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## Narrative Tactics: Windigo Stories and Indigenous Youth Suicide

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Anthropology

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Narrative Tactics:  
Windigo Stories and Indigenous Youth Suicide

(Narrative Tactics)

(Monograph)

by

Gerald P McKinley

Graduate Program in Anthropology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
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**Narrative Tactics: Windigo Stories and Indigenous Youth Suicide**

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Chair of the Thesis Examination Board

## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines cross-genre and cross-cultural discourse between contemporary Indigenous windigo narratives and medical narratives involving the topic of Indigenous youth suicide. The Indigenous narratives include forms that are Western in their origin, the novel, comic book and film, but contain traditional Indigenous narrative patterns, actors and themes. I draw these narratives from fictions produced by Indigenous public intellectuals. The medical narratives represent a cross-section of fields but focus mainly on Coroners' reports, social determinants of health research and suicide research based in psychology. The goal of my research is to examine how and where these forms of discourse come together in a meaningful way and how that union can benefit the Indigenous communities and medical researchers.

My research methodology includes the application of narrative and literary theory originating from such scholars as M.M. Bakhtin, Paul Ricoeur, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Narrative theory is brought together with the ethnographic work of A. Irving Hallowell, Victor Turner, Dell Hymes, and William Labov and Indigenous scholarship, particularly the work of Cree academic, artist and poet Neal McLeod, in order to conduct cross-genre and cross-cultural discourse analysis.

My major research findings are that the cross-genre discourse is not my own construct, as is evidenced by the role of medical narratives within the construction of contemporary Indigenous narratives. Medical narratives, also, demonstrate an application of ethnographic and cultural awareness in their analysis. However, I argue that there are still gaps that can be closed in the discourses that will benefit both sides of

the conversation. I argue that by focusing on the points where the discourses meet and where they are disconnected, the field of Indigenous youth suicide can gain a better understanding of the ontological and epistemological view-points of the communities they are studying and how these positions are connected to the stories they tell about their histories.

Key Words: Windigo, Youth Suicide, Indigenous Literature, Algonquian Narrative, Medical Anthropology.

### **Acknowledgements:**

The production of acknowledgements at the end of a process that will occupy the beginning of present works is a challenge of sorts. How do I thank the many people who have made this journey with me, all of whom contributed, supported and guided me in their own way, in a format that seemingly ranks you in order? Unfortunately there is no way of presenting my thanks in a manner that does not seem to rank you. However, I assure you that this is not the case. My journey would not have been possible without the support of the so many great people in my life.

I would not have started this process without the support and extreme patience of Shannon, Molly and Jonathan, my loving family. Thank you for standing by me through the past four years and understanding when I needed to be working on days when we would all rather have been playing. I have been lucky to work under the supervision of Dr. Regna Darnell for the past six years (two for my Master of Arts and Four for my Doctorate). Regna, your guidance, support and knowledge cannot be matched. You have helped me grow as a scholar and as a person. I have also benefited from the support of Dr. Douglass St.Christian. Thank you for your guiding thoughts over the past five years that I have worked with you. My parents, Brian and Ellen, have always supported me without fail in whatever I do. Thank you to my siblings Brenda, Elaine, Colum and Brian. I would also like to thank Dr. Maureen Matthews for acting as my external reviewer and for providing significant and meaningful advice on this project and for the connection to Louis Bird.

I was lucky to be granted interviews by some important contributors. I am thankful to Louis Bird, Daniel David Moses, Joseph Boyden and Sean Muir for taking time out of their busy lives to meet with me.

Over the years I have come to know an exceptional group of men who foster and support each other in our lives. Thank you, John, Brian, Chris, Michael, Nate and Jamie. Shannon and I have benefited from the support of her family, Sue and Scott, Sherry and Brad, as well as a great group of friends who have helped us whenever we needed anything. Thank you, Lisa, Jim, Kathleen, Jennifer, Mike, Pattie and Steve. The Department of Anthropology has some characters that have made this journey fun. Thanks to Joshua for all the conferences and play dates. Thanks to Mark, Ian, Mellissa, Brad, Jennifer, Matthew, and Jim and I wish you well on your own journeys.

That being said, it is clear to me that this dissertation really was a group effort. I hope it lives up to your expectations.

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### Guide to Indigenous Terms

Cree	Anishinabemowin	English
<i>Ācađōhkīwina</i>	<i>atisokanak</i>	sacred stories, the oldest stories
<i>Ācimōwina</i> history	<i>tabatcamowin</i>	referring to events in human
	<i>Nanabushu</i>	The Older Brother
<i>Nēhiyāwiwin</i>		Cree-ness, Cree Language
<i>pawakan</i>	<i>pawágan</i>	dream visitor
<i>Wāhkōhtowin</i>		Kinship
<i>Wīsahkīcāhk</i>		The Older Brother
<i>Witigo</i>	<i>Windigo</i>	Cannibal

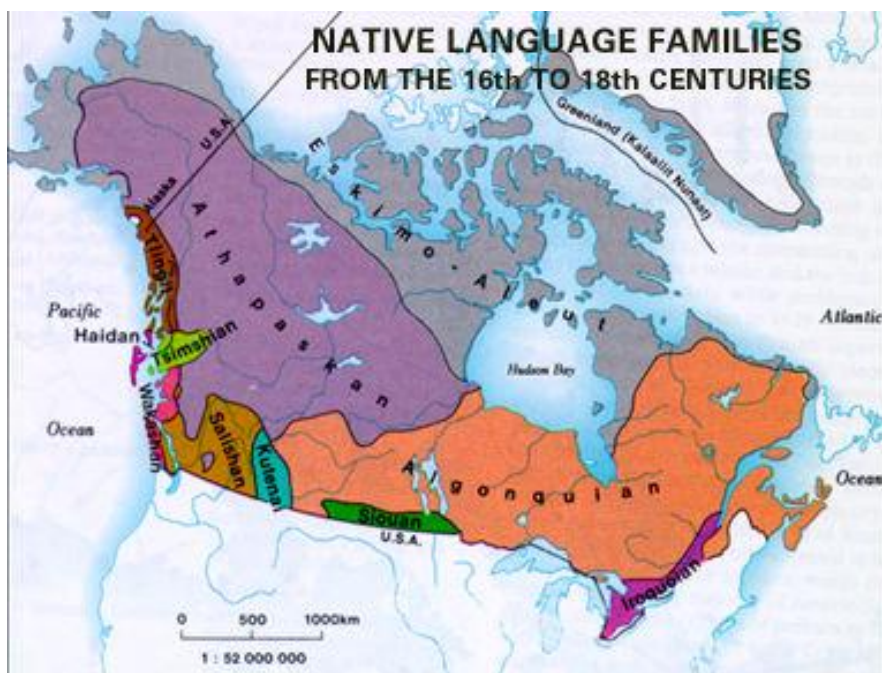


fig 1. Distribution of Algonquian Language Groups in Canada (Source: The Canadian Encyclopedia).

### **Introduction: The Modern Windigo.**

The goal of my dissertation is a multi-streamed investigation that combines narrative theory and medical anthropology in order to examine narrative representations of Indigenous youth suicide that originate in Indigenous and medical discourse. The Indigenous narratives are drawn from the works of public intellectuals whereas the medical narratives include coroners' reports, medical and psychological research, and psychological texts. It is a project that is part humanistic anthropology and part medical anthropology. The humanistic side of the project has allowed me to work with the movement of narratives and culture, while the medical side allows me to focus on the discourses that are the most influential with policy makers and empirically minded researchers. In both cases my focus is on narrative analysis. My dissertation is directed at four audience groups: readers of ethnographic texts, who will be interested in the cross-cultural discourse analysis, people who work in the field of Indigenous health research, particularly mental health and suicide researchers, and people who are interested in literary theory and cultural studies; and, of course Indigenous peoples and their communities.

Ethnographic research has had a long history of engaging with narrative and narrative theory. Franz Boas and his followers paid significant attention to the collection of narrative. Later ethnographers and linguists, such as Dell Hymes, William Labov, Victor Turner, Dennis Tedlock, Richard Preston and Robert Brightman all paid particular attention to narrative. When I consider language to be the means by which culture, the socially acquired method of understating and relating the world, is spread, then it is clear why narratives are of key importance to the greater ethnographic project. Anthropologist

Julie Cruikshank makes reference to the importance of narratives in oral culture as a form of cultural material that can be transported easily from site to site by people who are moving with resources (Cruikshank 1998:102). Similarly, narratives continue to be transported by the peoples who tell them from site to site as part of the process of re-claiming what it means to be Indigenous in Canada in the early twenty-first century. As a social scientist, I am interested in how Indigenous people are reflected and represented in the narratives that are being produced by a small group of authors but are read or viewed by a larger population, Indigenous as well as non-Indigenous.

In the field of Indigenous mental health research my dissertation speaks to the need for greater cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural understanding. I do not make the assumption that ethnographic research in Indigenous mental health research is missing. In fact, I have observed the opposite. Researchers in Indigenous mental health are showing an increasing understanding of the ethnographic prerequisites for their research and practise. The field is being led by young scholars such as Joseph P. Gone from the University of Michigan, who combines his medical and psychology training with his own cultural heritage as a member of the Gros Ventre Nation from the state of Montana. Laurence J. Kirmayer, Professor of Psychiatry at McGill University, directs the Medical School's division on Social and Transcultural Psychiatry and is engaging in cross-discipline, cross-cultural research studies that include medical sciences, social sciences and humanities-based research. Rather than complain that this type of cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural research is not taking place, for it is growing in strength, I position my doctoral research within this discourse. Scholars like Gone and Kirmayer are engaged with some of the same problems as I am from the medical side of the conversation; I am

clearly more influenced by the social sciences and humanities. For those researchers interested in Indigenous mental health research, particularly the area of youth suicide, this dissertation focuses on a narrative analysis of our shared conversation.

The reader of literary criticism will find this dissertation lacking in analysis of metaphor and other tropes, although they do make an occasional appearance. I recommend that any reader who seeks pure literary analysis consider using this dissertation as a form of cultural answer key to help explain what might otherwise be assumed to be metaphor. As I outline shortly, I have borrowed from critical theory and theorists in the production of this work. However, I have attempted to avoid overlaying Indigenous narrative with theories that are designed to be applied to Western literary traditions. Terms that are metaphorical represent a cultural position that should be approached as ethnographic sources. Like many of the public intellectuals on whom I focus, I employ narrative forms within this work that are a mix of Western and Indigenous influence. The narrative themes, on the other hand, originate from an Indigenous position. So while it may be appropriate to comment on topics such as the polyphonic novel or the construction of a *mise-en-scene*, I do not engage in either a Marxist or psychoanalytic reading of Indigenous actors such as the Windigo or *Wīsahkīcāhk*. I do not believe that either one of them cared about the alienation of the worker from their mode of production or what Oedipus thought about his parents. This dissertation emphasises reading across boundaries, not steamrolling over them.

It is now an appropriate time for me to introduce the main villain in my dissertation, the Windigo. Within this project I am focusing primarily upon Cree and Anishinaabek narrative traditions. Both Cree and Anishinaabek, the latter denoting the

Ojibwa, Potawatomi and Odawa nations who inhabit the Great Lakes regions in Canada and the United States, are members of the Algonquian language family. They occupy an area that stretches east to west from Quebec and Labrador to Alberta, Canada, and north to south from the shores of Hudson's Bay in Canada to the river valleys south of the Great Lakes in the United States. Along with sharing a mutually intelligible language, they also share an ontology that is closely related to their narrative traditions and histories. Throughout this dissertation I will use the term "Being" to denote an ontological status. "Self," "Selfhood," and "Other," all capitalized, are used in the same manner. Within Cree and Anishinaabek ontology there are several kinds of Beings: Human and Other-Than-Human Beings, plus animals and other animate entities such as some stones, rivers, and more (Brightman 2002; Hallowell 1955). The relationship between the Humans and Other-Than-Human Beings is maintained with the narratives of the Cree and Anishinaabek peoples. I will expand on this concept in the opening chapters.

Windigo, or Witigo to the Cree, was originally one of the Other-Than-Human Beings. As such he, for this Windigo is male, is atemporal and possesses powers that are beyond those of a human Being. "Windigo" is the boss of windigos in the same way that Bear is the boss of bears and Beaver is the boss of beavers. The bosses or "game rulers" are agents who have control over the movement, distribution and population numbers of those Beings that they control where the boss is conceived of as a giant form of the representative animal or Being (Brightman 2002:91). The significant difference is that a Cree or Anishinaabek person may kill an individual windigo, but they are not able to kill off Windigo. Similarly, that hunter may "go windigo" but that does not mean that they

become Windigo. To go windigo is to become a cannibal and to lose your humanness while the Windigo boss remains an anthropophagic Other-Than-Human Being.

It is the Windigo, I argue, that uses the power of colonization to his benefit. Windigo traditionally hunt by isolating their prey away from others. They, themselves, are anti-social and move through the boreal forests alone during winter in search of prey. It is important, however, not to consider windigos as mindless zombies out hunting and dependent on luck; windigos trap just like humans. They are creative hunters. With the increased influence of colonization the Windigo has adopted the destructive power of state discourse and policy as a means of isolating and hunting his prey (Johnston 1999:235). This is the Modern Windigo. The Modern Windigo still represents the evil and consumption of the Windigo, however, his hunting ground has changed. Traditionally, windigo uses starvation and isolation as a hunting tool. The Modern Windigo uses self-loathing, despair, and isolation as his hunting tools. I see similar qualities in Psychologist Thomas Joiner's suicide risk factors of perceived burdensomeness and a loss of connectedness to a community (Joiner 2005). I argue that this connection is why Windigo can be connected with Indigenous youth suicide discourse. He represents an Indigenous way of understanding this serious social problem.

Joiner notes that dominant theories on suicide can be counted on one hand, and may not require all of the fingers (Joiner 2005:33). These theories are divided into three main fields of study by the American Psychological Association: sociological theories, psychological theories and neurobiological theories (Berman, Jobes and Silverman 2006:46). All of these theories require narrative patterns in order to disseminate their research findings, however, only the first two pay any significant attention to narratives in

the construction of their theories. One such example of a psychological theory drawing on narrative therapy comes from Australian Psychologist Michael White, where narratives are used as a tool for mapping the personality of a patient (White 2007). In essence, White suggests that the narrative map is used to give the Psychologist access to the “other world” that is in the mind of their patient and aid in giving direction to the healing (White 2007:5). The sociological approach to suicide continues to fall under the shadow of French Sociologist Emile Durkheim. Durkheim sought a scientific, read “statistical and empirical,” approach to the study of suicide in *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (1951). Durkheim’s influence on the study of suicide is still seen in his emphasis on isolating the individual from their social context. Later sociological approaches to suicide looked for a method that allowed them to work around the limitations of Durkheimian statistical sociology and factor in narratives that synthesize sociological and psychological approaches (Berman, Jobes and Silverman 2006:48-49).

In order to make sense of the Humanistic side of this dissertation, I now want to position M.M. Bakhtin, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and Paul Ricoeur within my framework. My goal here is to discuss how some of their theories inform my work. I also ask myself the question of whether I can work with Bakhtin’s theories and not become, in the strict sense, Bakhtinian. The same question must be applied to my borrowings from Deleuze and Guattari and Ricoeur. The answer, I believe, is yes and to a point no. Certainly to employ a theory with integrity I must be aware of the intention of the author of that theory. This makes me liable to the legacy of the theory. However, I am also my own free thinking imaginative self who applies the narratives of Bakhtin, Deleuze and Guattari and Ricoeur to the Cree-Anishinaabek world as I experience it. The

strength of their work, and why I am drawn to them, is that it allows me to play with, and refine in a new context, their intended meanings.

I will start with Bakhtin. From his work I wish to touch upon the following concepts: historical inversion; centripetal and centrifugal forces in language; the polyphonic and how it relates to heteroglossia; and, the relationship between Self and Other. The concept of historical inversion is related to Bakhtin's use of the chronotope of space/time where historical inversion is an aesthetic unbalancing that "enriched" the past at the expense of the future (Bakhtin 1981:147). What interests me here is not that I see contemporary Indigenous authors doing this, but rather I believe that an argument can be made that their work undoes this trend in ethnographic writing by placing the focus on the now and the future together with the past, seven generations in each direction as the traditional saying goes. There is an opportunity with their work to revisit "salvage ethnography" and look at the living cultures of today. Additionally, the shifting of perspective from the chronotope as a time-oriented intersection to a space-oriented one will alter how this process is applied. If time has the ability to blend multiple places into one temporal segment then we must also consider the ability of space to blend multiple segments of time into its narratives. This intersection, I argue, constitutes the histories of a place and people.

Centripetal and centrifugal forces in language as centralizing and decentralizing are important in how *The Modern Windigo* operates. Altering the connotation of a signifier will in effect alter its tendency to pull the subject towards or push it away from the centre of the national language. Related to these concepts is the question of whether or not a single signifier can be both centripetal and centrifugal at once depending on the



context. I believe that the answer will be yes, for example when I consider the question in relation to priest characters in the texts of authors Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe) and Tomson Highway (Cree), where the priest represents pious devotion in one discourse and a destructive force in others. I believe that it is an important role of authors such as Vizenor and Highway to render visible the centripetal and centrifugal forces at work in language.

The polyphonic novel, Bakhtin argued, is heard as a collection of social voices and gains in importance when partnered with heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981:430). Heteroglossia is defined as: “at any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions – social, historical, meteorological, physiological – that will ensure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different that it would have under any other condition” (Bakhtin 1981:428). The polyphonic and heteroglossia are critical to my understanding of literature as ethnographic by allowing me access to the text as a collection of voices and in positioning those voices within a unique socio-cultural context. The author’s use of the speech of others reconciles the problematic relationship of author as mediator of narratives and the collective enunciation of the polyphonic.

Finally, I am more comfortable working with conceptions of Self and Other that are relationship-based rather than structured around the speaking Self voicing the Object Other through the Self’s concept of the Other. That Bakhtin acknowledges that I can only be the Self for me and that I must accept my Other as a Self other than me, rather than the opposite of me, is beneficial in working with many Indigenous texts. This is likely one of the reasons that Indigenous scholars and critics such as Louis Owens

(Choctaw-Cherokee-Irish) and Vizenor have drawn Bakhtinian theory into their own analysis of Indigenous literature. Bakhtin's view of Self and Other is directly reflected in his concept of polyglossia, which Owens points out reflects the conflict of worldviews between the colonial world and the Indigenous world written into the texts of many Indigenous authors (Owens 1992:8).

Bakhtin's theory of centripetal and centrifugal forces deals with how a national language pulls or pushes us towards or away from the centre, although I am seeking a way of looking at intentional pushing and pulling when constructing a text. This can be found in Deleuze and Guattari's theory of minor literature because it deals directly with how the "minor" constructs itself within the "major's" language as a means of deterritorializing, or re-presenting, the minor to the major as something other than a represented Other. Minor literature also brings its text into a political realm and it expects a few public intellectuals to speak for the many (Deleuze and Guattari 1986:16-18). I argue that this process of deterritorializing is not only taking place within contemporary Indigenous narratives, but also that a few public intellectuals are engaged in the process as a method of re-defining Indigenous community identity within colonialism.

Within this dissertation, I view the role of the author as a collector, positioner and filterer of narratives into a text. I imagine this process through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome system, with individual authors representing individual collection points in the system. The narratives they experience may or may not be the same, their imaginative systems will not be the same, their personal experiences will not be the same, but they all enact the function of creating a new branch in the rhizome. They all function

to create new narrative streams. For example consider the contrast between the texts of Vizenor's *Father Meme* and Anishinaabe author Richard Wagamese's *For Joshua* as texts created around troubled personal histories. While there are some similarities, as both involve the heavy influence of colonial policy, there are even greater differences: Vizenor's narrative does not reflect his personal lived histories, while Wagamese's is autobiographical; points of connection and points of disconnection. Both texts connect to other texts in different ways and at different times. Neither text is self-contained or repeatable by any other author as their personal collection point.

This brings me to my intended use of Ricoeur. Ricoeur, like Bakhtin, was a neo-Kantian, so there are connection points within their writing. One of these is the connection between narrative and experience. Bakhtin separates the world into one-time experienced events and repeatable narrative events, while Ricoeur argues that how we imagine that narrative is dependent upon our past experiences and narratives (Bakhtin 1993:2; Ricoeur 1992). Ricoeur's narrated Self connects into Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome in the individual, and constantly moving, connection points of the author (or any of us really). In terms of reading contemporary Indigenous literature as an ethnographic site, Ricoeur's work can be used in conjunction with Kiowa Author and Scholar, N. Scott Momaday's "memory in the blood." What is called by many "Blood memory," Jace Weaver (Cherokee) explains, is "not because of some genetic determinism but because its [historical] importance to heritage and identity are passed down through story from generation to generation" (Weaver 1997:7). Using the above humanities-based approach, this dissertation brings together the narratives that construct several different ways of talking about Indigenous Youth Suicide.

Drawing on a number of documents, I have been able to trace windigo narratives from historical recordings of oral narratives to contemporary written forms that draw on Western styles for their existence. In this process I have been keeping a close eye on the form of the windigo and how its changing historical context helps materialize this dreaded Being. From the medical anthropology side of the project I have also focused on narratives. In this case I have focused on the constructive power of narratives and their discursive relation to truth and evidence. The two together have allowed me to approach a serious problem facing Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world.

The problem is youth suicide. Over the past forty years youth suicide in North America has been on the rise, with rates quadrupling during that time (Lauwers 2011:42). In Canada, Indigenous persons make up approximately 2-4% of the total population, depending on how you frame your definition. However, Indigenous suicides account for approximately 10% of the suicides in Canada (Kirmayer et al. 2007:14-15). Pikangikum First Nation, which has a population of approximately 2500 people, has accounted for between ten and fifteen percent of the completed suicides in the Province of Ontario, which has thirteen million residents (Lauwers 2011:45). First Nations youth experience suicide rates five to six times higher than those of the non-Indigenous population in Canada (Lauwers 2011:44). However, as psychologists Michel Chandler and Christopher LaLonde have found in British Columbia the distribution of suicides in Indigenous communities is not uniform (Chandler and LaLonde 2003, Kirmayer 2007:15). I return to the distribution of suicides in chapter seven.

Discussing Indigenous youth suicide presents another problem. How do I take into account discourse that is taking place between culturally based genres? This project

was initially built upon a double axis: Indigenous and Western narrative theory; literature and medical narratives. Methodologically this presented a great challenge. Working within the social science of Anthropology how can I bring these two fields together in a meaningful way? The situation increases in complexity when we consider that “Indigenous” and “Western” do not signify homogenous cultural groups. Instead they are macro-levels of understanding imposed on a very local problem. Again, this presents a methodological problem to be overcome. In part due to methodological problems and in part due to personal philosophical positioning I have opted to move away from the rather simplistic two-axis model and adopt a model that reflects the situation in a more rhizomatic fashion.

I adopt the rhizome because it is complex. As my research progressed I found that a simple binary model of Indigenous: Western or literature: medical forced either too many important connection points out of the model or brought them in in a manner that did not reflect the complexity of their relationships. One such connection point, and one that will remain important throughout the project, is my increasing understanding of the ethnographic detail and awareness of narrative construction that is taking place within medical narratives. The already mentioned Chandler and Lalonde at times situate their work using ethnographic content. The addition of this quality, the movement away from the purely clinical or epidemiological provides their work with important insights into the communities that they work with. As a result their construct of cultural continuance is influential in multiple medical narratives on Indigenous youth suicide.

Gone’s work, based in Psychology, suggests an awareness of the role of narrative construction in the development of clinical theory. His call to end the “proselytization”

of the Indigenous health industry is based, in part, on the narrative history of the Indigenous: Western relationship of colonization (Gone 2008:310). Additionally, Gone identifies the relationship between clinical understanding and the recognition of the Self within a pre-existing semantic construction of the world that contributes to the discourse on health and healing (Gone, Miller and Rappaport 1999:371). Kirmayer has also sought a connection between studies of mental health and narrative construction as well as an inclusion of ethnographic material in clinical work (Kirmayer 2004; Kirmayer 1999). These two examples are not isolated. Throughout this project I will make reference to the work of anthropologists Cheryl Mattingly and Linda C. Garro and medical philosopher Howard Brody. Mattingly and Garro's *Narrative and the Cultural Construction of Illness and Healing* and Brody's *Stories of Sickness* both work with a theory of the narrative construction of medical discourse where the science of medicine is constructed within narrative discourse that is, in effect, in a dialogic relationship with other discursive influences (Mattingly and Garro 2000; Brody 2003).

At the 2012 meetings of the Canadian Anthropology Society in Edmonton, Alberta, I presented my view of culture. I began with Greg Urban's definition of culture as socially acquired knowledge moving thought space and time (Urban 2001). I presented two ways of considering this concept. The first was the layered cake of culture. In this model time is represented in a linear fashion and place is somewhat static. My analysis of this model is that time, the layers, represents generations within the culture. Movement is on the vertical axis of time with the same cultural ingredients being required to construct the same "cake" layer over layer. The same problem develops with this model as developed with the simple two-axis model I mentioned as my failed

methodology. The failure comes from the problem of changing the cake's receipt or the construction of the definition of what the culture I am looking at might be. Rigid models have a difficult time with the ambiguous. I do not like that.

The second model that I presented with the same definition of socially acquired knowledge moving through time and space was a giant hairball, or, if you like, as crabgrass. Put in a more traditionally accepted theoretical frame this is culture as a rhizome. This model allows for, and expects, complexity, ambiguity and unexpected turns. It allows for multiple connection points to be made between points of literature, medical reports, Indigenous and Western theory. Importantly, returning to Urban, it is an approach that allows me to consider how culture can move through the multiple social pathways that exist in the multi-cultured worlds. Urban put it succinctly when he wrote "the social space through which culture moves is nonhomogeneous. It is a space configured by prior movements of culture and in which the motion of new culture is constrained, in part, by prior movements" (Urban 2001:18). This is the very nonhomogeneous nature of "Indigenous" and "Western" that simpler models fail to represent. Urban's theory draws upon a world that has histories so that narrative forms, as they move as representations of culture, transverse sites that accent, shadow, slow or speed their movement.

A narrative combination of windigo in clinical worlds where positivism has ruled will experience a quagmire of histories. The line of flight is how we move in the rhizome. The viscosity of the pathway is determined by the narrative histories that construct the lines of flight in a particular pathway. Perhaps things become smoother once the pathway meets another which allows the windigo to travel in the world of the

clinical. Perhaps it slows as the pathway meets others that position the windigo as a functionalist myth from a primitive time.

I seek the line for flight where the Windigo enters into a world of becoming medical discourse. To do this I must first trace and track the Windigo from its oral beginnings in the boreal forests and follow it to the modern Reserve and urban settings of contemporary Indigenous peoples. The line of flight from oral to written is not a single entity. It has connection points and separations with other oral and written flight lines. Milman Parry and Albert Lord present one pathway, Mikhail Bakhtin another. Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong provide their pathway while Dell Hymes, William Labov and Dennis Tedlock provide further examples. In short, tracking the Windigo's pathway from the oral to the written world is complex and varied. The above pathways share themes but differ in outcomes. They potentially lead the researcher towards a method to answer their questions while offering to lead them away from their path.

In Chapter One I follow these complex pathways. I seek an answer to my title: *The Modern Windigo*. In this chapter I track the movement of the Windigo from recordings of oral narratives from fur trader and missionary sources to contemporary plays, novels, comic books and film sites. My findings are straightforward. As the histories of the Algonquian peoples who tell windigo narratives move through time and space their narrative traditions move with their histories. I return to Urban and his work on metaculture to structure this chapter. Urban seeks an answer to how culture moves through time and space, much as I seek an answer to the windigo doing the same thing. I have already defined how I view his version of culture as the rhizome and its lines of flight. His work on metaculture seeks to examine the liminal space between one person



and another in the cultural transmission process (Urban 2001:2-3). Urban defines culture in two forms: immaterial culture and material culture. The former an abstract form of knowledge contained within the mind of each of us as members of a culture. Immaterial culture is structural in its formlessness and must be “lodged in a material entity” to be perceivable to others (Urban 2001:2). Saussure’s separation of language into language and speech is an example of this. Speech cannot exist without language but language, the structure, does not become actualized until spoken.

The material aspect of culture is the actualized immaterial in a knowable form. In oral narratives culture become “lodged” in audible sounds: “the transitory home of culture is things in the world. But the stuff of culture is immaterial” (Urban 2001:3). The material form is required for culture to be passed on. The Windigo cannot exist in a relationship with the Anishinaabek if the windigo narratives are not told. Culture that is static dies. Therefore, Urban is interested in how culture moves, how it accelerates and what role the movement plays in its future form. He argues that the structure of the immaterial must be recognizable in the form of the new material in order for the temporal movement to be complete (Urban 2001:5). He refers to this movement as transferring from Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) to Omega ( $\omega$ ) culture. In terms of this project I seek this movement from oral to written. I am searching in the Modern Windigo for the cultural structures that are present in traditional windigo narratives. I am looking into the new “social pathways of dissemination” that result from a confrontation of oldness and newness where “a metaculture of newness necessarily provokes the continuous, restless attempts to establish new pathways” of transmission (Urban 2001:69).

In Chapter Two I am concerned with the constructive power of narratives and the ongoing relationship between narratives, community and culture. The chapter is a site where Indigenous and Western come together to help me frame my understanding of how I define narrative and how I see literary narrative as an ethnographic site. Chapter Two is the most theoretically active of the chapters in this project. In it I work to bring together Western theories on narratives and the narrative Self with Anishinaabek and Cree theories on narrative histories and their relation to the Self. The challenge is to undertake this process in a manner where both pathways retain the meaningful structures that drew me to them after connections are made. I begin with an examination of Ricoeur's application of John Austin's theories on how we do things with words in order to define my understanding of narrative as action.

From this position I then approach Cree and Anishinaabek narratives as histories. However, the presentation of the stories is not a simple matter of the surface translation of a language. The conceptual differences that can be lost in translation from one language that is another's language to my own presents a cultural challenge that goes beyond the metacultural movement outlined by Urban. It does, however, bring the reality of colonization and unequal power relations into focus. An aspect of the translation of narratives is the weighing of the value of time and space in the construction of plot within the narrative. Ricoeur identified time as a central element of plot in Western narratives while place is a more significant plot device in Cree and Anishinaabek narratives.

In Chapter Three I look to show general trends in Indigenous literature as it relates to social issues and the historical effects of colonialism. In this chapter I use Victor Turner's social drama as a means of understanding the de-territorialisation and re-

territorialisation by public intellectuals in contemporary Indigenous narratives. As a continuation of the movement of oral narratives to written narratives, this chapter required that I transfer Turner's theory from an oral setting to a written one. By moving through the four phases of his social drama I am able to track how other public intellectuals are using traditional oral motifs to discuss contemporary social issues and why that matters. Particular attention is paid to Highway's and Gwich'in author Robert Alexie's work. In *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and *Porcupines and China Dolls* respectively, the relationship between the residential school experience, colonization and social breakdown within the home community are made. Chapter Three represents a swing chapter. Partnered with Chapter Four it allows me to move from theory into set examples of how the windigo is being told at present.

Chapter Four is about why that matters. In this chapter I discuss how the concept of historical trauma or blood memory is being discussed in a variety of locations. The chapter is partnered with the theme of the constructive power of narratives that was developed in Chapter Two. Chapter Four is a foundational chapter in how I develop the project into the final three chapters where I focus on three specific Modern Windigo narratives. Ultimately it leads you, the reader, in the direction of thinking about these works as an Indigenous manner of discussing social problems and their causes. As this chapter demonstrates, the topic of historical trauma has become a cottage industry of sorts. Clinical practitioners such as the Eduardo and Bonnie Duran and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart have developed a successful research cluster around their constructs of the "soul wound" and "historical trauma." This chapter is informed by my participation in the 2012 workshop organized in Montreal, Quebec, by Laurence J.

Kirmayer, Joseph P. Gone and anthropologist Joshua Moses into the re-thinking of historical trauma. As such, the chapter reflects the current trends within a specific discourse that is increasingly anti-historical trauma, at least in the form that originates with Duran and Duran and *Brave Heart*. As a counter-point, I put forward the concept of “blood memory” which has been in discursive use within Indigenous public intellectual circles for some time. Blood memory narratives include the Cherokee Trail of Tears, Wounded Knee, Residential School and other events that are passed along via narrative from generation to generation within the Indigenous community that experienced the event. My argument is that narrative provides a possible method for discussing the history of violence and colonialism that Indigenous people have faced in North America.

Chapter Five is the first of my focus chapters. In this chapter I discuss Anishinaabek Poet Armand Garnett Ruffo’s film *A Windigo Tale*. The film is not specifically about suicide in Indigenous communities. It does however bridge well between Chapter Four and the remaining Chapters Six and Seven in how it represents the intergenerational effects of colonization, specifically residential school, on one community that acts as metonym for Indigenous communities as a whole. In this chapter I will work with the concept of narratives as constructive and an Assembly of First Nations report that looks into truth being a product of the stories we tell about our lives. Told as a story within a story, the film uses what I call Becoming-Anishinaabek, derived from Deleuze and Guattari, as a process to move the community members toward healing when they return to an Anishinaabek way of living and reject the Christian influence imposed under the colonial programs of residential school. In this chapter I solidify how I am approaching the intergenerational embodiment of experience through narratives.

The process of embodiment is significant as I consider the relationship between narrative, Self, and community histories in Indigenous youth suicide discourse. Importantly, as part of the process of de-pathologizing the narratives of youth suicide, I use this approach to move away from considering the suicide act only in terms of the individual actor's mental state.

Chapter Six is the first to focus specifically on a suicide narrative. I conduct a close reading of Steve Keewatin Sanderson's comic book *Darkness Calls*. The chapter flows from the discussion on Becoming-Anishinaabek and the role of intergenerational narratives discussed in the previous chapter. I engage in this discussion in order to examine some of the community-based factors that are related to Indigenous youth suicide. Originating from a conference paper given at the 2011 Algonquian Meetings at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, this chapter focuses on selected circumscriptive narratives that are present within the community represented in *Darkness Calls*. I define circumscriptive narratives using the work of Anthropologist Michael Jackson and explain them as language that seeks to limit the Subject. In this chapter I use these narratives to focus on their isolating effect on one individual, Kyle, the story's protagonist, and how they can lead to suicide, in this case taking the form of Windigo. Isolation is explored in this chapter as a hunting tool of the Windigo and a potential precursor of suicide. The potential implication here is that Sanderson, the author, is constructing a windigo narrative using the social determinants of suicide common in Indigenous youth suicides.

Chapter Seven brings Chapters Five and Six together in an examination of two suicide narratives from similar communities using theories on the social determinants of

health. I explore Dr. Bert Lauwers' Coroner's Report into the suicide epidemic in Pikangikum First Nation and James Bartleman's (Anishinaabe) novel, *As Long as the Rivers Flow*, based in Cat Lake First Nation, also in Northwestern Ontario. In this chapter, I examine how both narratives represent the social determinants of health of education, food security, and housing within the community in order to construct reality. In doing so, I argue that both are engaging in a process of applying authoritative discourse in constructing their own normative representations. I believe that there is great value in reading these two narratives side-by-side because each one helps make visible the invisible normative aspects of the other.

When I began this dissertation I was initially focused on the social commentary made by Indigenous public intellectuals within the contemporary narratives. My thought was that I would be able to find within these works a hint of an ethnographic representation that would help me explain contemporary Indigenous culture. What I found exceeded my expectations. I have been able to locate pathways that connect narrative traditions to contemporary social issues. I have also observed the making-Indigenous of a Western literary form while engaging with traditional relationships and narrative traditions. The real surprise for me was how the dissertation evolved from a theoretically focused work into one that situates the theory within the lived experiences of the communities that are represented. From this perspective I have been able to expand the focus of the project to open up the conversation on Indigenous youth suicide to engage both literature and medical discourse. In what follows I do not promise any answers to preventing the serious problem of Indigenous youth suicide. Instead, I offer a

way of examining the constructive power of narrative that develops how we view a problem and how we treat it.

## Chapter One: Narratives in Motion.

In this chapter I will give a general taxonomy of the windigo complex by looking at three specific forms of windigo and their correlated narratives. These three types of windigo are the Windigo as an Other-Than-Human-Being, dream windigo, and starvation or cannibalism windigo. I am choosing to not include windigo psychosis at this point because of its origins as a Western construct, although it will appear later in this project. This construct originates from the work of Rev. John M. Cooper in a short 1933 article in *Primitive Man*. Cooper defines windigo psychosis as a malady characterized by the craving for human flesh and a “delusion of transformation” into windigo with a heart of ice (Cooper 1933:20). I include windigo psychosis later in order to give me an opportunity to examine how windigo narratives are re-contextualized by both psychologists and anthropologists. Interestingly, Cooper’s rejection of the Cree belief in metamorphosis is similar in tone to contemporary medical analysis of hallucinations prior to suicidal acts committed by Indigenous youth (Cooper 1933:22; Lauwers 2011:29, 30, 32). As I move forward in this dissertation I want to be able to examine how re-contextualization by Indigenous authors and storytellers differs from the re-contextualization arising from non-Indigenous social scientists.

As argued by Anthropologist Robert Brightman, windigo narratives not only demonstrate an uncivilized Being but are also more specifically narratives of non-Creeness or non-Anishinaabek-ness (Brightman 2002:140). Windigo psychosis becomes problematic because it is a culture-specific theory. It locates the windigo as a marker of Creeness or Anishinaabekness in terms of difference or exoticness (Waldram 2004:8). In essence, I am after an understanding of how the windigo is manifested as both an external



and an internal influence in the lives of the storytellers who keep windigo narratives alive. This relationship becomes more important later in this project when I begin to discuss windigo in contemporary narratives with the storyteller assuming the role of public intellectual in order to comment on social problems. Despite some stories of women turning windigo, in traditional narratives and the vast majority of contemporary narratives windigo almost always appears in a male form. For this reason I will refer to the Being as male and specify any rare exception.

Ultimately, I am interested in how culture moves and what happens to it during its movement. Greg Urban has argued that culture is an immaterial object that moves from A to B via material objects that carry it (Urban 2001). Stories enable culture to move from A to B across time and space easily as all they require is language, a key element of any culture, to move them. They can be carried anywhere and, as history has shown, they are very difficult to destroy, unlike the material components of other more traditional definitions of culture. The narratives that I am about to recount were originally oral accounts that have been recorded, or entextualized to stay with Urban's vocabulary, which has decontextualized them. Additionally, the Modern Windigo narratives represent what Urban calls  $\omega$  (omega) culture. Omega culture is a cultural production that draws on some form of  $\alpha$  (alpha) culture but, because of the movement of culture, particularly within modernity, new forms of cultural representation appear (Urban 2001:15). The Modern Windigo maintains the isolated, insatiable consumer elements of the traditional narratives. And, importantly, the Modern Windigo retains a narrative identity that keeps it and its actions distinct and contrary to how a member of a Cree or Anishinaabek community should live their life. The Modern Windigo clearly draws upon

traditional narratives. However, under the influence of modernity it has been replicated in many forms that speak to a non-static definition of culture. In short, we cannot define the cultural continuity within a model that is static. The Modern Windigo requires a model of movement and change.

In order to begin tracking the movement, I wish to deal specifically with one or two illustrative narratives of each of the three forms of Windigo in order to get a better understanding of how the Windigo manifests. Beginning with Windigo as an Other-Than-Human-Being I wish to examine the following story which is contained within the *Nanabushu/Wīsahkīcāhk* transformer cycle. Normally these stories should only be recounted in winter. Failure to follow this rule results in snakes and toads coming to “listen” to the story (Berens 2009:112-113). The William Jones version of the narrative was collected between 1903 and 1904 in areas North of Lake Superior (Jones *ix*). The story represents an *atisokanak* narrative, known as an *ácaḏōhkiwina* narrative in the “th” dialect of Cree. I will make reference to three other versions of this story in my discussion: the version collected by Rev. E. Ahenakew in 1929, a version collected by Robert Brightman from *Asinīāskāwiḏiniwah* (Rock Cree) narrators, and Tomson Highway’s inclusion of the Windigo as a narrative reference point in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. I take for granted that *atisokanak* and *ácaḏōhkiwina* should be approached as true historical narratives of another time, rather than false myths or narrative explanations of the physical world and thus will not attempt an analysis of the stories (Berens 2009:116). I am interested only in the Being of the Windigo and its relation to the storytelling community. It should be noted that the *atisokanak* refer not only to this class of traditional story but also to the characters within them. Similarly, Cree *ácaḏōhkiwina*

narratives tell of the “Grandfathers” and are the Grandfathers at the same time (Hallowell 1976:365; Preston 2002:256; McLeod 2007:17).

The Jones text is as follows:

And once while walking along the shore (and) looking towards the other side of the sea, he saw one passing along the coast, tremendously huge was the being. Nowhere near to his buttocks were the trees in their height. Well, of course it was Windigo. Like a fool he called aloud to him: “O my younger brother! Upon the dry trail of a beaver did you ease yourself. You passer along the shore, halloo!” Well, at a safe distance away Nanabushu thought (he was).

Now, very angry was Windigo made by Nanabushu. “It is really absurd. Perhaps ‘I am the only Manitou existing,’ may be Nanabushu’s thought. Well, I will run round (to where he is), keeping to the shore.” Truly off went running Windigo, in a very little while he arrived at the place where Nanabushu was coming along the shore. What did Windigo do but get down and lay with his bottom up. It was but a short while when up came Nanabushu to where he was on the shore. Then (by Nanabushu) was he observed, what was he to see but somebody lying with bottom pointing up. Accordingly, when he made an attempt to hide from him, Nanabushu heard (Windigo) saying to him “come hither, wait, I want to make a small meal out of you. Make haste, come!”

Alas! Nanabushu began weeping silently on his way over to where (Windigo) was. Presently he came to where (Windigo) was, truly big was his anus, and in plain view was his heart. By him was he addressed, saying “Nanabushu, go gather some fire-wood. I will roast your body.”

Truly then up from the shore went Nanabushu to gather fire-wood poor fellow! All the while he was crying. After he had piled up much fire-wood, he was addressed: “Now, do you kindle a fire.”

Nanabushu then kindled the fire. After he had kindled the fire, he was addressed “Nanabushu, now go you hence to seek for something which I can use for a spit to roast your body on. (Let it be) very straight, else perhaps your old spleen might be forced out.”

Truly away went Nanabushu Now, all the time was he weeping, he was so scared. So a stick with a very big curve he found, and it had many twigs Then he started going over to give it to (Windigo), this he said to him “Oh, oh, oh” Such was the way Nanabushu acted.

“Would not your old spleen be forced out by that? For a different one do you seek, one that is straight.”

Hapless Nanabushu! Thereupon truly off he went crying, (going) till he a long way off was come And suddenly, while looking about as he went, why, here was a Weasel whom he addressed as it went running past: “my little brother, I am now going to die.”

In its flight stopped the Weasel By it was he gazed up at when it he addressed: "Nanabushu, why are you going to die?"

"Alas! Because a light meal does that Windigo intend to make of my body Could you not kill him?" Then he as addressed by it saying "And is the Windigo sitting down?"

"No, he lies with bottom pointing upward, and in full view is his anus, likewise his heart."

"Nanabushu, nevertheless I will try to slay him. And as a reward for myself I shall expect some kind of blessing from you So, therefore, if you fail to do something for me, I would not kill him."

Up spoke Nanabushu "As your reward for killing him, I will make you proud of yourself" Then was Nanabushu told "therefore do you put me in the bosom of your garment."

Ah, truly pleased was Nanabushu The roasting-spit which he sought to find was of excellent wood and very straight; and that was what he had cut. When he went thither taking it to him, still yet was Windigo lying with bottom pointing up. He spoke to him, saying: "Here is your spit." Then it was that he pulled the Weasel forth from the bosom of his garment, and away whirled its tail as it flew in. "Oh, well then do you take a turn at making a roasting-spit"

"No," he was told by Windigo "do you make it."

Nanabushu took up the stick; as he picked it up, he was addressed by the other saying "Impossible, Nanabushu, my heart beats with great fear It seems as if something is about to bite off the cord of my heart."

Nanabushu addressed him, saying "Make haste and impale me upon (the spit)! Hurry and roast my body! Or, if you wish, you may fry my body."

Again he spoke "Oh, impossible, Nanabushu! Impossible really! Perhaps, indeed, I am now growing unconscious"

Nanabushu then went up close and stood beside him "Oh, do hurry and impale me upon (the spit)!" While Nanabushu looked on, then down to the ground fell (Windigo) with his bottom; thereupon truly was he dying. When he was dead, then out from thence came the Weasel running.

"How now, my little brother! Wonder what (I can do) so that he may be very thankful! Therefore then will I paint him." Nanabushu took him up (and) then washed him clean, what should he do but seek for white clay After he had found it, whiter still he burned the while clay. After it was made exceedingly white, then he had it finished, whereupon all over he painted the Weasel; at the end of the trail he painted it black. "Now, just you try and see how you run."

To be sure, the Weasel started running. Oh, how really proud he was! Nanabushu spoke to him, saying "therefore in this manner do I render you. I was dying at the time Weasel. And that is the way you shall look in the winter-time And as long as the world lasts, this is the way you shall look. Therefore I now take leave of you." Nanabushu then departed, keeping along the shore of the sea (Jones 1923:197-203)

I begin with the Jones text in my exploration of the Windigo as an Other-than-Human-Being because the text contains most of the key characteristics of this form of windigo narrative. Many of these carry over to later windigo forms. This form of Windigo represents the “boss” of the windigo, or at least the antecedent form of the Being. In some versions of this text the Windigo is not introduced as a former human but as a giant being. The giant size requirement for the windigo, however, does not seem to be universal (Brightman 2002:149). In one of the versions contained in Brightman’s collection the Windigo is referred to as “mistāpēw” or “Great-man, Giant” (Brightman 2007: 24).

In Ahenakew’s Cree text the *Wetiko* [sic] is referred to as strong, fast and supernaturally powerful rather than as a giant (Ahenakew 1929: 352). However, the result is the same in painting the Windigo as an Other-Than-Human-Being, as a Being who cannot be over-powered by physical strength alone. Size, as will be seen, becomes one of the key characteristics of the Windigo in Anishinaabek and some Cree narratives (Brightman 2002: 149). Humans who eat the flesh of other humans are said to begin a process of growth towards the giant size of the Windigo. Knowing that the Windigo cannot be beaten by *Nanabushu/Wīsahkīcāhk* using physical strength due to his size and power establishes that another method must be found to defeat him. The multiple versions of this story that I have come across vary on the extent of trickery required to kill the windigo. In the Jones text *Nanabushu* hides Weasel in his clothing. However, in the Ahenakew text Weasel simply jumps into the mouth of the *Wetiko* and kills it (Ahenakew 1929:353). Similarly, the version of the story collected by Brightman demonstrates little actual conjuring or trickery used to kill Windigo. This is interesting

because of the role of conjuring in killing windigo in other variants. In stories of dream windigo or cannibal windigo or windigo during *ācimōwina* or *tabatcamowin* conjuring is almost always required. Howard Norman's *Where the Chill Comes From*, a collection of Omushkego Witigo stories, demonstrates this point. *Nanabushu's* conjuring power, being part manitou goes without saying for a Cree or Anishinaabek audience. However, I would have difficulty confirming this. A more likely assumption when a non-Indigenous audience is envisioned is the role of the translator in editing out the "magic" aspects of the tale. Ahenakew was a Christian Minister who presumably would have applied a specific Christian ontology.

Urban's work on entextualization, the process of making a text out of an oral narrative, provides a possible explanation to the Ahenakew texts. Entextualization enables repetition and with the repetition comes the authority of the text and the storyteller as the storyteller brings the narrative into their own metanarrative or metadiscourse (Urban 1996:23). As a converted Christian one might expect that Ahenakew is, in the process of entextualizing the stories of his community, bringing the narratives into a Christian metadiscourse and simultaneously bringing that metadiscourse into the narrative. In the process, the narrative loses its "supernatural" aspects. However, the Ahenakew narrative does retain the key elements of the traditional storyline including the reward for the weasel (Ahenakew 1929:352). Further study of Ahenakew's editing is beyond the scope of this project, with this aside offering merely an additional example of the movement of culture from alpha to omega. This time the changes bring outside influences including the increased Christian presence in Western Canada during Ahenakew's life.

What is manifested in all of the versions of the Windigo-Weasel story is that weasel kills Windigo by crawling inside the Windigo and eating his heart. As an antecedent from the so called “trickster cycle” of narratives the only way to fully kill a Windigo is established with this action. The Windigo is reported to be able to regenerate itself if its heart is not destroyed (Brightman 2002:149). In various versions of the narratives of windigo, the heart becomes a heart of ice which must be melted and burned to finally kill the windigo. George Nelson recounts stories of windigo not being harmed by bullets (Nelson 2004:92-93). The burning of the heart is not mentioned in the Jones text nor the Ahenakew text or any of the versions collected by Brightman. Given that these texts represent an eighty-year time frame and cover a geographical area ranging from the Great Lakes region of Ontario (Jones) to Manitoba (Brightman and Ahenakew) it is safe to assume that the origin of the heart of ice is not contained in this version of the windigo complex.

The final aspect of this story that I want to discuss, of all the *Nanabushu/Wisahkicahk* transformer cycle, is the etiological theme that plays out in the stories. As mentioned earlier, *atisokanak* or *acadohkiwina* narratives are not to be read as fictional, metaphorical representations. They are understood by tellers and audiences as real events that took place in our world prior to the existence of humans. So when the story tells us about Weasel getting his new white coat for killing Windigo we are to understand that this is how it happened rather than encountering the story as a metaphor of some sort. The etiological theme of Weasel’s coat is the result of Weasel’s actions. This is not a “made up” story of why Weasel has his coat. As will be discussed later in this project the etiological theme continues in Cree and Anishinaabek narratives where a

cause and effect relationship is narrated between colonial actions and events and ongoing social problems in Indigenous communities. In the place of Weasel and Windigo are the narratives of the people and their histories under colonialism.

The next narrative class I want to discuss briefly is the dream windigo. That is someone who becomes windigo by dreaming of Windigo, being tricked by the Beings Ice or North into eating human flesh in a dream, or someone is conjured against and becomes a windigo because of their dreams. Both the Cree and Anishinaabek divide the Self into a “*yaw*” (body) and “*ahcāk*” (soul) (Brightman 2002:76). This analysis is supported by Hallowell who recorded stories dealing with conjurers traveling out of their bodies in order to fight (both offensively and defensively) or to visit others at great distances (Hallowell 1976:376). The separation of the two is seen clearly in narratives of Bear Walkers and Shaking Tents. The separation of *yaw* and *ahcāk* in these Algonquian traditions is not the same as the separation of body and soul or mind and body that we find in the work of the Cartesian philosophers such as Rene Descartes. The latter of these forms separates cognition from experience in the search of Truth. The former allows the concept of experience to be expanded beyond the wakeful, physical world. Rather than being a philosophical position, the concepts of *yaw* and *ahcāk* are just the way the world is. In early nineteenth century accounts from Wisconsin, Ontario and Manitoba the fur trader George Nelson makes reference to the practise of detaching *yaw* and *ahcāk* in order to hunt (Nelson 2004:34). Richard Preston’s work on conjuring among Cree communities along the James Bay coast adds further evidence to the ontological nature of this position (Preston 2002).



The Cree term *pawāminwin* (dreaming) is an active engagement of the *ahcāk* seeking a relationship with a *pawākan* or spirit helper. Traditionally at around age fourteen a male would be brought away from the community in order to fast. During his fasting the boy would hope to be visited by a *pawākan* who would provide the dreamer with gifts and at time give them restrictions by which he was to live (Brightman 2002, Hallowell 1955). In order to understand this process we must first acknowledge that for both the Cree and Anishinaabek people the act of dreaming is not different from actions taken while they are awake. The *ahcāk* is the centre of Being and it can undertake actions independent of the body which might be sleeping, awake, near or far, alive or dead. That is to say, “reality” transcends the states of the waking and dreaming world, so that to dream of a *pawākan*, who generally only appear in dreams, is as real as meeting a relative at their home. Brightman wrote that dreams are also prophetic, saying “Crees say that dream events may determine the occurrence of like events – their worldly simulacra – that have not yet happened but will transpire in waking life only as a result of their having initially been dreamed” (Brightman 2002:99).

Chief William Berens, Hallowell’s primary source of information, mentioned that discussing the *pawāmiwin* ceremony is generally not done because of the belief that dreamers can lose their “gifts” or be sanctioned in some other manner (Brown and Gray 2009:82). However, Hallowell was able to provide the following account of an Anishinaabe boy meeting his *pawākan* because, in part, William Berens was at an advanced age when Hallowell met him in Beren’s River, Manitoba:

Experiences undergone when awake or asleep can be interpreted as experiences of self. Memory images, as recalled, become integrated with a sense of self-continuity in time and space.

Metamorphosis may be *experienced* by the self in dreams. One example will suffice to illustrate this. The dreamer in this case had been paddled out to an island by his father to undergo his puberty fast. For several nights he dreamed of an anthropomorphic figure. Finally, this being said, “Grandchild, I think you are strong enough now to go with me.” Then the *pawágan* began dancing and as he danced he turned into what looked like a golden eagle. (This being must be understood as the “master” of this species.) Glancing down at his own body as he sat there on the rock, the boy noticed it was covered with feathers. The “eagle” spread its wings and flew off to the south. The boy then spread his wings and followed.

Here we find the instability of outward form in both human and other-than-human persons succinctly dramatized. Individuals of both categories undergo metamorphosis. In later life the boy will recall how he first saw the “master” of the golden eagles in his anthropomorphic guise, followed by his transformation into avian form; at the same time he will recall his own metamorphosis into a bird. But this experience, considered in context, does not imply that subsequently the boy can transform himself into a golden eagle at will. He might or might not be sufficiently “blessed.” The dream itself does not inform us about this (Hallowell 1976:380).

Generally these relationships are benevolent. However, on occasion a malicious Being will communicate with the dreamers causing them damage rather than providing them with gifts. Most often the malicious spirits are North or Ice. In these cases the Beings appear in the form of a benevolent Being offering gifts in the form of game animals. However, if these game animals turn out to be human then the dreamer, upon consumption of the meat, begins the process of becoming windigo. Nelson provides one story of such a dream where the dreamer escaped this fate by recognizing the “game animal” as human body parts:

The [third] Kind, or delegated, which by what follows, I believe may be allowed to be the term, are those who dream of the North, or the Ice, or both. Every one knows where the North resides, but only few know the abode of Ice, or the Ice. This they pretend is the Parent of Ice, is in the bowels of the Earth, at a great depth and never thaws – all ice originates from this. These 2 they are much afraid of, because they are both highly malignant spirits: there is no joking or jesting with them. Those who at *any* future period are to become cannibals thus dream of them.

After the certain things usual in all dreams, “I was invited by the North to partake of a feast of ducks, the most beautiful I had ever seen and well

cooked – the dish was before me, I set *too*: a stranger by me touched me with his elbow and said, “Eat not thou of that; look into thy dish”; behold that which I has taken for the wing of a duck was the arm of a child!

“ ‘Heh! What a narrow escape’ said I.

“Then he took me into another room and gave me most excellent meat, the most delicious in appearance I have ever seen. I would not eat – I discovered it was the flesh of *Indians* thus served up to me! He took me into a 3d room and gave me Tongues: these I also perceived were the Tongues of *Indians*.

“ ‘Why refuseth thou what I offer thee? Is it not good?’

“ ‘I feel no inclination to eat,’ I replied.

“Then he took me in a fourth room where fine beautiful *hearts* were served up, and I was desired to eat, but I perceived that it was still the same. I therefore refused.

“ ‘Then,’ said he, ‘it is well done – thou hast done well.’

“Heh! Had I unfortunately eaten of this then had I become a cannibal in addition to all my other misfortunes!”

Those who eat at these feasts are frequently, but not universally, told: thus “This is a sign to Thee that thou shalt one day become a cannibal and feed on the flesh of they fellows – when thou shall see children play with, and eat, ice (or snow) *in thy Tent* say, ‘my time is near’; for then thou shalt soon eat *indian* (human) flesh. (Nelson 1823:90-91, edits from the text)

As such, those who dream of the consumption of human flesh become incipient windigo in the same way as the person who eats human flesh in their waking life.

It is perhaps important at this point to establish that the transformation into a windigo is not purely a dietary conversion or the breaking of a social taboo against cannibalism. It is better to consider the conversion on an ontological level where there is a change of Being. Understanding that metamorphosis is always possible makes this change comprehensible. Windigo is not a person who eats other people. Windigo is actually a different form of Being who preys on human Beings. Brightman points out that a better term to describe these Beings is anthropophagy rather than cannibalism or human zoophagy. He writes that “the term ‘cannibalism’ is imprecise, since the Cree emphasize that the Witigo, although formerly human, no longer is so” (Brightman 2002:140). Anthropophagy is defined as the eating of human flesh. This can include

cannibalism but we need to understand that there has been a conversion of the Self from Cree or Anishinaabek into a different kind of Being. This will take on a new meaning as our discussion moves towards the realm of the Modern Windigo in later chapters.

The third windigo type that I wish to define is the incipient windigo. It is assumed that all windigo, with the exception of the original Other-than-human Being Windigo, were human at one point in their existence. However, I want to make a distinction between dream windigo and cannibal windigo at this point. As already mentioned a dream windigo is often tricked into eating human flesh by North or Ice. While the outcome is the same I want to move forward with an understanding that cannibal windigo are those Beings who became windigo after they chose to eat human flesh in a waking state. While dream windigo remain windigo as a result of dream actions, of course, as noted a dream windigo will often still need to complete their transformation into windigo by their waking consumption of human flesh. This is the case where the dream acts as prophesy of future events.

I want to consider the cannibal windigo in terms of a process rather than as a set Being. While all windigo eventually become larger than life, ice-hearted, naked monsters, a survey of windigo narratives suggests that the process begins with the first bite of human flesh then accelerates with future kills. So some windigo maintain a human-like appearance for some time after their first cannibal experience. Omushkego Cree Elder Louis Bird described the process as “there is a *wihtigo* that was created by starvation – humans starved, went crazy, and ate human flesh when it was decayed. Some of us have experienced how awful the human body smells when it decayed. If you eat human flesh in that condition, of course, you poison your system – but you survive it,

it doesn't kill you because your stomach is empty and it can digest anything - and you condition yourself to eat that. And you become a *Wihtigo* – and that *Wihtigo* is very evil” (Bird 2007:112).

A second distinction that I wish to make is that the windigo is not a mindless monster, wandering the boreal forests eating whatever it comes across. The windigo has been called a “conspirator with starvation” (Norman 1982:3). As the story of the Owl-Famine Windigo shows, the windigo uses wind and famine as its hunting tools. In this story the windigo, with the help of conjuring and an owl, manipulates its environment to suit itself. The story is likely an *âtiyôhkan* or *tabatcamowin* narrative in that it takes place when humans exist but also at a time when animals were still talking to humans.

The story is as follows:

This story is from when an owl was blamed for causing a famine. That was a bad time.

Each day, for many days, the Snowy Owl arrived. He sat at the edge of the village. Then it would begin to snow hard. The snow came down over this owl, who had dark eyes. There was so much snow that soon all that the people of the village could see was the eyes! Then, when the owl closed his eyes, he disappeared! That's how the Snowy Owl disappeared. He was causing the famine. At first the people thought so.

There was bad thinking caused by all that. People began to eat all their food quickly, all the food they had saved, the little that was left. The smoked fish, everything!

One day some hunters returned. One said, “We had no luck in following the moose tracks. We were gone three days and we are very hungry!” In the village people answered these hunters, “There's not much food here either...it's a better kind of going hungry out there!”

This went on. Owl traps were set where the Snowy Owl had landed each time, but they couldn't trap the owl's *trick*. They couldn't trap how he did it, that disappearing trick.

So they thought the owl went on causing the famine.

It had snowed hard from the owl arriving. No hare were trapped. No fish were caught. Sickness began. There was some throat sickness and some shivering. The people all tried to take care of each other. This was when a young girl – who had not yet earned a name – lived in the village. Each day she saw a different person weep. When people began weeping, she would

attend to them. Her own face had a weeping expression, and she slept with her head touching the weeping person as he slept...but no tears fell from her. She groaned in hunger too, who did not weep in this famine. One night while she slept with her head on a weeping person, she had a dream that the famine was not the owl's fault. She dreamed that strongly. It woke her. With that she woke up several elders and said to them, "I dreamed a Windigo is causing the famine."

The next day, when the owl arrived, some people said to it, "Stay with us. You've caused some trouble before, but nothing this terrible. Don't return to the Windigo!"

But the snow fell. Then the owl closed his eyes. That night another person in the village began weeping.

It was agreed that this girl was right about a Windigo. Then it was decided they had to kill the Windigo. When the owl arrived again, they threw all their remaining food at it. They shouted, "WE DON'T NEED THIS FOOD! YOU TAKE IT!"

The owl saw it was a trick. He said to them, "One of you is missing."

Everyone looked around. They saw a man was missing from the village! Then they knew he had hunger-wandered out for food. The Windigo's plan was working!

Then the owl closed one eye, and half of the people in the village wept. Then he closed his other eye, and the famine weeping started up in everyone.

Except the young girl.

Then the people had to try to kill the Windigo, while they could still think clearly about it.

It was then a luck thing happened in the girl's thinking. She said, "Throw some paint on the owl!" Some paint was made, and when the owl arrived again the paint was thrown towards it. Two spots landed on the owl's belly, and it flew! Snow was falling on the village, where the owl left.

Some hunters set out to follow the owl. The hunters followed the owl flying above them. They saw the spots on the belly flying above them. When the spots landed...THERE was the Windigo! *The Windigo who had been sending the famine owl to their village.* The hunters shouted, "We are returning this starving!"

They shouted, "Your owl led us here!"

With that the Windigo howled open its mouth. The owl flew inside – carrying all the weeping sounds of the starving people in a sack! It flew inside the Windigo to a far place. When it got there, the owl opened the sack! Then the owl flew out on the howl, which was still going on LOUD. The Windigo began tearing at the sounds inside it. The Windigo tore its own heart out. The hunters grabbed the heart and melted it in a fire they had made.

The next day the owl arrived again and people were about to weep. It was then Who-did-not-weep-in-the-famine pointed to the distance. Some hunters were returning to the village with hare and ptarmigan! The owl kept

his eyes open to watch. Later it flew away. It's known the owl can cause trouble, but this time you see how it helped people out of a famine (Norman 1982:53-55).

What this story shows is how the windigo is associated with a specific problem in the lives of people hunting game animals for food. The windigo is both caused by and causes starvation. In the context that this story was originally told starvation was always a potential. However, the potential for starvation of this kind has generally disappeared in Northern communities. But the windigo is still discussed. If I define these examples as the  $\alpha$  for my research and the Modern Windigo narratives as the  $\omega$  which will be drawn from contemporary Indigenous narratives, I will need to consider how the culture of the windigo moves from alpha to omega. This allows me to respond to the question of how a story moves well and what it means to move well.

In order to answer the first question I want to spend some time moving the narratives from the realm of oral narratives to the realm of written texts. In doing this I want to consider how the change in form or mode of expression affects the story. Within standard Semiology there are two distinct elements to deal with: Firstly language (*langue*) is both a “social institution” and a “system of values” that represents a structural system over which I have no control (Barthes 1967: 14). The second aspect is that of speech (*parole*). Speech is differentiated from language in that it is an individual action rather than a cultural institution (Barthes 1967: 14-15). Language can be further defined using the work of Paul Ricoeur where spoken language is discourse, the actualization of language, and the discourse becomes the event of the discourse act (Ricoeur 1971). So that while language cannot be altered by an individual, speech allows for the use of individual style including the application of metalinguistic elements. In an oral

performance the paralinguistic elements of language such as volume, cadence, facial expression and body language contribute a great deal to the meaning of the story. Oral narrative performance depends upon both the teller and audience knowing ways of telling the story that is dependent upon and builds the context of the narrative and that are culturally appropriate. Here, context is meaning building and the Bakhtinian concept of heteroglossia nicely sums it up. In oral narratives the speech aspects draw on much more than the word so that meaning is created within the context of the performance. As the examples listed were extextualized and reproduced outside of their original performance their meanings were altered and they are now open to being re-contextualized, as I have done with them (Urban 1996). The re-contextualization contributes to establishing a new social relationship for the stories. The question of the movement of stories is still to be decided. I believe I have identified clearly that changing form equals changing context. And, if I maintain my use of Bakhtin's heteroglossia, then the changing context equals changing meaning. I am left with a quagmire of hermeneutics.

Perhaps the movement out of the quagmire does not lie with the theories of language that landed me there. The problem here is that these theories represent a meta-discourse on language while I am after a local or regional understanding of a story. N. Scott Momaday asked "how do we confront a word with an array of meaning and consequent meaning? The complexity of language is that quality that gives words their great vitality. We cannot exhaust the power of words; that power is intrinsic" (Momaday 1997:2). I want to place that quote from *The Man Made of Words* together with one of Momaday's lines from *The Way to Rainy Mountain*: "a word has power in and of itself. It comes from nothing into sound and meaning; it gives origin to all things. By means of



words can a man deal with the world on equal terms” (Momaday 1969 33). There are several aspects of these two quotes that I want to highlight. Momaday’s theory on language in many ways corresponds with the structural linguistic theory outlined by Barthes in *Elements of Semiology* (1964) and by Saussure in the *Course in General Linguistics* (1916). The connection points are that language exists outside of the individual agent and that it is manifested in the spoken word. I would however like to establish a distinction.

Within structural linguistics the meaning of the sign is arbitrary in that a “Windigo” can be called a “puppy” if we all call windigo “puppies.” However, in Momaday’s theory “a word has power in and of itself.” This can be read as language is a Being rather than the tool of a Being. Momaday’s theory is in agreement with what several Indigenous cultures believe about language where language holds a power in and of itself. In Cree and Anishinaabek thought this is seen in the ontological connection between “the grandfathers” and the narratives of the grandfathers. I am always drawn to the witching contest in *Ceremony* when I think of language in this way: “Call that story back. But the witch just shook its head at the others in their stinking animal skins, fur and feathers. It’s already turned loose. It’s already coming. It can’t be called back” (Silko 1977:138). I have gone through this exercise for several reasons: Firstly to highlight that understanding what language is culturally based; second, that the relationship between the written word and the oral word is also culturally based, so that the issue of movement from one to the other is also an issue of translation; and this enables me to suggest that a question about oral-written relationship is an expression of movement from  $\alpha$  to  $\omega$ .

Linguistic anthropologist Dell Hymes connected “narrative patterning” with “cultural patterning” (Hymes 2003:47) and Linguist Masahiko Minami studies the socialization process that children go through in language (Minami). Minami’s research indicates that when language is acquired it also carries with it the “social meanings” (Minami 2002:1). Furthermore, he has shown that cross-cultural differences can be approached via sociolinguistic differences. Minami’s research conclusions show that “parents transmit to their children not only language – specific representational forms and rules but also cultural specific interaction styles” (Minami 2002: 2). Urban’s theory on metaculture is one of movement where the cultural patterning contains the mechanism by which culture moves (Urban 2001). So language is an essential mover of culture because it is such a readily shared aspect of culture. The movement of the windigo from the trap line to the stage of Native Earth Performing Arts, to a film, or to novels and comic book forms could not occur without language. Urban connects this process with Bakhtin’s concept of other people’s speech (Urban 2001:17). So I am returned to the localness of the narrative. The re-contextualized narrative in a colonial setting is altered by degrees, the heteroglot remains multiple. By this I mean that the local, temporal conditions by which meaning exists in the utterance exist in a dual system of meaning under colonialism. The dominant narrative and the local narrative each exist within their own heteroglossia. And, of course, this example suggests that the model only contains two potentials for heteroglossia. In reality there are infinite possibilities within the concept of localness. For example the localness of the meaning of windigo as a Being who has been changed for the worse is maintained. The  $\alpha$  elements of windigo still exist. The non-Indigenous reading of windigo is separable from the Indigenous reading in that the

Western reading will connect its own histories of evil to the sign. However, the histories of Indigenous peoples that maintain the windigo carry with them their own conception of the evil of windigo which has grown to include colonialism as well as cannibalism. In short, cultural resilience is also a factor in heteroglossia and this resilience is perhaps strongest at the local level.

In his examples of metaculture and the movement of culture Urban focuses on the pronoun “we” in nuclear war discourse. I would like to discuss the role of gendered prefixes in Anishinaabemowin and their translation to an English written form to move Urban’s example into an Anishinaabek world. A similar approach can be undertaken for different Cree dialects as they share a common Algonquian root. In gender prefixes “o” stands in for his/her/theirs. “Ni” represents “my” and “ki” yours. “O” as in “odaanisun” is not divided into “his daughter” or “her daughter.” It is instead a non-gendered “his/her/their.” On the surface this is a seemingly inert difference. However, consider now the role of connotation within Western languages in regard to how English ranks maleness and femaleness. Gender has long been a key divider in the separation of the world in Western epistemologies. “Male” as a signifier is more often associated with a positive: strength, power, good, while the signifier “female” assumes the role of Other to maleness: weak, powerless, bad, black etc. When the above windigo narratives are translated they take on the connotational values of the English language. The point that I want to make is that not all languages assign gender in the same dichotomous manner so that the “cultural identification” associated with the ideological representation of the sign must be understood as culturally dependent (Bhabha 2009: 220). Or perhaps in Tomson Highway’s words “there is no gender, so that, in a sense, we are all he/she, as is God, one

would think...” (Highway 2005: 310). However, with the movement to English language forms the storytellers must now be prepared to work with the additional connotational problems of translation.

Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water* engages with play in language within the Western narratives of gender and power. Throughout the novel King switches the gender of the four creation story characters between an Indigenous female and a Western male origin. If language has the cultural goal of reducing ambiguity (Minami 2002: 274) King uses two cultural themes to increase ambiguity by allowing his trickster character to remain a shape-shifter/gender-shifter. Monroe, King’s trickster character in *Truth and Bright Water*, is first encountered as a woman as he/she tosses belongings into a river. As a woman Monroe is imagined to be emotionally unstable and dependent upon a man. As a man his actions are re-visited as an act of de-colonization (King 1999). Here the conventional connotational values interact with the local histories.

I do observe the retaining of a local understanding of the concept of windigo in the Modern Windigo narratives. However, I also observe that the changing histories of Indigenous peoples are adding a new symbolic value to the windigo. It no longer represents starvation in the lack of food sense. It does still represent non-Anishinaabek or non-Cree-ness, or put another way, cultural starvation. So the connected motifs of consumption are altered away from the physical and onto the ontological realm. The windigo now consumes the Being of its former community or draws the Self to consume itself. It is still an ultimately remorseless destruction but it represents changed histories and what destruction and death now mean within these new histories.

The second area of language that I want to take a quick look at is that of “narrative patterning.” I am going to use narrative or discourse in place of language here for ease of flowing thought. Within this category I will misuse Dell Hymes’ focus on patterning as a structural component of narrative by including discursive elements such as time, space/place and animate/inanimate and expanding the definition to include “semantic content” (Bal 2007:135). In the West we are familiar with a linear, teleos driven concept of time, beginning with alpha and ending with omega. Indigenous narrative patterns largely group around place rather than time and time potentially become circular. As I will discuss in a later chapter, rather than viewing plot as a combination of events happening to actors in time we can consider plot as events happening to actors in places. Many of the Grandfathers are essentially atemporal. This allows them to appear in multiple times, for the Cree and Anishinaabek clearly do have concepts of time, which is indicated by prohibitions on telling certain narratives during select times of the year and in seasonal migration of family units, and in multiple places .

Keith Basso’s *Wisdom Sits in Place* and Julie Cruikshank’s *Do Glaciers Listen?* offer excellent examples of how place can be interpreted culturally in a manner that moves the emphasis away from time and onto place. The “place-making” of the Western Apache does not follow the narrative pattern outlined by Aristotle in the “Poetics.” Rather than being focused on a beginning, middle and end, these narratives are attached to a place and, as they are interpreted locally, that place exists at once in the past and the present and various places in between if they are storied. Here the spatial meaning is dependent upon the receiver’s frame of reference (Bal 2007:136).

The final narrative patterning that I will single out is that of animate/inanimate. In many Indigenous narratives this relationship would be considered problematic from a Western perspective. Allowing language and thought to exist in entities that are traditionally inanimate in Western ontology exists comfortably within Indigenous narratives. Lee Maracle represents Cedar and the Earth as acting characters in *Ravensong* and Gerald Vizenor animates stones in *Heirs of Columbus*. An understanding that animals used to talk to humans but stopped is maintained and transmitted within Indigenous narratives, while talking animals in the Judeo-Christian tradition seem to exist only in Eden and never in this World. In order for cultural patterns to move and retain their force they need to make sense to the audience. This suggests that the members of a culture are also used to working with a culture that is not static, whether consciously or not, and that a significant amount of the meaning is retained within changing contexts.

The Modern Windigo narratives that will form the final portion of my dissertation carry with them many of the narrative patterns that are present in the  $\alpha$  versions. Highway uses the Weasel-Windigo narrative in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and has the youngest brother, Ooneemeetoo become windigo after consuming other men sexually. Ooneemeetoo is visited in his dreams by the school's Head Master, Father Lafeur, the windigo priest, who smells and tastes of honey. Joseph Boyden's windigo gains in strength the more death he consumes on the battlefields of World War I France. Armand Garnett Ruffo's *A Windigo Tale* features a windigo that needs to have its possessions burned to destroy its power. Steve Kaweetin Sanderson's Windigo hunts his prey with cunning, isolation and hate in Northern Manitoba. This Windigo is the Other-than-Human Windigo who battles Wīshkīcāhk. And, James Bartleman's windigo hunts using

fear by isolating his prey away from their community. All of these Modern Windigo narratives make up  $\omega$  narratives in their modernity influenced form. Several are novels, one a comic book and a movie.

The influence of modernity leads many to a discussion of the authenticity of oral over written literature. In different circumstances either one can be viewed as authentic. What is important to understand is that the culture, as represented by these narratives, is already in motion. When consumed within a political, post-colonial, or de-colonial frame of reference oral language is assumed to be the “authentic” culture (Miller 1990:70). What is problematic here is that while culture does not need to be viewed as moving towards written language as a sign of “development” it should be allowed the opportunity to adopt new forms of language and still remain authentic. That is to say that a contemporary Indigenous author, writing in English, can still be considered to be producing an Indigenous text which retains local meaning at the same time as it communicates to a larger audience. In terms of written literature the text of a narrative or history can be positioned as authentic or “the real version.” This authentication of a written form ignores the regional, individual and situational telling and retelling of narratives in oral setting. In all cases an oral performer will adjust their performance to the audience and the situation of the telling (Lord 2003:5).

Connected with the notion of authenticity in the relationship between oral and written literature are the concepts of the oral as primary and traditional and the written as secondary and modern. These approaches to oral language hold that the spoken word came first and from it the written word developed. This “primacy” of the oral is often connected with a notion of tradition that is stagnant or frozen rather than alive and

adaptive. In contrast, Brightman's collection of Rock Cree oral narratives demonstrates how Christianity and other Western narrative patterns, characters and values were adopted and adapted into "traditional" Cree narratives. Similarly, Bird discusses the influence of Christian narratives on Omushkego narratives (Bird 2007).

Viewing writing as secondary to oral form and at the same time more modern falls in line with the outdated teleological view of language discussed by Ong in *Orality and Literacy*. While the primacy of the oral seems to be undisputed, the superiority of writing has become an absolute "Truth" in Western discourse. If the oral came first, it stands to reason by this logic that writing is more modern and more adaptive in the increasingly complex world. The primary reason for this is the idea of writing as an off-site storage facility for human intelligence. However, writing can only take on this position if one maintains an ideology which views "progress" as inevitable and good. This is the same ideology that freezes tradition in the past without accepting that even the most "modern" cultures are essentially rhizomatic products of evolution upon evolution of cultures, moving in multiple directions, seeking multiple connection points.

Albert Lord argued that when we encounter or describe oral language we tend to focus on the individual performance and the audience reception of that performance (Lord 2003:4-5). In pre-World War II Europe Philosopher Walter Benjamin lamented the loss of the skilled storyteller with "the ability to tell a tale properly" (Benjamin 2007:83). Benjamin's concern was with the isolation that new forms of language use were causing in his culture. Spurred on by his analysis of post-World War I Germany, Benjamin, keeping with Marxist ideology, was concerned with the alienation of the individual. He saw this alienation as manifest in language usage (Benjamin 2007:84-87). "The



birthplace of the novel” wrote Benjamin “is the solitary individual...to write a novel means to carry the incommensurable to extremes in the representing of human life” (Benjamin 2007:87). Benjamin belongs to the group of theorists that sees oral language as alive in its performance, while written forms can be isolating. Perhaps this explains his love of Kafka. Written language is a form where the reader has greater, some would say full, control over the meaning of the text. The hermeneutical projects of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur and others emphasise the important role of the reader. I argue that, given what we know about meaning from structural/post-structural theory, meaning is absent until the sign enters into a relationship with other signs. Then to say that the written form is dead or frozen ignores the life that the reader brings to it, a life that informs the reader moving culture from  $\alpha$  to  $\omega$  as the reader brings the signs of the text into relationship with other signs. These approaches also ignore an ongoing relationship between oral and written forms that follow pathways that connect, disconnect and reconnect in multiple sites.

Benedict Anderson discussed the role of narrative in the “imagined community” where a nation is maintained by people who have never met but share the same stories and language (Anderson 2006:6). If I am going to maintain, as Urban does, that the  $\omega$  narratives are constructed out of  $\alpha$  narratives as a project of modernity, I also need to consider how modernity constructs “peoples.” The examples I have provided as  $\alpha$  narratives were all recorded in small group settings where their transmission was originally oral. The “people,” as is the meaning of Anishinaabek, were the people who spoke the same language in the same area. Hallowell wrote about the Cree referring to a world of Cree and non-Cree. And, as I mentioned earlier, these narratives were told in

relation to issues of food scarcity and cannibalism within a specific cultural orientation. However, the adoption of these narratives serves a new purpose within a modern Indigenous world. Modernity has helped to construct the “indian” narrative, which in turn has contributed to the “First Nations” narrative which closely follows the model of the modern nation as envisioned by Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson (Gellner 1983; Anderson 1983). The  $\omega$  narratives are national as well as local. They now deal with national problems such as the after-effects of residential school, Indigenous youth suicide, and drug use. The new narratives holding the people together are reflect the conditions caused by colonialism, which has taken the form of the windigo. Or has the Windigo taken the form of colonialism?

Minami’s study of the movement of orally taught children from home environments to state run educational facilities does deal in part with the movement from local to national meaning (Minami 2002). However, his research is structured within a system where language is changing form rather than both language and form changing. If language is the structural system of meaning within a culture, then it is safe to assume that a change in the language, via colonization, will lead to a change in social structure. Contemporary Indigenous narratives often represent this change with characters who have moved away from “the people.” Lee Maracle’s character “The Old Snake” or Highway’s “Big Joey” both represent characters who have become victims of a colonial windigo and as such have metaphorically gone windigo. The windigo appears in the bleakest of seasons because it needs the cold to survive, it is a “conspirator with starvation” (Norman 1982: 3). The Modern Windigo narrative deals with the idea of cultural starvation, where colonization makes efforts to exterminate a culture, for

example residential schools, where language is the food of the culture. The hunting tool of the colonial windigo is language. Later I will look at how Indigenous public intellectuals are commenting on those who are “conspirators” with cultural starvation. Of particular importance will be how narrative patterns from α windigo narratives are maintained to provide an Indigenous voice of authority on social issues.

The movement from oral to written can also be viewed in terms of Michel de Certeau’s concept of tactics. The translation of a language translates the connotational meaning of a signifier towards the meaning and values of the dominant society but it does not freeze that meaning. De Certeau’s term tactics gives me a method of thinking about how a contemporary Indigenous author can re-translate the signifiers of the colonizer in order to re-write the sign in a manner that has meaning to their Indigenous community. Cruickshank notes that English has become an Indigenous language (Cruickshank 1998:16). Marginality, wrote de Certeau, is not reserved for cultures with small demographic numbers. Instead the margins are now the location of the “non-producers of culture, an activity that is unsigned, unreadable and unsymbolized,” margins are silent in the face of the dominant (de Certeau 1988: xvii). Tactics of resistance in terms of language can be thought of as producing and signifying for yourself and for your community, the act of not being silent. The can also be the act of the community developing its own writing, without translation into English, a process which has taken place in many communities.

The windigo has moved from the trap-line to the contemporary world and lives of Indigenous peoples. In doing so it has become the Modern Windigo in a form that retains an intelligible meaning derived from the oral traditions that originally produced the

Windigo. The Modern Windigo is playing an important role in the re-articulation of cultural value systems contrary to the dominant values present within colonial discourse. The value system is then being re-directed towards discourses on healing communities from the very real health and social problems that exist within them. As this project moves forward in discussing the Modern Windigo, the role of this Being in discourses surrounding intergenerational health and youth suicide will be examined. In the next Chapter I will work to define my understanding of narrative as a shaper and the role of those who wield narratives for their communities as public intellectuals.

## **Chapter Two: The Intersubjectivity of Literature.**

In order for a story to mean something it has to mean something to someone. In the last chapter I discussed theories of how I will approach the movement of narratives and how I arrive at a method of understanding them. Central to this is Greg Urban's theory of metaculture. Urban's theory is that culture is essentially an immaterial concept that manifests itself in material form. Traditionally we assume material objects to be physical objects such as pottery and tools. However, Urban includes any product of culture as material culture. In this broad definition he recognizes narrative as a material object of culture because it is a produced object that moves through space and time (Urban 2001:3). This chapter will work with the question of what is narrative. Simply put, narratives are stories that relate actors and events through a plot. Narratives are also building blocks of communities. With narratives we construct a world as we construct the narrative (Mattingly and Garro 2000:16). Narratives join together linguistic signs in discourse to construct images of the world in which we live. We also construct the world in which we would like to live. Regardless of genres all narratives share this dependency on signs. Of course when we think about signs we must consider them in terms of both their denotational and connotational value, with the connotational value itself carrying a local understanding. The connotational value can be used to define the world we live in or the one we wish to inhabit.

The construction process is active: it is the social action of the story and those who encounter it. My interest is, in part, in how we do things with narratives. How are the actions of a narrative wielded in a social setting so that they mean more than what they say? The theory of locution, illocution and perlocution outlined by Paul Ricoeur,

based on John Austin, helps me get a better understanding of the difference between what is said, what the saying does and what is done by the saying (Ricoeur 1977:76). All three are important in understanding narrative as an act and work well with Indigenous Literary Scholar Greg Sarris' interest in the "specific circumstances of exchange." Here I consider the context and construction of the syntax of the narrative. The idea is that signs come together as narrative in order to give meaning to a constructed world. What is being discussed here can also be understood in Bakhtin's terms as an instance of heteroglossia. That is to say that while what is said might be transferable to different contexts and different times, what is done is not transferable. I understand this to mean that locution, the "propositional act," is effected differently from illocutionary and perlocutionary speech. The perlocutionary force for the narrative provides much of the shaping power as it affects the future actions of the narrator and the audience (Mattingly and Garro 2000:18). Additionally, the perlocutionary act is tied to the illocutionary process as the Self of the receiving person interprets the message sent by the transmitting Self.

In the first section of this chapter I look at narrative in terms of the following aspects: juxtaposition of four types of Cree narratives; the relationship of place and time to narrative; an examination of narrative as epistemological via Claude Lévi-Straus' definition; and, an examination of narratives as ontological, thus the question of the possibilities of stories as Beings. From Ricoeur I take the position that narrative is an action because the language which is engaged in narratives between two or more people forms discourse or a "language-event" (Ricoeur 1977:74). I also connect this with Victor

Turner's work on social dramas where narratives form through and give shape to the process of events within the drama (Turner 1974).

I have already defined narrative as stories. However, let me expand upon that definition by looking at a culturally specific definition of narratives. I will limit myself to Cree and Anishinaabek definitions in order to maintain my connection to the windigo. Both Cree and Anishinaabek are members of the Algonquian language family and share a narrative based ontology. I choose not to use the term "nation" in this chapter because I want to avoid the connections that can be made between culture and nation in terms of modernity in the understanding of a non-Western culture, because it tends to fix identity in a standardized form (During 1990:139). Instead I will use "cultural group" to denote a people who share a common language, tradition and a shared but differentiated sense of who they are. As will be discussed in later chapters, the differentiated identity of the cultural group is formed and expressed in their narratives. Certainly, given the large number of Indigenous communities in North, Central and South America, this argument cannot reflect all of them and their worldviews.

Drawing on her father's work with the Eastmain Cree community in the James Bay Region of Quebec, cultural geographer Susan Preston provides what she and her father, Anthropologist Richard Preston, have been taught by that community about narratives. Narratives, she writes, are divided into four main groups: *atiukan* which are "myths" and legends; *tepachiman* which tell stories about times more recent than *atiukan* but are still in the distant past; histories and stories about the narrator or people they know; and, hunting songs (Preston 2005:230). McLeod de-anglicises *atiuka* and redefines them as *âtayôhkêwina* (Cree) which are stories about *wîsahkêcâhk* and other

spiritual Beings (McLeod 2007:17). I will move myself away from Preston's definition that uses "myths" and "legends" and continue to simply use *âtayôhkêwina* in order to avoid the misconception that these stories merely represent a time before science when "magic" was used to explain the unknown. Myth is too many times associated with the negative side of a Western binary of reality-myth which can be connected to such prejudicial dichotomies as science-magic, rational-pre-logical, domesticated-savage and written-oral (Ong 2007:28-29). This sense of myth has a history going back at least to the Cartesian philosophy of Descartes. In contrast, *âtayôhkêwina* narratives "give insight into the way in which Cree people related to their ecology and the environment, and with other Beings" (McLeod 2007:17). Using the term *âcodôhkîwin*, which is a regional Rock Cree variation of *âtayôhkêwina*, Robert Brightman outlines four characteristics of these older stories: they predate the *tépâchiman* or *âcimôwina* stories, representing a world different from the one we know; they involve the trickster *wîsahkêcâhk* in relationship with animals who still possess humanlike qualities; the characters in the stories are not people whom the narrator knows in any direct way; and, *âcodôhkîwin* are true accounts of "events that transpired in an earlier condition of the world" (Brightman 2007:6).

The second class of narratives outlined by Preston are those of the *tépâchiman* or "story, not very long ago." Here Richard Preston explains the importance of not viewing these stories as dichotomous with *âtayôhkêwina* because these narratives continue the stories that took place after animals stopped talking and when more humans lived on Earth (Preston 2002:254-255). Preston establishes an important distinction between Western and Cree views on these first two kinds of narratives when he explains that younger "acculturated" Cree view *âtayôhkêwina* as false fairy tales and *tépâchiman* as



“usually or probable” true (Preston 2002:255). His observation highlights the concern that I have expressed over the term myth, as highlighted above. It also noted a problem of acculturation that, as will be discussed later using Hallowell’s work, has a significant effect on the health of the community.

The third category of narrative is that of personal narrative. These stories seem best described as a means for the tellers to connect themselves with the narrative tradition of their culture (Bauman 1986:33-34; Hymes 2003:47). N. Scott Momaday’s *The Way to Rainy Mountain* is perhaps the clearest example of the integration of personal narrative into Kiowa historical and older-than-historical narratives. In the writing of the text, Momaday is able to firmly ground himself within the history of the Kiowa. Richard Wagamese’s *For Joshua*, with its blend of personal narrative and Anishinaabek-Cree blended *âtîyôhkan*, links Wagamese with the Indigenous culture he lost as a result of his forced removal from his family. Tomson Highway’s semi-autobiographical novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen* can also be considered in this category. I examine the genealogical aspects of the three types of narratives later in the third section of this chapter. I am going to put hunting songs aside so that I can focus on the already defined narratives. I will, however, note that hunting narratives share an ontological connection to the Cree and Anishinaabek Self and are often the result of dreaming and Other-than-Human Being relationships.

I mentioned earlier Ricoeur’s use of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary language effects. What I would like to focus on now is how content and context play into narratives and their translation into meaning by the receiver. Bringing Hans-George Gadamer together with Ricoeur in *Reading Across Borders*, Shari Stone-Mediatore raises

the question of understanding, or “*verstehen*” from Ricoeur’s work, on the part of the receiver of a narrative. Her argument is that the narrative needs to be in a language that is familiar to the receiver as well as the sender. It is the role of the receiver to “translate” the meaning, or potential meaning, based on the context of that story (Stone-Mediatore 2003:39). For this to happen, as discussed in Chapter One, the form and symbolic aspects of the narrative must be displayed in a manner that is understandable to the audience. Put another way, if there is no connection of  $\omega$  narratives to  $\alpha$  narratives then the audience cannot be expected to connect the two forms or draw meaning from the latter to interpret the former.

Narrative, when considered in terms of content and context, rises into a question of hermeneutics. With apologies to Ricoeur and Gadamer and in the interest of this dissertation, I am going to allow hermeneutics to be a component of all language exchange, written and oral, for the time being. Also, by content I mean the themes and characters that are contained within a given narrative structure. I do not, however, mean style because style is the privilege of the sender of the narrative (Lord 2003:5; Hymes 2003:5-7; Momaday 1997:2). *âtiyôhkan* narratives recorded across a large selection of Cree communities maintain a similar content when you consider *wisahkêcâhk* stories. Despite Walter Ong’s claims to the opposite, McLeod maintains that the content of Cree narratives maintain a high level of stability across time and space (Ong 2007:41; McLeod 2007:16). He writes “Life experience shows the dynamic nature of Cree narrative memory, which could be conceived of as an organism growing and shifting. Nonetheless, like all organisms, Cree narrative memory has a structure within the parameters of possibility, and there is a great deal of stability. The prodigious memory of

Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, the fact that he could recite the stories of old people directly, illustrates the stability of oral traditions” (McLeod 2007:15-16). McLeod sees flow and stability within a narrative tradition where Ong sees inconsistency and lack of continuance over time. My research suggests that the maintenance of content continues in to the contemporary narratives that form the latter portions of my work and supports McLeod rather than Ong. Finally, by context I mean the event in which the narrative content is manifest.

When it comes to *âtiyôhkan* and *tépâchiman* narratives, their interpretation is also exposed to the possibility that no teller has the complete story (McLeod 2007:8). I would like to add that this final point would only be an issue if we were searching for an “authentic” version, a problematic in itself, rather than treating the narrative as an active event where the teller interacts with the narrative in a certain context. Sarris holds that narrative meanings “become more pronounced and obvious also when readers are familiar with the culture or cultural experiences being represented” (Sarris 1993:122n). In part this is related to the sign being interpreted within the narrative. The connotation of the signifier is always going to be culturally determined. We see the potential for miscommunication in early interpretations of the windigo as werewolves by Jesuit priests in Quebec. They connected the narratives they were hearing about people becoming windigo with their own prior understanding of lycanthropes.

Consider the role of plot in narrative. Western narratives structure plot around time (Ricoeur 1983). The common opening to many Cree *âtiyôhkan* narratives: “*wîsahkêcâhk* travelled along until he came to a river...” situates the narrative in movement (Brightman 2007:31). It must move through space for something to happen.

Brightman is repeating a significant element that differentiates Algonquian narratives from Western narratives. Hallowell's "Cultural Factors in Spatial Orientation" provides an excellent demonstration of this (Hallowell 1955). As part of this project I re-work the concept that narrative and time are intimately linked. When we think of time and narrative the work of Paul Ricoeur is significant when he proposes that time provides the unity of events in a narrative (Ricoeur 1983). Similarly, Victor Turner and Renato Rosaldo both depend upon time as the unifying factor in their process-movement models of narrative (Turner 1974, Rosaldo 1989). What all of these theories have in common is that as the actors of a narrative move through its plot they are unified with the events of the narrative by time. As I explain in greater detail later in this work, in Indigenous narratives, place takes on the role of time as the unifying factor between events and actors. Additionally, Hallowell highlights that narratives that are attached to certain places act as navigational aids for both the actors within the narrative and for an Indigenous audience (Hallowell 1955:187). Where Hallowell was interested in physical navigation and orientation by means of narrative actors representing set places, I suggest that the creators of contemporary narratives are constructing a means of identity navigation for their audience by connecting events and place so closely. Time takes on the role of vertical axis in a matrix of events that connects the history of the people to a set place. This process allows me to consider each level of time as a generation in an intergenerational effect of the histories of the place where subsequent generations embody the narratives of past generations while they occupy the place. I suggest the image of rock sedimentation as a way of understanding this process. As each generation inhabits the location with the embedded narratives, the new generation embodies the

histories in a manner that fuses each level together. In this way I am able to consider the histories of the community in a collective manner, fused together, rather than in isolation.

The context of the telling is also going to inform how the story is understood. Sarris, who embraces reader-response theory, acknowledges the importance of context in his literary-ethnographic work where he often makes reference to the effect of context on the meaning of narratives as he travels from his home community of Long Valley Cache Creek Reservation, California, to Stanford University and home again (Sarris 1993:27-30). Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain* is a narrative fuelled by context. For Momaday the story's meaning is always associated with the place of its telling and the setting of the content (Momaday 1969). What these examples show is a concept of narrative Selfhood that connects to place-making rather than time-event.

McLeod, along with Keith Basso and others, provides explanations of how Indigenous people are able to locate themselves and their narratives according to place rather than time (McLeod 2007:19-32; Basso 1996:3-4). The narratives of *wisahkêcâhk*, while certainly framed within a general sense of movement, are very much also situated within a territory. Susan Preston argues that, for the Cree, "landscape" is thought of in a larger context than just land. Cree landscape, in her understanding, includes "land, waters, topographic features, climate, animals, spirits and humans. It is an integrative, holistic concept from both an ecological and a social perspective" (S. Preston 2005:231). Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain* is about the Kiowa and about their place, literally and metaphorically, in this world. In contrast, standard Western connotation of woods is that of wilderness or a place devoid of human control. Heidegger might argue for a place associated with "standing reserve" (Heidegger 1992:322). Someone who is

familiar with and connected to the area will view it as a home, or home-territory, rather than a wilderness. The term “trap-line” seems to have a more productive and positive connotation with Indigenous people from the North than that of “wilderness” where Anthropologist Michael Asch notes that the concept of “wilderness” denotes a places that is devoid of human existence and where no cultivation is taking place (Asch 1989:208). The definition of “wilderness” suggests that human inhabitation is measurable only when agriculture is taking place, an ethnocentric concept of land use. Essentially, the content is open for interpretation based on the narratives that have informed the receiver’s worldview and are associated with local understanding of a concept.

Momaday’s narrative opens: “a single knoll rises out of the plain in Oklahoma, north and west of the Wichita Range. For my people, the Kiowas, it is an old landmark, and they gave it the name Rainy Mountain...to look upon that landscape in the early morning, with the sun at your back, is to lose the sense of proportion. Your imagination comes to life, and this, you think, is where Creation was begun” (Momaday 1969:5). Similarly Thomas King opens his novel *Truth and Bright Water* with images of place rather than time:

The river begins in ice. Grey-green and frozen with silt, the Shield shifts and breaks out of the mountains in cataracts and cascades, fierce and alive. It plunges into chasms and dives under rock shelves, but as the river leaves the foothills and snakes across the belly of the prairies, the water warms and deepens, and splits the land in two. Truth and Bright Water sit on the opposite sides of the river, the railway town on the American side, the reserve in Canada. (King 1999:1)

I want to draw attention to the similarity of these two openings set in place and the *wisahkêcâhk* story opening from above. Movement is a connecting motif in each case: *wisahkêcâhk* is going somewhere; the knoll rises and the river flows. Land and the

movement across it come together in contemporary and *âtiyôhkan* narratives. Similarly, narratives both are a movement and are in movement themselves. They follow and construct events and actions, they move with people from place to place. They carry, build, destroy with their movement through specific time and space: “stories recreate the life cycle” ( Cruikshank 1990:16, Cruikshank 1998, Chamberlin 2004).

But my discussion needs to expand beyond simply “how” an Indigenous narrative might represent place into how a place can contain a narrative itself. Anthropologist Keith Basso uses the term “place-making” to discuss the process where a location becomes an “entire world of meaning.” Place-making, says Basso, happens as a result of “acts of remembering and imagining which inform each other in complex ways” (Basso 1996:5). Place-making is a history of the place and the people as well as a method for the construction of culture and identities and for the reporting of particular events (Basso 1996:6-7). McLeod’s analysis of place names in Cree narratives is that of “a shorthand encoding of experience, of various relationships, and the articulation of core Cree values and worldviews” (McLeod 2007:19). In both cases the landscape acts as the fabric used in the weaving of cultural meanings. Narratives are both written onto the land and understood in terms of the land. A specific site acts as a mnemonic aid for a narrative history and allows the history and place to be embedded in each other. Space making, does of course take place within Western discourse also. As is examined throughout this project, however, Western concepts of “isolation” and “remoteness” impose their negative connotations on Indigenous communities that view their home community as the centre of their world.

I believe that there is an interesting comparison that can be made when looking at narratives about Indigenous people that are based on where they are situated, such as the *âtiyôhkan* and *tépâchiman* narratives, versus “when” they were/are. Temporally based narratives in Canada and the United States tend to establish meaning through key dates in colonial history; this has a tendency to marginalize Indigenous people within the stories, making the narratives about the colonial history not the Indigenous people. These dates include 1492, in that everything before this date is pre-history or pre-contact, which places the frame of reference relative to a Western understanding of when-ness. The Indian wars, the American Revolution, the War of 1812 and many other temporally based narratives are about the colonizer’s world and history rather than being about Indigenous understandings of Selfhood. Temporally based narratives have the potential to connect the “authentic” History of the date, while place-oriented narratives have the potential of connecting multiple histories to a site across time. Residential school, for example, is more than one narrative, it is many histories, which told together, form a collective, narrative memory, as outlined by McLeod, rather than a meta-narrative of a single event. The site of “residential school” expects and allows complexity of narratives because a single narrative has trouble representing the complexity of the collective experiences at that place.

So far I have focused on narratives using Cree examples, citing Indigenous academics and some Western academics who either work closely with Indigenous communities or whose work has framed my own in order to provide an explanation of what I think narratives are. However, I would like to pursue a tangent for a moment before returning to the original goal. Claude Lévi-Straus sees “myths” as a transitional



phase between “precepts” and “concepts” in a manner similar to how the sign acts as an intermediary between the image and the concept (Lévi-Straus 1996:18). This definition of “myth” takes an epistemological role in understanding narrative where narratives define what is seen and how to think about it. Such a definition is difficult to reconcile with what I am thinking about with narrative. Lévi-Straus’ definition forces narrative into a functional role in what is defined as a pre-scientific culture whose members use stories to explain what they experience. It is a view that reflects Ong’s psychodynamics of orality as a local, temporal, non-abstract aggregate of experience (Ong 2002:37-49). This approach allows little room for individual creativity. While I will not argue that narratives have no epistemological or functional characteristics, I do believe that defining narratives as primarily epistemological is problematic. Stories are more than “what they do.” This structuralist approach leads in the direction of attempted full and authoritative interpretation which may not be possible given, as McLeod points out, that one person may not know all the aspects of a narrative (McLeod 2007:16). Additionally, an embedded narrative represents an experience derived from someone else’s physical experience, adding a level of interpretation that challenges phenomenological hermeneutics. We must also consider that Algonquian oral narrative traditions did not work within a centre-periphery model. Instead local context was the most significant factor in their distribution. Places such as Pikangikum First Nation are marginal only within a certain discourse. Without the external discourse of marginality the oral narratives told by family units in that site are their authoritative discourse. I think a fair warning is that anyone who attempts to live in the North with the instructions gleaned from a functionalist understanding of narratives is likely going to starve – which might

serve to prove the functionalists inadequate. These narratives are about more than how to hunt, survive and mate. They do not take an experience and turn it into a conceptual idea of how to deal with it in the future.

Instead consider Thomas King's line from his 2003 CBC Massey lectures: "The truth about stories is that that's all we are" (King 2003:2). King's statement is a profoundly ontological statement. We are Beings made of stories, or as Momaday says "made of words" (Momaday 1997:9). The first stories we often hear when learning within an Indigenous Studies environment are creation stories. King wrote that creation stories help us define the world, the universe and our place in it (King 2003:10). In the preface to *The Man Made of Words*, Momaday wrote that "we exist in the element of language. Someone has said that to think is to talk to oneself. The implications of this equation are crucial. Language is necessary to thought, and thought distinguishes us humans from all other creatures" (Momaday 1997:2).

Many Western theorists also hold Being and language, or narratives, to be related: Martin Heidegger, M.M. Bakhtin, Hannah Ardent and Paul Ricoeur to name just a few. However, I do not want to suggest sameness here as a structural level, à la Lévi-Straus. As I have already written, narratives such as the Cree *âtiyôhkan* position the Cree person within the Cree world. They help the receiver understand their Being in relation to other Beings when used in conjunction with other narratives and ceremonies. Wagamese wrote *For Joshua* so that his son could understand who Wagamese is in his absence from his son's life. Momaday wrote *The Way to Rainy Mountain* to express himself as Kiowa. Words are a power to shape the world. The flow of language from words to discourse then to narratives help us to understand and "deal" with the world.

Folklorist and anthropologist Richard Bauman considers narratives to be a form of differential identity, conceptually defining who we are while simultaneously defining who we are not by voicing alternative means of viewing events (Bauman 1971).

So this question now turns towards the topic of identity. Here I want to differentiate between how identity is defined as how someone sees themselves, rather than as representation. I define representation as how others see you. Even though the latter might be defined as how others identify you (OED) it ultimately fails as identity because the Self can never know the Other from any position other than its own Self. Therefore, the Other can never be the “I” of the Self that is me and I can never be the Self that is the Other (Bakhtin 1993:14-15). What I would like to focus on for a while is the “I” of identity. To begin let me outline the two problematics of identity as I see them. Firstly identity is too often equated with the identical, I=I and nothing else; second, identity has a requirement of placing the “I” within the utterance of the Self (Ricoeur 1994: 45). In dealing with these problematics I will turn to Ricoeur for assistance.

Both of Ricoeur’s definitions of identity are ultimately based on the “I” of the Self. Ricoeur’s identity theory is based on *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity or sameness identity and the identity of Selfhood (Ricoeur 1994: 2-3). Both *idem* and *ipse* are Latin versions of identical which is the root of the first problematic. *Idem*-identity follows the classical view of identity which is based in sameness with a set of predicates. *Idem*-identity is, in many ways, self-representation and is related to the binary representation of Self-Other, white-black, good-evil, civilized-savage. *Idem*-identity is a form of identity via negation. If A is B and B is not C then A is not C. This is terribly uninteresting because it assumes that identity is made up of pre-existing, or at least self-negating,

qualities. However, it remains an influential method for defining indemnity within modernity. It is also entirely unrealistic to approach identity in terms of an Indigenous culture such as the Cree in terms of sameness based on strict negation. Brightman and Preston both clearly demonstrate that this type of identity approach is not well suited for use with the Cree (Brightman 2007:1-3; Preston 2002:69). This form of identity depends on a structural understanding of metanarratives of difference between “us” and “them.” If I take kinship models as my example, Algonquian kinship structures are considerably more elastic than those of the West. Furthermore, a matrilineal kinship structure allows children of Cree men and Anishinaabek women to be Anishinaabek (Brown and Gray 2002:12, 115-116)

*I*ipse-identity also begins in dialectics: that of Self and Other, and as Ricoeur states “as long as one remains within the circle of sameness-identity, the otherness of the other than Self offers nothing original” (Ricoeur 1994:3). So in this case I wish to move ipse-identity away from a frozen relationship of Self and Other and into an active world of Self-making. I wish to re-locate ipse-identity into a world of Becoming rather than Being. Additionally, if narrative meaning is complex and fluid and identity is constructed with the narratives then it is safe to assume that identity is also complex and fluid. To keep identity locked on the identical makes it difficult to connect with narratives, especially traditional narratives such as *âtiyôhkan* narratives. In these old stories “I” am not in them, nor is the antecedent of “I.” Someone other than “I,” perhaps *wîsahkêcâhk*, is in them but never “I.” In contrast, the earliest narratives in the Judeo-Christian creation story are built around “I” in Adam or Adam as the antecedent of “I” lacking only a belly button.

The argument of speech act theorists that the speaker puts themselves in a narrative by saying “‘I said’ *wisahkêcâhk* was walking somewhere...” is troublesome because “I” do not own the stories, “I” only interpret or transmit them. But it is in interpretation, perhaps retaining a hermeneutic, that the answer might be found to this problem. I am going to jump to Kant for a moment which forces me to reduce identity to an aesthetic realm for the time being. Kant argued that knowledge comes from the combination of experience and imagination. He wrote that the Self transcends experience and created knowledge via the imagination of the Self (Kant 2003:142-144). It is necessary to reduce the representation of the Self to an aesthetic because all representations, even of the Self, in Kant’s world, are inner representations created by the mind (Kant 2003:77). They are not the things themselves but an imagined representation of the Self (the Kantian influence on Structural Linguistics is hard to miss). Bakhtin, as a neo-Kantian, takes the transcendental aesthetic one step further. In Bakhtin, Kant’s initial triad of experience (or event), imagination and knowledge is expanded when experience becomes two separate, never-meeting events. The Bakhtinian event is bifurcated into the one-time happening of the event and the repeatable narrative that the one-time happening creates (Bakhtin 1993:2). In essence our experiences become repeatable only as narratives, which is only possible when the immediate and one-time event has passed. So the Self knows what it knows based on how its individual imagination deals with the one-time events in terms of narratives. “The truth about stories is that that’s all that we are” seems to be appropriate to repeat at this point.

In order to reconcile identity and narrative I suggest it is necessary to turn identity into an action, not a state of Being; nonetheless, I will retain the word “identity” rather

than working to create a neologism or redefine another signifier. It is in the action of Becoming, through the creating and understanding the narratives of my events, that “I” am created. The power of my imagination is formed into the knowledge that I create in combining these narratives into memory, understanding and a lens through which I view the world. As Hannah Arendt put it, “in acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world” (Arendt 1998:179). Again I return to *For Joshua, Cree Narrative Memory* and *The Way to Rainy Mountain* where the identity of the authors is established in the narratives of their lives. This idea of narrative identity is merged with narratives of collective histories later in this project when I discuss the relationship between “blood memory” and “historical trauma.”

So then, how do I connect this to *âtîyôhkan* stories? How do I bring myself into a story about *wîsahkêcâhk*? In short I do not. What I do is interpret, which is an act dependent upon imagination and all of the prior narratives that “I” have encountered. Every narrative that I experience can only be interpreted as “I” would, by my Self. So while I may not own a story, I do make it my own by the act of interpretation and in doing so bring it into my identity so that it becomes a part of the lens which I use to view the world. However, I will acknowledge that this is a limited model. It is a model that says little about the organizing social forces of discourse and which does not allow me to deal with the human emotions and reactions fully and completely. To the discourse aspect of this, I will respond with Peter Berger, Ricoeur, Dennis Tedlock, Tzvetan Todorov and Urban each of whom connects an inter-genre discourse to the narrative

construction of culture and reality. For these academics reality is a social construction that manifests itself in narrative form and narrative performance.

But allow me to go back to the problematic of “I.” Narrative identity formations seem to exist at both the individual and the community level (Preston 2002:68). How can I reconcile that “I” is also potentially “we” within a complex and shifting collection of referents? To suggest that the Self can be thought in terms of “we” rather than “I” is to open myself up to a full broadside from the Western Philosophical canon. However, perhaps that needs to be considered. Many conceptions of Self are connected to conceptions of Others in a unified manner. Here I think of Leslie Marmon Silko’s webs of relationships, rather than relationships of dichotomy. Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome, where the transmitting Self and the receiving Self are unified by narrative, allows for the possibility of “we” from a Western perspective (Deleuze and Guattari 2007:23). Clearly I am not suggesting a 1950s style blob consuming all individuality. Instead I am pondering the possibility of narrative as a means of breaking down the supremacy of the individual which liberal Western values hold as central. In terms of the Modern Windigo I believe that this is very much what is going on with Tomson Highway’s depiction of “Big Joey” as an individual rather than as part of the collective “we.” Cherokee Scholar Jace Weaver’s “communitism” would also support such an approach, where the members of the community are united through their actions for and with each other and their shared histories (Weaver 1997: *xiii*).

I argue that approaching identity as an action that allows for the possibility of “we” in terms of shared stories allows for an exploration of contemporary Indigenous narratives in terms of genealogical connections. In Anthropological terms I see this

approach as allowing me to view identity in terms of both structure and agency. In terms of structure I see two ways of approaching this. The first is language as a structural entity. It is important to note the connection between language and culture, where language is essentially a repository of culture. In short, narratives take place in language which is understood culturally. Without a genealogical connection, meaning cannot be transferred from individual to individual. By genealogy, I mean to say that the narratives we encounter within the rhizome have always already been filtered by acting agents within culture. Responding to King's question in *Green Grass Running Water*: "the water imagery does in fact mean something." The second structural aspect is Bakhtin's "ought" where the ought is the structural encoding of social norms. The ought is essentially Bakhtin's means of approaching the topic of ethics which he connects to action which in turn is connected to the bifurcated act (Bakhtin 1993:4-6). However, the structure cannot exist without the individual agents within it. Just as language cannot exist without speech and speech without language, the individual does not exist without a culture and the culture does not exist without individuals. Anthropologist Deborah Schiffrin connects the individual into culture via narratives as we "create a 'story world' in which we can represent ourselves against a backdrop of cultural expectations about a typical course of actions; our identities as social beings emerge as we construct our own individual experiences as a way to position ourselves in relation to social and cultural expectation" (Schiffrin 1996:170).

Returning to the genealogy of acting agents, I argue that these agents construct culture and culture informs their interpretations of narratives (culture here must be seen as something that is always changing). So that to seek an understanding of identity which



is based on narrative constructs that base identity on a foundation of culture which, like all cultures, has a genealogical formation. Again I recall the connection of  $\omega$  to  $\alpha$ . Dell Hymes, drawing on Henry Glassie's "On Identity," wrote that "tradition offers [a] means for facing the future, having faced the past" (Hymes 2003: 3). He goes on to explain further that narrative patterning is strictly correlated with cultural patterning so that it will be difficult to view narrative as anything but culturally and site-specific and dependent on a cultural genealogy (Hymes 2003:47).

In this chapter so far I have been investigating the question of a definition of narrative and narrative Self. What I have attempted to show is that narratives are stories that both establish the individual agent's identity and form the structure of that agent's culture by informing/forming how we see the world. The example of the Cree *âtiyôhkan*, *tépâchiman* and personal narratives is meant to demonstrate that narratives draw on past narratives having "faced the past" in order to look towards the future. Keeping an eye on the authors who are of interest to me I see clear genealogical lines. Of note, however, is the question of pan-indianism and narrative. King, the Cherokee-Greek academic writing in Anishinaabek territory, bringing the Blackfoot trickster together with recent Cherokee history and his own personal narratives, forces me to question the strictness of cultural/site specific meaning. In response I will suggest that the act of interpreting King's work will always land on the individual so that no Cherokee, Greek or Blackfoot will read his stories the same as any other Cherokee, Greek or Blackfoot. Narratives are stories that are inherently subject to heteroglossia.

Throughout this project I have been and will be referring to "contemporary Indigenous narratives." I wish to define this concept not by form but by function. I will

discuss contemporary Indigenous narratives drawn from multiple genres: film, comic book, novel; however, my focus remains on what the creators of the narratives are attempting to do and what social role they fill for the audience. Simply put, the creators are storytellers, regardless of their medium. Sarris notes that “storytelling is a fundamental aspect of culture, and stories are used in a number of ways and for a multitude of purposes. Stories can work as cultural indices for appropriate or inappropriate behaviour...so much depends on who is telling the story and who is listening and the specific circumstances of the exchange” (Sarris 1993:4). Sarris establishes several key aspects of narrative in his definition of storytelling. They “can work” to exchange ideas of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, as has already been discussed in their perlocutionary function. Their meaning depends upon relationships between a teller and a listener which can be significantly altered by the distance between storyteller and audience. Contemporary Indigenous narratives, as I understand them, are constructed by public intellectuals who speak within a national discourse to both an Indigenous and non-Indigenous audience (discussion on the public intellectual follows in Chapter Three). There is significant distance between the teller and the audience in this case. Therefore any ideas about local knowledge can be considered instead in terms of imagined communities as defined by Benedict Anderson, where the “nation” is composed and constructed around the narratives of individual people who may never meet. “We” in this case is entirely dependent upon a narrative construction of nationhood (Anderson 2006:7, 36). However, local knowledge does matter. For it is within the local that the Self situates itself as at home. “Their” perspective constructs “their” worldview which establishes how “they” interpret narratives.

Choosing to ignore form and focusing on a larger definition of narratives creates the potential for a dangerous slide into metanarratives and generalizations. However, in including multiple forms within a specific genre I hope to show that generalizations are problematic but that some discussions on similarities still allow individual works to maintain their particularity. Additionally, the heterogeneous nature of Indigenous communities in Canada, even among the Cree and Anishinaabek, makes any discussion of their works in a generalized form problematic. Originating in an oral tradition that moved with people across the land, these stories continue to share a diversity of meaning and delivery. In the majority of the works that I discuss, community healing is a function of the narrative. Again, I caution that how the narrative works to heal is dependent upon the community interpreting it and is made difficult by the competing interpretive fields of the national and the local.

My project looks at two narrative genres: contemporary Indigenous narratives and medical narratives about Indigenous people. My argument is that these two genres can be brought together to form an inter-genera discourse. In doing so both narrative genres open themselves up to ethnographic investigation. I also argue that the contemporary Indigenous narratives differentiate an Indigenous identity by maintaining the narrative relationship between  $\alpha$  and  $\omega$  narratives. The remainder of this chapter examines how I see contemporary Indigenous narratives as constituting an ethnographic site and which elements of narrative theory used in medical anthropology are applicable to a study of medical reports. From this dual perspective I will engage with an emerging discourse. Both literature and ethnography are socially constructed within a system which establishes their dichotomy around Western conceptions of “Truth” versus fiction as

falseness. In discussing the role of the author and the ethnographer in breaking down the barrier between literature and ethnography it is possible to identify the intertextuality written into the texts of contemporary Indigenous authors.

A sensible place to start in defining literature is, of course, the dictionary. Literature it tells us is 1) written words that are regarded as having artistic merit; 2) books and writing on a particular subject; and, 3) leaflets used to give information (OED). For the sake of simplicity I am going to take only the first aspect of this definition as the one that I care about. So then, literature is written works that are regarded as having artistic merit. Walter Ong agrees with this statement. He holds literature firmly on the page in *Orality and Literacy*, making clear that literature essentially means writing (Ong 2007:10). The word itself comes from the Latin *literatura* via *litera* or letter of the alphabet (Ong 2007:10). Ong even goes so far as to give us examples of what literature is: English literature and children's literature for example (Ong 2007:11).

But for Ong there is more to literature in the form of literacy as an action. He wrote that the written word, the printed signifier, becomes a marker of the thing itself. The written word becomes a thing that can be seen, touched; it becomes an artifact or residue of its creation (Ong 2007:11) and as such it can be transferred from one place to another independently of its author. His purpose here is to differentiate between the written word which exists in a book or on the page and can be held and touched versus the spoken word which can only be heard and held in the mind. And Ong does not stop here. For, according to him, literature is only the written form and oral forms should be excluded from the definition. The term "oral literature" is a "strictly preposterous term...[revealing] our inability to represent to our own minds a heritage of verbally

organized materials except as some variant of writing” (Ong 2007:11). What I want to take from this is that literature is written; the spoken word is not literature. Here, then, literature is a physical thing, a book, a paper, a record of words that have a residue. But is literature more than that? When my attention shifts from the study of literature as a physical form of language towards literary studies as a discipline then the possibility of literature as something other than Ong’s definition opens up and orality can rejoin our conversation.

Literary scholar Tzvetan Todorov asks “what is literature?” He moves the answer away from books, away from a material answer into one grounded in human interaction and intersubjectivity (Todorov 1995:2). For Todorov literature is a function of humanity rather than a physical thing on a page, it is cultural. This means that literature does something rather than is something. “Literature” is metaphorical. Michel de Certeau takes this doing of something and places literature within the powerful force of discourse (Massumi in de Certeau 2006:xx). Discourse here is anything longer than a sentence. Sentences are given meaning only in relation to other sentences which themselves exist within a socio-cultural context (Todorov 1995:9). The dependency upon the interaction of implicit in meaning is among the reasons that have led many, including Jacques Derrida, to associate literature with a textile-type weaving of meaning, dependent upon its social cultural context for meaning (Krupat 1987:114-115, Derrida 1981:26). The very nature of Derrida’s *differance* requires that meaning not be immediately present in language. It is within the structuralist/post-structuralist concept of the sign that I find an answer to the issue of what makes literature discourse and what makes discourse socio-cultural. Starting with the structural linguistic concept of the sign, as made up of the

signifier and signified, it makes sense to me to follow the notion that the signifier does not hold meaning in and of itself. In this approach the socio-cultural seeds of discourse are found. This leaves all literature open for socio-cultural interpretation – which might be part of a different sort of question. Understanding literature as a textile of meaning rather than a form of language is an important step in freeing literature from the dictionary-imposed definition of the written word. Literature becomes a form of “social interaction and practice” in an intersubjective world (Massumi in de Certeau 2006:xx).

However, this idea of literature as social interaction and practices contradicts more than the idea that literature is written material. From at least as far back as Plato literature has been divided into “truth” and “fiction.” This is a divide that was reified in the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment world. Writing, as a thing, is broken generally into three main areas: scientific, personal (letters and correspondence, lists, etc.) and fiction. Science is taken to be true, or at least not false. On scientific writing Bruno Latour reminds us that “scientists are scrupulous representatives of the facts” and that their discourse originates from their object and not from the writing subject (Latour 1993:28-29). Latour is outlining the fallacy of the sterile lab where socio-cultural discourse is left at the door and where only Truth enters into the true written document. Science as truth is a discourse which has been proven to have significant implications for what is considered to be ethnography. Narrative analysis, including literature, offers an opportunity to blur the lines between science and life and allow fiction to influence empirical research (Clifford 1986:3).

“Fiction” wrote de Certeau “is a perilous word” (de Certeau 2006: 200). Fiction sits on the other side of an epistemological barrier built between truth and lies. Vincent

Crapanzano calls this the irreality of the imaginary and the reality of the real (Crapanzano 2004:15). This barrier, he suggests, and I agree, should not be left as a barrier in the sense of something that cannot be transcended. Instead it must be re-thought, freed from its post-Enlightenment placement and reconstituted as a border. A border is meant to be something that is crossed and re-crossed (Crapanzano 2004:14). What I want to say here is that the notion of fiction as fake needs to be thrown out. The textile-like make-up of fictive literature makes the possibilities of barriers as outlined above difficult to support. Literature makes itself available as a “transient category” which moves and exists not in a realm of fakeness but instead as something descriptive of the world it represents (Clifford 1986:5).

I am going to return to the Oxford English Dictionary for my definition of ethnography. Ethnography is defined as “the scientific description of peoples and cultures” (OED). This is a problematic definition. If I go back to the three classes of works: scientific, personal and fictional, clearly ethnography is to be understood as the first in the triad. Western science, from about the seventeenth century or Enlightenment on, has sought to exclude subjective understanding from its objective discourse on the world (Clifford 1986:5). Interdisciplinary scholar James Clifford, who hangs out with anthropologists, observed that “literary texts were deemed to be metaphoric and allegorical, composed of invention rather than observed facts” (Clifford 1986:5). Anthropology conducts ethnography which is defined as “scientific description” not metaphorical or allegorical imagined worlds. Or does it?

George Marcus and Michael Fischer offered to lead Anthropology away from a world of labs and facts by positing a “crisis of representation.” This crisis “arises from

uncertainty about adequate means of describing social reality” (Marcus and Fischer 1999:8). In short, ethnography is not an objective, scientific function. It is a subjective, creative at times, description of what someone believes is going on. I think Clifford Geertz’s “thick description” works well within this definition of ethnography (Geertz 1973:10). Geertz holds that “anthropological writings are themselves interpretations and second and third order ones to boot...They are, thus, fictions.” Fictions, in the sense that they are “something made,” “something fashioned” – the original meaning of *fictiō* – not that they are false unfactual, or merely “as if” thought experiments (Geertz 1973:15). Rosaldo’s *Culture and Truth* also critiques the notion of ethnographic writing as objective and places an emphasis on the analysis of narrative in necessarily subjective ethnographic work (Rosaldo 1993).

From this train of thought I want to un-define ethnography as a “hard science.” Ethnographic representations gain in reliability when Anthropologists pay attention to the context and the “qualities of the construction” of the representation (Darnell 2001:241). What the Post-modernist Anthropologists such as Geertz, Clifford, Rosaldo, Marcus and Fischer do is break apart the construct of Anthropology as a science, a science constrained by the seventeenth-century rules of fact and fiction, Truth versus Falsity, and replace it with an awareness that ethnography is the description of what the Anthropologist thinks is going on. The Anthropologist who ignores socio-culturally situated discourse, such as a novel, play or poem, can only circumscribe themselves and their work.

A contrary position is taken by physician and author Richard Selzer who wrote in his book *The Exact Location of the Soul* that “there are differences between science and



art that can never be dismissed. Science is almost always fatal to sentiment. The personality of the scientist is absent from his work, as it should be. It is quite otherwise with the artist, whose own taste and temperament are always visible in the work. The scientist does no more than find in Nature what is already there, and to manipulate, or recombine it into new configurations. The artist invents a unity, creates something new that will fire the imagination of others” (Selzer 2001:7-8). I disagree with this. I have known some scientists who lack personalities, but none who lack subjectivity.

Subjectivity is an inescapable condition in all of our work. I can only produce the world as I see it. I think it is clear that I am choosing to work around the barriers that divide “fake” literature and the “Truthful” practice of ethnography. I know that this is not a new revelation. I am working with an awareness that anything we build, such as disciplinary restrictions, can also be broken down. In order for my project to be possible I need to take a strongly interdisciplinary approach to both literature and ethnography.

In terms of literature I choose to adopt Roland Barthes’ distinction between the work and the text. The work is that thing which can be held in the hand (Barthes 1998:901). It is the written form from the Oxford English Dictionary. The Text, on the other hand, is larger than the work that holds its words. The text, as defined by Barthes, “is held in language” (Barthes 1998:901). Here I see the importance of the structuralist/post-structuralist concept of the linguistic sign reappear. From the relationship of the signifier and signified we are able to exchange word images as representations of the things we wish to represent. Barthes’ text maintains for this project that the work of literature must be viewed as a text. That is, something held in language and therefore context dependent. The signifier in the text “refers not to some idea of the

ineffable, but to that of a playing: the generation of the perpetual signifier” (Barthes 1998:902). It is the play of language that allows the author to manipulate the signifier in terms of irony, metaphor or allegory. These manipulations are not falseness but socio-culturally positioned meaning which can be used to read the worldview of a person representing the culture that we wish to interpret.

A textual understanding of literature allows me the potential to read the works of Indigenous authors in terms of Geertz’s use of sociologist Max Weber’s “webs of signification.” The literary text from this perspective is very close to Geertz’s finished anthropological writing which is “constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (Geertz 1973:9). Analysis, Geertz continues “is sorting out the structures of signification” (Geertz 1973:9). Put another way, Anthropological writing is exploring the textual fabric and explaining what we think is going on. Close inspection, I suggest, will show that the textual fabrics meet at spots and are frayed in others, creating a rhizomatic system of signification from which the author draws their narrative and a system that is dependent upon intersubjectivity.

Given that identifying the social commentary made by authors in the role of public intellectual is one of my main research objectives, I believe that the use of the novel, comic books or films as an ethnographic site is an important place to start. In order to do this I am going to apply what I am choosing to call the Modern Windigo to the texts of contemporary Indigenous authors. The windigo in contemporary Indigenous literature has experienced renewed attention since Joseph Boyden’s *Three Day Road* in 2005. However, the Modern Windigo is not just the overt use of windigo/witigo narratives with the texts. It is instead based on the play of language used by the authors

in order to re-inscribe negative meaning into signifiers with positive connotations in the dominant, colonial, English language. These are then used to discuss social problems within the author's community.

The windigo, as outlined in Chapter One, is essentially two things: the cannibal spirit with the heart of ice, living in the North hunting its prey; and, the potential within all of us to "turn windigo." That is to say that the windigo is the potential for each of us to become antisocial and destructive – this is where the windigo psychosis discourse focuses. However, the windigo is simultaneously a powerful metaphor for the colonial process. It is a destructive external force manifested as colonial laws, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop (where the Federal Government of Canada transferred authority over Indigenous youth to the Provinces resulting in thousands of Indigenous children being removed from their homes and placed in foster care or adopted out), and literary representation. But the Modern Windigo of colonialism also works within the individual with the adoption of Western concepts of individualism, capitalism and isolation.

Essentially I apply the Modern Windigo concept as a means of understanding the social commentary being made by contemporary Indigenous authors towards either their own community or towards a pan-Indigenous community. Specifically I see this commentary as re-writing dominant "positive" Western values such as individualism, power, personal wealth and capitalism as negative and as a means of dealing with their effects on the community. These values are enforced within the discourse of the Western education, literary and media systems. Overt examples of this would be Boyden's "Elijah Whiskeyjack" in *Three Day Road* or Gerald Vizenor's Post-modernist use of the windigo or gambler characters in many of his texts, including *Bearheart*, *Heirs of Columbus* and

*Father Meme*. More subtle characters would be Lee Maracle's "Old Snake" in *Ravensong*, Tomson Highway's "Big Joey" and Thomas King's "Franklin" in *Truth and Bright Water*. All of these characters represent a destructive element growing within them and their community by their adoption of Western values. Not all of these characters are represented as windigo, but I believe I can make a similar argument about their roles. I read this as "other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to." The signification of Western "success" is being turned into a signification of failure within an Indigenous socio-cultural context. The stories contain both fictional and imaginative happenings where the Western success of an individual leads to alienation and destruction within their community. The alienation and social destruction are believed to be directly related to youth suicide.

From here, I want to bring the author into the question. "What is an author?" is the famous question asked by Michel Foucault in 1969 in his continuing quest to remove the individual from discourse. What is important from Foucault's text is that he was interested in the "author-function" rather than in the intentionality of individual authors. He was interested in the author in their role within discourse formation, which is where I draw some benefit from his work. Foucault views the author as a focal point, think transit stop, for the multiple discourses that converge within their text. They are not the originator of a brilliant work, but instead they are the collector who puts them together (Foucault 1998:899). Put another way, the author uses multiple  $\alpha$  narratives in the construction of their  $\omega$  narratives. This approach is what I think adds to the importance of the author in ethnographic research. Foucault's approach allows me to view the text of the author as engaged in an active process of collecting narratives into a text rather than a

single-minded monolithic representation. This approach makes their works more representative rather than purely artificial stories with a beginning, middle and an end. Perhaps a note of caution: Foucault's focus is on a function while I am focused on individuals. While it might be argued that I am giving authority to one person, a post-Enlightenment trend in literature (Foucault 1998:896), I think it is important given the role of storytelling within many Indigenous communities and the role of narrative in forming identity to view the author within an authoritative position.

In this work I hope to avoid a dichotomy between literature and ethnography. While literary texts are not constructed to be ethnographic objects, they do provide cross-over narratives that can be useful to anthropologists. Does the divide between literature and ethnography exist? Yes, clearly it does. Does my work dissolve it? I cannot say, for the dichotomy is constructed on a strong foundation of narratives. However, I would hope that anything we can build we can tear down, or that it at least has a fire escape. Clearly the works of many contemporary anthropologists and literary theorists cross over the barrier between the fictive world of literature and the truth-obsessed world of scientific discourse. While I have never been good with my hands I do hope that my work serves the purpose of helping to build a bridge across the divide.

My goal with this project is to examine the texts of contemporary Indigenous authors to construct an ethnographic understanding of how the authors view contemporary Indigenous communities. I am interested in how they fulfill their role as collectors of narratives in order to construct their representations of what they see going on. The following chapter will examine several contemporary Indigenous narratives other than the three main works that I focus on for close reading in this project (Ruffo's

film *A Windigo Tale*, Sanderson's comic book *Darkness Calls*, and Bartleman's novel *As Long as the Rivers Flow*). I focus on the three because of this use of windigo as a representative discourse on Indigenous health issues, specifically youth suicide. With them I will examine the possibility of applying anthropologist Victor Turner's theory on social dramas as a method of analysis.

### **Chapter Three: Conspiring with Cultural Starvation.**

The primary focus of this project is to look at Modern Windigo narratives. To that end I will focus on three narratives constructed in three different forms: film, comic and novel. However, these three, while being representative of the Modern Windigo, are not the only windigo narratives currently circulating. Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* can be considered a Modern Windigo narrative; Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* and *Through Black Spruce* contain the windigo motif; and, Daniel David Moses' *Father Breuf's Ghost* also contains a windigo figure that is central to the story. These works, along with others, can be considered within what is recognized as a distinct genre of Indigenous fiction. In this chapter I will provide a discussion on the appearance of some of the social themes and the role of colonialism in shaping the genre of Indigenous literature. To do this I will provide a survey of some of the more commonly read Indigenous authors from both Canada and the United States. My reason for focusing in on the major writers rather than emerging artists is because of the established power of their voices. Essentially, public intellectuals need to have someone listening to them. I am interested in how their message assumes the voice of Indigenous peoples across Canada.

An author is not necessarily someone granted authority within a political system, in the sense that the Prime Minister speaks for Canada. I think it is a safe bet that Tomson Highway will never be the Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. However, Highway has the authority to speak and write for Indigenous people within a certain context in which the Grand Chief does not. The author still provides for many Canadians the most authentic representations of Indigenous Peoples in Canada other than

those from media representations. The sales and public lectures given by Joseph Boyden after *Three Day Road* and *Through Black Spruce* are excellent examples of this authority in practice.

To define the public intellectual I start with Antonio Gramsci. “The intellectual” wrote Gramsci is “having an intellect and using it,” a potential within all people. But while all people have this potential, not all serve the function (Gramsci 2003:1, 9). Gramsci’s “organic” intellectual seems to suit my view of the author best here. The “organic” intellectual is someone filling a role for their community, who speaks and represents, but is not free of, the ideology of their community (Gramsci 2003:6-7). Edward Said takes the idea of the intellectual further. He defines the intellectual as “an individual with a specific public role in society that cannot be reduced simply to being a faceless professional...the intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public” (Said 1994:11). I consider Said’s definition alongside Foucault’s of author to outline my definition of the public intellectual. The public intellectual, as author, is the person who focuses the collective and personal narratives of a community in order to articulate their understanding of the community’s “message, view, attitude, philosophy or opinion,” as well as histories when silenced. Their work is based in discourse which is dependent upon the socio-cultural context in which their representations are constructed. Said contends that there is no such thing as a “private” intellectual “since the moment you set down words and then publish them you have entered a public world” (Said 1994:12). Cruikshank notes that the telling requires an audience; “a response, in order to make the telling worthwhile” (Cruikshank 1999: 16).



The public intellectual is someone who “visibly represents a standpoint of some kind, and someone who makes articulate representations to his or her public despite all sorts of barriers” (Said 1994:12). In terms of function, Said’s public intellectual must choose between the side of those peoples less well represented, forgotten or ignored or the powerfully represented (Said 1994:32-33). Like Said, I favour the intellectual’s ideal function as working against the “structure of power and influence, a massed history of already articulated values and ideas...[working instead for] ideas, values, people who... have not been given a room of their own” (Said 1994:34-35). Again I return to the role of the Modern Windigo as the articulation of an alternative point of view speaking out of the silence caused by the dominant discourse’s constructions of the world, giving voice to those denied voice and altering representation away from the power of the “National” language.

The role that Indigenous public intellectuals play is, as literary scholar Elvira Pulitano suggests, one of mediation between an Indigenous worldview and a Western worldview (Pulitano 2003:9). In terms of thinking about the relationship between form and content, I argue that while the form takes on a very Western-influenced character, the content remains Indigenous. Form is important for understanding because we are all disciplined in narrative communication styles that enable us to make sense of stories in particular ways. Medical historian and philosopher Howard Brody referred to these as “nested narratives;” as prototypical forms and outlines that are permissible and understandable at a cultural level (Brody 2003:29). What this means is that there are forms of stories that are intelligible to members of our society and that allow them to visualize the narratives on their own terms. In essence they make images from the

narratives that allow the listener/reader to make sense of what the narrative tells them. One Western theory on form that I wish to consider closely is the social drama. In his work on performance and narrative, anthropologist Victor Turner defines “social dramas” as “units of aharmonic or disharmonic social process, arising in conflict situations” that originate in oral narratives (Turner 1988:74). I consider Turner’s work on the social drama in relation to theories of differential identity where the stresses of the social dramas “give rise to an articulation of identity” (Cashman 2011:13, Bauman 1994). Similar to Bakhtin’s analysis of the *Bildungsroman* form of the novel, the protagonist in a social drama is engaged in a narrative process of becoming (Bakhtin 2007). Movement, as will be discussed shortly, is important for Turner. The movement of one actor to a new social status is accomplished or blocked by enacted rituals which can create the social drama (Turner 1988:74). In narrative form the same processes are used to create “narrative fidelity” where the narrative “rings true” to the audience (Brody 2003:26).

Turner’s work on social dramas centred in part around his belief that the social world, a world of interaction, is a world-becoming rather than a world-being (Turner 1974:24). However, Turner warns that we must consider how we are using the metaphor of “becoming” when describing social relationships (1974:30-31). Turner viewed the structure of metaphor through the lens of interaction between two subjects within the same statement, a principal and subsidiary subject (1974:29). When we think of “becoming,” Turner asked, do we conceive it organically or is there another means of thinking about “becoming?” Turner sought his answer in sociologist Florian Znaniecki’s neo-Kantian theory on the “humanistic coefficient” where “sociocultural systems depend not only for their meaning but also for their existence upon the participation of *conscious*

human agents and upon men's relations with one another" (1974:17). The humanistic coefficient is that place where individual agents meet as "objects of the actions of others" (1974:32). Znaniecki's humanistic coefficient and Turner's use of it share a strong theoretical resemblance to Ricoeur's work in *Oneself and Another* and Bakhtin's work on Self-Other relationships. In short, the observations of agents in the form of narratives of the actions of others are the means through which human-becoming takes place. Like ethnography, the human coefficient is a construction of narratives about what we think other people are up to. We can also define the human coefficient as intersubjectivity or by the Bakhtinian "heteroglossia." Turner adapts Znaniecki's work to discuss the role of conflict within Ndembu society, merging it with Kurt Lewis' "aharmonic" phase of the social process to create his theory on social dramas (1974:33). I propose to apply Turner's social drama theory to contemporary Indigenous narratives. In this case I will position the colonial state or government as one acting agent within the drama. The second side will be assumed by the public intellectual as a culturally authorized synecdoche for Indigenous peoples and their histories.

Turner defines the social drama as the aharmonic phase of a narrative "when the interests and attitudes of groups and individuals stood in obvious opposition" (1974:32). My question is, can I apply this theory to a reading of contemporary Indigenous narratives? Turner does suggest that the social drama exists at all levels of society and in very complex forms. Additionally, he wrote that the social drama existed in the political realm at a structural level (1974:33). The model of human becoming is now seen as dependent upon a metaphor of movement where harmony ideally is maintained. However, as human interaction is driven by individual agents and their narratives of

social relationships, which will inevitably lead to conflicts, the aharmonic phases of the process of becoming are created. I am drawn to the image of plate tectonics and earthquakes as a means of thinking about this relationship. If I take this one step further and add the additional condition that social relationships are not taking place on an equal field, they are happening under the influence of a colonial system, then the aharmonic phase for the colonized side may move into a perpetual state of conflict or battle for control of their own narrative identity.

Harmony, it would seem, exists at the structural level. However, Turner's model does allow for the roles of individual agency in creating social drama. For this point I turn to Bauman and his work on differential identity while recalling Pulatano's mediation role for the public intellectual. As has been discussed with Turner, some events can cause social harmony to be disrupted. When this happens a divide is opened up. In terms of thinking about the role of Indigenous public intellectuals, I would phrase this as follows: the effects of the history of colonization have resulted in structural change within Indigenous communities. This change has created a divide between two communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. The divide is maintained to the advantage of the non-Indigenous community by an asymmetrical power relationship. The resulting effects on the Indigenous community are histories of social issues. The role of the public intellectuals is to reach across this divide and create bridges or, if that is not possible, to articulate the position of the Indigenous subject. The tools that they have available to them are their stories. The public intellectual's stories, rather than being viewed as coming from an isolated individual, should be considered as their personal action to solidify the community to which they belong and provide a means for Indigenous peoples

to define themselves as Indigenous rather than being defined as an “indian” other to the main-stream “whiteman.” Bauman makes reference to the action of traditional language use, versus an external academic discourse, as a method of viewing Indigenous people as “special groups,” where narratives are the “product” through which the group is defined (Bauman 1971:33). In short, what I see here is a structural model for explaining the divide between two groups and a model for agency that aids in the construction of bridges and discourse between the two sides. Turner’s social drama becomes the action of interest to me insofar as it can be transferred into the forms I am interested in.

Social drama narratives are built around four phases: breach, crisis, redressive action and reintegration. The breach phases of the narrative break the subjects and the narratives away from ‘norm-governed social relations’ (Turner 1988:74). Lee Maracle’s *Ravensong* establishes this phase with a flu epidemic that decimates the community. In Tomson Highway’s *Kiss of the Fur Queen* the breach phase initially happens with the departure of Champion to residential school. Similarly, Robert Alexie’s breach is the partnered departure of the brother and sister to the residential school and the increased influence of the colonial government in *Porcupines and China Dolls*. Several authors, including N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko begin their novels, *House Made of Dawn* and *Ceremony* respectively, already within the breach phase of the social drama. In essence, these authors are maintaining that the breach is colonialism itself and its ongoing effects on Indigenous communities; the colonial subject has affected the Indigenous subjects of the narratives. The metonymic breach of colonialism is the movement to residential school, epidemics or loss of control, land, and language is present in a majority of Indigenous narratives because language expresses the histories of

the people. Additional examples include the construction of the dam in *Green Grass*, *Running Water* or the church in *Truth and Brightwater*, both by Thomas King. Joseph Boyden uses the presence of the colonial government to remove the authority of the Bird patriarch as windigo killer as an initial breach in *Three Day Road* while *Through Black Spruce* carries on with that breach already in place.

Discussing a movement away from a “norm-governed” set of social relations provides an interesting challenge in a colonial setting. Just when does the audience decide, in narrative time, that the stresses introduced by colonization got so great that the breaking event took place? Also, when conflicting “norms” are in place, how do we decide which set to use? The answer is located in the narrative construction itself: What story is the storyteller trying to relate to their audience? By paying attention to the perceived audience that the storyteller is narrating to we can find clues to answer these questions. Consider Tomson Highway’s *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. This semi-autobiographical novel takes place within a Cree world. The events occur within narrative time and space that are specific to the Cree experience but are generalizable to all Indigenous peoples in Canada. Highway alters what we might expect when we approach narrative time by basing it on movement across place. In essence it is more appropriate to talk about narrative place rather than narrative time here. Highway’s work places certain social relation-changing events in a chronotopic relationship that makes sense in the Cree world of Northern Manitoba. Events that are present in the narrative represent real life events that were occurring in the region during Highway’s lifetime: increased dependency on the government; increased residential school attendance; centralization of the community off the land and forced settlement into reserve

communities; and, increased influence of the Catholic church in the lives of Northern Cree peoples. All of these changes are narrated by Highway as movements away from or towards certain places: away from the trap-line and the locations where their traditional narratives situate the Cree; and, towards urban or reserve settings where Western discourse is dominant. Robert Brightman's ethnographic texts from the Rock Cree of Northern Manitoba chronicle the same events as shapers of the modern Rock Cree (Brightman 2002).

Whereas Highway's work is very much focused on Cree history, King's work assumes a pan-Indian audience. Therefore his narratives are established around narrative events that are more general to Indigenous peoples as a whole. The historical perspectives that are provided originate from a Blackfoot community in Southern Alberta but he creates an "every Indian" sort of perspective. Consider as evidence of this that King incorporates four different Indigenous creation stories into *Green Grass, Running Water* rather than basing it on a single narrative tradition as Highway does. King admits to purposely locating his narratives in a broad field of pan-Indianism as an active political statement (Weaver 1997:151). If we consider the present professional lifestyles of Highway and King, perhaps the two best known Indigenous authors in Canada, Highway, the performer, makes few public appearances while King has sought public office as a member of the New Democratic Party of Canada. Without too much speculation, it is important for their work that Highway is a residential school survivor who writes with an autobiographic voice and King is an immigrant to Canada from Southern California where he was raised by his single mother. King's *Truth and Brightwater* certainly

contains autobiographical elements from his life; however, the Indigenous events are not King's personal history.

Following the breach phase of the social drama there are two possibilities: return to normal social relations or widen the gap further. Since we are concerned with social dramas it is safe to predict that I focus on the latter. If the breach sets the conditions of possibility, the crisis phase is the possibility enacted. In terms of my overall project, the crisis phase is the realm of the Windigo. It is that place where social breakdown, isolation, hurt and anger reside in a narrative. Turner describes the crisis phase as a "cleavage in the widest set of relevant social relations to which conflicting or antagonistic parties belong" (Turner 1974:38). The breach phase moves the actors in the narrative into a liminal state between two stable phases that constitute the beginning and the end of the narrative journey. However, as will be discussed shortly, the storyteller may leave their narrative actions unresolved for a variety of reasons. This liminality is extended by the crisis, which can take on many forms. In at least two of the novels that I have been working with, liminality for the protagonist takes the place on a float plane flight between home and the residential school; a uniquely Northern liminal zone develops the crisis. The crisis is a "turning point" in the narrative (Turner 1974:39). In narrative form, a degree of differential identity begins to appear within the story. In Indigenous narratives that follow this pattern, it is often because the actors are Indigenous in a colonial system that the community is not able to resolve the breach and the crisis cannot be resolved. The crisis is often the result of colonial laws which circumscribe the actions of the community, overt racism and conditions of economic dependence.



Alexie's representation of the crisis phase in *Porcupines and China Dolls* is written in such a way as to make the crisis normative in the lives of the actors. The constant reply of "same old, same old" is given whenever actors are asked about their lives. As Alexie moves the actors from drunken boredom to drunken boredom he quietly maintains a state of crisis just below the surface of actor's narrative actions. Problems of violence, isolation, sexual and physical abuse, and drug and alcohol abuse are told by the actors in their thoughts rather than openly in their community. The crisis is internalized by each actor as they maintain their isolation in silence. The community's ability to resolve its histories has been destroyed by the legacy of the residential school system. Alexie differentiates the actors in his work from other Canadian communities by holding the community in a constant state of stasis. Same old, same old. Few people leave the community except for those children who have been adopted out and they are lost forever. Those others who travel to Whitehorse always return to the silent crisis of Aberdeen, Yukon Territory.

Highway represents crisis in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* in terms of the identity of the brothers, Champion and Ooneemeetoo. The breach in this narrative takes place when the boys are removed from their community and sent to residential school. The crisis that widens the breach takes the form of their conflict between narratives of identity that also differentiate the boys from the others in their school. Champion must choose between his concert piano career, his promise to his mother to follow Catholic teachings, and calls from a third Indigenous student to follow the path of their ancestors and return to an Indigenous narrative. This final possibility is held just beyond the reach of the young Champion by the narratives of Winnipeg street people, mostly Cree and Anishinaabek,

that Highway weaves into his work. Ooneemeetoo is conflicted by his sense of developing a sexual identity that he both feels shame for and embraces through dangerous sexual relations. He finds a place for himself in dance, but hides it from Champion as long as he can. In both cases their history of sexual abuse lead them, similar to the actors in *Porcupines and China Dolls*, to allow the crisis of identity to widen because of their inability to talk about who they are and share their experiences.

As in King's *Truth and Bright Water*, Lee Maracle (Cree-Salish) differentiates the two communities in *Ravensong* with the flow of a small river that separates the Indigenous community from "Whitetown." The breach begins with a flu epidemic, but Maracle makes it clear that the crisis that results is dependent upon racial and colonial policies that keep the Indigenous community in a constant state of crisis. The order of "Whitetown" is set against the disorder of "home;" medicine that is available across the river to keep Whitetown's population from dying of flu is scarce or unavailable on the Indigenous side. The identity of Stacey is tied up in the relationship between the two communities. In *Ravensong*, Maracle does something interesting with this relationship. She uses the relationship between the protagonist Stacey and Steve, a boy from Whitetown, to confuse the issue of the crisis. She differentiates between the two communities by degrees of crisis. Poverty, illness and racism circumscribe Stacey's community. Restrictive social norms, alienation from meaningful relationships, and dependence upon a nature-culture divide keep Whitetown residents from knowing the true value of the land upon which they are living and the people they live with in the eyes of the Indigenous community across the river. Maracle also adds an Indigenous element to the crisis by having the location of its power be in the actions of Other-than-Human

Beings, in this case Raven, who seeks to end the division between the two communities and end the silence by using crises to bring the two sides together in the style of the trickster that he is.

The twin narratives of Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* combine two of the phases of the social drama. Xavier's narrative represents the crisis phase, while his aunt offers a redressive option. I will deal with the redressive action shortly. The crisis in Xavier's narrative is a type of slow burn, multigenerational crisis. It begins with the death of his grandfather in an RCMP jail. The grandfather had fulfilled his role as windigo killer by executing someone who had gone windigo. However, rather than viewing the killing as appropriate and meriting resolution through reintegration into the community, the grandfather was charged with murder by the colonial state. Even if the Anishinaabek and Cree see the windigo as non-human and real, the government of Canada does not and treated the case as homicide. This initial stand-off is the symbolic loss of control for the Anishinaabek and Cree of Boyden's novel over their lives. The crisis widens with Xavier and Elijah's participation in World War I and their encounters with systemic racism and drug use. Boyden uses the windigo as an actor in his novel and partners it with the additive morphine of the era, the mass killings and savagery of the war and the isolation experienced by Xavier as Elijah continues to go windigo. Drug use, as a social problem in Indigenous communities, continues in Boyden's second novel, *Through Black Spruce*.

In all of the cases cited, the authors create a narrative sense of difference between the Indigenous community and the non-Indigenous community. However, all of these differences are a result of the histories of Indigenous peoples under colonialism. We may

call it “blood memory,” as is common in the Indigenous academic-literary world, or “historical trauma,” which comes from a psychological field of Indigenous clinical research. Both will be discussed in detail in the next chapter as a means of signifying that the collective narratives of Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States under colonialism have worked to shape a differential identity. Furthermore, Turner’s social drama provides a means of thinking about how these identities can be articulated. The Windigo is a Being that thrives in crisis. It also carries over into social dramas as a metaphor for destruction. I wish to re-articulate that the Modern Windigo is a conspirator with cultural starvation. This cultural starvation is brought about by the histories of a colonialism that has attempted to destroy the Indigenous presence in Canada and the United States. But the windigo represents more than just violence against Indigenous peoples. It also represents the choice that an individual makes in turning windigo: that moment a person decides to consume the flesh of another human, or the dream in which the person is tricked into eating flesh, is when they lose their humanness.

The manner in which the crisis phase of the narratives pushes the actors towards decisions that are potentially damaging to themselves or the community can be considered in this manner. Ooneemeetoo, the dancer, was consumed sexually by the windigo, Father Lafleur, while in residential school. This consumption of his body and his own exploration of his sexuality drives him to the consumption of other men, even when he is in a stable relationship with another man. As *Kiss of the Fur Queen* draws to a conclusion Ooneemeetoo, while dying of AIDS, continues to hunt for and consume other men. Highway’s great villain in his “Wasy Cycle” of plays, Big Joey, has become a consumer of his community by adopting the dominant individualism and capitalism of

the West. This character thrives in the crisis of Highway's plays. The "Old Snake" in Maracle's *Ravensong* has also adopted and internalized the means of becoming violent towards his own community as he turns away from their traditions and norms.

All three of these characters represent different manifestations of social issues within Indigenous narratives. Ooneemeetoo is the self-destructive hedonist in the same manner as James and Jake in *Porcupines and China Dolls* but does not act maliciously towards his community. He is more damaging to himself than to others but will ultimately bring down those around him. He is tragic in that his potential is lost because of the crisis. These actors are destined to remain liminal. Big Joey, on the other hand, seeks nothing other than his own gain even if it comes at the expense of his community. He is destructive at a level that Ooneemeetoo, James and Jake can never be. He seeks power and abuses those around him to get it. He remains liminal because, in many ways, he is a driver of the crisis from which he benefits. Finally, the Old Snake has internalized hate. He has given up on trying to live a good life and takes his anger out on those closest to him, his wife and children. Divided into three archetypes of crisis, Ooneemeetoo is the consumer who destroys himself, the Old Snake is the consumer who destroys those who love him, and Big Joey is the seller who consumes the community. These actors appear again in many forms. Martha in *As Long as the Rivers Flow* takes on the role of Ooneemeetoo and the Old Snake; Curtis in *A Windigo Tale* is on the path to becoming Big Joey and the Old Snake; and, Kyle's move towards suicide in *Darkness Calls* is in the tragic style of Ooneemeetoo's self-destruction.

Contemporary Indigenous narratives, however, are not interesting solely because of the negative aspects within them. I am more interested in what the public intellectuals

have done with the negative aspects in order to define an Indigenous means of dealing with the social problems. Turner's third phase in the social drama in the redressive action phase. The breach and crisis have worked together to move the narrative of the social drama into a liminal phase between states of social harmony. The redressive action phase works to "limit the spread of crisis" within the "disturbed social system" while retaining liminal characteristics (Turner 1974:39, 41). Turner provides some advice for people working with social change in relation to the redressive phase. He writes "study carefully what happens in phase three, the would-be redressive phase of social drama, and ask whether the redressive machinery is capable of handling crises so as to restore, more or less, the status quo ante, or at least to restore peace among contending groups" (Turner 1974:40-41).

In part, I cannot respond to this challenge. The factors that are currently working towards redress at the political, cultural, economic and educational levels alone are beyond the scope of this dissertation. What I can think about is how these efforts are being represented and how culture and traditions are being included in the other three redressive movements. I return to Bauman's differential identity. In the breach and crisis phases, the authors of representations of social dramas use differential identity narratives to highlight how the histories of Indigenous peoples contribute to the social dramas represented in their works. In the third phase, the authors are using differential identity narratives to voice Indigenous means of dealing with the problem. In short, they are re-articulating traditional healing practices. And, just as the windigo has metamorphosed into the Modern Windigo the healing practices have also been adjusted to work within contemporary social problems. Additionally, the contemporary narrative tradition is

combining elements of traditional narratives in order to present a continuity of narratives and histories.

Both the Cree and Anishinaabek narrative traditions have a story about the weasel and Witigo/Windigo. I have already provided an example of the Anishinaabek version from the Jones text in Chapter One. Brightman collected the following version among the Rock Cree of Northern Manitoba, the area of Manitoba that Tomson Highway comes from:

As *wīśahkīcāhk* was traveling, he found large tracks. Lying in the tracks were bits of excreta that looked like they contained human bones. He thought, “I wonder whose excreta this can be?” And as he was looking around, he saw *mistāpēw* (“Great-Man,” Giant”) approaching. *Mistāpēw* came towards him and said “why are you talking about me, *Wīśahkīcāhk*? I’m going to roast and eat you so you’d better go out and cut roasting sticks. Hurry because I’m hungry.” *Wīśahkīcāhk* went out to cut the sticks and he was crying in fear because he knew he would be eaten. Then he saw *sīhkos* (“weasel”) going by.

“Come here, little brother, come here! *Mistāpēw* intends to kill me and eat me. You see that door [*mistāpēw*’s anus] that’s open there? Run in there and go up inside to the heart. When you’re inside, bite his heart and he’ll die. Chew it up and you’ll kill him. Don’t worry about dying because I’ll save you anyway,” he said.

So that Weasel crawled into the hole. And just as *Wīśahkīcāhk* had told him he began to chew on *mistāpēw*’s heart. And *mistāpēw* said, “Hurry up! Hurry up! I’m sick from not eating in a long time. I’m almost fainting.” And then *mistāpēw* fell over dead because that Weasel had killed him. And then *Wīśahkīcāhk* cut apart *mistāpēw* and found that Weasel in there who had drowned from all the blood. *Wīśahkīcāhk* took him to the lake and washed him clean. Then he wrang all the water from his tail and began to blow on it and that Weasel came alive once again. And *Wīśahkīcāhk* said: “younger brother, in the future when there will be people, they will call you *sīhkos*.” So that was *Wīśahkīcāhk*’s doing that the Weasel has that name. (Brightman 2007:24-25)

The story of Weasel and Witigo/Windigo is very well known. Interestingly, and as an aside, the storyteller Jeremiah Michel refers to the Witigo as *mistāpēw*, the Giant, another Other-than-Human Being.

In a contemporary telling of this narrative Highway has the two brothers from *Kiss of the Fur Queen* travel through a shopping mall not long after Ooneemeetoo's arrival in Winnipeg as a teenager to live with Champion. In Highway's version the mall is the Witigo/capitalism and the boys are Weasel/Cree. The mall is representative of the monster that now hunts the Cree of northern Manitoba, colonialism, consumerism and capitalism. Like the Witigo who only knows consumption, the mall knows no purpose other than consumption. When the two boys emerge out the back side of the beast, they are covered in its excrement, they have dressed Ooneemeetoo in the style of a non-Indigenous youth. Like the Witigo of the *ācadōhkīwina* narratives, the mall is larger than the boys, towering above them. With his action, Highway sets the conditions in place for the brothers to engage with Witigo narratives in their play which is set towards the end of the novel. Their twin narratives will eventually split with Ooneemeetoo never being able to move beyond his crisis and dying of AIDS while Champion is able to heal himself by accepting his Cree identity. Champion is able to move towards a redressive action through the production of plays about the Witigo and the evils of residential school abuse, because he is able to differentiate his own identity from that of his white classmates. Rather than understanding himself as lacking what they have, he must come to understand that he has a Cree identity and all of the narratives of histories that go with it.

Similarly, Boyden uses the narrative of the aunt in *Three Day Road* to provide a redressive action which returns Xavier to his Oji-Cree traditions. The life history of the aunt is used to re-engage Xavier with a history of his people which is



different from the history told by the colonial state. Rather than being a marginalized “indian” whose only purpose is shooting a gun Auntie narrates a history where Xavier and his family are important to their community because they are powerful killers of windigo. The aunt adds complexity to Xavier’s story where racism and drugs have made it simplistic. Boyden uses narratives of the human-gone-windigo to interject an Indigenous voice to his work. Whereas the Weasel Witigo story is from a time before humans, the human-gone-windigo is a narrative history that continues to this day. Rather than having Elijah consume the flesh directly, his consumption takes on a metaphorical form. Here, Elijah becomes a character similar to Big Joey in that he seeks to gain from the pain of others. Boyden will take these roles further in *Through Black Spruce*, when the descendants of Elijah take on the windigo role as powerful drug dealers and the Bird family, Xavier’s descendants, battle against them.

Maracle’s use of Other-than-Human actors in *Ravensong* promotes an Indigenous normativity that is missing in many histories of Canada. In this work the redressive action is in part the acceptance of an Indigenous worldview where the role of animate actors extends beyond humans. In making this argument I am looking at the writer’s attempts to portray healing as a redressive action. I do not want to seem like I am suggesting that the redressive actions in the narratives are all that is needed to complete the healing process. The narratives must be considered as only part of the healing. Consider the healing processes of the Anishinaabek and Cree. While stories did and do play a significant role in the healing of individuals, these stories must also be accomplished with material and ceremonial actions. It is

a worldview that is contrary to a Cartesian worldview where culture and nature are separate and an acceptance of a worldview where the stories must work alongside other means of healing the community such as economic development, educational programs, political empowerment and land claims.

The fourth and final phase in Turner's social drama is the reintegration of the disturbed group or individual back into society or the "social recognition and legitimization of irreparable schism between the contesting parties" (Turner 1974:41). This phase presents an interesting challenge. First, is the social drama involving Indigenous peoples resolved to the point where reintegration can take place? And, second, are the authors who are voicing the narratives of this social drama seeking total integration or a version of plurality that allows Indigenous worldviews to exist alongside non-Indigenous worldviews? I think that the answer to the first question is no. The histories that are being converted into narratives of social dramas, the intersubjective relationship between communities has not been resolved; colonialism is still in place. This view is demonstrated in many of the contemporary Indigenous narratives I have been discussing. The second question needs a bit of defining before it can be answered. What do we mean by "reintegration?" Does that have the same meaning as "assimilation?" Turner's phrasing is also a bit problematic: "irreparable schism." What does he mean by that?

Part of the problem of the definition that I need to work around in this application of Turner's theory has to do with how he envisioned the origin of the social drama. Turner is using oral accounts of conflicts within a relatively

homogenous community, the Ndembu, as his guide while I am looking at relations between colonizer and colonized within the modern nation-state of Canada. Part of the benefit of examining contemporary narratives is how they re-tell the history of Canada outside the unity of the discourse of colonialism which privileges only voices from the centre, superimposed over discourses that originate from local histories. Cruickshank's work on Bakhtin, Benjamin and Harold Innis in relation to oral narrative use in contemporary southern Yukon provides an excellent example of how this process works (Cruikshank 1998). Essentially, the state, under the influence of modernity, produced versions that simplify the complexity of the unique histories of the local people. Local narratives provide a means of uncovering the buried complexity of the site.

In Alexie's *Porcupines and China Dolls* the social drama that makes up the main narrative of the text is contained within a longer-running social drama of the histories of the area. Similar to Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Alexie's work focuses on the relationship between two brothers in their post-residential school life. James and Jake, while not biological brothers, are adoptive brothers because of their shared experiences at residential school where they were both sexually abused and both became orphans. Alexie works the social drama narrative of James, Jake and Chief David, disclosing their histories of sexual abuse at the hostel and merging them into the greater histories of their community. Rather than present this one narrative as healing the whole community Alexie focuses on a phrase that both James and Jake repeat in the text: "healin' is a journey – there is no end" (Alexie 2009:201). What appears to be a redressive action in the form of the

disclosure does not move the whole community towards reintegration. It only moves some of the people because the multiple histories require multiple redressive actions. Alexie's work also speaks to the complexity of the social problems that are ongoing within Indigenous communities where violence, bootlegging, drug abuse and neglect continue alongside healing projects.

Highway's redressive action in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* similarly presents the fragile nature of the ongoing healing process in Indigenous communities. Both Champion and Ooneemeetoo work together to create artistic performances, memorializing the history of their residential school experience by telling the stories of the battles of *Wīsahkīcāhk* and Witigo. In Highway's version, the former school head is the Witigo which consumes the young boys. The work mirrors real life where Highway has become a playwright and his brother Renee, who died of AIDS, was a dancer. In *Kiss of the Fur Queen* Champion is the writer and Ooneemeetoo the dancer until his death from AIDS. In a conversation with Daniel David Moses about this work, Moses mentioned that while the writing has been helpful for Highway in his healing process he is still deeply scared by his experiences at residential school. Moses noted that Highway still harbours a lack of trust for White people which showed in his unwillingness to allow non-Indigenous persons recommended by Moses greater editorial influence in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (Moses 2011).

The revelation by Moses by Highway leads me to wonder about where contemporary narratives fit into the healing process and whether or not the application of Turner's model is appropriate. I find my answer in Turner and in the

works themselves. I have already quoted Alexie's line, "healin' is a journey – there is no end." Turner's interest in social dramas, and the way that they are constructed in narrative form, is as a process of becoming (Turner 1974:43). The social drama itself is a process in the form of four phases. It is also dependent upon a temporal intersubjective relationship where the actions of distinct subjects and their individual understanding lead to the events and actions that construct the narratives. Social drama narratives are dialogic rather than monologic, a distinction that will become more important in later chapters when I discuss the intergenerational and cross-genre relationships between fictive narratives and the narratives of the medical profession. The narratives of social dramas also display a dialogic relationship among Indigenous communities, between Indigenous peoples and the State.

As Champion moves towards his redressive action he must engage with other Indigenous communities, spending time on Manitoulin Island where Ooneemeetoo is attacked and beaten by Anishinaabek men for his homosexuality. The conflict that Ooneemeetoo experiences is partnered with Champion's reunited relationship with Amanda Clear Sky in the same community. Amanda works as Highway's tool for helping in the establishing of Champion's Indigenous identity. The boys and their community cannot escape an ongoing relationship with the Canadian government. This relationship includes the removal of the children to attend residential school, the reorganization of the community off the land and into a single site and hinted plans that this move opens up the north for development. The brothers are also engaged in ongoing and changing relationships with non-

Indigenous peoples throughout the novel, including piano and dance teachers, classmates, school teachers, random sexual relationships and more. The point I want to make with this discussion on the relationships is the complexity of the histories of Indigenous people contained within the narratives of social dramas. There resides within all of these narratives a complex relationship between events and actors and the actors' interpretation of the events.

Boyden's use of dual narratives running side by side around the events highlights this intersubjective understanding of events, actors and relationships. In both of his novels he uses two distinct voices to construct his narrative: Auntie and Xavier in *Three Day Road* and Uncle and Niece in *Through Black Spruce*. These, however, were not his first works to employ the multiple voice narrative. Section four of *Born With Tooth* deals with the suicide of a young girl in a northern community. Told alternatively from the perspective of an alcoholic uncle, a sniffing youth, an ethnocentric priest and a misunderstood grandfather, the narratives of this suicide take one event in the community and construct the multiple and complex narratives of a social drama. In all cases the breach and crisis are the suicide and the effect it has on the community, although the uncle and youth were already in an ongoing crisis due to their addictions. However, the multiple narratives suggest different means of approaching the social drama. Redressive actions do not always take place in the narratives and when they seem to, the other narrators may disagree as to their effectiveness and appropriateness.

In this chapter, I explored the application of Turner's theory on social dramas together with Bauman's theory on differential identity as a mean of locating

a method for discussing the social actions that are taking place within contemporary Indigenous narratives. In effect, I have used social dramas as a means of exploring the relationship between public intellectuals and the colonial government. I see these two theories connecting at the level of interaction between institutions and social action, where state discourse represents the institutional values and the public intellectual's narrative is a social action. Social dramas identify a state of conflict between subjects as they move into a liminal zone. The two subjects differ over norms and expectations. The role of differential identity, and how it relates to narrative, is to articulate the rift or difference of opinion over norms and expectations. An Indigenous public intellectual's use of a social drama narrative articulates that the colonial normative is not the only way things need to be. In doing so, they articulate the rift as part of the redressive process.

In the following chapter I will be examining the discourse of historical trauma or blood memory in the construction of contemporary Indigenous narratives. Something that interests me, and that is culturally significant for the communities represented, is that the social problems are not a pathological state that exists within the brain functions of a single individual. Youth suicide in any community effects the community as a whole. However, the social determinants that contribute to Indigenous youth suicide are intergenerational and affect the community as a whole. The suicides in this case should not be viewed as the isolated self-destruction of one person. The challenging question is what discourse or methodology is best representative of the problem of Indigenous youth suicide?





#### **Chapter Four: The Modern Windigo as De-Pathologizing Agent.**

In the previous three chapters I have worked to establish an ontological relationship between narratives and Self. Furthermore, I position both of these elements within a fluid relationship that is moving from earlier  $\alpha$  forms to contemporary  $\omega$  forms. In the previous chapter I used Turner's theory on social dramas to examine contemporary Indigenous narratives as a conflict between two subjects: the state and the Indigenous community represented by the author. Throughout I argue for a layered understanding of time on places with a specific focus on these negative events and how new discourse is focusing on healing actions. In this chapter I examine three disciplinary discourses on historical traumas in Indigenous communities. My focus will be on inter-genre discourse and how that can be used to benefit or circumscribe research depending on the critical perspective we take. This chapter looks at the works of Eduardo Duran, Bonnie Duran and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart alongside the works of three Indigenous public intellectuals: Steven Sanderson, Armand Garnett Ruffo and James Bartleman. I will also review the 2011 Coroner's report on the youth suicides in Pikangikum First Nation. Reviewing how each discipline discusses the history of social problems within Indigenous communities' discourses will reveal areas of potential cross-disciplinary cross-fertilization.

In an article on the role of dependency and colonization in the development of trauma in James Bay Cree communities, Marie-Anik Gagne suggests that the role of sociologists and anthropologists "is to consider trauma as dramatically changing the system of human relationships, which will, as a consequence, directly affect future generations" (Gagne 1998:357). Gagne's structural approach has a long history in the

Indigenous-focused anthropology traceable to Franz Boas and the Americanist Anthropological tradition that he developed (Darnell 2001). A. Irving Hallowell's work on acculturation provides an example of a psychologically focused Boasian scholarship considering the "dramatically changing" indigenous world (Hallowell 1955). In this chapter I seek to work with Gagne's reminder of the role of the anthropologist and consider three distinct but connected discourses on historical trauma in Indigenous communities by looking closely at selected narratives from each discourse.

The first is the historical trauma/soul wound discourse of Eduardo Duran, Bonnie Duran and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart which originates from their particular clinical readings and writings on Indigenous trauma and social issues. I examine their individual and collective work and trace its movement into the field of Indigenous literary scholarship. The second discourse is found in the productions of Indigenous public intellectuals. For this section I will introduce the three distinct works in three distinct genres, each of which deals with the ongoing effects of colonialism in the communities that they represent and that will form the basis of the final section of my dissertation. The third discourse is that of selected mainstream medical and mental health researchers. I use the term mainstream to simplify what is admittedly a complex heterogeneous field but what is also the dominant mode of discourse in Indigenous health. What I am interested in is how these three discourses speak to each other, even when they are not in direct communication. I will show how cross-disciplinary discourse can benefit from the participation of alternative discourses.

In his discourse on the origin of genres, Todorov discusses the role of perception in the construction of knowledge, writing that "the view point chosen by the observer

reconfigures and redefines his object” (Todorov 1990:16). One of Todorov’s objectives is to define the text as discourse. Traditionally, discourse is spoken. However, as Todorov argues, the text also has something to say and that saying is contained within an “enunciatory context” (Todorov 1990:16, 20-21). The enunciatory context is constrained by the terms of expression of the “class of text” wherein the codification of discursive properties takes place (Todorov 1990: 17-18). Put another way, the written text can be defined as discourse, however, that discourse is contained by certain standards of the genre; the constraints of the genre act as a defining measure for the object related by the subject. Therefore, any discussion of the construction of historical trauma discourse must pay attention to the individual genres wherein we encounter the construct. Additionally, as the discourse moves from context to context, the meaning contained within the text remains fluid. The effects of the fluidity of meaning are apparent when we enter into a discussion of the possibility of understanding the meaning of historical trauma in a discourse taking place across genres.

My first encounter with the construct of historical trauma was in Humanities/Social Science-based research into literature, rather than in the psychiatric or psychological realm. Metis academic Jo-Ann Episknew has made the concepts of “postcolonial traumatic stress disorder” and “postcolonial traumatic stress response” central to her work on the relationship between literature and healing (Episknew 2009). Episknew’s starting point is with Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran and their construct of “soul wounds.” Duran and Duran’s concept of the “soul wound” is based upon their reflection on Eduardo Duran’s work in central California where Duran noticed a domination of health discourses by topics of “injustice, the conquest, the dishonored

treaties” while conducting field research (Duran and Duran 1995:24). Based on Jungian analysis, Duran and Duran isolated the signifiers of injustice, conquest and dishonored treaties from their discourse setting and converted them into the symbolic form of the “soul wound.”

Mental images such as the soul wound reflect a psychoanalytic interest in symbolic interpretation over the event, or neurological-specific analysis found in other forms of psychiatry and psychology. Jung, particularly, supported a view that symbols needed to be connected closely with material reality as they linked the conscious and unconscious mind (Jung 1964). The Jungian influence in Duran and Duran is apparent in their statement that “the *terms soul, psyche, myth, dream, and culture* [are] part of the same continuum” and this continuum is where the soul wound originates (Duran and Duran 1995:24. Italics in original). Their argument is that the soul wound, as historical context rather than construct, needs to be understood by therapeutic services workers engaged with Indigenous peoples. Episknew’s interest in Duran and Duran leads her to literary sources of analysis: Metis writer and playwright Maria Campbell; post-modernist Anishinaabek Gerald Vizenor; and Kuna/Rappahannock playwright Monique Mojica (Episknew 2009:9). From this location, Episknew moves away from Duran and Duran’s Jungian clinical methods towards a trope-based understanding of the terms “postcolonial traumatic stress disorder” and “postcolonial traumatic stress response.”

Episknew’s work peeked my interest. I have been working with a similar concept called “blood memory” which has been commonly used by Indigenous authors and academics for some time now (Momaday 1976; Weaver 1997; Vizenor 1991; Allen 1992). However, this term is associated with a discourse on identity rather than with

clinical treatments of mental disorders. Jace Weaver states clearly that “there are, alas, no stories carried in the blood” (Weaver 1997:7). Citing the example of the Trail of Tears, the iconic traumatic event in the lives of Cherokee people, Weaver notes that its effect on Cherokee people is not “some genetic determinism.” Instead the Trail of Tears is important because “heritage and identity are passed down through story from generation to generation” (Weaver 1997:7). He supports this thesis with a quote from Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *Decolonising the Mind*: “culture does not just reflect the world in images but actually, through those very images, conditions a child to see the world in a certain way” (Ngugi 1986:17). In short, history and its intergenerational transmission is important. However, the key question that I want to address is whether or not the intergenerational transmission of a cultural identity via narratives can also be considered as an intergenerational transmission of trauma.

This leads to Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart and historical trauma. Her construct of historical trauma, which has become a cottage industry of sorts, has extensive similarities to blood memory. The significant difference between the two is that one is based in identity theory, the other in clinical practice. Originating from her dissertation at Smith College School of Social Work in 1995, historical trauma developed out of Brave Heart’s research into what she called “historical unresolved grief” among the Lakota (Brave Heart 1995:5). This concept was developed by Brave Heart to “indicate that Lakota unsettled bereavement is prominent, significant, and results from generations of devastating losses that have been disenfranchised through the prohibition of indigenous ceremonies as well as through the larger society’s denial of the magnitude of genocide against American Indians” (Brave Heart 1995:5). A significant aspect of

Brave Heart's historical unresolved grief is her term "historical trauma," "a term specifically developed by this investigator...and introduced in this study, is synonymous with cumulative trauma but emphasizes that the trauma is multi-generational and is not limited to life span" (1995:6). Cumulative trauma is defined as "collective and compounding emotional and psychic wounding over time, both over the life span and across generations" (1995:6).

I find my answer to the question of whether the intergenerational transmission of a cultural identity via narratives can also be considered as an intergenerational transmission of trauma in the narratives that construct our understanding of "trauma," specifically Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Interestingly, PTSD is influential in the work of Duran and Duran, Brave Heart and Episkenew (Duran and Duran 1995; Brave Heart 1995; Episkenew 2009). Duran and Duran attribute the origins of PTSD to an intergenerational legacy facing Jewish Holocaust survivors and their families (Duran and Duran 1995: 30-31). Creating parallel narratives between Jewish Holocaust experience and the experience of Indigenous people under colonialism, Duran and Duran write that "the level of abuse could have easily provided a workshop on technique even for the most sophisticated diabolical minds in Hitler's regime" (Duran and Duran 1995:31). It is a troubling narrative construct to make: while arguing for an Indigenous postcolonial psychology, they are drawing their examples from a European event. They use this example, partnered with the colonial effects on Indigenous communities, to suggest that if traumas are not resolved within the lifespan of the individual suffering, then they will pass those traumas onto their children (Duran and Duran 1995:31). Duran and Duran create a narrative of the processes of intergenerational PTSD with six stages,

drawn from the History of Indigenous peoples in the United States: first contact; economic competition; invasion war period; subjugation and reservation period; boarding school period; and forced relocation and termination period (Duran and Duran 1995:32-34).

PTSD makes an initial appearance in Brave Heart's 1995 dissertation in connection to trauma response (Brave Heart 1995:5). Citing Robert W. Robin, Barbara Chester and David Goldman, Brave Heart supports the notion that the "historical past and ongoing impact of oppression and racism" create a bond between historical trauma and PTSD as a response to that trauma (Brave Heart et al. 2011:284; Robin, Chest and Goldman 1996). In both cases PTSD is provided as a response to historically based, collective traumas. Interestingly, both Duran and Duran and Brave Heart et al. ignore calls for the inclusion of culturally specific analysis when dealing with multi-cultural settings while simultaneously arguing that their model reflects an Indigenous world (Gone and Kirmayer 2010). My analysis of the limitation of Duran and Duran and Brave Heart is that they circumscribe their work within a discourse of Pan-Indianism, while calling it culturally specific. And while Pan-Indianism has its place, it should always be accompanied by an understanding that it is also a construct arising from Indigenous-state relations from about the late 1960s onward.

Unlike Duran and Duran and Brave Heart, Episkenew is not a clinical psychologist or social worker; she teaches literature. She does not draw on PTSD from a clinical approach; instead she is drawn to a discursive stream which can be used to help in defining contemporary literary representations of Indigenous social problems and healing projects (Episkenew 2009). For her, I argue, historical trauma and PTSD share

similar attributes to blood memory in that they offer tropes for understanding narrative representations. To paraphrase Weaver, there is no history in the blood, it exists only in narrative. Historical trauma, as blood memory, is a narrative motif within the works of a significant number of Indigenous authors and playwrights (see the works of N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Tomson Highway, Thomas King, Lee Maracle, Joseph Boyden, Armand Garnett Ruffo, Sherman Alexie, and Daniel David Moses for examples). So why is PTSD problematic here? The answer to this question can be found in the history of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-III (DSM-III) and the construction of the diagnostic criteria for PTSD.

Literary scholar Wolfgang Iser has completed some interesting work on the relationship between the constructs of “fiction,” “real” and the “imaginary” that can provide some insight (Iser 1993). Iser’s essential argument is that the barriers between Truth, in an absolute scientific or historical sense, and Fiction, as a falsity, need to be rethought as borders between a triad of real, fictive and imaginary that can be crossed repeatedly (Iser 1993). The work of literary fiction can be positioned more clearly on the imaginary side of the border with the consideration that “a fiction devoid of any connection with known reality would be incomprehensible” (Iser 1993:1). Philosopher of medicine, Howard Brody added support for this position when he wrote “it is far too simple-minded to assume that the writer of literature presents to us a world of fantasy that never existed, whereas the author of a nonfictional pathography has some special insight into the world as it really exists,” where a pathography is a story of sickness encountered by medical professionals where both the patient and the illness share centre stage (Brody 2003:2, 3, 82). Similarly, the construction of the DSM diagnosis of PTSD in the DSM



III, while being scientific and bound for a destination on the “real” side of the border, it has profited from the reifying influence of psychiatric discourse and the “Truth” constructed from positivism (Young 1995). This discourse has blurred the many social and political influences that went into the construction of the definition as “objective knowledge” but now have become invisible (Gone and Kirmayer 2010, Young 1995). The DSM manuals, in their various forms, are authoritative texts in that they gain their power at a structural level of discourse (Bakhtin 2008). Bakhtin’s concept of “authoritative discourse” is a “privileged language that approaches us from without; it is distanced, taboo, and permits no play with its framing context. We recite it” (Bakhtin 2008:424). Episkenew’s mistake is the adoption of an authoritative discourse about PTSD across genres.

While Episkenew does focus on Post-Traumatic Stress Response (PTSR) as defined by Terry Mitchell and Dawn Maracle (2005), rather than PTSD, within the discourse of historical trauma PTSR merely re-confirms the historical collective aspects of the discourse. PTSD, by its nature, is a responsive condition (DSM-IV) where the conditions are a response to a trauma. Brave Heart also identifies PTSD as a “trauma response” (Brave Heart 1995: 5). Even if we consider that Mitchell and Maracle were attempting to remove the clinical application of the disorder from Indigenous people, Episkenew firmly re-instates it with her application of Duran and Duran. The adoption of clinical diagnosis has an additional side-effect, which Brave Heart clearly states, which is the denial of the existence of an Indigenous means of dealing with trauma (Brave Heart 1995:3). Drawing on Gone and Kirmayer, I suggest that this is not a question that can be approached at the Pan-Indian, macro level of discourse, as each Indigenous culture will

have its own social and cultural methods for defining and resolving trauma (Gone and Kirmayer 2010).

What follows is an investigation from the narrative side of trauma discourse. I have already stated and provided some examples of contemporary literary narratives that use trauma as a motif and their connection to the blood memory metaphor. My initial question is whether traumatic events are evident in traditional narratives of two groups of the Algonquian language family (Cree *ācaḏōhkīwina* and *ācimōwina* narratives and Anishinaabek *atisokanak* and *tabatcamowin* narratives). Evidence for the narrative continuance of identity is abundant in Indigenous studies discourses (see Momaday 1997 for a U.S. based example; Preston 2002 and Brightman 1973 for Canadian examples). My focus will remain on Cree and Anishinaabek examples because they share a similar narrative-based ontological worldview (Hallowell 1955, Preston 2002). If we can locate a traditional narrative-based means of dealing with trauma in these cultures, and we can trace it into contemporary narratives, then Brave Heart's concept of historical trauma does not apply and Duran and Duran's Jungian approach is inappropriate. My intention is not to discredit ceremonies such as the sweat lodge and the shaking tent, which have remained in active use in many communities (Brightman 1973; Preston 2002). Instead, I argue that these ceremonial forms cannot be separated from the narrative-based ontology of the Cree and Anishinaabek; the stories define the people and their actions.

Searching for what can be considered traumatic elements in the traditional narratives of these two cultures is not a difficult task. And while these outlines do an injustice to the stories, my goal is to highlight some of the more traumatic elements contained within them, by today's standards, rather than attempting to assume the role of

storyteller. The Rolling Head is a story where a young man witnesses the killing of his mother by his father who is in turn killed by the mother over her infidelity with spirit Beings. Her head then chases the boy and his younger brother for days attempting to kill them until the younger brother becomes a wolf and the older brother is saved by a man who intends on marrying him off to his daughter, then plans to kill him. The boy and his father-in-law then proceed to enter into a life and death battle where the boy is stranded on an island, swallowed by a sturgeon and almost frozen to death by the father-in-law. A second example is the narrative of the Hairy Hearts. In this story early humans are hunted by a larger, flesh-eating group of Beings (not windigo/witigo since the Hairy Hearts exist only in that form and are social Beings). The members of the human community are systematically eaten as “moose” by the Hairy Hearts, only being saved by the arrival of the Older Brother *Wīsaḥkīcāhk* or Nanabushu. In the battle with the Hairy Hearts, there is great bloodshed and the Hairy Hearts, young and old, are killed by the humans, ultimately, a very bloody story (see Brightman 1989 for examples of both Rolling Head and Hairy Hearts).

My final example, and the one that interests me most, is the windigo/witigo narratives. The Anishinaabek windigo and its Cree counterpart the witigo are cannibals who hunt in the boreal forests of the subarctic. They have one purpose: consumption. They are anti-social Beings with a heart of ice. Their existence is recorded as an atemporal Being who existed prior to humans and the Human-gone-windigo that exists to this day. A human turns windigo by consuming the flesh of another human; living, dead or in dream. These narrative prohibitions on cannibalism contain the traumatic events of near starvation, death and cannibalism in a variety of forms (Brightman 1989; Norman

1982). And while these stories are not directly about the traumatic events contained within them, the events are central to a narrative tradition that defines how Anishinaabek and Cree individuals are to act (Hallowell 1955, Preston 2002, Brightman 1973, Bird 2007, McLeod 2007). Additionally, the narratives were part and parcel with the healing powers of the *mitew* or shaman of the Cree and Anishinaabek (Bird 2007). The colloquial understanding is that the stories are “medicine.”

Cree poet, scholar and artist Neal McLeod provides a guide for how we can understand the narratives in an ongoing healing relationship with the people as “echoes” of past events (McLeod 2007). Omushkego Elder Louis Bird advises that the narratives are a powerful means of healing from contemporary traumas where their beliefs are “not based simply on personal reaction to fear and pain” (Gray in Bird 2007:xxi). In essence the traditional narratives are still being told as a means of understanding contemporary events and their effect on Indigenous people. Or put another way, as a means of dealing with traumatic events. Cruikshank’s work in the Southern Yukon provides an excellent example of this, specifically, her analysis of “Pete’s Song” (Cruikshank 1998). If we are to think about the narratives as positive actions then we should consider Mattingly and Garro’s statement that “as narratives are constructed, narratives construct” (Mattingly and Garro 2000:16). I caution that we need to consider that conceptions of trauma are culturally defined and may not cross over from Indigenous communities to the clinical setting (Gone and Kirmayer 2010, Waldram 2004). However, my understanding of the three narratives mentioned above is that the traumatic events within them are meant to be traumatic. The traumas are used to move the narratives in a negative direction during the breach and crisis phase of the narrative action (Turner 1974). I also note that this

interpretation is based on contemporary tellings of the narratives where the traumatic events are highlighted.

The traumatic motifs present in the traditional narratives have been adopted and adapted by contemporary Indigenous public intellectuals in order to deal with the traumatic events discussed in Duran and Duran, *Brave Heart* and many others in a narrative rather than clinical form. Thomas King and his radio work, “Dead Dog Café,” can be considered a public intellectual because King voices Indigenous discourses and directs them towards a mainstream audience; Tomson Highway and Daniel David Moses brought Indigenous issues and worldviews to an urban non-Indigenous audience with *Native Earth Performing Arts*; and Giller Award-winning Metis author Joseph Boyden brought the topics of drug abuse and windigo to a wider audience with his novels *Three Day Road* and *Through Black Spruce*. An additional qualification on the public intellectual is that whether or not they are looking to speak for a community, their voice has been adopted as the community’s voice. In an interview with Moses, he responded to the topic of being a public intellectual with “I don’t remember an election” (Moses 2011). However, the election to position is irrelevant, as Said points out. As soon as their work enters public discourse, they become public intellectuals (Said 1994) and their works are the representational access point for many non-Indigenous people across Canada, as noted above.

When we think about historical traumas in terms of narrative representation, it is useful to consider that we are not discussing the events in and of themselves. What we are discussing is a representation of the event, a symbol in discursive form. Part of my argument is that these symbols are currently being used by Indigenous public intellectuals

as part of an identity formation and cultural healing process that is taking place within many Indigenous communities. In a recent talk at The University of Western Ontario, Joseph Bartleman commented that of the approximately two thousand stories submitted by Indigenous youth for the James Bartleman Aboriginal Creative Writing Award, ninety percent made reference to events that could easily be considered traumatic. These references included alienation from the community, drug and alcohol abuse by parents and peers, violence and poverty (Bartleman 2012). These same symbols are also being used by Duran and Duran, in Jungian analysis, and by Brave Heart to construct historical trauma as a clinical discourse. Admittedly, I am not a fan of the use of psychoanalytic theory in the discourse of Indigenous peoples. I believe that the symbolic representations of Indigenous experience are too often centred in a non-Indigenous discourse, such as Duran and Duran's application of Jung. It is analogous, in part, to Greg Urban's concept of entextualization, where discourse is textualized and removed from its initial contextual setting. Once the text has been moved to a new context, a repeatable action, the connotational meanings of the symbolic representations from the original context are lost (Urban 1996:42). It is a similar problem that is present in the inter-genre discourse taking place in Episkenew's work.

However, there is some value in a concept of historical trauma. I believe that it is to be found in literary representations rather than in a clinical setting. Ruffo argues that his application of PTSD is combined with traditional oral sources "to tackle contemporary issues and create provocative theatre (as well as other forms of cultural expression)" as a community healing project (Ruffo 2005:178). Spokane Poet Gloria Bird argues that the benefits to be found in combining traditional narratives in an ongoing

healing process which will deal with historical traumas is found in the ability of the narratives to weaken “the burden of inherited shame, loss, dispossession, and disconnectedness.” For Bird writing extends beyond catharsis, as argued by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, and becomes liberating and political (Bird 1998:30). I am drawn to Gilles Deleuze’s application of the philosophical concept of the simulacra as a possible response to this, where the power of discourse takes on a truly transformative power (Deleuze 1983). The clinical approach to historical trauma has its origins in and around 1995 when Brave Heart was finishing her dissertation and Duran and Duran were publishing *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*. At the same time authors such as Bird, Highway, Moses, Simon Ortiz and many others were maintaining the discourses of blood memory away from the clinical setting, locating it in narratives drawn from their own communities. Currently, it would seem that the two discourses are reaching across genres in a manner that could cause hermeneutical problems.

The following three short reviews provide narrative examples of how historical trauma is being used away from the clinical setting. What I want to show is how historical trauma is being converted into a metaphorical representation that has its roots in a traditional narrative rather than in Brave Heart. The concept of the Modern Windigo can be traced to Anishinaabe writer Basil Johnston in his work *The Manitous: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway*. In it, Johnston suggests that the Windigo is still active as an Other-Than-Human-Being, still the Being and the action consuming the Anishinaabek (Johnston 1999:235). Rather than hunting in winter in boreal forests, the Modern Windigo hunts with the tools of colonialism and capitalism. The new victim of the Modern Windigo is isolated as before, but this time the narratives of historical trauma are

central to the isolation. The conversion of Windigo into the Modern Windigo is not without its cross-genre, hermeneutic problems. When discussing the move we must consider the problem of interpreting a traditional symbol away from its original context. John Miles Foley presents a similar problem in his discussion of how to interpret traditional spoken works in the context of contemporary written versions, such as the *Iliad* and *Beowulf* (Foley 1992).

What is interesting about a narrative approach is how the public intellectuals are using their understanding of their individual and their community's experiences to define themselves and their community, and how that definition is given voice in their work. In essence, they are attempting to connect the traditional narratives with a contemporary setting, re-inscribing a connotational value on the symbols of the narratives as a means of breaking down the meta-narratives of "indian." In maintaining a theoretical connection with Deleuze, I adopt the theory of becoming from his work with Felix Guattari (Deleuze and Guattari 2007). This theory works very well with anthropological approaches to culture that are focused on process rather than fixedness. In short, we are all in a process of becoming something. Deleuze and Guattari argue that we are in a process of becoming minor to a representational major which establishes a normative mode of seeing the world. To be major is to be the white, male, heterosexual, while paradoxically, the white male heterosexual is also minor to its major. Using series and structures borrowed from natural science, Deleuze and Guattari argue that we exist in an epistemological world of relations and hierarchies (Deleuze and Guattari 2007:234-235). Under these series and structures the major is to the white male what the while male is to the "indian," where the "indian" is a frozen representation of otherness. In *Becoming-*



minoritarian, and I am using Becoming-Anishinaabek to define this process, the public intellectual works to voice an Indigenous epistemology. Historical traumas then become a tool in the process of Becoming-healing, where all of the works presenting social issues facing the communities are collective and intergenerational. These issues can be classed either in terms of blood memory or as historical trauma, depending on how we construct the object of our analysis.

I would like to provide a warning that I believe should accompany my discussion of blood memory. This concept should be understood metaphorically and as being inherited from culturally situated narratives. The possible denotative value of “blood” as representing something genetic should be avoided. Blood memory is not genetic memory as outlined in the field of psychology and is not akin to instinct. Additionally, it should not include an application of Jung’s “collective unconscious” as a function of the psyche. Instead, I continue to work with blood memory as defined by Weaver.

The first example of this process that I wish to review is a comic book which originated with the Health Aboriginal Network in British Columbia. The network is using comics such as *Darkness Calls* by Steve Kaweetin Sanderson to create discussion and awareness of social issues facing Indigenous youth. *Darkness Calls* uses the story of the Witigo from Sanderson’s Cree narrative traditions to examine youth suicide. In the narrative, Kyle, the young boy facing suicide, is hunted by a Witigo in the woods around his community. The Witigo is using Kyle’s sadness, driven by the circumscriptive narratives that tell Kyle of his meaningless future, to isolate and consume him. *Darkness Calls* is similar in structure to the Weasel and Witigo narratives of the Cree (Brightman 2007). In these stories it is Weasel who kills the powerful Witigo when *Wīsahkīcāhk*

seems to be facing certain death. In Sanderson's telling Kyle takes on the Weasel role, represented by his perceived powerlessness, while his "grandfather" takes *Wīsahkīcāhk* roles. Kyle's grandfather fulfills two distinct roles in Cree culture: he is Kyle's mother's father's brother and therefore a grandfather in an extended kinship structure; and, he is an Other-Than-Human-Being who is alive in the Witigo narrative that Kyle imagines, moving through multiple forms of consciousness with Kyle in an ongoing relationship between the Cree and their Other-Than-Human Being relations.

In *Darkness Calls*, Sanderson uses the Witigo as a means of understanding and coming to terms with the topic of youth suicide. Rather than relying on a clinical report, Sanderson creates a narrative that speaks from his community of James Smith Cree Nation in Northern Saskatchewan. The legacy of colonialism facing Kyle and his peers is not pathologized. Instead it is mediated in terms that Sanderson's own community will be familiar with. Sanderson represents lack of community control of education, internalized community violence and addiction issues as the hunting tools of the Witigo. Rather than focusing on an abstract concept of a shared history of trauma, *Darkness Calls* brings the causes of Kyle's problems into the community in a very real form. Healing for Kyle and his community takes place when Kyle realizes that there is a Cree way of dealing with the social problems within his community. The Cree call this approach *nēhiyâwiwin* (Cree-ness) where the knowledge is "held in words and actions" in the face of colonial, acculturating forces (McLeod 2007:13).

The second narrative is a film by Anishinaabe poet and filmmaker Armand Garnet Ruffo. *A Windigo Tale* is an adaptation of Ruffo's play of the same name told as a narrated event of a narrative event (Bauman 1986). *A Windigo Tale* tells an

intergenerational story of the long-term effects of residential school on one family and its community. The narrated event is told to Curtis by Uncle Harold as they work through some of Curtis' social problems, including gang membership and criminal activity.

Uncle Harold narrates the events of the reunion of Lily with her mother, Doris, after the death of Lily's abusive step-father. The step-father, "a good Catholic," is the windigo in the film. His past includes violence against Doris and sexual and physical abuse of Lily, who was adopted out of the community as a result. Lily was fathered by a priest while Doris was in a residential school. Ruffo's film demonstrates his intention to heal through the adaptation of traditional narratives by situating the narrative of Lily and Doris within the narrative of Curtis and Uncle Harold and framing them all within a windigo narrative. Doris and Lily battle the power of the windigo together in an effort to free themselves from their history. In the end they are able to overpower the windigo using Anishinaabek means, rather than the Catholic values Doris adopted at residential school. The isolation of the two women comes to an end with the death of the windigo.

The third example comes from the novel *As Long as the Rivers Flow* by James Bartleman. Bartleman has created a composite world and history of Cree and Anishinaabek people from Northern Ontario in this text. The Windigo appears in dreams and stories where Bartleman makes a metaphoric connection to abusive residential school workers and colonial government policy. The story follows Martha and her family in a narrative that traces the effects of residential school and the Sixties Scoop on her, her mother and her children and community. Bartleman's work contains a considerable ethnographic quality derived from his travels into the communities that he writes about. Based on the ethnographic elements of his work, he has created a narrative world that is

part fictional and part personal testimony. The ethnographic components of the novel were researched by Bartleman as part of the writing process because he is not a northern Anishinaabe; Bartleman grew up in the Muskoka area of Southern Ontario. With *As Long as the Rivers Flow*, Bartleman has narrated both the intergenerational damage and healing potential contained in the history of the community.

The history of treaties, residential school, community re-alignment in the 1950s and the sixties scoop all serve as metaphors of movement away from an Indigenous Self. This in turn leads to isolation of the individual, dependency on alcohol and drugs, internalized violence and general community break-down. Bartleman's narrative parallels the work of A. Irving Hallowell, who identified acculturation stresses with increasing social problems among Anishinaabek people in the 1930s and 1940s (Hallowell 1955). The intergenerational healing in this work starts with Martha and her connection with the Indigenous Self that the residential school alienated her from. The final healing for the community begins with a healing circle in which the abusive priest is brought back to the community to be confronted by his victims.

In short, these three examples present the following conditions of possibility for social breakdown within the communities represented: isolation of the individual; damaged or circumscribed future prospects; intergenerational, systemic sexual and/or physical violence and abuse; drug and alcohol abuse; residential school experience and other colonial interference with the autonomy of the community; and, a loss of parenting skills as a results of historical experiences imposed on the community. A historical trauma approach in the style of *Brave Heart* would link all of these conditions to the unresolved trauma and grief of the colonial history of Indigenous people (*Brave Heart*

1995:3). However, I argue that the use of the Modern Windigo by public intellectuals is a community-based method for dealing with the trauma and grief of historical events with narrative means. A connection worth noting between this approach and Episkenew's is that she bases some of her healing theory on work of Daniel P. McAdams, who in turn calls for the use of narrative therapy. Episkenew's opinion is that the community needs to work with its narratives in order to heal. I disagree with a need to pathologize history as it reframes historical trauma in a manner that circumscribes its meaning within a clinical setting. However, given the narrative ontology of Anishinaabek and Cree peoples, community-based narratives do offer a great deal of potential in the healing process.

This difference can be highlighted with an examination of the five case studies from Dr. Bert Lauwers' *Death Review of the Youth Suicides at the Pikangikum First Nation, 2006-2008*. I focus on suicide because it is connected with the effects of the history, therefore historical trauma, of Indigenous peoples. Pikangikum First Nation is located approximately 100km North of Red Lake, Ontario, in the Northwest part of the province. It is a fly-in or winter road access only community. The current population for the community is around 2400 people. Pikangikum was identified by Hallowell in his mid-twentieth century fieldwork as a generally traditional, self-sufficient community, affected only to a minor extent by the colonialism and acculturation (Hallowell 1955, Brown and Gray 2009). The Reserve was surveyed in 1888 but retained a traditional lifestyle well into the twentieth century. Hallowell referred to Pikangikum as "the living past in the Canadian Wilderness," which may have been a slightly romanticized view of the community (Berens 2009:26). Victor Lytwyn's work on the fur trade from 1760-

1821 shows just how much contact there actually was between Pikangikum and European traders (Lytwyn 1986). The calibrating factor between Hallowell and Lauwers is perhaps autonomy, rather than a version of an Arcadian purity.

The Pikangikum of today is perhaps not a site that Hallowell would recognize. The community of 2400 experienced 4700 calls for service to the police in 2009 with approximately 3000 lock-ups that year (Lauwers 2011:17). Lack of housing and overcrowding has led the Children's Aid Society (CAS) to care for many of the 200 open case files outside of the community and, as of the time of the Lauwers report, the local school, which burned down in 2007, has not been rebuilt (Lauwers 2011:16,18). Overall, the social issues that Hallowell reported as absent in 1955 are rampant today.

Lauwers reviewed sixteen suicides in Pikangikum. Unusual for youth suicides was that the cases were split evenly between males and females, rather than the expected high male incidence rates and all of the deaths were due to hanging, a means with a very high lethality (Lauwers 2011:33-34). This suggests, in my understanding of youth suicides, that all these attempts were meant to be final and deadly, rather than "cries for help." The first case study is "Vanessa," a 16-year-old girl who was found hanging by a shoelace in her bedroom (Lauwers 2011:26). Lauwers' report summarizes her case as follows: alcoholism in the parents; abandonment, neglect and lack of supervision of the children by the parents while the parents were drinking; domestic violence, previous suicide attempts; and, death of two siblings, one in an unsafe sleeping environment, the other by suicide. Vanessa's mother has also attempted suicide (Lauwers 2011:27). Vanessa was attending school at the time of her death but displayed signs of problem drinking, having been arrested twice and placed in jail, once on alcohol related charges

and once for throwing a hockey stick at a peacekeeper vehicle (Lauwers 2011:26).

Vanessa had a history of being abused by peers and had participated in a group assaults on other youth. At the time of Vanessa's suicide, both of her parents were sober and CAS had deemed the home to be in good order (Lauwers 2011:27).

The second case is "Janice," a 16-year-old who was found hanging in her grandparents' house. Janice had been drinking prior to her death and smelled like gasoline when she was found (Lauwers 2011:28). Janice's family life was challenging: she was one of ten children, mostly in the care of the grandparents and CAS. She had self-inflicted burns and a history of public intoxication due to gasoline sniffing from the time she was 10 years old. Janice was removed from the community for foster care but returned under a Customary Care Agreement in 2004 (Lauwers 2011:28). She had previous suicide attempts, starting at age 12 and was not attending school. Janice had a history of being a victim of and causing physical violence among her peer group. In 2007, at age 15, Janice lost a pregnancy and spent additional time away from the community. Her suicide happened two weeks prior to her court date for assaulting her boyfriend (Lauwers 2011:29).

The third case is unusual given the age of the suicide. "John" was 12 years, 5 months when he hanged himself near the grave of his mother, who had died less than twelve months prior (Lauwers 2011:29). The second paragraph of this case study is interesting, and worth reviewing in its complete form: "John's mother had abstained from alcohol during her pregnancy with him. He was born full term, but was thought to have suffered from congenital toxoplasmosis. He suffered global developmental delay, he was hearing impaired and speech delayed. He was not toilet-trained at 5 years of age, and his

primary language was Ojibwa” (Lauwers 2011:30). The final sentence of this paragraph is interesting in its positioning. Lauwers may have been making reference to “John’s” lack of ability to communicate with medical professionals, which highlights the need for additional cultural and language training for medical professionals working within Indigenous communities. Or, less charitably, is Lauwers connecting John’s suicide to his Ojibwa heritage in the same manner that Cooper attached windigo psychosis to Cree heritage and alcoholism has been attached to Indigenous heritage (Waldram 2003:134-135)? That aside, John’s parents were alcoholics and he was a solvent abuser who had spent time in jail for public intoxication from gas sniffing (Lauwers 2011:30). John was described as suffering from neglect and emotional abandonment due to his parents’ drinking and was suffering from hallucinations about his mother prior to his death (Lauwers 2011:30).

Case study four focuses on “Donald,” a 15-year-old who hanged himself in his parents’ home (Lauwers 2011:30). Donald was a solvent abuser with a history of self-mutilation. He is suspected of being intoxicated by gasoline sniffing at the time of his death (Lauwers 2011:30). The report identifies the following conditions in Donald’s life: domestic violence at home; suicide attempt by his mother; lack of parental supervision; and truancy from school. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder was also suspected (Lauwers 2011:31). Similar to the case of John, Lauwers identifies Donald’s only speaking Ojibwa, defining him as “non-communicative” (Lauwers 2011:31). Donald is also described as “a youth who was lost with no supports” (Lauwers 2011:31).

The final of the five cases is “Margaret,” who was 18 years old when she was found hanging behind her parent’s home (Lauwers 2011:31). Margaret was a sniffer who



suffered from depression and suicidal ideation. She had made at least four suicide attempts prior to the successful attempt. Each time she had been sniffing prior to the attempt (Lauwers 2011:31). Margaret had had one sibling and one close friend die by suicide and had spent time living out of the community to deal with her substance abuse and suicidal ideation (Lauwers 2011:32). Like the others, Margaret was both a victim and perpetrator of violence and was a victim of sexual assault. Lauwers' summary of Margaret includes: "Margaret's life demonstrated a theme of feeling unloved and unwanted. She was a victim of both physical and sexual assault...she abused solvents...she had an undiagnosed mental illness, in which she suffered with auditory hallucinations" (Lauwers 2011:32).

While Lauwers' twenty-four emerging themes are beyond the scope of this paper, the following themes can be partnered with the three narrative examples that I have listed above: the children were heavily involved in substance abuse, including sniffing and alcohol abuse; sniffers constitute a subculture within the community; family members were involved in substance abuse; family histories of suicides, either siblings or parents; physical and emotional abandonment, neglect and lack of supervision, often related to parents' substance abuse; domestic violence; physical and sexual abuse; some were physical abusers; multiple arrests related to solvent use and physical assaults; auditory and visual hallucinations; and, extensive involvement of CAS in the lives of the youth (Lauwers 2011:32-33). And so, after a long diversion, I return to my earlier discussion on the possibility of discourse taking place between genres, this conversation being between a coroner's report and artistic narratives which draw on traditional symbols.

This is where a review of cultural literature can be of use to mental health researchers. Expanding on the role of the simulacra, or simulations, in the creation of “Truth,” these cultural narratives can provide a clue into the worldview and concepts of social issues held by the community. According to Deleuze, a simulacra can take two forms. The first is the transformative power of the false to create negative representations (Deleuze 1983:48-49). This can be explained as the many negative stereotypes that Indigenous youth face each and every day that originate outside of their community. The second form, and the one that is most useful here, is the positive power of transformation. Chandler and Lalonde have identified “cultural continuance” as a strong marker of a healthy community (Chandler and Lalonde 2009). The works of the Indigenous public intellectuals guide the positive simulation of a contemporary Indigenous identity towards a re-stated representation and cultural continuance.

The public intellectual often returns complexity to a discourse that has been simplified to fit clinical models such as Brave Heart’s or positivist models common in the DSM-III. The issues that the public intellectuals deal with in the works mentioned above share the same general themes as those outlined by Lauwers in the Pikangikum Coroner’s report. The value lies in bringing the two discursive forms side by side, rather than merging them into one. It is the act of looking for that sliver of the everyday that appears in fiction that Iser is looking for. The overall effect is what we might call a cumulative effect where “new objects take shape through a confrontation between individual brains and the world” (Urban 2001:271). In terms of traumatic events, a study based in the medical sciences might approach the history of these events in terms of Thomas Joiner’s theories on suicide and the ability of the individual to enact lethal self-injury. Joiner

argues that the individual events become cumulative over time resulting in an “accrual of fearlessness and competence” needed to commit the lethal act (Joiner 2005: 63-64). On the other hand, a narrative approach represents a collective community with a collective history of events. Within any collective representation of the community there will almost always be an intergenerational aspect. As the community adopts the narratives of the events into themselves the trauma of the whole becomes represented in the individual as part of the whole. Anthropologist Regna Darnell uses the concept of embodied experience (with reference to residential school trauma) to discuss the transmission of knowledge and experience within oral traditions (Darnell 2012). Essentially, embodiment allows for direct transmission of experience, and all of the tangible aspects of it, including feelings and knowledge, from one person to another, and across generations. In oral traditions such as Cree and Anishinaabek ones, the embodiment of experiences connects relations across the generations, seven generations in either direction. So the current generation experiences what their grandparents and their grandparents encountered and will pass the communities histories, as lived experiences, on to future generations via narratives.

Now comes that all important question: so what? What can I say about public intellectuals and their works that will be meaningful to an audience interested in suicide and mental health research? The first response would be along the lines of ethnographic representation. Works such as those mentioned above provide a glimpse into an Indigenous world from the perspective of members of the community. They can provide narrative support for ethnographic texts written by anthropologists from outside of the community. They can also provide insight into potential alternative worldviews without

a clinical researcher having to add long-term field study to their research when partnered with the ethnographic work. Consider, for example, the topics of dreams and the hallucinations mentioned by Lauwers. We can consider dreams in terms of brain function, REM sleep and serotonin levels. We can consider them in terms of Jungian or Freudian analysis. Or we can consider where dreams fit into an Anishinaabek worldview. It seems that dreams, or at least nightmares, may provide important information on suicides (Tanskanen et al 2001; Joiner 2005). If we think of them in terms of serotonin levels we might say something along the lines of disturbed sleep due to a reduction in the synthesis of serotonin can lead to depressed individuals, who suffer nightmares and are susceptible to suicide ideation (Joiner 2005:181).

However, an Anishinaabek person, particularly one who maintains a traditional worldview, will view the dream not as a brain function while sleeping but as an alternative form of consciousness. The dream world for Algonquian peoples, including Anishinaabek and Cree individuals, is as real an experience as the waking world (Hallowell 1955, McLeod 2007, Bird 2007, Preston 2002). How can we reconcile a worldview that says that an attack by a windigo in a dream is as real as if you met it in the boreal forest in winter? While it is beyond the scope of this paper, the Lauwers Report mentions that several of the suicides were experiencing hallucinations of dead friends and relatives prior to hanging themselves. Is that a case of mental illness or Spirit Beings? Who decides? Preston recounts Cree Elder John Blackned's narrative example of an elderly Cree man who was abandoned by his family during times of scarcity only to be aided by his *Mistabeo*, or Spirit-Helpers (Preston 2002:175-182). Is that hallucinating? An acculturated Cree might agree with Lauwers, while a traditional Cree would disagree.

Taking this further, what if stories are more than stories? Anishinaabek and Cree people connect narratives to the Self and community at an ontological level that is not usually present in Western discourse (McLeod 2007, Bird 2007, Hallowell 1955). If we think about historical trauma as representation of events under a Jungian framework we will come up with a different answer, as Duran and Duran have, than someone who uses a more culturally attuned approach within these two communities. However, this will only work on a local level. Pan-Indian analysis with local cultural tools is dangerous.

Treating a Dene person with Cree approaches could be considered as insulting. They are after all traditional enemies in some parts of Canada.

Where I see a benefit in approaches like historical trauma, although I still prefer blood memory as my metaphor of choice, is in preparing the way for inter-genre discourse. Medical science, narrative theory, political theory and Indigenous worldviews, when brought together, provide an opportunity to leave a trace of one on the others. However, we must be aware that this is only a trace that hints towards a tool for consideration. Literary fiction will never claim to provide empirical evidence. It will, to recall James Joyce, provide a nicely polished looking glass that can reflect the world to those living in it, and in a cross-cultural field that looking glass can be very helpful. However, historical trauma is not useful is when it is approached with Western tools as an Indigenous discourse and then transferred to a Pan-Indian answer. The approaches of Duran and Duran and Brave Heart are best left in the Jungian or Psychoanalytic discourse. Where the benefit lies is in looking for alternative means of approaching the histories of traumas experienced in Indigenous communities via narratives originating from the communities.

In the following three chapters I complete a closer reading of the three primary focus narratives of this dissertation: *A Windigo Tale*, *Darkness Calls*, and *As Long as the Rivers Flow*. Of particular interest to me is how Ruffo, Sanderson and Bartleman, respectively, constructed their narratives out of the historical events that make up the histories of their communities; traditional windigo narratives; and, contemporary events in their communities to react to intergenerational traumatic events and their effects on the community. I begin by focusing on the intergenerational aspects of *A Windigo Tale* before examining the relationship between circumscriptive narratives and youth suicide in *Darkness Calls*. Finally, I conduct a close reading of the narrative patterning of Lauwers' Pikangikum report and Bartleman's novel by paying attention to the construction of social determinant of health narratives.

### **Chapter Five: Intergenerational Trauma in *A Windigo Tale*.**

I now address the intergenerational effects of residential school experience and what has come to be called “Residential School Syndrome”. My question deals not with the existence of the syndrome, but rather what cultural factors allow it to move from one generation, who experienced residential schools directly, to later generations who did not. In order to investigate this I use Armand Garnet Ruffo’s film *A Windigo Tale* as a position from which to think. One aspect of this topic that interests me is dealing with the question of metaphorical language in a cultural setting that has been previously identified as non-metaphorical (Preston 2005:216). I want to juxtapose a quote from the Assembly of First Nations report on the stories of residential schools: “truth is built and rebuilt over time through the stories we tell, individually and together in community, about our experiences of a particular event such as residential school. As individuals, families and communities, it is the meaning, the interpretations or understandings found in our stories which determines, at least to a certain point, the impact of that experience on our lives” (AFN 1994:5). To do this I will also incorporate the theories of Deleuze and Guattari on the process of Becoming in relation to the state of Being that I discussed in the opening of my dissertation and used briefly in the previous chapter.

My lens for this analysis is the Modern Windigo. In Anishinaabek tradition any person has the potential of “going windigo” and all windigo were once considered to be human. Also called famine or starvation windigo it is a condition that is usually brought on by a lack of game animals for food. The person who goes windigo will either eat a dead companion or kill and eat someone. Once the human flesh is consumed, the person begins their transformation into the windigo. This Being can only be killed by destroying

its heart of ice and then the burning of its body on a fire. In almost all of the narratives that I have encountered powerful conjuring is required to defeat the windigo. In several versions of windigo narratives, the body of the windigo proves to be very difficult to burn, often putting out the fire. It is believed that if the whole body is not destroyed then the windigo will return. The windigo is at its most powerful in times of famine and starvation, when the things needed to survive are scarce (Norman 1982:3). The Modern Windigo, as a conspirator in cultural destruction and starvation, appears along with cultural destruction and feeds on the damaged community.

The film *A Windigo Tale* was shot on the Six Nations Reserve in Southwestern Ontario and has its origins in Ruffo's award-winning play of the same name. It deals with the after-effects of residential school on the relationship between Doris Dokis and her daughter Lily Dokis; set in what Richard Bauman would call a narrative event of a narrated event (Bauman 1986) or what Bakhtin would call a setting of the appropriation of "the speech of others" (Bakhtin 1981:337). The film narrative is set up in such a way that the windigo tale within it becomes a tool for Uncle Harold and Curtis and the movie's audience to think with. Ruffo uses the cautionary tale of cultural/sexual cannibalism to discuss the long-term, intergenerational effects of residential school. The Dokis windigo storytelling event travels from "the city" to "home" with Uncle Harold and his younger relation. While living in the city, Curtis has become involved with a gang. Curtis had been sent to live with Lily after the death of his parent in a snowmobile accident. In the ensuing return trip, Uncle Harold proceeds to tell Curtis the story of the events that took place after the death of Lily's adopted father. He begins teaching Curtis with a story, in an effort to heal the damage done by the gang and the city.



The narrated event tells the story of Lily's reunion with her mother Doris after Lily had been sent south as a child under the advice of Dr. Neville Shannon. Lily was conceived in the local residential school as a product of rape by one of the priests. Dr. Shannon had been providing the priests with abortions of babies of this type for some time. However, in Doris' case he did not conduct the abortion because "she was so beautiful." Instead Dr. Shannon found a Catholic man to marry Doris and adopt Lily. Unfortunately, the man turned out to be a sexual predator, just like the priest who assaulted Doris. This time the victim was Lily. In the meantime Doris has adopted Catholicism as her means of dealing with the trauma of her residential school experience, turning her back on her Anishinaabek culture.

The narrated event begins with the death of Lily's father. An accident at the funeral reveals that Doris has had him buried naked because she has been burning his cloths in fear that he had gone windigo. Upon returning home Doris discovers that a small fire has not burnt the clothing of her husband. Aunt Evelyn, a practitioner of Anishinaabek traditions, had suggested that Doris burn all his clothing, except one suit, in case he returned. Evelyn understood the need for conjuring to defeat the husband who had gone-windigo. Beside the fire Doris also finds a set of very large footprints. The footprints offer a slight amount of ambiguity. They resemble large bear- like tracks. Throughout the movie Bear is maintained in its traditional protective role, with Doris calling for *Makwa* to help her in one of the more emotional scenes of the film. One possibility is that the bear has come to watch over Doris. Ruffo envisioned having a bear protector visit Doris in both her waking and dreaming reality in order to warn her of the

windigo (Ruffo 2005:177). A second possibility is that the tracks belong to the windigo who is hunting his prey and returning to the source of his power.

Through the intervention of Aunt Evelyn, Lily is invited to return to the community. Although Lily is initially introduced in the opening scene in her art gallery opening, setting up the travels of Uncle Harold and Curtis, she is re-introduced in the narrated event along with her white partner, David. In this scene Ruffo also introduces Curtis' father, Joey, as an old playmate of Lily's. In terms of narrative, Ruffo has set in place several possible conflict situations. Lily and her mother clearly have a poor relationship. Lily and David's relationship is tested by Lily's emotional problems and by her relationship with Doris. David seems out of place in the community and hostile towards Joey. And, in a character later introduced as the alcoholic town doctor, Dr. Neville Shannon, seems to be at odds with everyone except Doris, who he tries to control for his own ends.

What I am after, and what will help me make more sense of what is going on in *A Windigo Tale*, is an understanding of how the conversion of Doris' experiences into a story transfer not only the story but also the experience to Lily. How is it that Doris' lived experience becomes Lily's or how is Lily becoming Doris? How can David become the windigo/husband? I suggest that the first requirement for this to happen is to transfer these storied events from an epistemological realm into an ontological one. To do this, I generalize the common narrative practice of using stories as a tool to think with by transferring the experience of one generation to the next with an appropriate story. The stories of Doris are not just part of the knowledge of her community's vernacular epistemology that Lily is to learn from. Instead we may assume that they are the

community, the history, the make-up of the identity of the Anishinaabek community. Becoming-Anishinaabek is a process of healing requiring the becoming-story of past experience. The experiences of residential school did not happen to Doris alone; they happened to the Anishinaabek and other Indigenous peoples. Cree scholar and poet Neal McLeod makes reference to collective memory in *Cree Narrative Memory* as “the echo of old stories that links grandparents with their grandchildren. In Cree tradition, collective narrative memory is what puts our singular lives into a larger context. Old voices echo; the ancient poetic memory of our ancestors finds home in our individual lives and allows us to reshape our experiences so that we can interpret the world we find ourselves in” (McLeod 2007:11).

I like McLeod’s use of the echo. He explains that he would like to continue to gather stories “so that the echoes of my ancestors will find some embodiment in the present” (McLeod 2007:11). *Cree Narrative Memory* is largely McLeod reflecting on how the stories of his family history are still present in him. It is an intergenerational transference of the experience of *nêhiyawîwin* (Cree-ness). While I do not want to equate being Cree with being Anishinaabek I acknowledge that the similarities in their ontological perspective and narrative traditions make comparisons appropriate. If McLeod’s “echo” is applicable in a positive light, it should also be available as a mechanism for the transfer of experiences such as those of residential school. The synergy of the experience and the story works to resolve the trauma. It is a process of the experience becoming-story and the story becoming-healing. It is also notable that people like Ruffo are using the echoes as a means of re-framing historical experiences, allowing them to be integrated into their conception of Self in a contemporary setting.

Next, we must also assume that the history of the people is not a collection of stories, as representations, but rather it is a collection of lived experiences that can be and are transferred from one generation to the next as stories. Just as the Other-than-Human Beings are ontologically present within the *tabatcamowin* and *atisokanak* narratives of the Anishinaabek or the *ācaḏōhkīwina* and *ācimōwina* narratives of the Cree, we can also view the experiences of other relations as ontologically present among the Anishinaabek through their history. McLeod refers to this as “spiritual history” where “the notion of ‘spiritual history’ simply urges us to try to engage the narratives through the lens of those who originally experienced it” (McLeod 2007:17). An understanding of ontologically based metaphors extends beyond the consciousness of the here and now which dominates Western conceptions of ontology. As has been discussed in a number of other works, cultures such as the Anishinaabek and Cree do not limit their understanding of themselves to the waking world. Their ontology is based on a multiple-leveled consciousness, where the experiences in stories and dreams are as real as the experiences of the waking day.

Let me rephrase this in terms of Ruffo and his expected audience. Ruffo’s audience for this film is the Anishinaabek and other Indigenous people who have experienced and continue to experience the effects of residential school. Ruffo’s understanding of “experience” is not that his audience went to residential school themselves. Rather it is experience gleaned from living under the penumbra of residential school. It is an experience that comes from living the stories as those who experienced them that extends beyond a concept of empathy and allows for the transfer of the physical/psychological hurt from one generation to the next. The process is non-

metaphorical, instead it is an embodiment, from the standpoint of the individual, of the history of the event in the fabric of the Becoming-Anishinaabek.

In the windigo narratives collected by Howard Norman among Omushkego, the windigo never seems to move into a village and destroy it. Instead it hunts with isolation, fear and confusion. Conflict within the hunted community is the hunting tool of the windigo. Often an individual can be the victim of conjuring by another person who sends the windigo after them. This windigo carries with it a feeling of dread and hopelessness. In the movie version of *A Windigo Tale*, Lily is certainly feeling these effects. As the story develops we discover that Lily may be the one whom the windigo is returning to prey upon. As his victim, as a human, it is her “flesh” that the windigo now needs. When he returns he will only have an interest in Lily, which Ruffo expresses with the line “I’m starving.”

Eventually the story reaches its climax when David puts on the father’s suit in order to help Lily deal with her anger and sadness. In doing so, David becomes the father/windigo and is overcome by the power of the windigo. By adopting the power of the Bear, Doris is able to overpower David/windigo while he attacks Lily and strip him of his clothing, and thus his power, and burn what remains. With this the windigo is destroyed and Lily and Doris can move on together in their relationship as mother and daughter. Lily and David are also re-confirmed as partners after the ordeal they have gone through together. *A Windigo Tale* ends with Uncle Harold and Curtis in a new relationship with each other. Uncle Harold gives Curtis Aunt Evelyn’s tobacco pouch as a replacement for the emblems of his gang. The acceptance of the pouch is Curtis’ acceptance of the healing of the stories. The story is the process revealed as becoming-

family, becoming-lovers, becoming-healed, and becoming-healer. I parallel the process of becoming-healer with the public intellectual's role in the redressive action in a social drama.

Ruffo's decision to use the windigo in his narrative is to heal. His goal with *A Windigo Tale* is to "address the intergenerational impact of the Residential School" with a secondary question of "if the way forward to the Native voice indeed required a gaze backward to traditional narratives, what did the narratives themselves tell us?" (Ruffo 2005:170-171). Ruffo's approach is, in part, guided by "The Committee to Re-Establish the Trickster," set up and named by Daniel David Moses and including Tomson Highway and Lenore Keeshig-Tobias (Fee 2010:60). This group of Indigenous writers was mainly interested in expanding opportunities for Indigenous authors in Canada with a stated goal to "consolidate and gain recognition for Native contribution to Canadian writing and to reclaim the Native voice in literature" (cited in Fee 2010:63). Their approach was to bring traditional oral narratives together with Western literary styles while addressing the contemporary lives of Indigenous people in Canada, including contemporary social issues such as residential schools, violence, poverty and alcoholism (Ruffo 2005:170). The topic of contemporary social issues in Indigenous communities continues to be a common theme in Indigenous literary and artistic production.

One of the means of discussing the residential school experience, along with the history of colonialism, within Indigenous communities has been a use of the diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As I have already discussed in the previous chapter, Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran approach PTSD as a result of "acculturation stress" where it is "a continuing factor in the perpetuation of anxiety, depression, and

other symptomatology that is associated with PTSD” (Duran and Duran 1995:32). Jo-Ann Episkenew incorporates the Duran and Duran PTSD approach into her work in Indigenous literature, public policy and healing. Episkenew argues that the “acculturation stress” includes symptoms such as violence against oneself and the community, addiction and poor academic achievement. Episkenew also argues for the existence of intergenerational effects of PTSD on Indigenous communities, where each subsequent generation inherits the effects of PTSD because there has been no healing (Episkenew 2009:8-9). We should also consider that many of the conditions that they use to construct their narratives are still in place.

However, Medical Anthropologist James Waldram does not agree fully with Duran and Duran and their application of PTSD to describe Indigenous peoples (Waldram 2004). I believe that his caution is warranted. PTSD is a psychiatric dysfunction that results from an individual and their exposure to severe trauma. The DSM-IV criteria for the diagnosis of PTSD require that two conditions be met: first, “the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others;” and second, “the person’s response involves intense fear, helplessness, or horror” (DSM-IV 1994:209). Waldram notes that discourse on PTSD within Indigenous communities has grown in popularity; however there has been little actual research on the topic and what has been done has proved to be inconsistent (Waldram 2004:216). I suggest that perhaps the problem of discourse versus empirical evidence lives in the application of a Western medical construct of psychiatric dysfunction outside of a western medical system. It is a problem of a metaphorical application of a medical term

to deal with actual social issues. And it is perhaps a productive way forward to combine narratives and medical definitions, rather than an either/or situation.

With this in mind it will be useful to spend some time on the diagnostic procedure for PTSD. The first of the two primary requirements is fairly easy to assess. Events that “involved actual or threatened death or serious injury” tend to cross multicultural lines. The development of the diagnosis of PTSD is closely linked to the return of combat veterans from the Vietnam War as a replacement of the “shell shock” of previous wars (Waldram 2004:213). The idea is that the person suffering PTSD experienced or witnessed an event that could have killed or harmed themselves or someone close to them. This criterion is easily quantifiable within DSM checklists. However, it is the second condition that interests me more: “the person’s response involves intense fear, helplessness, or horror.” This condition is ultimately a very subjective criterion, which I argue is ultimately culturally dependent. What happens when events that I, as an urban-dwelling academic, consider dangerous and life-threatening happen in communities that view these negative events as normative or expected? Does one fear and feel hopeless in the face of what one expects as normal? If so, how does one get out of bed in the morning? What also needs to be considered is a culturally situated means of dealing with normative traumas.

This then leads to the question of the possibility of using the subjective responses to produce quantifiable data in a multicultural setting. In order to examine this I wish to look at the additional diagnostic requirements for PTSD and consider them in terms of Anishinaabek worldviews. The second section of criteria also requires a subjective response from the patient. Section B requires one of the following: “recurrent and



intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts or perceptions;” “recurrent distressing dreams of the event;” “acting of feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (including a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes;” “intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event;” or, “physiological reactivity on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event” (DSM-IV 1994:209-210).

Section B asks the patient to provide subjective material on symbolic interpretation of events that happen in multiple phases of consciousness, both waking and dreaming. Symbolic interpretation is fully subjective and also culturally dependent. The method for reading the symbols always already exists in the culture of the individual being questioned. However, this alone does not severely challenge the potential of a diagnosis. What is interesting here is the movement between different phases of consciousness and differing cultural understandings of what these are. A. Irving Hallowell, among others, has provided an excellent analysis of the role of dreaming in the consciousness of Anishinaabek people (Hallowell 1976). For the Anishinaabek, traditionally, the dream experience is as real as the waking experience. Anecdotes of newly-Christianized men confessing adultery to their priest based on a dream experience provides a more light-hearted example of this difference (Berens 2009). However, this understanding of consciousness and experience must be considered in terms of interpretational transmission of traumatic events. We must also consider that the person’s reporting of the experience may be influenced by their belief in conjuring and their belief that the dangerous event was caused by someone else’s action carried out in a manner

other than direct physical contact. None of this takes into account the possibility of concepts of PTSD being passed from one generation to the next in the process of becoming-Anishinaabek.

I believe that to use PTSD in its clinical form for wholesale analysis is problematic. Waldram, however, does provide a second option. He divides PTSD into two forms. This first is clinical focus on the individual using DSM diagnostic materials. The second option is PTSD appearing metaphorically within the popular consciousness and allowing the condition to exist beyond individual manifestations (Waldram 2004:212). In order to follow this lead, I will need to apply a conception of embedding experience within metaphor that operates differently from Western literary usages of the concept of metaphor. I do this in order to reconcile an Indigenous narrative tradition which has been considered non-metaphorical (Preston 2005:216) with a contemporary narrative and language use that has become metaphorical. In essence I am after a method of understanding how experience transfers through language from one generation to another while remaining experience and not just a story of it.

However, prior to doing this I want to deal first with a means for thinking about the PTSD metaphor and how it may be applied. Metaphors are of course symbolic representations of a thing, an event, a person, an action. In this case it is a representation of the development of intergenerational social problems. It is a symbolic means of dealing with the change to or, in some cases loss of, meaningful cultural symbols. Waldram identifies the loss of cultural symbols as a condition that can lead to grief and depression (Waldram 2004:222). Episknew discusses PTSD in terms of violence against oneself and community and addiction as a means of dealing with issues of public

and community powerlessness (Episkenew 2009:8-9). However, where she attributes these conditions to PTSD, Hallowell, as early as the 1940s, was thinking about these same conditions in terms of acculturation and the attenuation of culturally determined personality structures (Hallowell 1955).

Hallowell's "Values, Acculturation, and Mental Health" explores what he sees as an increasing problem among Indigenous peoples. His purpose is to "show how the modifications of the personality structure of the Ojibwa Indians under the very acute pressures and frustrations of acculturation highlight the integrative role of the value system of their native culture in relation to the functioning of the total personality" (Hallowell 1955:359). What Hallowell concluded was that the Anishinaabek within three communities, all at different levels of acculturation, showed different levels of social problems which he attributed to the loss of a culturally constructed value system and model for intersubjectivity. Basically, the process of colonization and assimilation into dominant society had eroded the Indigenous systems but failed to provide a replacement. As a result Anishinaabek pursuit of *pīmādazīwin* and concepts of obligation to the Other-than-Human Beings, as well as respect of the existence of these beings, were lost. Hallowell's fear was that "the functional support, in the form of a system of values, which was one of the factors that enabled the personality structure of the Ojibwa to function at an optimum level under aboriginal conditions, is no longer available" (Hallowell 1955:364). Hallowell goes on to discuss this as a loss of a "cultural fulcrum" necessary to maintain a self-mediating society which had, in the absence of an over-writing political system, depended upon the individual and their relationship with Other-

than-Human Beings to self-regulate (Hallowell 1955:365). What was left to assume the role of regulator was the distant prison system of the colonial government.

What is interesting here is that Hallowell's theory, unlike clinical PTSD, is intergenerational. In fact, unless the situation of a society lacking culturally mediated social controls is changed, it is likely that the social conditions will continue to get worse. For example, if the grandfather is *Mīdēwīwin* [Anishinaabek medicine-lodge], he will govern his actions based on those beliefs. If his son acculturates to the point of not following the *Mīdēwīwin*, he will need to find a new system. If this does not happen he will have no system to pass along to his son and so on and so on. It is an intergenerational problem consistent with the effects of the residential school system in Canada. However, this is still a problem experienced across generations in contrast to the inter-generational transfer of experience which takes place in stories.

It is possible to approach this problem from the perspective of the people who are creating the representations of Indigenous experience for a generation that is removed from the physical experience of residential school, but who still understand that it is a dominant component of contemporary Indigenous experience. Here I turn to the *tabatcamowin* and *atisokanak* narratives. It is in the early narrative history of the Anishinaabek and their narrative relation to each other and Other-than-Human Beings that the artistic role of the public intellectual, in the movement to re-establish Indigenous worldviews, is finding a foundation. It is becoming increasingly clear that the importance of the growing of awareness of Indigenous values and traditions in the post-residential school Indigenous community is an important step in dealing with the ongoing effects of the residential schools. The *tabatcamowin* and *atisokanak* narratives are more than just a

collection of stories. They are the stories, the Other-Than-Human Beings, within the stories and the relationship between these elements and the Anishinaabek all at once (Preston 2002:256). For Ruffo this means that “the restoration and promotion of Aboriginal culture and expression is primary” (Ruffo 2005:178). In turning to the stories, artists like Ruffo are turning to the Other-than-human Beings in a similar but different manner than their ancestors did. Poets and screen-writers are contributing to a solution to collective traumas by using the *tabatcamowin* and *atisokanak* stories as tools to create awareness of a shared history and the stories are becoming-healing.

I would like to re-visit the AFN statement in relation to stories and residential school experience: “truth is built and rebuilt over time through the stories we tell, individually and together in community, about our experiences of a particular event such as residential school. As individuals, families and communities, it is the meaning, the interpretations or understandings found in our stories which determines, at least to a certain point, the impact of that experience on our lives” (AFN 1994:5). This statement leaves me facing *A Windigo Tale* and wondering what it is that I see. Drawing on Psychiatrist Daniel McAdams, Episkenew believes that in the act of healing oneself an individual must first convert the damage from the traumatic events of their life into language and stories as a method of gaining distance from the event. Next they objectively examine the event in order to understand the emotions it causes in them as a means of decreasing the negative effects of the event (Episkenew 2009:70). As mentioned earlier, I do not support this approach. It is akin to what Gone has called a “cottage industry” bringing Western psychological approaches to bear on Indigenous populations in an ongoing proselytization of the Indigenous mind (Gone 2008:311). In

an effort to make Indigenous people more like “us” we have transferred our own clinical diagnosis of mental illness onto large sections of the Indigenous population. Instead I wish to take the position that the stories are a means of re-establishing an Indigenous way of doing things, of bringing experiences closer rather than distancing them. Just as the Committee to Re-establish the Trickster did, the tradition continues with public intellectuals such as Ruffo.

As someone who did not attend residential school, Ruffo has had to learn about the experience from others. He first experienced the “Chapleau Indian Residential School” or “Saint John’s Indian Residential School” just outside of his hometown of Chapleau, Ontario, as a young boy. By the time he discovered the school it was nothing but a foundation in a large clearing by the side of the Canadian Pacific Rail (CPR) tracks (Ruffo 2005:168). Saint John’s was run by the Anglican Church of Canada with a catchment area made up of the Diocese of Moosonee. The Anglican Church of Canada describes the student body of the school as “drawn from a large area within the Diocese of Moosonee, extending from Fort Albany on James Bay in the north, to the Fort Francis Reserve in Quebec in the east, to the Six Nations Reserve in the south, and to Nipigon on the CPR main line in the west. Most were Ojibway and Woodland Cree from the northern communities” (Anglican Church of Canada). It was a significant geographical catchment area with Chapleau being a central and convenient location due to the CPR rail line. The original school opened in 1907 and was located on 153 acres of land east of Chapleau along the Nebskwashi River. In 1921 the new school opened on 2142 acres of land along the CPR lines and fronting Highway 129 and 101. The new, larger school was a result of Saint John’s early growth. However the school closed in 1948 and its duties were

divided between Sault Saint Marie, Ontario, and Moose Factory, Ontario. The school building was torn down in 1949 by a local business owner who had plans to develop the site for commercial purposes (Anglican Church of Canada).

Ruffo's assessment of the effects of the school on his community is, expectedly, damning: "they had not only learned their place in the pecking order of the town and larger Canadian state, they had given up their language and many of their traditions, in the process. Is it any wonder, then, that some of these same students could still be seen staggering in some dark laneway despite having been 'taught better'" (Ruffo 2005:168)? His comments reinforce the utility of Hallowell's analysis of the effects of assimilation and acculturation on Indigenous communities where the old cultural systems are removed and new ones are not fully established. Ruffo continues to explain how the school's effects extended to later generations. It was, in part, due to the on-going colonial programs of the Government of Canada. Using the example of movies in defining what it meant to be "indian," Ruffo likens the movie to the residential school. They were both "emblematic of a colonial culture that systematically sought to erase the Aboriginal presence from the country...I loved the movies, unbeknownst to me; they were ironically indoctrinating me, like generations before me, and those to come, to reject my Native heritage" (Ruffo 2005:169). Like the AFN, Ruffo is identifying stories as shapers, and he is using film to re-establish his understanding of an Indigenous identity.

In writing about the intergenerational effects of residential school on a community, James Bartleman's *As Long As the Rivers Flow* begins to examine the relationships lost within a community. He draws upon imagery of the Windigo to represent the negative effects of the schools. In Bartleman's work the Windigo is a thing,

existing in the dreams and minds of the victims of abuse at the school. Here the windigo always seems to be little more than a metaphor rather than an actor driving the plot (Bartleman 2011). Ruffo's approach, similar to Steve Sanderson's Witigo in *Darkness Calls*, is an actor in the narrative (Sanderson 2010). Ruffo states that he sees the windigo as both a thing and an action (Ruffo 2005:176). McLeod identifies the witigo as a possibility that exists in all of us, as a potential way of acting and that the narratives help to keep social order (McLeod 2005:8-9). The becoming-windigo is the process of hurting your own community with your negative actions, echoing the hurt of the colonial system.

I now return to the narrative of *A Windigo Tale* and apply selected theoretical approaches to my understanding of the movie. I am interested to see how an Indigenous poet and screen-writer is working towards a positive solution to the negative, intergenerational effects of residential school. The narrative of *A Windigo Tale* revolves around Doris. She represents the problem of acculturation that Hallowell was seeing. As a victim of residential school and government assimilationist policy, she has given up her Anishinaabek belief systems and adopted Catholicism. As the narrative develops we are witness to Doris reterritorializing herself, re-becoming-Anishinaabek. The re-establishing of the Self and the re-claiming of Anishinaabek values are important in the conflict situations that Ruffo has set up in the film. Doris' problems have their origins in the colonial system. It was a catholic priest that raped her and fathered Lily. Her husband, described as a "good catholic," was physically abusive to Doris and sexually abusive to Lily. Here, the catholic man has changed; husband for priest, but the actions are the same. The people in Doris' life that are positive, Aunt Evelyn, Uncle Harold and Joey, are all active in traditional Anishinaabek ceremonies and are all represented as



stable people in control of their own lives. As mentioned earlier, the bear plays its traditional role as protector in the community. However, Doris is in conflict, believing in a system that cannot protect her and rejecting the one that can.

Doris is undergoing a process of becoming that can be identified as a process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:291). Under the approach of Deleuze and Guattari the residential school system, and the colonial system in general, create a process of deterritorializing Indigenous peoples into becoming minoritarian. By definition the majoritarian is the state: “when we say majority, we are referring not to a greater relative quantity but to the determination of a state or standard in relation to which larger quantities, as well as the smallest, can be said to be minoritarian (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:291). It is a ranking system of normativity. But I will also add that when the theory is applied in a colonial setting, which it was not designed for, we must also add in degrees of scaling in the process of becoming minoritarian. Becoming Indigenous is very different from becoming minoritarian white male. The major is an anthropocentric worldview that disregards the Anishinaabek relationship with Other-Than-Human Beings. The “majority implies a state of domination” and a way of “knowing how ‘man’ constitutes a standard in the universe in relation to which men necessarily (analytically) form a majority” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:291). Residential school teaches the majoritarian view without allowing access to the major. Residential school is the site of becoming-minor. I use “is” rather than “was” because that power still exists even after the schools have been closed.

In residential school Doris becomes minoritarian while being rejected by the major. The Anishinaabek worldview which places people in relationship with other

Beings is removed and the dominant Christian worldview which places “man” as the centre of his god’s creation is enforced. With this change, acculturation, Doris loses her Anishinaabek ways of responding to the world. The narrative of *A Windigo Tale* follows Doris as she deterritorializes as the major’s minor and reterritorializes as Anishinaabek, moving herself off the scale of minoritarianism. The concept of minoritarian literature is composed in the language of the major as a way of deterritorializing itself with the belief that minoritarian consciousness “exists by means of literature” (Deleuze and Guattari 1986:16). The Indigenous experiences of residential school abuse that are embedded into the character of Doris are deterritorialized with her. As her healing proceeds in a process that reterritorializes her as Anishinaabek in relation with Other-Than-Human Beings, such as Bear, that healing is made transferable to other Indigenous people.

The process of regaining Anishinaabek values and worldview is perhaps best viewed in Doris’s relationship with cultural symbols in the film. During the attack of David/windigo-husband Doris first turns to her small altar and cross. Her instinct in becoming Catholic-minoritarian is to pray to the power of the church. However, in the anthrocentric world of the church, the windigo does not or should not exist and the church has no means of dealing with its power. It is a situation made clear by Dr. Shannon when he brushes off Doris’s fears that her husband has returned as windigo. However, in the mise-en-scene of the film a symbol of Anishinaabek power has been hiding in full view. On the wall in the living room is the skin of a bear. Later Doris will use the bear to contain the windigo-husband’s power, to protect herself and Lily. As Doris reterritorializes herself she moves closer and closer to re-establishing what will ultimately be a critical relationship for her. Ruffo describes *A Windigo Tale* as, in part, a

film about power, the bear, and the metamorphosis of a person into bear – becoming bear - as symbolic of the relationships between Anishinaabek people and their Other-Than-Human Being relations (Ruffo 2005:173, 177).

A significant element in the deterritorializing project is the metamorphosis of David into the windigo/husband and his return after the windigo's power has been destroyed. In western literary traditions metamorphosis is metaphorically supernatural or highly unusual, such as Kafka's metamorphosis of Gregor in "The Metamorphosis." Kafka's version of metamorphosis is an incomplete transference of Gregor into an insect. Gregor holds onto the portrait of the lady in fur as a means of clinging to some of his humanness. In Kafka's version of metamorphosis the becoming-animal of Gregor is representative of something else. Perhaps as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, it is a story of re-oedipalization (Deleuze and Guattari 1986:14). In Kafka's work Gregor is changed physically while the essence of Gregor remains. David, in Ruffo's work, in contrast, is lost to the spirit of the windigo which is now in his body. David's metamorphosis is complete and normative within an Anishinaabek worldview. In becoming windigo, David fully gives up his humanness. Because of its power, the windigo is able to fully take over David's Being. Kafka's metamorphosis of Gregor is a metaphorical conversion of the body into an insect while the Being of Gregor remains. That differs from the process of metamorphosis into the experience of residential school in that in the Anishinaabek case the Being is changed rather than the body. David is the windigo-husband when he puts on his clothes. In order to defeat David as windigo, Doris must find her own power. To do this she must use the power of the Bear rather than the cross. Doris is metamorphosed into "Medicine Bear Woman;" as both woman and bear, Doris is

able to defeat the windigo/Husband and save Lily (Ruffo 2005:177). In this case, David's complete metamorphosis is necessary for Doris to complete her reterritorialization as Anishinaabek, no longer minoritarian under a dominant major.

In order to aid in the becoming-Anishinaabek process in his work, Ruffo is using a narrative approach that has its foundation in Anishinaabek *tabatcamowin* and *atisokanak* narratives. In these narratives place is dominant over time, contrary to the hierarchy familiar from Western literary traditions. It matters where the actors are rather than when they are. My argument, as outlined in Chapter Two, is that contemporary Indigenous authors use place as a form of identity navigation, wherein the actors in the narrative move through places representative of the contemporary world. These places are imbedded as representations of the collective experience of Indigenous peoples in Canada which the audience can use to navigate their personal cultural identity through contemporary life. Just as in the *tabatcamowin* and *atisokanak* narratives, the moving actor navigates the etiological theme of the narrative. In contemporary narratives the navigational aid has become the symbol of a collective experience: residential school, the city, the greyhound bus station, the reserve, are all examples of these sites. With the use of the sites the author does not need to explain a specific residential school, although often they will, to allow them to convey the experience of residential school abuse to their readers or views.

In the case of *A Windigo Tale*, Ruffo uses non-identified tropes of place to help navigate the viewer between the Anishinaabek and mainstream Canadian worlds and to move the actors in a process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Lily, David and Curtis all reside in the "city," a quasi-exile land of opportunity and risk away from

home. The city is where Lily was sent to get her away from her abusive step-father. Curtis was sent to the city to provide opportunities that are not available to youth in the home community. In both cases the city does not provide the answers that are required for either Lily or Curtis to deal with intergenerational problems. Residential school is used to polarize the opposition between the Catholic “indians” and the Anishinaabek. At the school Doris is deterritorialized and made a powerless minoritarian-indian. Like so many other Indigenous people she was abused both physically and emotionally. It is the site where her Anishinaabek cultural symbols are made meaningless to her and where Catholic values are instilled in their place.

However, Ruffo also uses the residential school in another manner. It becomes a site of reclaiming power and authority for Anishinaabek people through the actors of Aunt Evelyn and Joey. The two practice traditional Anishinaabek ceremonies on the site of the residential school for those who were lost, physically and spiritually. Evelyn furthers the power-building potential of the residential school by holding a residential school reunion, thereby speaking the abuse in order to heal from it, bringing the experiences closer to the community. In order to do this, Ruffo requires only the navigational site of “residential school” rather than creating a story specific to Saint John’s Indian Residential School. The city is also an empowering site in the opening scene, which is located temporally out of place. In this scene Lily is hosting the opening of her art gallery with a show of windigo paintings. She is creating an Anishinaabek site within the dominance of the Western city. It is similar to Tomson Highway’s creation of a theatre for Champion and Ooneemetoos’ performances of Creeness in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*.

The long-term effects of the colonial actions of the Canadian state have clearly led to an assortment of social problems within Indigenous communities. In turn, the events that make up these actions have become embodied within contemporary Indigenous identity as part of the history of the people. In order for this to happen the experience of earlier generations has to become the experience of latter generations. This is a process of becoming-story, becoming-healing, becoming-Anishinaabek that is pervasive in Ruffo's *A Windigo Tale*. The metaphor of the Modern Windigo has become embedded with the experience of residential school. Experiencing the narrative moves the experience closer to the audience until it echoes in their own identity. The use of PTSD is best left as a metaphor sometimes useful for understanding the on-going trauma. Its subjective, culturally dependent diagnosis requirements make the application of an individual diagnosis to a community problematic. However, combining the Modern Windigo with Hallowell's theories on acculturation stresses does allow us to think about how past experiences exist within contemporary generations.

In the next chapter I will examine the embodiment of narrative from a different perspective. By applying Anthropologist Michael Jackson's concept of circumscriptive narratives and then slightly re-defining it to suit my needs, I examine how narratives can be internalized in a negative way. In Sanderson's *Darkness Calls* I examine how the embodied circumscriptive narrative can alienate an individual from their community. As in this chapter, I also examine the use of traditional narratives as a means of re-connecting the isolated youth with their community and their culture. I also examine how the conditions of possibility for the suicide of Kyle, the protagonist, demonstrate an awareness of indicators of an impending suicide on the part of the author. In part, the

awareness comes from Sanderson's engagement with his younger cousin's contemplated suicide in their home community of James Smith Cree Nation, Saskatchewan. The purpose of the next chapter is to highlight the role that intergenerational traumas and discourse play in the problem of Indigenous youth suicide.

## **Chapter Six: Directional Narratives: Suicide and Narratives in *Darkness Calls*.**

In the previous chapter I examined the intergenerational role of events on the identity of Indigenous peoples and a specific narrative dealing with them. In this chapter I investigate Indigenous youth suicide in Canada. I want to juxtapose two approaches used to understand this complex topic. The first is the use of Western concepts of psychology, psychiatry and mental health as a means of explaining and dealing with youth suicide as a clinical disorder. I also want to examine the question of Indigenous youth suicide in terms of how Indigenous youth might see themselves within their culture. That is, how are they orienting themselves in their worlds. In order to do this I examine what I am calling circumscriptive narratives which externally orient the youth and their culture as negative. From here I question the role of using traditional narratives and the relationships that are inherent in them as a means of re-orienting the Self of Indigenous youth in a positive direction. For this I will draw upon A. Irving Hallowell's theories on the Self and its orientation within its behavioural world. My argument is this: in order to make the discourse on Indigenous youth suicide meaningful and productive for Indigenous youth, we need to move away from a purely clinical approach to mental health by first acknowledging the colonial dis-ordering in their lives that has altered their normative orientation in an Indigenous world and relocated their Selves into a larger Western world; and, second, beginning to discuss the problem in terms of re-establishing an Indigenous orientation to the world. In order to do this I am going to conduct a close reading of a contemporary Indigenous narrative that deals with suicide in a Cree community. I argue that by addressing the youth audience, in a manner that is appropriate to them, the narrative helps to re-establish a Cree orientation alongside the



Western mental health discourse. It does this by re-connecting with Cree *âtayôhkêwin* narratives and the Other-than-Human Beings contained within them.

Recall the story of Weasel and Witigo from chapter one. In it *Wīsahkīcāhk* is forced to prepare the fire he is to be cooked on because he does not have the power to kill *witigo*. You will also recall how the story ends. However, I would like to focus on the middle before transferring it to a discussion on Modern Windigo. In this version life looks bad for a potential victim of *witigo*, this time a young boy named Kyle, and *wīsahkīcāhk* is still powerless to stop *witigo* in his never-ending consumption.

*Wīsahkīcāhk* continues to be on the move. This time his journeys have taken him to a Reserve in Northern Saskatchewan. *Witigo* continues to hunt. This time he hunts with the power of circumscribing narratives. This time he makes his victims kill themselves. It is a narrative practice of re-telling that maintains oral traditions of using stories as good tools for the audience to think with. For the narrative in question the audience is Indigenous youth who are asked to identify with Kyle in his battle against *witigo*. By examining what an Indigenous author is saying about a social issue I expect to get an understanding of how he is using culture as a means of mediating youth suicide. I am also interested in how the author is de-pathologizing the issue of suicide to make it about colonial dis-ordering rather than about individual mental disorder.

The narrative in question is *Darkness Calls* which was produced by the Healthy Aboriginal Network (HAN) as part of their ongoing program of promoting health, literacy and wellness to Indigenous youth in Canada. HAN was established in 2004 as a non-profit organization by its current executive director, Sean Muir, and it maintains a four-person volunteer board of directors. Muir commented that comic books became the

focus of the project when he, an avid reader, noticed the ease with which his comic book reading friend could read works in that form. He said that his friend was getting through four or more comics to each book of Muir's (Muir 2011). Since their first youth produced comic, *Standing Together*, HAN has produced comics dealing with social health topics geared for Indigenous youth. These topics include diabetes awareness, anti-gang programming, fetal alcohol syndrome awareness, anti-smoking and sexual/physical assault awareness. Muir's focus is on having youth produce for youth in order to make the comics as effective as possible. He does, however, admit that finding artists is one of the harder aspects of his job.

The Healthy Aboriginal Network is a focus group-based project. Muir outlined their program as follows: first a funding agent will be approached by or approach HAN with a social health project. Next the project team will establish up to ten key points that they wish to make in the presentation of the comic. This is then pitched to, and approved by, the funding agent as a story outline. Next the story is written, illustrated and recorded in a form of rudimentary movie/cartoon. The movies are used in the place of a manuscript because the network has found that it is difficult to get youth to read the manuscripts. The movies are then tested on a focus group of youth who give feedback on the project. Recently a focus group looking into HAN's upcoming gang violence comic suggested that the network expand on its movie version rather than the print version. The expectation was that film would be more accessible in a community which depends on visual images and oral communication. The movies also worked around the issue of illiteracy among gang members (Muir e-mail). In the final step of any project, Muir has an 18,000 person distribution list which is used to solicit feedback on a project before

they move to their next phase which is the printing of ten thousand copies of each comic. Comics are distributed by HAN and by the funding agents on an ongoing basis (Muir, personal interview).

*Darkness Calls* was written and illustrated by self-taught Cree artist Steve Keewatin Sanderson. Sanderson grew up in Saskatoon and is a member of the James Smith Cree Nation. *Darkness Calls* was inspired by Sanderson's younger cousin who contemplated suicide at James Smith (Reder 2010: 179). Muir commented that *Darkness Calls* has produced some complaints to the network because of Sanderson's "non-authentic" depiction of *wīśahkīcāhk* and *Witigo* (Muir personal interview). However, Sanderson's response to critics is that the artwork is designed to challenge and that in the case of *Darkness Calls* we are seeing the imagination of a 16-year-old boy (Farris 2009). While Sanderson's visual representation of *wīśahkīcāhk* and *Witigo* may not conform to some traditional Cree expectations, his approach to the ontological nature of these narratives does. Sanderson's work is clearly influenced by, and meant to be a continuation of, the Cree *âtayôhkêwina* narratives. In doing this Sanderson maintains the *âtayôhkêwina* as the history of the Cree people, and not as fanciful myths and children's stories. As I will discuss shortly, Kyle's "Grandfather's" awareness of Kyle's dream battle between *wīśahkīcāhk* and *Witigo* is an indication that the "Grandfather" is an Other-than-Human Being that shares an ontological link with the Cree people through the *âtayôhkêwina* narratives. It is also an example of Sanderson's continuation of Cree traditional understanding of dreams and "reality."

*Darkness Calls* is set in on a Reserve in Northern Canada. It is most likely the James Smith Cree Nation, located East of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, on the

Saskatchewan River. The Reserve of *Darkness Calls* is not fully isolated but it does stand alone. It is clear in the narrative that the community does have summer road access. James Smith was surveyed in 1884 after the Band signed on to Treaty Six in 1876. Settlement of the Reserve would have brought significant changes to the community in terms of cultural, educational, economic and land use patterns. Unlike communities in Northern Ontario, Reserves such as James Smith maintained rigid boundaries from the time of their establishment because of an ongoing settler presence on nearby farmlands. Lisa Campbell, a former Social Services worker at James Smith describes a community whose history has contributed to a dichotomy of strong family ties and love mixed with violence and social problems (Campbell, personal interview). As the story of Shu-Kwe-Weetam, or Almighty Voice, shows; the government has been willing to apply its military and political might in this region to keep order since the signing of Treaty Six.

In this chapter I continue to focus on Garro and Mattingly's statement that "as narrative is constructed, narrative constructs" (Garro and Mattingly 2000:16). This approach allows actions and events that are constructed in narrative to affect the actions and events of the shapers. It is a theory that is supported by Indigenous scholars such as Thomas King, N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Mormon Silko and by Western scholars such as M.M. Bakhtin, Paul Ricoeur and Clifford Geertz. What Garro and Mattingly are suggesting is that we pay attention to the "constructions, performances, enactments, contestations, plots and counterplots" of the world of narratives within which we live (Garro and Mattingly 2000:17). I would also like to frame this discussion on narrative, as culturally based, in terms of A. Irving Hallowell's concept of "normative orientation"

(Hallowell 1955: 105). With normative orientation the Self is oriented by its culture which provides the Self with its moral order. Understandably, narrative forms an effective means of constructing and transmitting normative orientation. It is from this quote that I want to approach a line in Michael Jackson's *Minima Ethnographica*. Here Jackson wrote on empowerment that:

In this sense one might say that an attempt to deconstruct or simply avoid such category terms as *politics, history, economics, law, religion*, and even *culture*, on the assumption that lived experience always overflows and confounds the words with which we try to capture or analyze it, is allied to the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed. But not in any crudely ideological or political sense. To declare against circumscriptive language is to declare for the phenomenal world of immediate experience, interpersonal relations, and live events. It is to testify to the wealth of life in even the most poverty-stricken and desperate situations. It is to emphasize the *experience* of being in control rather than assuming that control must be first defined objectively as a matter of commanding wealth, possessing power, or manipulating the fate of one's fellow human beings. (Jackson 1998: 21-22. Emphasis from the original)

I am reading "circumscriptive language" as a declaration against the damaging power of narratives and discursive categories. It is an effort to declare one's own life as valid despite the social science, popular cultural or internal narratives that tell one otherwise. I wish to define circumscriptive language in my own use as language that seeks to limit the subject. It is language that is based upon the confrontational element of the narrative event where a subject imposes a predicate upon another subject or object. It has its home in modernity's construction of knowledge categories which hold its Indigenous objects in place. If language is the tool used by the subject to construct reality, then circumscriptive language is the tool used by the subject to hold its other in place. It removes from the other their own experiences and imposes the understanding of the subject holding power. When circumscriptive language is related to power and colonial discourse, it affects the

other-subject's normative orientation by establishing an external concept of normative values that positions the other-subject negatively.

In *Darkness Calls* the reader is introduced early to the circumscriptive language present in Kyle's life. Page one opens with a bleakly coloured landscape and soon settles in on a math class in the "Chief Hubert Smith High School". A white teacher is giving an algebra lesson that has his students far from engaged. The page ends with the teacher saying "...apply this to your daily lives..." Here Sanderson creates a narrative expectation that the teacher, while controlling the class, is not engaging the class. He is teaching what is important to the colonial government's school system, not what the students feel is relevant to their lives.

As the lesson continues we are introduced to Kyle, a slightly over-weight Cree teenager drawing at the back of class. At the end of class the following one sided discussion takes place between Kyle and the teacher (pages 2-3):

"Kyle, we need to talk again."

"I've told you time and time again not to draw in class."

"You just doodle your whole life away. You're going to have to learn to focus."

"Uh huh. Yeah."

"Are you even listening to me? What's the point?"

"I'm listening."

"Just go for lunch. That's all you're good at anyway."

Kyle's "I'm listening" is telling. He has just been told that he is a waste of a life and good-for-nothing by a person holding significant power over his. To this Kyle says nothing but "I'm listening." In terms of narrative structure, Sanderson is establishing a

downward spiral or negative action in the possibility phase of the narrative, in effect establishing the breach phase of the narrative, although we may also assume that Kyle's life otherwise exists in a permanent crisis. This has been set in motion by a narrative event where the two actors, Kyle and the teacher, meet in confrontation. The teacher imposes the set of predicates of lazy and worthlessness on Kyle. Kyle is listening.

Sanderson continues the downward spiral of Kyle's day in the next event of the narrative. In this case, on pages 4 and 5 of the text, Kyle has an encounter with three fellow students. Visually they are depicted as styling themselves in a more "gangsta-hip hop" form than Kyle. Indigenous scholar Deanna Reder's analysis of this event is that the three classmates and Kyle have a history. Prior to the encounter Kyle is depicted as eating alone in the library. Reder suggests that Kyle is avoiding these three and based on his depicted expression in cell 5 of page 4, I agree (Reder 2010: 182). The three pester Kyle with further negative language:

"Hey, how come you do your hair like this? Are you gay?"

"Hey, whadya listening to?"

"Sounds like Punk music?"

"Guess that means you're a punk, huh?"

In this case the language of the attack is also complemented with a physical attack. This event raises the question of the internalization of violence as a result of a colonial legacy and residential school. It also agrees with Hollowell's assessment of the effects of acculturation and the loss of culturally-based modes of self-disciplining. In the 1940s Hollowell observed that as communities moved away from their cultural systems of moral codes, and had nothing meaningful to replace them with, there was an increase in

violence and social problems among community members (Hallowell 1955: 365). While I do not plan on engaging with a post-colonial reading of this work, I do want to bring Paulo Freire to mind here. In the second event, the oppressed have become the oppressors of Kyle. The violence of the circumscribing language of the West is re-created by Kyle's classmates upon Kyle. They have identified him with signifiers that have taken on a negative secondary connotation in the Western, gangsta, life that they wish to represent. To them Kyle is "gay" and a "punk." This suggests that they are "masculine" and "cool." The ensuing violence, where Kyle's headphones are broken by one of the three, ends with one saying "aw, I don't think he's gonna do anything, cuz he's a punk." Kyle listens and the event ends with Kyle internalizing the helplessness of the event and crying with his interior dialogue repeating "shut up, shut up. Stop crying."

Later in the comic the reader is introduced to Kyle's parents via Kyle's memory. They also employ circumscribing language on Kyle, which will be discussed shortly. Sanderson completes the cycle of school, peers and home providing only psychological abuse, violence and alcohol abuse in Kyle's life. All of these are common conditions present in the lives of the many young Indigenous people who kill themselves in Canada each year (Lauwers 2011). In so identifying them, Sanderson sets the conditions of possibility for Kyle's own death.

As Kyle's day continues to unfold the reader meets Kyle's one friend, Sarah, and attends a talk by an Elder who has come to the school to talk about the *âtayôhkêwina* and their connection to the *âtayôhkanak*, or Grandfathers. McLeod wrote that the *âtayôhkêwina* narratives establish the "spiritual history" of the Cree and that this history is an original counter-narrative to the colonial history. He also makes the connection



between the *âtayôhkanak* and the Cree through a long history preserved and transmitted in the narratives (McLeod 2007: 17-18). In *Darkness Calls* Sanderson develops a narrative that is set in contemporary Saskatchewan but is also connected to the *âtayôhkanak* via the Other-than-Human Beings such as *wîsahkîcâhk* and *Witigo*. The Elder has been introduced by Sanderson in order to re-connect Kyle and his peers with their history and the relationships that that history maintains. In doing so, he is potentially altering Kyle's normative orientation which inspires Kyle to draw as the Elder says: "I wanna talk to you about respect and about the old ways."

"Old Stories we pass on to each other."

"About Wesakecak, the trickster, and what he teaches us about ourselves."

"The way he looks is really up to the imagination of the storyteller. Sometimes, He's an old man. Sometimes, he's young."

"He can be a raven or a coyote."

"Anything he needs to tell us his story." (8-9)

Sanderson's *wîsahkîcâhk* remains atemporal, related to the Cree via the narratives of himself. These narratives in turn are open to new ways of being told. In that straightforward statement Sanderson give validity to his, and many other, contemporary tellings of the stories of *wîsahkîcâhk* and *Witigo*. Using the figure of the Elder, Sanderson begins to develop *Darkness Calls* into a healing narrative, moving away from the seeming inevitability of the original negative possibility of the early events. With the introduction of the Elder figure, Sanderson is creating the conditions of possibility for a redressive phase within the narrative of *Darkness Calls*.

Healing is a theme that both Sam McKegney and Jo-Ann Episkenew have explored in their works. Both McKegney and Episkenew discuss the use of narratives as potential healing projects in their analysis of Indigenous literature. A central theme in this approach is the use of narratives to undo the circumscribing narratives that contribute to social ills. McKegney's *Magic Weapons* seeks to expand beyond mere healing and engage in a process of activism at a communal level (McKegney 2009: 56). In his work he examines the autobiographical and semi-autobiographical narratives of several residential school survivors. McKegney's thesis is that the narratives initiate a healing process that seeks to heal not only the individual but also the community. *Magic Weapons*, with the sub-title "Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School," seeks to understand how Indigenous writers "endeavour to actualize Indigenous empowerment and rejuvenate spiritual, cultural and political structures placed under erasure by governmental intervention" (McKegney 2009: 45). While Sanderson is not dealing directly with residential school and its aftermath, its shadow undoubtedly has been cast over Kyle's community. Sanderson's work certainly engages with cultural and spiritual rejuvenation at a community level.

Recall that Episkenew's approach also focuses on the actions of authors in the process of healing their communities. However, Episkenew takes a socio-psychological approach to narratives, arguing that multiple generations of Indigenous people live with a form of post-traumatic stress disorder brought on by decades of the colonial government's attempts to deal with the "indian problem" (Episkenew 2009: 9). She contends that the narrative theory approach used in some branches of Psychology provides a means for the analysis of Indigenous narratives. For Episkenew, Indigenous

narratives serve two main transformative purposes: healing and advancing social justice (Episkenew 2009: 15). The healing, she suggests, takes the form of “personal myths;” an approach borrowed from Daniel P. McAdams’ *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*, where the individual dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder constructs a narrative of themselves and shares it with others. Episkenew’s application of McAdam’s theory takes the form of contemporary literary narratives within which the public intellectual/author attempts to heal themselves and their community with their writing. The text becomes the community’s personal myth.

I maintain my discomfort with Episkenew’s approach of transferring Western conceptions of individual mental health onto whole Indigenous populations. Where this becomes problematic is the transfer of healing from the individual to the community and the processes of getting to that point. Again, I recall Moses’ denial of being elected to speak for anyone. I argue that there is a need to move away from a pure psychological approach to community healing via stories. Rather than viewing the narrative of *Darkness Calls* as a form of talking cure led by one person, it may be more effective to view it in terms of community history and reconnection of lost relationships. Episkenew approaches this possibility in her reflection on *âtayôhkêwin* narratives. She sites Cree Elder Willie Ermine, *Oskapêwis*, as recalling that the *âtayôhkêwin* are not spiritual stories, they are Beings in and of themselves (Episkenew 2009:15). To put this in perspective, Martin Heidegger referred to language as “the house of Being” to explain how we exist metaphysically within narratives (Heidegger 2008). For the Cree the Other-than-Human Beings are manifested in and as the *âtayôhkêwin* narratives. The telling of the stories gives the Beings actuality. This approach allows *Darkness Calls* to be

approached not only as the work of one author but also as a voicing of an on-going Cree history that includes the Other-Than-Human Beings of the *âtayôhkêwin*.

If we view *Darkness Calls* as an on-going history and the relationships held within that history, then I can also consider the quote of “as narrative is constructed, narrative constructs” in relation to power, and in this, I include the power of Western clinical approaches to define Indigenous youth suicide. It is a power that, because of its discursive connections to science and Truth, is reified by the Enlightenment dichotomy of Truth and fiction. The clinical discourse is a power where the person committing or attempting the suicide is declared to be suffering from a mental disorder by state authority that assigns sickness to the individual. A narrative approach allows me to consider the issues of Colonial disordering where the pure clinical approach can be viewed as a form of colonization of the Indigenous mind. It becomes a question of power relations. Throughout this chapter I have been focusing on the theme of circumscriptive narratives, the narratives that hold Kyle in place in *Darkness Calls*. These narratives are more than just literary devices used by Sanderson to move Kyle through the text. Kyle’s suffering takes on a metonymic form because the circumscriptive narratives penetrate into the everyday lives of many Indigenous youth. The narratives gain additional power by existing in a cultural setting where the embodiment of narratives already plays a significant role in the formulation of youth identity. Viewing *Darkness Calls* as a history allows me to view it as a counter-history to the dominant, powerful history of the colonial system. We can now start to view the darkness, the *Witigo*, as gaining its power from colonial narratives. The teacher, the friends, the parents all speak to Kyle of not fitting

in. They tell him of his lack of worth, relative to the dominant society. They are forcing Kyle into isolation. The *witigo* is hunting with stories.

Now I am looking at the *witigo* as working with the powers of circumscriptive narratives in order to move Kyle away from his Creeness towards the emptiness of a dominant, colonial discourse. Under the banner of psychology, although more closely related to politics by my analysis, Chandler and Lalonde have identified this move as a potentially damaging direction for Indigenous youth living in isolated communities. The thrust of their argument is that communities that have developed a strong sense of “cultural persistence” have experienced lower rates of youth suicide. This theory stems from the approach that medical professionals take in working with individuals who are at risk of suicide. Psychiatrists identify social isolation and the future planning of the patient as potential signs of an impending suicide attempt (Jenkins and Hansen 2005:36). The idea stems from developmental psychology. A healthy individual, as they move through set life stages, views themselves in relation to the future. Identity formation is dependent on this process. Eventually, as the individual approaches an age when they expect to die, the focus begins to shift back towards the past. A sort of “getting their house in order.” Individuals who are contemplating suicide often lack this forward direction in their Self-identification. Chandler and Lalonde described suicide as “a stark demonstration of failed commitment to one’s own future” (Chandler and Lalonde 2003:50).

Chandler and Lalonde have transferred this theory onto the community level. Their methodology for testing cultural persistence within a community is to search for six key markers of cultural health: participation in land claims, participation in Self

Government, control of education, control of police and fire protection services, control of health services and control of cultural facilities (Chandler and Lalonde 2003:71-73).

Waldram argues that these definitions are not actually about culture, they are about power and self-reliance in the community and that they are ultimately significant (Waldram 2004:174-175). However, what Chandler and Lalonde do establish is that for Indigenous youth, in their focus communities in British Columbia, 86.1% view their Selfhood as being determined by life experiences (Chandler and Lalonde 2003:91). That is to say that they have tested Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth on their concepts of Selfhood based on a two-model system. Their findings are that 75.7% of the non-Indigenous youth view the nature of their Being in an essentialist manner, that is that the seed of their Being exists in them at all times and develops into a pre-set person. The majority of the Indigenous youth they questioned, however, saw their Being as being an ongoing process of becoming, in which the events of a person's life shape their Being, what Chandler and Lalonde call a narrative approach. Interestingly Psychiatrists using the DSM diagnostic manual are trained to view a patient and their symptoms synchronically rather than the more complex diachronic approach (Grinker 2007:119). Potentially, this suggests that the medical approach to suicide among Indigenous youth approaches the nature of the youth suicide with a method that is better suited for essentialist identity rather than a narrative form. It also explains the increased influence of circumscriptive narratives as a factor in shaping how youth like Kyle view themselves. This now raises the question of who has the authority to tell Kyle who he is? And, does his community lack the cultural continuity that Chandler and Lalonde describe?

Returning to the text of *Darkness Calls* Kyle is confronted with the question of authority. The school has been called to the gym for an assembly involving an Elder who has come to talk about storytelling. As he talks about *wīsahkīcāhk* Kyle becomes engaged. He goes from wanting to be somewhere else to drawing the story that the Elder is telling. Page ten, cell one, shows Kyle's comic book stylized version of *wīsahkīcāhk* which is greeted with praise by a classmate: "hey, that's cool!" Cells four through nine change the direction again. Kyle's math teacher interrupts the assembly with a loud shout of "Kyle!" drawing attention to him. Sanderson places three cells side by side by side. The teacher yelling "Kyle;" Kyle responding with an embarrassed "Huh?"; and, the Elder also responding with a confused "Huh?" The teacher then proceeds to yell at Kyle in cells eight and nine:

"It's bad enough you disrespect me by drawing in my class but to do it while our guest is speaking?!"

"You obviously don't respect him or your own culture enough to be here. Go to the office."

Here the teacher does two things. He usurps the authority of the Elder who was speaking to the school, placing his authority above the Elder, and he forces Kyle away from the one thing that has engaged him all day. If Chandler and Lalonde are concerned about the impact of self-determination on the suicide rates in Indigenous communities, and the white teacher is a reflection of Kyle's community not having control over their education, then Kyle is heading towards a dark future. The Elder's reason for the visit is to teach about "respect and about the old ways." The visiting Elder is a connection to the Cree way of doing things. His role is to pass on his knowledge and guide the next

generation as they develop into adult Cree persons drawing on his lived experiences (Bird 2007:90, 98). Unlike the teacher, who was educated and grew up away from the community, the Elder has a better understanding of what Kyle and his peers are going through. In usurping the Elder's authority the teacher, like the state, displaces the authority and value of Cree traditions, challenging Kyle's orientation of himself. He delegitimizes the stories that the Elder had been telling. In enforcing state authority over the Cree, the teacher is maintaining the long colonial presence that the James Smith Cree Nation has had to endure.

The second effect of the teacher's actions is Kyle being forced away from the one thing that has engaged him all day. In the final cell of page nine, the Elder states that *wīśahkīcāhk* uses "anything he needs to tell us his story." Kyle, the developing artist, is drawn to the potential of the stories. But there is more than just the art. The Elder uses "he" and "his" to describe *Wīśahkīcāhk*'s actions, taking on the second person perspective. The Elder is maintaining the community's relationship with its history. He maintains the Being inherent in the stories by portraying *wīśahkīcāhk* as animate and animating. In doing so, he offers to Kyle the opportunity to be connected rather than isolated. This important theme will re-emerge later in the narrative. The art work within the comic book parallels the performative aspects of oral performance. The effect of the images on the reader's interpretation does not need to be explained with text. Kyle's growing engagement with the Elders traditional teachings are drawn onto the faces of his peers. When Kyle is sent to the office by the teacher his response is one of denial of the connection to a history: "aw, I wasn't listening anyways." Kyle is forced to become isolated from his community and its history. What does seem to be common for youth



who contemplate suicide is that they have an overwhelming sense of isolation and loneliness (Jenkins and Hansen 2005:37). As Kyle is sent into isolation he is depicted in a cold, dark setting.

The ensuing conversation between Kyle and his friend, Sarah, is a depiction of Kyle at his lowest. Several indicators of impending suicide listed by Jenkins and Hansen are clearly present in Kyle at this stage of the story. These include signs of depression, giving away possessions, failing grades and indifference towards work/school, impulsivity, social isolation, history of suicide in among peer group, low quality of future plans, and death wish (Jenkins and Hansen 2005:37). Pages eleven to fifteen give us clues to Kyle's potential intention to kill himself. Signs of depression, aided by a darkened sky and bleak school yard abound. Page twelve, cell 2 has a reflective Kyle saying "I don't have any friends. The only friend I have is you." Cell 4 continues "No one likes the way I dress, the music I listen to. Everything about my life is useless." When a concerned Sarah responds with "but, Kyle, you're such a good artist. You're so talented" in cell 5, Kyle responds with an angry tirade:

"So what?! It doesn't mean anything!"

"All I do is draw all day and it doesn't get me anywhere."

"All it does is get me in trouble."

"It's useless"

Sarah responds with equal anger, but at Kyle. She also responds with love:

"Nooo!"

"Don't ever treat your drawings like this."

These drawings are so special."

“These drawings are your future.”

Kyle responds with clarity on the desperation of his situation:

“My future? What do you mean by that?”

“I’m just trying to get through today.”

“So don’t tell me I’ve got a future.”

“And don’t forget all the other kids just like me.”

“like Leonard Patchanak, that guy who killed himself behind the hockey arena.”

“or Jennifer Ahenakew, that girl who walked into the woods after a party and froze to death.”

“Did they have a future? No.”

“They just drank too much and died.”

“That’s all people want to do is drink and die. That’s all I have to look forward to.”

These elements, while clinical indicators of an impending suicide attempt, are also significant within the story of *witigo* in Cree culture. It is here that I want to turn away from a purely clinical approach and towards a narrative that combines Cree tradition and clinical responses. In this way the narrative becomes a tool for re-defining and re-engaging with traditional values that can aid in the healing of the community. Kyle’s statement of “kids just like me” should be read to say that Kyle is not an isolated case. Instead he is one of many youth in the community who are being called by the Windigo to kill themselves and that his actions in becoming-healer are directed towards the community as a whole. Traditionally, isolation and despair are the main tools with which the *Witigo* hunts. Isolation and lack of future or forward projection are also present in many youth who commit or attempt suicide. As I have already mentioned,

developmental psychologists divide the development of personality into set phases. Starting at birth the individual begins to develop their personality. Each phase is believed to contribute to certain aspects of our individual personalities. At around age eight we start to look forward and start projecting ourselves into the future, “when I grow up I’m going to be a...” is a common expression of this. Around the late teens each individual is believed to start solidifying their individual personality, while still projecting forward. This process continues until we approach old age when we begin to reflect back on our lives and prepare for death. (McAdams 1993:13-14). This is the phase that Kyle is in. He is attempting to solidify his Self but is unable to project it into the future. Emergency room doctors who work with patients with a potential of suicide are trained to ask the patient about future plans to gauge their forward or backwards projection of Self. Anyone with strong future plans is often deemed to be of low risk of suicide. The telling statement from Kyle happens on page 15, cell six: “I just don’t see the light at the end of the tunnel. I don’t see any hope at all.”

Returning to Chandler and Lalonde I want to spend a bit of time working through what Kyle might be experiencing. In *Personal Persistence, Identity, and Suicide: A Study of Native and Non-Native North American Adolescents* Chandler and Lalonde set out to investigate the paradox of personal and community persistence in what they call “sameness-in-change.” The idea is that we, in order to maintain a healthy relationship with ourselves, must be able to recognize ourselves while balancing two halves of the paradox. Firstly, the Self is obliged to keep moving, it is in a constant condition of flux; so that the Self is constantly changing. Secondly, the Self must somehow remain the same so that I know that that Self I am projecting into the future is the same me, only

moving. Without this second aspect the Self in the future is meaningless to the Self in the present (Chandler and Lalonde 2003: *vii*). Those who understand the paradox of sameness-in-change, where the self is the same self in a process of change, are less likely to commit suicide. An alternative to this relationship is that those who see or believe that their future has been cut off from them, or does not exist, can also be included in the high risk category for suicide. Kyle is now within this group.

Pages 16 and 17 offer the reader and Kyle some time to be alone with his thoughts. Sanderson has maintained the same grey scale images presenting Kyle alone in a bleak world. Page 17 introduces Kyle's absent parents from his memory. From these memories we are given a sense of Kyle's poor home-life and how it contributes to his isolation and depression. His mother drunkenly suggests "Why don't you go outside and play some sports? Maybe you'll lose some weight." While his father cruelly tells Kyle "Don't you know what a wrench is? Boy, you're useless." The third memory adds anger to Kyle's home life with his father yelling "Clean this place up!!" over the images of empty beer and liquor bottles. The bottles clearly belong to Kyle's parents as Kyle has already declared to Sarah that he does not drink. With Kyle seeing his Self as stuck in a depressed world of abuse, neglect and, hate, Sanderson is able to introduce the powerful *Witigo* into the story.

A common hunting technique for the *Witigo* is to isolate its victims from the rest of the community, move them towards itself and then strike. Norman's *Where the Chill Came From* provides thirty-one *Witigo* stories in which the *Witigo* is not a mindless monster happening across unsuspecting and unlucky Cree. The *Witigo* is a cunning and powerful Being that uses conjuring and trickery to hunt. On pages eighteen and nineteen

Sanderson introduces the *Witigo* that is hunting Kyle. While Kyle sits contemplating his lack of a future and the sadness of the present, the *Witigo* calls “KYYYLE” and Kyle hears its call. The *Witigo* has begun to call Kyle into the woods, a location symbolic as its hunting ground and also symbolic as the place where youth from Kyle’s community go to kill themselves. In isolation Kyle becomes a potential victim. Considering that culture is constantly changing, the *Witigo* has been thought and described in terms of its modern context by many, including Basil Johnston and Armand Ruffo (Johnston 1999: 235; Ruffo 2005: 168). This approach suggests that *Witigo/Windigo* is still hunting. His new tricks have evolved to match the colonial systems in place in Canada (and the U.S.). Capitalist greed, internalized violence, hate and addiction are among the *Witigo*’s new tools. Clearly the woods/death connection is intentional on Sanderson’s part. However, as page nineteen comes to an end, Kyle’s thoughts of the woods are interrupted by a Raven calling and the approach of a pick-up truck. The Elder has arrived.

The Elder introduces himself to Kyle as his Grandfather, or his “Grandfather’s Brother on your Mom’s side,” reinforcing the extended kinship network of the Cree. However, the Raven heralding his arrival suggests the possibility that this Elder is also another kind of Grandfather. After a quick exchange the Grandfather is up the stairs and into Kyle’s home being served tea by Kyle. The visit is the beginning of a narrative change in Kyle’s life. The first three cells remove authority from the teacher and return it to Kyle and his Grandfather. The Grandfather explains that he was happy to see Kyle drawing and getting excited about the old ways. He was also angry with the teacher who is to apologize to Kyle the next day. Quickly the Grandfather has given Kyle something to be excited about in the near future. The Grandfather also confirms his belief that

Kyle's art is a good way to keep the stories alive. With the arrival of the Grandfather, the circumscriptive narratives that have shaped Kyle's day, and life, begin to break down and a new story begins to appear. The return to a relationship with an Other-than-Human Being brings positive change to Kyle's life.

In the second to last cell on page twenty-two the Grandfather asks Kyle if he knows about the *Witigo*. The four cells which begin page twenty-three explain Sanderson's use of the *Witigo*.

"Ooohhh, *Witigo*. He's a demon spirit who lives in the woods. If you go into his woods he'll draw you in."

He'll use your confusion. He'll use your sadness. And he'll use your fears against you, and he'll eat your spirit."

"Right now...oohh, he's eating a lot of spirits."

"Especially among them teenagers."

Recalling what I have already written about the ontological status of the Other-than-Human Beings and their narratives I want to consider the possibility of viewing contemporary Indigenous narratives as using storied connections to maintain the ontological. So while they are stories, they are Beings. It is this way that I also want to present the circumscriptive narratives of colonialism. I want to think of them not as racist representations of Indigenous peoples. Rather, I want to think of them as tools of the *Witigo* where he breaks down the spirit of the people he is hunting with stories that are embodied in a negative way.

Just as the *Witigo* is using negative circumscribing narratives to hunt, *wisahkicāhk* in Sanderson's work uses them to heal. The Grandfather complements Kyle on his art

telling him that it is a good way to keep the stories alive, to keep *wīśahkīcāhk* alive. Suddenly Kyle's art is not fanciful doodling done in a pointless math class, but are a culturally relevant connection to the past and the future, helping Kyle orient himself in a Cree world. In constructing narratives, narratives construct. He explains that *wīśahkīcāhk* is worried, no one hears his stories or believes in his medicine the same way they used to. And *wīśahkīcāhk* sees the destruction caused by *Witigo*. The Grandfather tells Kyle that *wīśahkīcāhk* "lost his power. He just sees all these people dying and he decides not to sit around and let this happen anymore. Ooohh, that Wesakecak, he's not a warrior...But he can't stand by anymore and let this happen." With this the reader is transferred into Kyle's imagination. *wīśahkīcāhk* appears in the style of a comic book super hero. Tight clothing, rippling muscles, and a mask. We are also transferred from James Smith to "the City" where *wīśahkīcāhk* first transforms into a Raven then moves onto a powerful motorcycle in human form. Stylistically this is a *wīśahkīcāhk* meant to appeal to teenagers rather than Elders. Sanderson is depending on a sign system that is recognizable to youth who read comics.

The battle takes place in an industrial setting, which Sanderson describes as "the darkest places...where all that power of his [the *Witigo*] is manifested." In this setting Kyle is sitting on the floor of a large factory room. *Witigo* is standing over him, also stylized for a modern comic book reader. Just as *Witigo* is about to eat Kyle *wīśahkīcāhk* breaks in on his motorcycle and the battle between *wīśahkīcāhk*, using a samurai sword, and *Witigo*, using his large metal claws, begins. Eventually *wīśahkīcāhk* stabs *Witigo* through the heart with his sword and the evil Being seems to die. But of course *wīśahkīcāhk* never killed *Witigo* in the old stories. *Witigo* rises laughing and grabs

*wīśahkīcāhk* by the neck saying “You can’t stop me! I’m all powerful. Nobody believes in your magic anymore. You have no medicine.” *wīśahkīcāhk* must admit the *Witigo* is correct because *wīśahkīcāhk* never killed *Witigo*.

I want to return to the old story of *wīśahkīcāhk* and *Witigo* that I began with. Other versions of this story are also called Weasel and *Witigo*. In this story *wīśahkīcāhk* is unable to defeat *Witigo*. In order to live he must convince Weasel to be brave and climb into *Witigo*’s anus and chew out his heart. Just as *Witigo* is about to roast and eat *wīśahkīcāhk* the monster falls over dead. Sanderson remains true to this version of the story. Just as things look bad for *wīśahkīcāhk* he turns to Kyle. He says “There is someone here...who can stop you. He’s right here...It’s him.” *Witigo* responds with the language that Kyle is most used to hearing: “That fat useless thing?!...You are nothing...” As *Witigo* comes for Kyle, Kyle must become brave like Weasel.

Page forty-four opens with Kyle, timidly at first, then louder declaring that the does not want to die:

“You don’t get to choose that for me!!”

“You have no power over me!”

“I don’t wanna die!”

“I don’t wanna die!”

“I don’t wanna die!”

With the final declaration the *Witigo* is defeated and the reader is returned to Kyle’s kitchen. Kyle is unsettled, the Grandfather looks on knowingly. The Grandfather says kindly “Now you know. Now you know the power inside you. You know how much you’re worth. “



“Now it’s your responsibility to pass it along to someone else.”

“I know you can with your drawings and your wisdom.”

It becomes clear that the Grandfather was in Kyle’s imagination with him during the battle. The seamless movement from dream to waking status maintains Cree ontology where consciousness is extended beyond waking events. In participating in the dream, the Grandfather takes on a role similar to a *pawakan* ending the story with Cree education. The Grandfather replaces the Math Teacher as guiding Kyle into a future that is meaningful and connected rather than meaningless and isolated. As the Grandfather leaves, telling Kyle to be strong, his pickup truck first turns into *Wīsahkīcāhk*’s motorcycle from Kyle’s imagination then into a Raven. Kyle and his viewers are made aware that he has been healed by *Wīsahkīcāhk*’s medicines. Kyle is now poised to become healer and is responsible for beginning the redressive action in his community.

While it may be easy to view *Darkness Calls* in terms of metaphors and other literary tropes, I believe we get more out of it if we consider it in terms of Cree narrative traditions. Doing so allows me to move away from a purely clinical analysis of youth suicide and blend the Western clinic with Cree traditions. Doing this allows *Darkness Calls* to be seen as having the potential of altering the normative orientation of young Cree readers. The audience of *Darkness Calls* is meant to be Indigenous youth. It is designed to speak to them about their lives and help them reframe their identity within a Cree world. Rather than placing the Cree as an Other in the Canadian world, *Darkness Calls* centres Cree relationships and helps explain an ongoing history of relationships, both positive and negative. When placed alongside Western approaches to mental health it helps create a more effective system that helps youth deal with their developing

identities and helps them deal with circumscriptive narratives that might frame their culture, lives and future in a negative light.

## **Chapter Seven: Suicide Across Disciplines: A Coroner's Report and a Novel Talk.**

In this chapter I work with the Bakhtinian concept of authoritative discourse. The standard approach to authoritative, and its relationship partner internally persuasive, discourse comes from Bakhtin's analysis of other people's speech. Within this model the speech of another is always enclosed within a context (Bakhtin 2008:340). The two sides are linked simultaneously in an external and internal relationship that "usually determines the history of an individual ideological consciousness" (Bakhtin 2008:342). That is to say that authoritative discourse can be defined as a type of fixed, unquestionable external discourse that is set upon the discourse of the Self in a dialogic relationship. It is partnered with internally persuasive discourse as an absoluteness that deafens the Self to the "novelness" of the discourse of others. In Bakhtin's workings the two are linked but not always equally weighted. I argue that the flows of discourse that come through our lives affect the relationship between the external and internal mechanisms of understanding. Eventually, the Self can make the external internal, changing the Self in the process. I refer to the streams of discourse that enter us as the external authoritative discourses; they are the product of those discourses that we encounter in our multiple dialogic encounters with other Selves.

External discourses approach us in the forms of academic and pedagogical training, popular entertainment, home-life and early family discourse, and in working relationships. I argue that the internal aspects are those external discourses that have had the greatest effect on the Self. In discussing the concept of clustering suicides, something that I will expand upon shortly, psychologist Thomas Joiner argues that the clusters might be in part due to a grouping of individuals with similar personalities who are drawn to

similar risk factors for suicide (Joiner 2005:166). I am transferring the concept of “assertive relating” to discourses, then into narrative analysis so that people with similar personalities are drawn to similar narratives which become internalized and ultimately shape the historical understanding of the Self as they are clustered around discursive streams. Put another way, individuals who have a personality that suits a logical positivist discourse will tend to cluster around logical positivist discourse (i.e., medical researchers, chemists, psychologists, etc.). Additionally, personalities that value traditional understandings or narrative understandings will group around narrative discourse that gives their world meaning.

This brings me to my intension with this chapter. I intend on reviewing the construction of two narrative discourses dealing with suicide and social breakdown in two Indigenous communities in North-Western Ontario. The first is Dr. Bert Lauwers’ “Death Review of the Youth Suicides at the Pikangikum First Nation, 2006-2008.” The second is James Bartleman’s novel *As Long as the Rivers Flow* which includes discourse on the clustering of youth suicides in Cat Lake First Nation. In the former I show how a dependence upon medical discourse, values and expectations of education, and expectations of what it means to be “isolated” shape the Lauwers report. In the latter I show how contemporary discourses on the lives of Indigenous peoples are woven together with traditional narratives, particularly the windigo, to form a new narrative text that speaks of colonization as an ongoing event. To do this I draw upon the social determinants of health discourse as it applies to Indigenous health. I also draw in anecdotal discourse from media sites and government publication sites to help frame how education, food security and housing are being discussed. Finally, I discuss how the

Indigenous public intellectual adds a counter-discourse to the authority of the medical world in questioning how we view Indigenous community health.

Social determinants of health are defined as “the economic and social conditions that influence the health of individuals, communities, and jurisdictions as a whole. Social determinants of health determine whether individuals stay healthy or become ill” (Raphael 2004:1). The Public Health Agency of Canada recognizes fourteen social determinants of health as of 2002. These are Aboriginal status, disability, early life, education, employment and working conditions, food insecurity, health services, gender, housing, income and income disparity, race, social exclusion, social safety network, and unemployment and job security (Lauwers 2011:123). These determinants offer several methods of constructing a narrative representing Indigenous mental health and suicide. The first method is the use of statistical data to construct a clinical report. The second is to tell a story about it. The story can be told in several ways. Either as an ethnographic participant-observation narrative providing first hand narratives based on the experience of the people from the community; a first person community experience based oral narrative that is transferred to print, such as the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Shirleen Smith’s project *People of the Lakes* (Smith 2010); or, as has been the focus of this project, literary narratives that act as a reflection of the community that they represent.

The role of colonialism in the health of Indigenous people is an important one. Medical researcher Chandrakant Shah wrote that “four centuries of colonization – being subjugated and stripped of their land, religion, culture, language, and autonomy – have taken their toll on the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and cultural health of the

Aboriginal communities [in Canada]” (Shah 2004:267). What I find interesting, and what is a focus of this chapter, is how narratives are structured to examine the relationship between health and colonization. As will be discussed shortly, the role of proximal, intermediate and distal determinants plays an important role in the construction of the narratives. Statistical data to support the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples on the fourteen social determinants of health is available from Statistics Canada. For example, the Health Canada report “Association between Household Food Insecurity and Health Outcomes in Aboriginal Populations” uses statistical data to construct a snapshot of the relationship between food insecurity and health (Willows et al 2011). Alternatively, Brightman discusses the relationship between the development of fixed Northern developments and changing food patterns away from subsistence hunting to Southern style commercial economies (Brightman 2002:17). It is interesting and troubling to read statements such as “before 1940, there was no evidence of diabetes among Aboriginal Canadians. Today, however, the age-standardized prevalence of type 2 diabetes among Aboriginal peoples is at least three times that of the general population” (Shah 2004:276, citing D’Cunha 1999) with no seeming connection to what might have happened after the 1940s such as the re-writing of the Indian Act in 1951 and the increased promotion of fixed settlements as outlined by Brightman.

The social conditions that Indigenous people live under are a direct result of their experiences under colonialism. Several examples pulled directly from everyday media discourse provide anecdotal examples of the three-way relationship between colonization, Indigenous people and social determinants of health. The first example is the best known. As I discussed in Chapter Five, the education of Indigenous youth at the various

residential schools in Canada continues to have an ongoing effect on the lives of Indigenous people. Almost 70% of Residential school survivors reported being physically abused and 32.6% reported being sexually abused (Lauwers 2011:126). Reports originating from the ongoing Truth and Reconciliation Commission provide narrative after narrative of such events. Additionally, students were forced to give up their language and traditions, many were isolated from home communities, and mortality rates were unusually high in the schools. The Lauwers report details eight negative effects on health of Indigenous communities from the residential school programs as: isolation from family, verbal and emotional abuse, harsh discipline and loss of cultural identity; high incidence of suicide and death due to violence and substance abuse; almost 20% of the population attempt suicide at some point; a third cannot speak their language; emotional anguish based on confused identities, substance abuse and an inability to engage in meaningful activities; lack of role models for parenting skills; lack of interpersonal conflict resolution skills; and, increased rates of physical and mental illness (Lauwers 2011:127).

Food security has recently entered into public discourse when the United Nations chastised Canada over the poor state of its food security from Indigenous communities. Quoted in a national newspaper, Toronto's *Globe and Mail*, UN representative Dr. Olivier De Schutte stated "what I've seen in Canada is a system that presents barriers for the poor to access nutritious diets and that tolerates increased inequalities between rich and poor, and aboriginal (and) non-aboriginal peoples" (Schutte in Scoffield 2012). In short the report suggests that Indigenous dependence upon store-bought items, a trend mentioned by Brightman as having begun after 1940, is leading to decreased food

security for Indigenous peoples. Communities such as Pikangikum are situated in an area that generally does not allow them to grow a sufficient amount of crops for adequate nutrition, resulting in diets that are dependent upon hunting or shopping.

Housing provides my final example. Over the past year Canadian media outlets began broadcasting news reports on the plight of Attawapiskat First Nation. Essentially there are several issues at play in housing as a social determinant of health. The percentage of on reserve homes that are considered “adequate housing” is decreasing in Canada even though the number of total houses is increasing (AANDC 2005:72). Figures contained within the 2004 *Basic Department Data* of Aboriginal Affairs and North Development Canada indicates that 53% of the houses on reserve are adequate. The inadequacy of the housing can be connected with health factors such as mold, caused by poor ventilation causing respiratory and immune systems illnesses (Shah 2004:270). Additionally, the over-crowding of houses, a result of almost 50% needing major repairs, having poor, ventilation and mold problems, leads to increased transmission of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis (Shah 2004:274). Perhaps more important for my work is the connection that health researchers Charlotte Loppie Ready and Fred Wien make between over-crowded houses, stress and violence within a community. They write that “these conditions can also indirectly contribute to substance overuse and parenting difficulties, which may result in poor school performance among youth and children” where the over-crowded houses add emotional stress, including depression, and a lack of sanctuary or peace for the inhabitants (Loppie Ready and Wien 2009:3).

I use these three examples as a general guide to understanding how the social determinants of health are discussed in the two focus narratives of this chapter. However,



not all social determinants of health are created equal, or at least they are not considered by most medical researchers as equal contributing factors to specific manifestations of health. The basic point is that some conditions are considered to be proximal to the outcome while others are distal. Loppie Ready and Wien define the relational conditions as follows: “Proximal determinants of health include conditions that have a direct impact on physical, emotional, mental or spiritual health” (Loppie Ready and Wien 2009:5); “intermediate determinants can be thought of as the origin of those proximal determinants” (Loppie Ready and Wien 2009:15); and, “Distal determinants have the most profound influence on the health of populations because they represent political, economic, and social contexts that construct both intermediate and proximal determinants” (Loppie Ready and Wien 2009:20). This leaves medical researchers with the problem of deciding if a determinant directly causes changes to a community’s overall health or if it establishes the possibility for that change.

In his report on the social determinants of health in Pikangikum, Lauwers defines health behaviour, physical environment, employment and income, education and food security as proximal determinants. The healthcare system, education system, community infrastructure, resources, capacities (of economic systems), environmental stewardship and cultural continuity are all defined as intermediate determinants. Finally, he lists colonialism, racism and social exclusion and self-determination as being distal social determinants of health (Lauwers 2011:19). Lauwers’ work on the social determinants relies on a time-based plot common in Western narrative tradition which means that colonial effects are temporally distant in his view of the Pikangikum situation (Ricoeur 1983). Additionally, Lauwers is participating in a tradition of Western science which

French academic Bruno Latour calls the “unproblematic black box” (Latour 1987:4). In essence, the black box of science is a carrying-on of a narrative that has already created the conditions and reality of a certain situation. Lauwers’ mission is not to figure out what constitutes proximal, intermediate and distal determinants. Someone has already constructed that narrative. Lauwers must simply purchase the black box and apply it to his situation, allowing him to answer his question in an intelligible fashion. In many ways this approach recapitulates Ong’s theories on the difference between the psychodynamics of written versus oral culture outlined in Chapter Two. Lauwers benefits from being able to acquire someone else’s knowledge through reading, rather than having to investigate and create the same knowledge himself, as Ong suggests he would in an oral culture. Of course, it also means that Lauwers must have faith that the knowledge he borrows is correct for his purposes.

Loppie Ready and Wien are not the originators of the concepts of relational conditions. And while tracing the origins of the concept is well outside of what I want to accomplish with this chapter, I will situate these terms within suicide discourse. The concepts are generally connected to epidemiological research into suicide and can also be associated with fixed and variable risk factors (Berman, Jobes and Silverman 2006:14). The term proximal is defined as “those situational or life events that are closely related in *time* to the suicide and that may precipitate or trigger suicidal behaviour” (Berman, Jobes and Silverman 2006:14, italics added). Additionally, distal risk factors enable a “predisposition or vulnerability to being suicidal, such as mental disorder or character traits such as impulsivity” (Berman, Jobes and Silverman 2006:14). The concept is that the distal factors work in relationship with the proximal factors to increase the likelihood

of a person becoming suicidal. The proximal and distal model possesses a form that is recognizable as the structure and agency approach seen in structuralism. Here distal assumes the structural role and the agency role is filled by the proximal elements. In general suicide theory, as discussed by psychologists Alan Berman, David Jobes and Morton Silverman in the American Psychological Association's *Adolescent Suicide: Assessment and Intervention* (2003), we may be able to consider social determinants of health as roughly synonymous with "social correlate" analysis as "social determinants of health" does not appear in their work. Social Correlate theory suggests that demographic research can provide information on how risk factors influence suicide in an individual, an approach that Berman, Jobes and Silverman are weary of because of its lack of empirical evidence (Berman, Jobes and Silverman 2006:83).

What this means for the Lauwers report is a positioning of education and employment as key factors in a healthy community. Lauwers wrote "the most important social determinant of health is education. There is no greater barrier to improving the health, mental health, and suicide rate in Pikangikum than through its education system" (Lauwers 2011:19). Intermediate determinants include the healthcare system, educational system, community infrastructure and cultural continuity. Lauwers views colonialism, racism, and social exclusion and self-determination as the distal determinants (Lauwers 2011: 19). This represents an essential black box purchase of Loppie Ready and Wien's work on social determinants of health in Indigenous communities.

Allow me to make two extended asides. The first is a review of aspects of Emile Durkheim's theories on suicide which continue to have a significant influence on any socially based approach to suicide. The second is a review of the theory of cultural

continuity put forward by Chandler and Lalonde. Their finding is that the determinants that Lauwers calls intermediate may be more proximal. This will provide an important bridge into my discussion on Bartleman. My discussion on Durkheim's work is meant to provide a historical discourse upon which much of the social influence of suicide seems to be constructed (Joiner 2006:33-36; Berman, Jobes and Silverman 2006:46)

The anomic suicide outlined by Durkheim is worth considering and using as a template in Indigenous youth suicides. Durkheim's condition for egoistic suicide is that an individual become isolated from an existing social network. Simply put, something happens that drives the person from within the group to the outside. This person then is a candidate for suicide in their isolation. However, the social network as a whole is still functioning. With anomic suicide the overall rate of suicide in a social network increases when there is a shifting in the social conditions of the group. Durkheim defines it as suicide that "results from man's activity's lacking regulation and his consequent suffering" (Durkheim 1951:258). Furthermore, he wrote, "in anomic suicide, society's influence is lacking in the basically individual passions, thus leaving them without a check-rein" (Durkheim 1951:258). Where this differs from the egoistic suicide is that in this class it is the society that breaks down, taking the individual with it. I see significant parallel potential with Hallowell's work on acculturation and societal breakdown that was discussed earlier in my dissertation.

With anomic suicide Durkheim is looking for an explanation of the negative relationship between a society's regulative functions and the suicide rate (Durkheim 1951:241): when the former breaks down, the latter increases. Durkheim seemingly connects this with society's ability to affect the individual's options in reaching their

personal goals. He writes that “all man’s pleasure in acting, moving and exerting himself implies the sense that his efforts are not in vain and that by walking he has advanced...to pursue a goal which is by definition unattainable is to condemn oneself to a state of perpetual unhappiness” (Durkheim 1951:248). He later connects this with the ability of the individual to meet their desires. Where the desires increase and the ability to achieve them decreases the rate of suicide can be expected to increase (Durkheim 1951:255). He writes that when “reality seems valueless by comparison with the dreams of fevered imagination; reality is therefore abandoned” (Durkheim 1951:256). Where this gets interesting is if we consider the embodied effects on isolated Indigenous youth of Western material culture represented as normative in the media. What effect would be contained in the simulation of a world that does not exist for a youth who perhaps believe it is real? Do they abandon their reality for the simulation which cannot be achieved? Additionally, if key social determinants of health are in crisis, or are seen as lacking relative to the “norm,” is there an increased rate of anomic suicides? Sadly I do not have the ability to answer this question. I can only speculate given the connection between social determinants and depression, between depression and suicide.

In their ongoing research into youth suicide in First Nation’s communities in British Columbia, Chandler and LaLonde have come to two key findings, outlined in “Cultural Continuity as a Moderator of Suicide Risk Among Canada’s First Nations” (2009). First, they argue against the absolute adequacy of statistics in creating a meta-picture of the complexities of Indigenous youth suicide. They write that “counting up all of the deaths by suicide and then simply dividing them by the total number of available Aboriginal youth obscures what is really interesting – the dramatic differences in the

incidence of youth suicide that actually distinguish one band or tribal council from the next” (Chandler and LaLonde 2009:221). Their findings are that, in British Columbia at least, 90% of Indigenous youth suicides took place in about 10% of the bands (Chandler and LaLonde 2009:221). Clearly then macro-level statistics fail on two main counts. First, they fail to provide a proper perspective on the problem. They fail to show where the suicides are happening and generalize on the results. This leads to the second problem: macro-level statistical analysis maintains the colonial, centralizing process of lumping all Indigenous communities into a single undifferentiated category of “First Nations.” Under these problematic models massive amounts of cultural, economic and political diversity are whitewashed into homogeneity.

Their second finding is that communities that had taken measures to work towards what Chandler and Lalonde call “cultural continuity” had the lowest number of suicides. This theory is based on the idea that the communities had worked to secure an imagined future while also connecting the community to a past heritage. It is this strength of cultural identity that maintained the healthy community (Chandler and LaLonde 2009:221). The argument of the second finding is based on their previous research on individual suicide attempters and how they compared to similar youth who did not attempt suicide. Chandler and Lalonde have noted in several publications that youth are in a stage of becoming who they see themselves as. During this process some of the youth lose contact with a vision of themselves in the future and thus lose their connection to a future. These anomic youth are at the greatest risk of suicide (Chandler and LaLonde 2009:225-226). They summarize the process in the following manner: “when circumstances (whether developmental or sociocultural) turn in such a way as to

undermine self- or cultural continuity, a sense of ownership of the past is easily lost, and the future (because it no longer seems one's own) loses much of its consequentiality" (Chandler and LaLonde 2009:223).

Like Durkheim for European suicides, Chandler and Lalonde benefit from their use of statistics to discredit certain assumptions about Indigenous youth suicide. They discredit the idea that it is caused by lower socioeconomic status (SES), finding that "suicide rates were largely unrelated to measures of poverty and isolation" (Chandler and LaLonde 2009:237-238). They also use statistics to challenge the notion that Indigenous youth suicide in Canada is a "First Nations problem." That is to say that culture and being Indigenous somehow make Indigenous youth more likely to kill themselves because they are Indigenous (Chandler and LaLonde 2009:243). What their evidence shows is that suicide rates are independent of being Indigenous and that the rate of suicide is not equal across communities, leading to what they describe as a saw-tooth type of pattern in the data when graphed (Chandler and LaLonde 2009). This then leads to the question of what is causing the high suicide rates in the 10% of those Indigenous communities. What does the other 90% have that the 10% does not?

As discussed, Chandler and Lalonde argue that suicide rates were lowest in communities that were highest in their measures of cultural continuity. These measures include "efforts to regain legal title to traditional lands and to re-establish forms of self-government, to reassert control over education and other community social services, and to preserve and promote traditional cultural practices" (Chandler and LaLonde 2009:238). In short, communities that promote inclusion maintain a healthier population. What Chandler and Lalonde have done is transferred their work on individuals to the

community level. They have established a methodology for measuring potential connections to a past and imagined future at the community level. Potentially, it could be argued, they are seeing at the community level what Indigenous public intellectuals are doing in their narratives and quantifying the data.

Historical results of the loss of sociocultural structures and an increase in social problems in a community, including suicide, have been previously documented (Durkheim 1951, Hallowell 1955). The theory is roughly that if a community loses or has its means of understanding itself in the world taken from it, then that community is at risk of not being able to maintain collective health. The individuals within a society can only exist as such if they understand and follow the means of maintaining the society that are set by the society. Colonization and attempts at assimilation, called “civilization” by the state, break down existing social structures. In the process the Indigenous person is no longer following the same socialization process as their ancestors in Becoming-Anishinaabek, as the case may be for an Anishinaabek person. Instead they are Becoming-indian; the colonizer’s Other, in a process that leaves them without full access to either social structure. Two different narrative examples of this process are available. One is Brightman’s *Grateful Prey* where he outlines the history of relocation and change within the community where he worked. The second is Highway’s *Kiss of the Fur Queen* which uses similar changes to those outlined by Brightman to provide a narrative structure for Highway’s semi-autobiographical novel.

Chandler and Lalonde’s research is showing that communities that work to undo the process of assimilation have the lowest rates of suicide among Indigenous communities. Arguably, the process of Becoming-Anishinaabek is the process of re-



defining what it means to be Anishinaabek within the colonial state of Canada. It is a process of no longer being the Other-indian but rather, becoming an Indigenous Self. Chandler and Lalonde conclude their paper with the section “working out what works.” In this section the two move away from the statistical analysis that they had been using and turn their work towards the discourse of post-colonial theory. Citing Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “epistemic violence,” Chandler and Lalonde warn against top-down analysis of Indigenous youth suicide (Chandler and LaLonde 2009:245). Their warning is, if the strength of those communities with low suicide rates is their re-claiming cultural continuity, their Becoming-Anishinaabek, then the continuing to define them from a colonial perspective is damaging. They write that “such acts of epistemic violence, whatever else they may do, guarantee the positional inferiority of Indigenous people, further marginalize their voices, and undermine any possibility that they might be seen to know best how to manage their own affairs” (Chandler and LaLonde 2009:245).

In terms of providing their recommendation for how assistance can be provided they suggest two options: the social scientist can work with communities to investigate how the knowledge systems that are strong in some communities can be calibrated to help others; and, social scientists can work with the communities to figure out a method for the communication of this knowledge from one community to another where that knowledge is not being used (Chandler and LaLonde 2009:246). This is essentially a process of de-centering the power to create knowledge away from the colonial power structure and returning it to the individual communities that can best understand their own cultural context.

From this position I return to the Lauwers report. I argue that the social determinants of health are closely connected to Chandler and Lalonde's concept of cultural continuity, which in turn is closely related to Durkheim's theory on anomic suicide. Lauwers' "Death Review of the Youth Suicides at the Pikangikum First Nation, 2006-2008" began with three purposes: first, to examine the circumstances of each individual youth suicide in Pikangikum during 2006-2008; second, to collect information about the deaths; and, to make recommendations that would mitigate against further deaths in similar circumstances (Lauwers 2011:7). My purpose is to review the report's narrative by paying attention to the three determinants of health that I listed previously: education, food security and housing. Included in housing will be a short discussion of the concept of home and isolation and how they are connected to both of my focus narratives. I am interested in how the three determinants are framed within Lauwers and Bartleman's discourses. In each case I will pay attention to how colonialism fits into the discourse.

Arising from this initial investigation in 2009 was a recommendation to the community that they investigate "the role of education, health and other community services could play in preventing the hopelessness, desperation, and ultimately, suicide" of children (Lauwers 2011:7). As already mentioned Lauwers considers education to be the most important determinant factor in Pikangikum First Nation. The term "education" appears 396 times in the report and is the focus of Part D within the body of the report. Education, in Lauwers' opinion, "more than any other service, has the potential to have maximal impact on improving the lives of the children and youth of Pikangikum" (Lauwers 2011:79).

The educational system, identified as an intermediate determinant and education as a proximal determinant are under significant strain in Pikangikum First Nation. The community school burned down in 2007 and as of the publication of the report it was still not replaced (Lauwers 2011:16). The school itself acted as a community hub for social and cultural events. The burning of the school was reported to Lauwers as “significant negative turning point in the community’s history (Lauwers 2011:79). The report goes on to detail a substandard education system which leaves students “largely not equipped for post-secondary education” (Lauwers 2011:16). However, Lauwers' interest in education and the education system leaves much unanswered. The school was in existence until 2007. Prior to that date it was available for community events and for educational programming. It was replaced with portables and the teaching staff was able to carry on with their duties. Additionally, the removal of Pikangikum First Nation from First Nations’ high school program by the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council has only recently taken place (Lauwers 2011:16).

If Lauwers is correct and education is the most important contributing factor then I would anticipate a change in the suicide rates as access to education becomes more difficult. However, this does not seem to be the case. There was an increase in suicide attempts in the community after 2007. However, the average number of suicides in the community per year over a nine year average is 6.4, the lowest years being 3 in 2002 and 4 in 2004. For the three years including 2007-2009 the average was 8.3 per year, led by 2007 when there were 10 suicides. Interestingly, the higher average is only because 2007. There were 7 and 8 suicides in 2008 and 2009 respectively (Lauwers 2011:45). This suggests that there may have been other factors taking place in 2007 that led to the

increased suicide rate and the destruction of the school. Lauwers reports that a “surprising” number of suicides in the community took place in three clusters. Two of these clusters were in 2007: four deaths in 27 days and three deaths in 19 days (Lauwers 2011:34).

I want to identify these clusters as important in the discourse because they connect well with Bartleman’s work. Lauwers makes twenty-three references to clusters in his report. A cluster is defined by the American Psychological Association as “requiring three or more events in the series” (Berman, Jobes and Silverman 2006:111). Joiner notes that peer groups tend to attract like-minded people. The process is called assortative relating. People who are vulnerable form friendships and romantic relationships which are often based around shared risk factors such as substance abuse, violence and perceived isolation (Joiner 2005:166). In Pikangikum nine of the sixteen suicides over the three years reviewed had experienced family suicides and three had associations with a friend who had committed suicide within a month of their own. Significant numbers of the suicides shared multiple risk factors such as substance abuse, violence, and other criminal activities (Lauwers 2011:34-35).

Cluster or “imitation” appears to be a consistent topic in the study of suicide, particularly among youth in Indigenous settings. It is a topic that Durkheim was not able to clear away with statistics in the same manner he had with other extra-social topics. What he does do is convert the topic into a social one and not a purely psychological one. He argues that changes in suicide rates and their relation to changes in social environment demonstrate this (Durkheim 1951:138). He argues that imitation is not a cause of suicide (Durkheim 1951:140). Instead, he suggests that we pay attention to the manner in which

suicide is discussed in a society where other factors that contribute to suicide are present. He wrote that “where such acts are loathed, the feelings they arouse penetrate the recital of them and thus offset rather than encourage individual inclinations” (Durkheim 1951:141). However, while imitation is not a cause of suicide, it perhaps lets other suicides know what means will be most effective. The fact that all of the Pikangikum suicides were as a result of hanging supports this.

My point is that there are perhaps other answers to the question of increased rates in 2007 than education, and the education may be a significant factor in Lauwers’ report because he made it one based on his own discursive construction. Interestingly, it seems that socio-economic status directly impacts educational achievement. However, education’s promise of a better future is circumscribed by limited options and poverty which negatively affects attainment (Ungerleider and Burns 2004:140). If Lauwers’ goal is youth suicide prevention, then perhaps dealing with causes such as poverty, which was identified by former Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Phil Fontaine as the number one concern for a health Indigenous population (Lauwers 2011:39), will lead to a more realistic discussion on suicides within the community. Lauwers’ pontification on education contains elements of what might otherwise be termed the “protestant work ethic:”

Pikangikum must educate a critical mass of its young children and youth, and adequately prepare them to face the world and lead Pikangikum to a better and brighter future. As education increases, relative income and health increases. Education enables capacities and resiliencies to withstand life’s stressors. Education will contribute to health and prosperity of Pikangikum’s people by giving them the knowledge and skills to control their life circumstances and problem solve. When this happens, the unfathomable deprivation they face through poverty, lack of running water, crowded inadequate housing, lack of a sewage system, and the death of their youth through suicide will finally abate (Lauwers 2011:20).

Missing from Lauwers' discourse, something that will be found to be central to Bartleman's, is the role that ongoing colonial policies have in shaping the "life circumstances" of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Lauwers mentions food security only twice in his report. In both cases food security is listed as a proximal social determinant (Lauwers 2011:19, 123). However, food is mentioned throughout the report. On several occasions food is linked with other determinants that are negatively affecting the community: "Poverty, crowded substandard housing, gainful employment, food and water security are daily challenges" (Lauwers 2011:14). So that while food security is not directly addressed, those various elements that affect health are, including the cost of food, lack of food available, the condition of the food and food options. The most extensive discussion on food insecurity takes place on page 139 and is contained in a mere two paragraphs:

Food insecurity means that there will not be enough to eat because of lack of money. Food insecurity is related to health outcomes that include multiple chronic conditions including obesity, distress and depression (major depressive illness). 58% of residents relying on social assistance experienced reported suffering from food insecurity in the previous 12 months. According to the North South Partnership's Report, virtually all of Pikangikum's resources come from the federal government. The community is heavily reliant on social assistance for income. Of interest is the association of food insecurity and depression, likewise linked to suicide (Lauwers 2011:139).

The link between food insecurity and depression is supported by Loppie Reading and Wien (Loppie Reading and Wien 2009:14) and the link between suicide and depression is well recorded (Kirmayer et al. 2007:xvi). A similar connection between housing conditions and depression has been made earlier in this chapter.

There are 53 references to housing in the Lauwers report. While some deal with the role of the Pikangikum Housing Authority the majority deal with "substandard," "lack

of adequate,” “poor,” “acute” or “critical” housing issues. Lauwers includes the word “isolated” thirteen times in his report to describe Pikangikum First Nation and “remote” fifty-nine times, often paring the former with the latter. In essence Lauwers is establishing his outsider perspective and is making evaluations. Despite appearing 120 times in the report “home” is never used in a sense of belonging. Lauwers’ narrative lacks any sense of existing community and is positioned entirely from the perspective of the South looking North into the wilderness, an approach warned against by Chandler and LaLonde.

I now shift my focus away from Lauwers and towards Bartleman’s novel *As Long as the Rivers Flow*, which is mainly situated in a First Nations community in northern Ontario. The work deals with the intergenerational effects of colonial policy on one family in the community of Cat Lake. The narrative follows Martha Whiteduck from her birth, to the consolidation of the community onto a reserve and off of the land, to her residential school experience, her return home and her personal breakdown framed by the social breakdown of her community, the birth of her two children, her departure for Toronto to find her son with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and her return home to save her daughter who has joined a suicide pact. It is this final section, the saving of Raven from her impending suicide that my interest falls. Despite being overloaded with stereotypic tropes, Bartleman’s novel provides a comprehensive discourse on the many social determinants that affect the lives of the Indigenous youth in northern communities. Similar to the Lauwers report I will focus on education, housing and food security, although with the latter I will need to do so in a less direct manner.

The greatest difference between Lauwers' and Bartleman's narratives is the temporal role of colonization for the community. In Lauwers' report the word "colonization" appears for the first time on page 111 and only appears a total of seventeen times including subtitle usage and glossary definitions. Often the references to colonization and colonialism are presented within quotes extracted from other sources. In Lauwers' report, "colonialism" is addressed only as a distal determinant of health. That is it is something that enables the proximal determinants but is, however, temporally removed from the events of the illnesses themselves. Re-phrasing this, I argue that Lauwers' colonialism and colonization are events of the temporal past that has left a legacy of social illness within the community and that future action must deal with the proximal determinants that are temporally in the present. Bartleman's work presents colonialism very differently.

Bartleman's narrative starts in a relatively pre-colonial past, a time when the state had little influence upon the community and people who lived mostly off the land. In a paragraph describing life shortly after Martha's birth, Bartleman describes a community gathering as follows: "That evening, in honour of the addition to their community, everyone gathered around a campfire to laugh, tell stories, drink tea and eat country food – fish, game and berries harvested from the land" (Bartleman 2011:4). In many ways Bartleman is describing the Pikangikum and other Northern Ontario and Manitoba communities prior to the 1950s (Hallowell 1955, Brightman 2002). Negative change begins with the introduction of increased colonial influence, the signing of treaty and the increased dependence upon a specific community site. A description of the community's visit from their Indian Agent a few years after Martha is born describes the community's



loss of control over their future. The agent says: “And no one, not even way back here in the bush, can stand in the way of progress. Maybe you’ll find it hard to understand, but nobody in Ottawa believes in these old treaties any more, and the day is coming when there’ll be no more reserves, and you Indians will be just like the Italians, the Dutch and the Chinese – no better and no worse off than anyone else” (Bartleman 2001:17).

Bartleman is using reported speech to foretell the coming changes to Indian policy from Ottawa that will lead to the developing breach and crisis within Cat Lake First Nation. It is also here that the Windigo (or Wendigo in Bartleman’s spelling) begins to appear. The Windigo in Bartleman’s novel takes on the role of the destructive power of the colonial state. He uses it to represent the residential school that Martha attends, the nuns who work at the school, and Father Antoine, the priest who sexually assaults Martha. In combining the power of the Windigo and the power of colonialism, Bartleman maintains a constant presence of both throughout the book. Describing the Windigo, Bartleman writes “the Wendigo can do more than just eat people. It can remove children from their mothers, steal their souls, make them hate themselves and their people, ruin their culture and turn them into soulless devils. Worse, it can change the children of these children into Wendigos. The cycle will continue until a shaman arrives in the form of a raven to break the cycle” (Bartleman 2011:62). When Martha or her community experience difficulty caused by colonial policy the image of Windigo reflects the effects of the government upon their community. By the latter sections of the novel Bartleman’s description of the community has changed:

Raven continued roaming the community with kids seeking companionship and love wherever they could find it. They gathered at night behind the impersonal, windowless walls of the co-op to express their self-hatred and disgust at life and their revolt against their parents by smoking and drinking

and littering the ground with empty cigarette packages and boozed bottles, by cutting themselves with razor blades, by melting down over-the-counter drugs and injecting them into the veins, by swallowing Oxycodone and Percocet pills stolen from their parents who had smuggled them into their community to feed their own addictions, by inserting their heads into black garbage bags to sniff the fumes of gasoline and hairspray, and by squirting insect repellent straight into their nostrils to get a quick high (Bartleman 2011:202).

Bartleman identifies Martha's daughter, Raven, and her generation, as the generation that can and must work to undo the power of the Windigo/colonial state even though they are the ones so closely tied to its negative effects. It is noticeable and important that Raven is not seen as working to heal only herself. Her later actions in the novel, where Raven is instrumental in the community's healing circle, are based around communal health, an approach that is missed when suicide is treated as a problem of the individual (Bartleman 2011:206).

The ongoing relationship between education and colonization missing from Lauwers' report is very present in the Bartleman work. Rather than describing residential school as an isolated event in the lives of the community, Bartleman, like other Indigenous artists, works to show that it acts with the same methods as the windigo. It is capable to returning again and again because it has not been killed; the intergenerational effects of the schools are still being felt. Bartleman does not approach education with the same "more is better" approach that Lauwers derives from Western discourse. Rather Bartleman intersects the multiple narratives of Indigenous experiences with education under an ongoing colonial system to show how the combination of the two can have a negative effect on the health of the community. What is interesting about Bartleman as a public intellectual is the roles he has played in his professional life. After a long career in the service of the state as a diplomat Bartleman became the Province of Ontario's first

Indigenous Lieutenant Governor. In this role and after his retirement, Bartleman has worked to increase the access of Indigenous youth to literacy and educational programs, including a program to deliver books to children in northern communities (Bartleman 2012). It is at times challenging to reconcile his professional and public roles with the opinions he expresses in his writing.

Lauwers approach to education is essentially a blanket approach, same experience for all and more is better. Bartleman, on the other hand, highlights the individual effects that are then transferred to the community. The secondary actor of Sister Angelica, an Anishinaabe nun working at the residential school provides complexity to the education narrative. Unlike Martha, Sister Angelica fully endorses the colonial program. She became a nun after her residential school experience and acts more violently towards the children under her care than the non-Indigenous nuns at the school: “Sister Angelica, who was trying to prove to the other nuns that she was now a fully assimilated and civilized person by beating the children in her care” (Bartleman 2011:30). As a result of the nuns’ violence and the sexual attacks by the school’s head, Martha’s residential school experience reflects the many narratives of abuse and loss originating from within the program; Her university education in Toronto is plagued by racism and generations of misunderstandings over who Canada’s Indigenous people are; and, Spider, who suffers from FASD, is rejected by the Southern education system because of his wildness, which is caused by the FASD and his confused personal history as a Sixties Scoop Baby. Where Lauwers constructs education as a relatively simple means of improvement, Bartleman adds complexity to the discourse on education within the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Similarly Bartleman connects the history of food insecurity in Cat Lake to the history of colonial influence in the community. Shortly after Martha's birth the community comes together to celebrate with a feast. The menu was "fish, game and berries harvested from the land" (Bartleman 2011:4). It is a meal that reflects a time when the community was able to provide for itself from the land. As would be expected, as the story continues, food in the community changes. Dependence on store-bought food in the novel parallels the increasing reliance upon store-bought food in many contemporary Indigenous communities. This food tends to be very expensive in communities that have lower incomes and high dependence upon social assistance, and of poor quality because of the difficulty of moving produce from the South to Northern communities (Shah 2004:271). As mentioned earlier the change in food consumption has led to a deterioration of the health of the communities. The salvation of Spider, from a life on the street of Toronto to his adoption of his grandparents' way of life is represented by his growing acceptance of traditional foods. After floating down stream in a canoe he could not operate, Spider is saved physically and spiritually by two Elders who feed him "bannock and fried pike...[and] a tin of hot sweetened tea" (Bartleman 2011:188).

One of the more complex actors in the narrative is Martha's mother, Mary Whiteduck. She is from a generation that sent their children to residential school rather than attending themselves. She lives through the forced movement of her community off the land and onto the Reserve. She lives with the changes in the community's diet that will eventually kill her. The event that brings Martha back to Cat Lake is the death of her mother from diabetes. The spectre of colonialism hangs over the community. Everyone is aware that the changes in their health are a result of their increasing dependence upon

the imported food. The consumerism-dependent youth who are killing themselves are juxtaposed against an older generation who still live off the land, drinking their tea and eating wild game. Bartleman's thinly disguised moralistic story attempts to weave together narratives of cause and effect that contrast to Lauwers' purportedly objective narrative voice.

In many ways the depiction of homes in the Bartleman text related much of what Lauwers wrote about housing in the Pikangikum community. Bartleman does describe houses with no running water or inside toilets. He does describe houses in need of repair or slightly overcrowded. However, he also does something else. Bartleman, unlike Lauwers, is able to put families into the houses. Bartleman voices part of this through Joshua, a key secondary actor and healthy Elder from Cat Lake, as he recounts for Raven how lucky she is to live in Cat Lake: "you were lucky to escape all of that [residential school], living as you did with your wonderful Nokomis. You also have a mother who learned her language and culture again when she returned from residential school" (Bartleman 2011:206). At times Bartleman's depictions are little more than romantic ideals but even the dysfunctional families still view the house and community as home. This is where I want to return to Lauwers' use of negative descriptive signifiers in his report. Lauwers paints the picture of an isolated, destitute and lonely world. Lauwers Pikangikum is some place that no one would want to live; a place perhaps not worth saving. Bartleman's Cat Lake suffers many of the same problems but with the significant difference being that it is the community's home. It is a place with a history and a place with a future. It is a place that people will want to save because it is their place.

In Chapter Four I made a short reference to reported hallucinations from Pikangikum First Nation by Lauwers. Bartleman also deals with this topic in his novel. Raven had been involved in a suicide pact, where she and her friends agreed to kill themselves when they turned thirteen. The first three followed through but Raven was unable to. I have suggested the possible connection of the hallucinations to the work of *pawakan*. Bartleman uses the possibility of the disconnected *ahcāk* to allow Raven to travel to the spirit world on a vision (she would be the appropriate age if she was still a virgin). Rather than depict this as an individual mental illness, Bartleman situates it culturally. He also connects Raven and Cat Lake to Other-Than-Human Beings in her journey. He writes:

Nanabush then took me by the hand and told me to look deep down into the waters of Cat Lake. When I did, and the ripples on the surface cleared, I saw myself obeying the spirits of Rebecca, Jonathan and Sara and hanging myself by a rope from the black spruce tree that stands in our front yard. I saw my mother screaming and running out of the house and falling on the ground when she saw me swinging there. I saw Joshua coming to cut me down and hugging my mother. I saw the school close and all the kids running out crying, just like we did when the other kids killed themselves. I saw the people coming with gifts of food to my mother to try to comfort her. I saw the preacher talking to my mother and trying to help her.

I saw the police come and take me to the nursing station where they put me in a body bag just like they always do. I saw them shipping me out like a piece of freight on a charter to Thunder Bay for an autopsy. I saw myself lying naked on a stainless steel countertop in a laboratory as a doctor wearing a white lab coat looked at the marks around my neck and cut me open to take samples from my organs to test for drugs and who knows what – just like they do on CSI Miami...

I was then in a coffin with its lid open, dressed in my best clothes, my head and my body resting on soft red velvet cushions. Weeping members of the community passed by to kiss me and to say goodbye, just like they did at the funeral of the others...

Then the coffin lid slammed shut and everything was black. I felt the coffin being picked up and carried away and I was ever so scared (Bartleman 2011:238-238).

In an example that Lauwers could have been expected to view as nightmare or hallucination, Bartleman has injected Other-Than-Human Being intervention into the lives of the community.

Both the Lauwers Report and Bartleman's novel are dependent upon the worldview of each author. Embedded within their position is the narrative construction of their own identity. Just as suicide clusters can be formed around shared personality types, narrative identities can be drawn together by shared preference for particular forms of narratives. In Chapters Five and Six I focused on the power of embodied narratives in the relation to the health of Indigenous communities. In this chapter I have focused on the power of narrative to shape our understanding of what constitutes a healthy community. I have also worked to demonstrate the importance of the defining narrative coming from an Indigenous source, rather than from a continued colonial presence. In short, colonialism is not a distal factor that sets the conditions that allow for decreased Indigenous community health, it is a present-day proximal factor that is affecting community health. I argue that Bartleman's work is important because it allows for this possibility and employs an Indigenous, literary critique of positivist scientific methods. Bartleman's work benefits from his ethnographic investigations into the lived realities of the Northern communities he is attempting to represent.

### **Conclusion: So What? Revisiting the Modern Windigo.**

The topic of Indigenous youth suicide is not an emotionally easy research focus. The loss of young lives is tragic for their communities. Their deaths are also a sad reflection on the Canadian state because of the role that colonization, assimilation and racism have played in the histories of these communities. Indigenous youth suicides happen not because of the cultural tradition to which the youth belong as much as they are a result of an external designation of Otherness as exclusion within a colonial system. Anishinaabek youth in Pikangikum First Nation do not kill themselves because they are Anishinaabek. Instead their deaths reflect a combination of factors that are directly related to the health of their community which is directly related to the actions of the Canadian state's colonial policies, including education, land use planning and settlement and re-settlement programs.

In this dissertation I have worked to bring into conversation narrative theory and concepts from medical anthropology in order to conduct an examination of cross-generational discourse on the topic of Indigenous youth suicide. I focused on two primary discourses for my analysis. The first is Indigenous representations in the form of comic books, novels, and movies. The second is medical narratives that are taken from a wide variety of sources including coroner's reports, clinical suicide research and theory, and research into the social determinants of health in Canada. My findings are that the two discourses can and do join together in some ways. I also find that the Indigenous discourse more easily incorporates medical narratives into its texts than does the scientifically minded medical discourse. My conclusion is that the problem of lack of integration is a result of cross-cultural discourse, primarily in locations where two ontological positions come



together. I also note that it is within these perceived differences that medical research can make the greatest potential gains in its knowledge. I describe these gaps using Latour's concept of "open controversies" or "science in the making" (Latour 1987:4). With the use of open controversies researchers are required to return to a "complex process of construction" of knowledge that a black box approach does not foster (Latour 1957:22).

As I have moved through this project I have been tracking the movements of the Modern Windigo in relation to Indigenous youth suicide. Windigo has been of interest to many anthropologists, leading Tedlock to suggest that we purge the windigo and other such signifiers from our discourse unless we find a means of discussing them in a dialogical manner (Tedlock 1983:327). Tedlock's advice is that anthropology must move away from its analogical position and enter into a dialogic one (Tedlock 1983:328). My perspective is that anthropology offers the opportunity for mediation of dialogic position as I have illustrated with the joint reading of Lauwers' report and Bartleman's novel. The position of mediator that I have taken in my dissertation is aided by the Modern Windigo.

Recalling Urban's theory on the movement of culture, the narratives of the windigo possesses a  $\alpha$  form and the Modern Windigo represents an  $\omega$  form. However, this is a theory of movement. We must remember that what I am using as  $\omega$  will potentially become an  $\alpha$ , and my  $\alpha$  was once  $\omega$ , where  $\omega$  is present and  $\alpha$  is antecedent. That is to say, I am not using  $\alpha$  and  $\omega$  as absolute beginnings and endings. What they represent is positions upon the lines of flight that appear within my project. They enable me to construct line segments rather than complete lines. The strength of this approach is it allows me to consider Cree and Anishinaabek culture as in the present but connected to a past and with an expected future. For an Algonquian person living on a trap-line prior

to colonization, or at least early in its processes, starvation and windigo were very real threats. Under the influence of the advanced form of colonization that they currently live, starvation has become more metaphorical, akin to cultural starvation. However, this cultural starvation, a decrease in traditional skills and knowledge caused by colonization, takes on a destructive form when it negatively affects the social determinants of health within Indigenous communities. The Modern Windigo is partnered with the destructive forces of colonization where each becomes synonym and symptom of the other.

The Modern Windigo is an effective symbol because it is culturally translatable for Cree and Anishinaabek peoples. The Modern Windigo carries with it narrative traces from the histories of the people. Because of this it allows the contemporary narratives to work together with traditional forms in a constructive process. I also argue that the contemporary Indigenous narratives that contain the Modern Windigo are a continuation of Cree and Anishinaabek narrative histories. As part of the narrative histories of the people and their Other-Than-Human relations, contemporary Indigenous narratives potentially retain many of the ontological elements that are present within the traditional histories of the people. The distinction between history and myth is important in considering the Modern Windigo and traditional narratives. To be a history carries with it an element of truth that is incorporated into the identity of the people, whereas “myths” carry with them a connotation of fantasy and primitivism.

As a method for understanding the general flow of contemporary Indigenous narratives I have incorporated Turner’s theory on social dramas together with Bauman’s work on differential identity. Like history, social dramas represent a flow of people and events through a plot. Where contemporary Indigenous narratives can be approached

differently is with the structure of their plot elements. Rather than viewing plot as a construction of actors moving through events as temporal elements, I argue that contemporary Indigenous narratives require a form of identity navigation where the actors move from place to place. Embedded in each place are histories that layer time. The narratives, as a result, are embodied by the community so that each place and its events combine in an intergenerational format. The use of social drama allows me to clearly identify how the colonial government is positioned in the narratives. As argued the two sides of the drama are the offending colonial state and the offended Indigenous communities, represented by the public intellectual telling the story. This approach does two things: first, it articulates the role of colonial policy in the crisis situation outlined by the Indigenous public intellectuals; second, it allows the narratives and the crisis to represent a community rather than isolating the troubled individual in a pathologized manner.

I have mentioned the connection between place, time and embodied narratives. I have argued that the concept of historical trauma can be problematized in a useful manner by approaching it from the narrative tradition of “blood memory” rather than a further pathologizing of the individual and community under clinical models. “Historical trauma,” like all methodologies, is a product of its construction. With it Duran and Duran, and Brave Horse Yellow Heart simultaneously blame colonization for the problems facing local Indigenous populations and create a methodology dependent upon Western clinical practise that is to be deployed on a pan-Indian level. In essence they conduct the same simplification of Indigenous peoples into “indians” that the colonial state’s discourse does. My argument for the appropriateness of the narrative blood

memory approach is that it allows collective historical events, such as residential school, to be discussed at a local level. As a point of reference I suggest Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and Alexie's *Porcupines and China Dolls* as comparative approaches to the same historical event analysed at the local level. Additionally, the narrative approach, as mentioned, allows for the intergenerational embodiment of experiences in a manner that historical trauma does not.

Ruffo's film *A Windigo Tale* provides an excellent example of a narrative approach to the embodiment of intergenerational events. The film demonstrates how the effect of residential school can be felt by multiple generations within the same community. The Modern Windigo in the narrative is the intergenerational effect of both the residential school and the colonial system that enabled the schools to damage the lives of their students. It is juxtaposed against the narratives of the healing influence of the school reunion and the redemptive power contained within an acknowledgement of Anishinaabek traditions. As colonization, the Modern Windigo is only able to be defeated by the Dokis family calling upon the power of the bear rather than praying at a Christian altar. The implication for health, particularly mental health, within Indigenous communities that originates within *A Windigo Tale* is a call to heal not only the direct survivors of residential school, but a demand that the healing process must also incorporate their descendants and members of the larger community. Interestingly, Ruffo does allow a place in the healing for a non-Indigenous person. David is an active player in the healing process because he is willing and able to accept an Anishinaabek worldview. On the other hand, Dr. Shannon rejects calls for change and is consumed by his own guilt and alcoholism.

My use of *A Windigo Tale* allows me to focus on the intergenerational effects of colonial policy in Canada on Indigenous peoples. In order to bring the topic of Indigenous youth suicide into the picture I have focused on Sanderson's comic book *Darkness Calls*. Here I retain my focus on narratives by juxtaposing the circumscriptive narratives of colonization, racism, and internalized hate against the positive, healing narratives contained within Cree traditions. Just as *A Windigo Tale* promotes a form of Becoming-Anishinaabek as a healing process, *Darkness Calls*, promotes Becoming-Cree as positive. Throughout the comic book Sanderson uses what are clearly identifiable as clinical assessment tools for diagnosing potential youth suicides to construct the crisis phase in Kyle's life. However, the cure of the symptoms does not come from Western medicine. Sanderson identifies the proximal cause of colonization as the Modern Windigo calling Kyle to his death. Because modern Western medicine does not support belief in Other-Than-Human Beings, such as Windigo, it is not able to provide culturally appropriate treatment.

Now comes what Linguist William Labov calls the most important question: "so what?" It is a question that I have particular interest in since I read it first in Hymes' *Now I Know Only So Far: Essays in Ethnopoetics* (2003). The question originates within Labov's discourse on the question of reportability in oral narratives where the person engaged in the action of telling the narrative occupies a different social space than they would if they were simply engaged in conversation (Labov 1997:396). It is with the reportable event in the narrative that the narrator justifies the action of the telling, so that any narrative worth telling must contain a reportable event and the more reportable the event is the more effectively it justifies the narrative (Labov 1997:396). The challenge

for my dissertation is to identify how the reported events justify the narratives that have been examined. First, I need to transfer Labov's theory from oral narratives to the written forms that are represented within my dissertation. This is easily done. Linguistics requires that Labov have a focus on the spoken word. However, narrative as a human social interaction can assume a number of different forms and still be required to answer that basic question: so what? So the forms of comic book, film and novel must also agree with Labov and contain a reportable event if the audience is to be transferred into the narrative world that they represent.

The second important question I want to deal with is how I differentiated what is the reportable event, if there is only one, in a narrative. Clearly, this is a subjective question. If I integrate Labov's question into Turner's theory of social drama I then need to decide what events matter most: the breach, the crisis, the redemptive action, or the reintegration phase. Sadly, there is too much attention paid to the crisis phase in Indigenous narratives for my liking. I argue that it is a trend that connects contemporary Indigenous peoples to a tragic history that is an extension of the noble savage and the vanishing Indian myth. This myth, well documented in Indigenous narrative discourse, holds that, despite their many virtues, the Indigenous actors in a narrative are destined to disappear because of the dominant change that the "white man's" actions will bring. Clearly I do not mean to make light of the damaging effects of colonial policy. Instead, I question the productivity of a focus on negative events in and of themselves. Generally, I have stayed away from theories of narrative affect within this dissertation. However, I do need to ask one more so what question: In traumatic narratives do we care most about the trauma or do we care about the actors to whom the traumas happen?

In *As Long as The Rivers Flow* Bartleman moves his actors through every conceivable negative event in the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada over the past one hundred years. He does this because the narrative structure of a social drama requires it. The audience expects a breach and crisis, particularly the crisis. However, I return to the question of which phase we are interested in. Colonialism and the Modern Windigo, as I have already mentioned, exist in the crisis, the actors are liminal and therefore easier prey. However, I argue that we engage in social drama narratives because of the positive nature inherent in the final two phases, the redemptive action and the reintegration phase. These, I suggest, are the “so what” moments in the narrative that we, as audience, should concern ourselves with. So why then is this dissertation concerned with the Modern Windigo? Because, it is the crisis of the Modern Windigo that the redemptive action and reintegration phase are responding to. A narrative can contain multiple reportable actions, and clearly those that make up the breach and crisis are included in them. However, the reportable action that makes the journey with the narrator into the narrative justifiable is contained within the redemptive and reintegration phases. In *Darkness Calls* the events that led up to Kyle being under the influences of Windigo draw us in; however, the catharsis felt comes when he accepts the help of *Wīsahkīcāhk* and embraces his Cree traditions. That aspect of the narrative is why Sanderson told the story. Similarly, Ruffo and Bartleman tell their story so that their audience can engage in the process of healing that happens in the end, the adoption of an Indigenous solution, an omega version of traditional healing.

Now, can I ask the same question about Lauwers’ report? Does a medical narrative contain a “so what” moment? Can I analyze Lauwers’ report as a social drama?

Clearly there is a breach and crisis phase. I suggest that there is significant work that can be done in the investigation of the breach: how is it that Hallowell's utopia has become the community Pikangikum of today? However, the crisis, as already detailed, is firmly in place. All four phases do not need to be present in order for a narrative to be considered as a social drama. In Lauwers' report the reintegration phase is not present. However, the redressive action is in the form of Lauwers' recommendations for the community and for the various levels of government involved with them. The recommendations are the "so what" of Lauwers' narrative for the government. However, I question the report's ongoing redressive benefit to the community. He was not asked to produce the report to outline the crisis, the members of the community were already aware of those events. Lauwers was hired to produce a broader narrative to draw the reader into the narrative events of the redressive action. He was, in essence, asked to tell a story about healing.

Then is the answer to my dissertation that simple? Can I transfer the narrative theory of the social drama and the question of "so what" directly from one narrative genre to another? Have I not, after all, already broken a boundary between orality and literacy by transferring Turner and Labov's work to the written form? Does my transgression grow as I move the social drama from fiction to medical reports? Can "Truth" be analyzed in the same manner as fiction? I have provided my answer in my discussion on the constructive role of all narratives and in the truth elements of fictive narratives. Lauwers, just like Sanderson, Ruffo and Bartleman, is writing to an audience, while simultaneously creating an audience. They all create the audience by leading us with the possibility of answering "so what." There is that movement in the narrative where



Lauwers must answer the question of “why did you bring me into this narrative?” Is this moment, assuming as Labov does that it exists in all narrative events, the potential bridge between the Indigenous fictive narrative and the medical narrative?

Darnell has shown that an effective teller of a narrative transports the audience into the narrative, often by gradual stages (Darnell 1974). Ricoeur has shown that with each successive narrative encounter the Self is redefined into a new Self (Ricoeur 1992). I believe, and what I want you to take away from this dissertation, is that the bringing together of works from cross-discursive boundaries will ultimately aid in the cross-cultural understanding of the long-term effects of colonization on Indigenous populations in Canada. The benefit to both sides is a better understanding of what the other thinks is going on. In the chapter on historical trauma and blood memory I made reference to the examples of dreams and of hallucinations within Algonquian traditions. Both are active within the discourse of Indigenous persons and suicide and mental health researchers. However, the understanding of what these two things mean is very different, both are a truth. Cross-genera and cross-cultural discourse offer the opportunity for members of both communities to redefine their own understanding of the concept of truth in its partial and commentary manifestations.

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### A Note on Ethics

Approval of the Ethics Research Board was not sought for my dissertation after discussion with Dr. Regna Darnell. The majority of the research was based on textual analysis. In the few cases where I did conduct interviews I was working with public figures and the interviews only discussed works they have contributed to the public domain.

## Gerald Patrick McKinley Curriculum Vitae

### Degrees:

Doctor of Philosophy  
University of Western Ontario  
Department of Anthropology (Sociocultural Anthropology)  
August 2012  
Thesis: Narrative Tactics: Windigo Stories and Indigenous Youth Suicide.

Master of Arts  
University of Western Ontario  
Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism  
August 2008  
Thesis: Tease of the New Earth-Divers: Indigenous Narrative Identity

Bachelor of Arts (Honours)  
Trent University  
Native Studies  
June 2006

### Teaching Experience:

Trent University  
Cultural Studies 2025Y  
Oral Narrative  
September 2011 – April 2012  
May 2012 – August 2012

### Graduate Teaching Assistant Work:

University of Western Ontario  
First Nations Studies/First Nations Studies 2269  
Aboriginal Landscapes in Ontario  
January 2011 - April 2011

University of Western Ontario  
Anthropology/First Nations Studies 2203  
Cultures of the Pacific  
January 2009 - April 2009

University of Western Ontario  
First Nations Studies/Anthropology 2218  
Contemporary Indigenous Political Issues

September 2008 - December 2008

University of Western Ontario  
 First Nations Studies 020  
 Introduction to First Nations Studies  
 September 2007 – April 2008  
 Nominated for Graduate Student Teaching Award

University of Western Ontario  
 Film Studies 020  
 Introduction to Film Studies  
 September 2006 – April 2007

### **Publications:**

“Historical Motif: Re-Thinking Historical Trauma in Relation to Inter-Genre Discourse.”  
 Transcultural Psychology.  
 Division of Social and Transcultural Psychiatry,  
 McGill University.  
 Accepted for peer review (July 2012).

“Becoming Windigo: Transference Metaphors in *A Windigo Tale*.”  
 Anthropologica  
 Canadian Anthropology Society.  
 Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.  
 Accepted for peer review (February 2012).

### **Conference Papers and Participation:**

“Comic Changes: How Reading Comic Books Led Me Towards Medical Anthropology.”  
 CASCA 2012: The Unexpected  
 University of Alberta,  
 Edmonton, Ab.  
 May 9-12, 2012

“Traumatic Motif: Windigo, The Public Intellectual and Expressions of Community Trauma.”  
 ReThinking Historical Trauma in North American Aboriginal Context: Implications for Research, Services, Policy and Promotions.  
 Division of Social and Transcultural Psychiatry,  
 McGill University.  
 Montreal, QC.  
 March 5-6, 2012.

“Representing Death: Suicide, Windigo and Intersubjectivity in Contemporary Indigenous Literature.”

43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Algonquian Conference  
 University of Michigan, Ann Arbor  
 October 20-23, 2011  
 Paper submitted for publication in conference proceedings.

“Intersecting Narratives as Contemporary Collective Memory”  
 CASCA 2011 Conference  
 St. Thomas University, Fredericton  
 May 12, 2011

Franz Boas: Ethnographer, Theorist, Activist and Public Intellectual  
 Participant in Workshops  
 University of Western Ontario, London  
 December 2-5, 2010

“Contemporary Indigenous Narratives: Looking at the Text as Ethnographic and the Author as Public Intellectual”  
 Congress 2010  
 CASCA 2010 Conference  
 Concordia University, Montreal  
 June 3, 2010

“All these Buffalo Must Mean Something: The Intersection of Narratives in Truth and Bright Water.”  
 Theory Sessions  
 University of Western Ontario  
 Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism  
 March 2009

“Beyond Dichotomy: Boundaries and Barriers in Three Day Road”  
 Discursive Practices: The Formation of a Transnational Indigenous Poetics Conference  
 University of California, Davis  
 May 2008

“Ishi: Modernity’s Wildman”  
 Theory Sessions  
 University of Western Ontario  
 Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism  
 February 2008

“Trickster Discourse and the Resistance of Presence”  
 Tactics of Resistance Graduate Conference  
 University of Western Ontario  
 Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism  
 October 12, 2007

“Gerald Vizenor and the Word Wars”  
 Theory Sessions  
 University of Western Ontario  
 Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism  
 January 2007

### **Accepted Conference Papers:**

“A Healthy Place: Preliminary Research into the Relationship between mid to late Twentieth Century Community Re-Organization and Social Determinants of Health”  
 2012 American Society of Ethnohistory Meeting  
 Springfield, Missouri  
 November 2012

### **Professional Memberships:**

Canadian Anthropology Society (CASCA), 2010 – present.  
 Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA), 2012 – present.  
 American Anthropological Association, 2011 – present.  
 Society for Humanistic Anthropology, 2011 – present.  
 Society for Medical Anthropology, 2012 – present.

### **Scholarships:**

University of Western Ontario Graduate Student Scholarship, 2011-2012  
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 University of Western Ontario Graduate Student Scholarship, 2008-2009  
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### **Other Employment Experience:**

Trent University  
 Office of the Registrar  
 Transfer Credit Assistant  
 April 2005 – September 2006