrity" (p. 40).

What I find interesting about Mulcahy's description of the work of the *Curanderasdo* is that she represents it as a way for an ailing individual to search together with the healer to find out what it is that bothers them, and then to release "negative forces" *via* a "sweeping" away, a "cleansing" out (*barrida*) to transform the negative energy. These practices reminded me of my own personal experience with the (*non*-Indigenous) therapeutic practices known as cognitive behavioural therapy and dialectical behavioural therapy, both of which had a positive impact on my health. If we deem *Curanderismo* to be a form of "magical thinking" linked to Indigenous "spirituality," then perhaps Western psychology is also now demonstrating that it can work! Meanwhile, the Freudian standpoint in terms of which early medical research reassembled and then disparaged *Curanderismo* has been largely discarded. It is important to understand Western anthropological and philosophical definitions of magic as having their own particular cultural histories. Similarly, my own experiences, as I've said,

are personal, but not merely individual. They are rooted in and reflect both the collective cultural life of my community and the shared traumas of the colonial legacy: residential school, racialization, land theft, and indifference. They also reach, as a *Curanderasdo* might say, into the four corners of the world.

Walking toward ... and backward

The thinking and ideas that I have developed for this thesis resemble (in broad terms) thinking and ideas that other Indigenous scholars have articulated and disseminated, including several cited elsewhere in this thesis. I think that from an Indigenous perspective, this resemblance reflects more than my particular reading list. It affirms my sense that we are vessels of the knowledge that circulates through us and links us. In terms of an Indigenous ontology, to be grounded in our own selves is not solipsistic: our relational and cultural knowing constitutes us as Indigenous selves even as we re-create and re-transmit it. When I embarked upon this journey, I was unaware just how powerful collective thoughts and experiences can be in relation to our individual processes of awareness and perception, and what that power means to a definition of us as a people. The story I am telling in this thesis chapter is meant to explains the path I took to understand myself as an Indigenous person and researcher. I was originally trained in Western scientific methods during much of my undergraduate education; I was not offered a different option for doing research. I felt bound by settler colonialism and western academia whilst also learning to accept my indigenous reality. So, this “story” will also include telling of the dangers and obstacles that must be faced along the path to that knowledge.

I realize that, in the past few pages, some readers might find some of what I have written frustrating. I have made some statements about Indigenous Knowledge *Systems* that could be taken as generalizations about all Indigenous cultures. I do recognize that Indigenous cultures (and their knowledge) across North America and around the world differ from each other – in the stories they tell, in the particulars of their knowledge and the processes by which they protect its integrity and transmit it; in the relative formality or informality of their procedures to this and other ends, and in the rules and norms that govern their lives. For example, their specific land-based or sea-based knowledge will of course differ depending on the kind of geography that they live in and with, but it is a characteristic of many Indigenous knowledge systems that they are land-based or sea-based. I do think that some if not all of the more general points I have made about Indigenous Knowledge (for example, that it is land-based or sea-based) would be recognizable across many Indigenous communities. However, I have also claimed that Indigenous knowledge is personal, and I have noted the (Blackfoot) particularity of my own share of such knowledge. Also, I've made some statements that take the form of "Indigenous knowledge is not X but it is not Y either." For example, I claim that such knowledge is personal and, in some sense, individualized, but also collective and community-based; that it is not individually or collectively solipsistic. I made a similar point about this thesis. This begs a question – at least, it does from a Western intellectual perspective which privileges exactitude, conciseness, directness and the declarative. What is it that I am saying? As a reader of a draft version of this chapter asked (in response to my use of a "not x and not y" formula to describe this thesis), "What *is* this thesis?"[22]

[22] I do not have the space here do this point justice, but in a number of Indigenous cultures, indirectness is seen as an effective teaching/learning tool, especially in relation to *story*, whilst a direct question or declaration, or a demand for/giving of an immediate answer may be seen as rude – e.g. treating an interlocutor as a child, for example. For example, see Jean Briggs' discussion of her "schooling" by her Inuit hosts (Briggs, 1971).

Here is an (anti-)elevator pitch with a bit of cultural cross-translation. There are two traditional ways of coming to understand God in Roman Catholic Christianity. The dominant one is called kataphatic. It involves learning what God *is* through forms of instruction privileging declaration and definite statements taken to be true or normative within the faith. The other, less prominent, is the apophatic way, or *via negativa* ("Apophatic Theology", 2024). It involves coming to understand, over time, what God is *not*, shedding immature or mistaken beliefs for a deeper understanding. It is often experienced as having no definite end point. My approach to this thesis has nothing to do with Christianity, but my way of coming to understand *how* to know in an Indigenous sense has some similarity to an apophatic way. At times, it feels like I'm not *walking toward* a knowledge of Indigenous ways of knowing so much as *backing into* it. I do make some general declarative claims, and other claims restricted to my own community, or even more narrowly, to my own reading, life-experience, and stage of learning. But what stage of learning about Indigenous ways of knowing have I arrived at? Am I halfway there? One-third of the way? Less? More? I don't know. Perhaps there is no three-thirds end-point. Looking back along the path I've travelled, I can see how far I have come, but I can't say definitively how close I might be to a full understanding of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Some of my knowledge of IKS is intuitive and thus its validity depends in part on my ability to recognize it in the work of others, and/or whether others recognize it (or not) in my own work. Intuition can be corrected but may be less easy to document and defend in a scholarly setting. Further, if it is not easy to discern IKS in all their diversity, relatedness and fullness, sometimes it is also not always easy in this season, this braid, on this path, to discern adversaries correctly, including those that might inhabit even my own selfhood and work.

2.3 Tending sweetgrass in adversity – an experiential path

In this part of the chapter, I will discuss a mixture of academic literature and personal accounts (including my own) of issues that Indigenous people, especially women, face in settler-colonial Canada. These include some experiences that have served as barriers to my progress. But to see them *only* as barriers is to treat them the way positivist (and post-positivist) academic thinking historically has treated them – as externalities, not intrinsic to the learning or research process. In this perspective, they are things to be overcome; things to be written out of a thesis. However, from an Indigenous perspective, they *are* intrinsic to these processes. If, in Indigenous ontology, everything is connected, then experiences that affect our work *are part of that work*, even if academic authorities rule them to be "outside" of the scholarship we "should" be focused on. From an Indigenous perspective, the point is to sit with those experiences to discern where they are leading us, *including* our scholarship; to discern how they are an intrinsic part of our learning; our work. It was ***Niipowa*** (summer) 2021, and I was in desperate need of help, I was lost, alone, and angry, and I did not know who to turn to or where to go. I felt stagnant and I was removed from myself and my spirit. I was in deep turmoil; my life was in turmoil; my spirit had moved away from me, and I knew that I had to do something to recenter myself before something very bad happened. I had hit rock bottom: the burdens of past and present trauma, of illness (my own and others close to me), family issues, relationship issues, financial worries had ground me down.

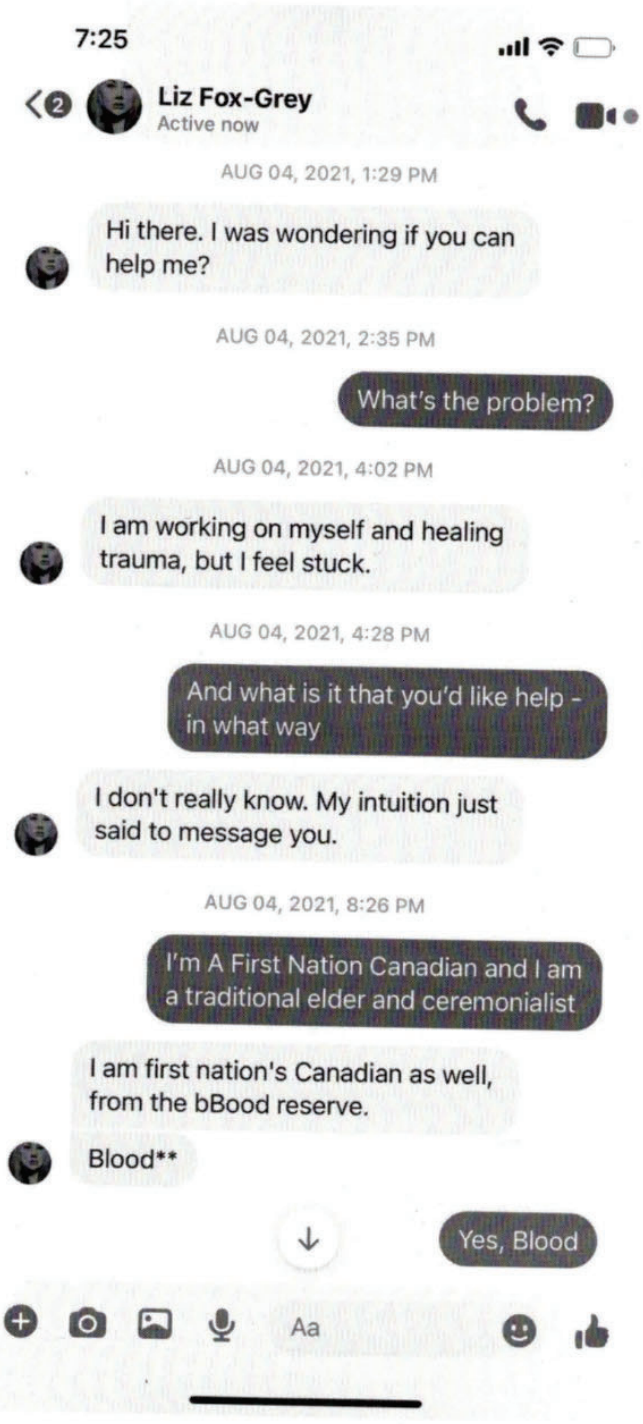
Sundance was going on in Kainai and I saw some of my relations making posts on social media about their experiences there. Reading them, I felt especially alone and disconnected. Then I

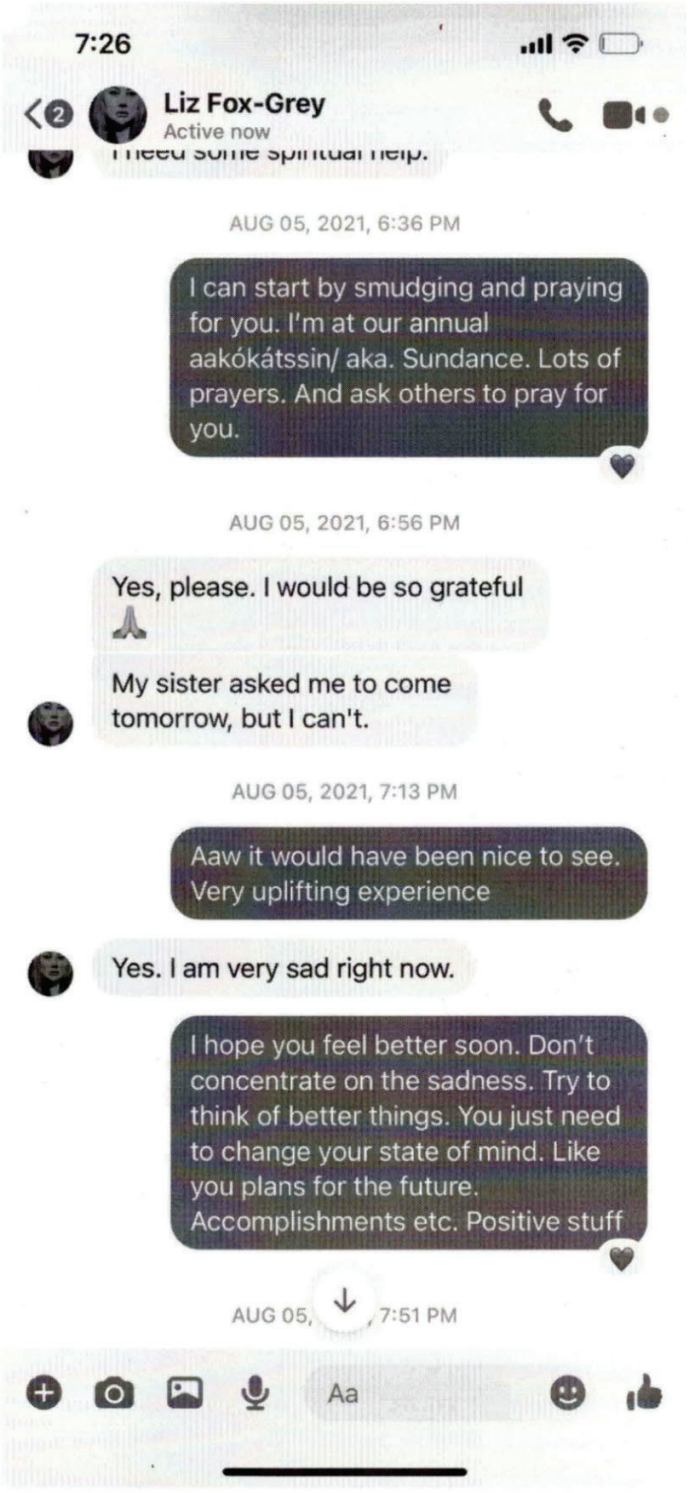
happened to come across some posts by a gentleman about what he was doing at Sundance; not only describing but explaining things and translating words online. How did I "happen to see" these posts? Western science would tend look for a naturalistic explanation; perhaps something about a social media algorithm "pushing" content my way, or my habitual way of moving from post to post or topic to topic, or the discursive parameters of what I paid attention to – or random chance. Fair enough; these are all plausible explanations. But what if these intertwined strings of causality were thought of as *carriers* of something *more than their components*? Melitta Hogarth (Hogarth and Czuy, 2021) writes about a similar "aha!" moment that she experienced following a seemingly random off-hand comment that she came to see, after the fact, as an "intervention:"

> … it was through an intervention of the ancestors that I was introduced to The Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous peoples' rights in education. The fact that I just happened to be sitting in the audience of a conference presentation when there was an off-hand comment made in response to a question asked at the end by one of the presenters mentioning the "Coolangatta Statement" and something or someone in my head saying "What's that?! Be sure to check it out." *I had no idea what it was or what* its actual name was, but I was determined to find out. So much so that later that evening in a hotel room, I was searching databases and doing random web searches. Without the intervention of the ancestors, my study would have been very different. The Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous peoples' rights in education became the lens through which I analyzed the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy It became the guiding document. (pp. 170-171)

In my case, the man whose posts I found myself reading seemed like he really knew what he was talking about; knew **Niitsitapiiysinni**/how to be Blackfoot (Mistaken Chief personal communication, 2022). I wanted what he had; it was as if, in his posts, something was calling to me; as if the wind was blowing past me and saying, "reach out!" So, I did. And as a result, he eventually became an Elder to me. His name was Duane Mistaken Chief; he worked as a traditional wellness counselor, and he graciously took me under his wing and his guidance. It was time to heal, to pray, to connect back to my Blackfoot roots. To call my spirit back home. To begin the movement toward leafing out.

(See next page)


7:25
Liz Fox-Grey
Active now
AUG 04, 2021, 1:29 PM
Hi there. I was wondering if you can help me?
AUG 04, 2021, 2:35 PM
What's the problem?
AUG 04, 2021, 4:02 PM
I am working on myself and healing trauma, but I feel stuck.
AUG 04, 2021, 4:28 PM
And what is it that you'd like help - in what way
I don't really know. My intuition just said to message you.
AUG 04, 2021, 8:26 PM
I'm A First Nation Canadian and I am a traditional elder and ceremonialist
I am first nation's Canadian as well, from the bBood reserve.
Blood**
Yes, Blood
Aa


7:26
Liz Fox-Grey
Active now
I need some spiritual help.
AUG 05, 2021, 6:36 PM
I can start by smudging and praying for you. I'm at our annual aakókátssin/ aka. Sundance. Lots of prayers. And ask others to pray for you.
AUG 05, 2021, 6:56 PM
Yes, please. I would be so grateful 🙏
My sister asked me to come tomorrow, but I can't.
AUG 05, 2021, 7:13 PM
Aaw it would have been nice to see. Very uplifting experience
Yes. I am very sad right now.
I hope you feel better soon. Don't concentrate on the sadness. Try to think of better things. You just need to change your state of mind. Like you plans for the future. Accomplishments etc. Positive stuff
AUG 05, 7:51 PM
Aa

Images, pp. 126-127 (above):

initial personal communication with Elder Duane Mistaken Chief, Blood Reserve, 2021

This and subsequent meetings changed me in ways that have contributed to the writing of this thesis and to who I am now as a researcher. They transformed my life in a short period of time. They are the kinds of experiences that Indigenous scholars need to have acknowledged as worthy of inclusion in their scholarly work, connecting that work to their unique, particular (but so often shared) lived realities. They need to be written into our work as a means to create connective, relational meaning and understanding through both our personal and collective histories. We are alive through our ancestral blood and bones and the land that made them. Dreams and memories flow through us and connect us in specific ways that we come to know as we are *meant* to know. We heal spiritually with others, with the earth, with the land, with the celestial beings. The ways we think about and communicate this have at times been viewed as "magical thinking' in terms of Eurocentric academic norms, but in order for us to live (in balance) we must reclaim the Indigenous ontological space of our knowing (Hunt 2014), our living and our ancestors, and accept and assert ourselves.

Racialization, indifference, inequity and abuse, domestic violence

In this and following subsections, I discuss stories of personal experience involving both trauma and support, along with published accounts that have impacted my developing understanding of

the challenges and dangers I and other Indigenous women face, including accounts from two-spirit literature: the threat and reality of violence, and the toll of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (an example being those who have gone missing along the Highway of Tears). I link these issues to challenges that Indigenous scholars face in the academy, relating them to my own experience as a female Indigenous scholar. I also discuss the impact of lateral violence in this and other settings. The literature I use in these discussions tends to refer to all of these occurrences in terms of collective experience with roots in colonialism.

"Because I am an Indigenous woman, I am six times more likely to be murdered than my non-Indigenous sister…I am high-risk just by virtue of being indigenous and female" writes Mary Teegee (McDiarmid, 2019, p. xvii). This is the grim personal and shared truth of Indigenous reality, especially female Indigeneity. Indigenous women and girls are six times more likely to be killed than their non-indigenous counterparts (McDiarmid, 2019, 3), experiencing the highest rate of extreme violence of any ethnic group in Canada; twice as high as Indigenous men, three times higher than non-Indigenous women. This is said to be due in part to disproportionate rates at which they face social issues like houselessness, addiction, poverty and mental illness; gendered features of past and present colonialism (McDiarmid, 2019, p. 4). In *Highway of Tears: A True Story of Racism, Indifference and the Pursuit of Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, Jessica McDiarmid (2019) discusses how the colonial legacy in Canada feeds the racialization and indifference that Indigenous females and two spirit people encounter. "No one knows who the first Indigenous girl or woman to vanish along the highway between Prince Rupert and Prince George was, or when it happened…nor does anyone know how many have gone missing or been murdered since" (p. 3). The estimated number of

MMIWG2S has been calculated by the RCMP at around 1,200 but actual numbers are presumed to about 4000. The highest rates of homicide for Indigenous females in Canada, and the second highest rates of Indigenous homicide, are in British Columbia and Alberta (p. 3). McDiarmid (2019) also notes abuse and violence against Indigenous girls in institutional care:

> The B.C study of sexual violence against kids in care found that 61 per cent of the victims were Indigenous girls, though they only make up a quarter of the total population...they are at a heightened risk of sexual abuse because of poverty, intergenerational trauma, isolation and social attitudes towards them…the report noted [that] perpetrators of this violence may also believe that they will not risk detention or prosecution since society is less concerned with the welfare of [I]ndigenous than that of non-[I]ndigenous children and youth. (p. 59)

The lack of dedication to addressing the issue of MMIWG2S is called a "systemic failure." Many examples of such indifference have been identified, from authorities not taking reports seriously to investigators neglecting evidence and protocol in missing persons searches.

But *what is* this "indifference"? Note that I paired "indifference" with McDiarmid's sentence quoted above: "*No one knows* who the first Indigenous girl or woman to vanish along the highway between Prince Rupert and Prince George was, or when it happened…*nor does anyone know* how many have gone missing or been murdered since." No one *knows*. Is not-knowing really the same as "indifference"? Often, they might be related. But what *else* might be going on? To suggest some answers, I'll use Granzow (2000) and also do a thought experiment

involving a small disobedience against what, elsewhere in this chapter, I call the "academic infrastructure" of the settler university. Please first follow along with this small experiment.

The accepted infrastructure of academic communication includes things like verification of truth claims through explanation and what's called "citation and referencing" – identifying sources used for statements you make – or, rather, for *non-obvious* statements you make. You don't need to cite an authority for the fact that the sun rises each morning. But most factual statements in this thesis about the realities of Indigenous lives are cited and referenced. Should the following two groups (of three statements each) *also* have citations?:

1a. For many decades, several Indigenous communities have had no access to something most non-Indigenous Canadians take for granted: clean, drinkable water from a tap in the house.

2a. Despite now-regular media reports on this reality (usually after an Indigenous leader has complained publicly), there are still Indigenous communities without safe, clean drinking water.

3a. Explanations of why this continues to happen range from some version of "it's complicated" (different levels of government, bureaucracy, remoteness, or political or social "indifference")

1b. For many years, if not decades, Indigenous women and girls, and two-spirit people have been "disappearing," many never seen again; others found murdered. (Note the word "disappearing": what emotive or cognitive work does it do *differently* than "missing" or "murdered"?)

2b. Despite now-regular media reports on this reality, Indigenous women, girls two-spirit and Queer people continue to go missing, many never seen again; others turning up murdered.

3b. Answers to questions why this continues range from a lack of effective investigative co-ordination, to lifestyles of the poor and vulnerable, to remoteness of murder sites, to (you guessed it) an "indifference" still shown by some police forces, by governments, or by "society".

See any parallels? Now, two more un-cited statements about occurrences related to those above:

1. The former Conservative government of Manitoba refused to fund excavation of a landfill site "thought to be" where some murdered Indigenous women's bodies were "dumped." Issues cited by one or another level of government included cost, and the health and safety of employees who would be tasked with the excavation.

2. The Six Nations of the Grand River (Reserve) in Southwestern Ontario sits in the middle of rich farmland, less than an hour's drive from the outskirts of the largest city in Canada, and immediately adjacent to the city of Brantford, named after an illustrious Indigenous leader. As of September 2024, about 70 percent of its residents did not have reliable access to safe clean drinking water from a tap inside their homes. The reasons for this neglect? Among other explanations, "no one outside the community gives a damn" ("indifference" in other words). Why *don't* they "give a damn"? How did they come to not give a damn?

What is with this "indifference?" That question was addressed by Kara Granzow (2020), who, as you can see, I *am* citing. Her book didn't come to my attention until almost the last minute though she is *not* geographically remote from me: she is a faculty member at my own university! Compared to multitudes of best-sellers, the event of her book's publication was what you might call "non-obvious." Is that because of "indifference?" I cited and referenced it because I am now returning to citational obedience *and* because I think it's important. Citation is in many ways a

good thing: it can be helpful to interested readers, and it can be a good fit with Indigenous relational accountability. But I suggest that there is also an infrastructural politics of citation and referencing, as there is of news-making, fed by a wider politics in the societies that host academic institutions and news organizations. That is, the act of citation isn't always *simply* a matter-of-fact. It can serve other interests. It can bring someone's work to the attention of a possible readership. That's good, right? But citing is also a way to acknowledge or reinforce a sense of what is likely to be deemed *not obvious* and needing backup. What stories or statements are seen to *need* citation and/or explanation, by whom, in what settings? Would the numbered statements above be more likely to be seen by *non*-Indigenous readers as needing backup, and by Indigenous readers as "obvious," at least in general terms? Who calls the shots on citation? To cite or not to cite, explain or not explain, is a *decision*, not simply a matter of indifference. You can not-cite as an act of rebellion, or cite as a matter of conformity or conscientiousness and care. But if you are *indifferent* to citation in an academic setting, sooner or later, someone will call you on it.

Granzow ended up thinking about "indifference" after noticing how many times tropes with the word were used in accounts of violence against Indigenous people, and after volunteer work sensitized her to some realities of that violence. "Reality" is a key word here. Settler culture includes what I would call a sort of common-sense realism. Granzow(2020) calls it an ontology:

> ... [t]he world defined by this ontology has specific components, including that it is singular, that it is Euclidean and inert, that it has a linear and progressive model of history, and that it has a "natural" and hierarchical organization, such as in terms of the Great Chain of Being, gender and "race," or biology ... Accordingly, distance is purely

> geographical. And finally, a progressive social teleology [*and axiology?*] means the endurance of a narrative of history in which the nation is articulated as morally good or, perhaps more accurately, as having once made mistakes but as now redeemed – often by apology or just by the passage of time. (p. 17; *my interjection*)

In an ontology of "inert" and objectively-measurable space, it makes intuitive sense that water issues in a "remote" Northern Indigenous community might escape the notice of big-city news organizations or the Federal government. But a community in densely-populated far-southern Ontario? That poses a problem for the ontology.

Granzow proposes – as did Garfinkel and Pollner – that the "reality" of space or spaces is an *accomplishment*; a result of institutional and social practices, which are *contingent* and thus also political – they could be followed, or resisted. So a community in the middle of southern Ontario can be *made* "remote" by reporting practices or more general institutional or cultural practices of selective attention. Similarly, a place, its people, and the things that happen to them can be *de-realized* by accounting practices that make them *non*-obvious. So, certain areas of a city, after closing hours, can be made safely remote from the everyday attention of suburbanites who might care deeply about events in Ukraine, or Gaza, Washington, or Tel Aviv. When a shocking story does emerge from the downtown (or from Kamloops), they might "reasonably" expect it to be backed by "reliable sources," quoting, say, the police, the Mayor, the Premier, a "recognized" Indigenous spokesperson. Granzow (2020) adds:

> As an expression of regulatory powers, the idea of societal indifference might actually neutralize contemporary violence toward Indigenous women and girls and erase or ease

> the Canadian state's and its citizens' historical and contemporary roles. ... All lives are not valued equally, and this differential valuing is not explained only by individual relationships to the dead – these relationships are not the only thing that makes lives matter – but also by an affect [feeling state] that is communicated and shared. As Butler writes, "Affect is never merely our own: affect is, from the start, communicated from elsewhere. It disposes us to perceive the world in a certain way, to let certain dimensions of the world in and to resist others" ... Butler describes affect as regulated and as dependent "on social supports for feeling" that are embedded in particular practices ... That is, the claim of an expectation of indifference not only names *but also prepares and instructs*. ... the notion of societal indifference actually contains its inverse ... a primary and basic interest in the *production of particular subjects for subjugation*. ... the claim of societal indifference might function as a basic support for the *production of particular subjects for "dehumanization."* This support, I suggest, actually necessitates what I identify as racialized state violence. Societal indifference, in this case, ... is perhaps itself the evidence of successful racialization. As such, societal indifference to an act of violence may be akin to what Butler describes as "the derealization of loss – the insensitivity to human suffering and death [as] the mechanism through which dehumanization is accomplished. (pp. 15-16; *my interjection and emphases*).

Indifference, then, could function as a kind of "obvious" claim; a generality less likely to be judged (by a settler readership) as needing backup than its alternative – that violence against MMIWG2S is part of a continued, systematic campaign to render Indigenous people "remote" and politically de-realized; a campaign so second-nature to settler society that many of those recruited into it may not even know they were recruited, nor that one of its functions is to reduce

their potential to develop affective bonds or alliances with Indigenous people. Supports of such derealization could include everyday communicative practices, in newsrooms, on social media, even in academic settings; practices that make or break statements in terms of different taken-for-granteds reflecting the safety *or* vulnerability of a reader's and/or gatekeeper's experience.

One final un-cited factual description (warning: it's disturbing), followed by an un-cited claim.

The description: A "serial killer" (note how that term individualizes an issue?) who confessed in 2024 to the murder of four Indigenous women in Winnipeg, "laughed" at his trial; "then said that he was motivated by 'hatred and disgust'" and "did what he did to protect the 'survival of my people if we don't start doing things like this.'" *The claim*: The killer's affect state may have had as much to do with a general minimizing of positive feeling for Indigenous people in settler society, fueled by communicative practices of de-realization and remote-making, as it did his own state of mental health. Downplaying positive affect is key to making violence permissible.

Again, do you read this claim, and the others above, as needing explanation or citation,[23] or not? As obvious, or not? Either way, why? And beyond your immediate reasons, think reflexively about your reality-commitments, communicative commitments, experiences or assumptions. How might they inform your response?

Now, where do *I* fit into this discussion? Where and how does it make sense for me to include and represent such issues in relation to my own experience during my research? I still don't fully

[23] For those seeking further information on issues mentioned in the un-cited statements above: On the Manitoba government's refusal to excavate the landfill, see Lett (2024). For the "serial killer's" court testimony, see Martens (2024). For water issues facing residents of the Six Nations of the Grand River, see Bernstien (2024).

know, but I know my experience matters. I don't want to tell this story in detail: I will only share a document and the barest outline. I can't do so without considering carefully implications it could have for those who may read it. I must disarm myself of learned protective mechanisms to shed my own light on real violence against Indigenous women; how it can happen to anyone we know regardless of education, occupation or socio-economic condition. To repeat, simply being born Indigenous and female makes me six times more likely to be killed than my non-Indigenous sisters, and I consider myself lucky not to have joined that number.

First, the document

(*Image next page: Court-ordered no-contact letter, 2022*):

Alberta Justice and Solicitor General

Correctional Services Division
Lethbridge Community Corrections
Suite #336, 3rd Floor
Lethbridge, AB
T1J 4C7

(P) 403-381-5202
(F) 403-382-4404

March 18, 2022

Elizabeth Fox-Grey
1221 7th Ave S
Lethbridge, AB T1J 1K6

RE: COURT-ORDERED NO CONTACT

Name: [redacted]
D.O.B.:
Court Date:
Location:
Docket #:

Please be informed that the above named was placed on a period of Court-ordered community supervision effective January 21, 2022. The period of community supervision is likely to end July 20, 2023. Conditions of this Order are as follows:

1. YOU SHALL HAVE NO CONTACT OR COMMUNICATION, DIRECT OR INDIRECT WITH ELIZABETH FOX-GREY.

If the above mentioned contacts you for any reason contact the police. They will attempt to investigate your allegation and consider further Court action. If police have any questions, please show them this letter, or have them contact Amber Kisinger at 403-388-1108 for confirmation.

Sincerely,

Amber Kisinger
Probation Officer
Lethbridge Community Corrections

Classification: Protected A

McDiarmid (2019) writes that, "[e]ven when controlling for those factors [social issues], Indigenous women and girls face more violence than anyone else…put simply, they are in greater danger solely because of being born Indigenous and female" (p. 4). When I finally came to realize how my Indigeneity could shape profoundly meaningful parts of my being, such as a deep connection to spirit and relations to the land and to all beings, I did not expect also to become aware of how a few life occurrences could impact me and put me at risk for encountering future violence. I guess somehow I believed that, because I was white-passing, I had some sort of protective insulation from the lived realities of others due to that privilege. But I now know that domestic violence has had a major impact on the way I see myself and what I know to be true about myself. While it has shaped me into the Indigenous researcher I am now, it also previously blinded me to its existence. This is the paradox of domestic violence: *it teaches denial*. It was not without great pain for me to realize that not my education, nor my determination, nor even my children could save me from the statistical veracity of violence against Indigenous women and girls. Despite having believed myself to be an exception, my story now sounds typical. I was born a child and grandchild of residential school survivors.

Pain and trauma were original fixtures in our home, and besides teaching denial, they also taught me how to relate to others. If there is such a thing as "magical thinking," trauma is its teacher. "Children growing up in homes with high parental conflict, including substance abuse, may also develop an attachment deficiency that includes symptoms of codependency" (Knudson & Terrel 2012, p. 248). Substance abuse, due to residential school syndrome, had major implications in the transmission of intergenerational trauma. And as Coffman and Swank (2021) write, "Attachment theory provides a helpful lens for working with families affected by substance

abuse and understanding how insecure attachments may predict poor family functioning…when considering the role the family has in the development of attachment systems" (p. 25). "The" family beset by insecure attachments is in many cases not *any* family but a family with a specific contextual burden: a colonized family; a family dis-integrated by colonizing institutions.

The residential school system removed children from attachment – to parents, to siblings, to the wider family and to community. It replaced attachment[24] with obedience, fear and resentment (Carriere and Richardson, 2009). It taught helplessness, and stoked rage that could only build inside. It removed ways to release that rage. It taught helplessness in the face of authority, and it taught that order is to be maintained by hierarchy, by shouting, by belittlement, by physical punishment, by strict conformity. It taught exploitation of the vulnerable. These were lessons absorbed by both abusers (for whom any subsequent relationship invoked ghosts (Maté, 2009) of failure, loss of love, loss of control, inevitability of disappointment, and the return of rage) and those abused (for example, those whose unmet craving for love and acceptance made them prey to love-bombing ("What is Love-Bombing?", 2023) and other like tactics and led them into codependent attachments). Further, trauma *itself* breeds self-abandonment and attachment disorder, and stops the clock, leaving its sufferers unable to move forward and prone to repetition. That quickly spreads the poison of codependency and further loss of self, as Coffman and Swank (2021) note that "[p]eople with codependency embrace the "helper or saver" role, and this type of behavior leads to one having a disturbance in their identity development…these

[24] Attachment theory can help explain the situations of Indigenous children forcibly removed from their familial and community settings and taken into residential schools, or later placed with non-Indigenous families in the so-called "Sixties Scoop." However, attachment theory has Eurocentric roots which show up in its reliance on a "dyadic" model of early childhood attachment, reflecting European and settler nuclear family forms. Uncorrected, these can affect its applicability to situations of Indigenous children in ways still not adequately recognized: see Choate and Tortorelli (2022). This relates to something I discuss in chapter Three: even well-meant discussions of Indigenous social life and social issues by non-Indigenous researchers can impose inappropriate theoretical constructs.

individuals maintain strong links with their partners, to the extent that these relationships become “addictive” (p. 104). Thus, there develops a felt impossibility of escaping an abusive relationship. The spirit gets lost and wanders away from us, because we are not aligned to it. We don’t see the truth of who we are; we do not see the ancestors clearly, we cannot connect with ourselves, let alone our relations, because the spirit is injured by our departure from it. As a wounded person (and I know that *not* being wounded doesn’t ultimately protect Indigenous women from violence) I walked this earth not knowing what boundaries were. I accepted toxic behaviors and those who perpetrated and pushed them into my life. Of course, this started the typical way with love-bombing, and then there followed manipulation, isolation and eventually, devastation.

The first domestic assault I experienced was on October 17th, 2019, I was attacked by my then boyfriend: hit, kicked and then strangled. I was able to escape and call the police. My “partner” was charged with assault and the police placed a no-contact order on him. He pled guilty and swore he would seek help. I did not leave him. I stayed, and life seemed to return to normal, but then the abuse started again. In the cyclic nature of abusive relationships, the behaviors always return. The codependency dove under my radar in 2020, because the “honeymoon” phase of the cycle put control behind a mask that simulated care and love. In the summer of 2021, my partner attacked me again. Then obsessive behaviors started and the control and manipulation became worse. By then, I had become a shell of a human being. I was lost, and everything in my life suffered. My children saw me crumbling; I was beginning to neglect my studies, and was isolated from my family. I left this “partner” for good this time, but that was not the end. On October 31st, 2021, he threatened to kill me I feared for my life, and the fear escalated as he

started to send me photos he had taken of bullets, saying all he needed was the gun. I called the police again. They once again charged him, this time with uttering threats, and placed another no-contact order on him. But that still didn't stop him from contacting me again ten days later. Again, I called police and again he was charged, and again, he pled guilty, but received only minor consequences. A respondent in a study by Saxton *et al.* (2016) was quoted as saying,

> The criminal court through the Crown Attorney dropped the assault charges and by agreement in which I was never consulted, he plead guilty to uttering death threats… I got protection order, but given his love of weapons and ability to access one, and his threat to kill me that way, it didn't feel like a piece of paper is much use in stopping a bullet. It does however allow the police to take action. Building courage to escape such a situation [means you] must accept that the danger lasts long after the police and courts are involved and that one has to be at the point of wanting to be free so badly, that you don't care if you die trying…

From the perspective of women (and two-spirit persons) in fear of further violence, this and similar outcomes appear as examples of a wider structural failure to take seriously and respond appropriately to domestic violence, especially if those at risk are racialized (Decker *et al.*, 2019).

My ex-partner indirectly contacted me again two more times in the following few months. I did not report these incidents because it seemed useless to do so. I do fear every day that this person may return to hurt me. After I wrote the initial draft of this chapter, he once again breached the conditions of his release and the no-contact order. On June 16th 2022 his probation officer called to check on me. She was concerned because he had breached his probation order and had been

MIA for the past month. She had alerted me that he was on the loose, was abusing substances and was unpredictable. I told her about the indirect contact and she advised me to call the police to report such incidents. On June 17th, 2022 at 8:48 a.m., he contacted me again from his cellular device. I once again had to initiate charging him. While June 25th 2022 marked the one-year anniversary since I had escaped the relationship, I could not seem to escape someone who threatened my life and showed no respect for law enforcement, no remorse and no promise of rehabilitation. This sad reality forced me to accept that I faced and had to live with a real and continuing danger. Now, I fight every day to try to repair the damage done by his abuse, to heal myself and to try to return as close as I can to the person I used to be. However, I also realize that Creator gave me a unique opportunity to fall apart and rebuild, and that involved *understanding* my story. With that new understanding, I gained a new focus for research. Through research, reading, and writing, I am becoming more aware of how my personal situation was shaped by the wider forces and circumstances of colonization and also how to become the Indigenous person I was meant to be. In the cyclic way our lives move, I am returning to my Indigenous self and calling back my spirit. My research now offers me healing and helps me to build a relationship with myself and each of my relations.

Why do I tell this personal story as part of my thesis? In accepting the continued danger I was in, I also realized personally how easy it is for Indigenous women, girls and two-sprit individuals to become statistics in the roll of the missing and murdered, and additionally, those who, like me, have been "lucky" – so far – but who still live in some degree of fear. I include this story because it illustrates the lived reality of many Indigenous women, girls and two spirit people. All of them have their own individual stories, some similar to mine; some not. But what most share

is the danger that hangs over them. My personal story, and the stories of others, constitute resources for researchers to get to know and understand the meanings, contexts and complexities of the reality of violence faced by many Indigenous people. Understanding these stories in the context of often inadequate or precarious housing, or being unhoused; in the context of their communities or isolation; on reserves, in workplaces, in urban neighborhoods, on the streets or in shelters, is where action should begin. It needs to be understood in particular that violence against Indigenous women is very often tied to availability of housing; and not just of any old housing, but housing that is safe and stable (Indigenous Women, Intimate Partner Violence & Housing, n.d.). It also needs to be understood that aggregate data is important, but not enough. Research in Canadian academic institutions, or wherever research initiatives reflecting the Action Research approach are able take root, needs to be acquainted with lived realities. By telling stories of our *individual* realities together with each other, we can grow a sense of what we *share*; of our *collective* reality. There is strength and purpose to be found in what is shared.

Further, instead of seeing violence towards Indigenous people largely through the lens of death and disappearance (as in the case of MMIWG2S), we can seek to identify the roots of the issues faced by women, girls and two-spirit people in the context of settler societies; their participation in particular groups, communities and geographical settings; their encounters with policing, justice, educational and social welfare systems; their experience of impoverishment and isolation, their risks from the activities of predators (on and offline, individually or in networks) and the ability of the justice system to address the issues they face (Louie, 2017). We can research using multiple methods to understand their lived experience and then we can take action that not only intends to create change but is *effective* in doing so. In the academy, we need to

hold space to let the Indigenous population know that we see them, we hear them, and we care about them. Part of doing that is for those of us in the academy who are Indigenous and/or two-spirit to be open about the life circumstances and forces that affect us, our work, and our research; circumstances that for us are *not* 'externalities' to our work but are intertwined with it; circumstances and forces that *hold us back* but also *impel us onward* toward justice and healing.

As part of this work, we may need also to address the possibility that the recruitment of Indigenous academics into an academic middle class might result in their insulation from the harsher realities of their impoverished and endangered sisters and brothers, which might feed an inclination to see the latter's struggles as "problems" to be treated as isolable objects of study rather than seeing those who struggle within a wider context of inequality and its sources, and as our fellow-subjects; fellow veterans of the various dimensions and experience of subjection identified by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls:

> Colonial violence, as well as racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, has become embedded in everyday life – whether this is through interpersonal forms of violence, through institutions like the health care system and the justice system, or in the laws, policies and structures of Canadian society. The result has been that many Indigenous people have grown up normalized to violence, while Canadian society shows an appalling apathy to addressing the issue. … In their testimonies, Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people argued that oppression against them is primarily based on colonialism, racism, and gender, with other factors, such as education, income, and ability, sometimes coming into play. In particular, families and survivors consistently referred to four general ways that

> their experiences were rooted in colonialism across First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives, as well as from the perspective of 2SLGBTQQIA people. These four pathways that maintain colonial violence are:
>
> • historical, multigenerational and intergenerational trauma;
>
> • social and economic marginalization;
>
> • maintaining the status quo and institutional lack of will; and
>
> • ignoring the agency and expertise of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people. (Reclaiming Power and Place, 2019, pp. 4, 11; see also Pyle, 2019)

However, we must recognize these things without reducing Indigenous peoples to narratives of "broken-ness." We must now instead situate past and present colonial damage within *desire-based* research in order to paint pictures of "complexity, contradiction, and the *self-determination* of lived lives" (Tuck, 2009a, p. 416; *my emphases*).

Lateral violence, interpersonal policing, assigning deficits, gatekeeping

One unacknowledged effect of colonialism that can contribute to ongoing issues for Indigenous people, including students and faculty, is lateral violence. The first time I heard this term was in an introductory course in Native American Studies taught by Don McIntyre at the University of Lethbridge during my undergraduate years. Don explained to the class what lateral violence was. While I had never heard the term before, but I knew I had experienced what it was, and now it had a name. Lateral violence takes gendered as well as racialized forms, can occur in a number of different settings, and is not always colonial in origin. But it can occur as a colonial legacy of

the management of racialized populations taken to pose a threat to colonial (and post-colonial) orders. There are forms of lateral violence which are products of colonizers using abuse as a weapon to gain power over Indigenous populations, and to impose particular kinds of institutional structures (from local governance to education) on these populations to restrict their ability to exercise power (see, e.g. Whyman *et al.*, 2021).

Such structures placed Indigenous people in "client" situations in relation to colonial officials (e.g., the Indian Agent) who acted as their "patrons," dispensing resources and permissions, and reinforcing relations of dependency and deference. Such clientelism can occur through the mediation of subordinate officials chosen from and (supposedly) acting on behalf of a subordinate population (see, e.g., Roniger, 2015, whose definition I have modified slightly). Historically patron-client relations structurally enhanced Indigenous dependency, reinforcing removal of the land base for traditional Indigenous self-sufficiency (for example, through restrictions on travel off-reserve to hunt and provision of non-traditional foodstuffs); policing restrictions that went with "Indian" status, and above all, making the provision of goods, services, and positions of limited power or status, dependent on a *system of permissions*. These were always limited in supply and controlled by colonial agents: the Indian Agent, the priest, residential school teachers, and administrators. This system also allocated positions in community life that were treated as favors, fostering competition and resentment, setting families against families. Further, the use of violence to produce order in residential schools also taught children within those schools – in the absence of counter-examples from their own communities – how to accept violence as inevitable, how to avoid it as best they could, and also how to use it, not only to gain and to protect power or status, but as an outlet for rage. Thus,

Indigenous people learned to use similar tactics within their own communities, groups, and families. Lateral violence became, if you will, a kind of "intimate power" of colonialism (see Whyman *et al.*, 2023).

Lateral violence commonly occurs when oppression is internalized. "Lateral violence happens when individuals who have endured oppression suppress feelings such as anger, shame, and rage" (Aboriginal Lateral Violence: What is it?, 2011; Jaber *et al.*, 2023). The process of internalization creates thoughts and feeling of powerlessness, doubt, inferiority and low self-worth. It can be coupled with rage, and it can be channeled into identification with the subject-position of the oppressor. It is also believed (Whyman *et al.* 2021, p. 2) that, for some, internalized oppression can involve coming to feel grateful to, and adopting characteristics of violence from, the oppressor. Whyman *et al.* (2021, p. 2; see also Whyman *et al.*, 2023) describe a model of this dynamic, called "Origins of Lateral Violence," created by the Australian Aboriginal Social Justice Commissioner, to help specify which factors of colonialism may contribute to the development of lateral violence. These include forms of oppression and control that foster identity conflict and facilitate the internalization of negative perceptions. When loss of land and cultural displacement come to be reinforced as "facts of life" and are supplemented with victim-blaming ideologies (e.g. that Indigenous peoples didn't deserve the land, or were too "primitive" to "develop" it), they contribute to an internalization of oppression that perpetuates marginalization and fosters lateral violence.

Colonization has left Indigenous populations worldwide struggling to exist in two worlds. This struggle may be obscured when marginalized people are conceived of as individuals whose psychological ability to fully integrate into one group or another has been inhibited for some reason. Where this inhibition is a product of colonialism, it needs to be understood as more than an individualized psychological type. However, it also needs to be understood as something not practiced exclusively by colonizers. Leaders of oppressed groups can also engage in oppressive behavior in their use of various means of control and identity-policing such as dispensing or refusing favors, or restricting access to positions, permissions and resources to maintain an exclusionary power base. These actions can stem from the desire of such leaders to relieve issues of powerlessness by adopting the oppressor's modes of asserting power in order to maintain collective identity or to maintain access to funding or institutional legitimacy. As Collins (2000) writes, while designed to represent and protect,

> ... the interests of powerful White men, neither schools, government, the media and other social institutions that house these processes nor the actual epistemologies that they promote need be managed by White men themselves. White women, African-American men and women, and other people of color may be enlisted to enforce these connections between power relations and what counts as truth (p. 253).

One such strategy is to assert a power to decide the "purity" of other group members and to judge their worthiness to be members or to share a group identity. Thus, for example, many Indigenous leaders (and also many community members) in both Canada and the U.S. have been complicit in maintaining versions of the blood quantum as a way of measuring indigeneity (Paul, 2020; Palmater, 2011). The term "blood quantum" properly refers to a policy enacted by the U. S. Government to regulate "Indian" status by designating children of an Indigenous and a non-

Indigenous parent as "half-bloods"; children with one Indigenous grandparent as being "quarter blood," and so on (Hill & Ratteree, 2017). The origins of the concept of blood quantum lie in a supposition, prior to the development of modern genetics, that "blood" carried familial, racial and behavioral characteristics; that these were biologically heritable along a "bloodline," and that they could be diluted by out-marriage. (To some degree, eugenics, a pseudoscience developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, which still has its adherents, employed a similar reasoning.) The Canadian federal system for regulating the definition of "status Indians" under the Indian Act, by contrast, relies on parental "registration," not blood per se, as its primary criterion (see Dicks, 2023; "Guide to Membership Codes", 2020; âpihtawikosisân, 2011).

However, the term "blood quantum" is often applied to the Canadian system in popular speech because that system *in effect* works similarly: the children of a parent with status may be denied status if one or or both parents lack the requisite *type* of status. âpihtawikosisân (2011) explains,

> Bill C-31 [1985] added new categories to the Indian Act, defining who is a Status Indian, and who will be a Status Indian in the future. The legislation does not specifically refer to any sort of blood quantum, therefore there is no official policy that would take into account half or quarter Indian ancestry. Nonetheless, ancestry continues to be a determining factor in who is a Status Indian. Section 6 of the Indian Act identifies two categories of Status Indians, called 6(1) and 6(2) Indians. Both categories provide full Status; there is no such thing as half Status. [However, the] categories determine whether the *children* of a Status Indian will have Status or not. (subsection, "Bill C-31 and Status," *my emphasis*)

The Canadian system thereby has a similar effect over time as the U.S. one, imposing successive intergenerational restrictions on the population with official status. Further, individual Band Councils in Canada are able to choose their right under the revised Indian Act to set their own criteria for Band membership, and some of them have employed measures that more explicitly involve a blood quantum (Paul, 2020; Palmater, 2011).

These systems, whether distinguishing at the Federal level between different types or levels of status (and who is entitled to them) in terms of "registration," or at the Band/Tribe/Reserve level between those entitled or not entitled to membership in terms of different blood quanta, backstop the performance of lateral discrimination along purity lines, with "registration" taking the place of "blood" in defining who is defined federally as fully Status and able to pass on status to their children, and locally (in the case of some band/tribal councils) who is entitled to band or tribal membership. These pure/impure distinctions continue to feed into a perpetuation of derogatory terms such as "coconut" (or, in my own Indigenous group, "apple Indian" – red on the outside, white inside), used as acts of verbal violence to displace and police marginalized individuals in the interests of personal power or the purity of group identity. Such phrases are used by community members to shame marginalized or targeted individuals for appearing or behaving "too white" (Whyman *et al.*, 2021, p. 3).

I cannot count how many times I have heard such expressions from fellow Indigenous people; even family members have accused me of being an "Apple Indian." In fact, I used to understand myself as "too white to be Indian and too Indian to be white" because that was how I felt – or

more accurately, was *made* to feel. I have heard many of my friends, especially those of mixed origin, express the same sentiment. I had a friend tell me that because they were half Indigenous and half settler, and raised in the city (meaning to them raised "white"), they constantly experienced lateral violence at an Indigenous Institution where they worked. They were highly educated (Eurocentrically) and because of that were accused of not knowing how to be *traditional enough* to hold a high position in their workplace. This example is not unique; this is a common story within my Indigenous community. I have often been told, even by close family members that I am *not* "Indian," and many times I have had to defend my identity and try to prove my Indigeneity. I no longer do so but that does not in itself make lateral violence, even within families, disappear.

Intersectionality and postcolonialism

The concept of intersectionality refers to unique intersections of sociality that interweave to create marginalized populations and divisions within them, and associated cultural phenomena, shaping marginalization in particular and complex ways. As Levac *et al.* (2018) explain:

> Intersectionality is a critical theoretical idea and an approach to research that aims to redress inequality by revealing and responding to the oppressions and privileges that result when peoples' identities or positions intersect with each other, and with social structures. Intersectional theorists also examine how these interactions shape social and political institutions. Intersectionality assumes that peoples' experiences are deeply affected by social and political systems. Intersectionality rejects the assumption that the same single source of difference (e.g., gender or race or class or sexual orientation) is

> always important or central to a person's experiences. Intersectional scholarship interrogates inequality, relationality, power, social context, complexity and social justice. (p. 8)

The experience and life chances of members of marginalized groups, like other members of society, are rarely based on one defining factor. Most individuals' experiences of oppression are based on several contributing factors, such as racialization, class, sex, gender, age, and other economic and status structures. The intersection of these factors affects different people at different times and in different ways. The concept of intersectionality is important to combat essentialist thought about oppression and inequality (Jaber *et al.*, 2023).

As I write with my interview interlocutors in mind, I am reminded that Jaber *et al.* (2023) suggests that Indigenous women may share similar experiences of intersecting forms of oppression, marginalization, disadvantage and violence; something I have found to be true in my own life and work as an Indigenous woman and in conversations with other Indigenous women. When intersecting forms of systemic violence or restriction are inflicted upon a group of people, they can manifest in similar outcomes, for example, in the case of internalized oppression (see Felipe, 2022). It became evident during the interview visitations I engaged in for this thesis that I shared experiences of displacement, authenticity challenges, and demands for proof of identity with my conversational interlocutors, and that these commonly were imposed on us by other Indigenous individuals. This is not to say that intersectionality discounts the fact that each person's experience is to some degree unique and always their own; it supports it. My own experience does not equate to a homogenous way knowing or lived reality. Nonetheless, when

we tell our stories together, shared worlds emerge, and intersectionality helps explain how *particular forms* of shared reality emerge.

Postcolonial theory (Kohn and Reddy, 2024) also helps with an understanding of the complexity of oppression and the related emergence of lateral violence. It offers a lens through which to look at the injustices that colonial policies and systems imposed on Indigenous populations, lending its perspective to the disenfranchised to (re)create a space of reciprocity, reflection and reflexivity within unjust institutions that still perpetuate colonialism. It is also used to deconstruct generalized Eurocentric frames of othering and division, for example, "us' *vs* "them" rhetoric is turned on its head when postcolonial theory critiques homogenous conceptions of othered ethnicities and cultures (Jaber *et al.*, 2023). Postcolonial theory also questions the idea that "colonialism" is a singular phenomenon. Settler colonialism is a different condition from extractive colonialism, though both involve land theft ("Settler Colonialism," Legal Information Institute, 2022; Son, 2018). They were often initiated at different historical points. Nonetheless, it can be argued that there is no "post" in postcolonialism because resource extraction still occurs and often still violates treaty rights and land claims. Further, settlers are still settled on North American land, and systems through which the colonial subjection of Indigenous peoples took place are still embedded in societal, institutional and political arenas of Canadian life, even if in modified forms. However, postcolonial theory does acknowledge contemporary implications of historical trauma and injustice that are a continuing part of the colonial legacy. Calls for reparation and reconciliation are cornerstones of its approach. But postcolonial theory does have its work cut out for it. In Canada, few commitments have yet been made to implement the 94 Calls to Action in the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2012; 2015).

Postcolonial theory and similar theoretical frameworks, such as critical race theory (McMaster, 2022), can be used in combination to understand how colonialism contributed to lateral violence within subjected populations and to recognize the systemic violations of rights, freedoms, and dignities that still occur within their communities and the institutions which govern them. Both approaches center not only the formation of colonialism and its continuing systemic and structural legacies, but also the effects of colonial institutions and the processes they further (extractivism, appropriation and exploitation, structural discrimination and systemic inequity) on the experience and the subjectivities of colonized peoples One important legacy of colonialism is its ability to lead Indigenous people to police each other, further reinforcing not only external oppression and neglect on the part of settler institutions but also internalized oppression within Indigenous communities ("Aboriginal Lateral Violence: What is it?", n.d., p. 1), both between Indigenous persons and in the formation of Indigenous subjectivities.

The experience and consequences of policing Indigenous identity

As mentioned above, I have been termed an "Apple Indian" as a way to contest my own identity and sow doubt within my own subjectivity. When I was young, my European-origin family members would often tell my sisters and me that we were *not Indians*, because our father was Lithuanian. They would explain that we were only to take the identity of our father and that our mother's indigeneity was obsolete because male genes transmitted to offspring have more power and are more pervasive. One white family member justified their attempt to extinguish our Indigeneity as arising from concern that we would be othered because of it. They had experienced ethnic discrimination (which they called racism) when they immigrated to Canada. They were often called a greenhorn and their family was not accepted by English and French

settlers – the kinds of people Prime Minister Harper once appealed to as "old-stock Canadians." This family member used the stigmatization of Indigenous people as a trope through which to relive and redefine their own oppressed reality. As a result of such efforts, I came to feel shame about my Indigenous identity when I was growing up. How was it, though, that I still felt the presence of that Indigenous identity despite these familial attempts to erase it? In part, it was the repeated assertions by some family members that I was *not* Indigenous and that I should embrace a *non*-Indigenous identity that continually *resurrected* the fact (or threat) of my Indigeneity.

However, as a result of this process of denial, I never felt completely self-integrated into a stable identity. Both sides of it, Settler and Indigenous, were reiterated, and not only by the settler members of my family but also by Indigenous people with whom I came into contact. I have had Indigenous colleagues doubt the authenticity of my motivation to engage with traditional ways of knowing as well as my ability to understand those ways. I still doubt myself now while writing this thesis, because at times I do not feel "indigenous enough" to write it. But then my spirit calls me back, and I remember what a friend once told me: "You are *powerful*; you get the best of both worlds, you get to move freely within both spaces." I can white-pass in the city, but many people on my reserve know my family, and my last name tells them that I belong to the community. But what about those who have been victims of a dispossession more complete than mine; who have been more completely removed from the community, yet still want to return? Specifically, one might think of those Indigenous children swept up in the "Sixties Scoop," raised as white without any contact with their communities of origin, who now are undertaking long, difficult and painful efforts to reconnect – efforts often discouraged by their adoptive families and their friends, and that may be rebuffed by some within Indigenous communities.

Such efforts may involve many missteps because of what they don't know, *and* because of what they don't know *about* what they don't know.

McKay (2021) explains the forbidding barriers faced by those whose identities or backgrounds are mixed this way: "Authenticity-policing indicates the power to challenge another's belonging or tentative inclusion within a group (p. 12)." Federal colonial policies for the "management" of "the Indian problem" in Canada and the U.S. involved a particular form of othering that paradoxically focused on measures to "kill the Indian in the child" but *at the same time* to erect a categorical framework defining the "Indian" based on notions of racial purity and authenticity. Both these systems of management reserved to themselves the right to define "real Indians" and to make policy relating to them. Authenticity in the form of a racialized "purity" then came to be expressed as a colonial "social fact"[25] that defined Indigenous identity and backed up efforts to create a restrictive (and indeed eugenicist) collective understanding of selfhood among "American Indians." McKay's (2021) research focused on the construction of "Native American" identity in the United States, but it translates well to the identification of Canadian Indigenous people too. McKay notes that the managerial construction of an "Authentic Indian" identity through a form of racialized othering had a paradoxical effect. It created *resistance* within Indigenous communities, but a resistance that *utilized* rather than rejected notions of purity and authenticity, Indigenous administrators and activists began to employ the "real Indian" trope as a tool to reinforce and to preserve a collective identity, by legitimizing those

[25] Durkheim (1892) defined a "fact" as any perceived thing or event that resisted attempts to imagine otherwise. But in Durkheim's historical and national context (French nationalism and imperialism), it was entirely possible for European scholars to represent racializing ideas as factual data about superiority and inferiority, not constructs reinforcing colonialism. For Mallard and Terrier (2021), Durkheim's own sociological project was "directed against racialism," but "not devoid of elective affinity with the colonial Republican project." In short, Durkheim's writing on colonialism and nationalism was marked by an unresolved tension between complicity and critique.

they defined as their "own," or contesting the authenticity of others (p. 12). The institutionalized self-policing of indigenous identity has created ongoing instances of lateral violence against those defensively labelled not "pure" enough, and it perpetuates a colonial control-by-definition over Indigenous bodies. It also fosters a collective *internalization* of originally *imposed* criteria of validation, operating both within Indigenous communities and in federal policies.

The symbolism perpetuated by various signifiers of authenticity forms a cornerstone of identity-actualization for Indigenous peoples. Blood quantum, phenotype, cultural engagement, membership in a tribe, the status card – all these become emotionally-freighted and often clashing markers of legitimacy, not only distinguishing between Indigenous peoples and settlers, but also working *within* Indigenous communities and relations. Identity has been legalized but also *politicized* in order to control those identifying as Indigenous who seek to gain access to band membership, services, and other elements of what is a *socially constructed* and *politically contested* form of identity and mode of existence thoroughly woven into the history of colonial institutions. Thus, meaningful symbols and ways of life that reach back before colonization but that have continued to adapt to new circumstances and that serve as markers of tribally-specific membership – ceremony, language and shared history – have become blurred by and entangled in the legal and institutional politics of federal and tribal/band recognition that defines bureaucratic enrolment as a privilege, based on signifiers of "bloodlines" (McKay, 2021, p.12).

But if this racialized identity-policing has come to pervade Indigenous practice, it was not originally its product. It has a long history in colonial efforts to separate and control non-white

populations. This has been done both to regularize the institution of forced labour (and later, a segmented labour market), and to justify land acquisition by displacing those thought to be inferior and in need of management. As we know, "race' is a social construct (Smart *et al.,* 2014), periodically amended to benefit the powerful and to meet their political and economic interests. Thus, a key colonial legacy is reinforcement of an "authentic" identity that fosters membership inclusion within Indigenous communities while simultaneously excluding those communities from settler society and economy. This creates the parameters of defensive identity-policing within such communities. Group identity is then challenged by the existence and persistence of "outsiders" whose ambiguous identities challenge originally-imposed parameters of "authenticity" that have come to be seen as agreed-upon criteria for judging claims of "Indianness" (McKay, 2021, p. 13). The actual *complexity* of Indigenous identity cannot easily be negotiated because colonial and genocidal practices have operated at the level of language not only to distort the meaning of Indigeneity in North America, but also to *remove language* in terms of which its complexity could and should be thought. Our tools for convivial thinking have been systematically removed – and replaced. This process is what makes racialized boundaries between Indigenous or Native American communities and settler society come to seem self-evident. But the supposedly self-evident always is contingent on a particular order, and therefore on specific forms of identity policing that provide the fundamental supports for practices of inclusion – and exclusion.

McKay (2021) notes that self-identified claims to Indigenous status have risen rapidly in the United States in the past half-century. Such claims have resulted in 5.2 million people claiming Indigenous identity; however, the state only recognizes an accounting of 1.9 million "registered"

federal “members” of Native American tribes (“tribe” being a common administrative designation for officially-recognized Indigenous communities in the U.S.). This has led “Indians to joke that the largest tribe in the United States soon will be the ‘Wannabi’” (McKay, 2021, p. 13). However, McKay argues that the actual complexity of Indigenous identity in practices varies from tribe to tribe, and the qualifications for tribal membership are never as certain or clear in practice as they are made out to be in law and policy. Administrative performativity and physical markers are only parts of a whole identity, and they are enmeshed in tribal politics. What each tribe requires for membership is always contested. In Canada, a somewhat similar development with respect to Band membership also sets a stage for such situations:

> As an outcome of the 1951 amendments to the Indian Act, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs maintained a register of all people with Indian status registered under the Indian Act. Generally, those who were registered were also band members. However, the 1985 amendments to the Indian Act recognized bands’ rights to determine their own membership according to the criteria established in Bill C-31. … Under section 10 of the Indian Act, bands may have their own membership codes if a majority of band electors consent to these codes, and if these membership codes do not deprive membership to those who acquired membership under previous rules (Crey, 2009, section on “Membership).

McKay (2021) notes that there is, for some, possible economic and social capital to be acquired with official acceptance into local indigenous communities, if “authentic” identity can be established according to supposedly official criteria. But the way that membership is gauged forces external and internal negotiations of the criteria of legitimacy, which perpetuates an

ongoing politicized policing of "Indianness" on both formal and informal levels. As self-identifying Indigenous claims increase in number, this policing reinforces an onus on those making such claims to "prove" identity. My own experiences are commensurable with these findings. But identity-policing is not solely about making it *difficult* to be recognized as Indigenous. It can also sometimes *enable* a cultural appropriation of indigeneity for personal advantage or for indifference (McKay, 2021, p. 14). For example, in my experience, self-identified indigeneity has offered some people a means to excuse or justify social injustice in Indigenous communities or their politics. I have experienced that "I am native and I am not bothered by it…" can be inserted into any conversation about systemic racism and violence or to defend the use of Indigenous regalia or artifacts for costumes and "spiritual" entrepreneurialism. McKay argues that such abuses and forms of cultural fraud thrive on an expulsion of diversity and heterogeneity from tribal officialdom. They allow a living heterogeneity to be objectified, commodified and turned into products of consumption. This creates a reified and stationary imagery of "the American native" and of First Nations populations throughout North America (McKay 2021, p 14). As a statused member of her own indigenous community who has worked within it, McKay has personally experienced this politics at work. "I have witnessed authenticity policing on personal, interpersonal and institutional levels…As a person raised within my tribal boundaries and traditions, I attest to the frequency with which people claim Indigeneity without any connection to a specific tribe…As a researcher and scholar, I know the exclusionary impact of the federal Indian policy era" (p. 16). But paradoxically, identity-policing *feeds the growth of problematic identity claims.* McKay (2021) found that because Indigeneity was a complex amalgamation of politicized practices, it was important to ask what markers people who identified as Indigenous took to be definitive of that identity. She found that the (originally

eugenic) concept of "blood" was taken to be meaningful as a protection; an indicator of culture and of belonging` Indian [status] cards signified and undergirded a sense of pride, belonging, and also responsibility (p. 17).

Blood quantum as a cultural and political signifier

Blood Quantum, as noted above, came to be seen as an important signifier of what is taken to be distinctive to each "racial" group, and thus for creating the parameters of what it means to be a "real" Indian, even in Canada, where "registration" determines status federally, while at the Band level, Blood Quantum criteria are sometimes but not always used to determine eligibility for membership. As mentioned above, this notion dates to pre-scientific ideas about heredity, but it also bears a resemblance to the nineteenth-century biological theory and practice of eugenics, which aspired to scientific status, though Norrgard (2008) has described its project as "doomed from the start" (subsection, "Problems with Eugenic Research Studies"). Nonetheless, the Blood Quantum continues to feed persistent afterlives; for example, in the popularity of genetic testing, supposedly for genealogical purposes, but often undertaken to identify one's "national" origins, expressed in percentages. And it continues to serve *policy* purposes in the policing of "Indian status." While the Indian Act in Canada did not explicitly adopt a Blood Quantum to govern status (unlike in the U.S.), its use of "registration" as a central criterion, and its amendment in 1985 to add two types of status, 6(1) and 6(2), as noted above, served to restrict status generationally in a similar way. Blood quantum and its analogues thus have long been used to adjudicate Indian and community status, including some, excluding others. More generally, blood became a go-to marker in a racialization of Indigenous groups incommensurable to Indigenous cultural traditions. McKay (2021) notes that people often disclosed their blood

quantum to her, without her asking, demonstrating the extent to which this form of racialization can be internalized (p. 18). Eighty percent of her research participants expressed ideas that the blood quantum was necessary to a definition of Indian status; however, it wasn't so clear that it was a good measure of Indianness in general. Some felt that the blood quantum as a requirement for status protected the nation; however, it was also acknowledged that the rules it imposed were both restrictive and clumsy (e.g. that within her particular nation one must have a proportion of "Indian" blood, measured by biological parentage, of one-half or higher to be able to be involved in political matters).

This ill-fit between rule and realities has caused contention between those who do and do not fit requirements for affiliation and political involvement, and it disregards traditional Indigenous ways of defining kinship ties and cultural participation. Some of the participants in McKay's (2021) research expressed resistance to blood quantum restrictions by claiming that cultural participation is more important than "blood" (p. 18). McKay tested this by creating two archetypes of Indigenous people. One was an Indigenous female that was one-eighth blood quantum but was very active in the community; the other a female with a three-fourths blood quantum, but who was not active in the community. After sharing these archetypes, she then asked project participants, "who is the real Indian?" The response she got was that both women were "Indian." Having active kinship ties and a lower quantum validates you, but having a higher quantum and no involvement does not invalidate you. Blood quantum without participation still grants belonging, but other research echoes fears of "diluting" blood by claiming to demonstrate that marrying out of the community equates to cultural loss. That is why some nations want to preserve their identity through a system that is preferential to "pure

bloods" (p. 18). This, however, ignores the fact that "marrying out" is a *social and cultural process*. It is the *social placement* that out-marriage often entails that sets up social and cultural circumstances that reduce engagement with one's community of origin and traditions. Conceptualizing exactly what it means to be a "real Indian" is a complex process: some believe that cultural awareness and participation is more meaningful than biological parentage while others believe that the lower your blood quantum the less you are entitled to have a place in the community, especially a *political* place (p. 19). But one can also argue that cultural, kinship and eugenic claims constitute a kind of conceptual toolbox from which people can pull out different kinds of identity arguments on an as-needed basis depending on whether they are defending or criticizing criteria for inclusion or exclusion in any particular situation.

"Indian" cards

Having an Indian card, or a status card does have meaning. I know this personally. I know that it is a question I am often asked; "Are you status?" People ask if I have a status card; they also ask if my children are status (yes, they are). For many, it is a signifier that you definitely belong. McKay (2021) writes that "[t]ribal citizenship cards represent the protection of tribal autonomy and pride of belonging as well as functioning as cultural surrogates for many participants" (p. 19). The cards can act as proof of the right to engage in social or political undertakings, or as a protection for cultural appropriation. This contrasts with the belief, also held at other times by many in Indigenous communities, that Indian cards are incommensurable with Indigenous values. However, the card has worked itself into Indigenous life as a tangible way to communicate ("provide") an identity. That ability to provide an available and recognizable form

of "proof" also provides a sense of pride to the provider. Indian cards can reassuringly "prove" to Indigenous people that they belong and are accepted by their communities (p. 20).

Historically, official legality as established in colonial regimes with respect to Indigenous peoples has not only served to racialize them but also to objectify them in terms of externally-imposed understandings of Indigeneity. The blood quantum and the Indian card served as deceptively-simple and interlocking markers in the official performance of Indigeneity, but have become everyday signifiers; a kind of accepted identity-currency. This is possible when "blood" is conflated with kinship and cultural ancestry, and when Indian cards are seen as magical guarantors of Indigenous citizenship and membership. Here is an example of "magical thinking" at work; one originating not in "Native traditions" but in the imposition and take-up of a mix of discredited science and racialized colonial policy! This also makes possible forms of identity-policing that work against other groups besides those intent on gaining access to Indigenous cultural, institutional and economic capital. Identity-policing is also applied to those genuinely seeking connection to and responsibility to an Indigenous community, and who are doing so out of a sense of their own Indigeneity that will not let them go, something my conversation partners brought up in interview visitations, and that I discuss in the final section of this chapter.

Colonialism, lateral violence, and the lived realities of Indigenous students

It's now time to take the foregoing discussion of colonialism and identity-policing into a closer examination of Indigenous participation in post-secondary academic life; whether as graduate-student researchers or theorists-in-training, or as faculty members or administrators. Indigenous

students embarking on post-secondary education are often met by an academic institution that appears officially to be inclusive. However, the actual experience that many Indigenous students and academics have is of ongoing encounters with inequality and "colonial thoughts, policies and practices" (Bailey, 2020, p. 1032). Canadian academic institutions are now seeking to create a more welcoming environment for their Indigenous participants, but these still do not always measure up to their aspirations or their institutional self-perception. Like Black members of academic institutions, many Indigenous students and academics experience racism interpersonally and institutionally and have ongoing concerns about Indigenous content not being correctly taught as well as about cultural appropriation. Further, they find themselves caught in the seemingly "neutral" administrative processes of these institutions – processes that may be considered necessary to the smooth and impartial running of the organization but that were built according to colonial logics (Hampton, 2020). To many Indigenous students, the supposedly "objective" infrastructure of the academic institution is fundamentally misaligned with their own lived realities, especially if those realities include financial, housing, family or transportation difficulties, lack of official Indigenous status or lack of influence in their local community, or subordinate positioning in an academic environment. Such misalignments have left both students and academics feeling marginalized when their needs and concerns are not met or at times not even recognized.

Lateral violence has also found a place in Canadian academic institutions. For example, when Indigenous students are shown to have large gaps in achievement levels compared to their non-indigenous counterparts, this can become an occasion for blame, and for accusations that equity programs generate unfair advantage. While these reactions usually come from White students,

they may also be mobilized by Indigenous students against other Indigenous ones; for example, in the context of infighting over scarce academic resources (admissions, program placements, grants and scholarships). This occurs in a historical context. Post-secondary education, as well as professional museum curatorship in Canada, contributed to the historical reality of racialization by requiring assimilation to Eurocentric forms of knowledge, art and pedagogy, treating their Indigenous analogues as only of value in an anthropological, artifactual sense (Harris, 2002; Simpson, 2014; Whitelaw, 2006). This is not just a matter of misinformation about Indigenous peoples within the *content* of what is taught – though that still happens. It is also about the displacement of Indigenous knowledge systems within academic institutions (Bailey, 2020, p. 1034), making the assertion of Indigenous ways of knowing a continuing struggle. The lack of concern shown by Canadian governments and within Canadian society at large for providing adequate resources to understand the historical and contemporary treatment of Indigenous populations and to allow Indigenous learners to enter academic institutions on their own terms is one element of the failure to implement the useful strategies prescribed in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report and its calls to action (TRC, 2012; 2015). Thus, many Indigenous people are still left standing in the shadow of inequality. Bailey (2020, p. 1034) states that the historical lack of information about the mistreatment of Indigenous populations has created a "cultural and colonial amnesia" and a "wilful ignorance" which continues to place the blame for the unequal socioeconomic conditions of Indigenous populations on those populations, and also continues to perpetuate stereotypical images of Indigenous people and Indigeneity (Digital Media Literacy, 2024), some of which have circulated in Canadian society for decades, producing, among other ideas, the notion that Indigenous people suffer not only a socioeconomic but an "ingrained cultural deficit" (Bailey, 2020, p. 1034). This continues a

longstanding process by which the notion of "deficit" was inculcated into those subjected to colonial authority, initially as a "racial" and moral[26] fault and later as a cultural one, resulting in forms of internalized oppression expressed at times as lateral violence.

Bailey's (2020; see also Henry *et al.*,2017) research on Indigenous students in the academy shows that although lateral violence is acted out by and on those within oppressed groups, non-Indigenous students and the academic institutions themselves exacerbated situations in which such violence occurred. For example, academic institutions' failures to represent the diversity of Indigenous groups, often mainly focusing on one, could pit different marginalized constituencies against one another. causing contention. Another issue noted by Bailey was that Indigenous men in the academy engaged in gendered violence practices that left Indigenous women and trans students – and faculty – feeling that they were not represented (or safe) within the institution. Classrooms became sites of contention as racist remarks made during classes were contested intensely by more assertive Indigenous students. Other Indigenous students felt that their counterparts' belligerence was seen negatively and allowed Indigenous students as a whole to be further typecast as unable to control their emotions (Bailey, 2020, p. 1041). At the same time, students who were more aggressive in contesting racism in the classroom could turn around and

[26] The work of T. B. Macaulay, a 19th-century British historian, exemplifies this alliance of racialism and moralism. Here, he describes the removal of Warren Hastings as head of the British colonial government in India:

> The natives soon found this out. They considered him as a fallen man; and they acted after their kind. Some of our readers may have seen, in India, a cloud of crows pecking a sick vulture to death, no bad type of what happens in that country, as often as fortune deserts one who has been great and dreaded. In an instant, all the sycophants who had lately been ready to lie for him, to forge for him, to pandar [=pander] for him, to poison for him, hasten to purchase the favour of his victorious enemies by accusing him. An Indian government has only to let it be understood that it wishes a particular man to be ruined; and, in twenty-four hours, it will be furnished with grave charges, supported by depositions so full and circumstantial that any person unaccustomed to Asiatic mendacity would regard them as decisive. (Macaulay, 1841, p. 9)

If there is any truth at all in this account, it would better be understood as what happens if a class of officials complicit in a colonial order but drawn from a colonized group internalize the colonizer's attitudes, using them to their own advantage and against rivals – lateral violence! Spivak makes a similar point about British colonial rule.

accuse their less assertive classmates of defeatism or cowardice. This could descend into lateral violence in the form of intimidation tactics coupled with accusations of siding with the enemy. What got lost in such spirals was the fact that without racism being perpetuated in academic settings by non-indigenous students and faculty, such lateral violence might not have erupted.

Another contributing factor to lateral violence endured by Indigenous students, according to Bailey (2020) was divisive actions taken by Indigenous student body leaders who claimed that unless you grew up living on the reserve, you were not a true "Native," undermining the lived realities of those Indigenous students raised in or living in urban environments. Those who contested such divisive tactics faced punitive responses. Cultural differences within Indigenous student groups over protocol also caused contention in planning or carrying out student-oriented activities. Students dealing with these issues experienced gossiping and negative talk and were even ousted from organizations or activities, further reinforcing not only division but also isolation (p. 1042). Other issues Bailey suggests may have triggered lateral violence between Indigenous students on campus had to do with authenticity and ancestry. "Correct" skin color was taken as a marker for authenticity in some instances, as was cultural practice and adherence to particular definitions of "traditional" teachings in others. Defensive othering in situations such as these also created grief for Indigenous students. It is noteworthy how many of these issues involved not only competitive power plays familiar in non-Indigenous student politics, but also comparative and competitive displays of cultural or even racial "purity." These may be legacies imposed on Indigenous students long before they become fuel for lateral intimidation within Indigenous student circles (see Whyman *et al.*, 2023), but lateral violence is not perpetuated solely through legacy forms of internal or mutual oppression (Bailey, 2020, p. 1041). Even

though it is understood that settler colonialism and related violence against indigenous populations created *historical* conditions that fed into lateral violence, Bailey (2020) mentions that students would often continue to remark that "that's how native people are" (p. 1043).

Bailey's findings are not unfamiliar to me from my university experience. I have seen misguided non-indigenous students make remarks about Indigenous people in class while the professor stood by and said nothing. I felt alone in correcting the misinformation, and then being met with isolation from my classmates. Was I being "too aggressive?" I wasn't making the correction as a power play, but was that how it was being perceived? Ahmed (2017, p. 39) writes: "When you expose a problem, you pose a problem." I experienced shame, I did not once utilize the Indigenous spaces whilst at the university because I didn't think that I was *authentic enough* to belong there. I received questions about my skin color ("You don't look Indian"). I also heard the phrase, "that's how natives are." That phrase, which reaches us from non-Indigenous people, is also used by some Indigenous folx. It contributes to the further internalization of beliefs about Indigenous groups initially created within colonial power structures. It is important for me to add these personal observations about lateral violence – more especially about the ingrained *fear* of lateral violence – to my thesis, in order to highlight how colonization has had an enduring *and intimate* impact on Indigenous people historically and currently; Indigenous people of all demographics. Including students. Including me. The colonial legacy is still at work not only in taken-for-granted academic policy and planning but also in the everyday business of learning, including the learning of a racialized and divisive hidden curriculum (e.g. MacDonald, 2019).

But before moving on to discuss a specific lateral contest that I will narrate in allegorical form, I want to present a brief example of how lateral violence can occur not only between *students* in the colonial/settler academy, but also between faculty and students, and faculty and faculty. It is worth noting that Departments of Indigenous, Native, or Native American studies are as subject to internal conflicts as any other academic department; conflicts that can tear them apart as Indigenous faculty battle with each other or take warring "sides." These don't occur simply because we all share "human nature." I would propose that they can be specific consequences of an often-*unrecognized* form of colonialism.

In 2018, enrolment in the graduate program in Indigenous Governance at the University of Victoria was suspended and a third-party review of the program was initiated, following claims that "discrimination" and "hyper-masculinity" had provided little classroom space for diverse points of view. CBC News reported (Barrera, 2018) that a confidential "participant's report" had "described the IGOV learning environment as stressful, in part, because of difficult classroom dynamics caused by a sense of entitlements, competition and unpredictability." Specifically, CBC News noted (Barrera, 2018) that the participants' report indicated a sense that the program had "little tolerance for LGBTQ and two-spirited individuals" and that there were "inherent tensions" relating to the "role and inclusion of 'non-Indigenous students' in the program" (Barrera, 2018). Keep that word "competition" in mind! There was no explicit mention in news coverage of conflict between faculty members themselves in or relating to the program; the emphasis was placed instead on the student experience. But often, a stressful environment for students indicates side-taking behind the scenes by faculty. Two faculty members ended up leaving the program: Jeff Corntassel moved to a different department within the university

(Barrera, 2018), and Taiaiake Alfred resigned not only from the program but from the university – indeed from academia (Rowe, 2019).

Alfred said two things in connection with his leaving. On March 6, 2019, he observed, of accusations that he had fostered an atmosphere of toxic masculinity, that "If you're asking me if I'm hyper-masculine, well, I'm Mohawk from Kahnawake … I'm a Mohawk from Kahnawake and that's who I am" (Rowe, 2019). But the next day, he posted a statement on his website which read in part, "Even as an Indigenous man who has battled against racism and colonialism, I carry old and harmful ways of thinking … My former partner, friends, and mentors such as Lee Maracle and Graham Smith have helped me understand the ways I embodied toxic masculinity and how I did wrong and harmed people because of it" (Dodd and Fagan, 2019; see also Cherry, 2021, n. 20). To take the second statement first, it is no accident if lateral violence often involves toxic masculinity: for many years before 1985, the "registration" criterion governing status under the Indian Act in Canada was paired with a privileging of the official status of Indigenous *men* as determining the status of a couple's children: status men married to nonstatus women could pass on their status to their children while status women married to nonstatus men could not. Status Indian men were in this sense subordinate to White officialdom but dominant over Indigenous women. A similar privileging defined men's roles in Band councils. Power differentials between priests and nuns were on display in residential schools, and "practical" education of Indigenous children within these institutions was differentiated by gender and reflected European Christian ideas about gender at the time. As a consequence of their (gendered) entanglement in colonial institutions, Indigenous people themselves became "institutionalized" (Rand, 2011).

I will not discuss further whether Taiaiake Alfred's take on Mohawk masculine culture is accurate – that is for him and the Mohawk community to sort out. What interests me here is a structural issue in news reporting on academic matters, linked to a structural issue in academic life often ignored in mainstream news reporting. It was suggested to me by Alfred's reference to his place of origin, Kahnawake. Kahnawake is almost exactly 4561 kilometers from Victoria B.C. But *none of the coverage of Alfred's statement seemed to find it the least bit notable that a Mohawk should be teaching in Lkwungen territory, thousands of miles from his home community.* This is especially surprising given that Alfred himself has tied accountability to place-based community: see Alfred, n.d.). The episodic nature of news reportage, and its tendency to focus on individuals – their personalities, motives, intents and identities – can underplay discussion of structural or systemic issues, especially when the structures and systems (and the assumptions that ground them) are deeply taken for granted. For news consumers, this means inundation on a daily basis by stories that come and go and appear disconnected.

Could it be that a colonial institution was taken for granted and left unmentioned in the coverage of the upheavals in the Indigenous Governance Program – in this case, *not* simply the University of Victoria itself, but a broader institution in which that university, like others across Canada *takes part*, namely the labor market, and specifically, the market for *academic* labor? Is it possible that this market plays a role in encouraging mobility and dislocation, as well as a competitive academic star system? The labor market is an *institution* in that it involves set arrangements for competitive production, exchange and distribution of goods and services in the form (at least in part) of commodities. It is *colonial* in that these arrangements do not reflect traditional Indigenous ways of life, teaching and learning, and were imposed as normative by the

settler state. That normativity reflects what Elizabeth Povinelli (2011) calls the late-liberal individualism of contemporary settler societies. (On how this affects higher education, see Hawkins *et al.*, 2014). What exactly happened at the University of Victoria isn't entirely clear from news coverage now becoming distant in time. But contextual awareness provides a way to reflect on the co-implication of universities and markets in settler society, on the effects of dislocation and diaspora on positionality, and on our insertion into systems alien to our ancestors; systems that often don't work in our interests or for our wellbeing.

Gatekeeping and the lateral policing of Indigenous populations

"Crabs in a bucket" is a colloquial term that fits how I feel when Indigenous people "drag each other down" in family, work, educational or governance or other institutional situations. We often feel little surprise when we encounter lateral violence or lateral defamation in such areas of Indigenous life (social media examples I have seen include commentary around contentious Band Council elections). When thinking about lateral violence as having its source in an internalized form of oppression – as internalized colonialism – and in dilemmas of complicity and resistance within colonial-origin or settler institutions, I can have empathy for those of us who have inner struggles concerning what we have been made to feel we are historically, who we are now, what we stand for, what we may be complicit in, and what we should resist. We can (re)produce lateral violence without being fully aware of what we are doing; without realizing that we are doing so (insufficient reflexivity can be an issue here). We can (re)produce lateral violence simply trying to survive in systems committed to the eventual elimination of our status as Indigenous peoples (Justice, 2018).

I was reflecting upon these issues recently while re-reading Tuck and Yang (2012); thinking about how those most affected by racialization on Turtle Island were, colloquially, Indians and the Black people, either through subtraction (land theft, restrictions on official status) or addition (the slave trade, the institution of slavery it fed, and the classification of those with partially Black ancestry as Black). Tuck & Yang (2012) argue that racialization has been adapted differently in its imposition on these two different groups of people. Indigenous people's status identity was *deducted* to enable colonialists to assert power and control over land. Eradication of official status, whether of Indigenous individuals or of whole groups, and suppression of their cultures, assisted justifications for taking land. Black people were *added to* the land, and the concept of "blood" was used additively to define to their alleged biological makeup in order to make slavery work by maintaining the captive-labour population subject to the violence of forced labour. The uncompensated labor of slaves produced the commodities that appropriated Indigenous land provided, and also produced the wealth of slaveowners and of the industrialists they supplied with raw materials (p. 12). The wealth produced by slavery also flowed back into Europe, where, converted into investment capital, it was used to fund the economic development of other colonial territories such as Canada. In the course of making this argument, Tuck & Yang (2012) quote Kim Tallbear, who argued that,

> …the one-drop rule dominates the understanding of race in the United States and, so, most people in the States have not been able to understand Indigenous identity…Through the one-drop rule, blackness in a settler colonial context is *expansive,* ensuring that a slave/criminal status will be *inherited* by an expanding number of 'black' descendants … Indigenous people have been racialized in a profoundly different way. Native

> Americanness is *subtractive.* Native Americans are constructed as becoming fewer in number and less Native, but never exactly White (p. 12).

That subtraction is exactly what happened, and in certain ways is still happening to Indigenous people, in Canada too. But what are the consequences of accepting the point of the story about colonial subtractionism if you then continue to endorse subtractive tactics to sort Indigenous populations? What does it mean if you show an understanding of what colonialism has done to Indigenous people with the intention of eradicating their identity, but then use colonial tools that threaten to create the same outcomes?

Many "Half" people[27] feel an internal struggle between wanting to belong, feeling a spiritual need to connect to an Indigenous culture, and feeling as if they don't belong or don't have a right to belong, as I demonstrate in my conversations with my interlocutors in the final section of this chapter. However, this internal struggle has been impacted by extensive discussion in the past few years concerning two issues: cultural appropriation and appropriation of identity. Cultural appropriation involves the appropriation of Indigenous cultural practices or materials by non-Indigenous persons, often for commercial purposes. Appropriation of identity occurs when non-Indigenous persons appropriate Indigenous identity without permission from or even at times without contact with any particular Indigenous group or Nation (e.g., Leroux, 2019). In Canada, high-profile examples include the English-born conservationist Archie Belaney (who became "Grey Owl"), author Joseph Boyden, Saskatchewan academic Carrie Bourassa, filmmaker Michelle Latimer, and former judge Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond (Lewis, 2023). Band

[27] "Half": I use this term to describe someone with one parent who is Indigenous and another who isn't, or two parents both of mixed background.

governments have also raised concerns about non-Indigenous persons fraudulently claiming Indigenous ancestry as a way to access Band resources, which are often already overtaxed. Drew Hayden Taylor has produced a documentary on such phenomena (Taylor, 2023), and the University of Saskatchewan commissioned a 2022 report on it (Leo, 2022).

On the other hand, there are cases of entire groups of Indigenous people who were improperly "enfranchised" (that is, disenfranchised of their Indigenous rights), or groups never recognized under the Indian Act; for example, because they were not known to exist, or because of a split within a given Nation. One example of a group enfranchisement and Band dissolution is Michel Band #472 (Michel Calihou Band), descendants of which are now seeking reinstatement both of their individual status and of their dissolved Band (History: Michel Band #472, 2022). There are Indigenous people whose ancestors lost their status under status rules that no longer apply. There are also those of Indigenous or Métis parentage who, through no fault of their own, were placed in foster care[28] in an earlier era, or those who were brought up non-Indigenous by adoptive parents – including the children of the so-called "Sixties Scoop" (Hanson, 2009). There are also people who cannot prove their ancestry or who do not quite meet the criteria for official Indigenous status, though they may have strong and continuing familial and cultural ties to a given Nation and may self-identify as Indigenous. And then there are the "halves" – people like me – with one Indigenous parent or mixed parentage. Many – again, like me – have Indigenous status. Others do not but desire it and/or have cultural ties. But their official or aspirational status notwithstanding, those whose supposed blood quantum dips below a certain level often find that the legacy of such racialized purity measures, even when they no longer are officially

[28] In a period when a child's Indigenous/Métis identity was not deemed important to maintain in foster care

sanctioned, persists in culture, impacts social relations, and finds expression in a spectrum of difficulties and inequalities such as lateral violence, discrimination, and struggles for recognition in both Indigenous and settler circles (Dicks, 2023).

Members of all these groups have at times been painted with the same brush as those seeking "status" fraudulently or for exploitative and self-interested reasons, and it has been suggested that some or all of them should be denied status or scrutinized far more carefully. This serves as a disincentive for such people to explore their ancestry or heritage out of fear of being painted with the same brush (an issue that also relates to things raised in the story of Fox and Bear below). There are, of course, also people of Indigenous ancestry who desire only to maintain cultural ties or to know details of their ancestry or heritage, without seeking either Status or Band membership, even if eligible. But what if their wish to identify with and become a member of a given Indigenous community is honest, deeply-felt, genuine, and something they are prepared to put work into?

To argue that colonial regimes have "subtracted" our identity but then to make subtractive arguments about the adjudication of others' entities and to use either ancestral relation or culture as a denominator is to risk setting up new conditions under which lateral violence can occur: lateral violence and gate-keeping often combine. In my own personal experience, I have rarely met someone who is half-Indigenous who wanted to connect to family or a specific territory for nefarious reasons. Yes, there are many settler people who claim to have some ancestral Indigenous blood because of family stories or a genetic test. Their reasons, and what they do

with such claims vary. For some, it is a matter of personal interest only. For others, it is a move to establish innocence (as Tuck & Yang, 2012, note) in the face of new revelations about the mistreatment of Indigenous populations and about land theft. It is important to protect Indigenous cultures and communities from exploitative appropriation and the conflict or violence that outsiders might bring. But are we in a position to continue to deny others who are "halves" or who had their status unjustly removed or denied, who are searching for ways to reconnect to an Indigenous community and willing to take responsibility to the community in doing so – or those who simply want to understand or make sense of their families (Hogue, 2024)?

Further, what criteria should we use to adjudicate between those who are "in" or "out"? Should the colonist's tools continue to be used to build postcolonial houses? We don't actually know what the "blood quantum" of any individual is, because "blood quantum" in itself is not a measurable property. Typically, we assess rights to membership or identity on *lineage*. Who is your father? Who is your mother? On my reserve, questions like these are used to figure out who may be accepted as a member of the tribe. My children are Blood Tribe members and hold Indian status under these rules as they presently stand. My children are known to the community because *I* am known, but some could and would argue that they do *not* have a right to claim Indigenous identity, relationality, or membership, because they were not *personally known* to certain community members. Being known to and within a community is a criterion for membership that some have proposed *additively*: in other words, if you are known to act as a community member, identify as a community member, and are accepted as a community member, you deserve to hold that status officially, even if your lineage alone doesn't qualify

you.[29] However, others would apply it *subtractively*; in other words, if you do not have strong and continuous community links, you do *not* deserve official status, regardless of your biological lineage. But in some situations, that turns out to be problematic. Take, for example, a child of the Sixties Scoop who has never felt at home in settler society (often one who was *made* not to feel at home, say because of skin colour) and who sets out on a quest to find documentation and to find their way back home? How do they get to become known if their approaches are rebuffed? How can they come to feel at home if they are not accepted as genuine? This is where lateral violence can enter the picture for "halves" and others whose ancestry doesn't meet standards of purity or whose relational connections were severed.

As I mentioned above, I reached a point in my own life in which I felt lost and was unsure who I was. I had official status as an Indigenous person, but was not sure if I belonged, or was worthy to belong. That was the point at which I reached out to Duane Mistaken Chief. He could have rebuffed me, judging me to be a troubled outsider with romanticized ideas about Indianness. Instead, he was gracious enough to hear me out., He did know my extended family – quite extensively! – but he did not know that I or my children even existed. Nonetheless, he agreed to serve as my elder and he has helped me to come to know my wider family better and has taught me about where I come from and about our traditional ways. If we don't know who we are, through no fault of our own, how can we become relational members of our communities except through the generosity of people like Duane Mistaken Chief? My Indigenous family and Fox

[29] The example of Buffy Ste. Marie who has argued that she was adopted by a family from the Piapot First Nation, raises complex questions here. Would adoption by a family mean also adoption into the First Nation, or not? Would the mere fact of adoption suffice, or would there need to be evidence of continuing interaction with, support for, and/or assumption of responsibilities for the family or the First Nation in question? My own opinion is that it should be up to each First Nation to decide such matters for themselves, but that still doesn't make such decisions easy.

name is well known, however due to being raised off reserve, the connections to community have weakened, but not severed. We cannot know what is in the heart of individuals trying to connect with a community without taking the time to understand them. While it would take additional time and effort, I suggest that we need to approach each case on an individual basis. This is not to deny the importance and meaning of "relationality" as a criterion for judging admission to a community, as discussed above, nor to question relationality as the foundation of Indigenous ontology (Kiitomohpiipotoko) and epistemology (Siksikaitsitapi). My point is not to discredit meaningful ways in which Indigenous groups judge who can become members. People are not entitled just to make a self-claim and thereby to *expect* to be given Indigenous status.[30] However, Duane Mistaken Chief's response to me arguably *showed actual relationality at work*, not as a static, formalized set of predefined criteria but as a living process. Not every situation is black-and-white, and taking a stance toward membership that is inflexible risks reproducing lateral violence in the form of purity politics. Let's not, as Indigenous people, engage in *that* form of cultural appropriation from the colonial legacy! Half-Indigenous folx often already feel that they have to prove their identity though various means of recognition, which means they continue to feel displaced, even if they have successfully gained official status.

As Butler & Athanasiou (2013) state, "[i]n tracing the possibility of de-privileging or reconfiguring the normative apparatus of 'having versus not having' in gender and sexuality [here I would add, also racialization and ethnicity], we get a central *aporia* of the body politic: we lay claim to our bodies as our own, even as we recognize that we cannot ever own our bodies" (p. 55). The unequal legacies of colonialism further complicate this *aporia*. Our

[30] However, as noted above, many who try to seek out their origins don't *expect* to be given status. They are trying to learn and understand. Again, an issue that could relate to one or more topics covered in the Fox and Bear story.

Indigenous identities become again a site for discussion. The social construction of Indigeneity has formed and informed our identities for centuries. However, our lived bodies are not merely a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate on which different definitions of identity can be imposed willy-nilly. We who experience ourselves and/or have been treated as Indigenous have been experiencing and learning that since we were *in utero* and we have been acted upon (including by actions and actors carrying out the legacies of colonialism) in a thousand ways all our lives. We have been constructed socially as a disappearing "race" and invalidated as humans. We have had our legitimacy questioned. We have been denied employment, followed through stores, stopped by police for being in the "wrong" area; had our identities doubted. The way we practice agency is by relating to what we have and have not learned; what we do and do not know; what we doubt and dare to believe we are. Our bodies are contested, divided, categorized, and reassembled in our social interactions, they are regulated and reproduced, restricted and supported, sickened and regenerated through our relations and our interdependence as well as our enforced dependencies; through our kinship ties and our membership in the human condition. Our bodies affect other bodies; we affect each other in terms of what we know bodily, and bodily we are invited in or excluded, given to or dispossessed. based on what appears visibly or is assumed about our presence (Butler & Athanasiou 2013, p. 55). Our capacity for relationality; our embeddedness in a manifold of relations, physical and social, shapes us and shapes our destinies – for good or ill.

The fact that Indigenous bodies and identities are so contested that they can be subject to dispossession by others is because others could act on us in terms of subtractive criteria originating in the colonial era to serve territorial displacement, racialization, and the uneven distribution of power, This is particularly apparent when we approach issues that surround

claiming Indigenous identity, when efforts genuinely intended to stop exploitation of Indigenous identity, culture and resources adopt or rigidly apply criteria originating in the subtractive dispossession of Indigenous identity by colonial authorities, enabled in Canada by legislation such as the Indian Act. The problem is apparent where we see the formal and informal policing of individualized Indigenous bodies and identities continuing despite our struggle to find a way to rectify what has been imposed upon us collectively. Further, given that our struggle to reclaim our collective identities remains *defensive*, I understand how that defense can be recruited to identifying "enemies within," or to internal oppression and its outward expressions: forms of lateral violence such as bullying, belittling, undermining, and exclusion. Or, more mildly, how *responding* to that defense, however well-meant, can be accompanied by feelings of intimidation or vulnerability; feelings which are silencing.

2.4 Fox meets Bear: a lateral contest over identity

The following discussion is from a conversation with a colleague[31] around which I have put a story frame. The conversation was an important one: it relates to the issue of appropriation of Indigenous identity by those said not to be entitled to it, and to the policing of such identity; issues that gained currency and controversy with allegations in 2023 (after this conversation had already taken place) that the singer Buffy Sainte Marie had falsely claimed Indigenous ancestry (Leo, 2023). That conversation was also experienced as a kind of contest, a somewhat tense one, by at least one party, who felt some degree of vulnerability during it.

[31] Quotes and paraphrases from the colleague's part of the conversation are used with their permission.

The Red Fox and Black Bear are native to Turtle Island and existed before European contact. Bears are large, powerful animals with few natural enemies. They can be placid, keeping to themselves, but can also be fierce and relentless defenders of their territories and their cubs. Though Foxes may be predators of smaller animals, they are small animals themselves and must be ever alert to the presence of larger, more aggressive, or hungry members of their environment. However, these natural characteristics fit the protagonists of this tale only in part and very loosely: their names are chosen out of a degree of whimsy. In this story, Fox and Bear, as narrative agents, meet in a very different context from forest or prairie; a social and *political* context, an academic ecology that makes it all too easy for being Fox or being Bear to become weaponized, despite good intentions.

Fox and Bear begin their conversation by discussing what it means to be *Indigenous to place*. Bear tells Fox that our (Indigenous) relational ties with community form the basis for our belonging but adds a caveat: *there must be some Indigenous ancestry* (a point discussed above in relation to the work of McKay, 2021). Beyond this, ideally, membership would be granted based on each individual tribe or nation's parameters for relationality in terms of belonging to a community. However, colonialism gave us the blood quantum and its analogues (e.g. Federal status registration and its generational limitations in Canada), and now, "up to the tribe to decide" often still means that Tribes (in the U.S.) and Bands (in Canada) choose and use such antiquated tool to adjudicate membership. However, Bear acknowledges that even using modern DNA analysis to assign Indigeneity is *also* problematic (Gershon, 2021). So, we have three things in play here: land, relationality, and ancestry, all of which have complicated *histories*, and

all of which pose definitional issues. How does Bear work through these complications? Let's listen:

> Alexandra Harmon [Harmon, 2019], she's making an argument that, in fact, it wasn't simply an imposition of blood quantum, that it's not that native people were not non-essential in this. They were trying to figure out how to use it to their advantage, which is what I would argue we're in the process of doing right. And sometimes, you know, so my argument is, we certainly don't want to go to DNA;. [we] certainly don't just want to unproblematically accept lineal descent.

Bear also mentions that if someone claims Indigeneity because they have an Indigenous ancestor who lived in, say, 1640, they must go back perhaps nineteen generations to find that ancestor; that's one out of over 2000 people, the rest of whom are white. Bear adds: "So, what we have is this mess that tribes in First Nations and Indigenous communities are dealing with right now." Bear adds some reasons why other people may not be members of their community of origin as defined by biological lineage; for example, because of geographical distance – where the lands are. Bear notes that they themself didn't grow up in their community of origin; Bear changed their enrollment to the place and community where they grew up. However, Bear adds,

> ... you better spend time there and make relations there. I'm not a believer of just being enrolled, or a citizen of a tribe with no involvement. Like, why, I just want to get benefits? No, I think you've got to help support the community, because the integrity of the collective matters more than individual rights.

Fox finds herself agreeing with this, but with a caveat. We *should* be giving to our communities and *should* be known to those we claim to be part of. The caveat is that perhaps *becoming* known, and learning how best to give, are better thought of as *processes* – or *outcomes* – rather than as *a priori* criteria of admission.

Bear also suggests that the community is not merely a collection of individuals. Fox thinks to herself, "This is true; collective identity is built over generations, is sacred, and is based on the whole." This is not where Fox sees a problem. Such a community can take in individuals who seek out connection and want to belong through meaningful relationships and with good intentions – even if the road of good intentions can pave the way to hell sometimes. But despite her agreement with Bear, Fox, with a learned need to be sensitive to one's surroundings and one's gut sense, is beginning to feel uneasy. It is not what is said, but a tone that Fox seems to be picking up on. Maybe it's because Fox and Bear are conversing across wires and air, on Zoom; not a comfortable environment for Fox, who wonders what she's missing. But she feels as if assumptions are being made about what she does and doesn't know; that perhaps she doesn't understand the implications of DNA testing and analysis for the perpetuation of racism and other aspects of the colonial legacy. She can't shake a feeling that she needs to defend herself and reframe things somehow to show that she does know what Bear means. In the moment, Fox begins to experience Bear's responses as slightly aggressive, almost a little dismissive. She begins to feel like an amateur being schooled about the way things are by a being who knows that far better.

However, the Bear then shifts the conversation, opening up to share some details of Bear's own background. Bear's father was non-Indigenous, but Bear was raised by their mother and grandmother and with their mother's Indigenous family. However, Bear did not grow up to live near or have frequent contact with either their non-Indigenous relatives, or their Indigenous territorial relatives. "So that's why I felt it was not appropriate to be enrolled […] there. Because I'm not culturally of them." *Choosing* who one is in cultural and geographical (proximity) terms worked to solidify Bear's understanding of who they are; subtracting a part of their identity to create a more secure relational connection to an Indigenous community in a different place.

Fox could see how any argument for inclusion based on ancestry measured in DNA could become an occasion for contention in discussions about eligibility, because those who are Halves could easily become Half-Nots, subtracted from their relations based on some sort of gene quantum. For Bear, to be entitled to claim Indigeneity should entail instead a longer relational process that connects one to community through the ability of those in the community to know your name. McKay (2021) noted that those she worked with had treated both blood and community ties as important and thought that they could work in conjunction with federal recognition. However, is having a higher blood quantum – or 6(1) status – and *little* community involvement just as valid as, or more valid than having a lower blood quantum – or 6(2) status – and *more* community involvement? Where do we draw the line along such a continuum? Fox thinks to herself that any dividing line will have ambiguities, and great detail must go into deciding who can claim Indigeneity – again, on a case-by case basis.

Fox decides to make a venture:

> I want to know about identity as somebody else who's in academia and researching and looking at things like identity and trying to get a … get away from these DNA…I want to ask you – is it okay, if I ask you some of the questions that I asked the people that I speak with [other interlocutors with whom she had conversations for her project]? You've already told me, like, how you identify yourself: how do you feel that others identify you?

Bear responds that where they grew up, "everybody knew I was native," possibly in part because of their skin colour, because they were "always outside in the sun." But Bear notes that as an adult and in different contexts their skin colour could be interpreted as lighter than they imagine. Further, Bear notes another factor at work in the place they grew up:

> I grew up in [an Indigenous/non-Indigenous] border town. So, everybody knew. [...] And of course, it was whites and Indians …you knew who was white and you knew who was native. There was no ambiguity about it. Even my cousin [*let's call her Polar Bear*], who looks just like me, except she's blond and pale. ... Everybody knew she was native too, because everybody knows everybody, there was no ambiguity. ... I would say when I leave the [Indigenous community] now…most people would guess I was native, but sometimes people would think I was Latino.

Bear goes on to add that many people had mistaken them for different ethnicities (like Italian or Chinese) based on where they were located geographically, and acknowledges that this makes their answer to Fox's question somewhat complicated. Fox appreciates Bear's sharing of their

own experience, and agrees that she too has been on the receiving end of all sorts of mistaken ethnicity ascriptions. We really do not know how others think about us nor can we control it, she thinks. Fox responds to Bear by sharing her own experience of others' perceptions:

> The way we perceive ourselves is completely different than the way other people perceive us. And I get the Italian thing. That's what I get, like, all the time. Oh, yeah. My sisters are much darker than me, even though we have the same parents, but my dad is… so blond hair, blue eyes, from Lithuania, you know that I'm just like, light. And, but my sister has like, blond hair and blue eyes. But she's, she's darker skin, it's just like crazy how everything has kind of come out.

Fox thinks of how she had asked similar questions about perception of the people she visited during her interview process – her relations, her interlocutors – and how she had worked just to try to get an understanding of how phenotype plays a role in perceptions of who we are and how that may be reflected in our ability to be included. Fox decides to probe a bit: "Is there anything about your identity that you would like to be seen more clearly? Like for yourself that you would wish people would, see?"

Bear moves back into teaching mode:

> Well, I'm gonna send you an article. I don't like the word identity. And I try very hard not to use it. I think it's individualistic and property-oriented. Yeah, I think what's important is our relation. I have an article [about how] identity is a poor substitute for relations. And I think identity is a word that really serves white people. I think it serves their project. Who are you *related to* is the important question. Yeah, that's the question. Not

> who *are* you? We are always becoming; what's important is who I'm related to. And, and, and so, you know, that's how people recognize me when I go home, because I've been away for a while now. But they'll look at me, who are you? And I'll say, I'm Bear. Oh, are you related to the other Bear [different forename]? Like, that's my mom. Yeah. Oh, okay. I know, your family. That's really important.

Fox finds herself agreeing again, strongly this time. It *is* important to have *relational ties* and for our communities to know and to trust us. And relationality *is* a process of "always becoming." Conversely, yes, "identity" *can* become a reifying and weaponized term. And yes, identity can be treated like property. Yes, identity can be treated as a thing, not a process, and in that way can also be commodified. But Fox also begins to feel as if she is being moved to the "I-don't-know-you" side of this conversational road; someone unknown showing up with questions. If Fox wasn't being seen as a deserving interlocutor, who was she coming to be seen as instead? Bear's dismissive "I don't like the word identity" gives Fox the sense of being on the back foot, feeling a need to explain herself defensively for using the term "identity," even though Fox had asked Bear beforehand if she could use the same questions she'd asked of her other interlocutors.

Sensing her smallness, Fox responds in a conciliatory manner, but her reply and Bear's response to it, will drive straight to the core of a disagreement and reveal the nature of their contestation:

> That's how it is with me as well, the reason part of this is, a lot of my work is in postcolonialism and working with how words of indigeneity and identity and those things are colonial terms, and for me, it's about relation as well. So, I use these terms, because some people don't understand that [in] other ways. So, we have to accommodate…I

> appreciate that you do understand, and when I say well, how people see you, I don't want to ask you, if – I don't necessarily mean, how do you think that they see your physical…like your phenotype in that sense.

Bear responds with three abrupt "I don'ts":

> I don't use the word mixed. I think it means we have to believe in [it,] period, and I don't believe it. So therefore, mixed events can exist [but] I don't feel mixed because I was raised by my [names their Indigenous Nation] family.

Bear adds that their (non-Indigenous) father " was nice when we saw him, but he was basically detached," and that they saw his family infrequently. Further, "[t]hey were completely culturally foreign to me. They were the very opposite of my [Indigenous] family in every way. ... I also have my mom's name; like my mom raised us. So, all four of our, her kids have her name. ... So yeah, I don't feel mixed." Bear also notes that later in life,

> I got a lot of exposure to Anishinaabe people, and they were such close friends, they became like family. So, I would never call myself Anishnaabe, but in fact, I've had a lot of exposure to additional culture and people ... So yeah, I'm Native. That's it, you know, but ... I don't deny that I have European ancestors. But ... when people come in, and like, "Oh, I'm Native," and I'm like, but you've been raised by white people. Ancestry alone is not enough. I could never make a claim to be a [European] peasant, just because my great grandparents were [European] peasants. It's absurd. Must I want to go connect with those people, which is probably not going to be the case? I mean, I think you have to have the capacity to connect. And even then, it's hard, right? As you have just said, you have the

> capacity, meaning you have people that know you and recognize you. But if you are somebody who can't go somewhere and find people that know and remember your family, and are willing to re-establish relations, you literally have no capacity to connect. And you might not want to be making claims based on ancestry alone, because that is biologically fetishistic. So, this is why [you] wouldn't, you know, I mean, I think some people genuinely feel mixed, because they were raised in concert with one another.

Bear here offers a verbal hand to pull Fox over to Bear's own argument ("...even then, it's hard right? And as you have just said..."). But Fox feels a need to assert a *difference* between their positions; her response is passionate. At the same time, she makes a plea for understanding ("you know what I mean?"):

> But that is not the case for many of [us;] it's not, and I have to speak like that, because that's where they come from; understanding myself, I don't like to say the word "mix." I don't use the word "race" to discuss [things] as an anthropologist and a sociologist. That's not my language use, but I have to use certain languages. Because, that, I have to meet people where they are; you and me are not at the same place as people that I work with, in, you know, their oral histories so I can meet them there. And you know, and I get what you're saying, I understand that, that you feel that there's a certain protocol, perhaps whatever to claiming a certain relation to something and I understand that, but there are people; I feel like there are people who don't know some things about themselves and that makes me sad, because [there are] a lot of people who have this Indigenous ancestry; [who] didn't have a choice in what happened to them, how they got where they got, who raised them; it took them away from their connections to their territory, or their nation or

> their communities. And to deny them that isn't fair, you know what I mean? They want to establish these things. And, and that's good for them. I've seen people that I speak with crying, to want to connect to that, because they feel these things within themselves. And, and we are not people able to – it's like membership denying, you know, a placement in our tribes and in our nations. So, being cognizant of that, for me, is extremely important as who I am. And, and I find that to be extremely important; to have that, that compassion of who's, who's allowed to be what? And based on what criteria, because there isn't a right or wrong criterion to belong to, belonging, you know, what I mean?

Bear's response reinforces their own perspective by anchoring it in the primacy of the collective:

> I mean, again, I come back to the collective, the survival of Indigenous collectives, is more important than the rights of individuals. And if an individual can help support the survival of the collective, that's one thing, but I would never pit an individual right against collective survival. Absolutely. And I think that's partly what's going on in a lot of this discourse. So, none of us had a right, none of us had a choice in the decisions our ancestors made, we are all here. And by no choice of our own right. ... I don't know if you've read this book, also order a book called *Becoming Indian* [Sturm, 2011] … a lot of people find emptiness, cultural emptiness, and whiteness, that does not *de facto* make a claim to indigeneity an ethical choice. So dealing with the empty, the cultural emptiness of whiteness, the sense of disconnectedness, this is a pervasive problem across society, North American society, whether one has Indigenous ancestry or not, it's something that has to be dealt with. And I don't think the answer to dealing with that is to make a premature claim to indigeneity.

Fox acknowledges the importance of the collective. Nevertheless, she persists:

> But also … faulting people [for] whiteness isn't the answer, either. Like, because that doesn't, that doesn't fix something. So, like, somebody's really wanting to connect. It's not saying, hey, oh, I think my grandparents or great grandparents [were Indigenous] or I was adopted, and I want to connect, I don't find that troublesome or problematic. What's problematic is what the motives behind it [are, for example] to gain some kind of notoriety to use it for capitalistic gain. I absolutely understand. I'm all about collectivity as well. And I believe we should protect that. Because that, to protect that collective nature, and honor that collection of people rather than individuals of a group, I'm absolutely on board with that. But in order to get that group, we have to let individuals in, what happens when those types (original members) of the group pass away, and we stop letting them in? – we have nothing at the end of it. It's the same thing. We have to accept people and teach them and bring them [in] when they're willing with their good nature with their good intention.

The Bear responds with a forceful argument that begins with a "we" but opens a widening crevice between them and Fox. It needs to be quoted at length:

> I think we're …what we're struggling with, though, is the difference between kinship and citizenship ... You can say it's about good intention. But that's not the way citizenship rules work ... think about citizenship in, as in a nation-state, right? People are, many people are born into that citizenship. There are naturalization processes, [in] which they

do try to adjudicate your morality. … So, I think citizenship and kinship are not exactly the same. Yeah. And we have to figure that out in in Indigenous communities, you know; we have a rhetoric of citizenship, which has been forced on us, which we are dealing with; then we also have a rhetoric of kinship. And the other thing that I write about, in one of these articles, I'm going to send you; being kin, just like I have a lot of kin who are not native people, you do not have to be yourself indigenous to be good kin to indigenous people … the other thing is about the social construction of race, if race is socially constructed, and not biologically essentialist, it is possible that people have become white and there's no way out of that. And they can reconnect; they can make kin with their indigenous relatives. That does not mean they should be claiming to be something that they were not socialized into.

So, this is why I think we really have to think about the active process of socialization, the active process of reconnection, I do not think there is an inherent right to make a claim. It's all about connecting and relationships. And hopefully one can make relationships in a way that helps one to deal with some of the injustice as that happened in the past, but they will not all be dealt with in this lifetime … Because it's not a nuanced argument: it's not a nuanced view of how they are; I will not stand here and say they're just colonized; they're just accepting the imposition of colonial thought. In fact, I know having grown up in that community that we struggle mightily, year after year with [these] enrollment criteria, and we always have referenda coming up to change them. So yes, I do believe that we become who we are. And I think that we can keep becoming. But that's not totally an individual project; we are also reliant on what others will enable us to become how we connect to other people.

And I think we need to be careful about privileging our individual rights and our individual journey over the rights of the collective. And that's what I see happening in a lot of this individualistic Western discourse, about rights to identity, rights to belong; we've got collective rights … versus individual rights. And these things sometimes match up, but they don't always, and we have to pay attention to that what is being claimed as an individual, right, versus what is the collectivity claiming, and individual rights will not always supersede collective rights, and sometimes that leaves some people out. But that's it again; if you believe in…What I want to do, though, is listen to the internal conversations of the community in a way that is according them the benefit of having nuance. I am very allergic … to these kinds of non-nuanced[32] accusations, that indigenous communities are just engaging in colonialism. … Are their definitions around who belongs and doesn't ... completely colonial impositions? Because what I have seen in my work is that ... they are they're trying mightily to respond to the strong imposition of the colonial wave, they're swimming against that colonial wave, right? They're swimming hard, and ... when you're swimming hard in that ocean ... you just don't have the option of complete decolonization. Now that said, I've certainly seen corruption. I and others have spoken out against that kind of corruption. I do not like to see, for example, the disenrollment of people and families simply because you want to keep the rolls small, so you can give each family that's on the roll a million dollars a year. I don't want to see that.

[32] See my discussion, in Chapter 3, of Healey (2017)

Fox recognizes Bear's point about the *active struggle* of Indigenous communities to come to terms with issues of definition. It is important to see members of such communities as *agents*, not simply as programmed to enact colonial ideations. But reflecting on this conversation afterward, Fox was struck by a distance between the words in the transcript and the tone in person. In print, it appears that Bear was *sharing* things with Fox and being open about the details of their own background. And Bear was *explaining* where her positions came from – "you know?" There seemed to be a kind of generosity there in the transcript. Fox wondered if her own response to what she took to be Bear's tone might have reflected her own sense of vulnerability. But some creatures *are* more vulnerable than others, and need to pay attention to their gut feelings; it's part of survival. Bear is a powerful figure, Fox is not. Smaller, vulnerable creatures, however, often get taught, wrongly and deceptively, to ignore those feelings.

But Fox had not just sensed a tone; she also saw something as *missing* from Bear's discourse. Richard Wagamese (2019) wrote eloquently about the importance of humility and his gratitude for his Nation's way of knowing and its way of living on the planet. She missed a sense, in Bear's description of her own past, of gratitude to Creator for having placed people in Bear's way who offered community and nurtured Bear's sense of Indigeneity. She missed a sense, in Bear's certainty about who they were, of their identity as a *gift* to them; a gift being something different from a claim. She missed a sense of *compassion* for those not so gifted. And she sensed that not only was Bear *making a claim* about their own Indigeneity but that they were also treating something about that claim as *normative*.

Further, Bear seemed to be talking about those who "wanted in" to Indigeneity and Indigenous communities as if they were making *counter*-claims, to *entitlement*. Bear did mention those who felt lost in settler culture, but in words that made it appear that what they were suffering – what they were wrapped up in – was a *settler* syndrome. Bear's words seemed to Fox to give a sense that such people's lost-ness and seeking were not something Indigenous communities needed to bother with. Bear treated such seeking as *claims-making*; making a claim to entitlement from a standpoint of *individualism* and individual rights. Instead of seeing a yearning for community – not to *any* community, but reconnection to *specific* communities – Bear seemed to see people who wanted to *acquire* an individual *identity-good*. Fox knew there were people who fit Bear's description. She also knew there were those who were struggling with the mix they were born into or brought up in, who felt *pulled in a direction* rather than *wanting a thing*; who felt pulled toward reconnection rather than pushing a sense of entitlement, and who followed that direction in the face of disapproval and rejection because they couldn't ignore that pull.

Bear appeared at some points in this conversation to be pulling Fox alongside:

> "I mean, I think you have to have the capacity to connect. And even then, it's hard, right? As you have just said, you have the capacity, meaning you have people that know you and recognize you. But if you are somebody who can't go somewhere and find people that know and remember your family, and are willing to re-establish relations, *you literally have no capacity to connect"* [*Fox's emphasis*].

But how did Bear *know* this to be the case? Why did it seem to Fox as if Bear was objectifying those not so fortunate? Bear made two strong distinctions: between *kin* and *citizenship*, and

between *individual* and *collective*. How did Bear know that these were distinctions that people who were "mixed" *all* represented? Also, what were the things that these distinctions distinguished between? Kin and citizenship are English terms, from anthropology and political science. Individual and collective, likewise, have a long history in Western political and academic discourse (Williams, 1985). The way in which Bear used these terms seemed to Fox to turn the difficult particulars of seeking a path into more abstract categories. Fox worried about such categories being turned into politicized instruments of *lateral judgement*.

The end of the transcript quoted above was not the end of the conversation between Fox and Bear, and there were other things and other possibilities in that conversation. But at this point, dear Reader the Fox chose to end her tale. She felt exhausted, even afterward, re-listening to the recording of the conversation and re-reading the transcript. To her, the discussion seemed to have veered into a hermeneutics of suspicion, some seekers as if they were *not deserving* of becoming members of a community, or of a chance to get to know themselves and others. Fox agreed with many things Bear said, Bear's way of saying them seemed to Fox to have positioned herself not as a co-participant in a conversation but as someone fenced off by an assumed lack of something; by a prior *subtraction*.

Fox cried over injustices we can do to our own people; over unrecognized occasions of lateral judgement that could potentially extend into lateral micro-violence; that could continue the colonial legacy, deeming who is in and who is out, even if rejecting names and terms imposed by colonialism. In the case of her conversation with Bear, Fox wondered, was there a point at which

trading stories tipped over into argument? Could things have turned out differently if the stories had gone on longer, or had been told in some other way or context, or if other stories had been told? Could some other exchange of stories have broken through to trust and mutuality instead of vulnerability/intimidation or defense/contestation? For Fox, these questions related to the question why Creater might have placed Bear in Fox's way – but also to another question; why she, Fox, might have been placed in *Bear's* way. And given that Bear was a relation, a fellow-creature, what might be Fox's own *relational accountability* or *responsibility of care* for a Bear?

Fox could only conclude – for the time being! – that care meant for her, in this moment, to represent someone's words as fairly as possible, but that care does not mean suppressing disagreement – or caution. Fox thought of her own sense of vulnerability: could it have led to her into hypersensitivity? But Fox remembered again having been taught to ignore her gut sense of vulnerability at times, and how she'd had to learn *not* to do that, in times of peril. And there *was* an actual difference in social and institutional power between Fox and Bear; this was not a question of relational accountability between *equals*. Fox also thought about how airlines instruct passengers, in case of emergency, to put on their own oxygen masks first, in order to then be able to tend to others. At certain times, in certain situations and positionalities, some can offer care both proactively and *effectively*, while others, in other situations, might be better advised to exercise caution. Relationality and relational accountability are axiomatic for Indigenous ways of living, but actual relations may not always be equal, equally comfortable, equally safe, or equally ideal.

2.5 Stories and relations

As I wrote about the significance of narrative within research and as a methodology in the earlier parts of this thesis, I began to look more closely at conversation as a methodology using Margaret Kovach's (2019) "Conversational Method in Indigenous Research." Kovach warns that Indigenous methodology must be in accord with two major premises to be acknowledged as Indigenous. The first premise is that the storytelling, the gathering of knowledge and the process of conversation must be carefully considered but allowed to move naturally through an Indigenous paradigm that Kovach calls "research-in-relation" (p. 123). The second premise is that the conversation must be generated and located at the intersection of method, ethics and care, all of which together would create "the conversational method in action" (p. 123).

Oral traditions are an important source of knowledge gathering, but it must always be remembered that they are *teachings* grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems, and that they need to be *attended to*, not just studied and classified as anthropological objects. In Indigenous life, the sharing of knowledge between the generations (in order to assist those to come) often can take the form of storytelling, which to some Western epistemological ears may imply something recreational, communicating mere opinion, myth or fantasy rather than "fact". Or such sharing may take the form of conversation, which, to some such ears, might still imply the leisure side of a leisure/work binary – not involving debate, critique, or careful building of logical arguments. Such reactions show that there is still a need for a more thorough deconstruction (or at least, more thoroughly-explained) of what a "fact" is or can be in Western thought, despite the work of theorists such as Fleck (1981), Latour and Woolgar (1986), and

Latour (1993, 2010), and also for a further critical unravelling of the binary mythology of the "modern" versus the "premodern" (Latour, 1993). Such reactions show that certain prejudicial ways of understanding Enlightenment rationality still burden us and still need to be called out for being less than truly emancipatory (Clement, 2017).

Indigenous methodology as a paradigm

In Indigenous knowledge systems, storytelling is conversational, and conversation and story are intertwined as *dialogical* vehicles for learning, *and for testing* what one is learning. For Indigenous researchers, the center of the dialogical action is its relational value – how social relations are manifested through it (Kovach, 2019, p. 124). In this light, Kovach (2019) explores the conversational method as positioning Indigenous knowledge-gathering in two ways. The first is to set the framework of Indigenous methodology as a paradigmatic approach. This is a *theoretical* task (we are talking paradigms, after all), but also a *concrete* one (because Indigenous methodologies do not allow researchers to get away with separating off what is happening *in the research itself* from the intent and goals of that research, as an "externality" This task involves treating *the actual conduct of the research itself as a social (relational) and personal process* to which attention must be paid. The second is to align conversation as a method (p. 124) with the social situations in which it takes place, and to do so in a way that involves multidimensional *awareness*, not only of what "data" the researcher might want but of the *contexts* in which it is given meaning, and the ways in which the giving of meaning is a social process. This has some counterparts in Western research methods; especially in the social sciences; e.g. ethnomethodology and recent approaches to ethnography – and such insight is also beginning to penetrate the natural sciences (*e.g*. Frank, *et al.*, 2024).

Kovach (2019) sums up her sense of the relationality of research as follows:

> In a paradigmatic approach to research, be it indigenous or otherwise, methods ought to be congruent with the philosophical orientation identified in the research framework to show internal methodological consistency…if a researcher chooses to use an Indigenous methodological framework, the methods chosen should make sense from an indigenous knowledge perspective. (p. 125)

"Philosophical orientation," from an Indigenous perspective, is less a matter of advancing propositions in the abstract than of orienting one's research with one's life, with the community one works with and relates to, and the *lived issues* that members of that community communicate. While I have suggested that Indigenous knowledge systems can be shown to have an axiology, the whole point of that axiology is to ensure that knowledge encompasses the whole of life in its concreteness rather than abstracting certain procedures – mining them – from its ground. Kovach does an excellent job of defining the usual terminological suspects of research, such as paradigm, ontology, epistemology and methodology. I do not wish to re-define them here, but it is important to note that Kovach quotes Wilson (2001) as saying: "there are methods that are useful from an Indigenous perspective and some which are really built on the dominant paradigms, and they are inseparable from them" (Kovach, 2019, p. 124).

To become aware of such inseparability when it crops up, it is necessary to rethink another word among the "usual suspects;" a rethinking that, again, refocuses research on *what is happening here and now, and who am I and how am I situated as part of it.* This word is "protocol," and the new meaning (new at least to many *non*-Indigenous researchers, especially but not exclusively in

the natural sciences) refocuses on relational knowledge-making. In Western science, "protocol" has often been taken to refer to technical procedures; for example, a procedure that guards against "contamination" of data. More recently, especially after revelations of ethical breaches in scientific research dating back as far as the 1950's (e.g. "List of scientific misconduct incidents," 2024; also Noakes, 2021), the term has also been applied to ways of dealing with ethical and conflict of interest issues. There is likely to be overlap with the ethical requirements now being adopted by various mainstream scientific associations and councils (e.g. Tri-Council), but there are also some differing emphases. In Indigenous research, protocol covers ways of being reflexively aware and demonstrating respect through that awareness, though such "ways" may differ from community to community. Context, including local context, is important.

Such awareness includes being aware of how the concept of "research subjects" does and does not fit with the ethics of a given Indigenous community, and being aware of how doing research, whether with Indigenous people or as Indigenous people, involves *making relations*: specific relations to beings (human and other) involved in the research as conversation partners, co-researchers, communities and community members. It means being conscious of how those relations may change over the course of the research. It entails awareness of and respect for positionality, traditions, priorities, and ethics held by the people (or other beings) and communities one engages; their ways of governing their relations with each other and their ways of being in community. It means identifying and respecting disagreements in culturally-appropriate ways. It means to learn one's own positionality and its context, and to reflect that learning honestly and respectfully in relation to those one observes or who serve as one's interlocutors or conversational others. It means taking time to learn the specific procedures for

demonstrating such awareness and respect that a given community may expect. No-one and no-thing escapes the webs of relationality and the importance of reflexivity in an Indigenous paradigm, however far or near one is positioned in it, because in an Indigenous ontology, *the being of the world*, the *whole* world, is a web of relations, and even more specifically, a differentiated web of kin.

Here, I must return to the contest between "Fox" and "Bear" to respond to Bear's conceptual (but also political) separation of kinship (and perhaps also community) from citizenship. To be kin means to be related in specific ways (children, siblings and parents, whether adoptive or biological, cousins, aunties, uncles) but some kinship terms (e.g. the latter three) may be defined and used differently than in Settler society, and also differently across various Indigenous communities and Nations. Within a given Indigenous worldview, animal and plant species may also have differential kin relations to each other. Kin relations have rules, and to be kin – as I know from my own family – does not always mean sharing hugs and fuzzies. This is also true of Indigenous views of community. An Indigenous community typically includes human beings organized in terms of kinship relations, but may also include other beings seen as kin, if in differently ways (such as kin relations across species: humans and dogs, or humans and horses). Indigenous communities may also encompass members who are not kin but included on some other basis. What or who is included under the umbrella of community can be fluid. And, like kinship, "community" in Indigenous life also is not encompassed by concepts such as similarity, togetherness or common agreement (nor are non-Indigenous communities). C. James Mackenzie (2016, pp. 8-18) asserts that community (whether Indigenous, mixed, and non-Indigenous), is [also] about who you *fight* with about things that really matter to you (collectively).

"Citizenship" is a difficult word for me because it is imposed; an English word that speaks to legalities which don't always fit well with Indigenous histories and realities. I recognize that in the present Band and Nation framework as recognized by the Canadian settler state, questions of citizenship must be grappled with. I understand Bear's point that questions of citizenship cannot be treated as *identical* to questions of kinship. But they bleed into each other, For just one example, here is the Haudenosaunee Confederacy definition of citizenship (Haudenosaunee Citizenship, 2019):

> Haudenosaunee citizenship is enshrined within the Covenant Circle Wampum. That being, one is born within the protection of the Confederacy and Haudenosaunee citizenship is conferred by being born of one of the forty-nine clan families that exist within that circle wampum. To be clear, Haudenosaunee citizenship is conferred in one of two ways; by birth into one of these matrilineal clan families or through an adoption into one of these matrilineal clan families. (subsection, "Citizenship")

Further, citizenship in an Indigenous Nation or Band cannot be distinguished strictly from membership in a community. Again, they are not identical, but they overlap. Often, Band or Tribal citizens come to see themselves as a community – a collective self-identification and sensibility is common to citizen groups as well as to communities, and for that matter, families or clans. And that means when citizenship definitions and rights are negotiated and debated, matters of kin, family, clan or community are likely to be part of the mix, or to be influential in the background. My own Blood Tribe is an example. Each time Band Council elections roll around, there are complaints that certain families with members in the running are seeking council seats in order to distribute money and positions to family members. I won't speculate on how much of this is fact or perception, but it speaks to a fairly widespread sense that, for better

or worse, Band politics are often also family politics. That perception speaks to a persisting sense that citizen matters (council business, council elections) are family matters. That sense has likely suffered distortion over time due to the imposition of arbitrary Federal funding regimes, but expectations associated with it nonetheless could date back a long way in some form. Maybe instead of being simply condemned, they might need a long, hard look. Bear's suggestion that one can be kin without being a citizen appears to be aimed at protecting Band, Tribal or National *resources*. That too is understandable, but clear distinctions between citizenship, kin and community that would fit all Bands and Nations are unlikely. Coming up with such distinctions is also complicated by the fact that they have meant different things in Indigenous communities than they do to settler states, and it is not unknown for such states to define terms to their own advantage and then represent the definitions as objective, universal and stable. They are not. I think Bear senses this. We *are* on the same page about one thing: parsing kinship and citizenship is a struggle, and will continue to be one. The struggle may be unavoidable, but it needs to be kept in mind that it involves not only the politics of monetary and other resources, but a struggle over *meaning* – imposed, traditional, and contemporary – and how meaning is *made*. It is also a struggle over the *interpenetration* of kin, community and (for lack of a better word) citizenship, as well as distinctions between them; a fluid, changing struggle.

I believe we easily get trapped, through no fault of our own, in definitions, models or paradigms that unreflectively obey and convey Western ideas. This includes Enlightenment ideas about what societies are or should be, and also positivist and post-positivist ideas about what research methodologies and scholarship should look like. Wilson (2001) argues that the relationship between methods and paradigm is *made* and needs to be made, by and for Indigenous people,

through the protocols of encounter with our relations in specific settings, and in the lived process of research. Indigenous paradigms do not proceed from a set of abstractions but are created and continually re-created *relationally*. An Indigenous paradigm is no more a fence around a philosophical/methodological position than Haudenosaunee citizenship is a fence around a territory populated by atomized individuals. Instead, it is a *process* that takes place through ceremony, story, and conversation. It justifies and guides our engagement in particular kinds of relational experience. It can turn getting together to do an interview into *visiting*, which in Indigenous communities is a specific kind of activity, governed by social protocols, no matter how informal. Dear Indigenous Reader, I can feel you nodding your head reading that sentence. Dear Non-Indigenous Reader, if you do interview research, do you wish me to give a detailed *explanation* of what such protocols are, what they mean, and in what terms they are valid? Do you ever feel pressure to explain or justify to an Indigenous colleague how "setting up an interview" works in *your* world, and why *you* do it in a particular but *different* way? Kovach (2019) defines an Indigenous paradigm as,

> … justified by and in the *practice* of relationality, which is a matter not just of experience but of *living*. Indigenous paradigms are evident in and have their own being in and through the protocols of shared ceremony, community, conversational storytelling, and being-with-each other; through the relationships they establish and pass on (p. 124).

While working on this project, I became used to having some of the methods I have considered using or actually employed examined by others, and of course I have reflected on them myself. I naturally felt that if I was to do this work legitimately, I must adhere to certain protocols, but I did not like the direction in which terms like "data collection" "interviewee" and "data analysis,"

seemed to be pushing me. I was concerned with how such Western terms might work in ways incommensurate with the decolonization of methodology I wanted to work toward. Kovach's (2019) work became a companion that helped to validate and encourage my tentative and initial steps into considering storytelling and conversation – and also the arts – not as add-ons to method, but *as method*; as *central* to method in the case of my work.

"We need to talk" – about explanation, who needs to explain to whom; on whose terms

I began this chapter with a reference to summer as a time of growth, but also a time to be aware of the direction from which an enemy might come; an enemy who might not simply come riding in from a distance but who might appear *from within*. One thing that burrows its way into us and takes up residence there is the constant requirement for more explanation and better justification that Indigenous researchers and their research face within academic institutions; the notion that research carried out by Indigenous scholars starts out with a justification-deficit, especially if it challenges ideas long held by non-Indigenous scholars about Indigenous peoples, their societies and their histories (see, *e.g.* Steeves 2017 and 2021). This is a theme that runs through this thesis: the enduring burden of having to repeatedly legitimize Indigenous ways of knowing through rigorous work (to be more rigorous than is required of the average non-Indigenous researcher) that explaining Indigenous knowledge systems in full would entail. Kovach, for example, had to meticulously explain and define the elements of her research production and the rules and definitions of even the most pragmatic aspects of her work. As a student, I did appreciate the work that she put in to do that – sometimes having to explain things is good, and (as was pointed out to me) it can build bridges – but I feel like it is getting to be enough now. Yes, Kovach (2019) models a careful way to cover all the bases, to open communication with

others who don't share her perspective or approach, and this example may be worth following, but the recommendation to explain, not once but repeatedly, also carries a cost: it reinforces expectations that make a struggle for a right to do research, in the context of Western (especially positivist and post-positivist) rules for science and scholarship, so constant and so difficult.

I am cognizant of the reasons why Kovach (2019) is compelled to explain two things at once: how using conversational storytelling as an Indigenous method means showing how it aligns with Indigenous paradigms, and also how Indigenous paradigms themselves can be positioned in the theoretical literature as rationally valid. She also must explain that she recognizes how Indigenous methodologies are evolving as they come into engagement with western systems and standards for conducting social research, including qualitative research. She emphasizes that her methods are precisely selected for their alignment with the particular world view of Indigenous knowledge systems as well as their validity in terms of at least some broadly-accepted non-Indigenous social science methodologies; thus, their employment is *calculated* (2019, p. 125). She notes that when Thompson incorporated Indigenous methodology in their research (Thompson, 2008), it was to position it in terms of a specific Tahltan traditional worldview (an ontology), which made her engagement of theory with methodology a practice of dealing with theoretical assumptions without necessarily committing to paradigmatic constraints.

But because Thompson did not gather and theorize evidence in terms of traditional western scientific norms, their work was doubly vulnerable to being characterized as outside the tents of both acceptable theory and acceptable methodology. Similarly, the relationality characteristic of

Indigenous methodological approaches is vulnerable to characterization as biased (Kovach, 2019, p. 126). Kovach's response (2019) is to assert that, while each Indigenous culture's ontology may be somewhat different (for example, elaborating different relations to time or space), they share broadly similar systems of practical belief. And while Indigenous theoretical research examines how knowledge is created in particular contexts, and how what comes to be *considered* knowledge is understood in terms of basic but particular axiologies, it also stresses that Indigenous knowledge generally is land- (or maritime-) based, is co-created and does not rely on the single epistemological figure of the knowing subject through whose agency data is collected, analyzed, and converted into knowledge (p. 126; see also Clement, 2017 and 2020). It places a reflexive responsibility on all parties involved with the research to be cognizant of their spatial, emotional, intellectual and spiritual relationships.

Bear as a relation

When Fox sat down with Bear, they talked about many things. But Fox came away with a sense that Bear, for her, was from South, the direction from which adversaries come in Blackfoot belief. Fox had a developing sense as they talked that she needed to *explain* herself to Bear, but that her explanations might well receive a discount or might be used to trap her. Bear explained their own position very well to Fox, but implicit in Bear's words was a directionality – Bear also appeared to be explaining Fox *to Fox*. Bear was a highly intelligent and sophisticated if subtly adversarial interlocutor. Many of the things Bear said sounded convincing to Fox. Fox thought about how easy it might be to be drawn into Bear's world; about how Bear was perhaps playing a double game, discounting Fox's position but also throwing out a line to her labelled "articles you need to read" or "you know." It seemed that for Bear, Fox thought, the conversation was a

contest; perhaps a way to count coup, or to convert a possible adversary into an ally, adding to a count of allies useful against other adversaries.

But who had created Bear? Was it not the same Creator who made Fox and set her on her way? And who placed Bear in Fox's way? Or Fox in Bear's? As much as Fox found the encounter with Bear draining, was not Bear still her relation; part of the web of relations that makes the world in Indigenous ontology? Must all teaching come to us *only* through pleasant or at least emotionally-neutral experiences? Fox was ready to consider but not to definitively answer such questions. Was her energy drained in the encounter with Bear because Bear really was an adversary, or because Fox interpreted Bear's words and actions through a trauma lens, in terms of previous challenges and dangers she had experienced? Or was it both? Trauma and vulnerability, after all, can heighten one's interpersonal awareness (Newman, 2024). But is it perhaps ok for Fox to *take her time* with these questions, if to know in terms of an Indigenous epistemology and ontology means to know and understand things *in their own time*; when we are ready? There aren't fixed institutional deadlines to what Elders teach or what the world imparts.

The problem of time relates to a particular context that goes beyond Bear and Fox. The deadlines that structure the working of settler society and the settler economy wait for no-one (except the privileged), and settler institutions have networked into a mechanical monster that feeds on "accountability" but never gets enough of it. This monster also has invaded academic life. Its appetite is never satisfied. It is always hungry, always demanding, Wendigo-like (Walker, 2023, p. 58), *more and more explanation* and *more justification*. And the trick it uses to get that "more"

is to convince us that we are less members of communities than individual competitors in a never-ending rush to gain credibility; to be certified as possessing "excellence," and to attain coveted positions before somebody else does. If we do not start this race in the middle of a pre-defined road, we must double down, not just to do our own work but that of others; to explain our work, to justify it, in more detail, and ever more convincingly, to satisfy skeptical others and accountability apparatuses.

Circling back to story: conversational method, mutuality & growth in Niipowa-Saato'ohts

As I have already noted several times, Indigenous knowledge is often learned through storytelling. We tell stories all the time, and we tell them conversationally. Yes, there are formal events, ceremonial occasions during which an elder might be asked not only to pray but to tell a story. But story also serves as a vehicle of non-competitive learning and as a *way to be conversational*; a way to *visit* with each other; with our *relations*. Part of the problem with understanding story is the history of the definition and interpretation of narrative in European scholarship that took for granted distinctions between modern and premodern (Latour, 1993), literacy and orality[33] and between scientific communication and story.[34]

[33] Milman Parry and Albert Lord are often thought to have established a clear and universal distinction between literate and oral cultures. However, Nagy (2001) argues they did no such thing:

> For Parry and Lord, the opposition of literacy and orality – of *Schriftlichkeit* and *Mündlichkeit* – is a cultural variable, not a universal. Moreover, their fieldwork experiments led them to think of literacy and orality as cognitive variables as well ... [J]ust as orality defies universalization, so also does literacy. The mechanics and even the concepts of reading and writing vary from culture to culture. ... For Parry and Lord, the histories of literary and oral traditions, of literatures and pre-literatures, were interrelated. (2001, p. 534)

[34] Snively and Corsiglia (2016) challenge this partition.

Nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europeans exploring their own "folklore" traditions (often supposed to be remnant and just as often characterized as rural), as well as the narrative cultures of colonized peoples, concluded that they were dying in the face of modern communications, and that whatever "factual" content they carried was garbled or translated into "myth." Much energy was expended in collecting and classifying mythological figures and tropes, looking for universal or variant features. Functionalist interpretations of narrative (e.g. Oring, 1976) understood it variously as cementing social cohesion, reinforcing religious or other forms of authority, facilitating life transitions, or asserting continuity over time or across different dimensions of the cosmos. Structuralist analyses of narrative (e.g. Propp, 1968) attempted to classify basic story forms and components, treating content and function as secondary. What characterized many (though not all) European analyses of "folktales" was a tendency to downplay their truth-content (defined in terms of an opposition between myth and fact), and to focus on the figure of a "teller of tales" as carrying out a rather specialized social function, on the handing-down of stories from individual teller to individual teller, and on tale-telling as a rule-bound skill involving a rather formal co-operation between tale-teller and assembled audience. This reinforced an idea that story was a product of "tradition," was timeless (despite evidence of its adaptability) and yet a thing of the premodern past, reducing the complexity of its actual history and its flexible relations to modernity (Ramp, 2017).

These approaches did give useful insights into narrative. But to characterize all story in terms of a "come gather round and listen" model of special performance, or to treat its content in terms of a "fact or myth" binary, or to shift attention away from content to structural typologies, or to neglect its purposes for a list of predetermined "social functions," is to do it a disservice, as other

scholars of narrative (e.g. Polkinghorne, 1988, Witherell and Noddings, 1991) pointed out. The purpose of story is neither simply to convey scientific facts about things in objective terms, nor simply to make things up in fantastic form. In Indigenous cultures story teaches awareness and wise judgement – though it also has been shown to be able to convey highly accurate accounts of events over tens, hundreds, and even many thousands of years (see Steeves, 2021). Story-telling in Indigenous cultures does not rely exclusively on special times, places and occasions, nor specialized tellers or performers (though the stories told by elders are taken very seriously). It takes place in the everyday, is often informal (which is not the same as lacking rules) and mutual; it can be conversational in the sense that people *share* stories in the course of visiting. Stories do not "convey" knowledge as does communication in the western intellectual tradition; rather, they often tend to model and embody it. We hear and tell stories, and trade storylets in almost every conversation. Now, guess what: non-Indigenous people do it too. The difference is that in the Indigenous world, we aren't told to turn off the story tap in order to learn how to be scientific (though many of us *were* told in schools that science required that). Story in Indigenous culture is positional and relational, placing tellers and hearers in a shared web of knowing and living. I mentioned above that story, for Indigenous people, is about passing on knowledge in the form of contextual awareness (how to *be* aware) rather about than the collection and digestion of facts. At the same time, this sharing or passing-on of ways to be rightly aware is not subject to arbitrary time limits. The meaning of a story may take its own time, sometimes a long time, to reveal itself to a hearer. Stories and their tellers do not *force* meaning on others.

Like other forms of knowledge dissemination, knowledge communicated through story works best when it works to serve those involved, whether in research conversations, dialogue about politics, or in talk of everyday life. Conversation is key to this inclusion because it creates a deeply positional understanding, whereas formal presentations of scientifically-collected data, especially if inflected by positivism can often be tone-deaf to matters of positionality. To take into account the positions of all hearers and speakers involved is to center the process of connection and the maintenance of relationality. The relations between those engaging in conversation is characteristic of Indigenous communication of research; it goes beyond "rapport" or recreation to form a meaningful interpersonal and inter-positional connective experience. According to Kovach (2019, p. 127), this aligns Indigenous research paradigms with the protocols and the mutual care that legitimize Indigenous knowledge construction. Now, does *all* conversation in Indigenous settings really reflect these characteristics? Of course not: there is infighting in Indigenous communities scarred by the colonial legacy, and Fox did not feel particularly comfortable in her conversation with Bear. More broadly, Indigenous teachings over the generations have conveyed an awareness of how intentions, actions and relations can go wrong even in the best of circumstances, But the conversational aspects of story, the narrative aspects of knowledge, and the relationality of both, are well known in Indigenous social life as they are in the telling of the cosmologies which orient it.

From interviews to conversations

As I was writing this thesis, I often found myself in deep thought about the relation between my research journey and my changing sense of self. My research interlocutors, who had given me time and attention, and whom I came to see as partners in conversation, were also on my mind.

Initially, I had fixated on how my journey would create meaning for *me*. The conversations I'd had during visitations I'd done – which I'd thought of initially (before I began to do them) in terms of a general model of qualitative interviewing – had taken place some months before I started writing, and they had drifted to the edges of my thinking. And I had more immediate things to attend to. But after writing out my own stories, I knew it was time to return to them and transcribe them. I found myself transcribing hybrids: occasions that seemed to start out *as if* interviews – complete with prepared questions, though I indicated to my interlocutors that it was ok to take these where *they* wished to go – but ended up in a more conversational give-and-take; in particular, swapping stories. To my surprise (though in retrospect it shouldn't have been a surprise at all) there were many similarities between our stories.

All my conversations were with female-identifying people with half-Indigenous and half-settler identities, like me. At the time I engaged in these conversations, I was still thinking of my interlocutors in terms of a more general "Indigenous student" identity. They all were students (Fox's academic interlocutor, Bear, being an exception), but I came to see them as related in conversation with me. It turned out that there was so much more shared experience going on in our lives than the simplistic categories with which I had started the project could have predicted. Now, I can see how removed I was from myself and from the purpose of the work I anticipated doing when I planned my interview questions. I can see now how I thought I was going to look for and find "data" with which I could create a set of generalizations about "Indigenous students" that could translate into some quantifiable conclusion. I was wrong, but I could not have been more grateful that I was wrong. I was glad that I had delayed looking at the conversations for a long time. Leaving them until later on, I was able to look at them through a

new lens that clarified how I needed to be responsible to my interlocutors – *as* interlocutors responding to me – and responsible in how I defined and handled their stories. Creator always guides us, but sometimes without our awareness. But at other times, we must pay attention to what is happening, when it happens and how it happens in particular situations to discern that guidance. For me, it made a world (view) of difference.

I was fortunate in having decided not simply to ask questions and record answers during my visits, but to share stories of my own struggles with identity and its consequences when my interlocutors brought up theirs: struggles with not being considered "white" or "Indigenous" enough and having to prove things about myself to a variety of very different people in an array of different institutions or institutional settings. When I read my first transcript back, I saw right away the connections, relations, ties, and mutual positionalities that we shared with each other.

Here is CJ, my co-creator of that first transcribed conversation. Note how she is patient with my questions to her, which to me now seem stiff and stilted. But note how, when we both begin to "get going" my questions loosen up, and we start to engage in conversation.

Me: Do you hold Indian status in Canada?

CJ: No, but I do self-identify.

Me: If you're not holding Indian status, are you able to register for status?

CJ: No, my father is six, two.

Me: Question three, is being or becoming status important to you?

CJ: Yes, and no; I guess in one way, it would make it so that my fellow Indigenous people would not be able to pull the blood quantum card. But in the other hand, I feel like status is just a way for the government to control and decimate the population.

Me: Does, like, the status that you have or don't have affect how you feel about your identity?

CJ: At times, I find it really difficult when people talk about how they have status, and then they will lessen my identity as an Indigenous person by saying, well, you don't have status, so you don't count.

Me: Does that affect you personally? Like you not having status? Does that affect your identity personally? Like, does it make you feel less or more of something? Or does it have any implications? For you, not like for what other people feel, but just for yourself?

CJ: Yes, at times, you know, I find myself searching a lot more because I don't have that piece of identity that says, this is what you are, no matter what anyone says. So, it is easy for me to get stuck in a loop of feeling like I'm not good enough.

When I listened to myself ask these initial questions, I could tell I was doing so in "data-collection protocol"-mode, but as CJ became more expansive in her answers, I remember feeling a shift occur inside of me, knowing that feeling of not being good enough. Although I hold status, that does not protect me against feelings of not quite belonging, and I remembered listening to Brené Brown (in Restrepo, 2019; also qtd. in Darrisaw, 2019), saying,

> Belonging; we're wired for love, we're hardwired for belonging, it's in our DNA, and let me tell you, we are in the midst of what I would call a political and social shit show…it's a cultural nightmare, and we want belonging in the midst of this thing…let me tell you what belonging is, the opposite of belonging is 'fitting in' assessing and acclimating, belonging is belonging to yourself first, speaking your truth, telling your story…true belonging doesn't require you to change who you are, it requires you to *be* who you are (Brown, in Darrisaw. 2019, subhead, "Do I really belong, or am I just fitting in?")

What also resonated with me was Kimmerer's (2013) explanation of the Windigo syndrome (discussed in chapter 5) and its cure: "It is the Windigo way that tricks us into believing that belongings will fill our hunger, when it is belonging that we crave" (p. 308). This could not resonate more with me and my relations with others. We want to belong; we want to be readily accepted. Bear identified this to Fox as a settler syndrome, but it's not limited to settlers.

I asked CJ, "How do you see yourself then?"

> **CJ:** I feel like I have something to prove...as non-status Indigenous person, I have to go the extra mile to learn my culture or to practice my culture, like, just being indigenous isn't enough, if I don't put in that extra mile…I don't count."

Is this not how many Indigenous researchers must feel in the settler academy – that they have to work twice as hard and to be twice as good at what they do and how they explain it in order to be accepted as scholars and researchers? I told CJ that I remembered hearing a quote: "Indigenous people are the only people in North America that have to prove their identity" and asked her, "does that resonate with you?"

CJ: Yeah, that's perfect…it really hit home, because I don't know anybody else who says "Oh I'm Italian" ...they don't have to [then] *prove* they are Italian…but if you say you are Indigenous, people are like, "How much…can you prove it, are *you status* [Indian]?"

Me: How do you identify yourself?

CJ: I identify myself as mixed. So, when someone asks, I am very honest, that I am white, mixed native or [an] Indigenous person depending on who I'm talking to. Because older people don't know what intention is, it's mostly, I identify with my indigenous heritage as I've learned about it more. Because really, I don't want to associate it with my white-Indigenous or my white heritage.

Me: How do you feel that others identify you?

CJ: Most of the people in my life have made it very clear they identify me as white, and [they] get very offended when I even bring up my father.

Me: How does that make you feel?

CJ: [emotional] Sorry, I am gonna cry…it really makes me feel little…you can't say that to a child that "part of your family doesn't count just because they're not in your life full time" …so, now as an adult, I am willing to get into arguments with my mom's side of the family.

The conversation went on and I offered empathy, explaining that I had also experienced similar situations, my father being white and my mother Indigenous; both sides of my family were involved in my life, but the white side denied me my Indigenous identity (as explained earlier). I

find it interesting that some members of CJ's family believe she is white because her *mother* is white and that some of my family members believe that I am white because my *father* is, which reinforces the phenomenon that despite the potential of fluidity in racialized identities, White identity is still seen as dominant, and Indigenous identity as something to extinguish in accord with a "logic of elimination" (Wolfe, 2006). Referring to the erasure of Indigenous identity, Tuck and Yang (2012, p. 12) suggest that even Indigenous blood is restricted as an identifier because the persistence of Indigenous identity threatens settler access to land and natural resources. To be able to believe that the destiny of Indigenous people is to be dead or assimilated is to rest assured in a guarantee that the land is available to those who would exploit it.

> **Me:** The next question is this; [does] your identity as indigenous, whether status or not have significance for you in terms of future generations, either your own descendants or your community?
>
> **CJ:** As far as my own descendants, I know, because my kids are more mixed than I am, I don't know if that's the right way to say that. But I definitely want to keep them remembering where they come from, as far as being Indigenous, but also, that, really, our bloodline is going to wash away. You know, obviously, because my kids are white, they're always going to have that culture. And really, that's the normal culture of our day. But their kids maybe won't know that they're Indigenous or their kids, kids maybe won't know, it's going to be so slim that they'll have society also telling them that they're not.

As I went on to visit more of my conversation partners, people I was coming to think of as my relations rather than as interviewees, I noted that similar feelings arise about the self when people come from two distinct and divided groups of people, as do the children of the Indigenous/white dichotomy. It affects the way we relate (incompletely) to our families; there is

conflict and contestation over who we are and what we are made of. CJ's words most definitely did not fit the model of a non-Indigenous person intent on collecting a badge of identity because it might be a cool collectible, or of a "half" who has no real connection to a community and "no capacity" (Bear) to make a connection. She *wants* to connect; she talks back to those who disapprove of her wanting to connect, and she is very definite that she is Indigenous; not someone from the settler world who is lost and looking for …something. Despite her own questions about her identity, *she knows who she is* every bit as much as Bear does. And when she puts that out there in talking to her family and friends, she makes herself vulnerable. It is *work* for her to make her claim to Indigeneity, and she *risks* disapproval from others, along with her ties to family and friends to do so. Nevertheless … she persists. But it is sad to hear her final words above. This is how subtraction works. And subtraction hopes that people like CJ, who don't have official status, will just give up. We need to take care not to become unwitting allies of subtraction.

Kori came to my house to visit with me and have a conversation about her identity for my research, bringing her child with her to visit with my child whilst we discussed matters important to us (notice the shift beginning in my words here, away from "interview" to "conversation," and from "me and her" to "us." I asked Kori, "Is being status important to you?"

> **Kori:** It is. For me, in particular, I am in a weird space, I'm kind of walking down the middle path, so to speak, because my one side of the family is indigenous, the other side of the family is about as settler as you can get. And so, I feel like I'm a fish out of water at times because they [each] don't belong to one particular world or the other I belong in to and I've realized that walking that middle path, it's to join the two together. But

sometimes I feel pulled on one side, I feel pulled on the other and I didn't know about my particular heritage, it was a family secret until I was in my late teens.

I thought of myself and also CJ while Kori was relating these experiences and perceptions to me, because I was beginning to sense a theme.

Me. How does that make you feel about your own identity?

Kori: About my own identity? Sometimes I feel, I feel lost. I feel like, I either feel lost or I feel like I'm an, I'm a poser. I guess it's kind of like an impostor syndrome with that.

Again, the feelings of displacement that Kori voiced seemed to echo both mine and CJ's.

Me: Has official status recognition affected how you see yourself, like that you have, because you actually have status, does that affect how you see yourself?

I asked this question because I wanted to test on Kori something that I believed. I think that it *would* affect me if I did not have official status. I know in my heart that the fact that I hold a status card gives me comfort and justifies my ability to claim Indigeneity, especially given my white-passing fair skin. As I wrote earlier, I think that blood and status cards, for better or worse, have become important identity markers, and that has implications for those who are (and aren't) deemed indigenous.

Kori: It's changed over the years. When I first was in contact with my dad, and he gave me all the information and I got my status card, I didn't know what it meant. As the years moved on, and I learned more, and things started to open up, and the discussions were

happening, I realized how important it is, and how important it is for my children to have that information and knowledge as well.

So, Kori and I both felt that "Indian status" was important – practically-speaking. For me, it was the way the card offered me a vehicle of *proof* – carrying it gave me something I could show. But for Kori, the importance of official status appeared to be a bit different – *having* status spurred her to *think about* her status, to pay attention to what was happening in the Indigenous world, and to gather the knowledge that she now gets to share with her children.

Me: How do you feel others would identify you?

Kori: They would identify me as a white woman. When I started working with one of the bundle holders on the reserve, he did tell me, he had a dream from spirit that the white woman [was] coming, so he would just call me white woman. So, you know.

Me: That's what they see.

Kori: Yeah, yeah.

When Kori told me that others see her as a "white woman" I immediately identified with that, because no matter where I go, I am seen the same way, even on my reserve. If someone is not familiar with me, they assume that I am white. I did not go to high school and I do not have a diploma. When I decided I wanted to go back to school in 2008, I went to Red Crow Community College to do my upgrading. There was a moment when I was in a particular class one day that we had some people from the health center come to and talk to us about Indigenous sexual

health. After the presentation, the women who facilitated the class talked among themselves and it became clear to me that they thought I was white. One talked to her colleague, calling me a "Naapiaki" which translates to "White woman." To their surprise, I turned around and said: "No, I am not!" They had no idea that I was from Kainai, because of how fair my skin is. Besides the identity card, skin colour has also come to be taken as an identity marker, a racialized one, though its use leads to many mistakes – not only by the women who mistook my status, but also for people from Asian backgrounds who are mistaken for being Indigenous.

Me: Fair enough. Do you identify with a particular indigenous community or First Nations?

Kori: I am Mohawk. But I have done some learning [about] it within university and attended several sweats and sings with the Standoff reserve and one of the elders there, […] he was starting to show me some of the traditions, and said things happen for a reason. I got moved out of that situation. So now I'm just kind of waiting to see what happens.

Me: Okay. Do you identify with a particular way of life or with the land in a particular region?

Kori: Yes, I do. I smudge every morning. I have a deep connection to the earth. I have something that's come into my life that is very earth-based. And it's in my yard, actually. And I spend a lot of time there.

Me: Is there anything about your identity that you would like to be seen more clearly?

Kori: I would like, I guess…I think is it's a generalization though. I think that every everybody wants to be seen. Everybody wants to be heard. Everybody wants to be

acknowledged. First impressions, people just see you at face value, and they don't want to, they don't go below the surface. And I just wish people would take more time to go a little deeper, and understand.

Me: Okay, how do you want to be seen and by whom?

Kori: I spent a lot of years trying not to be seen. I hid a lot from the world. And now I have had that time to do a lot of healing and a lot of opening up. I know. My path is to bring both sides together, there has to be healing, we have to move forward together, or we're not going to move forward.

Me: What part of your identity is most important to you?

Kori: There's a couple of models, a whole bunch of pieces. There's my identity as a woman. There's my identity as a First Nations woman. There's my identity as a mom. And how I move through the world and the intentions that I put out.

Me: What are those parts of you like; why are those the most important?

Kori: I think there's a lot of oppression that has come along for women, for indigenous people of color. People who don't fit the standard image of what is the ideal human being. I'd like to know who the first person was kind of put that into place. Because I have a few words. How did this evolve? How did we get here?

Me: Do you feel that the dominant [colonial] society has an impact on your identity?

Kori: Yes, absolutely. I grew up in a family that was very strict, very strict religion. And that took precedence over everything. It is the Catholic faith. And they were one of the faiths that were predominantly in charge of the residential schools. I don't know the

history from my grandfather, I suspect he was in residential school. It's a secret. It doesn't, it doesn't get talked about. And now he's passed on. So that knowledge is gone. My father suffered with being beaten in school, hiding under his desk all the time, by the nuns. He never talked about it. But he carried those wounds deeply. He held everything in so tightly. He succumbed to cancer five years ago; he had a big, big tumor in his bowel, and his colon. But it's what may be in your DNA…and it gets passed on to the next generation.[35] And we have to clean that. Who has stopped the cycle? And unfortunately, not everybody can understand. But I just have that gratitude of, I've stopped the cycle…I don't talk to my mom very often. My oldest daughter and I have a very fractured relationship. And you know, my mom and I had a fractured relationship. Her mom and her have fractured relationships. So, it's, it's the same, but I'm stopping it right here. "When you're ready. Come talk to me when you can see both sides. Come talk to me" It's very toxic. And we're not doing each other any good. "You have space right now. Just know I love you." [Kori telling her daughter]

Me: That's it. That's how it's been for me. I've had to learn to put the boundaries up because I had to realize what the trauma created; co-dependencies…and I've had to battle that on my own and create that healthy healing. For me, I work with several healers, indigenous and spiritual healers and spiritual advisors to just get myself to a functioning level, you know, because I don't like to say, like, *I'm so damaged*; not like that. So those things are so deeply within us that trying to undo them isn't very easy.

Kori: I've lived my whole life in Survivor Mode. Same with me. And then I met this man. And he's like, you don't need to do that anymore. And he told me, like, when

[35] A claim supported by Gabor Maté (2022) though in relation to what he sees as an interplay between genetics and epigenetics rather than to genetics alone. See also Khazan, 2016.

> COVID hit, we kept her [daughter] home from school and I've kept her home from school and she's thriving in that environment. And he said to me, you can stay home she's your first priority. And I've never had anybody told me that, and there weren't all these expectations, like the house needs to be spotless. You need to have dinner [ready]; you need to do this, this, this, and then just focusing on "just be you;" just spend time with your daughter, just heal.

What becomes clear, even on the page, is how my questions to Kori in the segment above gradually became responses to what she had said; in particular, to the *stories* she was telling. What she said resonated with me, and that resonance became part of what was a *conversation* – and something to pay attention to; a dialogue that added information, rather than contaminating "the data." Kori's words resonated with me because, status or non-status, many of us not only have to function as parents, we have to function as parents who are *traumatized*; who have to deal with intergenerational trauma.

> **Me:** These things devastate me. And that's the reality of being Indigenous and parents and the past generations going to residential school and colonialism. That's it and all of these things. So, I am right there with you. That's why we have similar stories. Yes. Because we do, our bodies and our minds react similarly. That's the human condition, and being able to talk with people is healing for me and then I don't feel like I'm the only one.

So, I lost my "objectivity" here at the end, right? But that was a consequence of how these interview conversations, along with my own personal experiences in 2021, worked on me until I

came back to the transcribing, and came round to the conviction that I needed to include myself in my research; to challenge the distinction between researcher and research subjects.

Now, here is Jane. Note how my first question to her in this conversation segment is a rather abstract, “big picture one. But Jane takes it into her “growing up” story – and makes it personal.

> **Me:** Do you feel that dominant society [colonial] has impact has had an impact on your identity?
>
> **Jane:** Yeah, absolutely.
>
> **Me:** How would you think it has?
>
> **Jane:** [It’s] been making me feel less than, especially growing up and being different like from everything from pop culture to? I don't know, it was just ingrained in everything that wasn't diversity when I was growing up on TV, it was very much like, I hate to say these words, It makes my stomach turn, but you know, like a drunk Indian like that's how we were portrayed everywhere. So yeah, definitely growing up. That's how I always felt and I think I have social anxiety from that like going through post-secondary and doing presentations, I just always feel like I have to even now it's work. I am literally being told for the last three weeks at work like you are working too hard. You can work from home, other managers work from home. I know I get more stuff done from home, but it's like, I always feel like I have to be there early not even just on time. I have to be an example for my Indigenous because I'll always represent, I can't change my color. I can't add people are always gonna see me as some kind of not white. So, it doesn't matter. For me, I've just always felt like I need to work harder. And be better. I don't know.

Me: What is the part of being in like, indigenous culture [that] is most meaningful to you?

Jane: I think the most beautiful part about it is that the values and those core beliefs about like, there's no heaven or hell, like I really do identify and like, I don't like push my kids to believe a certain way. But I, I always encourage them to, like, you know, get educated on themselves with all of the different religions and like, pick what works for them. But I do like this simplicity of our culture, and how humble, I guess, we all are as a whole collective. It's just like, really, those are very similar traits. I'm finding across cultures when I do like, look, gathered information from other people and stuff. It's just like that basic kind of genuine authentic, like, be nice, like, just be a kind person. And when you dig more into it, like just knowing that you're a part of like the spirit world, and this energy really, it's not about evil or good or heaven and hell, I don't know.

Here, Jane indicates that she does want her kids to understand where they come from and what it means, but for themselves, on *their* terms.

And now, Nicole. Her story is one that resembles that of many "sixties scoop" survivors. Some were raised in households in which the parents treated them differently from their biological children. Others had adoptive parents who wanted to raise them as generically middle-class and white, and to do that, hid or suppressed information about their pre-adoptive backgrounds. Some tried to keep the lines open between their children and an Indigenous community, but that wasn't the norm, and it didn't always work out well – because the kids were visitors to the Indigenous community, brought there by strangers, and at the end of the visit, they went back to life in a

non-Indigenous household. But again, note that in Nicole's case, her adoptive (or foster) mother's absolute refusal to share the most minimal information about Nicole's background with her did not shake a basic conviction Nicole had about her Indigeneity. She grew up not knowing what her birth identity was, but she knew where to go looking for it, and did. Perhaps that was because her (adoptive or foster) mother fostered Indigenous children and had relations with people on the reserve. But the key thing is that whatever the reason, Nicole chose what was made for her a *difficult* path toward Indigeneity – and kept on that path, despite its costs to her.

Me: Do you hold Indian status in Canada?

Nicole: I do not. Not officially. Okay.

Me: Which family member is the person who would have [had] the indigenous identity?

Nicole: I'm not, I'm not sure I was raised in a foster home ... during the 60s Beat. And I have not actually fully explored, like my actual ancestry. Okay. But grew up in a indigenous foster home.

Me: With being raised in that care? What kind of information were you able to have?

Nicole: I think. My mother has just kept it to herself. And so, I ended up being adopted by that family. And she's just doesn't want me to actually explore it. And like, I actually honestly just started exploring it. And just registered, like to actually get my ancestry.

Me: Did you like do you know, your birth mother?

Nicole: No

Me: … and you don't know your birth father?

Nicole: no

Me: the people who've adopted you, they know that information?

Nicole: Um, they, my mother has led me to believe that I was adopted. But not really, like given me. Like, it's kind of tricky, because she really doesn't want me to know, like, my culture or anything. So instead of saying you were adopted, she says, I wouldn't even tell you even if you were…she just, she basically ran an indigenous foster home, like 90% of the youth and children that she cared for were indigenous.

Me: Okay, so she fostered that type of, like, cultural understandings for Indigenous children that she took in, like, she kind of let that in the home? Or, like, how would you explain it?

Nicole: Just, I mean, she was good to the kids that came into her home, and then she had contact with the reserve. And I mean, she would go out there and, like, her goal was for the kids in her care to go to go back to their families, many of the kids eventually did, and then she just she's got, like, a lot of connections on the reserve where she can go and visit and see how and I mean, it's been years we're talking like, she started doing that in the early 60s.

Me: If you were eligible to apply for status, would you?

Nicole: I'm not, I'm not sure um, my goal all, like all along, like with my degree and everything was just to kind of give back to community. I did my internship at the Blackfoot lodge. I've worked in addiction and mental health in a 40-bed facility. And my goal is just to kind of give back

Me: How does that make you feel about your identity as like, if you're indigenous?

Nicole: That's the biggest challenge, is not having, like, not knowing what my identity is. And I mean, my way of trying to just kind of have some connection is to go to like sweats and things like that. So, for you that like piece of paper of a government official telling you that your status is that what's important. It's more like what you do. It's more what I do.

Me: The question is, has official status recognition or lack of official status recognition affected how you see yourself? So not having status? Does that affect how you see yourself as an indigenous person?

Nicole: And I mean, I think I'm reminded that I don't have a status like, even when I was at the lodge, like I was there for four months, and I mean, there was constantly joking and it wasn't like, malicious. It was just like; I was constantly being called the whitest person and things like that. So, I feel like it was the kind of take it away anyways. Yeah.

Nicole: I think, honestly and like, even just the way I'm like feeling in my heart that there's just a lot of shame attached to my identity. Yeah. And even wanting to know more their shame attached to that. So, I think I'm just trying to be a good person in the community and trying to like help people and be empathetic.

Me: Why do you have shame?

Nicole: That I was raised with shame. Okay, so

Me: It's not shame about not knowing who you are, but shame of just, if this is what you are, it's a shameful thing to be?

> **Nicole:** I'm, I think, just ashamed of, like you've been wanting to know. Like, feeling like I'm going to upset people or feeling like sometimes. Yeah, I feel like yeah, a lot of guilt and shame around wanting to know…and see my kids like my son, particularly. And he's, even though he's like, fair haired and blue eyed, it is very much connected to the Blackfoot community. Yeah. And my daughter as well. I mean, she has she did her internship on the Blood Tribe, and was like, very welcomed and very prideful. I mean, she, she got to have that connection. And I was like, super proud and happy for her. Because it's just been there without, without really even talking about it too much. There's just that pride piece. So, I mean, if I was to, so there's almost like an over not an overlapping, there's like a duality between the contrast between my pride and my shame. Yeah. Because there's pride there. And then there's also shame. Like, right there.

Nicole's sense of shame is worth pausing over for a moment. She is ashamed of *wanting to know*; of *possibly upsetting people*. And yet, even without knowing her original connection to any Indigenous community, she wants to "give back" to the community she lives closest to. These are acts of relation; she is doing things that involve care; the kinds of things that would be expected of kin. But she is ambivalent about seeking citizenship. Here again, we see how her ideas of kin and citizenship are different from what Bear suggested those wanting a connection to Indigeneity are seeking. Nicole doesn't express entitlement to tribal citizenship. She doesn't take kinship to be something determined only by a DNA test. And she is pulled toward *acts of kinship* not to take something from an Indigenous community, but to give to it – and not in a high-handed way, but as a way of serving it. Patty Krawec, herself a "half," felt a pull to kinship too, and it led her not only to reconnection with her Indigenous community but along a path of awareness she calls "unforgetting" (Krawec, 2022), and with that, a path of service.

These conversations included very personal accounts of becoming and understanding as well as hurt and vulnerability. They have become close to my heart; I found that I could see myself in each of these women. I noticed that all of us had difficulties in knowing or feeling assured of exactly who we were, yet all of us did know. We weren't white women from the settler world who craved some kind of community or identity and fixated on Indigeneity to provide that for us. All of my conversation partners knew they were Indigenous even if their roads were hard when that knowledge wasn't validated or even made available.

We "halves" walk in two worlds. Identity can be ambiguous for us but something doesn't allow the ambiguity to shake our conviction. In the stories told to me, I see serious consideration of how identity is perceived and how those we encounter can impact how we feel about ourselves, even as we *know* in some foundational sense where we have come from. The commonalities of feeling that we share do not fit into neat categories, and if we want to belong, we express that differently and want it in different ways. But the direction of the wanting points the same way. We all felt frustration at having to "prove" our Indigeneity (see also McKay, 2021), and we all felt it was important for our children to know where they come from and to honor that in their identity. So, the gradually-ripening fruit of the summer season of my research has been that the story I would tell about myself is not just *my* story; it is also the story of others, my relations, who live with both ambiguity and certainty about who they are.

In this summer season, Fox came to understand how someone concerned with – relating to – the same issues could also become an adversary. And in the summer season, I came to understand

how easy it is for identity-policing to inform adversarial lateral judgement, and for both to work their way into systems of knowledge – and into our selves. But in this same summer season, I came to see how the time I had spent with relations, my conversation partners, along with my own times of trouble, ambiguity, exhaustion and fear, had led me to see the resilience within them and me, and between them and me; the determination that carries us along our paths, even when others tell us it is the wrong path – or that there is no path there. The commonalities we found; the connections we forged, the connectedness we felt, have made me more aware, more resilient, and more determined and that, too, is a feature of kinship.

In the next chapter, I will address a topic of importance to Robin Wall Kimmerer and to Michelle Hogue. Kimmerer, despite her sometimes-negative encounters with Western science, was trained in it as a botanist, and wants to find a way toward braiding together Western and Indigenous ways of knowing. She also refers to this as developing and tending a "knowledge garden" in which a space of possibility will be filled by a complementary planting of the two knowledge systems, as corn and beans were planted together by North American Indigenous people like the Haudenosaunee. She uses "a metaphor in which Indigenous traditional knowledge is the corn, and Western science … is the bean (Peterson, 2023, subsection, "Planting the corn and the beans together"). Hogue (2019; see also Ober, 2009) refers to honoring both Western and Indigenous knowledge systems as "Two-Eyed Seeing" or "Both Ways Knowing," and likewise sees a space of possibility in which Western and Indigenous ways of seeing and knowing could be brought together; not juxtaposed, but overlapping.

A spoiler alert: I remain somewhat skeptical of such potentiality. This isn't because of ideological commitment: my mind is not closed with a "keep out" sign deterring a visitation by the possibility. But when I consider it, I see danger signs. Perhaps this is a matter of my individual cast of mind, or my background, or my early schooling, or my later university experience, or something else individual to my experience. But wherever it comes from, I don't think that caution should be ruled out of order by definition, or because others have had different experiences, or because there are counter-examples. There *are* counter examples; an increasing number of them: non-positivist strands in Western knowledge systems, even in Western science; community-oriented research; research co-creation; people of good will seeking to build bridges between Western and Indigenous ways of knowing. But for a bridge to last, it is important that its footings be in something solid and its span well-supported – and also, the connection in the middle between the two ends of the span needs to be well aligned and well-fastened. In Chapter Three, I acknowledge respectfully the possibilities that others see, and I hope I show an ability to take them seriously. But my own contribution, here, and for now, will be to discuss an example of how things can go wrong – or at the very least, not quite right, in a way that arguably ends up reinforcing Western-centrism and Indigenous marginalization in knowledge-making.

The example is an ethnography that, when I first read it, recruited me as a fan. It was written by an American, a non-Indigenous academic at a settler university, about an Indigenous community on the other side of the world he lived in. But he flipped the kind of narrative one might have expected given that starting point, and he appeared to show awareness of his location and of his definition through others' eyes, in a way seemed to me very insightful; subversive, even. Then I came back to read it again, and started thinking to myself, first, "There's something not quite

right here," and then, "Oh nooo." The very people through whose eyes the author purported to narrate himself seemed, on my second and subsequent readings, to end up being used in an othering; *another* othering. It was an othering with a twist, but not a twist that invited in the people that the author (singular) studied. It did not actually treat them as full and willing partners in something new or something equally co-created for shared or equal ends. Rather, I came to see it as involving a move to "innocence" – instigated from one side.

I will explain...

CHAPTER THREE:
PICKING SWEETGRASS AND FALL-WEST/MO'KO-AAMITO'OHTS

Mo'ko is fall, it translates as the growth energy that is depleted, and points to a move from tending to harvesting and gathering-in. **Aamito'ohts** is west; its wider meaning has been lost, but it is more commonly known now as the direction of an upward incline, as the land all goes up to the west, toward the mountains (Duane Mistaken Chief, personal communication 2022). It indicates a time to pack what is needed for a journey.

3.1: Indigenous and western knowledge practices: cautionary comparisons

How to pick sweetgrass – and how to ask questions of it

The teaching of Sweetgrass in this thesis encompasses holistically what are treated in Western academic language as the discrete elements of a thesis: introduction, literature review, hypothesis, methods, results, discussion and conclusion. Sweetgrass (the plants and the earth in general) answer questions they are asked in the way they behave – but what we take in of what those answers can give also depends on what we ask and *how* we ask it. As noted earlier, Kimmerer (2013, p. 159) explained through her own experience how the scientific method can, at times, be applied in rigid and uncompromising ways in terms of what it interrogates, how it interrogates, and what it claims from its interrogations, and it can also sacrifice context. We cannot claim to "discover" things that have been occurring, have been known, and have been communicated long before we observe them – like Columbus "discovering" America. We cannot claim that it is a simple matter to describe things "objectively," as they are, when our seeing and describing is shaped by our relations to what we see, to those who have taught us and examined us and those for whom we write. Experimental procedures and scientific observation can lose by what they rule out as much as by what they allow in, as when, for example, "translating plant

knowledge" is dismissed as unviable because plants are not to be treated as communicative. Kimmerer discussed the standard process in which her graduate students were expected to present a thesis proposal to their supervisory committees and have it approved before moving on to their research, telling a story about a student who proposed to examine the treatment of plants in terms of a hypothesis that "if we use a plant respectfully, it will flourish…If we ignore it, it will go away" (2013, p. 159). That hypothesis was met with eye-rolls and statements such as "I don't see anything new here for science…There's not even a theoretical framework" (p. 159). One committee member treated the hypothesis as immediately falsifiable: "Anyone knows that harvesting a plant will damage the population" (p. 162).

However, the issue here goes deeper than an alleged omission of a theoretical framework or a "faulty" hypothesis. In positivistic models of the natural sciences, methods are treated as valid if they facilitate an *objective* identification of relevant data and rational analysis of such data. And data is treated as valid if it results from careful, empirical examination of observable *objects or events* with strict controls in place to weed out spurious elements or extraneous variables (see, e.g. Reed, n.d.). *Relational* knowledge – that is, knowledge that depends on and foregrounds the researcher's own personal relation to the subject-matter and to others with involvement in it – tends to be discounted, and is often treated as "anecdotal" or subject to bias. Many kinds of social relations involved in teaching, learning and research are, in such standard models of objectivity, regarded as externalities to be factored out of the products of research. This model has often been unreceptive to the social sciences for precisely this reason, and because the social sciences generate knowledge that "fails" to meet the criteria of strict repeatability – because social situations are usually not strictly repeatable. The philosophy of knowledge and the social

sciences, in turn, have generated critiques of knowledge-generation, especially in the *natural* sciences, pointing out how that knowledge is situated, relational, and embedded in unrecognized social processes (*e.g*. Feyerabend, 1975 and 1978; Latour 1999 and 2010). These critiques, and the legitimacy of social science methods that depart from natural-science norms of empiricism and objectivity, are now accepted and widely taught in the academy. However, it is possible that some institutional procedures for validation of research projects, especially of methods and verification of data, may still face a legacy of evidentiary norms originating in positivist natural-science iterations of empiricism and rationalism being taken as a standard against which to measure non-positivist forms of research, especially if administrators feel pressure from politicians, pundits and moral entrepreneurs calling for "tightening-up" of research standards in higher education (e.g. recent attempts to stoke a moral panic about "wokeism" in universities).[36]

By contrast, traditional Indigenous knowledge systems may be honored in "reconciliation" discourse, but they are typically honored *as traditions*; as cultural artifacts, rather than as viable partners – or rivals – of westernized science. Research proposals featuring a commitment to "objectively" testable generation of "repeatable" data are at times still treated as inherently more valid, at least in their aspiration, while Indigenous knowledge practices, when treated as resources rather than as artifacts, may be subject to critical and skeptical review, except in terms of their value to teaching practices tailored to Indigenous students. Important as such teaching practices are, the idea that Indigenous knowledge systems are mainly of illustrative value is a

[36] In wider academic (and also, especially *non*-academic) circles, non-positivist researchers in the humanities and social scientists also felt a chill from responses to the so-called "replication crisis" in psychology. That crisis referred specifically to non-replicability of statistical results in experimental psychology, but in popular discourse and online forums (Reddit being one), studies in other fields and not using methods remotely similar to experimental psychology, from marine biology all the way to Indigenous history came under assault from multitudes contesting their "factual" basis as an online search of the term still attests (see, e.g. Taylor, 2021).

subtle form of institutional undermining: treating one form of knowledge as inherently valid unless shown to be otherwise, while another is treated as invalid until proven otherwise, except for pedagogical purposes. Kimmerer and her student had to ensure they were plausibly following Western natural-science protocol in order to have an experiment deemed "scientific" and thus valid. They had to adhere to the "way things are normally done" (to a set of academic *traditions*). However, the yield of their research *did* provide a plausible falsification of the supposedly self-evident and scientific statement that "Anyone knows that harvesting a plant will damage the population." That statement failed to explain what *actually happened* in the experiment, which involved recording the results of traditional forms of care for and harvesting of the plant, versus results from control plots in which plants left alone. The cared-for plot of sweetgrass thrived, while the control plot didn't. The thriving sweetgrass, apparently "undamaged," was being harvested, but was also being shown specific forms of honor and respect that were not offered to the failing plot. The plants that were incorporated into a relationship of reciprocity and respect, continued to grow, apparently undiminished, despite the harvesting (Kimmerer 2013, p. 162). This example highlights a hegemonic Western axiom until recently normative in agricultural and forestry sciences – that to "harvest" is a zero-sum game in which a population is subject to subtraction (which must then be cancelled by subsequent "inputs" of genetically-engineered higher-yield strains, industrially-produced fertilizers, irrigation and herbicides). Such exclusive axiologies work to undermine the possibility of bringing western and Indigenous ontologies together (or even into mutual critical engagement), in ways that might possibly benefit both. We can imagine how such mutual engagement might thrive like cared-for sweetgrass. But as long as embedded infrastructures of institutionalized practices persist that construct and reproduce certain kinds of academic authority housing and

supporting Western axiologies while distancing Indigenous ones (as artifacts to be studied rather as modes of study worth considering in their own right), we will not *know* if it will thrive. New practices of axiology need to be grounded, literally and figuratively, in order for Indigenous knowledge systems to flourish and cross-fertilize with Western forms of knowledge.

Fall-West in an action research approach

Harvest occurs in the fall, the time in the medicine wheel when we see the yields of spring and summer. We see what worked and what may have failed during the time of growth. In this time, we see what is important for the growth, what needs to be tended to, how the environment affects us and what changes we can make to ensure a more successful yield (Hogue, 2012, p. 94). Can we see the "harvest" of knowledge as similar to the harvest of sweetgrass; as an act of *mutual care* rather than an *extraction* of data? Can this be done even if we acknowledge that we cannot control all the phenomena that make up systems of knowledge in their interaction with methodological practices and the incredible complexity of our interactional, institutional, cultural and natural environments?[37] It is important to acknowledge that our experiences and circumstances, and the experiences and circumstances of others, enter into the most "controlled" research environments, especially in the social sciences. The treatment of these experiences and circumstances forms part of what allows some research to be deemed successful and other research to be "failed". But the directional west (an upward trek that entails preparation and

[37] Note that common English language definitions of "nature" and "culture" as *different* terms already assume that they are poles of an axiological *binary*. Thus, to use language like a "community" of interacting plants, fungi, insects and humans in an academic setting risks devaluation, because "community" is commonly seen as a human construct; an artifact of culture, not-nature. Thus it is that the language of community, and awareness of the incredibly rich interactions of non-human and even non-mammalian interactions is only now appearing in the literature – as a new scientific "discovery!" But such interactions were always there, and many were long known to Indigenous people, as Kimmerer asserts. But Indigenous knowledge of them was long treated as myth or magical thinking.

effort by a body of people and animals), in association with the autumn season, reminds us that we have a relational responsibility to all things and to each other. As Hogue (2012) explains; "If we as educators come to a better understanding of what works, we might be better able to cultivate the academic garden for success or 'harvest' for Aboriginal students in post-secondary education." (pp. 94-95)

Hogue (2012) asks: "How can holistic traditional Aboriginal teachings and concepts be bridged with the discipline of science and the contemporary university learning and environment…such that we get the best harvest, with the highest yield?" (p. 95). I hear Hogue, I see her. However, my question is a little different, because we still may run the risk of centering Eurocentric ways of knowing, even in posing the question as above. Is the *highest* yield always the *best* harvest? What definitions of "best" may get recommended or not, in what possible *circumstances* and not others, in what *ways* and not others? What we need to ask is how to bend Western science and the standards of academic evaluation that support it in such a way that the latter can be *grounded* enough to accept and to seek a level of companionship with Indigenous ways of knowing, Again, it is within the humanities and social sciences where such bending is now taking place, but in the academy, these disciplines face discounting not only from the natural sciences but also from moves within their own disciplines to re-discipline the social sciences along natural science lines (e.g., in response to the "replication crisis" in psychology: see Wiggins and Christopherson, 2019). They also face discounting where administrative practices still take for granted something like a positivist research standard; for example, that research is data-extraction; that it entails the "isolation" of a research target or "field" location and a distanciation of observer and observed in the interests of objectivity; that such distanciation is *possible*).

Czuy and Eagle Speaker (2019) include a key third step in their Critical Braid approach to developing knowledge. It involves integration of Indigenous and (relevant) Western knowledge. Here, I must confess that I do not feel entirely *ready* to braid together Indigenous and Western knowledge practices and systems. This is an important unreadiness to acknowledge. This thesis is being written not only in terms of *seasonal* time, or in stages of knowledge-development, but also within a personal time-frame, a *life*-time, in which I am still learning, and still coming to terms with what I am learning. This is a time frame which I do not stand outside of and cannot assess "impartially" or objectively. I am in relation to time and *embedded in* time, and the time I am in is *itself relational*: it is woven into my relations to my past, my community, all my social relations, and my experiences. These do not unfold at my own will, but in terms of their own time. In this thesis, I am writing out the process by which I have *come to realize* my Indigeneity and to *become* more aware of all my relations, and my positionality. I am not yet ready to harvest the full yield of this process as Kimmerer and Hogue might suggest I consider doing in the coming season. I am not yet ready to see with two open eyes the good that is in the Western academic and scientific tradition and to bring it together with the Indigenous knowledge traditions I am learning. I am still too wary. I have become aware of too many ways in which Western norms and protocols of scholarship have discounted Indigenous knowledge and barred the way into it; the too-many ways in which they still do that. So, in this chapter, I will not (*yet!*) try to reconcile the two. I may hint at how that reconciliation could occur, but my task here and now is to show how, even in Western scientific work that claims sympathy with Indigenous perspectives, some very subtle but very real forms of self-deception – and deception of others – can still occur. In short, I will discuss an example of the kind of trap into which Western science

– even Western *social* science – and even Western social science that *claims to repudiate positivism and Eurocentrism* – can still lead itself and can also lead me, and us.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) were at work, successfully, long before colonization-initiated attempts at abocide (see Verwaayen, 2013, note 1).[38] Decolonization is now underway, including within the academy, but it needs to become more systemic, more embedded, more *infrastructural*. As Tuck and Yang (2012) state, decolonization is not (or is *more* than) a metaphor. My experience and understanding of the contexts of decolonization, their sources, and their ongoing development, are things that I have had to accommodate; as will my children. We have had double the work to do as indigenous learners in bending and shaping our minds to conform to the dominant canons of "understanding". The academy needs to bend more toward us. I have had a life of learning two ways of being and trying to reconcile them, often without help and without adequate resources, and yet I can still be seen as a lazy Indigenous person in settler society, and I also risk being seen as "too troubled" for academic success because of the damage that comes from the contradictions of growing up Indigenous in a colonial society. Hogue (2012) has explained the struggle faced by many Indigenous students to be able to adapt to mainstream education; facing ridicule and being portrayed as dumb or unable to learn because their unique needs are not being equally met within and outside the classroom (p. 95). Indigenous students are expected to leave their Indigeneity at the door, and to join the flow within the mainstream of western academic life (Hogue, 2012, p. 96).

[38] Verwaayen traces the origin of the term abocide to a paper by Harry W. Daniels, former President of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (Daniels, 1998).

I know I am not the only one who felt out of place in the academy, the only one characterized as a "magical thinker" or the only one to feel isolated because most students did not share the same reality and the same barriers that I and other Indigenous students did. Because we were taught that we cannot speak freely about what we know and how we know it, we were often forgotten about. Why do we have to twist and turn our already marked bodies and minds to "fit" a Settler matrix? As I read Hogue's words, "in order to succeed, their culture had to be suppressed," I highlighted them and wrote in the margins "this is traumatic." It is traumatic because *we cannot be ourselves*, because what we know we are is *not good enough*, because we have to be *untrue to ourselves*; to *do violence to ourselves*, to be *valid*. As noted earlier, Hogue also wrote, "[E]qual merit [needs to] be given to both ways of knowing and, again, this has not historically been the situation in western education (Hogue, 2012, p. 96). It still is not "the situation" ten years after Hogue's paper was published. In this Fall season, the harvest of knowledge is diminished by the unequal inability of two paradigms to stand together as co-operative equals. While an increasing number of Indigenous social and natural scientists, even mathematicians, argue that Indigenous science and math can yield the same results as Western scientific methods, the Indigenous paradigm still too often remains on the back foot of validation.

Critical braiding – third strand: responding to Eurocentric ways of learning

The third strand of the Critical Braid addresses dominant ways of knowing in settler academic institutions. It must address the hegemonic sciences of enduring imperialism and colonization (Czuy & Eagle Speaker, 2019, p. 6). As I wrote this thesis, I became increasingly aware of how difficult it is to find purchase in the paradigms organizing western academic work; how easy it is instead to encounter a rigidity that makes it difficult to allow IKS equal acknowledgement in

western academic institutions, or for western ways of knowing to bend down to the land where IKS exist. However, my purpose in this section isn't to ridicule western knowledge systems, but to explore, through an example, how they can persist in resisting decolonization, even despite a commitment to reconciliation. I will try to understand the persistent limitations of western ways of knowing and methods of research in relation to a persisting colonial legacy that hinders an ability to decolonize whilst instead seeking relief from settler guilt.

Indigenous Knowledge systems have been used metaphorically when welcomed into tutelage, without acknowledgment that they can stand on their own without "translation." Czuy & Eagle Speaker (2019, p. 6) emphasize that Eurocentric ways of learning require that the researcher use a particular set of arrangements (protocols) in order to be able to find "truth" through one's work. These protocols involve the use of a "scientific language" and terms such as validity, facticity, isolation of variables, answers and truth criteria that are not exactly congruent the language of "equity, cooperation and solidarity" because they factor out the stories and the relations that link indigenous strands of knowing together. Eurocentric ways of knowing are not equipped to answer questions of Indigenous knowledge because they lack this sense of relational being. Indigenous researchers and learners need all the resources of their culture and sense of spirit to position themselves within their work with reflexive responsibility and to maintain the integrity of land-based knowledges and resurgent histories of indigenous people on their own terms, rather than in terms of the norms governing settler academic institutions and committee reviews. The hope of the third strand is that Eurocentric scholarship can bend toward accountability and acknowledgment; that it can recognize and act on its own need to undertake an epistemological, ontological and methodological bending in order to engage with other

worldviews in equity. Brittle strands break and weaken the braid. Pliability can be an academic virtue; "academic rigor" can induce a rigor mortis of learning. The danger of the third strand is that non-Indigenous researchers trained in the Western scientific tradition can, even with the best of intentions fall prey to unexamined or unanticipated Eurocentric assumptions or to a temptation to construct a self-validating role for themselves in relation to Indigenous peoples they encounter; a role that may situate them as still-privileged interpreters, excuse them of certain responsibilities, or relieve them of guilt.

"Fuck nuance"

"Nuance" is something that could be thought of as an ally of pliability, introducing bendability or "give" into scholarly thinking. But is it a deceptive ally? According to Kieran Healy (2017), nuance has come to be perceived as a gold standard in recent sociological theory; a signal of virtue that gifts scholars and researchers with the ability to contribute some "good thinking" to the discipline (p. 118). However, Healy is less than enthusiastic about this approach to theory, arguing that the notion of nuance in sociological thought has become a nuisance detrimental to an understanding of the already "complex, rich and multifaceted" world that is the subject of present-day research and analysis, and that it lends itself to displays of "sophistication" that do little to advance theory (p. 118). Healy isn't suggesting that nuance is useless in itself, but rather that it has become canonized as a substitute for good sociological work. Rather than "cutting through" complex issues, it seeks to add "complexity" to a topic rather than focusing on what is *interesting* about it (p. 119).

Healy acknowledges that sociological theory and practice is heterogeneous and wide-ranging but argues that interesting work comes from the ability to expand or change the scope of the field *via* new ways of formulating or clarifying problems and new methods of research and analysis, not simply by adopting an allusive style that privileges a self-referential labyrinth of second-guessing or attempts to cover all the issues or counter-examples that critics might raise. "Generative research programs develop theories that aim for a fruitful combination of simplicity and strength…those theories are built with the aid of techniques, methods or rules that actively constrain what one can say" (Healy, 2017, p. 119). Healy suggests that theorizing under formal logical or methodological demands actually *fosters* the creative development of new ideas: thinking in terms of a theory's limitations *promotes creative freedom* because of those limitations. How does Healy make this claim? Don't the constraints imposed by a particular conceptual or theoretical framework *shut down* creative theorizing? Healey says no: without a framework for conceptual analysis and theoretical synthesis, how can one know when one is testing the boundaries of a particular theory or theoretical paradigm? The fashion for "nuance," says Healey, avoids grappling seriously with questions of theoretical coherence or limitations by avoiding theoretical work. Instead, it accumulates detail.

It is true that sometimes, nuance may take the form of "inclusion" (as when Indigenous knowledge is added and stirred into a mix of "perspectives" on a topic without seriously considering whether it operates systematically under different rules than non-Indigenous thought). Indigenous knowledge systems do not flourish when non-indigenous theoretical constraints are weaponized against them, but they can also wither when they are "included" *without serious effort to understand* how they might challenge non-Indigenous concepts and

paradigms. “Actually Existing Nuance” may freely offer questions or observations that can *appear* to have theoretical or methodological weight but that offer little help when applied to difficult questions like “how can we decide if it is possible and theoretically defensible for an Indigenous researcher to find sociological insight by finding herself?” On what (different) *theoretical grounds* would that be convincingly possible? Healy suggests that Actual Existing Nuance – nuance as a flavor of the week or a theoretical fashion (*e.g*. “inclusivity”) inhibits actual theoretical engagement with difference. It appears free-flowing but it demands endlessly that *more be added to* ramify or complexify even already rich theory. What it doesn’t do, however, is to ask *why* this endless demand must be made (p. 119).

This being said, what does Healy’s objection to nuance mean in terms of this thesis project? I began this chapter by noting Kimmerer’s (2013) account of how an academic review committee responded to a research project proposed by her students to test the claim that “if we use a plant respectfully, it will flourish…If we ignore it, it will go away” (p. 159). The proposal was met with the response, “I don’t see anything new here for science…There’s not even a theoretical framework” (p. 159). This might seem to be the epitome of “theoretical constraint.” Would Healy, too, have rejected such a proposal as lacking theoretical rigor or consistency? But note that the committee didn’t *ask questions* or *seek to understand if* there was theory at work in the proposal; they simply rejected it out of hand, annoyed at what they took to be the *lack* of a (Eurocentric) theoretical framework. Kimmerer (2013) noted one committee member’s generalizing dismissal: “Anyone knows that harvesting a plant will damage the population…you’re wasting your time…and I am afraid I don’t find this whole traditional knowledge thing very convincing” (p. 159). Kimmerer (2013) suggests instead that the

committee's problem in this case was *a refusal to think theoretically* about the limits of their own theoretical assumptions:

> Getting scientists to consider the validity of Indigenous Knowledge is like swimming upstream in cold, cold water…they've been so conditioned to be skeptical of even the hardest of hard data that *bending their minds* [my emphasis] towards theories that are verified without the expected graphs or equations is tough…couple that with the unblinking assumption that science has cornered the market on truth and there's not much room for discussion (p. 160).

Alternatively, the committee could have said, "we are striving to be more inclusive; could you provide us with more detail about how this project will help reconcile Indigenous traditional and modern scientific knowledge." But this response – the "more nuance" response – would have been just as bad in Healy's view, because it assumes that "reconciliation" is just a matter of *adding* "Indigenous traditional knowledge" to an *existing* mix – and stir. The committee that Kimmerer's student faced was at least honest about refusing to do their homework!

Healy (2017) suggests that "[t]he most important thing about theory is whether it is any good…demands for more nuance actively inhibit the process of abstraction that good theory depends on" (p. 121). By "process of abstraction," Healy does not mean simply coming up with a generalizing idea or making universalizing claims. "Abstraction is a way of thinking where new ideas or conceptions are formed by considering several objects or ideas and omitting the features that distinguish them…abstraction means throwing away detail, getting rid of particulars" (p. 121). Healy also claims that abstraction is not metaphorical (and yes, I think to myself reading that, decolonization is *also* not a metaphor!) According to Healy, working in

abstract theory begins with nouns: people, places and things, so to say. As we selectively remove from consideration certain ways in which they differ, we can *begin* to develop generalizing hypotheses by creating "abstract concepts" such as "furniture," "honor killings," and other social phenomena (p. 122). These abstractions are then used to make "explanatory generalizations." But we shouldn't *begin* with generalizations in the way Kimmerer's student's committee did.

However, unlike the committee which rejected Kimmerer's student's proposal, Healey is prepared (at least to a degree) to consider the possibility that processes of abstraction can fail, and that the theories erected on them can prove unworkable, uninteresting, or open to serious challenge, quoting Rosen (2014): "In this process, an immediate challenge is that 'nothing…requires that ideas formed in this way represent or correspond to a distinctive kind of object…that is, there is no guarantee that the abstractions we come up with will be of any use for us" (qtd. in Healy, 2017: 121). Abstractions can be built carelessly on linguistically-particular and taken-for-granted ways of seeing the world (for example, as a world of *nouns*) taken to be universal. I think that Kimmerer (2013) contests *both* the limitations of the Western tendency to abstraction *and* the "do your thing – but in more detail please!" imperative of "nuanced" thinking. She does so by explaining the logic of the statement that "if we use a plant respectfully, it will flourish…If we ignore it, it will go away" on its own terms. She is met with the counter-statement that "anyone knows that harvesting the plant will damage the population" (p. 159). But this statement simply *ignores* the *different constraints* that structure the logic of her student's statement and assumes that such knowledge is only valid when it fits the constraints of what is taken to be accepted agro-botanical theory in "western science."

Traditional knowledge is not without its own specific grounding – and rules – and to the surprise of the "scientists", when the project was carried through (without the committee's blessing), the sweetgrass plots that were controlled and *not* harvested were the plots that were failing while the plots that were tended to and picked (harvested) with care (respect) were thriving. The evidence was recorded rigorously, but the criteria for *deciding what counted as evidence* (in terms of *relationship* in the student's work) were different. Details that the scientists would have removed (or not even been aware of) were taken seriously. The sweetgrass flourished when harvested traditionally and with respect. The committee could have taken the effort to *ask*, not for "more detail," but instead for, say, an explanation of how the project was *grounded in a system of knowledge* that wasn't simply waiting for science to accept it, but was developing on its own terms and out of its own logic. That might have meant Kimmerer and her student facing tough questions about experimental controls. Or it might have meant the committee facing tough theoretical questions about the limits of (post-)positivist scientific logic as employed in western approaches to agronomy or botany that its members assumed to be normative.

Healy's "Fuck Nuance" is an attempt, written in terms of western philosophy of the social sciences, to advocate for a place for serious theoretical work at the points of collision and contention of different theoretical paradigms. It is an attempt that can be interpreted, as I have tried to do here, as helpful to a respectful but tough and honest encounter between Indigenous ways of knowing and western science. But at the same time, I remain uneasy about it. Much depends on how thoroughly Healey and his readers would be willing to put *all* of their theoretical commitments on the line; to entertain *fundamental* ontological challenges posed to those commitments by Indigenous knowledge systems, and not to slide by those challenges by

deeming Indigenous knowledge as not serious or not consistent with (their version of) "theoretical rigor.".

3.2 *The Meaning of Whitemen*: a methodologico-political critique

In his book: *The Meaning of Whitemen*, anthropologist Ira Bashkow (2006) explains how the historical presence of the "Whiteman" has impacted the lives of the Orokaiva people in Papua New Guinea (PNG). He does so by researching and writing an ethnography in a way that seems to constitute a new landmark in opening Western anthropological theory and methods to a serious consideration of the sense-making of Indigenous cultures. Bashkow seems to de-center the (western) subject-position of the anthropological researcher, taking that subject-position to be a *topic* to be problematized, not a *resource* whose validity is assumed. Bashkow argues for paying critical attention to the significance of modernity (including the concepts of production and of race) not only in the formation of anthropological theory but also in the "Whiteman's" *contribution* to the understanding that the Orokaiva develop in their own perceptions of the "Whiteman" (2006: 9). Bashkow explains that when the Orokaiva speak about "the Whiteman," they use race as a foil to articulate the differences between them (selves) and the Whiteman (the other). They then *use the white "other" as a way to help explain themselves* and to understand their own lives. What the "other" is, the self is not. The Orokaiva, see themselves as moral beings with close kinship ties and reciprocal relationship obligations. This perception helps Orokaiva to feel morally well, as opposed to their white counterparts: "to Orokaiva, the moral issues whitemen present are not indifferent . . . in so many ways, the lightness of whitemen

seems to represent an absurdity, violating the principles that actually govern Orokaiva moral life (p. 94).

It appears that in making this argument about the Orokaiva, Bashkow is granting them *agency* to develop a view of the "Whiteman" in terms of *their own* knowledge system. For Bashkow to recognize himself in others' eyes means, in turn, that he is decentering his own anthropological selfhood. However, a key issue here is how Bashkow himself formulates the actual creation of othering. He determines that this Orokaivan moral high ground is in contrast to the "white ways" of the colonial West, and he acknowledges that he himself uses his "position of power" to make power moves. In playing the reflexivity card here, he appears to move beyond nuance to critical reflection on his own theoretical standpoint, but my argument will be that he ends up denying the need for reflexivity and (re)creates the ignorance of and resettling of settler colonialism, *via* a set of *moves to innocence.*

Methods and knowledge in moves to innocence

O'Reilly (2012) explains in her paper, "Ethnographic Methods" that it is reasonable to allow and encourage ethnographers to be creative in their writing process, but she stresses that it is centrally important for ethnographers to explain *how* they did what they did to gather and formulate what they take to be their knowledge (p. 224). Bashkow (2006) begins his ethnography by addressing his place in relation to the lives of the Orokaiva as that of a "white" presence within the ethnographic field (p. 15). This allows him to question his "whiteness" as an influence that may distort his data collection. He frames this issue of his own presence in his

methods as "whiteness and methods." He explains that he will approach the issue of that presence in two ways (p. 15). The first is to address the issue as Malinowski would have, which was to dive in and have faith that all will be revealed! The second is to address the *weight placed by social science* on the manner in which objective knowledge is produced. O'Reilly (2012) suggests that in this process there should be a section to address methods more concretely and substantially than in a paragraph of acknowledgement, and that discussion of methods should include a full and concrete description of where, how and from what positionality the ethnography was done (p. 224). Bashkow (2006) clearly believes that he has done this: he explains his methods in five pages in the beginning of his book. He notes that his reflexivity does not set a stage for countering authorial power in any simplistic way; in fact, he will still employ an empirical and ethnographic focus and is not writing an autobiographical piece. But he adds that his "whiteness" is an important *method* that he finds of value to his ethnographic research as it helps to explain the *authorial asymmetry* that has been historically embedded in colonized communities.

Fabian (2001) explores how claims of objectivity are embedded in and implicit within ethnography, arguing that this implicit objectivity needs further reflection. Unlike Bashkow, Fabian concludes that ethnography is *inescapably autobiographical*: you cannot fully remove yourself from your position as ethnographer, because the ethnographic voice positions you as an *authorial* voice (p. 12). As Michel Foucault (1977) argued, this authorial voice is socially, institutionally and discursively *constructed* as authoritative. Therefore, ethnographic authority is typically ever-present and hard to subvert. Foucault himself could not escape becoming an authorial authority, despite his refusal to autograph his own books. Bashkow's anti-

autobiographical self-positioning is antithetical to Fabian's argument, and also to my own approach to writing this thesis. In writing the second chapter of this thesis, I wrote about myself. An issue arose when I explained to my supervisor how I was including myself in my work, explaining that my interview material would be used as background support of this self-inclusion; that I would emphasize how these interviews were interactional occasions in which I was fully involved as an interactant, friend, relation, and fellow-learner. He replied "As much of the interviews that are at all relevant and that you are able to include, the better, I think, even if only to reinforce how your own experience isn't *just* your own experience." But how can it *not* be my experience –and what is the meaning of the word "just" that my supervisor appended to it? It's true that I don't have the ability to coexist collectively and consciously with my interlocutors such that I can make the case that they are *all* of one mind with me, and me with them. I write about me so that others within similar situations may find some comfort for themselves, perhaps, but I don't write about others in order to display the truth of *their* being nor to show how their being simply mirrors my truth. I can only be the author of my experience; of my perceptions, of my thinking, even if and as I myself exist only in *relation* to others.

It is also true that my subject-position has been shaped by family, communities, friendships, relationships, conflict, all in the context of institutions, and of colonialism. But I can know this only through my own (auto-) biography. I can include a collection of similar narratives from the history and present activities of colonialism, but my perception and experience and assessments of these are subjective and positioned. It is not fair of me to assume that my experience is anyone else's other than mine. I can consider others' accounts of their experience in light of mine, and possibly re-evaluate mine as a result. Yet my ability to do this derives from my ability to *relate*

these experiences to mine. Further, my very being is *relational*, as is (in other ways) my own experience and my very being: this is foundational to Indigenous knowing. But even though I deeply connected and identified with those with whom I had conversations during my research for this thesis, in writing a *thesis* within the constraints of the English language, the subject-object relation, and western academic protocols of authorial responsibility, I cannot escape the particulars of my authorship and of the (subject-) positionality that shapes it. I also cannot escape testifying to my experience concretely as my own. All research involves a view and an interpretation of events; a person's *positioned* interpretations of others. Even if you include, verbatim, the words and thoughts of others, your interpretation of them, the experiences you narrate, and the position you take in narrating them, are still yours. If Bashkow can use his "whiteness" as a methodological device, then I most certainly can take up (and I *cannot escape* taking up) my Indigeneity and personal history as integral to my method and approach. The difference between me and Bashkow is that my taking up my Indigeneity is not intended primarily as a literary or a methodological device only, and I do not then deny it by claiming to do something that is "not autobiographical." It is my entry into an Indigenous way of knowing that is unquestionably central to this thesis and wider than the limits of my personal history and experience; a starting point that has to be openly *acknowledged* but also must be *accepted* for me to make this thesis make sense.

Bashkow (2006) does addresses his own positionality, and he does acknowledge unequal power dynamics between himself and those he studies by naming his "whiteness" as a model of authority. However, it appears he believes that by making this acknowledgement, he becomes less subjective and (ironically) *more authoritative* as a researcher. This move to authority could

also be termed a move to innocence (Tuck & Yang 2012). How so? After all, Bashkow acknowledges that an attempt to shed or erase one's positioning within power relations is in itself a power move; one which in turn highlights the asymmetry of power that researcher and researched inhabit. Given that knowledge is produced in terms of power relations and is itself a form of power, Bashkow (2006) argues that it is best to understand how power is viewed and activated with respect to the subjects that the researcher wishes to know (pp. 15-17). Bashkow asserts that, although white people have been leaving Papua New Guinea (the national context of his study) post-independence, the legacy of whiteness is still intact. The problem is that Bashkow seems to *relieve himself* of implication in unequal power relations by the way he acknowledges them, *as if an acknowledgement reconciles them and allows one to move on*. But a serious explanation of ethnographic methods should entail more, given the key point that *expectations structure ethnographies* as well as that mistakes are made during them.

By contrast, O'Reilly (2012) asserts the importance of understanding in detail how ethnographic knowledge is created, giving it integrity by including an extended discussion, in a highly descriptive methods section, of its concrete production in the course of actual, power-inflected social relations (p. 224). She further claims (p. 225) that representativeness is an important issue in the production of knowledge: ethnographers may at times make claims as if they are representative of a particular group under study when they can be shown to constitute generalized statements that can be applied to *any* group; the implication being that such claims may be supplied by ethnographers out of their own sociocultural matrix of understanding. Bashkow (2006) describes an occasion on which he hears a Orokaivan man named Kingsford Penunu make a joke about a bundle of taro he is carrying, quoting him as saying, "[t]he heavier

the burden, the closer our lives come to the earth, the more *real and truthful* they become" [my emphasis]. This remark elicits a round of robust laughter. Bashkow is not sure why the joke is humorous, so he asks, "Why?" Kingsford Penunu explains that the heaviness of the load keeps the Orokaiva from floating to the moon, adding that the Orokaiva are heavier and more burdened than the "light Whiteman." Bashkow takes this specific statement to mean that the Orokaiva *in general* see "Whitemen" as "light" in the sense of being free from obligation due to the power they possess, and therefore able to move more freely in life (p. 65).

Bashkow's interpretation is tempting to me – it would fit nicely with an interpretation of "Whitemen" as agents of colonial relations. But knowing that temptation reflexively allows me to pause. Here, Bashkow is narratively *producing* a "shared belief" as something that *factually* exists and that is characteristic of Orokaivan culture – something *specific* to Orokaivan culture but *generally* held by all participants in it. He transforms Kingsford Penunu's joking claim to knowledge of burdens and Whitemen, a claim made on a specific occasion and in a specific context, into a "belief" held in common by all Orokaiva as a shared belief. He "gets" the joke (with a little help), but is the particular *way* that *he* "gets it" and then generalizes it necessarily the way in which Penunu's *other hearers* get it? What about Penunu's reference to "real and truthful" lives? O'Reilly (2012) suggests that the move from making an interpretation to claiming it as a point of information often involves a process of *inference* – inferring that a point of information can be applied *to all* within a group under study, which she terms a "Jonesville-in-the-USA" approach to ethnographic knowledge (p. 226).

Sperber (1985, p. 10) argues that for ethnography to be recognized as having merit, it must inescapably interpret cultural phenomena. Because such phenomena are taken to be a medium through which meaning is expressed and conveyed, it is imperative to understand where that meaning comes from. But this is where the understanding of the ethnographer and that of the subjects of study can part ways. The way that the Orokaiva come to understand themselves, according to Bashkow, is in the way they have come to understand the meaning of "Whiteman" historically, and in the way their proximity to white men in time and space has contributed to their understanding of who they themselves have come to be. Sperber explains that as description becomes interpretation, the products of interpretation become *representations*. I would suggest further that representations can easily and unreflectively turn into *typifications*. Bashkow concludes that the figure of the "Whiteman" is a vehicle with which the Orokaivan people can conceptualize who they are in contemporary Papua New Guinea in the context of the lasting (if at times distant, inconsistent, or weak) impact of British and Australian colonization. "The Whiteman," according to Bashkow, is a typification produced and used by Orokaivans, but it is arguably also an element in *Bashkow's* typification of Orokaivan sense-making.

In discussing the interpretation of ethnographic material, Sperber (1985) points to the importance of being alert to "indirect speech," which can take different forms – *e.g*. a paraphrase or a summary – and may also include elements absent from an original utterance (p. 16). This can result in narratives being *reported* differently than they were *recorded* as they occurred. Bashkow mainly speaks with one man (Kingsford Penunu) but in his ethnographic reportage he translates his interaction with him in a way that convincingly represents these encounters as having happened *in fact* in the way he describes. Bashkow states at the beginning of his book

that he wants to show how the "other" comes to see the Whiteman, rather than how the typical white male ethnographer comes to know the "other." This is a key assertion to examine in light of the way in which O'Reilly (2012) assesses ethnographic validity. She argues that an emic (insider) perspective is more important than an etic (outside observer's) stance in understanding an ethnographer's account of what is going on, as in the joke about taro for example. Bashkow's readers are expected to accept his account of the joke as *both* emic *and* etic: Bashkow purports to describe how Orokavians as "insiders" to each other understand each other's shared *insider* meaning of "Whiteman." At the same time, his description *rises above the situation* in order to *explain* the joke to outsider readers. Bashkow (2006) describes himself at first as an outsider who did not understand how the joke was funny, until his informant (Kingsford Penunu) explained what his understanding of the "lightness of Whitman" meant to them (p. 65). In Bashkow's telling, Penunu's explanation, delivered *situationally* to Bashkow, morphs into "their" understanding historically and *generally*. While Bashkow states right away in his methods discussion that his ethnography is neither autobiographical nor confessional, he *does* refer to it as self-reflective. And while his ethnography did strike me as mainly written in terms of a realist genre, as discussed below, there are elements of a confessional narrative at work in it that arguably are flagged by his reference to self-reflection. But his use of the terms "self-reflection" raises an important question: do "the Orokaivans" thereby become "things to think with" in Bashkow's own process of *self*-understanding?

Realist and confessional tales

In this section, I will describe how Bashkow constructs what appears to be a realist form of description and explanation, while still importing elements of a confessional narrative into it, and

how his claimed *avoidance* of confessional autobiography can be understood as resembling a settler move to innocence as defined by Tuck & Yang (2012). Van Maanen (2011) uses the concept of the "tale" to describe and distinguish between different approaches to creating ethnographic texts. He suggests that the "realist tale" is the most popular narrative model used by ethnographers to describe and explain their encounters with the specific cultural practices that they observe (p. 49) It is the narrative style that ethnographers use to promote the authenticity of their depiction of a set of phenomena they experience as constituting a particular and coherent "culture" that demonstrably exists as such. Van Maanen (2011) argues that confessional tales are not meant to replace realist tales or vice versa; they stand side by side. The formal methods involved in constructing a realist tale provide a way to decode (or re-encode) a corresponding confessional tale, while the confessional tale situates the formal methods of the realist tale (p. 75). However, one without the other may introduce an unacknowledged distortion either of the ethnographer's relation to a people, or of the culture the ethnographer wants to describe, or both.

Van Maanen (2011) describes how realist conventions in anthropology diverge from those in other types of work. For example, in journalism, realist tales are meant to be representative of the conversations that occur during discourses that are considered *social* (p. 45). Realist conventions are understood as occurrences operating in the flux of space and time in the actual construction of narratives. However, Van Maanen (2011) typifies four particular realist conventions as the most ubiquitous: *Experiential Author(ity)*, *Typical Forms*, *Interpretive Omnipotence* and *The Native's Point of View* (p. 45). *Experiential Author(ity)* is characterized by the lack of the author's presence in the work: the final written product focuses on primarily the actions of the "subjects;" what the "members of the studied culture say and do." The author

becomes absent to create a text that would focus solely on what has been observed (p. 46). The convention of *typical forms* presents a narrative as a documentary type of observation, describing everyday happenings within a given context *via* detailed accounts of rites, rituals and practices. Such texts rarely include dramatic or anecdotal accounts because this style relies on the simplicities of life; the ethnographer often uses categories to outline what is written about, then writes up field notes in terms of the ethnographic lens they provide (p. 48). *Interpretive Omnipotence* characterizes narratives written to privilege the ethnographer's interpretation of events and observations. The ethnographer is the definitive voice narrating how the culture being studied is to be understood. Van Maanen (2011) quotes Malinowski's sense of ownership over his particular ethnographic voice: "it is I who will describe them or create them" (p. 51). This style is considered rare (thank goodness). Van Maanen notes that in realist tales, there is often little room for questioning, if the ethnographer's point of view or style of observation is taken to be correctly portraying a culture. The convention most favoured by Bashkow is what Van Maanen (2011) refers to as "the Native's" point of view. Similar to what O'Reilly (2011, p. 49) refers to as an emic point of view, this convention can be vital to the faithfulness of ethnographic knowledge to the culture about which it is produced. The Native's point of view can enable ethnographers to paint an evocative and accurate picture of events and routines that members of a culture engage in, using both direct accounts and explanations. Van Maanen notes that an identifying feature of the native's point of view is descriptions of perspectives that "Natives" hold *about themselves* and their actions (2011, p. 49).

The description Bashkow (2006) gives of the Orokaivan awareness of continuity in terms of the taro cult (p. 184-185) is an example of use of the Native's perspective in that Bashkow shows

how the Orokaiva have their own reasons for doing what they do, from their own perspective. He draws attention to the importance of a feature of the taro cult – seeing taro as alive and quasi-sentient – to the Orokaivan worldview. He explains it as a positive identity-function; one that reinforces Orokaivans' continuity with their ancestors to the extent that the traditional tool used in cultivating taro is still used in preference to more modern alternatives. Gardening taro is a favorite Orokaivan pastime because it gives and renews their consciousness that they are part of a land inhabited by their ancestors and that they treat the land in much the same way now as then. As part of this identity, the Orokaiva believe that, in their cultivation of taro, their ancestors are there with them, protecting the taro for them. While Bashkow does make an effort to stick close to his claim that his ethnography is not confessional, there are moments when even he cannot resist telling a confessional tale on himself (2006, p. 165), recounting how he had to be told the proper etiquette to be used when entering a taro garden: you do not wear your shoes in the garden!

Because of the large amount of "contextual framing necessary to the presentation of the "native's point of view," Van Maanen (2011) argues that there is temptation to engage in "epistemological stunts" and that "not a lot of ethnographers account for it" (p. 50) However, Van Maanen acknowledges a Geertzian argument that ethnographers need both to describe natives' actions and also present natives' *own accounts* of what they make of those actions from their own perspectives (p. 51). For Van Maanen, the best way to elicit the perspective of natives within ethnography is through their own voices, including their use of clichés, slogans and setting-specific utterances. Bashkow does a decent job of expressing such clichés in Orokaivan descriptions of the "Whiteman". His re-telling of the joke that Kingsford Penunu told about the

lightness of the Whiteman is an example of Bashkow trying descriptively to capture local "truisms" about the meaning of that lightness from an Orokaivan perspective. He explains that the robust laughter the joke elicited from the crowd showed that its meaning was intersubjectively shared by the members present. Bashkow appears to capture a theme common to Orokaivans (or at least those Orokaivans present at the time) concerning their understanding of the "Whiteman" as free from burdens. The wording used to convey this theme (to the extent that it was repetitive), like other Orokaivan tropes about the whiteman (*e.g*. the brightness of their skin and characteristics of the foods they eat), could be said to resemble the clichés that Van Maanen (2011, p. 50) recommends including in ethnographic accounts.

However, a realist approach to description still cannot escape issues of positionality and interpretation. The meanings of "whiteman" that the Orokaiva have developed since the beginning of colonization are treated by Bashkow as ways in which the Orokaiva have come to know themselves that are now *permanent* fixtures of their culture (Bashkow, 2006, p. 185). In claiming this, Bashkow is giving the reader *his understanding* of how "the Orokaiva" understand themselves. In particular, his description of "Whiteman" tropes as now constituting both *general* and *permanent* fixtures of Orokaivan culture could be argued to perpetuate an idea, once common in academic studies of Indigenous people and still common in Eurocentric popular discourse, that Indigenous cultures are to be conceived of as static and homogeneous.

Bashkow (2006) positions himself outside of the colonial project by describing himself as relinquishing power – though he also claims that this is never fully possible (p. 17) – and as

conveying a sense of himself as an "immigrant" alien to Papua New Guinea. He portrays himself as an other in a way that elides implication in colonization; he is a newcomer, and *not* embedded in colonial rule. This persona can be described as an example of a "move to innocence:"[39] it allows Bashkow to avoid addressing in depth the possibility that his travel to Papua New Guinea and access to the Orokaiva was facilitated by institutions with deep colonial roots, and that he is implicated in such institutions and their histories by deriving benefit from them. Further, it is possible to read his account as one that can easily be "flipped," from one that portrays his own viewpoint as "alien" to the Orokaiva, to one that portrays (to his European, Australian and North American readers) the Orokaivan viewpoint as "alien" *to him* – and to his readers – even if he wishes to retain the identity of a sympathetic interpreter. Thus, even if he "innocently" portrays himself as the alien "other," his self-distancing (as a temporary immigrant) from the history of academic and other forms of colonialism recreates the condition of othering. This can be linked to what Tuck and Yang (2012, p. 18) call colonial equivocation; "a more nuanced[40] move to innocence [in] the homogenizing of various experiences of oppression as colonization…calling different groups 'colonized' without describing their relationship to settler colonialism is an equivocation, the fallacy of using a word in different senses at different stages of the reasoning." They also note that,

> [e]quivocation is the vague equating of colonialisms that erases the sweeping scope of land as the basis of wealth, power, law in settler nation-states. Vocalizing a 'multicultural' approach to oppressions, or remaining silent on settler colonialism while talking about colonialisms, or tacking on a gesture towards Indigenous people without

[39] Specifically, it is reminiscent of a common claim, variations of which are made by many present-day non-Indigenous Canadians: "*I* didn't steal your land, make the treaties, or run the residential schools! *I* can't be held accountable for the actions of people long-dead before I was even born!
[40] Healey (2017)!

> addressing Indigenous sovereignty or rights, or forwarding a thesis on decolonization without regard to unsettling/deoccupying land … The shuffling of Indigenous people between native, enslaved other and orientalised other shows how settler colonialism constructs and collapses its triad of categories. (p. 18)

Papua New Guinea is not, in Bashkow's telling, a settler state, and he is careful to give a brief history that charts the changing forms of colonial rule to which it was subjected. But having done that, he is free to set aside the possibility that something systemic was at work in these changing forms, and free to modify the parameters defining an "immigrant" (versus a settler, a colonial police officer, a magistrate or some other agent or historical beneficiary of colonialism); free to reconstruct the situation of his encounter with the Orokaiva so that he can appear to be doing heroic work, at once recognizing who he is to the Orokaiva (White, and Other) while rising above implication in the power structures out of which the figure of the "whiteman" arose for the Orokaiva. But by evading his own postcolonial positionality (as part of an "autobiographical" approach he rejects), he has in effect disguised himself. That disguise in turn becomes part of a descriptive apparatus which means that, for all its insight and its emphasis on their active world-making, his account renders Orokaivans "objects to be exploited by the empowered postcolonial subject" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 19).

Bashkow (2006) starts his ethnography by describing the cultural history of the Orokaiva after the establishment of colonial missions to them, and giving an account of past ethnographic research done on them. He then indicates that his own approach in his study was to try to

identify what the "other," an outsider who becomes an insider, can come to know about colonial "white" power (pp. 1-14). Gupta and Ferguson (1997) note the "implications of an archetype" at work in certain ethnographies, of an all-American, lone white male who enters the field as an alien. They assert that in relation to such archetypes, "even *ideas* about 'the field' explicitly disavowed by contemporary anthropologists in intellectual terms continue to be embedded in professional *practices* (p. 12), and suggest a need for critical analysis of the notion of the "real fieldworker" to understand the ethnographic construction of "the field" (where data collection takes place, through participant observation, interviewing, surveys, etc., seen as a separate space from that in which polishing-up is done when ethnographers return "home" (pp. 12-13). Bashkow (2006) similarly describes himself as "white, developed, and western" (p. 15), and in constructing his own account of the difference between "field" and "home," describes how his "whiteness" was salient to his positioning as an "alien." His alien-ness as a "whiteman" was a marker of where the field was for him. Conversely, Bashkow's description of himself as "developed" lends itself to the implication that he is formally-educated and that "home" is where the "academy" is. Thus, he positions himself (his "home self") *outside* of what he is doing in the field. However, an argument could be made that good ethnography is neither to "go native" nor "be alien" but to become *relationally-aware and relational in one's dealings with others*. In Bashkow's case, that would mean to position himself in awareness that being "white" is not "alien," or at least, not *simply* alien, as whiteness has left its mark on all territories and societies that have experienced colonialism and has done so over generations.

Bashkow (2006) does create relationships with the locals, but, wary of "rapport," he creates boundaries between himself and the "field" which actually *contradict* the purpose of being

reflexive (or self-reflective, as Bashkow terms it). His attempts to acknowledge uneven power structures between the Orokaiva and the "whiteman" appear benign, but do more to highlight his authority, his lack of connectedness, and his incomplete consideration of how his position as researcher and outsider implicates him in the institutional and historical formation and perpetuation of colonialism. He inadvertently divides the field as he recenters his whiteness.

Bashkow's ethnography also appears to exemplify a *hierarchy of purity* defined as a "distinction between the field and home" in which the field is seen as not where the academy is but where data is collected, and home as where writing up the polished version of the fieldwork is done (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997, pp. 12-13). The field is not on the same level as "home." Gupta and Feguson (pp. 12-13) claim that the different types of writing that occur in each of these places produce a spatial trek (complete with side-line entry and exit narratives) which in turn creates *othering*. In the field the writing is brief, isolated, and can suffer material and other limitations. Field notes are viewed as "raw" or "primitive," much as is the field; connoting "not West, not equal, or underdeveloped" whereas "home" is dignified. Bashkow (2006) suggests that the striking visibility to the Orokaiva of his whiteness means that to be a white person in the field where he did his research is out of the ordinary, and he cogitates just how far away from "home" he is. Yet he notes that the place he has taken up residence is in the local community hall;[41] and that he became involved in many Orokaivan community meetings, because, well, they happened on "his" front step. He also explains the local languages that are spoken in the community and that the Orokaiva speak a dialect called, Ehija. With these details Bashkow *creates a narrative of* his field, in a way that produces what Gupta and Ferguson (1997, p. 13) refer to as the "real

[41] Note that the provision of the hall to house him must to some degree have affected the community's own use of it.

field" where "real fieldwork" takes place: sites that can be considered more gritty, wild, or untouched than others.[42]

Bashkow (2006) seems to grasp ideas of how the postcolonial world has shifted and takes in stride becoming "other" in his methodological situation. He is not in Papua New Guinea to treat the *Orokaiva* as "other" that he must learn about in the customary and Eurocentric sense of learning about difference. Rather, he seeks to learn how *he*, as a white man, is the "other" in Papua New Guinea and to the Orokaiva. He wants to become this "other" to understand how he (the Whiteman) is constructed in an Orokaivan way and in a postcolonial context. The inception of this idea, in Bashkow's narration of himself-as-other, sets the stage to explain the colonial missions, including intellectual/educational missions, that had placed the Orokaiva in a position asymmetrical to the white colonizers. Bashkow wants to address the implications of these with reference to his own position as an imputed authority figure within the field community. He does so by explaining how he was given a chair at a meeting: he comes to understand that the Orokaiva value their "customs," one of which is treating authority figures with respect by giving them a chair. At the meeting in question, Bashkow was given the *last available* chair. He uses this detail to narrate-into-being his position in relation to the Orokaiva, the chair-giving being an enactment (by the Orokaiva) of a long-held notion of authority. Because he is *white*, he is treated as authoritatively worthy of his own chair. He also tells us that he understood his position and

[42] Gupta and Ferguson (1997) suggest that places such as "Africa" are viewed by the (post-) colonial eye as more "anthropological" and "real" than, say, Europe, when it comes to discerning "real field" sites. They also (pp. 1-13) discuss how the globalizing world and the political implications of colonization and decolonization impact ethnographic production of narrative accounts of "the field" as real; how ethnographers represent changes as events that "occur" within the narrative space of that field, and how they construct a discursive boundary structure that creates and divides "home" and "away."

did not challenge the "power relations, as that would undermine the Orokaiva sense of *generosity* by forcing them to act differently" (pp. 15-18, *my emphasis*).

In short, Bashkow colluded with what he saw as an acknowledgement by the Orokaiva of his authority. This particular part of the ethnography presents what I would call an *ethnographer's* move to innocence: what else could he do? It was the *Orokaiva* who put him in that position (not the nature of his own arrival in the community to do his study). It was the *persistence* of a notion held by the Orokaiva; a holdover or leftover from colonial times when they expressed "generosity" in such a manner. Here, Bashkow appears reflexive in weaving into his narrative an account of the colonial context that had shaped Orokaivan notions of generosity and his sense of his own whiteness. He wants his readers to see how and why he chose to reverse the archetypal insider/outsider dichotomy by showing how the Orokaiva, as outsiders to Western culture, can be viewed as "insiders" who create "insider knowledge" about the outsider "Whiteman" (knowledge that they let him in on).

Cerroni-Long (1995) discusses Foucault's view of othering in "intellectual discourse" in a similar vein: othering is constructed in specific forms and places as a form of power and domination. For example, insider/outsider dichotomies have also been constructed and perpetuated in terms of knowledge created through anthropological ethnography (pp. 4-5). The question is (a) whether Bashkow's reversal of othering *works*, both in the concrete situation described, and in his construction of himself as other, and (b) who it works *for*. A reference to a persisting post-colonial Orokaivan definition of "generosity" seems insufficient without further

exploration of the possible persistence of *actual* authority in the Orokaivans' lives. Did he write his book *with* the Orokaiva, or *for* them as a primary readership, or for readers from the Global North like himself?

Tuck & Yang (2012, p. 1) claim that when we try to reconcile colonization with the call to decolonize academic institutions, we often are actually giving refuge to a settler perspective. Too often in such efforts the colonial legacy is mistaken for an accidental occurrence, rather than a systemic vehicle of deprivation and assimilation. When university leaders prematurely suggest or imply that symbolic gestures of reconciliation equate to the decolonization of academic life and communication, they allow the continued authority of an unacknowledged whiteness over the academic infrastructure of settler institutions, which in effect is also authority over the validation of knowledge and research. Elements of a Eurocentric ontology and epistemology (see Cross, 2007 for examples) thereby continue to be represented as universal, and words such as "data and "findings" continue to be defined in ways that normalize Eurocentrism. That is, such language can continue to appear to be innocent of the *practical* colonial history of European empiricism as it was applied to the study of non-European peoples. In short, "theory" should not bear all the blame for the perpetuation of motivated and colonialist stereotypes, and a move to empiricism will not in itself serve to accommodate diverse ontologies and epistemologies; instead, it will rationalize their continued objectification (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 2). Decolonization discourse rests on an assumption of fairness. However, as the Indigenization of academia takes place, the language used to convey it tends to become "superficially adopted" into educational institutions as Indigenous ways of knowing are espoused without acknowledging the historical struggle that Indigenous people have endured when trying to

maintain them (p. 2). When making Indigenous space in the academy is defined as, say, hiring Indigenous scholars in certain disciplines, decolonization becomes a metaphor signifying standard models of affirmative action dressed up as reconciliation. Inclusion becomes an illusion when decolonization is encased within western thought and institutional forms (and even mobilized to reproduce them). When decolonization becomes a metaphor, it resettles whiteness and perpetuates colonization, especially when it allows practices of extractive academic colonialism – the extraction of Indigenous knowledge and culture for use within a non-Indigenous matrix of academic status, power, or monetization – such as occurred historically to the Blackfoot roots of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (see, e.g., Blackstock 2019 and 2011; Cross 2007; Safir 2020).[43]

Historically, extractivism in colonial contexts has involved land acquisition, settlement, resource-extraction, and the associated governmental containment of Indigenous peoples and restriction of Indigenous political expression. However, colonial forms of extraction have broadened to encompass the appropriation and re-purposing of Indigenous culture and knowledge, which can happen even under the guise of reconciliation when Indigenous knowledge systems are adapted, transformed and re-used both within academic institutions and by cultural entrepreneurs outside them to reconstruct "universals" appealing to Western readers.

[43] Compare Safir's account to Ravilochan (2021), which de-emphasizes the extractive aspect of Maslow's use of Blackfoot knowledge to focus on what "we" can learn from Blackfoot "wisdom." But Ravilochan inadvertently reveals the *structural hostility* of western academic scholarship to Indigenous knowledge in quoting this passage:

> "It's possible that Maslow may have faced dismissal if he had publicized Blackfoot teachings. Dr. Richard Katz, author of *Indigenous Healing Psychology: Honoring the Wisdom of First Peoples*, Harvard professor, and personal friend of Maslow's speaks to this point in a podcast conversation with Scott Barry Kaufman (minutes 28:50–32:20). He says he never spoke directly with Maslow about this, but postulates that Maslow may have been concerned that elevating Siksika teachings might diminish the validity of the ideas he [*sic*] was putting forth. Such barriers to Indigenous contributions have remained in academia until today." (Blackstock, 2019, in Ravilochan, 2021).

Decolonization becomes problematic when Indigenous knowledge systems are adopted, transformed and rebirthed by academic institutions on *their* terms (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 3). This makes the struggle to decolonize methodology more difficult and its targets more obscure. The thesis I write must adhere to certain accepted protocols of method and presentation, including a requirement to explain points of Indigenous knowledge so that they are understandable in non-Indigenous terms. Even if the content of this thesis is increasingly reinforced by scholarly literature now being written from an Indigenous perspective, and even if its approach is accepted or even encouraged by members of my supervisory committee, its presentation must fit what I call "infrastructural" protocols of scholarship in the production of theses, especially those governing scholarly communication and the presentation of "adequate" forms and types of evidence or of sources. Both the content and the framework of this thesis can be unsettling for classically trained non-Indigenous academics, and even those who read it sympathetically may raise questions about it that anticipate possible negative responses from other readers, suggesting that the possible objections of such readers may *legitimately* need to be taken into account. This suggestion raises an important question: *Is* that need, burden though it is, ever in some sense or some instances, legitimate? I suspect Tuck and Yang might say no. I myself gravitate toward "no. But see the final two paragraphs of this section for another response – *also* from an Indigenous perspective.

Tuck & Yang (2012) address this unsettling effect of decolonization discourse when it is applied to the actual rather than metaphorical decolonization of ways of knowing and communicating knowledge. Given the emphasis on positionality in Indigenous knowledge, they note that it is

important to address the struggles that Indigenous scholars face whilst trying to decolonize scholarship *from within* scholarship:

> Decolonization as metaphor allows people to equivocate these contradictory decolonial desires because it turns decolonization into an empty signifier to be filled by any track towards liberation…Decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted; that is, all of the land, and not just symbolically. (p. 7)

Decolonization is not *simply* a resurgence of Indigenous knowledge. The knowledge has always been there. It is its lack of validation (Spivak, 2010), and the felt need always to translate it into non-Indigenous terms, that needs to be addressed. Unsettling the settler academy means to unsettle Western ontology, epistemology and discourse, yes, but also to unsettle the everyday social organization and institutional protocols of academic communication and validation. Settler moves to innocence are still seen within academic institutions even as they commit to reconciliation, when the necessity of such protocols is taken for granted as the "way things are," and when their Eurocentric roots or anti-Indigenous freight is quietly left unidentified and unexamined. A commitment to reconciliation cannot come to fruition as long as "inclusion" means inclusion *within* expectations and requirements unrecognized as hostile to Indigenous ways of knowing, as long as Indigenous people do not have full agency in relation to their historic lands, as long as the academic institutions they attend and work in are housed in Indigenous territory but have not fully accounted for the ways in which they have perpetuated or benefited from abocide – the assimilation or erasure of Indigenous knowledge, bodies and

culture. The innocence of certain forms of reconciliation lies in their ability to relieve settler guilt with symbolic gestures, often in the language of diversity and inclusion. (Who are assumed to be the *agents* of inclusion? What groups does diversity language tend to equalize abstractly when employed without a full historical accounting and concrete commitment to decolonizing actions led by Indigenous people?) Such solutions to settler guilt, Tuck and Yang (2012) argue, pacify or smooth over the disturbance of settler institutional and social structures (p. 9).

Indigenizing of academic disciplines has become a commonly-expressed aspiration in the social sciences, but now is making its presence felt in natural-scientific fields as well. However, when this takes the form of recruiting Indigenous folx to represent "Indigeneity" within a particular field it can relieve pressure on colonial infrastructures integrated into the settler academy while reassuring academics who treat the status quo as a given or as universal. Tuck & Yang (2012) make note of Mawhinney's theory that white people can self-position as innocent of colonialism *via* an *absence of experience* in which they point to their own experiences of oppression whilst simultaneously claiming they have never personally engaged in oppression because they were not *there* when colonization happened (p. 10). In doing so, they overlook ways in which they have benefitted from the kinds of societies that colonialism has established. Or, we could add, having not experienced the same atrocities that minorities have, they look to BIPOC people to give them answers; to do the work settler people need to do to decolonize; to perform emotional labor to ease settler guilt, or to perform emotional labour on behalf of settlers for those hindered by the ongoing legacy of colonialism but once again called on to "work harder." I cannot decolonize the University alone, and not ultimately without considering the (im)possibility of asking everyone to vacate the property and give me/us back what is rightfully our peoples' land

to learn on. I am aware of this impossibility, but my intentions are to push every avenue to create a different way of teaching, learning and research that is open and accepted as a viable way to do scholarship within the academy.

In "pushing every avenue," and rejecting an obligation to explain repeatedly to non-Indigenous people what our ways of knowing are, why they are valid, and why I communicate them as I do, I support Tuck and Yang's imperative to pressure colonial infrastructures and refuse reassurance to those who support or shelter in them. But recall Tuhiwai-Smith's (2001) refusal to mix research and activism, and Wilson's (2008) reluctance to criticize others. While I argued against them both on these issues, their positions do reflect a wider and an *Indigenous* context. Hogue (2024) proposes "trying to shift an entrenched paradigm by exemplar not by criticism," observing that, in her experience "elders don't criticize but rather illustrate through story or exemplars." There is truth in that, and relational accountability. In this thesis, I too contrasted adversarial features of Western education with non-confrontational modes of teaching and correction in Indigenous settings. But I've also seen news clips of elders standing in the way of bulldozers and police, issuing a direct "no" to clear-cutting, property development, mines, dams, or pipelines on ancestral lands. I've heard elders voice forthright criticisms of extractivism. But also consider my allegorical iteration of the encounter between Fox and Bear, and my reflection on its construction. Its content addressed issues important to my thesis. I used it to criticize Bear's positions on citizenship, status and identity, and also their tone (as Fox perceived it), but gave them a pseudonym. I did not send them my critique.[44] I handled the story out a mix of self-

[44] As noted, Bear gave permission for me to use the interview content as I wished, without asking for feedback.

protection and accountability, but opened that mix to readers' assessments of its adequacy and ethics. My own willingness to entertain further confrontation had limits.

So, which *is* the Indigenous way: pressure and confrontation, or non-confrontational story and exemplar? I suggest neither, and both. Let's not reproduce zero-sum binaries or impose one way as *the* way for all Indigenous politics. If there is an "Indigenous way" it is plural, and situated; specific to time, place and setting. It is locational, positional, informed by context. It depends on reflexive awareness and relational accountability, not in the abstract but concretely, on the ground, in the moment and for seven generations. It will look and *be* different in particular places, times and settings. But it will use the good things that our ancestors passed on to us; the axioms and forms of wisdom necessary to deal with tough questions right here right now. I don't have all the answers on activism. My sense of where to find understanding and perspective, whose words to heed, who to stand with and feel with, how to handle responsibility, how to *keep on learning*, is a work in progress.

It is work in response to a voice that calls, *"Remember who you are."*

3.3 Parallel paths? Indigenous ontologies and critical race theory

I discussed the example of Bashkow's study of the Orokaiva to show that braiding together western and Indigenous knowledge needs to be preceded by and to proceed with careful discernment. Even the most sympathetic work on Indigenous knowledge systems done by non-

Indigenous scholars can hold perspectives and materials that can weaken an honest engagement between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems, like how thorns and brittle plant matter can weaken a sweetgrass braid. How do we develop that discernment? In this final section, I will very briefly discuss two examples of work that might shed some light on a possible path forward to a braiding together of Indigenous knowledge with dissident or alternative voices within the Western tradition of scholarship, though they are not without their own issues. One of these is Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's "perspectivism" and his contribution to an "ontological turn" in Anthropological theory. The second is Critical Race Theory.

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro is a Brazilian anthropologist. As a Brazilian, he is geographically out of the mainstream of anthropological thought, but he is nonetheless trained in and very familiar with the traditions of European anthropology. He primarily studies Indigenous peoples of the Amazon basin, though he himself is not (as far as I know) Indigenous. But he wants to take Indigenous ontologies seriously, and to explain what it might be like to see the world through their eyes. Thus, in his work, he acts as an interpreter of Indigenous knowledge systems, but wants to explain such systems respectfully, not as a set of myths or as magical thinking, but as resting in ontologies and valid in terms of those ontologies. He presents Indigenous ways of knowing as radically and fundamentally different from Western ones and tries to represent them on their own terms. For him, the job of the anthropologist dealing with Indigenous peoples is not only to understand them as actively engaged with aspects of the modern world with which they have contact, but also as engaging with the world and the cosmos in terms of an ontology that has its own integrity and coherence on its own terms.

In basic terms, Viveiros de Castro represents the ontology shared by the Amazonian peoples he studies as organized in terms of a few basic propositions. 1. The world is animate, including elements of existence treated by Western knowledge as inanimate. 2. To understand these features of the world, one must take their perspective; to see the world through their eyes. Whether one is confronting a warrior from another group or tribe, an animal, tree, even potentially artifacts, landscape features, or rocks, one will fail at understanding them if one does not see oneself from *their* perspective. This sounds a bit like Bashkow trying to represent how the Orokaiva see him as an alien or other. However, Viveiros de Castro (2019) is not taking "othering" for granted and simply reversing it; he is attempting to represent an ontology in which animals and even certain things called in Western language "inanimate objects" are *subjects*, and also in some sense human:

> [T]he Amerindian separation between humans and animals may be seen as an analogue of our "nature/culture" distinction; there is, however, at least one crucial difference between the Amerindian and modern, popular Western versions. In the former case, the separation was not brought about by a process of differentiating the human from the animal, as in our own evolutionist "scientific" mythology. For Amazonian peoples, the original common condition of both humans and animals is not animality but, rather, humanity. The great separation reveals not so much culture distinguishing itself from nature as nature distancing itself from culture: the myths tell how animals lost the qualities inherited or retained by humans. Humans are those who continue as they have always been. Animals are ex-humans (rather than humans, ex-animals). (p. 22)

This, says Viveiros de Castro, is the opposite of the Western view of the "human":

> While our folk anthropology holds that humans have an original animal nature that must be coped with by culture—having been wholly animals, we remain animals "at bottom"—Amerindian thought holds that, having been human, animals must still be human, albeit in an unapparent way. Thus, many animal species, as well as sundry other types of nonhuman beings, are supposed to have a spiritual component that qualifies them as "people." . . . Another important consequence of having animals and other types of nonhumans conceived as people—as kinds of humans—is that the relations between the human species and most of what we would call "nature" take on the quality of what we would term "social relations." Thus, categories of relationship and modes of interaction prevailing in the intrahuman world are also in force in most contexts in which humans and nonhumans confront each other. This idea is part of an indigenous theory according to which the different sorts of persons—human and nonhuman (animals, spirits, the dead, denizens of other cosmic layers, plants, occasionally even objects and artifacts)—apprehend reality from distinct points of view. The way that humans perceive animals and other subjectivities that inhabit the world differs profoundly from the way in which these beings see humans (and see themselves). (p. 23)

This leads Viveiros de Castro to suggest that the ontology common to the Amerindian societies he studies strikes at the heart of an ontological axiom that informs much of modern Western anthropology: that humanity is fundamentally one biologically, but diverse culturally. Viveiros de Castro (2019) flips this around to argue that whereas “multiculturalist” understandings of divergence,

> . . . are founded on the mutually implied unity of nature and multiplicity of cultures—the former guaranteed by the objective universality of body and substance, the latter generated by the subjective particularity of spirit and meaning—the Amerindian conception presumes a spiritual unity and a corporeal diversity. For them, culture or the subject is the form of the universal, while nature or the object is the form of the particular. To say, then, that animals and spirits are people is to say that they are persons; and to personify them is to attribute to nonhumans the capacities of conscious intentionality and social agency that define the position of the subject. . . . Whatever possesses a soul is capable of having a point of view, and every being to whom a point of view is attributed is a subject; or better, wherever there is a point of view, there is a "subject position." The attribution of humanlike consciousness and intentionality . . . to nonhuman beings has been indiscriminately termed "anthropocentrism" or "anthropomorphism." However, these two labels can be taken to denote radically opposed cosmological perspectives. Western popular evolutionism, for instance, is thoroughly anthropocentric but not particularly anthropomorphic. On the other hand, animism may be characterized as anthropomorphic but definitely not as anthropocentric: if sundry other beings besides humans are "human," then we humans are not a special lot (so much for "primitive narcissism"). (pp. 23-25)

Thus, Viveiros de Castro (2019) also parts ways with Karl Marx's anthropological universalism of human "species being":

> Talk about primitive narcissism.… Whatever Marx meant by the proposition that man "produces universally," I fancy he was saying something to the effect that man is the universal animal . . . While apparently converging with the Amerindian notion that

> humanity is the universal form of the subject, Marx's is in fact an absolute inversion of the notion. Marx is saying that humans can be any animal (we have more "being" than any other species), while Amerindians say that any animal can be human (there is more "being" to an animal than meets the eye) . . . the universality [of "man"] is anthropocentric for Marx; anthropomorphic, for Amerindians. . . . Such divergence invites us to imagine an ontology I have called "multi-naturalist" so as to set it off from modern "multiculturalist" ontologies. (pp. 25-26)

It is not my intention to defend Viveiros de Castro's use of "nature/culture" language, or his description of Indigenous ontology and ways of knowing, or his usage of terms like "myth." His "perspectivism" has been questioned as a kind of ontological relativism, and David Graeber (2015) defended realist ontology in response to what he termed the "ontological anarchy" that Viveiros de Castro's work threatened. That is another issue for serious discussion when we ask what the engagement of Western and Indigenous ways of knowing might look like. However, for now, what I want to point to is that in his encounters with the Indigenous peoples in Brazil Viveiros de Castro became conscious of a need to take seriously the ontological difference between their knowledge systems and his own (and that of his Western readers), and to try to treat that difference *fairly*. To the extent that he does this, he meets the challenge of Healy in "Fuck Nuance" – to *take seriously* theoretical and ontological difference in the face of moves to either to dismiss Indigenous knowledge systems or to use them to "nuance" Western philosophical or social theories (or, in popular culture, to mix appropriated "Indigenous wisdom" into Western self-help, and stir).

Further, Viveiros de Castro has developed a respect for that ontological difference into support for resistance by Indigenous people in Brazil to "capitalism and the state." He points out that from the subject-position of capital and the state, Indigenous peoples are reduced to and objectified as "landless persons." In other words, colonization in the era of capitalism operates to *re-ontologize Indigenous peoples as objects* and thus *to be Indigenous and to persist in an Indigenous mode of being* is to *resist* (Gavroche and Viveiros de Castro, 2017). This is not simply an epistemological matter; not just about how Indigenous people are *seen*. It is ontological in the sense that a colonialist/capitalist way of seeing arises out of and perpetuates a particular historical way of *being and acting* that is taken as fundamental or necessary. This is an ontology that presupposes "persons" to be individual subjects who may exploit and even in some historical circumstances *own* other individuals, categorized racially as commodity-objects like draft animals, for purposes of profit. Or to put it another way, Gavroche and Viveiros de Castro (2017) propose that capitalism is an ontology-producing cultural machine; it ontologizes "citizenship," the State and commodities, and also whiteness:

> The opposite of "indigene" is "alien", whereas the antonym of indian, in Brazil, is "white", or better, the many words of the more than 250 indian languages spoken inside the Brazilian territory that are commonly translated in Portuguese as "white", but which refer to all of those people and institutions that are not indian. These indigenous words have various descriptive meanings, but one of the most common is "enemy", as is the case with the Yanomani "naipë", the Kayapo "kuben" or the Arawaté "awin". Even though the indian concepts of enmity, or the condition of enemy, are significantly different from ours, it is not difficult to remark that the word that we have that is most suited to translate directly these indigenous words is "enemy" . . . But […] neither the

> settler, nor the "agroboy", nor the broker are among the natives – ask them … They are "Brazilian", something very different from being "native". To be Brazilian is to think and act and to consider oneself (and perhaps to be considered) as a "citizen", that is, as someone defined, registered, surveyed, controlled, assisted – in sum, weighed, counted and measured by a territorial nation-State, "Brazil". To be Brazilian is to be (or should be to be) a citizen, in other words, a "subject" of a "sovereign" State that is transcendent. This condition of subject (one of the euphemisms of subject is "holder/bearer of rights") has nothing to do the native's vital, original relation with the land, with the place where one lives and from where one's sustenance is taken, where "life is made" with family and friends. . . . It is to be part of a community tied to a specific place, that is, it is to integrate a "people". To be a citizen, by contrast, is to be part of a controlled "population" (at the same time "defended" and attacked) by a State. (Under subhead, "The involuteers of the fatherland")

Notice here that Gavroche and Viveiros de Castro envelop "whiteness" in a wider context in which white and non-white are terms that are weaponized in the aggression of the state and of capital (in particular, in Brazil, agricultural capital wanting to clear Amazonia of trees and Indians in order to grow soy and other crops for the international commodities markets), and the resistance of the people Viveiros de Castro calls "native." This way of understanding "whiteness" and its implications is worth comparing critically to Bashkow's discussion of the Orokaivan notion of the "Whiteman." I will return to this point briefly in the conclusion to this chapter, after first discussing the potential relevance of Critical Race Theory to the critical braiding of dissidence within the Western tradition with Indigenous Knowledge.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a form of legal and social analysis based on the idea that race is not a natural, biologically grounded feature of human individuals and groups, but a set of socially-constructed categories with specific histories that were developed to justify the exploitation and oppression of people of colour.[45] Critical race theorists have used elements of Western critical theory and critical legal theory to argue that racism is embedded in North American and European institutions and social structures, and that it works to maintain social, economic, and political inequalities between those defined as white and non-white, while obscuring the history and functioning of these inequalities. Critical race theorists seek to deconstruct the institutional and structural nature of racism by analyzing racialized power relations to develop awareness of them and to aid in the development of a more level playing field for those who have lived in different social realities from the racially-privileged. Satzewich and Liodakis (2010, p. 53) add that, in Canada, Critical Race Theory can be used to analyze how Canadian settler institutions and society have generated hierarchies of unequal power and wealth organized along the lines of "race." Critical Race Theory can also be used to understand the role of racialization in the appropriation of land, the formulation and application of the Indian Act, the development of reserves and of the residential school system, and historical and present-day definitions of "Indian status." CRT can also be used to understand, contextualize and validate Indigenous experiences of institutionalized racism, including their experiences of the settler academy.

Post-colonial discourse complements CRT by emphasizing that when the colonizing authorities left newly-independent ex-colonies in Asia and Africa, they left behind an enduring legacy in the

[45] See "Critical Race Theory" (2023), and also Anthony Cook, *et al.* (2021).

institutional, social and cultural formation of post-colonial societies. However, in Canada, the colonists settled, and thus the colonial legacy here has meant that its critics have faced an enduring struggle with hegemonic European discourse about cultural and social normativity that has "settled in" to Canadian institutions, society and culture. This hegemony is seen within settler society, not as something external, imposed by colonists who have since left, but as part of "our" national identity and history. It is also seen in colour-blind ways. The resistance to definitions of "self" and "other" as superior and inferior entails an ongoing struggle among minority groups (Satzewich and Liodakis 2010, p. 55) and between minority experience and a settler consensus that Canada is not a colonial power. Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper once famously asserted this denial ("Prime Minister Harper Denies Colonialism in Canada at G20," 2009), and further denied that it was constructed in terms of racialized oppression, while *simultaneously* asserting – as Harper did (see Ha, 2015) – the historical primacy and legitimacy of "old-stock Canadians," (English and French) as definitive elements of Canadian nationhood.

At the same time, racialization in Canada does have parallels to racialization elsewhere in the world. Edward Said (1977; see also 1970) explained how Orientalism unfairly painted Arab culture as static and exotic in contrast to the supposedly superior dynamism and rationalism of European culture. Something similar occurred in Canada as Indigenous peoples were placed the category of the "savage' and socially and culturally constructed as inferior to the European-origin groups. Said's work is an important contribution to discussion of colonization because it uses the notion of the "gaze" to examine how hegemonic western discourses constructed an "orientalized" other. Satzewich and Liodakis (2010) note that European explorers and settlers

constructed ways of seeing Indigenous peoples in Canada that justified their appropriation of Canadian land and resources, treating its original inhabitants as both exotic and inferior (p. 55).

3.4 ". . .They tried to bury us, but they didn't know we were seeds": [46] re-telling our stories and ourselves

Critical Race Theory, and such discussions of colonialism and its othering dynamic, come together in work such as that of Guzzetti in *Stories of a Healing Way* (2022). Guzzetti's purpose is to see how CRT—in conjunction with Writer's (2008) work with TribalCrit—can engage with the intersections of race, gender, and culture to better examine one aspect of colonization and its legacy in settler societies—how Eurocentric thought, ideas and forms of power have become endemic within societies such as Canada's—whilst showing how Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) are constructing their own identities and promoting alternative ways of knowing. Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) was introduced by scholar, Bryan Brayboy (2005, p. 3) specifically to address Indigenous-defined issues concerning racialization and politics within the CRT paradigm. Although TribalCrit is positioned to address racialization, its main tenet "is the endemic nature of colonization and its processes in society…TribalCrit functions to expose the inconsistencies in structural systems and institutions...[to] make the situation better for Indigenous students."

Writer (2008) argues that the U. S. educational system "has been one of the most hostile and oppressive aspects of colonialism…colonized-based educational systems have contributed

[46] See Taylor, 2023

significantly to the destruction of cultural knowledge, and the imposition of the belief that Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge and ideas were—and remain—less than those of mainstream peoples" (p. 2). Guzzetti (2022) reinforces that statement with a claim that American education does not afford Indigenous students the ability to embrace their cultural identity because their ways of knowing and cultural expressions are not validated in the choice and use of literary work within that system of education (p. 131). This has the effect of delegitimizing Indigenous cultural resources as well as making it difficult for such students to access their own culture's resources and disallowing the expression of oral or aural lived experience. Guzzetti wrote *Stories of a Healing Way* (2022 to explore the experiential side of intersections between racialization and gender and to identify how cultural expression and identification are gained through various modalities communicating Indigenous lived experience.

The understanding of Indigenous identity in Settler North America was shaped by historical notions that Indigenous people were either to be assimilated or that they would gradually disappear. Oppression of their cultural and language practices was thought to aid in assimilation while museumization of those same practices would preserve a record of their disappearance. European notions of gender were mapped on to Indigenous people in ways that perpetuated the rule of men over women in marriage, inheritance of status, and band government. Today, Indigenous women are using different modes of communication to reclaim and exercise their voices and to reestablish the truth of Indigenous female identity from their own perspectives. Yet many Indigenous youth are still socialized and educated in assimilated environments, as 92% of students learn off reservation, and mainstream public-school curricula still feature assimilative practices that limit Indigenous students' cultural expressions (Guzzetti, 2022, p. 131).

Understanding how Indigenous folx create identity texts, and how oral histories constitute a culturally-important way to deliver Indigenous knowledge, is something that can be explored. These may be told in story, but they may also be sung, painted, carved, inscribed, acted, drummed, and danced. The ability to engage in ways appropriate to Indigenous culture and life must be offered as a viable option for expression alongside more "standard" forms of writing. CRT offers validation for racialized folx to divulge their lived experience as factual rather than anecdotal accounts.

As I have expressed at various points in this thesis, the discounting of personal stories of becoming within the settler academy and the struggle to justify alternative ontologies, epistemologies, methodological forms and purposes, and modes of scholarly communication, has been detrimental to Indigenous experience and forms of expression; especially for Indigenous women. I have referred to MMIWG2S to provide a framework for the reality of Indigenous female-identifying experiences and fears; to provide a sense of how Indigenous women and two-spirit people are subjected to a much higher rate of violence and targeting for abuse which in turn leads to traumatization, especially for those also impacted by poverty, housing and familial insecurity and the like. I noted that the colonial legacy of residential school created psychological issues during childhood development which can lead to maladaptive attachments and place Indigenous folx at risk for entering abusive relationships.

These are important things for me to acknowledge in considering the significance of storytelling and positionality to my experience and my writing. Writer (2008) notes that CRT aims to

construct different realities by validating and expressing the lived realities of racialized folx through different modalities of storytelling, to invoke a "voice" for those who have been racialized and silenced by racialization; spoken for by others: "CRT allows for the construction, deconstruction and (re)shaping of the master narrative by enlisting multiple perspectives and experiences as sources of valid knowledge which serve as catalysts for transformation" (p. 3). These different forms and modes of reality construction are part of moves to reassert and embrace non-western ontologies and epistemologies to enable BIPOC researchers to utilize their cultural experience in their methodological practice – to give voice to what is, for them, a known reality; to deconstruct and decolonize knowledge production. It is important to move away from "universalized" (white, middle-class) expectations about what constitutes lived reality and how it is to be expressed, and to embrace the realities and voices of racialized folx as enduring and valid, and as agents of change of the academy, not guests "invited" in to it as it stands.

Indigenous people who attempt to create meaning and identity texts need to be encouraged in their use of alternative semiotic resources to facilitate their learning and expressive aims, including pictorial, artistic, musical or oral expression. This will allow us dynamic ways to experience and express literacy whilst redefining what counts as literacy; opening inclusive spaces for Indigenous ways of knowing and negotiating the vehicles of meaning and knowing; achieving communication that, both in its content and its form, might counteract the assimilative and oppressive tools that have suppressed Indigenous knowledge systems since the times when the writing of treaties was done in ways that invalidated Indigenous oral narratives and ontologies on order to usurp Indigenous lands. The hegemonic tools of colonial acculturation created standardized modalities of communication in educational institutions and the continuity

of the present with the colonial past is still dependent upon the denial of alternative methods of "writing" (Guzzetti, 2022, p. 132). It is time to break with that dependency, and the silencing of Indigenous voices is not being challenged by a resurgence of communicative alternatives.

TribalCrit is one tool that evokes the legitimacy of Indigenous story telling as a way to disrupt colonial pedagogical and knowledge frameworks, allowing Indigenous folx to reclaim their perspectives and lived experience. TribalCrit enables Indigenous learners and researchers to resist becoming complicit and acclimating to normative disseminative practices. Guzzetti (2022, p. 140) gives the example of a Navajo woman named Tatum, an academic, who uses her Dine culture to bring traditional and contemporary Indigenous reality to life in her use of comic strips. She uses first-person storytelling in writing her story panels to deliver her experiences. She positions the Navajo as existing in real time and using "modern conveniences" mixed with traditional practices, to contest the constructed idea that Indigenous people exist under a historical exit sign and are dying out. Tatum employs several teaching devices to convey her messages about Navajo culture and languages; for example, by implementing language guides for translation and code meshing to create a "user friendly tone." Guzzetti argues that Tatum's use of multimodal text enables her to convey personal, emotional but realistic experiences of contemporary Dine life. This is important because the contexts and structure Tatum uses to tell stories represent the nontraditional juxtapositions that Indigenous people experience in lived reality, allowing indigenous readers to escape and resist colonialist modes of time and causality.

Guzzetti (2022) quotes Tatum's response to Bryan Brayboy's TribalCrit: "I found that Brayboy's point that American Indians have been…replaced with fixed images from the past of what American Indians once were…Brayboy is essentially why I want to continue writing and creating zines/comics…Native American history is taught just as history, that once we were assimilated that was the end of our story and that we have, for the most part, been wiped out by colonialism" (p. 142). Guzzetti (2022) is arguing for storytelling as a viable way for academics as well as non-academics to disseminate cultural knowledge that diverges from the conventional forms of knowledge and modes of communication taken for granted in Eurocentric academic circles. She resists the lack of consideration for diverse realities and forms of expression in education which are still dismissed as anecdotal. The sharing of Indigenous identity stories in new ways helps to create Indigenous avenues for resistance to neocolonial academics (such as Frances Widdowson) who contest the validity of Indigenous ways of knowing, treating them as threats to "universal truths" (Guzzetti, 2022, p. 145). Indigenous and female voices are powerful, and platforms that allow such voices to freely express their own experience, traditions, and present-day practices through personal stories are one way in which academic institutions can combat the actual silencing of such voices (and the silencing of the silencing of such voices) and to decolonize Eurocentric methodological and communicative hegemonies in scholarship.

Growing awareness, beginning a new braid, un-braiding Bashkow

The concern raised at the beginning of this chapter was about a premature braiding together of Indigenous and Western ways of knowing: this chapter has attempted to convey some reasons for that wariness. A story of my own developing awareness might be useful to give a sense of how I have become wary as I became aware. When I first read Bashkow (2006), he seemed at

first to be on the right track and with good intentions. Instead of arriving in Papua New Guinea to study "exotic" natives, he set out to understand the Orokaivan notion of the "Whiteman," to understand how they perceived him as white. What he did was to "flip" the "familiar/us" vs "alien/other" dichotomy by proposing what it might be like to see "the Whiteman" (Bashkow) as alien. This has the virtue of making othering *visible*. But I came to see that it does so by reversing the structure, not challenging it. Bashkow (2006, pp. 42-63) does deal with colonialism as a varying context for the othering he examines, spending a chapter on the particularity of the colonial presence in Papua New Guinea, which was physically and geographically unsuitable for plantation agriculture or other forms of colonial economic 'development', and whose governance was marked by the weakness and lack of motivation of the Australian colonial state. He notes the "generosity" of Allied forces fighting there in the Second World War; and names postwar white flight, infrastructural deterioration, and a rising crime rate, as factors in the nostalgia for the colonial era expressed by many Papua New Guineans. He discusses (2006) how this nostalgia factored into a double image of "whitemen." On one hand were "exemplary" figures recalled by Papua New Guineans who had worked closely with or for them, as generous and conscientious in maintaining relationships of reciprocity. On the other, were figures encountered more sporadically ("patrol officers, magistrate, traders, teachers, doctors and missionaries") who were experienced as "strangely unreachable through exchange" (pp. 54-58)

Bashkow (2006) argues that this double image served as a backdrop to Orokaivans' positive cultural evaluation of paternalism, and their cultural construction of whiteness as a foil with which to understand "the moral concerns" of their own culture (pp. 59-63). But Bashkow's insistence on the sporadic and changeable nature of colonialism in PNG, and on the complexity

of Orokaivans' use of "whitemen" as beings to think with *morally* about themselves, seems to neglect three things. One is that the systematic aspects of colonialism *don't* necessarily depend on the regular presence of white men. Colonial systems can and do work on (and through) different groups of and classes of people. A second thing is that the destruction of pre-contact forms of village rivalry and warfare, which Bashkow notes was approved of by most Orokaivans, may have been part of a more thorough-going but less evident undermining of social, economic and cultural autonomy. After all, if the Orokaiva were fully autonomous actors, participating in "development" on their own terms, they would not have felt the weakness of Australian colonial authority or its eventual withdrawal as something that disadvantaged them. Of course, Bashkow does not claim that they *were* entirely autonomous, but at the same time he does not seem to grasp the possibility that their post-colonial nostalgia might have been rooted in a dependency engineered by imperial and Australian authorities, even if it was intermittent or appeared to be weak rather than drastic. Finally, a third thing he doesn't appears to dig into is how Orokaivans' moral self-reckoning (in terms of the morally ambiguous figure of "whitemen") is not unique. Similar versions of it can be found among other colonized people. For example, Indigenous people in Canada have had to navigate between an internalized sense of inferiority (taught in residential schools and reinforced in dealings with settler administrators, professionals, cultural and media producers, and in everyday gaslighting) and a desire to defend and preserve their cultures and ways of life. As I discussed in chapter two, this navigation is difficult when Indigenous peoples are taught to see themselves and their cultures as inferior, and Western ideas and standards as normative. This is how internalized colonialism works. Further, such navigation is made even more difficult when defending Indigenous rights and cultures is translated through Eurocentric notions of identity, authenticity, and "purity," as in questions over

who is "real" or a "pretendian." Again, as I suggested in chapter two, this is where internalized colonialism can contribute to lateral violence.

This may take different forms in different places and times, but that does not rule out the possibility that it can take wider, more systemic and less noticeable forms. Bashkow (2006) briefly mentions that the "Taro cult"[47] that developed about 1914 had some nationalistic overtones and contributed to the beginnings of a pan-Orokaivan and Papua-New Guinean identity (pp. 33, 43, 53, 55-56). He also notes the centrality of Taro to Orokaivan identity. However, he suggests that the Taro Cult was ambiguous in its characterization of whitemen and its attitude toward colonial authorities, was not particularly political, and as a movement was more dispersed than cohesive. At the same time, he situates the Taro Cult within a claim that Papua-New Guineans actively travelled to and linked up with more distant communities, and actively developed their own wider collective sense of themselves, albeit one that was also a response to "whitemen" (pp. 183-187). I think that this same historical data, very quickly treated by Bashkow, could easily be interpreted less dismissively as a response to fundamental changes to PNG societies. Bashkow sees these changes through a "half-empty" lens: Orokaivan land wasn't stolen wholesale and turned into plantations; nor were Orokaivans enslaved – or confined to reserves. However, I suspect that a "half-full" interpretation is also possible, in which the "limited" effects of colonial rule could be read as a quieter but over time still a profound and systemic introduction of a sort of infrastructural dependency on Western education, medicine, and law. Shouldn't the Taro Cult have deserved a more central, more serious treatment by Bashkow? Couldn't it be argued – in terms of the "autonomy" leanings of Bashkow's own

[47] The term "cult," while it has specific anthropological meaning, and may also have been a common usage picked up by Bashkow, is nonetheless somewhat dismissive, arguably even derogatory in tone.

argument -- that Taro served just as central a political, moral and identity function in Orokaivans' collective self-understanding as did the figure of "whitemen"? Could it also be argued that Taro served as a central symbolic marker in Papua-New Guineans' *dis*quiet over the "quieter" changes brought by British and Australian rule?

Bashkow (2006) prefaces and also ends his ethnography with references to colonialism and ethoncentrism, but he doesn't center a consideration of colonialism as a system of systems that persists not only despite but *through* its variable forms and iterations in Papua New Guinea as it has elsewhere. It's as if colonialism and structures of othering, though variable, are givens; not always good ones, but not equally bad, either (p. 258). In the example of his being reserved a chair at the community meeting, Bashkow refers to "generosity" as a feature of Orokaivan culture rather than examining directly and in depth the possibility that what is being shown is *deference* to someone identified with colonial *power*. Generosity and giving, as Mauss (2011) pointed out, can be features of power relations, and not only as a lingering cultural legacy (nor, on the other hand, only as matters of individual intention).

Bashkow was neither a settler nor a colonial official, but it seems to me that he enacts a "move to innocence" by not giving more centrality to the historical precedents to his own arrival among the Orokaiva, and to the infrastructural and social legacies of colonialism that paved his way to arrive as a researcher seeking to gather knowledge of Orokaivans' collective sense of whiteness for what was and probably still is a largely a non-Orokaivan readership. Researchers first arrived in the wake of colonial explorers and "founders," along with missionaries, prospective planters,

resource prospectors, administrators, police, and criminals on the make. Bashkow's "move to innocence" involved positioning himself in a kind of non-position, floating beyond implication in any legacy of structural othering produced by such historical figures, in order to describe his participation in community activities objectively, from a constructed placement somewhere above his actual, temporal participation. Bashkow (2006) rejects what he calls "the romantic egalitarian ideal of rapport" in anthropological fieldwork as "based on an overly-simplistic and ethnocentric model of power" (p. 17), but it seems as if he fails to see that a more sophisticated view of power can still be implicated in power relations.

Bashkow (2006: 16) does note that he drew methodological inspiration from David Schneider's realization that he had "discounted the effects of the colonial situation on his data" concerning Yap Islanders, and he further argues that, for anthropologists, "it is at best possible to achieve [a shedding of power] only partially" (p. 17). Yet his own work shows how hard it can be, for someone who has arrived from and will return to a center of Western scholarship, to maintain such wisdom in practice. There are, in short, *two* Bashkows in his book: Bashkow (1), who lived among and interacted with the Orokaiva, and Bashkow (2), who seeks to observe Bashkow (1) *and* the Orokaiva impartially and to give a "realist" description of their interactions without the clutter introduced by autobiography and rapport. But that move brackets his own possible implication in power relations and the possibility that his authorial stance objectifies his subjects.

Michel Foucault and Bruno Latour are useful names to bring up in this light. Both were Europeans, trained in European universities, but both asked probing questions about some taken-

for-granted features of Western ways of knowing. In *The Order of Things* (1994), Foucault interrogated a series of "epistemic" shifts that facilitated the rise of modern science. These discredited an earlier theological notion that the natural world was animated and sustained by its Creator, and that to study the natural world meant to look for ways in which things in that world (plants, trees, animals, birds, etc.) spoke of their creator and of Divine purpose (pp. 17-42). In its place, there developed what Foucault termed the modern Western "episteme", which was more than epistemological. It was not just a new way of seeing and of gaining knowledge about the world, but also a new way to conceive of the nature of being.

However, Foucault (1994) argued, this subject/object distinction set up a dilemma in the "human sciences" as well as in philosophy. "Man" is a biological being; thus, "man's" biology can be examined scientifically. Later, it came to be proposed that human psychology, language and culture could also be studied scientifically as entities with their own structures and laws of evolution independent of the individual wills of their participants. Thus, the idea of "Man" in Western thought developed as an unstable combination: an "empirico-transcendental doublet." "Man" was the transcendental Subject who knew things and acted on them, but also an empirical *object* that could be studied and acted on (pp. 303-385). Foucault developed these ideas further in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1982), replacing the term "episteme" with those of "discourse" and "discursive practices" to make the point that epistemological and ontological configurations don't just come into being and exist all by themselves but exist in being *practiced* and *lived*. As noted earlier in this chapter, Foucault, in "What is an Author?" (1977), pointed out that texts are not simply expressions of the minds or wills of particular authors. A whole discursive context shapes the extent to which texts are taken to be publishable or memorable. A

corresponding web of institutional practices constitutes regimes of authorship and copyright, the organization of publishing industries, scientific/academic disciplines, *etc*. Thus (as with knowledge produced by laboratory work processes and in the history of measurement, examined by Latour, and everyday and scientific reality-construction studied by Garfinkel and Pollner), "authorship" is a *practical accomplishment*; an effect of interconnected social and discursive practices. Foucault's theoretical trajectory led him to rethink knowledge as *power*-knowledge (knowledge as a product of discursive and social practices that, in their interconnection, also gave it force), and to see "truth" as an effect of power that was also defined by and subject to resistances.

Edward Said, a Palestinian who gained fame in Western literary criticism as a legacy of his book *Orientalism* (1977), reinforced aspects of Foucault's intervention into Western scholarship but in a particular political direction. Like Foucault, he understood othering and the "exotic" (in particular, of "the East") not as categories that simply exist but as produced or constructed in specific places and times. That is, both orientalism and colonialism – along with "race" – are *located constructs*, and political ones. Said seems to be one up on Bashkow here. While Bashkow (2006, p. 259) sought to reverse the direction of colonialist othering by encouraging Americans to "be more willing to see the world and *our* role in it, as *others* do" (my emphasis), his attempt seems to leave open a possibile reading othering (in one direction or another) as a kind of given. In his conclusion, he doesn't endorse either of its two forms, and he notes that colonialism is a feature of its context. Yet he seems more interested in its changeable particularities than in the possibility that an ongoing, more systemic but less visible perpetuation

of a colonial legacy may have been at work in Papua New Guinea; one that shaped and offered ethnographers like him a place (and a chair) in it.

The value of Foucault, Said and Latour is that they exemplify Western theorists willing to unbraid Western epistemology and its ontology of othering, and also Western discourses of power and of objectification. The value of Critical Race Theory, and the work of anthropologists like Viveiros de Castro and historians like Gayatri Spivak, is that they systematically center colonialism in their critiques, for all its changeable complexity, making it available to new paths in theory, research, and action. The Western strand of the critical braid – and that includes Bashkow's attempt, using Orokaivans' self-reflection on the moral failings of their society as a kind of model for assessing those of his own – still needs further re-working. That work can and should be taken up – with care, and by many hands – and there is much of it still to do.

CHAPTER FOUR: REFLECTING AND RE-BRAIDING

Winter-north / Isstoyii-Aapatohso'ohts

Isstoiyii is Winter; literally, it means "the cold." Isstoiyii has seven moons or lunar months. It is not winter *per se*, but it refers to the cold that permeates those months, or**]**

Aapatohso'ohts refers to North; literally, to the rearward direction, looking back. We come from the southern direction, and we can only have Aapatohso'ohts directly in our sight if we have come from the south direction and are moving forward.

4.1 Rest and reflection

The time to rest and rejuvenate is found in the season of winter, which is the direction of the north. It is the time for seeds and plants to rest, as the other seasons have passed and the yields of knowledge have come to fruition in them**.** In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer (2013) begins the chapter in which she tells of this season with the Anishinaabe story of Nanabozho, the first man; known as Napi in Blackfoot culture. In her hands, the story is about becoming indigenous to place. Nanabozho must learn the original instructions of being in his place. But time in relation to this story is not a linear process; it is circular, and thus, "original" here does not mean "past and over with." This time allows and helps the people to learn from mistakes and to take what knowledge we gained from each season and start new with new information and insight to *re*new our original instructions.

Similarly, Spring does not simply leave Winter behind. Winter and Spring are not opposites, and they are linked. Innaapo'ohts/east is the direction of knowledge. As in Chapter One of this thesis, Spring/East is a chance to start, or start anew, and to learn each day, after the rest time or the time of staying in place in the cold or blizzards of Winter. Spring is, like the beginning of

this thesis, the start when seeds are planted and Indigenous knowledge sprouts. As in the Nanabozho story, in which he must learn from the land and his non-human relations (Kimmerer, 2013), so must we. As Kimmerer retells the story of Nanabozho, that story also talks to us about the time of first contact; how settlers (Second Man) arrived on Turtle Island but they did not arrive *completely*. They were still only half here and half from where they came from. They were not able then to embrace the original instruction. They walked with and learned (though often extractively) with First Man, but Second Man could not become the same as First (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 207).

Winter/North in the action research approach

We think now, in this season. We wonder what we have learned; what we need to do next season; what we can try that would help us to have the highest or the most fitting yield from our plant and other relatives and from our efforts. "It is a time to evaluate, to come to an understanding of the results of our interaction with other 'seasons' and to use that knowledge to move forward into the next cycle" (Hogue, 2012, p. 98). With that being said, we must look at what in this thesis has worked, what I have learned from going through each season of my work. Hogue asks, what have we learned about how the action research approach could help to create the inclusive curriculum; how do we reflect upon what has transpired along its path? How has this approach fostered the relationship between the university and Indigenous students and scholars, and how has it identified issues in that relationship that will be addressed? What have I learned from it about indigenous research and scholarship? About indigenizing the settler academy? What have I learned about my own path to knowledge and wisdom? About what to accept, what to resist, what to turn aside from, what to turn toward? What have I learned about

myself as a researcher, a thinker, a searcher, a student, a scholar, a member of a community? As someone moving toward health from trauma and illness? Academic and personal experience *together* inform us on how to move forward; how that move will be successful, what we learned from what worked and what still needs to be changed or modified so that we can go forward informed and with understanding (see Hogue, 2012, p. 98).

The overall understanding I have gained is that inclusivity and indigenous-specific programming are key *initial* elements for integrating into legacy-colonial institutional spaces without being further colonized. Indigenous students need to see themselves in the curriculum, rather than as a piece outside of it. Traditional ways of knowing and learning are important features of being Indigenous that need to make their way to the forefront of contemporary education within academic institutions. This is not to say they cannot be discussed or compared to other ways. Rather, as Hogue argues (2012, p. 102), Indigenous students need to be *connected to the academy and to each other* in meaningful ways. Relational and holistic approaches to and practices of being and knowing must be welcomed, in conjunction with a recognition that Indigenous folx are heterogeneous and that flexibility in their academic participation must therefore be honoured. Hogue also notes the importance of the sense of success for Indigenous students: they and their accomplishments should be profiled and celebrated. When I won the AGES award, it felt to me like it was a big deal, but no one seemed to know about it; a colleague was upset that she had to hear it from me, rather than from the university, and that there appeared to be no mention of it anywhere in any online database. Sharing successes of indigenous students reduces negative stereotypes of Indigenous learners and acts as a counterbalance to negative statistical rates of indigenous success (Hogue, 2012, p. 103).

4.2 Resurgence

Above all, we can no longer accept being punished or reprimanded for our Indigenous knowledge systems. We must demand that our voices be represented equally and consistently within academic institutions, in both theory and practice; philosophically and methodologically. We are no longer asking, we are showing up, and this is resurgence; our resurgence. Our ways of knowing matter and are significant to our scholarly work, just as our personal experiences matter to it. They need to be seen and heard for what they are. Decontextualizing academic work introduces an artificial separation of wisdom and lived experience from learning. Czuy and Eagle Speaker (2019) have iterated the same sentiment, as I noted in Chapter Two: "the personal ways of knowing contribute to how Indigenous students can better understand how to do math based on their own ways of knowing" (p. 6). For Czuy and Eagle Speaker (2019), the second strand of the knowledge braid validates personal histories as meaningful parts of culturally appropriate learning for indigenous students developing an understanding of the significance of their own experience and the ways it can enrich both "their lives and their sense of self." From the first strand of the Critical Braid, we also learn the importance of *relationality* to knowledge: our personal experience is experience of our positioning in *relation* to others, to communities, to organizations and institutions, to cultures and traditions past and present, and to the wider world.

More than ever now, we can no longer stand Idle. This thesis is both an act of scholarship and of resistance. It reflects the anarchist spirit included its title. We are un-learning a willingness to sit back and have our knowledge system picked on, picked from, and misappropriated to the advantage of Western knowledge and ways of knowing, and of academic practices in the settler academy. That academy has its feet firmly planted on Indigenous territory. It is here to stay.

Integrating ourselves within it means it will have to change. That doesn't mean that the academy or its members will become completely Indigenous. As Kimmerer (2013) states in her telling of the story of Nanabozho (chapter 18), "Immigrants [settlers] cannot be by definition be Indigenous … Indigenous is a birthright word, no amount of time or caring changes history or substitutes for soul-deep fusion with the land; following Nanabozho's footsteps doesn't guarantee transformation of second man [settlers] to first". To iterate Tuck and Yang's work on moves to innocence (Act 1: Settler Nativism), settlers often have besetting needs: to find a way to excuse themselves from the travesties committed during colonization; to find a way to indigenize to place; to eradicate feelings of guilt while allowing themselves to be seen as ambivalent and to have a right to be positioned.

This does not mean that those who are part Indigenous and part settler by ancestry cannot be or do not belong as First peoples. However, it *does* mean that the *care and integrity and respect* that goes into becoming more fully Indigenous must be there, as discussed throughout this thesis and especially in Chapter Two. Relationality, the mutual value placed upon doing and being in our learning, is the most important aspect of this becoming. For the rest; for settlers who will remain settlers, especially those in the academy, the challenge will be for them to find ways to be allies and partners truly accountable for the legacies they have inherited, and willing to deal with them in ways that involve honesty to themselves and to us. This will not be accomplished overnight, but the work must begin, and continue, and must not be shut down by setbacks.

This thesis, then, has been written as a way toward understanding of Indigenous selfhood and identity, but not in the abstract. It was written in and through an ongoing process of

understanding and reclaiming *my* self in a process of becoming; moving from colonization to Indigenous knowing and being. Perhaps also, as you read, Dear Reader, it might aid your understanding of yourself; of the complexity of yourself. This thesis privileges what lies both within and between us. It privileges Indigenous ideas of selves in relation; selves with histories and futures; selves in contexts and communities; learning and healing selves. The radical reflexivity that I not only think about but try to think *with* is akin to the relationality of Indigenous knowledge and research methodology, clothed in an anarchist's words where these made sense to use. But reflexivity really requires the researcher engage with their own struggle with identity; to go beyond understanding; to more-than understand their biases based on their positionality; to acknowledge their privilege; to examine their relationship to *all things involved* from the beginning to the end of each research project; to become one with all that is involved in the research process from beginning to end; to foster good relations with others one visits in that process, *including oneself*, and to do these things responsibly and respectfully. It requires living in a good way; *living the research* in a good way – because research is not separate from our living. Need I add that this is not always easy, nor learned quickly, or to a schedule. So, excuse me; excuse my prolonged reflections on radical reflexivity and relationality; for my insistence on ontological, epistemological and axiological distinctiveness, and for my focus on activist research. I am searching for myself and my ancestors.

In other chapters of this thesis, I have written many words. There are fewer words in this one, because I want to try something a little different here. In 1972, John Berger published *Ways of Seeing* (Berger, 1972), a collection of essays which challenged the sanctification of the "Western Art Tradition" as something embodying the highest ideals of Civilization; something that floated

"above" popular culture, machine production, and the exploitation and dispossession of human beings. Berger showed that this Great Art myth, at least as it had been museumized in the capital cities of Europe and in settler societies around the world, told a lie. That myth – the story told about art by establishment historians and curators of the time such as Kenneth Clark – performed a trick of magical thinking. Like soap advertising, it scrubbed away all the "low" or unsavory associations of paintings created by "great masters," and then bought and sold by dealers on the art market, collected by the wealthy, and given to or purchased by galleries. Berger devastated that cleansing operation.

Museumization also has a history of magically cloaking the history of appropriation by Western museums and galleries of Indigenous art, and of Indigenous ways of making art, also picked up by non-Indigenous artists and collectors as usable innovations in "style" or method, or meaning. Natalie Bell shared her experience of and response to museumization-as-appropriation with Angie Morrill and Leilani Sabzalian *in Weaving an Otherwise* (Morrill and Sabzalian, 2022):

> It's not enough to be dead, you want us murdered. It's not enough to be murdered, you want us dismembered. It's not enough to be in pieces, you want us stolen. And then forgotten. Now, Berkeley's Phoebe A. Hearst Museum holds our stolen Ancestors as ransom. What more could you want? We need our Bones back. I speak as a tribal citizen, card or not, I speak as a descendant, I speak as a future Ancestor and I speak as a mom who remembers. (Natalie Bell, personal communication to Morrill and Sabzalian October 12, 2020, in Morrill and Sabzalian, 2022, chapter 2)

I text this quote to my supervisor, and we talk about an obsession I have with collecting representations and facsimiles of bones and skulls. It strikes me in that moment that "my bones

(ancestors) are missing; that's why I am so busily collecting fakes and facsimiles of them!" These material representations, including plastic or ceramic models, surround me in my home. I reflect on, and with them. I am unapologetic about my radical reflexivity: it is "radical" in being a search for roots, "reflexive" in my being turned inside (bones) out, and also activist because *doing* is also how I am coming to be. Again: I am searching for myself and my ancestors.

4.3 Your turn

I mentioned John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* above not because he is an intellectual mentor but because I am appropriating a tactic he used in *Ways of Seeing*. It is made up of seven essays. But three of them *contain no words*. They are composed only of images, none captioned or explained. Berger invited readers – as viewers and respondents – to make their own meaning of these images and apply that meaning back to what is written in the rest of the book. The rest of this chapter is composed of images. They are only numbered, and there are no captions. The images relate to three *other* learning processes that were occurring while I was a graduate student. In the first part of this chapter, I reflected on what I have learned in the process of reading for, researching and writing this thesis, and on how I learned these things. In this thesis, I have stressed the importance of holism, relationality, context, and radical reflexivity to Indigenous Knowledge and to Indigenous research practices. I have noted the importance of Indigenous-led research to de-colonizing action. I also called attention to a need to grow in understanding and knowledge of ourselves in and through our research, and not arbitrarily to separate off "personal matters" from "scholarship." So, let me take you into my sidelines: they also merit some thought in relation to what I've written. During roughly the same period in which I was at work on this project, I engaged in three non-academic activities. I didn't so much

choose them as they grew on me. I see them as *learning* processes, though I don't yet know exactly where this learning will lead. I just have a sense that it is connected in some way to my experience of research and writing, and how that research and writing has changed me.

One of these three activities is collecting popular culture items that depict or are in the shape of skeletal material: bones and skulls. Another is painting — something I picked up on my own, without professional instruction. And a third (with one of my sons) has been music. I am involved in two bands: Void of Mood (Gothic Death Metal), and Exandra Fang (Bluesy Folk). My debut album with Void of Mood (to be recorded in December 2024) will be titled *Born to Darkness.*[48] (I have a sense of myself as "born from the darkness of the Church.")

It's hardly news – it's kind of obvious – that a grad student might pick up other activities while pursuing a thesis project. But these three aren't just diversions, tension releases, or hobbies. However, where they were/are leading, and what I am learning through them, is a little less obvious. Sometimes, the closer a learning activity is to your being, the harder it is to be clear about its exact meaning. Some aspects of what is being learned may be obvious while others aren't, and only become clear over time. How we learn from story in Indigenous contexts is like this: in one way, a story may seem clear and simple at the time of telling, but in another way, its meaning may take hold of you only weeks, months, years or decades later, or in the way it walks *with* you for years. So, I will try not to say too much about these other learning processes here. I will only hint at a few *possible* meanings, and raise some open questions. Beyond that, I will let these activities *tell themselves* to you in the images that follow the written portion of this chapter.

[48] The album title is from the line, "I was born to darkness," spoken by Brad Pitt in the soundtrack of the film, *Interview With a Vampire*, starring Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise (Jordan, dir., 1994).

The first five images are of paintings I have done. The sixth and seventh are posters for events that include performances by Void of Mood, a band I am in. Some of these images include representations of bones and skulls, popular imagery of death. You could reflect on these in light of Natalie Ball's words as shared above. Or you might be tempted to interpret them as "morbid." That's fine, but could they also be seen less as morbid than as *subverting* some common ways to define and distinguish between life and death, liveliness and morbidity, purity and decadence, health and sickness, normalcy and pathology, attraction and aversion, in the discourse of colonial, post-colonial and settler societies or in the categories of the state or of state agencies? And such a question might propagate others.

> – What did Achille Mbembe and Libby Meintjes (2003, p. 38) mean when they wrote, "[w]hether read from the perspective of slavery or of colonial occupation, death and freedom are irrevocably interwoven"?
>
> – What might it mean to say, "Love is Punk as Fuck"?

Several of my paintings to date also show female figures, in one of which bones and skull are directly visible. As noted, my supervisor and I talked about my fascination with bones and skulls. He noted that in some Indigenous traditions, animals are painted with their skeletons showing, in a manner that struck him as in some way possibly similar to my painted representations of women. He also commented on what he saw as an "uncanny" resemblance between the posture and clothing of the women in some of these images and the Virgin Mary as depicted in 17th-century paintings and in Roman Catholic popular art. For example, Mary is commonly depicted in such art wearing a head-covering resembling a hijab: covering the hair was a sign of "modesty" (or purity in a sexual sense) and humility. She is also often depicted

with various types of halo around her head, symbolizing divine light (or light of divine grace) descending on her and uniting her soul and body in spiritual purity. Further, Mary often appears in European art and religious imagery wearing a crown, symbolizing her status as "queen of heaven and earth" and as mother of Jesus, who in turn is often represented, post-resurrection, as a heavenly king. Crowns exalt and extend the head, making the human figure taller; they are also related to the garlands bestowed on the heads of triumphant Roman generals and emperors – so a crown also symbolizes glory ascending from the people and descending from the gods or God. The Catholic festival of the crowning of the Virgin Mary, held in May (coincidentally, a season of fertility), typically involves crowning her statues with garlands of flowers.

Crowns, like other related honorary headgear, accentuate the head over other bodily parts as the locus of earthly (or heavenly) *authority*. The halo, as a sign of holiness, is related in meaning to the crown, and when it takes the form of a golden disc, is also related to the "corona" of light emanating from and surrounding the sun. So here is something interesting. Mary carried Jesus bodily, in her *womb*, not her head. But it is her *head* (and head covering) and her *face* which are accentuated in European Renaissance and Baroque painting. Her lower body is covered (while the infant Jesus, commonly depicted on her lap, is often represented as naked). By comparison, there is a rite of passage still performed today on which people wear ceremonial gowns that cover and mask their bodies, along with headgear that accentuates their height (...slightly!) – called "Convocaton" – at which universities ceremonially award degrees. Such events symbolically separate degree-holders and candidates for degrees from non-degree-holders, and convey on them a certain authority (Laurendeau, 2024) of knowledge, and competence to teach,

research, or enter certain higher-status occupations.[49] What do the cap and gown symbolize about Western knowledge; about its relation to the body, and to social orders?

The head coverings or "halos" depicted in my paintings of female figures are not identified as Mary but are intuitively read as such by many viewers. Why is that, and what could they have to do with imagery such as that outlined above? Do they simply draw from it, as traces or remnants of a religious or aesthetic tradition? Do they *add* something different to it, question or subvert it, or enter into some other sort of conversation with it? Do they bridge an Indigenous/Western gap, descend into that gap, or rise above it? Do they question the gap itself, or its history? What might Mary have to do, if anything, with Indigeneity?

Indigenous people have been deeply impacted by the culture and beliefs of Christianity, particularly through the Roman Catholic Church. There, they were exposed to a saturation of Marian imagery, but also taught that Original Sin entered the world when Eve, the first woman, convinced Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. Thus, while Mary is linked to Eve in a traditional Catholic typology, the link is ambiguous. Roman Catholic Orders ran many of Canada's residential "schools" and teaching Catholic beliefs and practices to Indigenous children was part of the genocidal project of such schools, intended to "kill the [cultural, linguistic, moral and experiential] Indian in the Child,"[50] and also to teach such children that they were *sinful* beings, worthy of condemnation and punishment if they did not "repent." While the sites of some

[49] "Corona" is linked etymologically both to "crown," *and* to "research." All of these English words descend from a proto-Indo-European root meaning to "turn" or "bend". See "Corona (n.)," Etymology online, https://www.etymonline.com/word/corona.

[50] The phrase, "kill the Indian in the child" is popularly attributed to Duncan Campbell Scott, who as noted earlier, did say something similar in relation to "the Indian problem." But it may have originated in a statement by U.S. Army Captain R. H. Pratt, "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man," describing his philosophy of assimilation in an 1892 speech during the National Conference of Charities and Correction in Denver. Colorado (Pratt, 1892).

residential schools are now places of remembrance, mourning and anger, as graveyards on their grounds yield up the secrets of so many child deaths, many Indigenous people remain Roman Catholic, or remain impacted by Roman Catholic culture. It was drilled into many of us, bone-deep.

However, Indigenous writers, including Kimmerer (2013, chapter 1) have commented on a major *contrast* between the story of Eve in the Bible and of Sky Woman in certain North American narrative traditions. Eve is a bad doer; a woman of the first sin, commonly depicted in Western art as caught in the act of offering Adam the forbidden fruit. Sky Woman has no such stigma attached to her. Eve, along with Adam, was kicked out of the Garden of Eden while Sky Woman fell *into* the arms of the earth. Sky Woman and Eve both can be seen as givers of life, but Eve takes on this role *alone with Adam* after they lose their way (having fallen into sin) and are shown out of the Garden, while Sky Woman has her animal relatives around her, whom she can ask to help humans (who are also relatives of the animals) to find their way. Adam and Eve, in their banishment, must toil against nature to make it yield them a living and eventually to yield to their dominion.[51] While Eve is symbolically the "mother" of humankind, she floats in a kind of semi-banishment around the edges of Catholic culture.

Mary is more specifically a figure of Roman Catholic veneration than Eve. Indigenous comparisons of her and Eve to figures such as Sky Woman are to be expected, but because Mary is so identified with the core of Catholic belief and practice it is harder to loosen its grip on her. Links between Mary and Sky Woman (for example) thus are likely to be different, more

[51] That dominion was a promise given by God in the Garden and *not* revoked. The idea of a God-given dominion over nature through extractive work echoed in the 1867 naming of a new colonial state as the Dominion of Canada.

complex, more difficult than those of Eve to Sky Woman. Mary is said to have been a virgin but nonetheless the "Mother of God;" a model of "purity" in a patriarchal vision of womanhood. She is also someone who is said to have suffered and expressed grief for her son, and for humanity. But maybe Mary also grieves for chains that bind her to narratives of purity and its opposite? Maybe she grieves evils done to women and children in her name, and grieves their deaths and unmarked burials? Maybe she grieves calcified skeletons of doctrine imposed on the energy of her living bones? Or maybe she means something else, as yet unknown to those who have painted her, and to me (and my supervisors)?

Kimmerer (2013, chapter 1) suggests that Eve was given a raw deal in scripture and by the church. She instead opens a door to welcoming *both* Mary and Eve into re-imaginings, and even into possible companionship with Sky Woman. Could Eve and Mary be re-conceived as our first aunties? What all of this might mean, Dear Reader, is now as much up to *you* as it is to me; whether sooner or later, in its own time, and in yours.
Your turn.

4.4 Images

Images begin on the page following this section.

The first five images are of artworks painted in acrylic by Elizabeth Fox-Grey.

Images 6 and 7 are event posters designed by Elizabeth Fox-Grey.

Background imagery in the posters was sourced from Canva (a software program): canva.com

A reproduction of the painting in Image 1 has been used, with permission of E. Fox-Grey, as the cover image for Jason Laurendeau (2024), *Settler Colonialism, Sport, and Recreation* (Champaign IL: Common Ground Research Networks). DOI: https://doi.org/10.18848/978-1-963049-26-8/CGP

Image 1

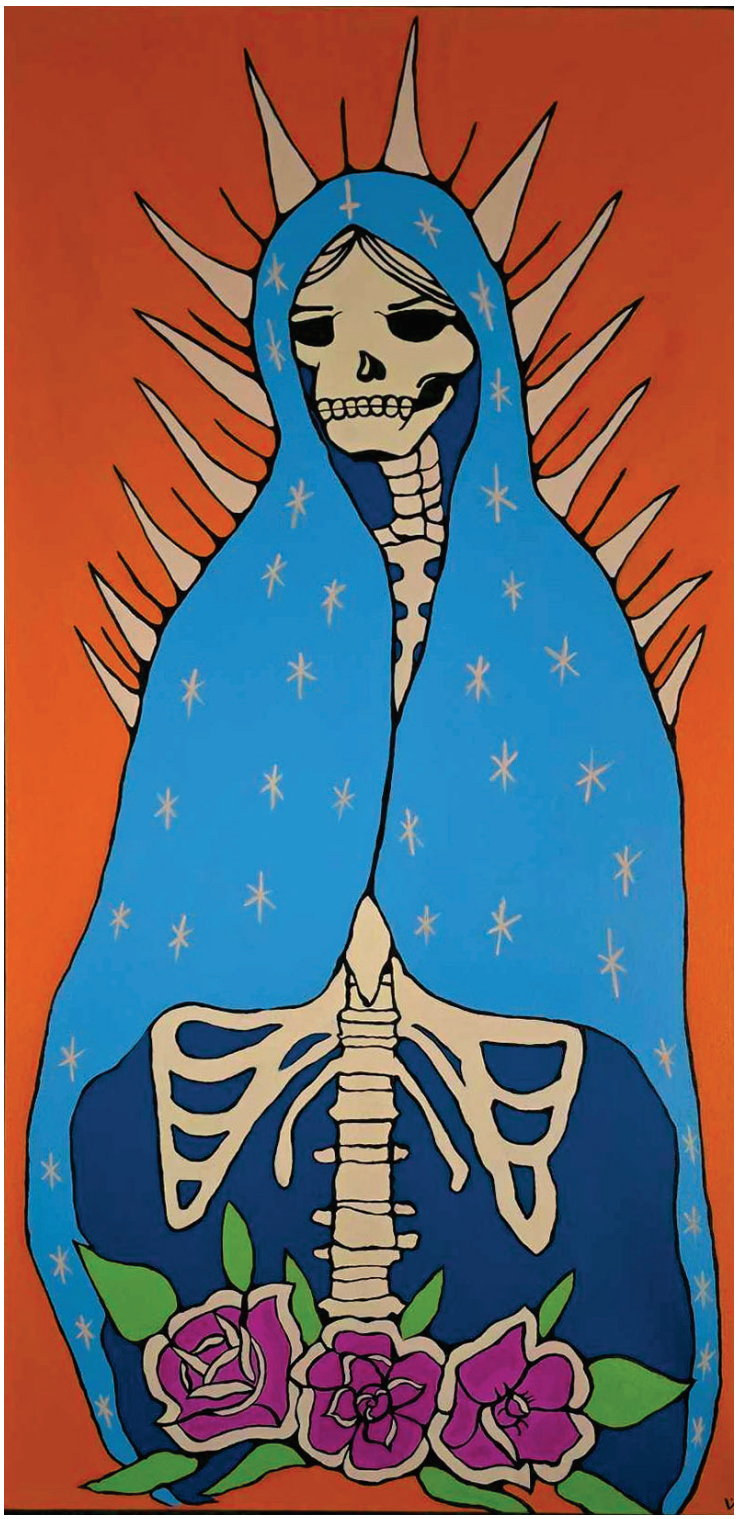


Image 2

Image 3

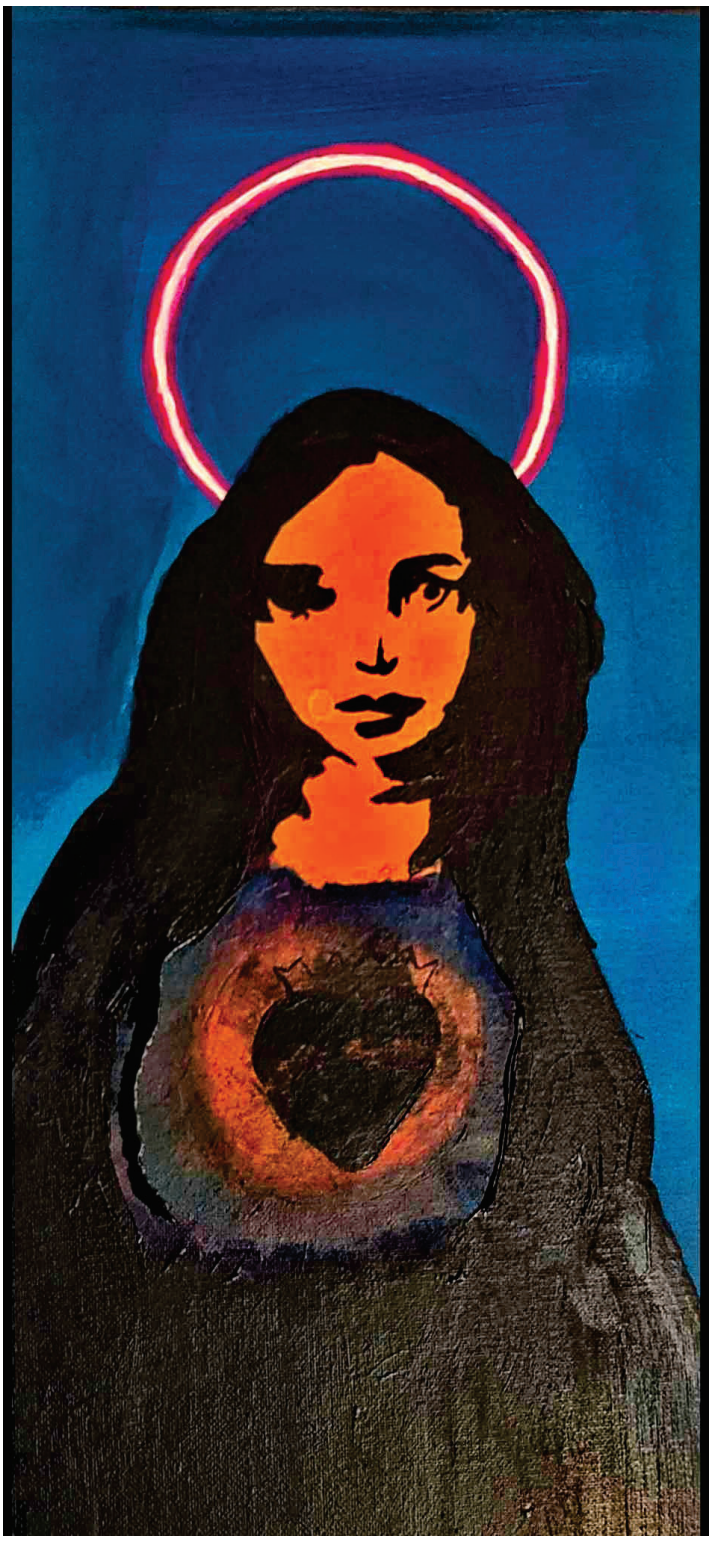


Image 4

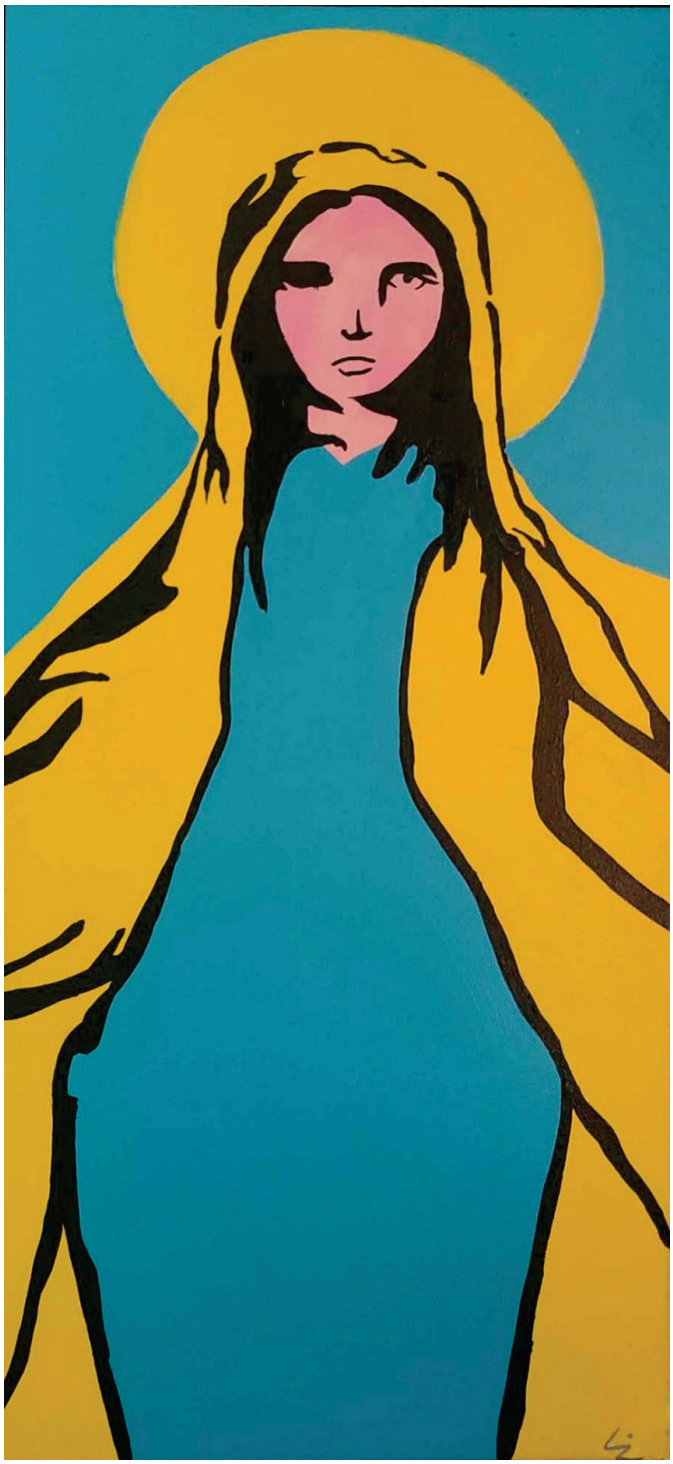


Image 5


Deathbridge Disease Presents:
Penalty
Culled
Exit Wound
Pools of Blood
The Slice
November 30th
Doors 8 $15 Bands 9

Image 6


Deathbridge Disease Presents:
Hacked Apart
Congealed Flesh
Beaver Fever
Powertrip + Void of Mood
The Slice
October 1st
Doors 7
$20
Bands 8

Image 7

CHAPTER FIVE:

BURNING SWEETGRASS, AND THE RED ROAD TO GRATITUDE

Nitsiiksiniiitaki (Gratitude)

"A sweetgrass braid is burned to create a ceremonial smudge that washes the recipient in kindness and compassion to heal the body and spirit" (Kimmerer 2013: 301)

5.1 Windigo footprints

According to Pitt (2018), a windigo (or wendigo; there are various spellings),

> … is a supernatural being belonging to the spiritual traditions of Algonquian-speaking First Nations in North America. Windigos are described as powerful monsters that have a desire to kill and eat their victims. In most legends, humans transform into windigos because of their greed or weakness. Various Indigenous traditions consider windigos dangerous because of their thirst for blood and their ability to infect otherwise healthy people or communities with evil. Windigo legends are essentially cautionary tales about isolation and selfishness, and the importance of community. According to most Algonquian oral traditions, a windigo is a cannibalistic monster that preys on the weak and socially disconnected. In most versions of the legend, a human becomes a windigo after his or her spirit is corrupted by greed or weakened by extreme conditions, such as hunger and cold. In other legends, humans become windigos when possessed by a prowling spirit during a moment of weakness. (paras 1 and 2)

There is some disagreement over whether such stories are part of the Blackfoot tradition. Vivian Asimos (2022/2024) claims that they are, while Pitt (2018) names only the Siksika, not the other Blackfoot peoples, as having such traditions. However, in the past century, Windigo stories have circulated across North America, in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous circles. Pitt (2018) notes that the term "Windigo Psychosis" entered Western psychiatric discourse after an Oblate missionary in the 1920's used the term "windigo" to name what he saw as a psychoneurosis in which a person "felt possessed by cannibalistic desires" (subsection "Windigo Psychosis").

In settler discourse, Windigo stories were not only used to name individual "psychopathologies" but were often described as "myths," "mythologies" or, as Pitt (2018) describes them, "legends" that "reveal much about the beliefs, ways of life, social structures and traditions of the people who tell these stories" (subsection, "Symbolism and Meaning"). In other words, the stories are said to present *fictional* beings *as if* they are real entities, whose actions reflect dangers that occur in *real* situations or communities. This fits with a tendency in Western literary and anthropological discourse to treat such figures as *metaphorical* or symbolic. Pitt (2018) notes that,

> ... [a]ccording to historian Shawn Smallman, the windigo is still seen as a symbol of greed in modern society, as manifested in capitalism and corporate consumerism. The creature has also come to serve as a metaphor for the injustices that Indigenous people have faced in Canada, including residential schools, the restriction of rights in the Indian Act, the Sixties Scoop and similarly assimilative policies. Armand Ruffo's film, A

> Windigo Tale (2010), for example, uses the monster to tell a story about the intergenerational trauma of residential schools. For some Indigenous persons, the windigo represents the forces of colonization. (subsection, "Symbolism and Meaning"; see also Smith, 2021)

But what is the status of the Windigo in terms of an *Indigenous* ontology? A possible answer is that the Windigo contradicts relational being. It is a lone beast, one that can (paradoxically) both devour us *and* take up habitation in us; that it is present in the parts of us that are dark and alone.

Here is Kimmerer's way of telling about Windigo. As you read it, note how easily her tale *could* be read – and probably *has* been read – as metaphorical, symbolic, mythological; as re-presenting actual or possible occurrences in terms of timeless or legendary fictional archetypes. Kimmerer (2013) notes that the Windigo is a key figure in Anishinaabe tales that encourage people to be aware of the dangers of selfishness and greed. The Windigo is a beast in human form, but it is a human who will not enter the spirit world, because it has become filled with insatiable desires. This beast has been formed to consume without care and should be considered armed and dangerous. It is believed to exist in all of us, as a part of us that can be elicited if we are not careful to mind our behaviors (p. 307). Stories of the Windigo are told in order to caution us, to help us recognize the power of the beast, but to not feed its power, as our destruction will ensue if we do. In a modern setting, colonialism can be said to be a mark of the beast, now also associated with neoliberal ideas of individualization, acquisitiveness, private property, commodification and competition, and with all the scars that are visible on those who consume *with* no end and *to* no end. Under its hand, even Indigenous knowledge systems have been misappropriated and capitalized. Like the land in which Indigenous folx have traditionally lived

and learned from, and which they were once one with, Indigenous knowledge has been commercialized; and such commercialization has created beasts among us (p. 308), even in my own community. We have been bitten by the beast, through no fault of our own, in our forced assimilation: bitten by desires to consume, displace and exclude through the weaponization of private property, through competition for privileges doled out by bureaucrats, and through lateral violence which positions us not in *relation* to others but *against* them. Our lands have rotted from a lack of care and reciprocity; connection has been lost in many places, left dark and alone. If Mother Earth does not have stewards of the land, her hair will not continue to grow, and the braiding of sweetgrass will get lost, as we will no longer be able to express our love through it (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 207).

5.2 "If there is no mask, how can any of us be real?"

There is still more at stake in this way of thinking about Windigo. If we are unable to express our love *of* the earth *through* the earth; through our place *in* the earth; through actual, embodied practices such as braiding sweetgrass, then, as Lee Maracle (2012) said, "the rage begins to smoulder," rather than the sweetgrass burned ceremonially. And in her words again, "there is a direct connection between violence against the earth and violence against women." Note her word choice here: a *direct* connection; not a metaphorical or symbolic one. And now this truly makes sense to me. Is the hair of Mother Earth a metaphor only? Is being bitten by a wendigo a metaphorical bite only? Are the auto-immune diseases that Maracle (2012) discusses *symbols* of modern life or *real* effects of real occurrences?

Listen, now, to some *different* questions. These are Lee Maracle's (2012) questions.

> If there isn't a cedar tree there, where do you put the tobacco? If there isn't a huge oak tree, what do you pray to? If there isn't that pine, that beautiful pine, where does the tree of peace live? If there isn't those fish, where's my salmon dance? If there isn't those trees, where is my mask coming from? If there is no mask, how can any of us be real? (15:00-15:40 mins)

"*If there is no mask, how can any of us be <u>real</u>?*" *What could she mean??*

We are trained in Western culture to see masks and marking as *hiding a reality*; as a kind of *dissembling*. But in the dramas of the ancient Greeks and Romans, supposedly the ancestors of "Western civilization," the masks worn by actors were intended to *accentuate* the reality those actors conveyed. The Latin word for a theatrical mask was *persona*, from which we get the English term "person" ("Person (n.)", 2022). The mask also *amplified* the voice of the individual actor, but somewhere along the way thereafter, the mask came to be associated with a "social role" as against the authenticity of the individual "personality." Perhaps the history of "Western Civ." is as much a forgetting, or perhaps a turning in another direction, as it is a remembering or a straight line.

But for Lee Maracle, the mask, as a feature of ceremony, is about putting on the earth by putting on what grows there – which is akin to donning a mask as a way of putting on ourselves as people who grow out of what the earth gives. Our growth *comes to us from the earth*. Our growth stops and our greed grows instead when we deny the earth and refuse it respect. Windigo

personifies this process of denial, not by moving it into the register of myth, but by emerging out of the process itself. The reality of colonialism and extractivism, of denial, from the standpoint of Indigenous ontology, is Windigo. From that ontological standpoint, *illusion* lies in the notion that Windigo is "not there" as an *actualizing force* in the social, technological and belief systems that "eat" us.

In Chapter Two, I wrote about missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG), linking indifference to the land and indifference to MMIWG. The "systems" at play around and in our lives – extractivist capitalism, patriarchy and white supremacy – all are in the belly of the beast: a beast that consumes and destroys in multiple forms; a beast that sought to destroy me, a multiform beast I *allowed* almost to destroy me, a beast *I became* that nearly destroyed me. To defeat such a beast is the journey of a lifetime.

5.3 Defeating and healing windigo

Defeating the Windigo is a mission not to be taken lightly. Kimmerer (2013, p. 374) grieves the loss of maple trees, to whose presence in the nearby lands she'd become accustomed. She worries about the exposed flora and what their future holds without the protective shade the maples offered. Windigo, she writes, was the one who orchestrated the tree death and sealed the fate of the remaining plants; the one donning the masks of various "systems" and "necessities" that amplified its voice. Tracks and traces unfamiliar to Kimmerer alert her that the Windigo is lurking in cold and empty spaces wandered by humans lost in the vast plains of scarcity. Greed and insatiable hunger feed this beast. In a strange way, it feeds on *lack*. You cannot satiate or

quell the hunger in something that only knows fear, ego and consumption and that is obsessed with what it does not have.

Kimmerer (2013) writes that "[a] world made of gifts cannot coexist with a world made of commodities" (p. 376). The market creates ebbs and flows of material consumption and produces wants rather than satisfactions. She points out that scarcity is created by the free market as a mechanism of capitalism. Scarcity emerges from the relationship between the material world and the magical circulation of material goods, which hinders, diverts or replaces the old circulation of wind, water and living beings. It emerges from a new language that celebrates technology as if technology creates itself and has its own godlike agency (Macfarlane, 2018).[52] The capitalist market itself presents as more than a mechanism of distribution; among its apparitions is also a production apparatus, one that endlessly produces wants, inequities and scarcities, fueling its own vortex through the production of state and consumer debt (Lazzarato, 2015). Its ebbs, flows and eddies produce both under- and overcapacities, shortages and gluts, but more importantly and systematically, it produces *scarcity itself* as an endemic condition of human being: not enough money; not enough capital; not enough things, not enough luxuries, not enough housing, not enough jobs, not enough health care. It produces fear of losing out; it produces occupational health issues, poverty pockets, chronic unemployment existing side-by-side with overwork; it produces constant stress and stress-related disease. It helps fuel the negative comparisons and defensive fears that fuel lateral violence. The free market, we are told by Silicon Valley gurus and free-enterprise think tanks, is a "free-for-all" without consequence.

[52] Marx (2009) noted, in an exposé of the magical thinking of modern capitalism, that money appears to have a power all its own , and that commodities and money also seem to exchange themselves for themselves (Marx, 2015). Human relationality and reciprocity are thereby displaced and hidden by a circle game of competitive commodity production, marketing, consumption or hoarding, and disposal.

But in this free-for-all, the personhood of the earth is flouted whilst the personhood of the corporation is granted (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 376).

Kimmerer (2013) explains that the sweetgrass braid, and the mutual human work of braiding, signifies *and enacts* a unity of mind, body and spirit (p. 378). The strands of this braid are interwoven to remind us of that unity in the self, and of self to earth; a unity enacted in our love and respect for mother earth, remembering all that is given to us, for it is our responsibility to care for the gifts of the earth and to give back. The Windigo is an un-raveller of such a braid; an agent of disconnection from the relationship to the earth and its gifts; a taker from the earth's abundance without reciprocity. The Windigo mindset is fear-fuelled greed for more; always more. The Windigo is the spirit of not-enough.

"The plants give them gifts with unstinting generosity" (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 374)

Kimmerer (2013) re-iterates and adds to an Anishinaabe tale that speaks of Nanabozho, the hero who has hunted and defeated the Windigo (chapter 18).[53] He is the warrior that set out and still sets out to kill the beast. Nanabozho is a wise warrior, so he does not wait for the winter to track the Windigo when it is in its prime. Instead Nanabozho goes after it in the summer. Nanabozho appears to Kimmerer to remind her that she, too, is capable of defeating the Windigo, and that everything she needs to do so is readily available to her from the earth. In order for Kimmerer to

[53] This view of Windigo has a surprising paralell in a facet of the Christian view of Satan. Anishnaabe people are taught to be alert to the power and presence of Windigo in vulnerable situations. Similarly, traditional Christians hold that Satan is a powerful force, prowling and roaring, drawing the gullible, weak or unaware into evil. Kimmerer tells us that Nanabozho has (*already*) defeated the Windigo. Its power is still real, but it rages against its own already-accomplished defeat. Similarly, in one strand of Christianity, the devil as agent of fear, of sin-and-death, has *already been defeated* by Christ. The devil is a nothingness; a lack, and it rages against its nullity. It seeks to feed itself back into being by consuming human souls it has drawn in, but only makes them nothing too (Ramp, 2004).

expel the poison that enrages Windigo and drives it to consume human beings, she must give the beast the medicine it deserves, according to the idea that “like dissolves like” (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 377). Equipped with the gifts of the plants, Kimmerer utilizes the benefits of the buckthorn, a berry-producing species that is invasive to the land in which she lives; a species that takes over land and destroys the reciprocity of its surroundings. In this sense, the buckthorn out-of-place resembles the Windigo’s displaced and obsessive drivenness. In her version of the story, Kimmerer uses buckthorn to create a concoction for the beast to feed on. The expulsive properties of the elixir have it heaved over and retching. With the expulsion of the evils that lurk in the depths of its (non-) being, the beast is now rendered weak and vulnerable, Kimmerer offers it medicine made from the earth; the medicine she has been telling stories about throughout her anthology: stories of the healing properties of flowers, plants, seeds, and nuts; healing properties that are abundant and available for those who seek out a reciprocal relationship with the land. When, in her story, she offers this medicine to the Windigo, it is terrified, thinking that this is more poison, Kimmerer takes a sip to reassure the Windigo, and then she sits down to tell a story. “*She fell like a maple seed, pirouetting from the autumn sky*” (Kimmerer 2013: 379). Sky Woman falls, not into sin or evil or lack, but into the arms of the earth, and into a state of gratitude.

5.4 Living and expressing nitsiiksiniiitaki

A standard component of Master’s and Doctoral theses is a section called “Acknowledgments” placed near the beginning of the thesis document. It normally involves naming those who have helped or encouraged the author in their path to completion of the thesis, and offering them

thanks. However, it's interesting that such thanksgiving is identified with this particular English word – acknowledgments – because "to acknowledge" something can also have quite different, even almost opposite connotations. The word "acknowledge" is typically defined in dictionaries in a way similar to this example: "to accept, admit, or recognize something, or the truth or existence of something: acknowledge someone as something" ("Acknowledge, verb [T]", 2013). Such a definition could encompass examples like admitting, either joyfully *or* with reluctance that someone has helped you. It could also mean admitting a failing, a wrongdoing, sins, or responsibility of some kind. "Acknowledge" also carries the meaning of saying "thank you" or giving thanks, but often with a connotation that doing so is a response to an *expectation*, or sometimes a formal obligation. So the word "acknowledgment" contains the possible meaning of an admission, confession or gesture that is in some sense obligatory – for example, the idea that to give thanks is good manners or "good form." In turn, the inclusion in this meaning of a notion of expectation, supports, at least in modern Western culture, a kind of social contractualism: e.g., a person thanked in thesis acknowledgments symbolically gets something back for "services rendered;" for what they "put in" to the thesis process. We see something similar in the notion that care for the environment is a return for "ecosystem services"[54] offered by Nature and useful to humans – and a way to ensure that such "services" will continue to be provided.

I have chosen instead a Blackfoot word that translates to something more like "gratitude." Also, I have chosen to situate my expressions of gratitude here, in this chapter, to make a point about a difference between "acknowledging" something and expressing or living Nitsiiksiniiitaki. I also want to illustrate something about how academic infrastructure in a Western institutional setting

[54] Defined as direct and indirect benefits that ecosystems provide humans. Agroecosystems, forests, and rangelands provide suites of ecosystem services that support and sustain human livelihoods ("Ecosystem Services," n.d.)

can conflict with or not quite fit with Indigenous practice or an Indigenous worldview. In this case, the infrastructure is not physical or organizational, like a building or a timetable, but an institutionalized ("normal") *expectation* about thesis structure, codified in an online template (School of Graduate Studies, 2024). It's a very minor example, but of a kind that can be multiplied many times over in an Indigenous student's experience. In contrast to "acknowledging," expressing Nitsiiksiniiitaki is more closely represented in English by "expressing gratitude," *being* thank*ful*. Gratitude is also related to the word "grace," e.g. the theological sense of a gift freely given. You can, at least hypothetically, give a gift without being obligated to do so, and it is possible to be thankful or grateful for something without being socially obligated to express it.[55]

I mention this to lead into something wider I want to mention, however briefly. It seems to me that if acknowledgement is understood primarily or only in terms of expectation or obligation, it lends itself to a certain kind of circulation, an "economy" endangered by a potential *in*sufficiency. Are one's thanks worded sincerely or adequately enough? If one *doesn't* offer thanks or if one misses a name, or forgets to thank someone, does that mean someone is left (symbolically) with empty hands in return for whatever they offered? Does that then create a *lack*; a glitch in the gears of an economy of obligatory reciprocity? If so, can it also be said that gratitude belongs to an economy of a *different* kind? Kimmerer (2022) gives her (Indigenous) definition of gratitude:

[55] There has been a century of controversy in philosophical anthropology about whether gift-giving is in essence obligatory (or creates obligation), or has an essential element of freedom (to give without obligation or without wishing to create obligation). This debate was sparked by Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* (1990). First published in 1925, it continues to incite critical responses concerning the meaning of reciprocity, e.g. Derrida (1994), Hénaff (2019), O'Neill (2001), Caillé (2001).

> Gratitude is so much more than a polite "thank you." It is the thread that connects us in a deep relationship, simultaneously physical and spiritual, as our bodies are fed and spirits nourished by the sense of belonging, which is the most vital of foods. Gratitude creates a sense of abundance, the knowing that you have what you need. In that climate of sufficiency [*note: not scarcity!*], our hunger for more abates and we take only what we need, in respect for the generosity of the giver. (para. 8, *my interjection*)

She then links gift-giving and receiving to reciprocity, but note the language she uses to do so:

> If our first response is gratitude, then our second is reciprocity: to give a gift in return. What could I give these plants in return for their generosity? It could be a direct response, like weeding or water or a song of thanks that sends appreciation out on the wind. Or indirect, like donating to my local land trust so that more habitat for the gift givers will be saved, or making art that invites others into the web of reciprocity. (para. 9)

Here, Kimmerer defines "reciprocity" not as an obligation but something potentially more spontaneous: a *response*. Her next step is to link that response to an economy, but she defines "economy" differently from a "services rendered, acknowledged and paid for" model.

> The words "ecology" and "economy" come from the same root, the Greek *oikos*, meaning "home" or "household": *i.e.*, the systems of relationship, the goods and services that keep us alive. The system of market economies that we're given as a default is hardly the only model out there. Anthropologists have observed and shared multiple cultural frameworks colored by very different worldviews on "how we provide for ourselves," including gift economies. ... Why then have we permitted the dominance of economic systems that commoditize everything? That create scarcity instead of abundance, that

> promote accumulation rather than sharing? ... On their website, the American Economic Association says, "[Economics is] the *study of scarcity*, the study of how people use resources and respond to incentives." My son-in-law teaches high school economics, and the first principle his students learn is that economics is about decision-making in the face of *scarcity*. Anything and everything in a market is implicitly defined as *scarce*. With *scarcity* as the main principle, the mindset that follows is based on commodification of goods and services. ... [Dr. Valerie Luzadis,] past president of the US Society for Ecological Economics ... prefers the definition that "economics is how we organize ourselves to sustain life and enhance its quality. It's a way of considering how we provide for ourselves" (paras 13, 14, 15, 16; *my emphasis*).

Kimmerer (2022) proposes that Luzadis's definition allows for a way of conceiving and practicing a *gift* economy, in which gratitude and reciprocity form the "currency" and have "the remarkable property of multiplying with every exchange, their energy concentrating as they pass from hand to hand, a truly renewable resource." She goes on to write:

> To name the world as gift is to feel one's membership in the web of reciprocity. It makes you happy—and it makes you accountable. Conceiving of something as a gift changes your relationship to it in a profound way, even though the physical makeup of the "thing" has not changed. A woolly knit hat that you purchase at the store will keep you warm regardless of its origin, but if it was hand knit by your favorite auntie, then you are in relationship to that "thing" in a very different way: you are responsible for it, and your gratitude has motive force in the world. You're likely to take much better care of the gift hat than the commodity hat, because it is knit of relationships. This is the power of gift thinking. I imagine if we acknowledged that everything we consume is the gift of Mother

> Earth, we would take better care of what we are given. Mistreating a gift has emotional and ethical gravity as well as ecological resonance. ... (para. 11)

So, becoming part of this gift economy "makes you accountable." How we treat gifts has "emotional and ethical gravity." But there is a shade of meaning here that is different from a sense of external obligation or "formalities." It is to "feel" something, and not just to feel individual obligation but to feel happiness, to experience "*membership* in a web of reciprocity," to care. Acts of reciprocity are acts in which we *recognize* and *bond* ourselves to each other, in which we can become more than individual economic agents; in which we can *make ourselves a we*. In the context of my own Indigenous community, such acts might mean, for example, recognizing each other not first as "status Indians" or as "band members" (though we may –or may not– be both), but as Niitsitapi – real people; people *real to each other*. The more we practice such recognition, the more we embody Niitsitapiisini – our way of living.

This thesis is the product of many things, many circumstances, many actions, and many people, because nothing happens in a vacuum. It is their co-creation, which led to, and then forward from, the moment of its conception. It came to fruition with the guidance of the Creator. I am grateful that I was given an opportunity to embark on this academic journey, and grateful for where it led me. This thesis is the result of a "project" that became a journey. It took on its own life and it took its time: it has been many years in the making. I could have looked back on the extended time it took to research and write and revise it as wasted and lost. Why could I not have finished on time? How will I ever get all that time back? How might that time spent have damaged my career prospects? In other words, I could have obsessed about lack and loss – about *scarcity*. But I believe instead – even if at times it has been *hard* to believe – that each moment

in the process was along the path chosen for me by Creator, and for that I have gratitude. So now, I am thankful, I *feel* thankful, and I give thanks.

Some, but not all of the people named below are paid salaries to do what they did for me and for this thesis. It is good that they are paid, but for me, as I write this at this moment, I experience what they have done personally and as gifts, and *I am happy* for those gifts. It is good for me to be polite and to offer thanks to those identified below, but I also *want* to show gratitude to them, and to *share with them* a web of reciprocity that *we* have made.

I am grateful to my parents for their help along my journey. They gave their time to help ease the burdens of life, giving financial support, offering childcare, and taking on my domestic duties so I could tend to my work or make it through periods of illness. I am grateful to my other family members and my friends for their belief in me and their support. I am grateful to my children, as they made sacrifices for me to give me the time I spent away from them to focus on this work.

Strictly speaking, in academic terms, I am the author of this work. I wrote it and I stand behind it. But in a broader and less institutional sense, this thesis is the co-creation of a community of people without whom it would not have come to be, or would not have taken the form it did. This community of co-creation includes those who translated Blackfoot terms for me, gave me knowledge about the traditions and tenets of my Blackfoot people, advised me, encouraged me, or listened to me as I talked about the work of researching and writing, and some of the difficulties and blockages in my way. This community also includes those I met in my

visitations, who took time to listen to and respond to my questions, and to take part in mutual, mutually-supportive and enriching discussions beyond them. It includes those who edited or suggested edits to many draft versions of this thesis, and those whose published work was essential to the development of my understanding.

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I am grateful to all the events that happened during this process of research, thinking, pausing, writing, and revising, because they ultimately shaped the woman and scholar that I am today. I am grateful also to adversaries. I am grateful for the time that a pandemic gave me to understand myself more and to reinforce my ability to overcome uncertainty. I am grateful for moments in which I felt it necessary to argue, contest and resist, and for those placed along my path to test me in these ways. I hope I have met your challenges fairly.

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mother, to the Sun who draws life from her, to the air for giving me breath, to water in all its forms, and to my non-human relations, for feeding me when I was hungry or thirsty, for giving me a home among them, for clothing the world in which I share life life with them.

I am, again, grateful to *all* of my relations. To all of you, named and unnamed.

Research as medicine: the red road

The research I have done and the experiences I have had during this thesis project have led me to where I am now, becoming, growing and evolving, and learning most importantly that love is neither selfish nor selfless, but is a quality of selfhood; is what keeps the self from turning away from gratitude into obsession with scarcity and lack; from turning into a hungry ghost. The red road was explained to me by Shelly Pompana Spear Chief as the path we take to be our authentic selves, the road to get back anew to the place from which we came. This is also a research road. On this road, star blankets and ceremony mark transitions in our lives, reminding us from whence we came, and where we must now go to get back ultimately to the other side – to the stars, where we belong (Pompana Spear Chief, 2021). Elders speak of walking the red road on which we connect to our own spirit and to the guidance of the spirit world. Along this road, we learn how to take responsibility for our actions and to speak the truth from our hearts (Frost 2022: xxvii). Research is also a journey, marked by the seasonality through which we discover knowledge and deepen truths about ourselves, our relations, and others. It is also ceremony in that it is a way we seek to maintain accountability in and to the relational world; to all the world *as* relational; to all our relations. This journey should not be diverted by erasing the self and its

relations from its path in a misleading quest for a god's eye version of "objectivity." Meaningful knowledge is knowledge that is radically reflexive in an Indigenous sense; true to and honest about our positionality in relation to our communities, the wider society, and the earth itself. Truth is meaningful when we can stand behind it with this honesty, with the humility that comes with learning, and with the blood, sweat, and tears of our experience and effort. It is meaningful when the axioms which guide our speech and our being are not arbitrarily chosen but located and locating – when, grounded in the earth, we feel her breath in the wind; her restorative tears falling gently from the sky, reminders of a story given and received.

She fell like a maple seed,

pirouetting from an autumn sky.[56]

[56] Kimmerer (2013), page 379

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