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## E-kawôtiniket 1876: Reclaiming Nêhiyaw Governance in the Territory of Maskwacîs through Wâhkôtowin (Kinship)

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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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## Abstract

The Nêhiyawak, Four-Body People, known as the Plains Cree, reside in the territory of Maskwacîs. Of the Four Nations that encompass Maskwacis, this study focuses on Nipisihkopahk, also known as Samson Cree Nation and is located 70km south of the city of Edmonton in Alberta. Governance for the Nêhiyawak lies in the philosophical and spiritual teachings passed down through generations of ancestral knowledge especially in discussions relating to wâhkôtowin, kinship, ohtaskanesowin, origin, and the teachings from Wîsahêcâhk, Elder Brother, who taught the Nêhiyawak about morality and self through oral narratives. As relationships between the settler state of Canada and Indigenous Nations create dialogue concerning authority and autonomy, this study discusses the methods utilized through community collaboration for the process of enacting traditional governance. As it stands, Samson Cree Nation follows the band council system that was enforced by *The Indian Act*.

Forwarding the collective memory of the Nêhiyawak through their cultural knowledge, this study follows the journey of Nipisihkopahk as they forward the resurgence of traditional governance through their own laws rooted in the idea that we are all related, and this extends not only to the human world. Kisê-manitow, Creator, gave the Nêhiyawak wiyasiwêwina, laws, of how to conduct our self morally and ethically, revealing further the mindset of the people. Insights into the Creation story allow this study to delve deeper into the philosophical and spiritual values aligned within ceremony. Through this understanding of what it means to be Nêhiyaw, the study will also reveal key philosophical insights into Treaty and how better understandings can shape the diplomatic discussions between Indigenous Nations and the settler-state. Concepts of miyo-pimâtisiwin, the good life, and pimâcihowin, livelihood, allow for the ability to understand how the Nêhiyawak connect to land, culture, and family.

The Elders agreed that already published oral narratives and teachings would be utilized, since the intellectual property and ownership belongs to the Nêhiyawak Nation. The significance of this study is to allow Nêhiyaw indigeneity to come forward and allow for the well being of the citizens of Samson Cree Nation outside of the domination of colonial policies to occur. This study presents the process in how meaningful relationships should occur between researcher and community.

## Keywords

Governance, Maskwacîs, Nipisihkopahk, Nêhiyaw, Nêhiyawak, Plains Cree, Indian Act, Band Councils, Mental Health, Elders, Elder Brother, Wîsahêcâhk, Oral Narratives, Relationality, Law, Legal Studies, Indigenous Law, Treaty, Relationships, Indigeneity, Indigenous, Resurgence, Colonization, Decolonization, Liberation, Kinship, Family, Collaboration.

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## Preface

Indigenous Nations hold deep-rooted spiritual and philosophical understandings of the universe. These views are not expressed in positivist institutions that place value on tangible and scientific evidence. Some within academia will have a hard time rationalizing or understanding this embedded spiritual connection to all of creation, however it is the very mindset that the Nêhiyawak have built their sociological, political, economic and legal foundations upon. I ask as a citizen of the Nêhiyawak Nation and of Nipisihkopahk that you come with an open mind to the knowledge that is shared with you. Our understanding of time and space is not linear and because of this we hold that our past and future are within the present. Our knowledge held centuries ago is still alive and our words hold sacred reflection in how they are spoken. We believe that we must be cautious of everything that we say as we do not know who is listening. We understand that there are other world presences that cannot always be seen in the physical realm. We acknowledge their insights within our world and we draw from our personal experiences and dreams that forward us into the paths set for us by Creator.

Nêhiyaw governance is seen in our understanding of self and what we have been taught through core teachings that reflect how we are morally and ethically responsible to creation. It is through our inherent rights as the original inhabitants of “North America” that we deserve the ability to share what we believe and establish the basis of our constitutional order that engages the Nation to form a sense of pride and honour. The mental health of Indigenous peoples lies in the ability to emancipate our narratives of the past to forward a healthy future. Glimpses of our spirit beings and ancestors will reveal themselves throughout this narrative.

Language is an important aspect in furthering the complex world view the Nêhiyawak hold. While this is only the surface level of the everyday use, there is a sacred and ceremonial language that will not be found in this study. No sacred oral narratives are shared either, as this is Nêhiyaw custom to keep the knowledge alive and passed down through our methodological tradition. However, to assist you with the Nêhiyawêwin, the Four-Body language, that is in the text, there is a glossary in back after the conclusion that includes both words and where necessary the etymological, breakdown revealing the significance of the word.

This is not the end, this is only the beginning, and with that said, I ask for you to open your mind and experience who we are as an Indigenous People as we weave together our pasts and futures. This is how the Nêhiyawak view the world, and this is what makes us distinct, but it also forms the basis of how Canada as a settler state can share our territory.

## Chapter One

### 1 The Nêhiyaw Search for Truth and Justice

In the time before there were human beings on Earth, the Creator called a great meeting of the Animal People.

During that period of the world's history, the Animal People lived harmoniously with one another and could speak to the Creator with one mind. They were very curious about the reason for the gathering. When they had all assembled together, the Creator spoke.

'I am sending a strange new creature to live among you,' he told the Animal People. 'He is to be called Man and he is to be your brother.'

'But unlike you he will have no fur on his body, will walk on two legs and will not be able to speak with you. Because of this he will need your help in order to survive and become who I am creating him to be. You will need to be more than brothers and sisters, you will need to be his teachers.'

'Man will not be like you. He will not come into the world like you. He will not be born knowing and understanding who and what he is. He will have to search for that. And it is in the search that he will find himself.'

'He will also have a tremendous gift that you do not have. He will have the ability to dream. With this ability he will be able to invent great things and because of this he will move further and further away from you and will need your help even more when this happens.'

'But to help him I am going to send him out into the world with one very special gift. I am going to give him the gift of the knowledge of Truth and Justice. But like his identity it must be a search, because if he finds this knowledge too easily he will take it for

granted. So I am going to hide it and I need your help to find a good-hiding place. That is why I have called you here.'

A great murmur ran through the crowd of Animal People. They were excited at the prospect of welcoming a new creature into the world and they were honoured by the Creator's request for their help. This was truly an important day.

One by one the Animal People came forward with suggestions of where the Creator should hide the gift of knowledge of Truth and Justice.

'Give it to me, my Creator,' said the Buffalo, 'and I will carry it on my hump to the very centre of the plains and bury it there.'

'A good idea, my brother,' the Creator said, 'but it is destined that Man should cover most of the world and he would find it there too easily and take it for granted.'

'Then give it to me,' said the Salmon, 'and I will carry it in my mouth to the deepest part of the ocean and I will hide it there.'

'Another excellent idea,' said the Creator, 'but it is destined that with his power to dream, Man will invent a device that will carry him there and he would find it too easily and take it for granted.'

'Then I will take it,' said the Eagle, 'and carry it in my talons and fly to the very face of the Moon and hide it there.'

'No, my brother,' said the Creator, 'even there he would find it too easily because Man will one day travel there as well.'

Animal after animal came forward with marvelous suggestions on where to hide this precious gift, and one by one the Creator turned down their ideas. Finally, just when

discouragement was about to invade their circle, a tiny voice spoke from the back of this gathering. The Animal People were all surprised to find that the voice belonged to the Mole.

The Mole was a small creature who spent most of his life tunneling through the earth and because of this had lost most of the use of his eyes. Yet because he was always in touch with Mother Earth, the Mole had developed true spiritual insight.

The Animal People listened respectfully when Mole began to speak.

‘I know where to hide it, my Creator,’ he said. ‘I know where to hide the gift of the knowledge of Truth and Justice.’

‘Where then, my brother?’ asked the Creator. ‘Where should I hide this gift?’

‘Put it inside of them,’ said the Mole. ‘Put it inside them because then only the wisest and purest of heart will have the courage to look there.’

And that is where the Creator placed the gift of the knowledge of Truth and Justice.

(Lane Jr. told by Wagamese 1996: Chapter 3, The Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, vol.2, Restructuring the Relationship, in Borrows 2010: 119-121)

## 1.1 Introduction

The Nêhiyawak are the Four-Body People<sup>1</sup> whose territory is iyiniwi-ministik, the people’s land gifted to us by Kisê-manitow, Compassionate Creator. Nêhiyawêwin is the Four-Body language and will be used subsequently throughout to indicate the importance of its use in studies such as the one before you. Historically, the Nêhiyawak have been

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<sup>1</sup> Four-Body is the term used today, but we are Four-Spirit People. The meaning of Four-Spirit people lies within sacred levels of our understanding of self and for that reason I do not use it in this study. Nêhiyawak refers to what we call ourselves as Indigenous or Native people.



referred to as the Plains Cree or Cree, a political body of people whose territory lies between Alberta and Saskatchewan in the settler-state of “Canada.” Creator gave us all that we would ask for spiritually and materially (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 10). The oral narrative presented above gives insight into how the Nêhiyawak have come to know the world around them through the guidance of Kisê-manitow and the protection of the Animal People. Within the narrative, we are taught the premise of how to live a good way of life through our search for truth and justice within ourselves. Narratives such as these forward a metaphor of life that allow the listener, and reader, to reflect on their morality and teaches how to respect the gifts of Kisê-manitow. Further it enhances the thought process Kisê-manitow endured as the world was formed and it tells us the foundation of how we as Nêhiyawak are to act and uphold ourselves. The Nêhiyawak learn that they must find truth and justice inside of themselves and to think critically about their actions, and this reveals the legal systems and governance of the people through oral narratives. It is through this understanding of self that we reveal the depth of Nêhiyawak philosophies that encompass our views of the world through our tapwewakeyihtamowina, beliefs.

The thesis presented before you, is one that is multiple generations in the making as it calls for a resurgence of Nêhiyawak knowledge. With the utmost adherence and respect as a Nêhiyaw, Four-Body Person, myself, I will not use the term Plains Cree or Cree throughout this work. This is to challenge terminology and language imposed onto our people, though authors before me have used it and it appears in historical texts. We were never Plains Cree or Cree, and we were never First Nations, Indians, or Aboriginals. The Nêhiyaw have found their selves bound through colonial policies and politics to become identified into something that does not and never has encapsulated our understanding of self. While I advocate for the use of traditional names such as Nêhiyawak, I will use the term Indigenous throughout the work, though it too is a colonial term. Indigenous in its Latin form is “indigena” meaning “sprung from the land” (Monchalin 2016:2). Indigenous has been used in the international and United Nations context to define peoples in relation to their colonizers (Monchalin 2016:2). The United Nations has defined “Indigenous” as including those who self-identify as Indigenous peoples at the individual level and are accepted by the community as its members; have a historical continuity with precolonial and/or pre-settler societies; have a strong

link to territories and surrounding natural resources; have distinct social, economic or political systems; have distinct language, culture and beliefs; form non-dominant groups in society; and resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities (UNPFII 2015 in Moreton-Robison in Andersen and O'Brien 2017: 69).

This narrative of the Nêhiyawak does not encapsulate the whole Nation as the Nêhiyawak extend all over Canada as our oral narratives have indicated our travels to various coasts. Simply, it presents one of many narratives; specifically, I focus on the territory of Maskwacîs in Nipisihkopahk, a First Nation known as Samson Cree Nation, located in "Central Alberta" between the townships of Wetaskiwin and Ponoka. On January 1, 2014, Maskwacîs formally changed its name from "Hobbema." The President of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) admired the Dutch painter known as "Hobbema" and named the railway flag station after him, and the name was used to refer to the Four Nations since 1891. Knowing who the Nêhiyawak of Nipisihkopahk are is an essential aspect of this work as its aim is to fan the embers of our cultural knowledge as we strive for a resurgence of our traditions, practices, and knowledge that will reshape our understanding of self, and in turn lead into discussions of governance. As Nimosôm, my grandfather, Jerry Saddleback explained, our culture was never lost, we simply left it, but we are more than capable to go back to it (November 2, 2016).

While this work is driven to add to various fields of academia and is interdisciplinary, it goes further than a mere study, as this is the core of my understanding Nêhiyawak ohtaskanesowin, origin. This narrative is aimed to decolonize and reaffirm the Nêhiyawak concept of self. While I intended to focus on oral narratives and their importance, what kept arising was understanding my role as a Nêhiyawiskwew, Four-Body woman, and that within the teachings that I was gathering lies the foundation of our governance system that forwards key philosophies and worldviews. Though we as Indigenous peoples are unable to achieve the ability to go back to a time before contact, it does not mean that we cannot learn from oral narratives, songs, dreams, and teachings to set the foundation of a new form of governance for our People – and this is what we as the Nêhiyawak of Maskwacîs within the borders of Samson Cree Nation attempted to achieve. However, I must state that this thesis is not necessarily the thinking of Samson

Cree Nation or of other Nêhiyawak. The opinions I express here are entirely my own. The initiative itself is aimed to better the lives of our people today, but my primary audience is not born yet, and often any piece of decolonial work is either too late or too soon. Writing is a violent act against the domination in which Indigenous peoples find ourselves positioned as the “colonized” and this piece is too late in many regards but it is also too soon.

Indigenous pasts have been altered to fit ulterior motives by colonial governments who have framed Indigenous knowledge as inferior and primitive in comparison to their own. In academia, there still exists the separation of emotional and spiritual realms from the realm of science and quantifiable data. Indigenous knowledge has never been given the proper respect it deserves when shown and shared with the outside public because the dominant view holds man as superior to nature, animals, and land. Often Indigenous knowledge is believed to be simple and basic in form; however, as many Indigenous scholars and traditionalists explain, the dominant society has a hard time understanding these apparent “simple” views of the universe. With that said, this study aims to present Nêhiyaw views of the world through oral narratives, cultural teachings, and methods that we use to transfer knowledge. Understanding the Nêhiyaw view allows for the ability to share how the Nêhiyaw governed themselves in a time before colonial stipulation and into treaty agreements. The traditional governance structure of the Nêhiyaw lies in the understanding of self but also in the relationships that are created. The effects of residential school will emerge throughout this work, but I will not galvanize the residential school experience as this narrative is of hope, resistance, and resurgence. Hope that the work done in this initiative assists in any possible means as the Nêhiyawak have proved to be resilient in retaining and continuing our culture to preserve and the intent that a resurgence in our way of life is imminent. As I lay the foundation of the Nêhiyawak world, I also share my experience through my research. As my aunt, Shauna Bruno, an educator and Nêhiyawiskwew from Maskwacîs, expresses in her dissertation “Nêhiyawiskwew Âcimowina: Attending to the Silences in the Lives of Nêhiyaw Women in University,” it is also a narrative of self, and this is an integral component of Indigenous research (2010:10).

This work is a political history of the people of Maskwacîs as it attempts to detail various insights into the constraints that Indigenous peoples in Canada face. The narrative presented examines key issues within the education and judicial systems of Canada and how they are lacking Indigenous involvement, presence, and authority. I forward with the intention for future generations to utilize this information as it aims to reclaim the vision that our ancestors had at the time of Treaty and it is through Nêhiyawak stories that we can perceive a sense of the political climate at the time that leads into the present. Knowledge found in this work include Johns Borrows, Neal McLeod, Robert Innes, Sylvia McAdam, John Mohawk, and Taiaiake Alfred. In addition, there are sources I have utilized such as unpublished dissertations and theses written by Nêhiyaw scholars that I believe are important contributions to the narrative and these include Grace Swampy, Shauna Bruno, Claudine Louis, and Albert Lightning. This is a work that weaves between taking theory and implementing it into actual realities and reveals the process in which I achieve the ability for Samson Cree Nation Elders to fulfil their roles as knowledge holders. Samson Cree Nation has over the last few decades overlooked the insights of our Elders, and this as means to include them. While, my conversations are with community and family members, there is no lack of ethics as I am bound by the protocol and custom of my Nation that directs me to consider whether I am or not properly conducting myself. E-kawôtiniket is the process of taking back and in simplicity it is reclaiming a sense of purpose and identity necessary to allow our community the ability to be healthy and prosperous. E-kawôtiniket 1876 refers to the time during and before Treaty negotiations and how the Nêhiyawak maintained a sense of self in relation to the world and how they mandated their every day actions and movements. The ability to acknowledge the multiple facets of this study each chapter plays an integral role in discussing the moment that brought us to answering what is traditional governance and by what means is it still achievable today.

In this Chapter One, I will provide emphasis on why studies on traditional governance are needed as these are emotionally invested endeavors that keep the community needs in priority. In addition, I will share the history of Maskwacîs and how we maintain the continuation of culture and knowledge through the role of Elders and language. Nêhiyaw knowledge is intergenerational, collective, and lived, and this

promotes the ability to gain insight into how we view our self in relation to others, not only the physical but metaphysical as well. I introduce you to the collective of Elders that I came to know and trace my lineage through my ancestors to inform you of the importance of family and connection to one another that is integral to Indigenous nations. By doing this, I allow us to think in chapter two how family and kinship has been perceived by non-Indigenous peoples as this gives insight into the history of the Nêhiyaw Nation within Alberta and Saskatchewan.

In Chapter Two, I examine why settler states, such as Canada and the United States, have misconstrued historical narratives by limiting the role or presence of Indigenous peoples and their history. These misconceptions of the Indigenous past go further than limiting Indigenous voice, as it reveals how colonialism has impacted a sense of identity and the mindset of Indigenous youth. History can promote pride and confidence to the reader, but when Indigenous narratives leave Indigenous children thinking they are unworthy or inferior, there must be a way to challenge the discourse. There is a deep-rooted damnation and internalized hatred that we as Indigenous peoples must break through in the emancipation of our historical narratives as what we have been taught does us no justice regarding confidence and self-worth. We as Indigenous peoples must do this for ourselves because if we do not, then the cycle of violence and ignorance continues. Furthering the discussion of Indigenous lineage and pasts, I present the works of Nêhiyaw scholars Robert Innes and Neal McLeod and it is expressed that what we know about the Nêhiyaw is not the entirety. However, to understand that what we know about Indigenous narratives are often misconceptions or misunderstandings, we need to push further to realize that the methods and ways of knowing and gathering Indigenous peoples endured to maintain knowledge are not kept or presented as much sources we find in academic institutions such as universities and archives.

Chapter Three presents the “gathering, writing, and structuring” (Dion-Buffalo 1996: 12) of the study and what methods are essential to incorporate in Indigenous research. Also within this chapter I foreground Nêhiyaw scholars I draw upon through my research including those in Maskwacîs and throughout North America. This methodological chapter expresses how Indigenous, Decolonizing, and Nation-specific methodological approaches are necessary to narratives such as these. As well, I present

the problems associated with varieties of terminology that Indigenous peoples have been forced to acknowledge or use, and how collaboration initiatives such as this project strive to build better relationships between academics and Indigenous Nations. The methodology that I used includes âcimowina, oral narratives, wâhkôtowin, relationships and relationality, personal learning, and language. Understanding and conceptualizing how Nêhiyawak maintain and continue our knowledge is important to the presentation of the next chapter.

Chapter Four presents the foundation of Nêhiyawak self through a very introductory the presentation of our Creation story and how we are descended from the sky. Primarily, we will unfold the ontological and spiritual connections to the Nêhiyawak world and why this is essential to understanding the plight of our Nipisihkopahk's dilemmas to date, and how a collective body of Kêhtê-ayak, Elders, came forward to offer their services and build a document aimed at protecting and governing our Nation. This chapter reveals the worldview of Nêhiyawak philosophy and how only certain individuals can share such knowledge and interpreting the meaning. I am not one of those people, as I am not an Elder, but we witness that to present what traditional governance is, we must understand the role of those that would.

Chapter Five describes the process in which the Kêhtê-ayak undertook their traditional roles as knowledge keepers and how they as a collective body brought forward the wiyasiwêwina, laws, gifted by Kisê-manitow, Creator. These laws were prepared as a co-produced document between the Elders and I that would assist in Nipisihkopahk's process of restoring our traditional governance structure. Together we forwarded a Constitution of how we envision our sovereignty and autonomy. This chapter describes the process in which I established the ability to formulate a working body of knowledge holders that hold the ability to dismantle a system that has systematically failed and oppressed us since its creation. However, to focus on only Nêhiyawak governance and mechanisms of sovereignty would be futile, as there are multiple Indigenous nations that allow us to learn from their journey including Six Nations of the Grand River in Ontario and Tsawwassen First Nation in British Columbia. Though what we learned from these nations often follow suit to the demands of the Government of Canada and Indigenous

and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), they offer valuable insights into the struggle for self-determination and allows scholars and communities to learn from.

To conclude, Chapter Six discusses the future of Canada and the journey forward by Samson Cree Nation and what this study aims to contribute to the scholarly record. For Nipisihkopahk and their journey to enact their sovereignty, this is only the beginning as they challenge the settler state through their traditional governance and deliberative law enacted by the Elders of our Nation.

Throughout this gathering of knowledge, I draw from Indigenous scholars who have paved the way forward for the enhancement of Indigenous studies and well-being. I draw inspiration from their efforts and learn from their experiences as I begin to realize my role within academia and my community. I acknowledge those who I have come to know and am grateful for the tobacco laid down and prayers sent to the spirit world that brought us together. This work is written in a colonial language for numerous reasons. First, English has been the primary language forced upon us to learn and on June 21, 2016, Nêhiyawêwin became the official language of Maskwacîs. Our hope is that one day the work completed will be entirely in Nêhiyawêwin but until then, my goal was to allow them to utilize works such as these as they endeavor to learn about their pasts. As well, this is not to exclude settlers who aim to learn from us and gather insight into our understanding of the world. However, this does not give them permission to speak on behalf of our Nation and experiences. This work is endured through countless hopes and prayers.

## 1.2 Pakoseyimowin ekwa Ahyaminawin: Hope and Prayer

Nimosôm Jerry Saddleback stated that we were given the two most important and powerful gifts by Creator, hope and prayer. “Hope and prayer, are more than enough” for the Nêhiyawak. It is through hope and prayer that I found myself within the opportunity that I never anticipated. Prayer is not the religious definition that many today know, rather prayer for the Nêhiyawak lies in the interconnection of all of creation and where Creator is a part of us and not separate. As well, it is through prayer that we can converse with spirits and ancestors of the past as they have never left us. I prayed for an opportunity to provide my services to my nation through any means that they saw fit. I

prayed for the ability to work with Elders who would be able to guide me and show how me where I needed to go. I prayed to the ancestors of the past and those not yet born to allow me to converse with them, even if I could not hear them in my physical body. I prayed that I would not lose myself within my deep uncertainty of the academy. I prayed that I could utilize my position as an opportunity for change not only for my community but within the uneasiness of the western institution. Western institutions are positivist in nature and much discussion of spirituality and ceremony never cross the paths of many disciplines leaving the inability to conceptualize the views and perceptions that Indigenous peoples hold. All of this made no sense to me until I reflected on my initial beginning as a student.

What brought me to Western University will only reveal itself in the process of my journey towards the Spirit World. As Brian Lighting told me once, “We are all getting a little closer to immortality.” I think Creator can put everyone on paths that we need to endure so we can not only grow but also develop into the people that we need to be, not only as Indigenous but non-Indigenous as well. To be Indigenous is beautiful. To be an Indigenous woman is powerful. An Indigenous descendant knows they are never truly alone. However, to be an Indigenous academic means you need to hold onto everything that makes you intrinsically distinct, while navigating the hierarchy of domination that aims to destroy you as positivist pedagogies are ranked superior. Maintaining the integrity of our culture and views of our self as Indigenous peoples is needed as my experience had endured the continual skepticism of Indigenous knowledge within the institution and whether we are academic or Indigenous, and never the two. Not all Indigenous people in academia experience this, as I hope that there are institutions that realize the insight our knowledge as Indigenous people forwards.

When I was admitted to the doctoral program, I had a limited scope of what I wanted to research, and quite honestly, I was not sure if academia was for me, as I preferred to be inside museums discussing what heritage and culture mean from an Indigenous perspective. Manitow has plans for us, and I have faith in what is envisioned for me. Indigenous scholars conduct research in a means that follows suit to our people’s intellectual traditions and specifically, “Our work is embedded in community” (Simpson 2008:17). Indigenous academics spend time connecting to the land, raising lifelong



relationships with knowledge holders, and learning and using our language and intellectual traditions (Simpson 2008:17).

Shawn Wilson is Opaskwayak Cree from Northern Manitoba and in his book *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, forwards that the Indigenous journey into research and academia is intrinsically tied to kihci-isîhchikêwin, ceremony, as we are forwarding knowledge obtained in ahyaminawin, prayer, and nacinekewin, protocol. I never fully grasped what he was referring to until I embarked on a similar experience. With that knowledge in mind, I kept it very simple; I was going to record Âcimowina, oral narratives, of the Nêhiyaw Nation and express the methodological approach and custom of how to share cultural knowledge. With my position as a student in mind and as I realized my growth into my role as a wiser, though often questioned, kîsopikiwak, adult, is essential to my learning and this study.

My roots are found in the territory of Maskwacîs, Bear Hills (see Appendix 6). Maskwa, means bear, wachiy, forwards the notion of a big hill, and -is (and -ihk) indicates a locative. Maskwa Wachi-is Ininiwak or Maskwacheesihk Wiyiniwak, with both Ininiwak and Wiyiniwak indicating people, are my people and many of whom I learned from are Peyakowehaman, family. As late Nêhiyaw and Maskwacîs scholar Yvonne Dion-Buffalo expresses, family is:

To share, to love. Family also meant kahkiyaw, all her living family members: grandmothers, mother, aunts, sisters, grandfathers, father, brothers, and uncles. Kin ties who shared in the teaching and guiding of all of us throughout our lives. She said, “They, too circle like wolves, ready to crush anyone or anything that would hurt anyone of us. Take my word for it, my entire network of extended family would not let our people down” (1996: 90).

Maskwacîs is comprised of four Nations within the territory: Nipisihkopahk, Land of the Willows, which is known also as Samson Cree Nation; Neyaskeweyak, An Opening in the Forest, which is Ermineskin Cree Nation; Kisehpatinow, On the Edge of the Hill, which is Louis Bull Tribe; and Ahkamihk, Across the River, for Montana First Nation. The population totals 8,436 citizens in Samson alone, with 15,903 in total living in Maskwacîs. I am a Nîpisîhkopâwiyiniw, Willow Cree person, though often I utilize the term Paskwawiniwak, meaning Prairie people, and this is another term used for the Nêhiyawak. Paskwâwinîmowin, is the "Y"-dialect of our language, though we typically

use the term Nêhiyawêwin today. The names for each reserve reflect how we observed and came to know geographical features within our landscape and were aware of our physical surroundings. We are aware of our environments and knew Paskwâwiyinînhk, our Nêhiyawak country, well. This knowledge is reflected in the location of many areas. Otôskwanîhk refers to Calgary at the elbow, with sâkitawâhk referring to the town of Peace River as the mouth of the river, and Nistawâyâw referring to Fort McMurray as the merging of three rivers. Knowledge of geographical locations for place names were common but place names also included where major events or relationships were enacted such as Amiskwaciwâskahikan, Edmonton, referring to Beaver Mountain House or Fort Edmonton where people traded furs for European goods, or Wetaskiwin meaning Peace Hills and where the Nêhiyawak entered peace with the Blackfoot, now a city 18km north of Maskwacîs.

The Nêhiyawak were informed about our surroundings and those that we came to know including ayahchiyiniw, members of other Nations or our enemies or those who became ostracized from other camps. The term used to refer to the Gros Ventre is pâwistikowiyiniwak and means People of the Rapids, and the name today is a misconception of the reality. The Nêhiyaw called them pâwistikowiyiniwak because of where they were located along the South Saskatchewan River in present day southwestern Saskatchewan. The pâwistikowiyiniwak would illustrate through their hand gestures that they were People of the Falls making a downward movement. The French misinterpreted this to mean “big belly.” The pâwistikowiyiniwak are the A’aninin, White Clay People, and are seen in historical narratives of the prairies in their alliance with the Blackfoot Confederacy. As interesting as it is to learn about other Indigenous Nations, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) states that Indigenous peoples will rarely study outside their own Nation in respect to the fact that we do not represent each other and we do not speak for one another unless asked to do. It is to allow the Indigenous nation to be their own voice, and this is in respect to differing world views and political and legal stances that are not universal for every Indigenous nation. However, as you read further into the history of the Nêhiyaw people, we will reveal a multicultural narrative of the Nêhiyaw’s close alliances.

I first met Pat Buffalo in a meeting alongside my mother who has worked as a court advocate in Maskwacîs for the past eighteen years. Aware of the intent of my research as I talked about in great lengths to my parents and grandpa, my mom approached Pat to see if this was something that interested him. Pat is the chair of the Justice and Legal Department and Councilor for Samson Cree Nation, and holds the view that Indigenous peoples cannot have justice without healing. In August of 2015, I along with two others were to assist the Justice and Legal Department at Samson Cree Nation as they intended to develop a series of laws that are essential to our well-being within the reserve and follow core teachings such as miyo-pimâtisiwin, living the good life or good mind. As I set out to understand traditional governance, I learned that initiatives such as what Pat wanted were not new. The written constitution of Samson Cree Nation has now been created over four times but none of the constitutions created have ever become affirmed by the Nation. At present Samson Cree Nation has seventeen current and pending “By-Laws.” I am not trained in law but I informed the department that I was not there to create new laws. We decided very early on, that we would no longer use the term by-law as that indicates a weak municipal type governing system, and if we truly are a sovereign nation than these are laws we are presenting and these are integral to our constitutional order. I was simply forwarding how we came to understand our world through teachings and philosophical concepts. This could only be achieved through extensive work and collaboration with our Nation’s Elders.

Co-producing a document that would protect our interests as a Nation was never the plan, but I was asked to do so. This was what my Nation needed rather than to have me approach them with my own research interests. I allowed my Nation the ability to direct and guide my research and while this is not applicable to every researcher, I felt responsible to have my people direct me to answer questions for them. Indigenous scholars hold their Nation’s with great regard as we have witnessed the struggle to be heard in multiple regards especially within law and education. The main research goal set out to determine how the Nêhiyaw enacted traditional governance in a time before colonial stipulations and by what methods or techniques was this achievable. Drawing from Indigenous scholars in North America and abroad, the Elders and I learned how sovereignty and self-government are enacted by other Indigenous Nations. The collective

of Elders and I utilized archival material available through our community museum, however, the sources that you will read in this study come from Indigenous and Nêhiyaw scholars who came before me. The collective of Elders that I worked with agreed that only limited new material from our discussions and interviews would be presented and this was to protect the intellectual property and ownership of our knowledge. In addition, every law that was written was not approved until the Elders had read through it. I utilized Elders within Samson Cree Nation, but as it would be, I could not help but extend the invitation to those outside including the other three nations and beyond.

Samson Cree Nation is a reserve 70km outside the City of Edmonton that has over the last few decades frequently appeared in media and news outlets for detrimental and negative experiences. As much as we face social issues and poverty, the underlying reasons are linked to the foundations of colonialism and cultural genocide that we face constantly; this affects our understanding of personhood. To better the circumstances that Samson Cree Nation faces, the Justice and Legal Department through guidance of the Elders positioned themselves as the legal authority of Samson Cree Nation, as we assembled to create and produce a written and legal constitutional order that affirmed the laws that were created. By doing this, the aim of the initiative was to better various aspects of life within the reserve including mental health and well-being. To address the impacts of colonial violence that Indigenous peoples experience through the Canadian judicial system, the collective of Elders forwards core teachings and values held by the Nêhiyawak people to our community. These essential foundations of how the Nêhiyawak view their world allowed for a resurgence of self in relation to the whole of the community. Nêhiyaw governance lies in the social responsibilities and roles of relationships that set out rules and regulations of how to live accordingly together as a collective and meaningful nation. The authority therefore, lies in the collective voice of the Elders, as I situated them in power positions as they are the knowledge holders who need to fulfill their roles to our community as they transfer their knowledge.

However, to begin the initiative of writing laws, I needed to understand, what makes us distinct as Nêhiyawak. Specifically, what does it mean to be Nêhiyaw and be part of this Indigenous Nation? What knowledge is needed to share with not only ourselves but the settler state that infringe on our right to sovereignty by their continued

dominance through hierarchical worldviews and political, social, and legal frameworks. With protocol in hand, my brother and I went to every Elder's house in Samson Cree Nation and invited them to a meeting to speak on behalf of the Justice and Legal Department. The protocol is, as late Elder Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw from Onion Lake, Saskatchewan:

When a young person goes in search of knowledge about something, either about [something secret like] the pipe ceremony, or when he cuts off tobacco for an elder, when he is going to offer up the food, he places these two [tobacco and cloth] first so that the old man will hear and take pity upon the one who goes to cut off tobacco for him. Now amongst these which Our Father has made, for tobacco to be the foremost, he endowed the tobacco with supernatural powers, that is why the tobacco is given the foremost position, the first place, in the way in which one places one's reliance for something upon an elder, or upon an old woman, when you are going to buy medicine from them, "These will be first for now, these occupy the foremost place," that is what the elders used to say (1998:121).

In my request of knowledge, I gave tobacco to female Elders, many of whom are the matriarchs of their families. Through custom I was not able to ask men directly unless a male family member gave protocol on my behalf. Of the one hundred and twenty-seven (127) Elders (in 2015) we have in Samson Cree Nation, only thirty-three (33) attended; only eight (8) returned after we asked them back. These eight Elders, would form the collective group of decision makers, and through one way or another, I would learn that they were tied to me through Mihchetoskan, Blood lines, and Wahkohtahew, new ties. What I was enacting is the very foundation of Nêhiyaw society and way of life; I was rebuilding my kinship structure through customary law by reaffirming my relationship to each Elder. Together we brought forward the foundation of our Nation through their sharing of knowledge found in teachings, beliefs, oral narratives, and their personal stories that shaped their experiences throughout time as this is how we maintain and continue knowledge to be shared amongst each other. Nation as I use throughout this work refers to both the Nêhiyawak Nation who is distinct in their culture and language in a specific territory, and Samson Cree Nation who is part of the Nêhiyawak Nation but is its own distinct collective today that follows the traditional order as a group of people under a Chief and his respective headmen, matriarchs, and Elders. This work is essential to not only understanding the methods utilized in collaboration and building relationships

between academics and Indigenous Peoples but also the mindset the Nêhiyaw Nation uphold and value to all of creation.

I attempted to bring forward teachings of our past but I realized an integral component of my initiative – I was never in charge and I do not think any of us really were.

### 1.3 Mihchetoskan ekwa Wahkohtahew: Blood Lines and New Ties

Family is an important aspect of Nêhiyawak life as evident in the law of Wâhkôtowin, referring to relationship and kinship. Kinship ties and relationships are important to maintaining a sense of self and family. Wâhkôtowin is a fundamental principle relating to the phrase kahkiyaw niwahkomakana, “all my relations” and holds us accountable to all of creation and one another. To describe what family means there is a deep understanding of how we relate to those around us; mihchetoskan means that are many blood lines or clans involved, and refers to the genealogy of one’s self, but we can also establish wahkohtahew, meaning that we take an individual and treat them as family.

As Regna Darnell forwards in her article “Cree Semantics as Interaction” kin terms have been used as often for non-relatives as for relatives (1995:39). Nêhiyaw kinship terminology is dynamic and changes throughout various circumstances, but it is never as static and fixed as many anthropologists believed. Where research focused on kinship attempts to present only blood relations, it often leaves out the ability to create meaningful relationships with those who are not family. Many genealogical relatives are called by terms indicating closer biological relationship than in fact existed. Kinship as a social fact, manipulable per situational context and personal intimacy, and is far more significant than mere biology (Darnell 1995:39). Therefore, for the Nêhiyawak, non-relatives can be fit into positions that would be held by relatives, and are dependent on the individual after agreement between both individuals. Kinship for the Nêhiyaw relies on the properties of a valued social relationship and no closure of the relationship will occur as the relationship is ongoing through time (Darnell 1995: 44). This ability to relate oneself to others is essential to understanding how we as Nêhiyawak treat one another, even those who are Mônîyâw, meaning not of us or white people. One may think freely

for their self but it is through our conception of family and law of wâhkôtowin, relationships that we realize our actions and thoughts impact not only ourselves but the entirety of our community.

Relationships are important as it presents how knowledge is transferred and where it comes from. I do not use any fictive names or pseudonyms for those I worked with, and this is because for Nêhiyaw culture we trace the knowledge through oral footnotes; this allows us to honour not only the individual but how they individually obtain the knowledge through protocol and making meaningful relationships. By acknowledging the Elders I worked with, I also revere the gift of tobacco and the ancestors who allowed this knowledge to continue to flow from one generation to the next. To confuse the names would confuse the spirits that accompany this knowledge as any Indigenous research is ceremony.

It is within this understanding of family that we reveal the core of the Nêhiyaw Nation. Residential schools and the mandatory approval from the Indian Agent to leave the reserve impacted the clan systems; it did not dismantle how Nipisihkopahk maintained knowledge of relationships. Relationship did not rely solely on consanguines and affines, rather it rested on the framework of community obligations and the essential interdependence of all people (all living beings) (Darnell 1995: 45-46). For the Nêhiyawak, cross and parallel relations are crucial in the parent generation because of ties to marriage partners in one's own generation. First cousins often referred to one another as brother and sister and maintained the kinship terminology used by both lineages to refer to one another as parents, grandparents, etc., except in cases of cross-cousins through the term nêcimos, as it refers to 'my cross-cousin of the opposite sex' (Darnell 1995:46). The term also means "sweetheart" and should be used with caution when referring to first cousins and possible courtships. With that said, many of the Elders that I worked with, through my grandmother Grace Swampy continued the relationships between their selves and myself, as if they were my biological grandparent. These customs reflect the importance of family networks that extend out of the immediate as we are taught to not plan for future events because we never know when Creator will call us home. The relationships that I affirmed with the collective of Elders reveal insights into

how we are related and if we were not, how we established a relationship. The following paragraphs introduce you as the reader, to the Elders that assisted this study.

My paternal *mosôm*, grandpa, is Chris Johnson, and since we were children he has made it very clear that my siblings and I call him grandpa, as *mosôm* makes him feel old. However, though he has never stated it, it is also since he does not wish what he experienced in residential school to impact his grandchildren. His parents were James Johnson and Mary (Wakeno) Johnson (see Appendix 1). Growing up my father would often hear people call the Johnsons “scripts.” Script was a way to extinguish the Aboriginal title of the Métis by awarding a certificate redeemable for land or money of either 160 or 240 acres or dollars, and was dependent on age and status. In *Behind the man: John Laurie, Ruth Gorman, and the Indian Vote in Canada* by Ruth Gorman, the Johnson name comes up in what would become “The Hobbema Case.” Legally, it is reported as (1957) 7 DLR (2d) at 745 (Alta. Dist. Ct.) under the title of “Reference to Section 9 of the Indian Act re: certain members of the Samson Indian Band, Hobbema, Alberta” (2007:155).

Eviction of scripts on the reserve was due to a grudge held against three families. The Johnson and Lightning families were under scrutiny by Chief Saddleback who created a petition to have the families removed since one of the families was the Royal Canadian Mountain Police’s Scout who had arrested the Chief’s son for drinking (Gorman 2007:153). At the time, these scouts were technically policemen, but did not carry the authority of the name. Chief Saddleback believed that the scout should have not reported his son and should have not disgraced the family. To punish the Johnson and Lightning families, the Chief would have them removed, and argued that they had taken script. The reserve had forwarded that an ancestor to the Johnsons had received script. Tracing back and digging through archival records, a hand-written document by Colonel MacLeod, the famed Mountie who gave Fort Calgary its name, and was one of the scrip commissioners at the time stated, “Application denied as I believe this person is a treaty Indian” (Gorman 2007:159).

Grandpa Chris is a strong male figure in my life and has offered me guidance through many life experiences. He raised my father by himself starting when my father Paul was only twelve years old. Those years together solidified their bond, and my



grandpa only ever listens to him. Since I was a teenager he and my father and I would play a round of golf with each other on the weekend, especially after I would return home for the summers from university. Grandpa never wanted us to call him Nimosôm and was wary if we would speak Nêhiyawêwin to him, but this is not because he does not uphold our culture. As I noticed when I was a child, he does not say, “I love you.” The effects of residential school have impacted how he reacts to affection, but though he does not say it, it is clear his love is expressed in his actions.

He has taught me about love through his own experiences after the breakdown of his relationship with my grandmother Ginger Wildcat. His voice calms me in the hardest of times. He told me once that he did not know his parents, and I never asked him for more insight, and I respected the small pieces he has opened to me. He wears his championship Hawk’s ring on his left hand and it accompanies his gold watch. He was the Maskwacîs Hawks Jr. A Hockey team’s manager during the 1970s. He did not marry until he was almost thirty and recounts his time as a wildfire firefighter, land manager for Natural Resources for our Nation, and importantly, as he advanced his studies at night while working at the Ermineskin Indian Residential School. John Stienbach, a teacher and now a family friend who showed him golf for the very first time, tutored him. Grandpa assisted me in finding kêhtê-ayak, Elders, to work with and he told me to ask my other grandfathers.

Nimosôm Victor Bruno has been married to Nohkôm, my grandmother, Sophie for over fifty years and their union is one of the very last customary marriages of our people in Maskwacîs. “December 3, 1964 was when our parents decided that we would marry, we had to have a quick marriage however because she was still in school and underage. We married January 8, 1965” (December 24, 2016). Nimosôm Victor is first cousin to my maternal late grandmother Grace Swampy and therefore, through kinship relations making him and Sophie my grandparents (see Appendix 3). Nimosôm Victor is a wise man and speaks about his experiences through life as guidance to understanding how the Reserve has come to be. He was our first Fire Chief in Samson Cree Nation and in 1979 became a councilor. He is sincere in his approach to discussions and thinks before he speaks; when he does speak, it is in a helpful manner that calls for self-reflection. Nimosôm Victor and Nohkôm Sophie have ten children, five boys and five

girls. Together they complement each other. Nohkôm Sophie is such a strong and vibrant woman, and I hope that one day, I can be as powerful and liberating as she is. Though cautious at first, when I explained that this work is not only mine but all ours, she made sure we would get where we needed to be. Her encouragement is reflected within this work, and having supported her daughter Shauna Bruno and her niece Claudine Louis as they completed their doctoral degrees in 2010 and 2014 respectively, she was avid to ensure that I would obtain mine. I think Shauna's description of her parents sums up quite brilliantly their demeanor:

“My dad, a tall man and of fairly large build, talked about law, politics, health, religion, spirituality, humility, work ethics, relationships, and I'm sure other topics I cannot recall at the moment. He had challenges in life but it has been his strength through such experiences that has brought teachings into my life. My dad grew up in poverty along with 14 siblings. My grandfather, Mosôm Bruno, was also a tall and big man. I remember Mosôm's towering stature and his beautiful silver and white braided hair. When he spoke, people listened. There was meaning and substance in what he shared. Similarly, my dad, an Elder now, shares many good series, mainly stories about how to live a good life. His knowledge is blended with contemporary and traditional Cree knowledge; it is his and my mother's perspective and teachings that I respect and listen to the most. They are the consistent teachers in my life” (Bruno 2010:16-17).

Nohkôm Sophie's knowledge of the child welfare system and women's teachings were vital to understanding how our children are the core of our Nation's well-being.

Nimosôm Victor's parents were late Fred and Katie Bruno. Nohkôm Sophie's parents were late Louie and Mary Yellowbird. Victor and Sophie are amazing people who are devoted to their children and grandchildren.

The first time I met Nimosôm George Saddleback, White Eagle, I was a teenager and then again, the week I began my gathering of knowledge. Our first open meeting with the Elders as part of the Justice Department did not go as planned; quite simply, it became an open band meeting and the Elders let Chief and Council know why they were upset. The meeting initially was to engage with the Elders of Samson Cree Nation with the initiative of bringing forward what is traditional governance and if we could establish laws needed for our Nation. However, we did not even get to the intention of the gathering as Nimosôm George let his voice be heard about the lack of respect to the community by elected leaders. I knew then that he was someone who cares for his Nation

and wants only the best for our people. He requested a councilor to step down from their position, as he never attends community functions or meetings; I could not help but think he was right. He is direct and provides valuable insight into lack of political integrity and accountability not only within our reserve but how the Federal and Provincial governments have treated us. As a former councilor for the Nation, both he and Victor assisted me in understanding the work that they did and how the Government of Alberta and Government of Canada have impacted our autonomy.

Nimosôm George and Nohkôm Celina, Angel Woman, are from a very cultural family. The Saddlebacks in our nation are spiritual and cultural keepers of our traditions and one of few families that still know their clan. Like Nimosôm Victor, Nimosôm George is a first cousin to my Grandmother Grace through marriage. Nimosôm George and Nohkôm Celina are often on the powwow trail and have adopted relatives in Arizona, Montana, Saskatchewan, and Germany. They too are one of the last arranged marriages within Maskwacîs. They counsel me on various levels as an academic, as a woman, and as a Nêhiyaw. Nohkôm Celina is quiet but when she speaks she is prolific and has a gentle and soft demeanor.

Our storyteller throughout our work is Nimosôm Jerry Saddleback, whose eldest brother is George. Nimosôm Jerry admits that his brother is very much more direct than he is, often too direct. He can captivate you in story and ensure that what you are learning is essential to your understanding of self. He is the Dean of Culture at Maskwacîs Cultural College (MCC) in Maskwacîs and has an amazing depth to his mind that holds our teachings and ways of life. Theresa Wildcat during the 1970s interviewed various Elders from Maskwacîs at MCC and Nimosôm Jerry appears through many of these interviews as an interpreter. His knowledge is extensive and essential to understanding who we are as Nêhiyawak. His oral narratives were complemented with insight from Nohkôm Cecilia Saddleback.

Nohkôm Cecilia (Wildcat) Saddleback, Omisimaw, the Elder Sister, is my paternal grandmother Ginger Wildcat's sister and has been vital to education within Maskwacîs. As an advocate for the integration of Nêhiyawêwin within the school system on the reserve, Nohkôm Cecilia has spent over thirty years educating our youth. Currently, she is the Elder for the Grace Marie Swampy Memorial School that educates

primary school students. With her knowledge of the language and ability to translate the higher form of Nêhiyawêwin used in ceremony, she assisted this initiative through various levels of depth regarding spirituality and knowledge in relation to our family lineage (see Appendix 2).

My great grandparents were George Piché and Emma Child. Emma Child (1925-1991) was the daughter of Patrick Child (1888-1970) and Betsy Mary Roasting (1894-1964). Patrick Child was the son of Alexander Littlechild (1861-1939) and Eugenie (Jenny) Cardinal (1859-?) whose first husband was killed during the “Frog Lake Massacre.” Eugenie’s parents were Pierre Jacob Cardinal (1844-1920) and Agnes Letendre Batoche (1843-1917). Betsy Mary Roasting was the daughter of Samuel Wapahow Roasting and Jennette Ward. However, the family tree that is significant for our understanding of Maskwacîs and the Four Nations is that of my great grandfather George Piché (1923-2000). George’s parents were David Piché (1865-1917) and Marguerite Victorine Dion (1898-1974). Marguerite’s parents were P Bladion (Dion) Buffalo (1855-1944) and Catherine Peggy Allard (1856-1945). Pierrus Dion (born before 1841) was the father of P Bladion. David Piché’s father was Chief Jean Baptiste Piché or Chief Ermineskin (1839-1921). Chief Ermineskin’s parents were French fur trader Louis Piché (passed away August 13, 1843) and Magdeline O’Piastewis (born around 1795) who was from the Ahenakew family. Chief Ermineskin’s brother was Chief Bobtail who spent time away from what would become Maskwacîs to live in Siksika, which is four hours south near present day Gleichen, Alberta, and was fluent in the Blackfoot language. Chief Bobtail would later return and establish a reserve for those from Montana State and name it after them; this is Montana First Nation established in 1899. David Piché’s sister Marian Sikak Piché would marry Chief Muddy Bull who eventually became the Chief of Louis Bull. Chief Samson was also first cousin to Ermineskin and Chief Bobtail and was given land to establish his own reserve after Bobtail made the initial location to where we have come to know it today. Understanding the past of our people allows for us to understand our presence in Canadian history and to situate Indigenous narratives of the past.

Derwin Okeynan is vital to my understanding of the Nation I am from. His oral narratives have shed light into understanding Chief Samson and how we governed our

people and he was prepared to discuss various topics that he has studied and come to know. His participation assisted me in understanding lived experiences of the injustice inflicted onto our reserve and people. Though I was aware of experiences that affect our well being he has constantly proved that he understands the socio-economic plight of our reserve through the constraints he has witnessed not only through our Band Councils but also through the Royal Canadian Mountain Police and Government Agencies. Though I am unaware as to whether he is my grandfather, he stepped into the role of a kêhtê-ayak because he wants the best for our Nation and our People, and became Nimosôm through his support and encouragement.<sup>2</sup>

As you may have noticed, my family ties do not solely lie within Samson Cree Nation, but also in the Ermineskin Cree Nation and Louis Bull Tribe (see Appendix 2). I was eighteen years old when I first met my uncle Joseph Deschamps. Joey, as I have come to know him has affirmed a friendship with my grandpa Chris as he is related to my family through my paternal grandmother's side. Together they travelled to South Dakota and Montana when my dad was a child. Grandpa Chris and Joey are exceptionally brilliant when they are together and both have been influential in my health and well being. Joey has assisted in various graduate student projects (Poirier 2008; Louis 2010) and is a well renowned knowledge holder utilized by the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, and Royal Alberta Museum, Edmonton. It is also through my paternal grandmother's side that I have come to know Nimosôm Gordon Lee.

Nimosôm Gordon is from Ermineskin Cree Nation and was once Chief. He was the interpreter to late Chief Robert (Bobtail) Smallboy who established the Mountain Cree Camp, commonly known as the Smallboy Camp in 1967 with Lazarus Roan. The intent of the camp was to minimize outside deterrents to Nêhiyawak values and principles that are reflected in spiritual and philosophical beliefs held in ceremony. In addition, Nimosôm Gordon has not shied away from being present in discussions and advocating for Aboriginal Rights. He along with my grandfather Wilton Littlechild have been pivotal in Maskwacîs in respect to advocating Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution Act. Section 35 of the Constitution Act states:

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<sup>2</sup> I extended social relationships to Derwin and refer to him as my grandfather.

35. (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.
- (2) In this Act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.
- (3) For greater certainty, in subsection (1) "treaty rights" includes rights that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.
- (4) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the aboriginal and treaty rights referred to in subsection (1) are guaranteed equally to male and female persons.

Nimosôm Gordon's knowledge of past government policies and mechanisms of protection as Indigenous peoples assisted me greatly through various aspects of my endeavor.

These individuals are important to me for various reasons and to express it in words will do no justice but they are the very reason that I could learn and document what we envisioned to produce. I am nothing without them. With them, I can obtain anything. Family is not only the bonds that one has through blood relations since it is the ability to enter new relationships that are meaningful and supportive. For the Nêhiyaw their ability to create new relationships and learn from their relatives and acquaintances is important to remember as the work progresses into Chapter Two and Chapter Five. Relationships forge the way the Nêhiyaw act in familial settings but also diplomatic partnerships as well. While I could work with the kêtê-ayak there are those others who were essential to my narrative.

My parents are Paul, Little Bird, and Luci Johnson. My father's parents are Chris Johnson and Ginger Wildcat. My mother's parents are late Frederick Michael Hodgson and Grace Swampy. Grace's parents were Sara and Magnus Swampy and they were married in custom when Sara was fourteen years old. Sara was the daughter of Peggy Joshua and John Wellington Lee. John Wellington Lee was a Welsh man. Magnus was Nakoda from Morley and the Nakoda are part of the Lakota Nation. His parents were James Swampy and Mary Chiniki. James Swampy was one of three brothers who left their territory in Manitoba to explore, and one stopped in Louisiana, one stopped in Montana, and one came to call Morley home back in Canada. Frederick Michael's parents were Frederick Kenneth Hodgson and Melvina (Mina) Minde. Nimosôm Jerry once told me that the last name Minde was given to spiritual people who could see vastly

into the world Creator gifted us. The Minde name is about their minds and how deep and interconnected they were with Creator.

However, none of this makes sense unless I present myself. Nîya sîpihkokîsikowiskwew, I am Blue Sky Woman. I am a descendant of the Paskwawiniwak, the Prairie People, of the Nêhiyawak, Four-Body People, Nation, and reside in the territory of Maskwacîs within the borders of Treaty 6 negotiated in 1876. I am a citizen of Samson Cree Nation though the Government of Canada will refer to me as 4440167805 (with 4440 referring to Samson Cree Nation, 1678 referring to my family Johnson under my father Paul, and 05 meaning I was the fifth member of my Johnson family). My family lineages extend outward and have given me the ability to learn not only from my immediate relations but also from those that fulfill their roles as grandmothers and grandfathers. The sun and the four fundamental laws of the east, south, west, and north direct me. I belong to the land but am gifted by the stars. I am learning to see into the other minds within myself. The ability to see into the realm that Creator gave us is an important aspect of becoming a Kêhtê-ayak, an Old One, as they are our knowledge keepers and have developed the ability to expand their minds and retain much of our pasts, our lineages, and our being. We cannot look to anyone with as much respect and gratitude without acknowledging that the process of mihchetoskan, family genealogy, and wahkohtahew, establishing new kinship, and how I came to know and build relationships with individuals who fulfilled their roles, not only to me as family, but as Elders to the community of Maskwacîs.

### 1.3.1 The Kêhtê-ayak: The Old Ones

In academia, scholars have been trained to understand their primary and secondary sources to get an understanding of who has written them and why they are of importance. In Nêhiyaw culture, the primary and secondary source material comes from living individuals who cannot be called historians. The idea of history or historians is unheard of, since there is no word for “history” in the Western sense for the Nêhiyaw (Wheeler 2005: 201 citing Wilson 1998, paper presented at the Western History Association). Instead, pasts, as I will refer to them, link to our ancestors and are told through various types of stories found in oral narratives and many of them overlap each

other. The Nêhiyaw have two common forms of stories called âtayôhkêwina and âcimowina; where âtayôhkêwina are sacred stories of how the world was shaped, when pisiskiwak, animals, and humans could talk, and when Wîsahêcâhk transformed the world of misadventure, love, and mischief we have come to know today and where âcimowina account a time after Wîsahêcâhk (Wheeler 2010: 48). Storytellers teach lessons about greed, respect, and humility, to name a few; many use Wîsahêcâhk as the main character as he is a cultural hero amongst the Nêhiyaw (Innes 2013). It must be noted however that one cannot simply go in and out of Old People's lives without establishing bonds, familiarities, and reciprocal relationships with them. The Old People are living sources and their ways of knowing and teaching must be considered within their own contexts (Wheeler 2010). From how they understand the world around them to the cultural values and laws that they live by, the Old People are strong in their roles as keepers of community knowledge (Wheeler 2010).

Kêhtê-ayak can be a kisêyiniw, Elder, or kisêyiniwak, Elders, who stand by their Nation as people who have demonstrated throughout their lives generosity, skills, and wisdom (Wheeler 2010: 48). Late Alex Bonias from the Little Pine First Nation in Saskatchewan gave the analogy that a kisêyiniw is like a duck beating on the ground with its wings to distract a potentially dangerous predator, thus giving its little ones enough time to run and hide (Wheeler 2010: 48). Kisêyiniw is derived from the word "kisêwew" which means protector, and therefore, an Elder does not only teach valuable lessons but protects the young as they encircle themselves around their children and grandchildren (Wheeler 2010: 48). With the greatest respect, the kêhtê-ayak would tell stories for the youth to ponder and think about or ones that were told with great exuberance. If the youth did not believe the kêhtê-ayak, the Elder would stick a knife in the ground and state to his audience, "If you do not believe what I say, you can use this knife on me" (McLeod 2007:12). Many of the Old People were hesitant to claim that they completely knew the oral story and began with namôya mistahi ê-kiskêyihitamân, "I do not know very much," or used the phrase to emphasise their own limitations (McLeod 2007: 15-16). Being humble is a core value and Grandfather Teaching of our culture. Storytellers would acknowledge how they came to know a story, and statements such as "my father had told me," indicating an "oral footnote," like Western culture's bibliography (McLeod 2007:



16). Filled with compassion, empathy, and kindness, the Old People are the embodiment of Nêhiyaw culture.

## 1.4 Nêhiyawîhtwâwin, the Four-Body Culture, is Intergenerational, Collective, and Lived

Nêhiyaw scholar Neal McLeod in his piece *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Time* acknowledges Louise Halfe's collections of poems from *Blue Marrow*. Her opening poem begins: "The walk began before I was a seed. / My mother strung my umbilical cord in my moccasins" (McLeod 2007: 8 citing Halfe *Blue Marrow* 1). The poem gives reference to how we walk with the 'Ancient Ones' and those who have given us our place within the world today (2007:8). As we walk with our ancestors, we reveal a depth of meaning associated to our understanding of connected being. Where we exist within the continuity of the past. Kîwetinohk kacakastek, refers to the Northern Lights, but it means the ghosts are dancing. Our belief is that the northern lights are our deceased loved ones' dancing in the heavens; thus, an individual learns to respect this natural phenomenon, and additionally, that we are never to whistle to them as this is a form of disrespect and the northern lights will come closer as the whistle sound is heard in the spirit world (Swampy 1981:26). Our round dances are in respect to their presence in our night's sky, and as we dance below, you can see the ancestors dance in the sky.

As we hold onto the memory of those before us, we also honour the memory of how we came to be. Our stories, our songs, and our Nêhiyawîhtwâwin, Four-Body custom or culture, is a collective memory. Where "collective memory is a gift and a responsibility, an intergenerational process" and to allow it to grow and flourish requires commitment to learn it and share with those that have yet to be exposed to its power. Where our traditions and customs including knowledge of our being, oral narratives, songs, teachings, and language are passed down. To obtain knowledge is essential to understand and value the experience as this is a process that requires commitment and for the learner to recognize the gift of its existence. As McLeod affirms this is part of decolonizing Nêhiyaw consciousness where the collective memory of our people must be

awakened (2007: 9). Though difficult, it is not impossible to share Nêhiyawîhtwâwin with each other through memory, as our memory gives insight into the history of our people.

While the Nêhiyaw may think that collective memory is the stories passed down through generations from grandparents to grandchildren, it goes further by putting our lives into a larger context (McLeod 2007: 11). Within these contexts emerges how each memory linked to oral narrative and teachings encapsulates our experiences in the present, meaning their significance and use will shift over time or through individuals since narratives are always being reinterpreted as, “Narratives have been the basis for understanding Cree experiences” (Preston 1975:3). The late Anthropologist Keith Basso in his work *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (2010) furthers this notion of time and shift in stories as he acknowledges that the Western Apache recognize landscape as a living teller of their narratives so that they can learn from them when needed and interpret through individual experience. These are the counseling aspects of oral narratives that allow Indigenous peoples to heal themselves through learning by human action and from other world beings. How we counsel is representative of this process as Elders may give guidance or hold accountable an individual through narratives of their past. Elders will not solely state what the individual has done wrong or needs to reflect on but allow the individual to discover this for their selves. Where questions of one’s morality linked to better judgment become the overall intent since an individual must change their self and be held accountable for their breach of ill-intent. A Nêhiyaw is healthy, strong, and whole. A Nêhiyaw must account for the health of their mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional self. Learning through “Narrative Inquiry” is essential as Nêhiyaw knowledge is a way of living (Bruno 2010: 50).

Narrative inquiry is where “humans make meaning of experiences” (Clandinin and Connelly 1988: 24). Lived experiences are essential to understanding Nêhiyaw knowledge transfer and worldview. Kisê-manitow reveal elements of our personhood through what is presented to us within our lives, which is essentially a conduit of our existence to understand the world and social, economic, political, etc. landscapes we have come to know. Lived experiences therefore are “storied lives” of an individual that are

holistic, where a phenomenon is addressed, and where respect of the process and all those that come involved occurs (Bruno 2010: 51). The telling of one's experiences expresses a process for the participant and Nation to grow and develop which ultimately allows for empowerment (Bruno 2010: 51). Lived experiences are essential to understand the experience of Indigenous existence, as it is vital to understanding the needs and values of the people. Pimâtisiwin kiskinwahamâkêwina are life teachings, found within the experiences of our people from oskawâsis, very young child, to oskâyak, youth, to kîsopikiwak, adult, and kêhtê-ayak, Elder. The experience as a Nêhiyaw reflects the whole of a Nation because our lives are intergenerational, collective, and lived. Our being is intertwined with those we have come to know, have met only on the surface, and have lost; it is the existence as a human who acknowledges our ancestors and unseen spirits and teachers that makes our culture distinct and rich. To reveal a depth of our being, we must address not only our oral narratives and teachings, but also our language in both oral and written forms to get a glimpse.

## 1.5 Nêhiyawêwin ekwa cahkipewasinahikewin: Respecting the Four Body Language and Syllabic Text

“I do not think that we should be so inclined to support “Freedom of Speech.” I do not believe that it is part of our ways. But somehow, we have come to stand by it” (Gordon Lee, trip back to Maskwacîs from Enoch).

Our language is powerful, as it can call to our ancestors, sing to the spirits within the land and water, and it is heard through ceremony and prayer to Manitow. What you say out loud can be heard regardless if you are alone. It is as linked to why we as Nêhiyawak were unsure of stairs when we started living in multi-level houses. We do not know if there is anyone underneath the staircase. Acknowledging that there may be an unseen force in your presence is difficult to illustrate to those who have been taught to see in only one plane of existence. We have become ingrained in thinking of only the physical elements of our existence that we fail to incorporate or learn from our spiritual and emotional views of the world. Our language much like this document is living and breathing. “Words are sacred,” (Wheeler 2010) and this is because “You never know who

is listening” (Nimosômak George and Gordon). The Nêhiyawêwin dialect that I use is the “Y-dialect” and is common in central Alberta and Saskatchewan. At one time, we could communicate with animals but we lost the ability to understand one another. Voice is a special gift and important to how we communicate with Manitow from the heart while speaking only truths. The sound of our voices can travel far, and like a pebble is dropped into a lake, those ripples extend outward from the center, and therefore, we are taught to speak only with grace and caution.

Leroy Little Bear from the Blood Indian Reserve and the Kainai First Nation near Lethbridge, Alberta forwards that most Indigenous languages “are generally aimed at describing ‘happenings’ rather than objects”:

The languages of Aboriginal people allow for the transcendence of boundaries...Aboriginal languages allow for talking to trees and rocks, an allowance not accorded in English. If everything is animate, then everything has spirit and knowledge. If everything had spirit and knowledge, then all are like me. If all are like me, then all are my relations (2009:78).

Language, for the Nêhiyawak, is not only powerful through oral communication but also through written texts.

Anthropologist George Mandelbaum recorded Chief Fine Day in the 1930s and the story that he shared was the origin story of the Nêhiyaw Syllabics. Chief Fine Day recalls the day that Mistanânôwêw, Calling Badger, had passed away but returned from the spirit world with the gift of writing (Stevenson 2000: 20). Wes Fineday expressed what his grandfather, Calling Badger, experienced in the following account:

“Fineday the younger explained that Calling Badger came from the Stanley Mission area and lived ten to fifteen years before his grandfather's birth in 1846. On his way to a sacred society meeting one evening Calling Badger and two singers came upon a bright light and all three fell to the ground. Out of the light came a voice speaking Calling Badger's name. Soon after, Calling Badger fell ill and the people heard he had passed away. During his wake three days later, while preparing to roll him in buffalo robes for the funeral, the people discovered that his body was not stiff like a dead person's body should be. Against all customs and tradition the people agreed to the widow's request to let the body sit one more night. The next day Calling Badger's body was still not stiff so the old people began rubbing his back and chest. Soon his eyes opened and he told the people he had gone to the Fourth World, the spirit world, and there the spirits taught him many things. Calling Badger told the people of the things he was shown that prophesized events in the future, then he pulled out some pieces of birch bark with symbols on them. These symbols, he told the people, were to be used to write down the spirit languages, and for the Nêhiyaw

people to use to communicate among themselves” (Wes Fineday, "The Story of Calling Badger," CBC radio, Morningside, no date in Stevenson 2000: 20-21).

This account of the Nêhiyaw cahkipewasinahikewin, syllabic writing, whose root word is câhkipayiw, meaning something that protrudes upward, is essential to understand the importance of the spiritual connection within the syllabics themselves. The syllabic text expresses the sacred sounds of our language. The syllabic symbols have living spirits within their sound. Academics and the like have stated that Nêhiyaw syllabic text was created by Methodist missionary James Evans in Norway House, Manitoba during the Nineteenth century and followed standard Roman orthography, but we have expressed their importance in contradictory accounts.

The Nêhiyaw believe that the syllabics are given to us through the spirit world, as each syllabic is a spirit marker. The syllabic is a combination of consonants and vowels, that when spoken release the spirit of the language. There are forty-four spirit markers and students who are beginning to learn Nêhiyawêwin often are taught the syllabic text through use of a star chart (see Figure 1). The center of the chart reflects the importance of Kisikaw pîsim, Father Sun, as our people in the Thirst Dance Lodge would show him honour as they suffered on behalf of their people. The Thirst Dance Lodge has come to be known as the Sun Dance of the Plains Nations. The forty-four spirit markers reveal a law within each vowel and syllable and vowel combination. The Nêhiyawêwin language is vast and layered with insight into how we learn from the universe and give respect to all our relations.

The emphasis of this section is to present the importance of language and its use, and to highlight that what we say goes out into the universe and all will hear it. The Nêhiyaw have long used written text for our healing and ceremonies, and while we are an oral culture, the written text that we utilized was for special circumstances and spiritual needs. The Nêhiyawak are the keepers of the original sacred written language (Deschamps March 22, 2016). While we may state we are an oral culture, there are elements that are sacred and not showcased for the entirety of the world. Calling Badger’s account is an important insight into how the Spirit World shapes Nêhiyaw beliefs and is respected.

The Nêhiyawêwin and cahkipewasinahikewin presented in this work utilize the *Alberta Elders' Cree Dictionary* by Nancy LeClaire and George Cardinal, edited by Earl Waugh. Sister Nancy LeClaire who was from Samson Cree Nation in Maskwacîs initiated the dictionary project in the 1970s utilizing Father Albert Lacombe's *Dictionnaire de la Langue Crise*, and working collaboratively with Elders such as the late Albert Lightning from Maskwacîs and Harold Cardinal of the Sucker Creek First Nation. In addition, the work of linguists in Saskatchewan flows into the thesis such as Freda Ahenakew, Arok Wolvengrey and Solomon Ratt's documentation of the language was utilized for terms that I did not know. Many of the sources presented throughout this study are shared from Elders in Saskatchewan.

Nêhiyaw scholar and activist Sylvia McAdam from the Big River Cree First Nation in Saskatchewan within Treaty Six territory forwards the basis and underlying principles of Nêhiyaw governance in her work, *Nationhood Interrupted: Revitalizing Nêhiyaw Legal Systems*, which will be utilized throughout this work. McAdam acknowledges the verbal laws of Pâstâmwîn and Ohcinêmwîn: where Pâstâmwîn, indicates the improper use of language against human beings, and Ohcinêmwîn, indicates the use of language against creation, including such matters as gossiping, uttering threats, and profanity against animals or creation (McAdam 2015: 39).

However, I must state for an outsider to our culture and past, simply knowing our language does not mean that you deserve to know our cultural knowledge. It is not an opening for researchers to come and take what they find interesting and leave like in years prior. An ally does not use our language to speak for us – that is reserved for the Nation. Simply knowing the language does not reveal the entirety of our mindset as this is evident in our experiences as intergenerational, collective, and lived knowledge. For Kisê-manitow is a compassionate Creator who allowed us to feel the intensity of the universe through our way of life.



land's dynamics and use have changed to accommodate Western powers and institutions, and how Indigenous presences and histories within landscapes have been blanketed with their power hidden. His metaphor in this narrative is to express how Indigenous laws have now been "concealed and submerged by a system that privileges Western legal narratives" (2002: xi). And he further states: "Although Indigenous law predates the arrival of Europeans, principles of Aboriginal order are rarely recognized or affirmed by the settlers' legal establishment. In effect, the common law of Canada built over Anishinabek law and obscured these prior customs from public view, just as *Philosopher's Walk* covers and conceals an ancient past" (2002: xi). Western forms have come to dominate much of Indigenous narratives of the past including physical features, and there lies an issue of assumption that because we have come to know what we see as reality, we have assumed and missed an entire narrative and insight. Though 'Western' forms have covered Indigenous legal systems, this does not mean they have been destroyed. Like the Anishinabek, the Nêhiyawak and many other Nations within Canada and the United States have seen their governance systems blanketed by colonial institutions.

The layers that blanket Indigenous narratives reveal how colonial governments have begun to construct our identities and our rationale of self and leaves to the sidelines and margins the inability to fully represent Indigenous truths. There are so many identities that float around, and as Lauren Leve in her article "Identity" forwards, these constructs of identity are due to the 'identity machine' where a transnational assemblage rapidly reorganizes ways of being and knowing oneself and produces the categories of ethnological identity and the very ontology of identity that underlies liberal and neoliberal democracy (2011: 514 and 517). Here "culture" has become a powerful form of political currency that is "morally and legally compelling aspect of personal and collective being that can be deployed as the basis of political claims" (Leve 2011:517). Arjun Appadurai has given this trend the name 'culturalism', which is 'the conscious mobilization of cultural differences in the service of a larger national or transnational politics' (1996:15 in Leve 2011:517). Simply, the identities of Indigenous peoples have been placed in are constructions of the political realm of Canada, and tied to political and



economic interests of the settler-colonial state regarding land and territory, and this ultimately secures state power (Leve 2011 citing Ree 1992).

As Bhakta Raj Shakya: 'If people have their own religions, literatures, and cultures, they'll have a feeling of ownership, and they'll resist the imposition of others' (in Leve 2011:525). Based on the model of the 'identity machine' Leve states, "social groups are assumed to be constituted not primarily by their relations with one another but first and foremost by their relation to their own history. This history – 'culture' in its material form – is assumed to make them what they are in the same way that an individual is assumed to be constituted, as an individual, by his or her own memory. This history/culture/identity is conceptualized as something that these groups can – indeed, should – own and control. To destroy that property is murder; to appropriate is left" (2011:525). Therefore, based on the premise of Leve's article, the identity of Indigenous Peoples and that of the Nêhiyawak has been formulated by the settler-nation to fit as they see us, with little or no understanding of the complexities of our embodiment of self. Thus, what is known to be "Plains Cree," is left as entirely subject to the views of those who have had minimal contact with our philosophies, worldviews, and experiences. Complicated is an understatement, yet, these "identifiers" have been used throughout the history of Canada.

Peeling back these layers imposed on Indigenous peoples sheds light further into how we as Indigenous peoples experience these layers through our lives. Further, it complicates the understanding of self when you learn about your heritage through education materials provided by the government. Quite simply, Indigenous Peoples are not Aboriginal, Indians, Chippewa, Cree, Canadian, or First Nations. Indigenous Nations have been given these names and rarely have what we acknowledged ourselves as been dominant. Indigenous peoples are Nêhiyawak, Anishinabek, Haudenosaunee, and so on, and these colonial asserted terms and identities are constructs of a political agenda that extends from the struggle to be known as Peoples rather than objects. Indigenous peoples have grappled with inherent contradictions in international law regarding the recognition of Indigenous peoples as peoples and the implementation of their rights. Seen in the "Doctrine of Discovery", the Papal Bulls, and the fight to be known as "Peoples," First Nations have had to actively participate and let it be known that they are not subject to

the views of European tradition. Today, terms such as “self-determination,” “autonomy,” and “self-governance” have been forwarded by Indigenous Nations to express their own foundations and institutions to challenge settler-nations.

Self-determination is commonly used when debates about Indigenous nationhood emerge, and this is in large part because self-determination is in relation to the ability of Indigenous peoples to identify themselves by their own perceptions, including the right to remain free of imposed definitions (Venne 1998). The ability to be known as a “People” therefore allows First Nations to determine their own political status from the settler state. This is because First Nations possess political features including political organization and governance before contact. Indigenous peoples had to push for the inclusion of self-determination in the United Nations Rights on the Declaration of Indigenous Peoples since they had been denied the right to freely determine their future. This right had been denied to them since the “Doctrine of Discovery” (Venne 1998:9). The “Doctrine of Discovery” took for granted the belief that Europeans were inherently superior and shortly after:

When European sovereigns asserted that they had various sorts of rights in the New World, these rights were in the nature of a territorial sovereignty or “dominion.” This conclusion was based on the assumption that a single code of international law regulated the struggle for empire... not between rival sovereigns in their capacities as personal lords of the new territories or as holders of some “Crown” but between representatives of nation-states. Discover conferred title; all Europeans accepted that principle because it was in their interests to do so (Sohn 1998:6 in Venne 1998:9).

Indigenous Peoples must learn their own narratives of the past including cultural teachings and traditions and if needed, write it to present a complementary narrative that brings forward their own insights and realities, rather than that of those who never experienced what we face day to day. Indigenous history enters the realms of the sacred and there are guiding principles that are available in each community to consult, either through the oral narratives of Elders, or through material culture such as Wampum belts and petroglyphs. To hide Indigenous insights is to inadvertently deny both worlds, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, knowledge that they can utilize and provoke change. It is no mystery that these racial views extend beyond the political spheres of Europe and colonial nations. There are those who believe that our Indigenous knowledge should be

protected and kept secret. It is my belief that certain elements can be used to protect us. If Indigenous peoples are not actively participating in the strides of betterment, then we enable the trend to continuously marginalize our Indigenous personhood.

## 1.7 Sohkastwâwin: Resilience

Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark of the Turtle Mountain Ojibwe in her article “Stories as Law: A Method to Live By” states that:

Methods are not just a tool for the study of the past and present. They illuminate pathways forward. When understood through Indigenous stories, methods are also ontological; they are about a way of being, a method for living (2017:255).

This study was never a means to create academic debate or be read around the world, it will always be with the intent of leaving valuable knowledge to the next generation. I utilized scholars from Maskwacîs as I wrote the piece and much of the knowledge available lies in the unpublished dissertations of many Nêhiyaw scholars. The Elders and I went through recordings conducted with Elders from the 1970s, as these were conducted by nohkôm Teresa Wildcat, however, they are not presented here. Leanne Simpson in her dissertation “The Construction of Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Issues, Implications, and Insights” states that she does not document the Anishinaabe environmental knowledge and provided no descriptive accounts, any reports, interviews, or land work done with the community, and I do this as well. This knowledge and “These documents belong to the community, and are for the community to use or not use at their sole discretion” (Simpson 1999: 9). What is available however, is aimed to discuss what Samson Cree Nation needs regarding change in the political, legal, social, and economic landscape of our future.

This study is interdisciplinary and converges and diverges in various aspects. The overall goal has always been to give Samson Cree Nation research that they can use for their own benefit. Additionally, it argues that Indigenous nations can change the circumstances that we find ourselves in. While this thesis is politically charged, it is also spiritually bound to Nêhiyaw knowledge and ways of knowing. Key themes that will occur throughout include forwarding Nêhiyaw mindsets, and creating discussion pertaining to what traditional governance is, and by what means does it look like. Traditional governance is found in the oral narratives, teachings, principles and values

that Nêhiyawak hold. While my main objective is to teach; teach not only my community about how colonial states have impacted our sense of self and history, but also to teach non-Indigenous peoples about how complex and intricate our beliefs are. With that said, I recount historical events and evidence in a certain way that is not typical in academia. I exist within two worlds, and often they are difficult to navigate and this comes with great responsibility. In various aspects throughout I will write in first person because the practice of telling oral narratives is important to many Indigenous peoples and for me to stay true to tradition, I follow such elements of knowledge sharing.

I hold intimate knowledge, I am not only part of Samson Cree Nation, but I am presenting a unique scholarly perspective. Primarily, throughout I discuss what are valid sources and how are they understood from a cultural perspective. Meaning that what we are taught as academics varies in difference from written and non-written sources. Academia holds belief that non-written material is often not sufficient or scholarly. Knowledge shared with me are as valid and important in comparative terms to written documents. The knowledge that I have come to learn is embedded in myself and importantly one day I may become a Kêhtê-ay, Elder. I realized this early on as I sat in our Treaty Talks held in 2015 as I was one of two youth in the arena in Ermineskin, the other being my brother who I forced to come with me. Elements I share are biographical in nature, as a storyteller shares their past to educate their learner. What I share here is not only important for Samson Cree Nation but the larger human context that is important for global aspects. As this narrative discusses the process in which I engaged to create a collaborative approach to research and ethics that is important to learn from especially other First Nations who have yet to engage their sovereign rights.

As stated already, this study is not based in one discipline, as I engage within elements of ethnography and methodology from Anthropology, analysis and discussion from History and ethnohistory, Political Sciences and Law through the study of governance and morality of human nature. There are various narratives at play: one will show you the worldview of the Nêhiyawak, one will show you traditional governance through the role of women and home, one will discuss how Indigenous nations affirm sovereignty in the present, and another introduces you to how relationships are important for cultural longevity. As I began my study of traditional governance, I had the ability to

do something for my community that I will never forget. The Elders that I worked with to get a sense of Nêhiyaw personhood led me to realize that our laws have been in existence since time immemorial. As I understood my role as an individual, I realized that I was part of a larger collective and I represented my family and my nation as well. Everything I did was for the nation. Together the Elders and I created twenty-three laws, drafted a constitution, and gave historical material that would allow the citizens of Nipisihkopahk that ability to change the outside pressures that we feel. We created the *Kisê-manitow Wiyasiwêwina Kihcimasinakikanis: The Living Law of the People of Maskwacîs Document* in a means to not only brings this study from the theoretical but into tangible and necessary material. This document addresses the socio-economic dilemma that we face by providing solutions for our nation by our very own people. I am emotionally invested in this work for various reasons, but none are greater than allowing the Elders of my community the ability to share their insights into what we need as a nation for a healthy and prosperous future. Elders who never had the chance to sit in the position that I hold today, and who I will always fall under and not the academy. These Elders are the brightest and most prolific individuals that I could have ever asked for and to know. In the end, regardless of where I find myself, I always go back home and I feel safe within the presence of my ancestors.

## Chapter Two

### 2 Nêhiyaw in Literature

To effectively achieve that ability to share what it means to be Nêhiyawak and encourage a resurgence of the culture and language, it is important to forward sources that already exist within academia and how the history of the people has been shaped by non-Indigenous authors. Since “contact” the beliefs and knowledge perpetuated about Indigenous peoples have been cross-cultural miscommunications and misunderstandings that extend into appropriations through interpretations and representations dominated by non-Indigenous peoples. Scientific analysis enhanced the idea that Indigenous peoples could be compared, measured, and judged inferior to European standards of civility, language, and culture. This firm belief allowed for atrocities and forced removal throughout Indigenous territories due to the idea that the land was *terra nullius*, a Latin term meaning *land that belongs to no one*. Indigenous peoples were ravaged by disease, warfare, slavery, and many other harmful experiences, and settlers used their near extinction to forward a backwards and illogical view of superior versus inferior. The belief assumed by settlers was that because the “Indian” could not live or be exposed to civilizations such as theirs they would not survive. This belief was exemplified further through the perceived decay of their societies linked to ‘drunkenness, beggary, and savagery’ since they were the fallen savages and were unworthy of their heritage and culture (McGuire 1997:67 citing Dippie 1982:25-28). Thoughts of extinction drove various individuals to capture, collect, and record all that they possibly could. By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, research and study on Indigenous peoples had grown extensively; however, the very knowledge that was obtained followed the standard for Western positivist research. This research was aimed at examining the ‘other’ and found dominance within “institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies, and colonial styles” (Said 1978:2 in Tuhiwai Smith 1999: 2).

‘Western’ as Stuart Hall explains functions in four ways: (1) It allows “us” to characterize and classify societies into categories, (2) condenses complex images of other societies through a system of representation, (3) provides a standard model of comparison, and (4) provides criteria of evaluation against which other societies can be

ranked (in Smith 1999:43). ‘Positivism’ is how the natural world is examined and understood through scientific method and leads to a “universal truth” (Smith 1999:42). These approaches led the way for quantitative studies, and soon Indigenous histories and culture became extracted by research approaches that left those who were studied disenfranchised (Kovach 2009:27). However, one-thing remained throughout academia’s salvage of Indigenous knowledge, the Indigenous Nations who were to vanish but instead were growing.

The assumptions that Indigenous peoples would no longer exist have created various problematic narratives and these standards of discourse have continued their legacy throughout academic studies of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous history has largely been conducted by the non-Indigenous peoples who stand outside Indigenous worldviews and comment in a language that is unsuitable and often does not translate effectively (Miller and Riding in 2011:1). Western academic institutions and many disciplines have continued this trend by marginalizing Indigenous worldviews and discourse from Indigenous histories and present day national narratives. Since it was as open and freely emerging and meaningful relationships, Indigenous courses would not be still alternative classes and the narratives found in primary and secondary schools would be engaging and producing critical thinking individuals. I have yet to see either of those outcomes, and as much as this statement is untenable and an old generalization, it still exists. Indigenous scholars trained in Western institutions still find their voice marginalized, as Lunaape Historian Mary Jane McCallum of the Munsee Delaware Nation states in her article “Indigenous Labor and Indigenous History” (2009) indicates that often Indigenous writers are left to the sidelines of commentary or left solely to review books and articles on Indigenous peoples. With all due respect, my experience within academia has not indicated anything other than a call to continuously advocate for change but this often falls on deaf ears.

Indigenous scholars have worked continuously to challenge the hierarchy of domination and suppression that they have been placed into by colonial forces and marginalized through biased legislation and educational initiatives and policies that promote Western knowledge systems at the expense of our own (Bishop 1997). Dominant is often used as an adjective to describe the culture of European descended and

“Eurocentric, Christian, heterosexist, male-dominated” society, and does not include those who fall “outside” (Wilson 2008:35). Indigenous peoples have taken a stand and begun an indigenizing and decolonizing process that includes the retelling of cultural pasts and practices, and have advocated for their own value systems, traditional governance, and way of life in relation to the cosmos, nature, and landscape. Through these actions, Indigenous peoples have taken on the politics of our society in North America and abroad, and revealed for the first time, who Indigenous peoples are through their own methods and customary traditions.

To establish an understanding of the Nêhiyawak, it is important to assess existing texts that present not only the culture and way of life by non-Indigenous scholars but Nêhiyaw scholars as well. This chapter presents what is known about the Nêhiyawak through historical sources and emphasizes that what we have come to know is not the entirety of the narrative. For Nipisihkopahk it is essential to realize what has already been written by Nêhiyaw scholars and Nations and by what means has history and education in Canada impacted the understanding of Nêhiyaw personhood. I examine colonial narratives impact Nêhiyaw confidence as school children and what colonialism has intended to do by limiting our voice and creating nationalistic narratives of pride and glory for the settler state of Canada. The lack of Indigenous voice has profound psychological effects on Indigenous well-being and is why liberation narratives such as these are important for creation. In this chapter, we begin to evaluate how narratives about Indigenous Peoples have long been used by colonial forces to disenfranchise Indigenous peoples from their own knowledge of self in efforts to maintain an image of honour to the settler-nation.

The Nêhiyawak Nation has the largest Indigenous population throughout Canada and stretches from Quebec into British Columbia. Though “Nêhiyawak” is typically associated with the “Plains Cree” it is also used for the entirety of the people. Divided into different groups, the Nêhiyawak encompass Paskwâwiyiniwak, the Prairie People (known as the “Plains Cree”), the sakâwiyiniwak, the Bush People (known as “Woods Cree” or “Rock Cree”), maskêkowiiniwak, the Muskeg People (known as “Swampy Cree”), and the Eeyouch (known as the “Eastern Cree”), with “subdivisions” including the “Moose Cree” and omaskekow referring to a maskêkowiiniwak from the James Bay area. The name “Cree” is said to be an Anishinaabe term, Kistanowak, People of the North, for the



Nêhiyawak, per anthropologist David Mandelbaum; but various other sources state that the French through a variety of spellings including Kiristinon, Kristineaux, Kiristinous, and Kilistinous, recorded the name and later contracted it to Cri, and then spelled Cree in English (1940:15). What is important about each of the distinct Nêhiyaw divisions is that the suffix is -iyiniwak that is plural, meaning the people. However, within these names is a marginalized narrative of the Nêhiyawak Nation as it fails to incorporate the influence of the Assiniboine and Saulteaux, and the Metis who later emerge. Together these ethnic groups (Nêhiyaw, Assiniboine, Saulteaux, and Metis) would form the Iron Alliance (Mandelbaum 1940; Innes 2013) and forever change the landscape of what are now the western provinces of Canada.

This chapter is not simply a narrative or a modern day ethnographic account of the Nêhiyawak Nation and their customs and traditions but an assessment of the ethnographic material that is often consulted by researchers and that has constrained the reality of these people and has yet to be incorporated into the mainstream Canadian historical narrative. Specifically, I will examine the multicultural relationships of the Nêhiyaw and present how various Indigenous communities including the Assiniboine, Saulteaux (Plains Ojibwe), and Metis have impacted the Nêhiyaw including their philosophies. We will examine this through kinship ties and marriage customs, the oral narratives associated with Wîsahêcâhk, Elder Brother, and specifically, treaty governance and traditional protocols. I prefer not to use the term “story” as it falls into the field of folklore or mythology, but instead use oral narratives as this gives insight into our culture and incredibly rich sources to draw upon. To understand and conceptualize this discussion we must first explore and examine ethnographic literature including anthropologist David Mandelbaum’s (1940) work, *The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical, and Comparative Study*, and historian John Milloy’s (1990) *The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy, and War 1790 to 1870*. Both works attempt to give a historical narrative of the Nêhiyaw as a distinct monoculture but by doing these authors’ limit the relationships with other Indigenous Nations. Specifically, as the late Nêhiyaw scholar from Maskwacîs Grace Swampy asserts:

Mandelbaum cannot be considered to be authoritative except in the context of a re-creation of the kind of ‘ideal’ societal system which ethnographers of his period reconstructed from informants’ descriptions. He is surely not authoritative in the

context of how a native female might describe such things as her own role, nor in the context of simple observation” (1980:5-6).

To add to this narrative, this chapter draws from other Nêhiyaw scholars such as Robert Innes (2013) from the Cowessess First Nation, east of Regina, Saskatchewan, and Neal McLeod (2000) from the James Smith First Nation, near Melfort, Saskatchewan. Together, they address a transformation of knowledge perceived about Nêhiyaw people as they emerge from the constraints of representation and assumptions.

## 2.1 Historical Narrative of the Nêhiyawak

The first accounts of the Nêhiyawak occur in the *Jesuit Relations*, written in 1640, and from that moment onward accounts of contact with the Kiristinon would present a picture of westward migration from what would become Eastern Canada. Mandelbaum (1940:15-16) states that the Nêhiyaw were a powerful migratory people who lived near Hudson Bay and fought with the *Nadouessis*, who are known as the Dakota or Sioux. During this initial contact period, the Nêhiyaw were known to have inhabited only the regions between Lake Nipigon, the Moose River, and the East Main River located in northern Ontario and Quebec. In 1666-1667 firsthand accounts of the Nêhiyaw appear by Father Allouez who conducted a mission to the community and recorded their behaviors and activities including a “kind, docile disposition, but [they] were more nomadic than other Nations” (Mandelbaum 1940:16). In 1669 attempts to spread the gospel were initiated by the Jesuits but they note that since the Nêhiyaw were highly nomadic these attempts failed because they only rarely assembled for market and trade or festivals. Simultaneously, during this period the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), a fur trading company, emerges and to generate profit they send explorers westward to recoup their declining commerce of furs. The journals of various HBC explorers offer glimpses into the territory at the time, and in 1659 explorer Pierre-Esprit Radisson recounts an armed alliance between the Nêhiyaw and the Mascoutin people (an Algonquin speaking people) near the Fox River in present day Wisconsin:

...another wandering nation, living only upon [sic] what they could come by. Their dwelling was on the side of the salt watter [sic] in the summer time, and in the land in the winter time, for it’s cold in their country. They calle [sic] themselves Christinos,

and their confederats [of the Mascoutin] from all times, by reason of their speech, wch [sic] is ye same, and often have joined together and have had company's [sic] of soldiers to ware against that great nation (Mandelbaum 1940:17).

The Dakota were on the opposing side of this military attack. Mandelbaum goes on to present further primary sources that recount Indigenous warfare in the region both in the north and south of where the Nêhiyaw and their allies lived. The alliance of the Nêhiyaw and Assiniboine emerges more clearly in 1695 by Father Gabriel Merest:

The most distant, the most numerous, and the most important of these Tribes are the *Assiniboels* and the *Kriqs* - or, otherwise, the *Kiristinnons [Crees]*... the *Assiniboels* are a Scioux [sic]Tribe who have been separated from that nation for a long time, and who since have constantly made war upon them. The *Kriqs* and the *Assiniboels* are allied together; they have the same enemies, and undertake the same wars. Many *Assiniboels* speak *Kriq* and many *Kriqs*, *Assiniboel*. [Italics his] (Thwaites 1896-1901:66:107-09 in Sharrock 1974:105).

This alliance is believed to be how the Nêhiyaw could adopt a Plains life style through the Assiniboine by Mandelbaum and he further infers that this makes the Assiniboine the “cultural godfathers” of the Nêhiyaw (Mandelbaum 1940: 166). In 1727, the Nêhiyaw ally with the Saulteaux as they set out to battle the Sioux and this account is detailed in the journal of Chevalier de la Verendrye who mentions for the first time the “Cree of the Prairies” (Mandelbaum 1940:26). This statement by la Verendrye is the first account of the Nêhiyaw in Southern Saskatchewan. In addition to these accounts of the Nêhiyaw in the west, Mandelbaum notes that the Nêhiyaw during this time become the middleman for the fur trade and are eager to show routes inward to HBC explorers.

What is important about this account presented by Mandelbaum is that it parallels John Milloy's (1990) work as he attempts to account for how woodland ancestors adopted a plains way of life in the 1790's while the European fur trade fuelled this migration into the western prairies. The evolution of the Plains Cree culture witnessed some of the canoe-reliant Nêhiyaw traders become horse owning, parkland-prairie dwellers (Milloy 1990: xv). The Nêhiyaw and Assiniboine solidified their alliance beginning as middlemen for the fur trade where they benefited not only in a monopoly with the HBC traders but could operate successfully within existing political and economic realities in the interior (Milloy 1990). The Blackfoot-Nêhiyaw alliance began a new era of political relationships and this time witnessed the Nêhiyaw benefit from the Blackfoot being at war with the Snake Nation.

Simultaneously, the Nêhiyaw and Assiniboine could coordinate trade and relations with the Mandan and Hidatsa who were influential in the Native trade system (Milloy 1990). The Nêhiyaw through their diplomatic approach to alliances and sharing the land through witaskewin engage in the creation of new relationships and kin ties. These narratives of political alliance fail to give depth to how the Nêhiyaw could create relationships with other nations, and fail to incorporate the world view and custom and practice that the Nêhiyaw continue to uphold today. Cultural sharing between Nêhiyaw and other Indigenous nations was customary and essential. As Swampy states, Mandelbaum and Milloy's works are "speculative histories" (1980:10). Simply, the works of Mandelbaum and Milloy are not a definite explanation of who the Nêhiyaw are and how they identify their selves but they can lead to tangible insights that we can draw upon.

## 2.2 The Multicultural Identity of the Nêhiyawak

Following the indigenization and decolonization of Indigenous histories, Nêhiyaw scholars set out to challenge the works of Mandelbaum and Milloy by creating a history of the Nêhiyaw Nation. Neal McLeod set out to write a PhD he had tentatively called *A National History of the Plains Cree* as he intended to write about the Nêhiyaw language and the religion of his family (McLeod 2000:438). The James Smith Reserve that McLeod was part of labelled itself as "Plains Cree" but as he researched his family genealogy by talking with various old people, he realized that this label was extremely misleading and limiting, primarily, since the Nêhiyaw, Saukteaux, and Assiniboine were allied with each other and there was a great deal of cultural overlap and intermarriage among each group (2000:439). As McLeod, would find out, the James Smith Reserve was not entirely Nêhiyaw, especially his family, many of whom were descendants of the Saukteaux. The Saukteaux are known as the Ojibway, Chippewa, and Anishinaabe. McLeod's grandfather John R. McLeod called Smith Atimoyoo nîci-nâkawayiniw meaning "my fellow Saukteaux" (2000:441). As McLeod further notes this is interesting since the Saukteaux genealogies are ignored by the belief that his reserve is entirely Plains Cree (2000:441).

McLeod's experiences are echoed through Rob Innes' experiences as a member of the Cowessess Cree Nation as he began his research into the multicultural dynamics of his band. When Chief Cowessess signed Treaty Four in 1874, his multicultural band was

comprised of Nêhiyaw, Saukteaux, Assiniboine, Metis, and English Halfbreeds (Innes 2012:123). Beginning his early analysis of cultural dynamics, Innes stated that the scholars he consulted emphasized tribal histories that highlighted intertribal contact and relations although the nations had distinct boundaries (2012:123). Authors such as Susan Sharrock and Patricia Albers have written about multicultural groups but even their work was limited; Sharrock (1974) examined the ethnogenesis of the Nêhiyaw and Assiniboine, and Albers (1993; 1996) considered the alliance of the Nêhiyaw, Saukteaux, and Assiniboine (Innes 2012:123). What is missing within Sharrock and Albers' work is the influence that the Metis have had by being incorporated into bands and how boundaries were not actually set amongst these groups. Innes (2012) further states that the devotion to tribal histories has masked the importance that kinship, i.e. across cultural lines, has played in band formations and maintenance.

Communities in the northern Plains region were kin-based and multicultural and this allowed the Nêhiyaw, Saukteaux, Assiniboine, and Metis to integrate into each other's bands since they shared similar cultural kinship practices. These communities did not create a singular hybridized culture but could maintain multiple cultures, as evident in the maintenance of the Saukteaux clan system, which was a foreign concept to the Nêhiyaw (Innes 2012). As Innes further illustrates, cultural sharing occurred amongst the Cowessess Nation with his own grandfather, who spoke a 'half-breed Cree' language and this was not a mixture of Nêhiyaw and English but a mixture of Nêhiyaw and Saukteaux (2012:125). It was not uncommon for many Indigenous individuals to know more than one language, and for the Cowessess Cree Nation their members could speak or understand more than one language. This is a reason why the Plains Cree engaged in valuable alliances with fur trade companies and explorers, and other Indigenous nations. Terms that refer to fur trade goods in Anishinaabemowin, the Ojibwe language, and Nêhiyawêwin are typically the same. Not only could they understand each other through language, the customs that they followed were similar.

The Nêhiyaw, Assiniboine, and Saukteaux followed the Dakota type kinship system that indicated that a person's kinship role determined their responsibility to others (Innes 2012 citing Albers 2002; DeMallie and Miller 2001; Peers and Brown 1999). Specifically, this marriage system incorporated the cross/parallel system meaning:

the children of one's father's brother or mother's sisters (i.e. of same sex siblings); cross cousins are the children of one's father's sister and mother's brother (i.e. of the siblings of different sex). Concomitantly, all relatives of one's own generation were grouped either as siblings/parallel cousins (for whom the term was the same); or else they were cross cousins, and potential sweethearts and mates (Innes 2012 citing Peers and Brown 1999:533).

Therefore, opposite sex cross cousins could marry each other but it was not an exclusive right for cross cousins. Parallel cousins however were considered as siblings and followed strict cultural taboos that inhibited them from ever marrying each other. Marriages played an important role in maintaining a multicultural community and are a vital component of the Dakota-type kinship system especially arranged marriages. Arranged marriages were made through agreement between parents, or the groom's family would bestow large amounts of gifts to a prospective bride (DeMallie 1994:108-124). To maintain or create a powerful political, economic, and social alliance, marriages allowed Indigenous communities to band to one another, and included unions with Europeans (Albers 1996:114). As Sylvia Van Kirk emphasizes: "...from the Aboriginal point of view, cross-cultural unions were a way of integrating the Euro-Canadian stranger into Native kinship networks and enmeshing him in the reciprocal responsibilities that this entailed" (2002:4). Therefore, community members were able to trace their connection to the group through kinship ties; but this was not always the case as 'marriage into the band usually furnished an "immigrant" with the social alliances necessary for adjustment to the course of communal life. Thus, the numbers of each band were constantly augmented by the recruits from other bands of Plains Cree or from other tribes (Mandelbaum 1940:105-106). However, when early anthropologists and other researchers attempted to understand these multicultural communities through kinship and marriage, they ended up blending the composition of groups by attempting to essentialize their identities to present a single identity or a monoculture as seen in the genealogies of "Plains Cree" Chiefs.

By limiting the Nêhiyaw identity to a singular cultural identity we dismiss multicultural and mixed ancestry genealogies that were established through custom and tradition, especially political and social alliances in marriage. Chief Little Pine's mother was Blackfoot and his father was Nêhiyaw (Innes 2013:131 citing Tobias, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*), while Chief Poundmaker who is notable throughout Plains

Cree history, was the son of an Assiniboine man and a Metis woman and later in his life was adopted by Blackfoot Chief Crowfoot (Innes 2012: 131 citing Dempsey, *Canadian Biography Online*). Chief Big Bear was the son of a renowned Ojibwe medicine man named Black Powder, and he was from Ontario and was the chief of a mixed Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux band (Innes 2012: 131 citing Dempsey 1984). As well, Chief Piapot was the leader of the Young Dogs, who were a Nêhiyaw-Assiniboine band (Innes 2012: 131 citing Tobias, *Canadian Biography Online*). Chief Sweetgrass who was one of the leading spokesmen in the Treaty discussion was Gros Venture and his mother was Crow (Innes 2012: 131 citing Cuthand 2007; Turner, *Canadian Biography Online*). Pasque was Nêhiyaw and the leader of a Saulteaux band (Innes 2012: 131 citing Tyler, *Canadian Biography Online*). Focusing on the multicultural genealogies of these Chiefs presents how problematic it is to identify the Nêhiyaw as one Nation, or one Indigenous Nation because it obscures the relationships established by the Assiniboine, Saulteaux, and Blackfoot, and specifically the Metis.

The Metis have often been represented in separate categories when compared to Indigenous communities and writers have emphasized the differences and tensions between the two. John Milloy states that the Nêhiyaw were frustrated with the hunting practices of the Metis (1990 in Innes 2012:133), and in a practical sense the Nêhiyaw would be frustrated since bison herds during the nineteenth century were steadily decreasing. The Nêhiyaw, Assiniboine, and Saulteaux watched the Metis constantly and some of them became part of these existing cultural mixed groups. The focus on tensions and differences has largely overshadowed how integrated and closely related these groups were with the Metis (Innes 2012:133). The Nêhiyaw, Assiniboine, and Saulteaux treated the Metis differently than how they treated the Blackfoot, and even though the Metis infringed on their social and economic resources, they were unwilling to wage war on them (Innes 2012:133). The lack of warfare is partially due to the intermarriages that occurred between these cultures, as evident in the heritage of Chief Poundmaker whose own mother was believed to be Metis (Innes 2012:131). In Maskwacîs, Chief Ermineskin was the son of Louis Piché, a French fur-trader and Magdeline O'Piatastewis (Ahenakew) who was Indigenous, and still he maintained his Metis ancestry through his name of Ermine-skin since he would tan in the summer and be pale in the winter just like the ermine. Writers of early Metis history focused

on the racial makeup of the people and attempted to state that the Metis were “cultural brokers, cultural mediators, and bicultural; because they were from two different worlds; but this was not the case, as Indigenous groups were also capable of mediating the in-between traditional and European worlds” (Innes 2012:134). Simply, historical narratives placed the Metis and Indigenous Nations on opposite ends of a continuum and evaluated them through “racialized lenses” (Innes 2012:134). These arbitrary boundaries between the Metis and Indigenous groups ignored the complexity of traditional kinship practice and therefore fuel the belief of tense relationships between Indigenous and Metis today.

The multicultural heritage that is Nêhiyaw has often been ignored as we imagine a strict Nêhiyaw “tribe.” Tribe is a problematic term, as Regna Darnell asserts, “‘tribe’ is a highly suspect and thoroughly ethnocentric category, particularly when applied to nomadic hunter-gatherer traditions” (1997: 93). ‘Tribe’ overlooks important networks of relationships that existed between ethnic groups (Innes 2012 citing Binnema 2004). For Ray Fogelson, “tribe” is an inaccurate reflection of Aboriginal societies, and so he prefers the term “community” since: “[the] idea of communities is preferable to the idea of tribes, since tribes are politico-legal entities rather than face-to-face interactive social groups. Furthermore, in aboriginal and neo-aboriginal times there were very few tribes, in the sense of institutions with clear lines of political authority, chiefs, councils, and strict membership criteria... Tribes were not primordial polities but institutions created to facilitate interactions with states” (1998:51). For the Nêhiyaw, Assiniboine, Saulteaux, and Metis, kinship relations were more important than ethnicity for ‘group identity formation’ (Innes 2012:127). But the relationships between the Nêhiyaw and their allies did not stop there.

Mandelbaum (1940:111) states warrior societies held their own unique songs and dances but they could purchase the right to perform a certain dance from the warriors or a society of another group. The Nêhiyaw did so through the purchase of the “Buffalo Dancers Society”:

The Buffalo dance was broth [sic] from the Pwatak, the Dokata, [sic] by a group of Warriors who were of the West People, the River People, and East People.<sup>3</sup> The bargain was made when the Plains Cree and the Dakota were camping together along the South Saskatchewan River, southwest of where Saskatoon now stands. The Dakota

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<sup>3</sup> Despite the testimony that Warriors from three bands had collaborated in purchasing a dance, the same informant and all others who were questioned, stated that each band had only one Warrior lodge.



came from a place called the Red Sand Hills. I was only a boy then. It happened shortly after Sitting-bull killed three white men, about four years before his big fight with the Americans.

The way, [sic] it was done was this: The Plains Cree came up to the Warrior's lodge of the Dakota. The Pipestem Bearer of the Cree (an official in whose charge was sacred pipestem was entrusted) led the way, pointing the unwrapped stem toward the Dakota. His tribesmen followed, carrying many clothes and leading many horses. They piled the clothing in front of the Dakota Warriors' lodge and tied the horses to the tipi stakes. The Dakota came out carrying clothes over their shoulders. Each one of the Dakota went up to the pipestem, raised his arm outstretched before it, passed his hand along, the stem from butt up to mouthpiece, and then down over his forehead and chest. With the same motion, he took the clothing from his shoulder and placed it under the pipestem which was being held up by the Bearer. This continued until the Bearer slowly laid the stem on the pile of clothing, signifying that enough had been given and the bargain was concluded. The Dakota gave clothing to the Cree because they were buying back the right to perform the dance themselves. They gave the Plains Nêhiyaw about as much clothing as the Plains Cree gave them, but the Cree had also given horses.

When the transfer was completed, the Dakota took the Nêhiyaw into their lodge and taught them the songs and the dance. They had the tipi partly open and everyone was invited to come and look. I saw two big buffalo heads, one painted red on the muzzle and the other painted black. They were laid on a red cloth. Around them were smaller heads. The Cree sat in a row praying. When they sang the following song, "My father gave me the buffalo bull," the dancers would stand, put on the buffalo skulls and dance.

That same year the East People Band bought the Big Dog dance from the Paddling Men Band of the Stoney (Mandelbaum 1940:111-112).

The Nêhiyaw could purchase and sell society dances, and often these transfers between groups did not relinquish entire ownership of dances or songs (Mandelbaum 1940:112). *Voices of the Plains Cree* by Edward Ahenakew reflects on multicultural exchanges through the stories of Chief Thunderchild. Where many bands had over a hundred families living together with many of the members were from different groups. He accounts one instance in which members within the band knew who was Saulteaux, Assiniboine, Metis or Nêhiyaw (1995:17-18). Multiple groups lived together based on the "Indian Law" of sharing, and moreover, individual responsibility to care for one another that included the animals, land, rocks, winds, trees, etc. (Ahenakew 1995:17). Not only were these formations of groups based on political, social, and economic gains, but the

years following contact with settlers resulted in Indigenous communities dealing with epidemics including the small pox virus and tuberculosis. James Daschuk in *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and Loss of Aboriginal Life* presents that “biological unification” brought many Plains people together and bluntly states that, “What brought death to some often translated into economic opportunity for others” (2013: XII). Disease brought by contact aside, we cannot ignore that even though multiple sources account that the Nêhiyawak lived with the Assiniboine, Saulteaux, and Metis communities, their identification has been stripped from general knowledge and collective memory.

Neal McLeod states there are many factors as to why a strict Nêhiyaw identity was formed:

1. Indigenous peoples have been subjected to the films and the ideas of mainstream society;
2. Historically, the Plains Cree language had a greater prestige than other dialects such as seen in the Treaty Six negotiations where the Plains Cree leaders refused to listen to a translator who spoke Swampy Cree;
3. The Plains Cree Y-dialect became the standardized written dialect;
4. Revitalization of ceremonies today are said to be predominantly Plains Cree, and finally;
5. Many scholars contribute to the notion of a “Plains Cree” through their ethnographies and histories such as Mandelbaum and Milloy (McLeod 2000:439-440).

Much is to be learned about the Nêhiyaw as their narratives and stories unfold. Writers such as McLeod and Innes have offered a new and more nuanced reality of the understanding of being Nêhiyaw. Specifically, how the Nêhiyawak interacted with other Nations and crossed amongst one another. If the Nêhiyawak Nation could maintain these ties in the past, then in the study of governance we can witness an overlap of cultural sharing in our search to understand governance and learn from Nations outside of the Nêhiyawak.

No narrative is ever complete as we witness in numerous instances that history is changing and revealing new narratives and focuses into the past. Nêhiyaw narratives are living and breathing entities and though they differ in regional areas, we share similarities in how our understandings of personhood and nationhood have been assumed and eradicated. One of the main underlying threads that continue in the narratives of Indigenous peoples and the Nêhiyawak is the experience of genocide linked to colonization. Rarely are Indigenous historical narratives primarily used and rarely do the

narratives presented by non-Indigenous scholars detail the effects of colonialism including narratives linked to trauma and hardship, as I do not believe they truly understand the implications. To understand the trauma, the Indigenous experience within coloniality is required. This study is anything but one of victimization and hardship; to understand the difficulty within Nipisihkopahk today, we need to examine how colonization and forced assimilation impacts how Indigenous peoples view themselves. Here the mental state of being colonized reveals why resurgence of cultural pride and relearning love of oneself is essential to emotional and mental well being. Still, discussion of education in Canada needs to be addressed to understand the experience Indigenous children endure in their classrooms.

### 2.3 Colonial Narratives in Canadian Society

The following section analyzes the role of history within the Canadian classroom and how these historical narratives have been written. By presenting this understanding of suppression, it allows readers to delve deeper into the psychological effects of colonialism that wear down Indigenous peoples. Canadian history is written through the vantage of the colonizer, and since it is, it is meant to create a patriotic narrative where the settlers overcame adversity and from nothing could build a great and triumphant nation. Canada has manipulated and changed its history without any regard for its Indigenous peoples. James Loewen in *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything your American History Textbook Got Wrong* presents how the US government shaped the history of their nation; though written from an American context, the key themes of his argument are crucial for discussion within Canada. Loewen presents how colonial figures go through a process of “heroification” and this takes a flesh and blood individual and makes them into perfect beings that never experienced “conflict, pain, credibility, or human interest” (Loewen 1996:19). This process of heroification erases any fault and wrongdoing that the said individual did in real life and therefore, changes the reader’s perception of what truly happened. In turn this results in false views of historic actions, and importantly for our discussion, distorts societies view of the truth through the privileged positions that written texts offer and presents what Loewen calls the “Disney version of history” (1996:31-35).

In Canada, history books and those used in secondary and elementary schools rarely if ever tell the truth of Canada's colonial past. Rarely do they state that Canada's first Prime Minister John A. McDonald implemented a position of "malevolence" to First Nation food as he said Indigenous nations could ask for support during times of need based on Treaty obligations but that was not the reality (Daschuk 2013:108). He starved First Nations to expand the railway but is remembered as the noble "Father of Confederation" and his face graces the \$10 bill. Some may know he was an alcoholic, others, especially Indigenous peoples remember him as merciless racist who supported the *Indian Act*, legislated residential schools, and gave away Indigenous lands to settlers.

Regardless, when it comes to the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada, these textbooks tell the time old narrative that the Natives were savages who needed salvation to reach the kingdom of Heaven and luckily for these people, missionaries, Jesuits, and the like were there so that they could cleanse their souls (Souie 1992: xiv-xx). Sent to residential schools and forced to assimilate, text books make it appear that everything done to the "Indian" was righteous and well-intentioned to the people since these were peoples that needed aid to be brought from their primitive state of being into modernity. This implies that what happened to First Nation peoples was an inevitable natural occurrence. These texts never tell the hardships of colonialism and destruction of culture, language, beliefs, and so on; as they skim over colonial policies of starvation, exploitation, and elimination. Simultaneously, these views contribute to the idea that the original inhabitants of this land basically disappear as Canada builds its nationhood and when they do appear they better be wearing the "costumes" of their people untouched by modernity. Simply, we need to pay attention to what textbooks are telling us and what they are not (Loewen 1996:35).

Textbook and national narratives aim to shield children from harm or conflict with the perceived need to "control children and avoid classroom disharmony" (Loewen 1996:35). These ideas concerning what is written, shared, and tested therefore extend into heritage institutions such as historic sites with re-enactments and museums. Robert Coutts states that written, early ideas about heritage and reasons for commemorating sites "were inextricably linked to the perceived 'triumph' of Anglo-British culture and institutions in Canada" (1993:1-2 in Peers 2007:5). Much of Canadian society will learn

these narratives and history from Canadian textbooks and rarely continue into post-secondary education focused on Indigenous history, and therefore, they continue to have these false views of Native peoples. As Edward Said (1978:2) points out: “Institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imaginary, doctrines and even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles” support the “Western discourse” (in Grande 2008:234). This western discourse served the agenda of the nation to create a unified people that see no faults in their leaders and government.

Daniel Francis in *The Imaginary Indian: The image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, continues this discussion by stating that the images of Native peoples have been manufactured by White Canadians who have “believed in, feared, despised, admired, taught their children” (1992:21). Francis addresses that the very idea of the ‘Indian’ is problematic since: “The Indian began as a White man’s mistake, and became a White man’s fantasy. Through the prisms of White hopes, fears, and prejudices, indigenous Americans would be seen to have lost contact with reality and to have become “Indians”; that is, anything non-Natives wanted them to be” (1992:21). The initial years of contact and colonization saw alliances between Native peoples and settlers, and this image was relatively positive if they remained allies (Francis 1992:21). By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, these wars were over and settlers no longer needed military allies (Francis 1992:21). Settlers began the task of inventing themselves as Canadians, and to do this they needed a comparison that was everything the Canadian was not; they needed an “other” and there was the Indian (Francis 1992:21).

Settlers began a process of eliminating the Indigenous reality, while simultaneously taking control of Indigenous peoples’ lands. To remove the Indian from their land, settlers needed to disempower the Indigenous population; Joseph Gold writes, disempowerment began with disease followed by an increase of immigration and settlement, and the creation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867 (in Episkew 2009). Government officials, in relation to creation of the imaginary Indian, developed policies to control the “proliferation of Indigenous languages and stories shortly after establishment of the Dominion. These policies made it ‘possible to falsify history to undermine group and individual identity and invalidate the life experience of those [they wished] to disempower’” (Gold 2002:32 in Episkew 2009:5). Furthermore, the

colonizers believed in their superiority over Indigenous peoples and they considered it their responsibility to “eradicate pagan superstition and replace it with ‘truth’” (Episkenew 2009:5). Settlers allowed their privilege to become normalized and justified the seizure and occupation of Indigenous lands. Despite evidence to the contrary, the myths created by Euro-Canadians were founded on a practice of psychological terrorism and theft (Episkenew 2009). As Dara Culhane states: “When government policies and practices that systemically discriminate are juxtaposed with the Canadian state’s formal commitment to democratic equality, hypocrisy is revealed. In these ways, Aboriginal peoples strike repeated blows to the heart of Canada’s liberal self-image and international personality” (1998:49). Few settlers are willing to admit that there is a “darker aspect of Canadian history, one rarely highlighted in a country that fancies itself an angel in an imperfect world...The Canadian self-image is that we have a bland history that is exemplified by the perceptions that the American West was violent and colorful, while in Canada it was peaceful and bland” (Krauss 2004: online in Episkenew 2009:6). The use of a “peacemaking” identity for Canada dissolves and denies that a settler in Canada is a colonizer with the Indigenous as the colonized (Regan 2010:34).

Ignoring the truth behind Canada’s past has constrained the healing of Indigenous peoples across Canada. Canada’s “Indian” policies constitute a form of “psychological terrorism,” which has a profound effect on Indigenous health (Episkenew 2009:7). Where many Indigenous peoples have turned the violence of these policies inward, allowing the struggle to become “toxic and effective self-loathing, culturally, and individually” (Neu and Therrien 2003:4). These feelings extend from the historical trauma endured not only through colonial policies such as residential schools and forced assimilation, but through the “violence, rarely against settlers but rather against oneself, one’s family, or one’s community, and addiction as a form of self-medicating to temporarily ease the despair of personal and political powerlessness” (Episkenew 2009:9).

As Gerald Vizenor points out, this historical trauma is not publicly acknowledged and honoured in national narratives, and therefore, subsequent generations inherit and display effects of that trauma (in Episkenew 2009). Being able to share history allows for Indigenous peoples to heal themselves but, for this healing process to begin, most settlers deny that their society is built on a “sick” foundation, which denies Indigenous peoples

the chance to seek a cure (Episkew 2009:11). As well, it allows Canadian society to uphold a racist and ignorant view of the worth of Indigenous peoples and their culture making it seem that Indigenous peoples are a burden on society and this limits the ability to trust one another fully. Reconciliation cannot occur if the truth is not stated and accepted rather than stated and dismissed. Reconciliation is not just a term to be used freely as if the injustice of the past has been reconciled. No partner in any relationship can truly forgive if the other continues to abuse, and this cycle of trauma to honeymoon phase to blow up needs to stop. The history of Canada needs to address the colonial succession of historical trauma for Indigenous peoples to begin a healing process, and to do this, the education of the settler state must be challenged and incorporate Indigenous narratives and truths.

While efforts have been seen in the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC) Reports and publications I do not believe that non-Indigenous peoples have accepted it as they continuously tell us to “get over it” and “it was in the past.” Non-Indigenous academics fail to realize that they are protected in the ivory tower that they still possess and using terms such as reconciliation, revitalization, and collaboration does not mean anything if they do not actively assist Nations in liberating their narratives. One-day lectures and weekend workshops do not indicate that the participant is an active mechanism for change. I will not pat such events on the back as they are unrealistic in effectively changing the societal views of Indigenous peoples in a few hours or days. I do not think we have effectively achieved all ninety-four calls to action from the TRC and these actions have been called for six years ago. To state that there have been profound changes dismisses the work to continually hold accountable the government, legal institutions, and society, and makes students in various disciplines overlook the work that is still needed. I am not pessimistic, this is a reality. A reality that I know too well in Alberta and Saskatchewan as tensions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples still exists. This liberal idea of inclusivity and multicultural foundations are not necessarily easy to change in Canada but they hold Canadian society accountable to realize that they are a part of Indigenous history. The responsibility of sharing and incorporating narratives goes both ways, and is needed in the education of the Indigenous

and settler states. If Indigenous peoples do not share the history, then we too allow this systematic oppression to continue.

Canadian society does not hold any right to Indigenous knowledge such as sacred teachings and ceremony, but settlers must take on the responsibility to know how the history of Canada has taken shape. They will learn their national history but also how their pasts are intrinsically intertwined with Indigenous peoples. What Indigenous peoples can share are our realities that encourage Indigenous children to be proud of their heritage. With respect to relationships, if we do not challenge the colonial discourse and share what we know, then this perpetuated version of Indian history continues to infest the minds of the generations of unknowing children. All children have the right to learn the truth, as it is our duty within the Treaty we have entered with the settler-nation that their children are our children, and this is something that they forgot.

To break free from the generalizations Indigenous peoples have been framed in history books, we must come out of the pages to challenge these representations and call for a time of resurgence and empowerment. Indigenous peoples need to make sense of our history and the effects of colonialism first and relearn, reclaim, and recharge our fires within through our cultural knowledge, and then reach new audiences who can stand with us as we challenge internalized colonization. To do this First Nations must create a process of resurgence and empowerment that allows them to take lead in discussions. However, we cannot enact change without discussing how colonialism does more than impact Indigenous histories, as it also affects mental health and well-being of Indigenous peoples. Acknowledging this harsh reality encourages appropriate responses needed for our healing and resurgence of being.

## 2.4 The Mindset of Colonialism

You ever go to a sun dance and see the pieces of hide on the ground? We had to hide our ceremonies because of the Indian agents and RCMP. We still put it on the ground to thank those people who continued our traditions even when it was outlawed. Our culture had to go underground or be hidden. I remember being told about this little old lady. They [the RCMP] had come to take all our belongings used in ceremony to burn them. Our bundles, rattles, and drums, and they tried to take her bundle away from her. Man, she had a good grip. The one officer kept grabbing it from her and she held on tight.



People thought he would throw her in with it. They had burned the majority of the items and the other officer said to him, “Just let her keep it,” and she held onto it so tightly afterwards. The bundle she kept has allowed for our culture to continue (Nimosôm Jerry, driving to his house from Wetaskiwin).

There is never an easy way to present colonialism. Often when the term is used people disengage or they shut off, or as an Indigenous person we get angry. We have every right to do so. We cannot shy away from the emotions and reverberations within ourselves as we begin to think about the plight of our people that is still not over. From 1884 to 1951 many ceremonies in Canada were outlawed through the *Indian Act* including the “potlach” in British Columbia (Monchalin 2016:117). In 1914, an amendment to the act required that all “Indians” living in the West were to obtain authorization before appearing in what the government called “costumes” when it was in fact regalia. In 1921, Duncan Scott Campbell, deputy superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs from 1913-1932, wrote to Indian Commissioner William Morris Graham, “It has always been clear to me that the Indians must have some sort of recreation, and if our agents would endeavor to substitute reasonable amusements for this senseless drumming and dancing, it would be a great assistance” (Monchalin 2016:117 citing Henry 2012: 112). In 1927, the *Indian Act* became more restrictive in the exclusion of Indigenous traditions and dances as outlined in section 140(3): “Any Indian in the province of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, or British Columbia, or in the Territories who participates in any Indian dance outside the boundaries of his own reserve, or who participates in any show, expedition, performance, stampede or pageant in aboriginal costume without the consent of the Superintendent General or his authorized agent, and any person who induces or employs any Indian to take part in such dance, show, exhibition, performance, stampede or pageant, or induces any Indian to leave his expedition, stampede or pageant has taken place or not, shall on summary conviction be liable to a penalty not exceeding twenty-five dollars, or to imprisonment for one month, or to both penalty and imprisonment” (quoted in Monchalin 2016:117-118).

The colonized, the inferior, the alternative – all refer to how we as Indigenous peoples have come to feel as we have been cast into these divisions by those on the opposite end. Indigenous peoples are not mainstream or dominant, and if we are it is rarely in the perception that we envision. Nelson Maldonado-Torres presents an “Outline

of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality,” that I find is essential to understanding not only the historical injustices that we have experienced, but also the everyday experiences that have impacted our understanding of self. Maldonado-Torres focuses on decolonization and as I struggled to write this section, as I could not contain my emotions, and I utilize his material as a stand in for my voice. By doing so, I am aware that I have limited the ability for the constraints of colonialism that I have felt and my nation and people have endured are not present. I could not ask the Elders and bring myself to tell you how much it hurts, and how much we suffer. As I stated earlier, this narrative is about resilience, resurgence, and hope. In this section, I ask for you to read the five theses and keep them in the back of your mind, as these are the thoughts that I have endured as an Indigenous woman. While I will never admit that I am colonized as this statement impacts my personal well being and my mental health, we as a western society need to be realistic to what Indigenous peoples face through colonialism.

The first five theses refer to coloniality and are important for our discussion, as they are the root of the colonized experience that play into how we carry ourselves. While Maldonado-Torres touches on experiences outside of Indigenous contexts they are of a colonized state of being that are no less important than Indigenous experience. My mother often explains that many of the youth that she helps in court are mad, but why are they mad? Maybe, it is our shared experiences that evoke a raw emotion that I feel as I sit in the lecture halls of the institution I was admitted to in thinking that I could not breathe.

*Breathlessness* is “caused by a sudden attack or by a very targeted and obvious brutality” (Baker, Goodman, and Mueller 2015 in Maldonado-Torres 2016: 5). As a student poet presents:

I stand out in the midst of your power and supremacy degraded by your battering and  
hatred for me because I am.

....

False lies perpetuated in classrooms and lecture rooms, to make me  
feel insignificant and worthless.

Told that my story begins and ends with your supreme nature told  
that being dark skinned is

A tyranny

An umbilical cord waiting to be cut and destroyed  
Destroyed are the physical ropes and chains you tied my forefathers

with.  
 Still strapped and chained like a slave, like a dog chained to  
 Magogo's gate.  
 Mentally enslaved is what it's called  
 Mentally enslaved.  
 ...  
 Once again my mother and my father reduced to nothing but labour.  
 Stripped of my dignity  
 My integrity gone and nowhere to be seen  
 HENCE  
 I CAN NO LONGER BREATHE  
 (Masisi 2016, abbreviated version, see Maldonado-Torres 2016: 5-6)

Maldonado-Torres presents the First thesis: "Colonialism, decolonization and related concepts generate anxiety and fear." Where anyone that presents colonialism and decolonization faces "a decadent and genocidal modern/colonial attitude of indifference, obfuscation, constant evasion, and aggression, typically in the guise of neutral and rational assessments, postracialism, and well-intentioned liberal values" (Maldonado-Torres 2016:8). The colonized experiences become subjected to a series of bad faith responses including: "This happened in the past and we need to move forward," "my ancestors were also colonized," "my parents were poor," "I am also othered," "in truth, we are all racists," "my wife (or husband, or best friend) is one of you," "I try to join, but they reject me;" and all the while, our experiences are undermined and conceal the relevance of colonization and decolonization to give any grounds to protests or questions of the colonized (Maldonado-Torres 2016:8).

The Second thesis: "Coloniality is different from colonialism and decoloniality is different from decolonization." Where colonialism and decolonization are usually presented as past realities or historical episodes that cannot be occurring in our present state, and coloniality and decoloniality refer to the logic, metaphysics, ontology, and matrix of power created by the massive processes of colonization and decolonization (Maldonado-Torres 2016:10).

The Third thesis: "Modernity/coloniality is a form of metaphysical catastrophe that naturalizes war." This thesis indicates that the conceptions of humanity and the ideals of inter-human contact is a veritable catastrophe (which means a "down-turn") whereby the world populations started to be divided according to, not merely specific practices or

beliefs, but degrees of being human (Maldonado-Torres 2016: 11). Where metaphysical catastrophe indicates a system of measure through the “Chain of Being” in which an individual is connected or not to God or simply, whether they can be dehumanized. The degrees of human imply a superior and inferior individual that normalizes war, either actual wars or genocidal practices. “Being” and “nonbeing” become forms of standards of which humans are differentiated between and specifically, “where s/he/they is susceptible to denigration and a constant target of the violent dimensions of perpetual war” (Maldonado-Torres 2016:16).

The Fourth thesis: “The immediate effects of modernity/coloniality include: the naturalization of extermination, expropriation, domination, exploitation, early death, and conditions that are worse than death, such as torture and rape.” These are the perceived order of nature and where a presumably extraordinary practice such as torture becomes a “way of life” and “a fundamental necessity of the colonial world” (Fanon 1988:66). Colonized women experience a lower status of humanity and are exploited and vulnerable to violence and sexual degradation, and men become known as an enemy and the best way to approach them is to kill them, imprison them, and profile them (Maldonado-Torres 2016: 17-18).

The Fifth thesis: “Coloniality involves a radical transformation of power, knowledge, and being leading to the coloniality of power, the coloniality of knowledge, and the coloniality of being.” This thesis explores:

Knowledge: Subject, Object, Method

Being: Time, Space, Subjectivity

Power: Structure, Culture, Subject (Maldonado-Torres 2016: 19).

Particularly:

“... the *damné* is the subject who appears at the crux of the coloniality of power, the coloniality of knowledge, and the coloniality of being. The coloniality of power, knowledge, and being refer to how power, knowledge, and being, along with its constituent element, function in the zone of sub-humanity. The coloniality of power, knowledge, and being is also, generally and abstractly speaking, what creates the line between the human and non-human, between the world where perpetual peace is considered a possibility and the world that is defined as perpetual or endless war. The coloniality of power, knowledge, and being also refers to how time, space, culture, structure, method and conceptions of subjectivity and objectivity transform through metaphysical catastrophe. Modernity/coloniality is, in fact, the catastrophic transformation of whatever we can consider as human space,

time, structure, culture, subjectivity, objectivity, and methodology, into dehumanizing coordinates or foundations that serve to perpetuate the inferiority of some and the superiority of others” (Maldonado-Torres 2016: 20).

These five theses specifically address the *Fabric of Coloniality* as Nelson Maldonado-Torres coins as the three basic layers of Damnation:

1. *Deprivation of signification*: where you consider yourself less than the colonizer;
2. *Self-Deception*: where you are deprived of humanity based on the idea of what you have been presented as identity and this leads you to believe that what you are experiencing is normalized; and,
3. *Isolation*: where our basic ways of communication have been affected and where we are colonized to feel alone (Decolonizing Epistemology Lecture, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, July 14, 2016, Barcelona, Spain).

Understanding the three layers of damnation allows us to reflect on how Indigenous people perceive themselves through a colonial lens that inhibits aspects relating to livelihood and personal growth. If those who do not realize impacts and struggles constantly present you narratives of yourself, then you know no truth and have no understanding of what is right and just. You begin to believe you are not worthy, and this impacts mental health and prosperity of obtaining and achieving goals. The underlying reality of the three basic layers of damnation is that it constantly makes you find means to survive without the ability to thrive and push forward.

If we have been unaware of the extremity of colonization within our reserves, then we have become individuals who experience the three levels of damnation and the impacts addressed in these five theses without ever being able to properly deconstruct what is presumed in our society. Hence why I feel breathless in the first place or why the youth are angry, it is based on this underlying reality of how colonization impacts us through our state of mind. We know Indigenous peoples are more than worthy, we feel it through the sensations of our ancestors and spirit of our language, and we must continue to let our children know. In my belief and experience, this is why Nipisihkopahk has experienced the increase of gang related activity and impacts on our mental well being, we need to relight the narratives of our creation into the world for us to witness the beauty. Indigenous peoples must decolonize the minds of our youth to resist this hegemonic view of our importance. Indigenous peoples need to be shown that they are

beautiful and capable, and need role models that are efficient in saying that the goals they obtained are achievable. Education plays an important aspect in Indigenous futures through ability to allow individuals and Indigenous nations to thrive.

Maldonado-Torres goes on to present five remaining theses that aim at decoloniality including:

***Sixth thesis:*** *Decoloniality is rooted in decolonial turn or turns away from modernity/coloniality.*

***Seventh thesis:*** *Decoloniality involves decolonial epistemic turn whereby the damné emerges as a questioner, thinker, theorist, writer, and communicator.*

***Eighth thesis:*** *Decoloniality involves an aesthetic, erotic, and spiritual decolonial turn whereby the damné emerges as creator.*

***Ninth thesis:*** *Decoloniality involves an activist decolonial turn whereby the damné emerges as an agent of social change.*

***Tenth thesis:*** *Decoloniality is a collective project.*

What is important to conceptualize is that impacts of colonization affect our understanding of being and allow for trauma both known and unknown to continue. It affects my home nation as we witness a rise of suicide, emotional pathologies that extend out of physical and sexual abuse, a sense of entitlement, and various other detrimental actions to persist. However, if we can challenge these learned behaviours through our colonial cages, we can forge ahead with a new love for our way of life through our teachings, especially in Samson Cree Nation.

## 2.5 Resistances, Resurgence, Empowerment

Indigenous Peoples are framed within two value systems that are fundamentally opposed: one rooted in traditional teachings, structures of social and cultural relations, and the other, imposed by the colonial nation state (Alfred 2009). Indigenous peoples were prohibited from actively engaging in customs and traditions, and we have ignored the crisis these communities face by not knowing what they have lost and the significant strides needed to reconstruct their identities as “autonomous individual, collective, and social beings” (Alfred 2009: 25). Granted Indigenous peoples have made significant strides toward reconstructing their identities, but much remains to be done. As the threat of cultural assimilation no longer overwhelms Nations, the effects of restoring mental, physical, and emotional health cannot be overstated (Alfred 2009). Social ills that persist

are proof that cultural revitalization is not enough, since land, culture, and government are inseparable in traditional philosophies. This means that the denial of one aspect makes impossible the recovery for the whole (Alfred 2009). There is still an extensive amount of work to be done, but resurgence and empowerment can be obtained as seen through the work of the Kaupapa Maori in New Zealand through their education system, *Te Kotahitanga*.

This political consciousness developed by the Maori people is used to promote the “revitalization of Maori cultural aspirations, preferences, and practices as a philosophical and productive educational stance and resistance to the hegemony of the dominant discourse” (Bishop 2008:439). This resurgence is based on the Treaty of Waitangi in which Maori can “determine their own policies, to actively participate in the development and interpretation of the law, to assume responsibility for their own affairs and to plan for the needs of future generations” (Durie 1995:45 in Bishop 2008:440). Through the incorporation of *Rangatiratanga*, a Maori legal term bound by cultural traditions, they could achieve relative autonomy or Self-determination and hold the right to determine one’s destiny. Such destiny is in relation to others, and this notion of relations being fundamental to Maori epistemologies includes:

1. Taonga Tuku Iho: cultural aspirations – treasures from the ancestors
2. Ako: Reciprocal learning – to teach and to learn
3. Kia piki ake I nga raruraru o te kainga: mediation of socioeconomic and home difficulties – parents are incorporated into schooling
4. Whanau: extended family – a cultural preference that contains both cultural aspirations and cultural practices.
5. Kaupapa: Collective vision, philosophy (Bishop 2008:446).

The Maori can consider: where power is shared; where culture counts; where learning is interactive and dialogic: learners are co-inquirers, collaboration with others; where connectedness is fundamental; and, where there is a common vision (Bishop 2008: 446). This results in the ability for Maori students to participate and engage in educational systems on their own culturally constituted terms (Bishop 2008:446).

Through this Maori example, we can witness the importance of Indigenous knowledge within education for Indigenous students. As well, we learn how the Maori utilized their cultural strengths and Indigenous communities can learn from their success. Leanne Simpson in *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation*,

*Resurgence, and a New Emergence* puts forward a Canadian reality of resurgence and empowerment. Simpson puts forward the notion that:

We need to be able to articulate in a clear manner, “our visions for the future, for living as *Indigenous peoples* in contemporary times. To do so, we need to engage in *Indigenous* processes, since per our traditions, the processes of engagement highly influence the outcome of the engagement itself. We need to do this on our own terms, without the sanction, permission or engagement of the state, western theory or the opinions of Canadians. We need to not just figure out who we are; we need to re-establish the processes by which we live who we are within the current context we find ourselves. We do not need funding to do this. We do not need a friendly colonial political climate to do this. We do not need opportunity to do this. We need elders, our languages, and our lands, along with vision, intent commitment, community and ultimately, action. We must move ourselves beyond resistance and survival, to flourishing and *mino bimaadiziwin*” [living the good life] (2011:17, emphasis in original).

Through transforming Indigenous peoples, the communities and nation ultimately initiate the first step in transforming our relationship with the state (Simpson 2011:17). Building diverse “nation-culture-based resurgences” means re-investing in our own ways of being. This is achievable through regenerating our political and intellectual traditions, living within our legal systems, learning our language, obtaining ceremonial and spiritual pursuits, and creating and using our artistic and performance-based traditions (Simpson 2011:17). As Simpson further declares, “there is no purpose to put all our energies into demanding that the state recognizes us since it is depressing, futile, and a waste of energy; **this transformation begins with Indigenous peoples**” (emphasis added, Simpson 2011:17). The Maori example presents how Indigenous peoples actively achieved the betterment of their education by incorporating key philosophies that in turn allowed the Maori to achieve a resurgence of their traditions linked to legal systems and traditional governance. This is obtainable in Canada, and has already begun at the community level. Simpson goes on to present that we can initiate deepen our understanding of decolonization, assimilation, resistance and resurgence from within Nishnaabeg perspectives.

Biskaabiiyang is the process “returning to ourselves” in which Anishinabek researchers and scholars can evaluate how they have been affected by colonialism (Simpson 2011:51). Aanjigone explores the “ethic of non-interference” in which one needs to be careful with making judgments and with the act of criticism because if we



criticize something, our spiritual being may take on the very essence of that criticism (Simpson 2011:54). Naakgonige encourages Nishnaabeg people to make decisions slow and carefully and that warns to be careful or mindful (Simpson 2011). Debewin is normally translated as truth but if you place an “o” in front of debewin, (o)debewin it is “the sound of the heart;” meaning the sound of my heart, and that my truth will be different from someone else’s (Simpson 2011:59 drawing on Dumont 2010: Elders Conference presentation). Gdi-nweninaa is listening with our full bodies – our hearts, our minds, and our physicality, and where we must listen and take with us those sounds that hold the greatest meaning in our own lives and in our resurgence (Simpson 2011:61).

## 2.6 Mâmitonêyicikan Nêhiyaw: Think Four Body

The late Haudenosaunee scholar John Mohawk was Seneca of the Turtle clan from the Cattaraugus Indian Reservation, located in western New York State. Mohawk’s thoughts are presented in *Thinking in Indian: A John Mohawk Reader* edited by José Barreiro. Throughout the work, Sotsisowah, Mohawk’s traditional name, forwards a basic call to consciousness, where:

A strategy for survival must include a liberation theology – call it a philosophy or cosmology if you will, but we believe it to be a theology – or humankind will simply continue to seek more efficient ways to exploit that which they have come to respect. If these processes continue unabated and unchanged at the foundation of the colonizers’ ideology, our species will never be liberated from the undeniable reality that we live on a planet of limited resources, and sooner or later we will exploit our environment beyond its ability to renew itself (Sotsisowah – Basic Call to Consciousness: Presented by the Haudenosaunee to the Nongovernmental Organizations of the United Nations at Geneva Switzerland, 1977 in Foreword address by Oren Lyon, Barreiro ed. 2010: ix).

Sotsisowah’s knowledge is seen in his ability to present Haudenosaunee cosmology and ancient understandings of human relationships to the natural world through his writing. His initiatives were focused on sustaining Gayanashagowah, “The Great Law of Peace,” where he was taught the traditional governments of the Haudenosaunee in the Newtown Longhouse in Cattaraugus (Barreiro ed. 2010: ix-x). Such knowledge relied not only on the Earth Spirit but also Indigenous economics, Nationhood and governance, Native

Rights today, and Political philosophy; all of which are addressed in key sections of the work.

Sotsisowah states that the movements required to empower Indigenous peoples are in the grassroots level of action through reestablishment of economic and social institutions that benefit the people rather than a government or party. Power must rise from the people to their leaders and should not rise the other way around (Mohawk 2010:196). To be successful one must be conscious of the fact that they too are part of a struggle against developments that threaten to destroy peoples and cultures globally; these forms of oppression are all interrelated (Mohawk 2010:197). The most profound stories are all common to the struggle of peoples, cultures, and communities all over the globe that survive assault by transnational corporations and nation-states that seek to exploit lands, waters, forests, and labour, basically all resources (Mohawk 2010: 197). Therefore, a Native traditionalist movement is necessary against the transnational corporations as Indigenous understandings of the environment work against the growing power and monopolization that reformed our traditional lifestyles (Mohawk 2010: 197). Through spiritual objectives, this movement must engage in the redevelopment of culture on a human scale as all else will lead to the extermination of our own peoples (Mohawk 2010: 197). Drawing from the theology of the Haudenosaunee, the divine nature of the Nêhiyawak world extends through our concepts relating to kahkiyaw niwahkomakana, all my relations.

Specifically, Nêhiyaw philosophy lies in the connection to four worlds of being: the mental, the physical, the emotional, and the spiritual. The Fourth World, the Spirit World teaches us fundamental elements of how we conduct ourselves within the present. Kwayaskâtisiwin is being moral or having honest character, and is important to instill in our Nêhiyaw children. We remember through oral narratives of Wîsahêcâhk, Elder Brother, what can happen to us if we act as he acted, and he teaches us how to live. Furthermore, our natural environment offers us teachings to how we should act to one another, not only the human world, but the plant and animal worlds, and these are seen in the Seven Grandfather teachings:

Kihêw, Eagle, represents sâkihitowin, the act of being in love.  
Paskwâw mostos, Buffalo, represents kihceyitamowin, regard with deepest respect.

Maskwa, Bear, represents sohkeyimowin, the act of having strength, courage, or bravery.

Mistâpew, the Giant, represents kwayask itatisiwin, honesty in good clean living.

Mahikan, Wolf, represents Tapâhtâyimowin, humility.

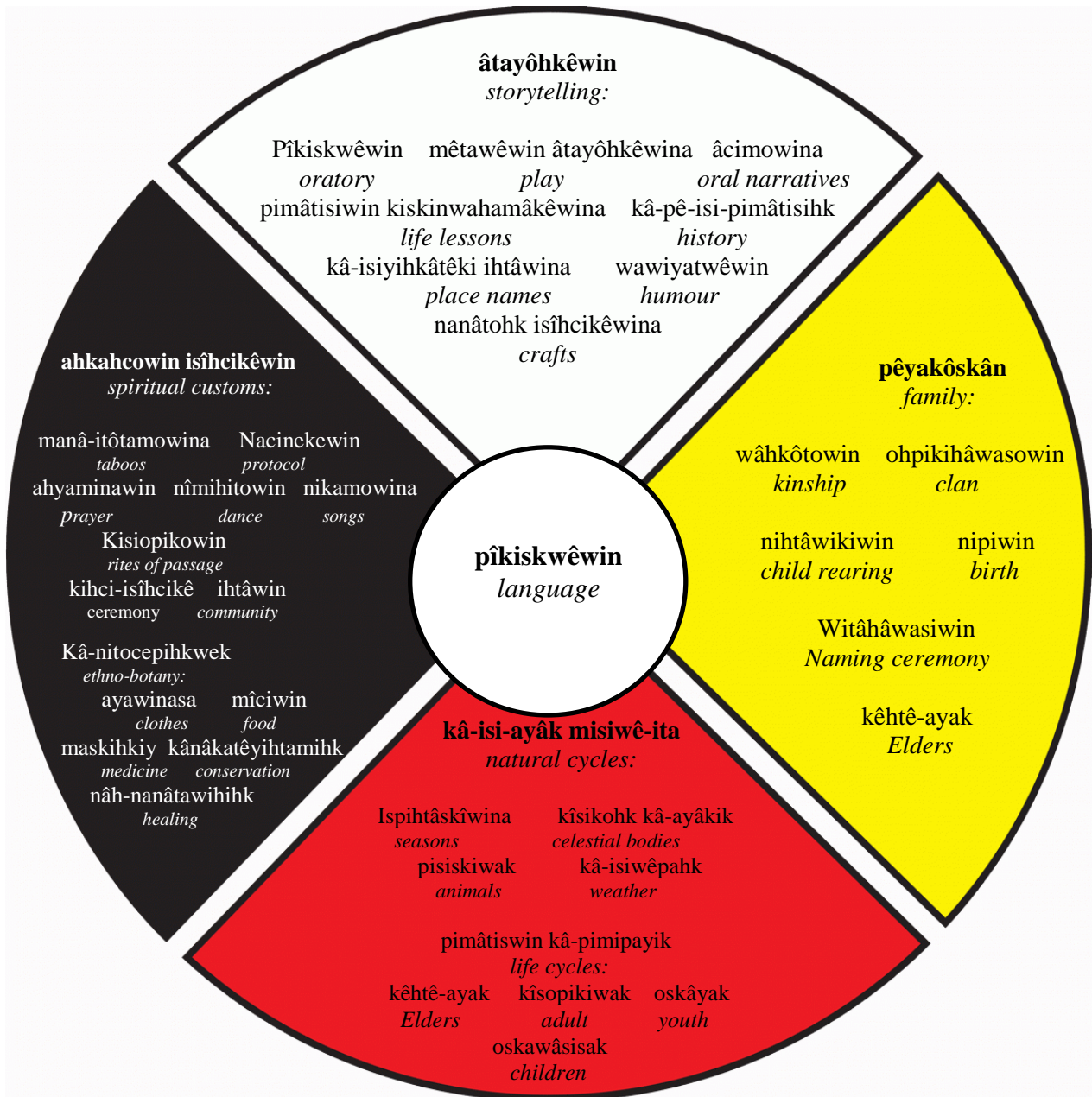
Amisk, Beaver, represents kakêhtawêyimowin, to think wisely.

Miskinâhk, Turtle, represents tapwewin, the act of telling the truth.

These are the basis of Nêhiyaw Iyinisowin ka masihtahk, Four-Body philosophy, that connects us to how we should present ourselves as we not only represent our individuality but we are bound to honour and integrity of our family, nation, and other-world beings seen in kâ-isi-ayâk misiwê-ita, natural cycles.

### 2.6.1 Elements of Nêhiyaw Culture

Solomon Ratt, a sakâwiyiniwak speaker and educator from Stanley Mission, Saskatchewan provide insight into Nêhiyaw Culture through elements that reflect our being (see Figure 2) (available through the “Cree Literacy Network,” accessed January 26, 2017, <http://creeliteracy.org/2017/01/26/solomon-ratt-elements-of-cree-culture/>).



**Figure 2** Elements of Nêhiyaw Culture, adapted from Solomon Ratt’s Hand Drawings and Translations

## 2.7 Conclusion

The history of the Nêhiyaw has been dominated by outside sources that to this day are consulted and cited. As we witnessed through Rob Innes and Neal McLeod's work, the Nêhiyaw share multicultural genealogies, but through assumption that they are a singular monoculture there is limited amount of literature available. Scholars have failed to convey the complexities of Aboriginal societies in the prairie regions, and by doing so have limited what we can know. These multicultural genealogies allow us to witness how other peoples have impacted Nêhiyawak knowledge systems and philosophies, but also how the Nêhiyawak have contributed to ways of thinking about other Nations, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Through kinship and marriage customs, oral narratives of Elder Brother, and traditional governance and treaty understanding, we can highlight where further study lies in the history of the Nêhiyaw nation as we spread further into the subordinated roles and knowledges of Saulteaux, Assiniboine, and Metis communities.

In addition to understanding the Nêhiyaw we highlighted dominant assumptions that have been continuously used to discuss the Nêhiyaw including westward migration and ethnogenesis. Ethnogenesis states the Nêhiyaw emerged out of nowhere in the prairie region; but oral traditions and narratives present a long history throughout British Columbia and Manitoba. Many scholars still cling to the idea that the Nêhiyaw moved westward with the fur trade and disregard the Nêhiyaw's ability to have settled west without influence of the fur trade. As Kiera Ladner points out, a Nêhiyaw "chief" drew a map of the locations and pathways of several major waterways in the Plains (the Saskatchewan, Red and Missouri Rivers) for French fur trader La Vérendrye circa 1730, and this indicates that the Nêhiyaw had to have known the region well enough to draw a map that is decipherable and accurate till today (Ladner 2001:244). Maskwacîs too has knowledge of their traditional regions including trails and events within the territory (see Appendix 7). Dale Russell's *Eighteenth Century Western Cree and Their Neighbors* argued that the Nêhiyaw had not migrated west but settled near the lower Saskatchewan River for several hundred years (Daschuk 2013: xiv). Russell further states that the fur trade record misinterprets a westward migration that did not show the people moving west but the fur traders (Daschuk 2013: xiv).

The Nêhiyawak past is emerging and will challenge how history is consulted through ethnographic texts and archives. As the Nêhiyawak express their intellectual traditions we can only expect the literature and insights of Innes and McLeod be expanded upon. For the first-time Nêhiyaw culture, tradition, and custom will be liberated from the categories and representations held by Canadian public, as we bring forward the voices of Nêhiyawak Elders and spirits, home to its people, the Nêhiyawak, Assiniboine, Saulteaux, and Metis. However, the methods and pedagogies required to complete such as task for liberating Indigenous narratives are found within the transfer of knowledge and ways of knowing held by Indigenous Nations.

## Chapter Three

### 3 Gathering Roots

Shawn Wilson in his work *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* defines epistemologies as the nature of thinking and knowing and how we have come to know something (i.e. how do I know what is real?); and methodologies refers to how knowledge is gained (i.e. how do I find out more about this reality?) (2008:34). Methodology includes the techniques used to obtain knowledge including archival research, interviews, and so on, while epistemology relates to worldview or philosophy. We will witness that epistemology dominates the methodological framework of Indigenous study because it includes entire systems of thinking that are built on ontologies. Ontologies look at the theory of nature of existence, or the nature of reality (i.e. what is real?) (Wilson 2008: 33). These are part of an axiology guided by ethics and protocols as we search for knowledge and judge what is worth searching for (i.e. what part about this reality is worth finding out and what is an ethical way to gain such knowledge?) (Wilson 2008: 33). The term “tension” is used quite often in Indigenous studies as it explores distinct differences between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems. Therefore, in that vein, I will bring forward the distinct differences between the three methodologies but also point out where these methodologies converge and diverge from one another. This insight is critical for scholars who intend to work with Indigenous communities and for the settler-state of Canada to begin the process of reconciliation and understanding as both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples move forward.

Therefore, this chapter will examine how Indigenous peoples have utilized Indigenous, decolonizing, and Nêhiyawak methodologies to rewrite what is known and can be known. These methodological approaches challenge the very core of knowledge production since they do not follow Western terms of research (Kovach 2009:29). As well, they forward a “meta-physical” perspective that is not typical in Western methodologies, as these are designed to obfuscate the metaphysical origins of disconnectedness and claims to objectivity and rationality (Moreton-Robinson 2017:75). This methodological approach does not rest on a relation between the body and the mind (Moreton-Robinson 2017:75). Indigenous ways of knowing demonstrate that bodies do matter in research and knowledge production and that these processes embody specific orientations towards the social. These methodological approaches are valid and

appropriate to approach the world based on making a metaphysical argument that one is connected from the living earth (Moreton-Robinson 2017:75). Specifically, Indigenous research must “un-do” the Western methodological presupposition of nature as servant to humanity and humanity as master of nature (Moreton-Robinson 2017: 75).

### 3.1 Indigenous Methodology

As Indigenous people have grasped for the ability to represent their selves through their own narratives and intellectual traditions, we have witnessed a shift in the academic landscape as studies move away from the binaries of Indigenous-settler relations to construct emergent, mutual forms of dialogue, research, theory, and action (Kovach 2009:12). Indigenous methodologies have been first and foremost the reaction against research and its effects on Indigenous peoples’ knowledge and history. It is out of this relationship with research that Indigenous peoples developed “alterNative” methodologies that “construct, rediscover, and/or reaffirm their knowledges and cultures...represent the aspirations of Indigenous [peoples] and carry within them the potential to strengthen the struggle for emancipation and liberation from oppression” (Rigney 1999:114). Where a battle cry of “Indigenize!” shouts in the minds of activists, lobbyists, and even one’s own self as Indigenous peoples bring forward their knowledge to shift how our world thinks and learns how to reason (Battiste 2013:71; Ladner 2001:35). This shift is caused by the “Indigenous Renaissance” since it is an agenda for the present and future and is a movement that works collaboratively toward Indigenous peoples’ goals for sovereignty, self-determination, and treaty and Aboriginal rights (Battiste 2013:73-74).

Indigenous peoples that experience the movement for Indigenization attempt to bring light to how we reason within the world. Challenging for the truth for Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing is irrelevant and tiresome since our society has been instructed to reason in only one fashion, and that is through scientific analysis that dictates a specified way of thinking (Ladner 2001:35). Incommensurability impacts the discussion of Indigenous methodologies since it is through this way of thinking that tensions arise amongst Western scholars and why Indigenous peoples struggle to share their knowledge due to how they have been educated in Western institutions that limit the ability to see outside fact and evidence. As James Youngblood Henderson affirms in *The Mi’kmaw Concordat*, it is a “transformation of consciousness” that is required to escape colonial legacies and Western-Eurocentric thought (1997:24). By



incorporating Indigenous alterNative ways of thinking we react to intellectual colonialism and reaffirm Indigenous knowledge by respecting Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies.

By incorporating Indigenous knowledge systems and research frameworks that are distinctive of cultural epistemologies we can challenge and transform the institutional hegemony of the academy (Kovach 2009:12). This institutional transformation is how Indigenous knowledge systems and research frameworks open new ways of interpretation, and understanding since these offer broad overviews and frameworks for research; but since they are based on beliefs and assumptions about reality, they are intrinsically tied to value (Wilson 2008:33). Therefore, these methodologies are based on Indigenous knowledge that is wholistically derived from the Spirit, heart, mind and body; where intuitive knowledge, and metaphysical and unconscious realms are possible channels to knowing (Abolson 2011:31 citing Colorado 1988; Deloria 2002; Little Bear 2000). Channels that can come from meditation, dreams, and visions, and these are gifts from the spiritual realms that allow a researcher to learn through nature and maintain the relationship between creation and the Creator.

The terms used by scholars for “research” should not reflect a Western view of collecting and finding, but instead should reflect the views of obtaining through past traditional practice and include terms such as searching, harvesting, picking, gathering, hunting and trapping (Abolson 2011:21). By incorporating Indigenous intellectual traditions of how knowledge is gained, researchers allow themselves to view the world through different lenses and open their selves to a new way of thinking, learning, and understanding. Researchers who do not share these mindsets can begin with understanding cultural protocol since this is not only a method to obtain knowledge but the creation of a mutual relationship with Indigenous Elders.

As Margaret Kovach in *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Context* states: “We need only to look to the importance of protocol within Indigenous communities to recognize that how activities (i.e. methods) are carried out matter. Protocols are a means to ensure that activities are carried out in a manner that reflects community teachings and are done in a good way. The same principle ought to apply to research” (2009:40). The late Maskwac’is scholar and educator Walter Lightning defines “protocol” as:

... to any one of a number of culturally ordained actions and statements, established by ancient tradition that an individual completes to establish a relationship with another person from whom the individual makes a request. The protocols differ according to the

nature of the request and the nature of the individuals involved. The actions and statements may be outwardly simple and straightforward, or they may be complex, involving preparation lasting a year or more. The protocols may often involve the presentation of something. It would be a mistake to say that what is presented is symbolic of whatever may be requested, or the relationship that it is hoped will be established, because it is much more than symbolic (1992:210).

Indigenous teachings and cultural protocol encompass the importance of Indigenous methodologies. Since all associate to the act of sharing, and since each personal narrative, story, and song is a method that allows each generation to transmit knowledge, these approaches are vital to cultural persistence and continuity. Cultural longevity depends on the ability to sustain cultural knowledge; many Indigenous scholars emphasize methodological approaches that respect cultural knowings (Kovach 2009:12, 24). These cultural knowings drive Indigenous research through three distinct characteristics including: the cultural knowledges that guide one's research choices, the methods used in searching, and a way to interpret knowledge that gives back in a purposeful, helpful, and relevant manner (to the Nation and a wider audience) (Kovach 2009:43-44).

Kathleen Abolson, Minogiizhigokwe, is Anishinaabe kwe from Flying Post First Nation in Nipigon, Ontario presents an example of an Indigenous methodological approach. Abolson's "Petal Flower" is a "wholistic "framework in search of knowledge and is comprised of six parts:

1. The Roots: That is the foundational elements, where all methodologies are rooted and informed in varying degrees by Indigenous paradigms and worldviews;
2. The center of the Flower: The center represents self and self in relation to the research. Indigenous re-search is as much as who is doing the research as to the how of the research;
3. The Leaves: The leaves enable photosynthesis of knowledge: the transformative journeys of self through research. Indigenous re-searchers are on a journey of learning who they are and what they know. The leaves are connected to the stem and to the ways Indigenous searchers navigate academic channels;
4. The Stem: This is the methodological backbone and supports all parts of the whole. The backbone of Indigenous research comprises a critique of colonialism, imperialism, and Euro-Western research on Indigenous peoples. The stem is the connecting pathway between the paradigms, researcher, process, academia, and methodologies. Critical Indigenous research agendas are actualized because of the strengths, supports, skills, and roles of Indigenous scholars;
5. The Petals: The petals represent the diversity of indigenous research and methodology and the diverse ways of research for knowledge; and,
6. The Environment: This is the academic context of the framework that influences the life of Indigenous methodologies in the academy and affects Indigenous researchers who are trying to advance their theories and methods. Predominantly, Indigenous research and the inclusion of an Indigenous methodological approach brings uncertainty and unfamiliarity

since it is unfamiliar in the academy, and therefore within the environment a researcher can share their experiences and strategies for employing Indigenous research in the academy (2011:50-52).

This methodology is significant in several ways including: all its components are interrelated, and interdependent; it is earth centered and harmoniously exists in relationship with Creation; it's cyclical and changes from season to season; the environment it lives in impacts its life; and it has spirit and a life (Abolson 2011:49). Predominantly, this Indigenous methodology brings the core of creation to the center of its importance while acknowledging and validating Indigenous leadership and scholarship displayed within a climate that is often foreign, alienating, and marginalizing (Abolson 2011:49). This methodological framework is one of many that may be utilized by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars because it intertwines Anishinaabe protocol and intellectual traditions. As promising and important as frameworks such as these are, there are limitations and tensions within Indigenous methodology.

Tensions that arise from attempting to conform to an outsider's view of the "Indigenous Standard" (i.e. "all Natives are this; all Natives are that") have failed since each Indigenous Nation is different and unique and has a multi-layered tradition of customs borrowed from other Nations and employ strategies to understand their own places (Kovach 2009: 5; Oliveira 2006:6 in Louis 2007:133). Quite simply, there cannot be a single Indigenous methodology that is universal since as Kovach states, "a common language puts Indigenous peoples at risk" (2009:24). As Little Bear states, "there is enough similarity among North American Indian philosophies to apply concepts generally" (2000:79). Therefore, each Indigenous Nation is bound by their cultural philosophies, world-views, beliefs, customs, and protocols, and though a general methodological approach assists through research, it cannot however be a universal truth for all Indigenous peoples. Indigenous languages often have multiple meanings associated to one word and when you give a translation that becomes the sole definition it compromises the word entirely, since it denies other possible meanings to be associated with the term. However, this then is an issue of translatability not generalizations because often Indigenous words cannot be translated effectively or coherently as a colonial language is limited.

Indigenous methodologies have allowed Indigenous ways of knowing to emphasize the cultural, spiritual, and intangible importance of Indigenous ways of life. These methodologies allow Indigenous histories and pasts to be told through Indigenous knowledge systems that put

the heart of the people in the forefront rather than on the margins looking in. These are valuable and critical research frameworks and epistemologies that can assist in enhancing, rewriting, and challenging what we know and have yet to learn about Indigenous peoples. The overall principles of Indigenous methodologies include the incorporation of Indigenous worldviews and cultural knowledge systems, but these are simply not enough. The foundations of academic hierarchy are rooted in colonial thought and this requires us to decolonize academic and larger societal systems.

### 3.2 Decolonizing Methodology

To assess what decolonization is and how it relates to methodologies, I believe we must examine what colonization/colonialism is by assessing imperialism. Imperialism frames the “Indigenous experience” and still hurts, still destroys, and is reforming itself constantly (Smith 1999:19). Extending to the arrival of Christopher Columbus, imperialism allowed for a vast array of military personnel, imperial administrators, priests, explorers, missionaries, colonial officials, artists, entrepreneurs, and settlers to leave permanent “wounds” on the Indigenous Nations, and allowed them to name and claim traditional lands (Smith 1999:21). Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith states that imperialism tends to be used in at least four different ways beginning from the fifteenth century:

1. Imperialism as economic expansion: The system of control that secured the markets and capital investments,
2. Imperialism as a form of subjugation of ‘others’: Exploitation and subjugation of Indigenous peoples that has created a struggle to recover histories, lands, languages, and basic human dignity,
3. Imperialism as an idea or spirit with many forms of realization: Particularly, this way incorporates the promotion of science, economic expansion and political practice, all of which have impacted the study and research of Indigenous peoples, and
4. Imperialism as a discursive field of knowledge: This way has been generated by writers whose understandings of imperialism and colonialism have been based either on their membership of and experience with colonized societies, or on their interests in understanding imperialism from the perspective of local contexts (1999:21-23).

Imperialism was the beginning of what would become colonialism and the driving force for settlement of colonies. As Susan Miller asserts in her article “Native Historians Write Back,” colonialism refers the planting of colonies outside of a Nation’s land base that suppressed and manipulated Indigenous peoples through military assault, concentration on reduced land bases,

the taking of children, re-education, criminalization of Indigenous culture and incarceration of its carriers, etc. (2011:33). Though Miller's statement traces the impact of colonization through time, the colonial policies reflect an agenda that attempts to remove Indigenous sovereignty and rights from the initial beginning.

Colonialism therefore is 'the historical process whereby the 'West' attempts systematically to cancel or negate the cultural difference and value of the 'non-West' (Gandhi 1998:16 in Hart 2009:26). Colonization however, connects directly to Indigenous knowledge through three means: exclusion, or the absence of Indigenous knowledge, methodologies and practices, and with Eurocentric scholars identifying their knowledge as superior; marginalization, where peoples, individuals, and ideas are put to the side lines; and, appropriation, that connects colonialism to Indigenous knowledge through the misrepresentation of partial representation of an idea or artifact without recognition of the sources or inspiration, and at the same time gaining prosperity, success, and or the benefit from others' ideas (Hart 2009;Graveline 1998 in Hart 2009:27). The question for Indigenous historians is not what colonial peoples have done but what Indigenous peoples have experienced (Miller 2011:33).

To challenge the constraints of colonialism, academics and new learners who are allies to Indigenous peoples in the protection of our knowledge must step outside their privileged positions and challenge research that conforms to the guidelines of the colonial power structure (Hart 2009:32 citing Simpson 2004:381). Specific topics concerned with decolonization include Indigenous ways of thinking such as: "ideas about citizenship, governance and organizational structures, education, oral traditions, language, repatriation, images and stereotypes, and diet, as well as the role of truth telling..." (Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird 2005:4). To understand why we must decolonize Indigenous thought, we can focus our attention to the context of African colonization and where we first witness decolonization emerges through diffusion and anti-colonialism.

Mary Louise Pratt presents "diffusion" as the process of substitution and replication. Put simply, this is where Western education replaces Native education, and where the modern replaces the traditional and local (Hart 2009:30). Basically, the "superior" or importantly, the Western, approach substitutes for the "inferior" philosophical belief systems. However, anti-colonial accounts recall a completely different substitution; instead these were structured interventions that combined physical and epistemological violence inflicted onto Indigenous

peoples (Hart 2009 citing Pratt 2004:452). Anti-colonial brings forward anti-oppressive discourses and at the same time, remains aware of the historical and institutional structures and contexts that sustain intellectual projects (Hart 2009 citing Dei 2000). Within anti-colonialism lies *Indigenism* that opposes imperialism and colonialism but incorporates the ‘fourth-world’ position. The “fourth-world” calls for empowerment and seeks the goal of peace (Hart 2009:32). Indigenism can literally mean ‘to be born of a place’ and specifically as Jamies Guerrero states, an Indigenous person has the “responsibility to practice kinship roles with his or her bioregional habitat, manifested through cultural beliefs, rituals and ceremonies that cherish biodiversity; this is the contact of Native land ethic and spirituality” (2003:66 in Hart 2009:33). The emphasis of anti-colonialism and Indigenism is the recognition of the injustices inflicted by imperialism and colonialism and what we as Indigenous writers and advocates must bring forth as we reflect on the transformation of our worldviews and customs. This is decolonization that looks to resist and challenge colonial institutions and ideologies (Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird 2005:2). Decolonization is an important aspect of writing and learning Indigenous pasts, and is critical to the advancement of Indigenous worldviews into mainstream education that is Eurocentric by nature. This is where Indigenous scholars and supporters must break down the layers of colonialism from our education, politics, medicine, and so on, and confront the very foundation that Western society is built upon.

Confronting ideologies of oppression is essential to decolonize our minds and our disciplines because we are not living in post-colonial times (Louis 2007:131 citing Smith, G.H. 2000, 215; cf. Moody 1993: xxix). Decolonizing Indigenous research is not the total rejection of Western theory, research, knowledge, and existing literature; rather it is about shifting directions into Indigenous concerns and worldviews and how we come to know and understand our theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes (Louis 2007:132 citing Smith 1999:39). Decolonization is by no means an effort to live as Indigenous peoples once did before contact and colonization, but a movement to rid ourselves of the colonized relations with nation-states and the destructive nature of those relationships (Miller 2011:34). Simply, it is a movement to ‘bring back’ that includes the revitalization of language, recovering ceremonies, institutions, technologies, philosophies, games, and various other forms of ancient knowledge, including traditional governance and responsibility (Miller 2011:35).

At the same time, decolonizing methodologies do not allow Indigenous peoples to fall into victimization of past injustices but rather stress how we can work toward our freedom, and transform the world around us and liberate our lives while at the same time enhancing our cultures, traditions, and state of mind (Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird 2005:2). Graham Smith (2000) furthers this notion through how Indigenous peoples' struggles cannot be reduced to singular solutions in singular locations but need to be carried out in multiple sites using multiple strategies (in Battiste 2013:70). Decolonizing methodologies demand a critical reflexive lens that acknowledges the politics of representation within Indigenous research (Kovach 2009: 33). So far, I have discussed the importance and needs that have driven a decolonial discourse by Indigenous peoples, but to see what methods are implemented in practice we need look no further than Linda Tuhiwai Smith's book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*.

Various Indigenous scholars have utilized Smith's work as it details a global experience felt by Indigenous peoples who share a common history. In her book, Smith presents twenty-five decolonizing projects that are not efforts to resume living as our Indigenous ancestors did before colonization but a movement to rid ourselves of colonial relationships with nation-states and the destructive efforts of those relations. Of these twenty-five projects, I have decided to focus on ones that are important for my research including: storytelling, celebrating survival, remembering, connecting, writing, representing, returning, protecting and sharing. Though the other projects will tie into my research, these nine will bring forth the importance of decolonizing methodologies and reveal the motivating factors of my study.

Storytelling, oral narratives, or oral histories are an integral part of Indigenous research since these stories "contribute to a collective story in which every Indigenous person has a place" (Smith 1999:144). Oral narratives and oral traditions allow for Nation stories linked to identity and well-being to be brought to the forefront of academic research and analysis. Indigenous cultures have a firm tradition of telling stories, and this is because they are either used as teaching narratives, tell of spiritual beginnings or offer words of self-healing and self-reflection for the audience. Many Indigenous cultures are oral cultures, and oral tradition and narratives bind Indigenous peoples together. Oral traditions and narratives present the collective voice of the Nation and as Simon Ortiz states:

The oral tradition of Native American people is based upon spoken language, but it is more than that too. Oral tradition is inclusive; it is the actions, behavior, relationships, practices throughout the whole social, economic, and spiritual life process of people. I think at times “oral tradition” is defined too strictly in terms of verbal-vocal manifestations in stories, songs, meditations, ceremonies, ritual, philosophies, and clan and tribal histories passed from older generations to the next...Oral tradition evokes and expresses a belief system (1992:7 in Archibald 2008:25-26).

Oral traditions and narratives present cultural traditions and custom while at the same time dictating protocol, and this is because of oratory. Oratory as a Lee Maracle affirms is a place of prayer, to persuade:

This is a word we can work with. We regard words as coming from original being – a sacred spiritual being. The orator is coming from a place of prayer and as such attempts to be persuasive. Words are not objects to be wasted. They represent the accumulated knowledge, cultural values, the vision of an entire people or peoples. We believe the proof of a thing or idea is in the doing. Doing requires some form of social interaction and thus, story is the most persuasive and sensible way to present the accumulated thoughts and values of people (1992:87 in Archibald 2008:26).

Oral narratives are linked within ancestral traditions, and they are maintained through a systematic process that includes oral footnotes of where the story began and who spoke it and where it came from. Not only do stories tell of the culture and people, but also, they allow for Elders to reach beyond their generation and impact the lives of the youth and therefore impact cultural longevity. Stories such as Russell Bishop states offer ‘diversities of truth’ where the storyteller and not the researcher remain in control (in Smith 1999:145). Linked within storytelling is the celebration of survival that focuses on the positives of Indigenous being and celebrates our resistance and affirms our cultural identity (Smith 1999:145).

Both Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies offer extensive frameworks and methods to carry out reclaiming of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Indigenous methodologies attack the research processes and aim to incorporate “alterNative” ways of thinking including Indigenous knowledge systems, while decolonizing methodologies attempt to remove colonial relationships and the systematic injustices that Indigenous peoples are placed into. While both bring forward the experiences of colonialism, one aims to produce a resurgence of traditional knowledges through worldview and intellectual traditions, and the other aims to deconstruct and decolonize our minds from suppression and assumed inferiority in which we are situated in the idea of the “endgame of empire” (Waziyatawin 2011:76 in Desai et al. 2012: IX).



However, neither is capable of successfully obtaining their goal without the other since decolonization can only be “achieved through the resurgence of an Indigenous consciousness channeled into contention with colonialism” (Alfred 2009: 48 in Desai et al. 2012: III). Indigenous methodologies that incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems are the starting point for resurgence and decolonization. However, to narrow in our focus, I will present a Nêhiyawak Methodological approach to discuss how certain research frameworks require a specific and detailed approach.

### 3.3 Nêhiyaw Methodology

Indigenous and decolonizing epistemologies both examine the collective experience of Indigenous peoples, yet, there are limitations and generalizations that extend out of their initiative. Margaret Kovach explains that applying Indigenous and decolonial methods may reveal too much and make available through texts what should have never been written down such as sacred knowledge (2009:46). Therefore, there is a need to create and express how Nation-specific methodological approaches differ from Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies. Indigenous cultures offer a breadth of distinct, unique, and even multicultural worldviews that are not expressed within a generalized approach. With that said, the Nation specific methodology that I will focus comes from the Nêhiyawak, the Four-Body People.

Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin, Nêhiyaw Knowledges, is an epistemological approach presented by Kovach that has several characteristics as researcher preparations involve cultural protocols, research preparation involving standard research design, making meaning of knowledges gathered, and giving back (Kovach 2009:46). The basis of this framework is in relation to the morpheme *miyo-*, meaning good, and is important for sharing and generosity, and for respect for the earth and all its life forms (Kovach 2009:63). *Miyo-wîcêhtowin* is good relations and is the center of Nêhiyaw culture and the basis of ethical responsibility. Kovach presents a Nêhiyaw research framework through the Buffalo Hunt. The Paskwâw mostos, *buffalo*, were the main stay of the Plains Nêhiyaw economy and an essential part of Nêhiyaw life. Peyasiw-awasis, Chief Thunderchild, shares a story that underlines Nêhiyaw methodology in relation to the buffalo:

In the days when the buffalo were many, there were Old Men who had the gift of ‘making pounds.’ Poundmaker’s [one of the Chiefs of the Plains Nêhiyaw] father was such a one, and he gave the name to his son. Another was Eyi-pa-chi-nas, and when it was known that he was ‘sitting at pound’ – that he was seeking the supernatural power to bring the buffalo – hunters would gather.

One winter there were ten teepees, just for these hunters. Working all together, they cut trees to make a circular pound about seventy yards across...The gate was fourteen feet wide, and out from it they laid two long lines of tufted willows that spread farther and farther apart, to channel the buffalo into the pound. In the centre they set a great lobbed tree.

When everything was ready, other Old Men joined Eyi-pa-chi-nas and sang the buffalo song. Far on the plain, a herd of buffalo was sighted, and two young men rode out to watch. They were to blow whistles as soon as the buffalo started to move in the early morning...The buffalo came on between the lines of the wall and through the gate... Then the hunters closed in, and stopped the gateway with poles and buffalo robes.

We would cut up the meat till late at night, and haul it with dogs to the encampment...Other bands came to join us and to feast (Quoted in E. Ahenakew, 1995: 36 cited by Kovach 2009: 64-65).

In this story, the methodology is “the preparation for research, preparation of the researcher, recognition of protocol (cultural and ethical), respectfulness, and sharing the knowledge (reciprocity)” (Kovach 2009: 65). This is how the Nêhiyawak do things, and is an epistemological teaching. To get at the heart of Nation epistemology, we can relate to storytelling and the teachings within each narrative, and we can also find the cultural protocols within language.

Within Nêhiyawêwin we witness how the Nêhiyawak related to their world. We can look at the animacy of animals, tobacco, rocks, trees, and rivers and understand why they are given respect and how wholism ties within Nêhiyaw concepts. English translations often do not convey the full context of the meaning, and as researchers we must be aware that ‘we are going

to lose some of the meanings, and we are also going to change some of the meanings' (Michael Hart in Kovach 2009:68). What we must remember is that a researcher does not need to be fluent in Nêhiyawêwin but must understand how language influences knowledge; this is an important and critical aspect of Nation epistemology since it speaks to other realms of knowing and the sacred. Sacred knowledge is difficult for Western research to accept and is quite often uncomfortable. As Shawn Wilson demonstrates Nêhiyaw research is a ceremony and the West has struggled to understand the metaphysical (2008:69).

Nêhiyaw ways of knowing are tied to the pipe, the songs, and prayer, and these are integral parts of ceremony. Treaty negotiations were conducted in a pipe ceremony, which is one of the most important ceremonies since it involves spiritual beings and ancestors. Specifically, the pipe is an oath made in front of Manitow as witness. How Nêhiyaw people come to know is linked to spiritual knowing and processes such as ceremonies, dreams, visions, and synchronicities (Kovach 2009). The emphasis of a Nêhiyaw epistemology is the importance of "respect, reciprocity, relation, protocol, holistic knowing, relevancy, story, interpretive meaning, and the experiential nested in place and kinship systems" (Kovach 2009:67). With that said, there is no ruling Nêhiyaw philosophy because knowing is a process of being (Kovach 2009), and the research that is conducted within the Nêhiyaw culture is a learning journey that reflects the writer's experiences. Understanding Nêhiyaw custom and tradition is only the beginning of the whole experience a researcher will undergo, and often we fail to realize that though we may write a dissertation, a novel, or an article, we may not be leading that project, and the universe has decided what we should or should not know. That is an important aspect of Indigenous and Nation research that is never accounted for in conventional negating of research.

Nêhiyawak methodologies offer new insights and cultural experiences for researchers, and are valuable to growth of Indigenous literature and study. This specific research framework puts the needs of the Nêhiyawak in the forefront of the research and allows for them to express how they understand and interact with the world around them. A Nation-specific methodology extends out of Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies but at the same time has distinct goals it aims to achieve. The tensions that exist are those that the Nêhiyaw people must forward since it is their way of life being researched, their experiences within the constructs of colonialism, and they know what ideologies and traditions are important for their own resurgence and well-being. Nation methodologies are based on the foundations of creation and

incorporate the ontological knowledge linked to philosophies that make each Indigenous Nation distinct.

## 3.4 Methods

### 3.4.1 Âcimowina

Oral narratives are an integral part of everyday Nêhiyaw life as they reveal culture, protocol, and knowledge. Stan Cuthand, from the Little Pine Cree Reserve in Saskatchewan, recalls legendary storyteller Sakamôtâ-inew, the son of renowned Chief Poundmaker. Sakamôtâ-inew would often forget the story and the adults would recall how the story started and in so doing, brought the whole audience together. His humility in himself allowed him to connect to the people and since he was typically the one who told stories during hard times; would attend wakes and his stories would help the mourners relieve their anger and grief (Wheeler 2010). Storytellers like Sakamôtâ-inew would tell miscellaneous stories or little stories about how things were like before the Treaties, or stories of personal actions such as giving away horses, winning a wife, or holding a feast, and for Sakamôtâ-inew his greatest stories were those of Wîsahêcâhk (Wheeler 2010). Wîsahêcâhk like many Indigenous terms, has multiple meanings, typically known as the trickster, he can also be the narrative of the Elder Brother known as âtayôhkêwina (McLeod 2007). It might be said, in fact, that Sakamôtâ-inew was a contemporary embodiment of Wîsahêcâhk.

Âtayôhkêwina place importance on the “spiritual history” or the narratives involving spiritual beings known as âtayôhkanak, meaning the “spiritual helpers,” who can be spiritual grandfathers or spiritual grandmothers (McLeod 2007:15). These narratives give insight into the way that Nêhiyaw people relate to their ecology and environment, and importantly with other beings (McLeod 2007). To understand the oral history of Nêhiyaw people, one must take into the consideration the Indigenous perspective and ways of knowing that shaped the cultural forces in the first place (McLeod 2007). Put simply, “spiritual history” stresses the audience, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to engage in oral history narratives through the lens of those who experienced it firsthand and challenges the Western notion of linear time (McLeod 2007: 17). Nêhiyaw narratives are then constructed in relation to space and location rather than linear time and therefore exist through long stretches of time (McLeod 2007). Scholars will often use the term “cultural history” as a means of characterizing the

Indigenous understanding that all aspects of their oral tradition are viewed as history, and this distracts from the idea that these oral narratives can exist within the present.

Passed down from Elders whose life experiences aid the guidance of younger generations, the traditional storywork of these Indigenous groups offers insights into how Indigenous peoples treated and related to one another. Linked to legal systems these stories aid in “maintaining harmony in the family, the camp, and the community” (Zion 1984:265 in Innes 2013:37). In this section I will draw heavily from the work of Rob Innes in *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* as I explore how other communities influenced Plains Nêhiyaw philosophies through oral narratives and storytelling. Innes, like many Cowessess band members, has lived off reserve; to discover and understand his heritage he came upon new realities into the ethnic makeup of the Nêhiyaw through traditional stories that speak about kinship ties.

To begin this section, we will focus on the Trickster figure who is one of the early figures Indigenous children are taught about, and a character that will provide insight into understanding how the Iron Alliance governed their peoples. The Trickster is seen throughout Indigenous literature as a generalized figure that embodies a pan-Indian approach to storytelling. However, the Trickster is more complex than a “simplified and essentialized element used for Native literary criticism” (Innes 2013:24); the Trickster should incorporate elements of cultural and geographical specificity (Fagan 2010:4 in Innes 2013:24). Simply, like Indigenous peoples, the Trickster has been viewed through Western perceptions, and the name alone indicates foolish behavior that misrepresents the complexity of this character that is simultaneously a Cultural Hero, Deceiver, Transformer, and other terms. In Nêhiyaw narrative tradition, Neal McLeod affirms that the term *Wîsahêcâhk* offers a better solution and representation of this cultural figure as it allows for cultural specificity and a deeper understanding into Nêhiyaw world views (Innes 2013:25). To teach lessons about greed, respect, and humility, to name a few, storytellers use *Wîsahêcâhk* as the main character.

Stories are an important aspect of Nêhiyaw oral narratives since the Nêhiyaw people are an oral culture whose intellectual traditions are embodied through tellings. Of the stories that are told, the Nêhiyaw have two common forms of stories called *âtayôhkêwina* and *âcimowina*. For the Saulteaux, Assiniboine, and Metis, cultural elements were similar and

different at the same time in relation to oral narratives and storytelling. From the realms of the sacred to the mythical beings that dwelled in the earth, the stories of the Iron Alliance shed light into shared customs and practices. However, to get an in-depth understanding of the similarities and differences shared across cultures, we will focus on the Nêhiyaw and Saukteaux and Elder Brother.

To give a background quick historical background of the Saukteaux, they are identified through a variety of names, from Plains Ojibwe, Chippewa, and Anishinaabe. During the 1650s and 1660s, the Saukteaux migrated from the Sault Ste. Marie region along the southern and northern shores of the Lake Superior region into eastern Minnesota in the south and the Lake of the Wood region in the North (Innes 2013:48). Writers have stated that this migration was due to several factors as they were either escaping the expanding Iroquois or the search for the Nêhiyaw and Assiniboine fur trade middlemen (Innes 2013:48 citing Bishop 1976:43). Due to hostilities with the Sioux (one of the Plains Cree enemies), the Saukteaux were prevented from entering central Minnesota and moving northward near the Red River, and this marked a territory known as “no man’s land” known as the “War Road” (Innes 2013:48).

The stories of the Nêhiyaw and Saukteaux share similar structure, form, and purpose, and the Nêhiyaw and Saukteaux share many of the same mythical beings (Innes 2013:34). As previously mentioned the Nêhiyaw use âtayôhkêwina and âcimowina to tell their past and present through realms of the sacred and a time after Wîsahêcâhk; while the Saukteaux have sacred oral narratives about mythical beings known as atiso’kanak. The oral narratives of the atiso’kanak are about “other-than-human” beings or culturally known as ‘our grandfathers’ (Hallowell 1975:150 in Innes 2013:34). Both âtayôhkêwina and atiso’kanak share ‘other-than-human’ beings such as the Thunderbird, the great Lynx, and various others that are used to “reinforce socially beneficial behavior” (Innes 2013:34).

For example, the Thunderbird lives in communal groups that heavily emphasize sharing; quite often the young Thunderbirds, due to their immaturity and inexperience will cause lightning strikes that wreak havoc on the environment and humans. Through these oral narratives, we learn that the older Thunderbirds are responsible for the young Thunderbirds and they teach them how to act and behave for the good of the group, but also to self-learning through patience as the young Thunderbirds will not always listen to the Elders

(Innes 2013:35 citing Smith 1995:83-86). The oral narratives of the *âtayôhkêwina* and *atiso'kanak* are central to Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux societies as they are central to the foundations of “spirituality, philosophy, and world view, and contain the laws given to the people to live by” (Wheeler 2005:202). Understanding how the spirits work in oral narratives not only gives us insights into how Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux societies operated but also provides a theoretical framework to approach contemporary Indigenous kinship (Innes 2013:35). This is as Neal McLeod advocates, “the use of *âtayôhkêwina* – sacred stories or spiritual history, as one elder has described it – is one source of conceiving of a Nêhiyaw critical theory; a narrative embodiment that creatively reflects on the situation and the world in which we find ourselves” (2007:97). This ability to understand contemporary peoples through *âtayôhkêwina* is appealing because it allows for cultural values and philosophies to be utilized. What is also important is how the central being of *âtayôhkêwina* is Elder Brother, who is identified, as a trickster but is a cultural hero.

Elder Brother for the Nêhiyaw is *Wîsahêcâhk*, while for the Saulteaux, Nanabush is their cultural hero. Though these two characters are different they have overlapping characteristics. First accounts of *Wîsahêcâhk* occur in 1669 when the Ojibwe and Odawa of the Mackinac region stated ‘Ouisaketchak’ referred to ‘the great hare’; while many commonly refer to Nanabush as the Great Hare (Brightman 1989:51 in Innes 2013:36). Saulteaux speakers instead of Nanabush often use *Wîsahêcâhk*, while some Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux use the names interchangeably. However, though these two figures are similar, they differ through parentage and through Nanabush’s incorporation into the Midewiwin (medicine lodge) origin stories of the Ojibwe (Brightman 1989:63 in Innes 2013:36). The importance of Elder Brother coincides with how Indigenous societies should function in relation to one another.

Elder Brother represents the legal system for the Law of the People, since in the Elder Brother stories his actions can either result in positive or negative consequences through actions and these then inform listeners to think and remember the consequences of Elder Brother in their everyday lives. *Wîsahêcâhk* refers to *sâki ahcâhk*, a loving spirit that only wants the best for the people, and if he needs to teach them, he will (Clarence Whitstone recalls what his mother told him 2016). Robert Williams Jr. states that: ‘The stories socialized children and reminded adults of their roles and place within the

universe...Indians have long practiced the belief that stories have the power to sustain the many important connections of tribal life” (1990:84 in Innes 2013:37). The following story of Elder Brother highlights how kinship roles and responsibilities are taught through story:

One night some wolves heard Elder Brother singing. The oldest says “I believe that is my eldest brother. He has a good song...watch for him, and run and say to him, ‘My uncle, what are you saying?’” when the wolves met up with Elder Brother, they told him that their father wanted to meet him. The father asked his Elder brother what his song meant. Elder Brother told him and then decided that he would stay with the wolves for a while. Sometime later, Elder Brother decided he wanted to leave, but he wanted one of his nephews to go with him. The old wolf allows his youngest son to leave.

After the dream, Elder Brother addressed the young wolf, “My nephew, never go along the lake-shore. Do not run on the beach.” Later, the young wolf was thirsty. Forgetting Elder Brother’s instructions, he went to the lake and drank some water. He suddenly became crazy. Elder Brother realized his nephew had gone missing and knew that the White-Lynx had taken him. He tracked White-Lynx and, listening to the Sun, shot at his shadow. He was successful on the attempt, but he did not kill him. The White one, though injured, escaped. Elder Brother met up with old toad, who was on her way with her medicines to heal White Lynx. Elder Brother killed and skinned her and put on her skin. He went to White-Lynx, now as old toad. When he arrived, the people said, “Oh, our grandma is coming again.” As the toad, Elder Brother entered the White Lynx’s lodge. Upon entering, he saw the skin of his nephew hanging on a pole. He then saw White-Lynx with an arrow in his side. He had a pipe filled and then asked everyone to leave. “Now, shut the door. I shall smoke and take out the arrow now, but don’t let any one look in.” When this was done, Elder Brother walked up to White-Lynx and grabbed the arrow in his hand and pushed it into the Lynx’s heart as hard as he could. He then grabbed his nephew’s skin and fled, tearing off the toad skin. One Elder Brother had ensured that he had lost his pursuers, he brought him back to life (Skinner 1916:344-346 in Innes 2013:40).



In this story of Elder Brother, though he was not related to the wolves, he was adopted into their family, and through his status as an adult family member, he is therefore able to call the younger wolves his nephews and assume the roles and responsibilities expected of a relative through guidance and teaching. Elder Brother is responsible for the young wolf in this narrative, and though the wolf goes against his instructions, Elder Brother fulfills his responsibility not only to the young wolf but his older relative who bestowed that honour to him by searching and rescuing his nephew (Innes 2013:41). This oral narrative and various others give glimpses into how the Nêhiyaw, Saukteaux, Assiniboine, and Metis would have acted towards one another. As well, oral narratives allow us to imagine how these groups were before the reservation system was put in place and contributed to loss of kinship customs and practice, and governance.

We witness this further in the oral narrative of Elder Brother in the “Shut Eye Dance”:

Nanabush was walking through the forest and, as usual, he was very hungry. He came to a lake and, looking around, he saw a nice, sandy beach. Nanabush then looked out across the lake and saw geese, ducks, and mudhens. ‘What can I do to get them?’ he wondered. So he went to the woods and gathered some trees and boughs and made a lodge. Then he walked back to the bay with his packsack. One of the ducks asked:

‘Nanabush, what do you got in your packsack?’

‘I got some songs from out west.’

‘Sing us some songs,’ said the ducks.

‘At nightfall, come up to the lodge and I’ll sing.’

Later on, they all went up to the lodge, where Nanabush had lit a nice large fire.

Before entering, Nanabush told them, ‘I got too much smoke. Shut your eyes or they’ll turn red. You won’t look good with red eyes.’ The geese, ducks, and mudhens all went inside with their eyes closed. Nanabush took up his drum and began to sing. The birds danced around the lodge. As they came close he grabbed them, twisted their necks, and put them in his sack. After a while, one of the dancing mudhens opened one eye a little. She saw what was going on and shouted out, ‘Nanabush is killing us!’ Forty of the birds were dead already. Nanabush, who was blocking the door, got up and chased the mudhen around the lodge. All the others had escaped and flew away [the mudhen

escaped too, but in the commotion Nanabush stepped on its feet. This duck is now called the Diver, and it still has red eyes today because of the smoke from Nanabush's lodge].

Nanabush then built a good, hot fire on the beach. He buried the dead birds in the scorching sand so he could roast them, leaving their feet sticking up so he could find them later. While the birds were baking, he thought he would take a little nap. To make sure nobody would steal the ducks he instructed his feet to be watchmen [Other members of the body are left as watchmen in different tellings of this story]. He asked his feet to wake him if anyone came near.

During his nap the Winnebago people passed by and saw the smoke, 'Hmmm, Nanabush is roasting something,' they said to each other. They went over and dug the birds out and took them away, leaving just the legs sticking out of the sand. The watchmen tried to warn Nanabush, but he slapped them saying, 'Don't bother me, I'm trying to sleep.' When he eventually woke up he was very hungry. He looked at what he still thought was a feast of birds spread before him. Finally he pulled one leg. 'Oh!, it's so well done that the feet come right out.' Nanabush ate the leg; it was done to his satisfaction. But when he dug around in the sand for the rest of the duck, it wasn't there. He dug around the other feet and found it was the same.

Nanabush was furious and started to beat his watchmen. 'I'll fix you for this,' he said. He lit a great big fire, and set his feet on it. His feet hurt badly, but Nanabush was firm: 'you can cry all you want to, but I'll punish you!' He burnt his feet until they were sizzling. When he started walking his feet hurt so much that he tried to run away from them. He ran along the shore with blood trailing along behind [the blood touched some leaves, which ever after became known as red willows. When red willows are mixed with tobacco and burned, it is said they provide a better smoke]. In running, he got turned around and saw his own tracks. 'Somebody's passed here,' he said to himself when he saw them. 'They must be violent, I can see blood all around.' Nanabush became frightened that he would be chased. But he couldn't go anywhere. His feet were all blisters. So Nanabush lay down on the sand, hungry, sore, and afraid (Borrows 2002: 47-49).

The “Shut Eye Dance” presented comes from John Borrows *Recovering Canada: The Resurgence of Indigenous Law*, and though he is Anishinaabe and this comes from our relatives, I have heard it told by Clarence Whitstone from Onion Lake, Saskatchewan and have also read it in Yvonne Dion-Buffalo’s PhD dissertation where anthropologist Leonard Bloomfield recorded ka-kisikaw-pihtokew, Coming-Day, of the Sweetgrass reserve in the summer of 1925 in *Sacred Stories of the Sweet Grass Cree*. Additionally, I have heard that the Lenape in Ontario tell a version as well. Though elements of the story differ through regions, the intent of the narrative explains how trust and honesty are important aspects of one’s self, and that if you lie or betray someone there are retributions at play. In addition, Elder Brother over harvested and took more than he needed which is a breach against hunting traditions. While Elder Brother slept, the Winnebago people ate the food instead since they were in more need of the food than Elder Brother. As Coming Day accounted, the fox out tricked Wîsahêcâhk because Elder Brother was naive to challenge the fox to a race:

"Oho, it's surely Fox has been fooling me again, eating up my geese! And so I am to stay hungry!" he cried; "Ho, you have got me angry, Fox! The earth will not be big enough for you to escape. It was I who created the earth; I will find you; and when I find you, who ate up my geese!" cried Wîsahêcâhk, as he went out to look for Fox.

He had not gone far, when he saw him taking a nap, his belly all big; for he had eaten a hearty fill. He took up a stone, to strike him.

"Yah!" he said; "I shall ruin his hide," he said; "I might as well have a cap of his fox-pelt!" he said; "I had better make a fire round him so that he chokes in the smoke," he said.

The other was listening to what he said about him. So then he made a fire, setting fire to the grass round about. When the blaze came, Fox got up. The smoke was getting too thick for him.

"Ha," said Wîsahêcâhk; "Haha, just you eat up my geese again!" he said to him.

Fox dashed about in a circle, this way and that, as the smoke grew denser. At last Wîsahêcâhk could see him no more. Up leaped Fox, jumping across the flame, and making for safety. Wîsahêcâhk did not see how he ran away. At last there was a big fire, and Wîsahêcâhk kept walking around it.

"I have surely put an end to Fox; burning him to death," said Wîsahêcâhk; and when he saw the ashes lying, where there had been buffalo-dung, "Surely I have burned him to a sorry end!" said he; "I shall eat what is left of him, if there is any of him left from the fire," he thought; and he was going to take up the ashes there, thinking, "And this must be Fox, burned up in this fire," as he deceived himself.

Even now he did not know that the other had got away.

And so this is the end of this sacred story (Dion-Buffalo 1996: 231-232).

Here Wîsahêcâhk, thinking he had killed fox, ate "buffalo-dung" which teaches us as listeners that often retribution is not always as straightforward as we expect. The natural order and balance of the universe all worked itself out in the narratives of Elder Brother with key teachings and lessons. These narratives offer insights into how Elder Brother conveyed traditional law to the people and therefore it could function as a legal institution. Laws for the Nêhiyaw were Nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina and these were human laws, of how to function in society that are found in the songs, ceremonies, and in all our sacred sites (McAdam 2015:23), and these sites are often where Elder Brother and the 'other-than-human-beings' appear. The human laws of the Nêhiyaw are a part of Creation laws and are called manitow wiyasiwêwina, the Creator's law. Together these laws laid the foundations of how Creator placed many responsibilities and obligations for his people through birth and through our own personal creation he indebted us with a part of him through his soul-flame and because he did we are all related and great reverence is given to wâhkôtowin, kinship, for that reason (McAdam 2015:22).

### 3.4.2 Wâhkôtowin and Relationality

The late Lakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr. from the Standing Rock Sioux Nation stated:

We are all relatives when taken as a methodological tool for obtaining knowledge means that we observe the natural world by looking for relationships between various things in it. That is to say, everything in the natural world has relationships with every other thing and the total set of relationships makes up the natural world as we experience it. This concept is simply the relativity concept as applied to a universe that people experience as alive and not as dead or inert (Deloria 1999: 34 in Moreton-Robinson 2017: 73).

This statement is critical in understanding how we as Indigenous people view our relationships within the earth. This is important to the Nêhiyaw concept of Wâhkôtowin that refers to a “deep meaning of relationality as it presupposes a particular worldview and knowledge system” (Louis 2014: 99). Nêhiyaw scholar Evelyn Steinhauer states: “When I hear the word wâhkôtowin – it is like being blanketed by my ancestors, love has been shared” (personal communication, January 15, 2008 in Louis 2014: 99). Put simply, this methodological technique intends to create meaningful relationships such as those created between Elders and Academics, the Academy and Nations, and, relationships with ancestors and spirits around us. When I began my gathering of knowledge, Councilor Patrick Buffalo asked one of his Elders to conduct a pipe ceremony and pray for the initiative. In addition, Nimosômak Chris and Victor and Nohkôm Sophie came with me to sweat at nohchawis, uncle, Joey’s where we indicated that we were initiating this endeavor to present our past, our culture and worldviews, and in turn develop the laws for Nipisihkopahk. These actions were to build good relations with not only each other but also our ancestors who we needed to assist in where we were going. Establishing these relations was built on one of the Grandfather teachings of kihcheyihta, respect. Respect is a fundamental approach to how we treat all of creation. Through respect we can better understand our approaches and thoughts to one another. Within respect also lies accountability, where everyone is held to honour one another and take ownership if they overstep their boundaries.

Through the concept of wâhkôtowin and the value of respect it became evident that while I gathered my appropriate knowledge and insight, my reflection of self changed as well. Louis states that: “The process is just as important as the end result” (2014:101), meaning, the journey and learning process is integral to understanding how we came to achieve the dissertation you read before you. What occurred in my life was just as important as the knowledge within this work; where the gathering process is a methodology itself because that “If research doesn’t change you as a person, then you haven’t done it right” (Wilson 2003:249 in Louis 2014: 102).

As Aileen Moreton-Robinson, an Aboriginal woman of the Goenpul tribe, part of the Quandamooka nation on Stradbroke Island in Queensland, Australia presents:

Relationality is the interpretive and epistemic scaffolding shaping and supporting Indigenous social research and its standards are culturally specific and nuanced to the Indigenous researcher's standpoint and the cultural context of the research (Moreton-Robinson 2017:69).

Specifically: "As an expression of Indigenous sovereignty most Indigenous researchers adhere to a research agenda informed by our respective cultural knowledges, ethics and protocols" (Moreton-Robinson 2017:69). Our existence as Indigenous peoples is reliant on our "flexible knowledge systems" and how they exist in different forms of the present (Moreton-Robinson 2017:70). Furthermore,

"Even when we are developing Indigenous methodologies we are influenced by discourses that presuppose our existence as scholars within academia. To recognise our disciplinary knowledges and academic training as part of our [research] ... is not a case of being either Indigenous or academic but of recognising the epistemological, ontological and axiological complexity of being an Indigenous researcher that is politically challenging, intellectually creative and rigorous" (Moreton-Robinson 2013: 339 in Moreton-Robinson 2017:70).

Therefore, what we experience as Indigenous academics is based on our "actualities of our living, knowing and disciplinary training provide the epistemological grounds for understanding and critiquing domination as well as theorizing and researching our modernity" (Moreton-Robinson 2017:70). Relationality forwards distinct forms of thought and specifically:

Relationality, as the core presupposition of the Indigenous social research paradigm, finds expression within culturally specific and gendered axiologies, ontologies and epistemologies that are connected to the earth (Porsanger 2004; Wilson 2008; Martin 2008; Edosdi 2008). I use the term "social" to qualify Indigenous research because the social is relational, involving the interconnectedness of what people are doing and experiencing as the outcome of actions in the actualities of their lives and lands (Smith 1999: 7). The social is constituted by our histories, our culturally embodied knowledges and life force that connect us to our respective lands, our creators, all living entities and our ancestors (Moreton-Robinson 2000; Wilson 2008; Martin 2008). By privileging and following the logic of our cultural knowledges, we come to know who we are and who we claim to be, as well as who claims us and how we are connected to our lands. This is a matter of ontology, our being – not a matter of identity – and how relationality informs an Indigenous social research paradigm (Moreton-Robinson 2017:71).

Therefore, relationality forms the condition for coming to know and to produce knowledge through research in time, place and land (Moreton-Robinson 2017: 71). There

are rules in our social relations that are determined by our ancestors and Creator beings that guide who can be a knowledge holder and of what knowledges (Moreton-Robinson 2017:72).

Margaret Kovach is of Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux ancestry and a citizen of Pasqua First Nation located in southern Saskatchewan; she developed a relational methodology known as Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin. Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin is grounded in Nêhiyaw epistemology and focuses on a decolonizing and ethical premise that incorporates cultural protocols and is designed to make meaning from knowledge gathered and how this knowledge is given back (Moreton-Robinson 2017: 73). The premise of the methodology lies in the Nêhiyaw teaching of respect and reciprocity:

Relational responsibilities exist between the Indigenous researcher and the Indigenous community; the Indigenous community and the researcher; the Indigenous researcher and the Indigenous academic community; non-Indigenous researchers and the Indigenous community; and between the academic community and Indigenous methodologies. Specific responsibilities will depend upon the particular relationship. They may include guidance, direction, and evaluation. They may include conversation, support, and collegiality. Responsibility implies knowledge and action. It seeks to genuinely serve others, and is inseparable from respect and reciprocity (Kovach 2009: 178 in Moreton-Robinson 2017: 73).

The importance of this gathering is indicative of a larger interplay of relationships that I will endure as not only scholar, but also as Nêhiyaw.

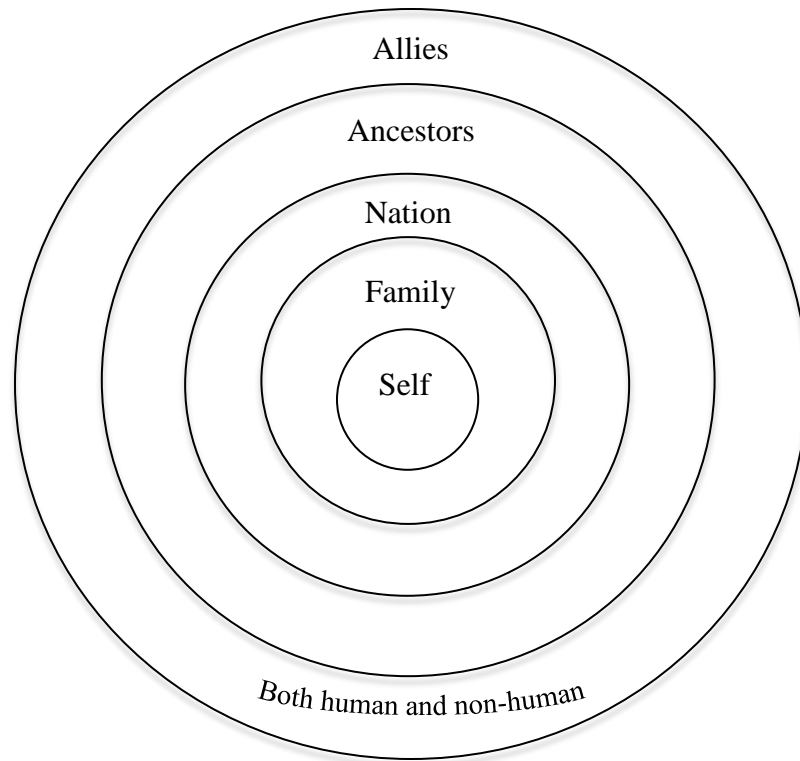
### 3.4.3 Personal Learning

There is no doubt that I am by no means an Elder, and I am in the very beginning of my understanding of who I am in my young age. I am trained in Western Academia in the fields of History and Anthropology. I am not an expert in Indigenous history and I am not an expert in Nêhiyaw culture. This is my own experience, though I will admit there have been dreams and intuition arising from outside of myself but still essential to my experience, they led me along the way. I realized in the early stages of my gathering that I needed to differentiate between being an academic and a citizen of my Nation, and this meant I kept no recordings. If I was going to learn knowledge from Elders, I was going to do so without the help of audio or video recording. It became clear that what I was initiating was based on reaffirming my familial and kinship ties and the knowledge of my

Nation; it was a governance of my own being (see Figure 3) and fulfilling my role as *oskîskew*, the helper in ceremony. *Oskâpewisak ekwa oskîskewak* are helpers and learners of ceremony. They assist in learning our culture and take direction from the ones with knowledge and once they learn, their teacher will send them out to teach others, it is a cycle of transferring knowledge to ensure the survival. I needed to create relationships with the Elders to receive knowledge and while doing so, I experienced a sense of self. *Miskâsowin* refers to finding one's sense of origin and belonging or finding "one's centre" or "one's self" (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 21). As well, I was learning, *Isîhçikêwin* the ways in which things are done in *Nêhiyawîhtwâwin*, the Four-Body culture. Simply, "Tradition...cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour" (Eliot 1953:3-4 in Borrows 2002:23).

As I began gathering my knowledge, *Nimosôm* Jerry changed the entirety of the project as he told me to present what already had been written, and only minimally what I share here. While I questioned my choices in career and what I was going to tell Regna in our check-ins, I realize why he had me going through each available source. I needed to learn methodological and analytically like my education had taught me, and then he would break down that understanding and perception through alternative knowledge transfers. *Nimosôm* was forcing me to think Indigenous and reconnect to the spiritual, emotional, intuitive, and ceremonial aspect of my being. He was drawing out the collective memory of our Nation and the knowledge that I was learning was becoming imbedded. I woke from a dream where I sat face to face with a bear. While I sat there looking into its eyes, I gave grandfather/grandmother a hug. He/she licked my face and I woke up. While in moments of doubt, deer would appear in front of me, and it was always a slow walk up and they would look me in the eyes. It is acknowledging that the world we have come to know in our society has oppressed the beauty and power of all our relations.





**Figure 3.** Self-Sovereignty: I represent myself through my family, my nation, my ancestors, and allies both Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples and human and non-human.

#### 3.4.4 Language

I am not expert in the Nêhiyawêwin language but I am also not afraid to use it in any possible way. Language is a powerful method to understand traditional governance and Nêhiyaw way of life and perception. Our ancestors speak the language of our people and it is powerful beyond words expressed here. The language read here is from Elders in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and is the “Y-dialect.” The roman orthography often differs per region and as there have been initiatives to standardize the language in written form, I think fondly of nohkôm Cecilia and nimosôm George as they said, there is no right or wrong way, as long as you are trying. Too often, “children are laughed at and it’s like a candle, you take the oxygen away, the light goes out, we have to encourage our children, we can’t keep bullying them every time they make a mistake or they won’t try. So, say it again” (nimosôm George to me as I was saying Kêhtê-ayak Omaminowatamakewak).

### 3.5 Conclusion

Indigenous peoples live within two worlds; one is rooted in culture and tradition, and the other within the colonial indoctrination of the settler-nation state. Finding who we are is an important journey of self-discovery, reclamation, and liberation, as we are often conflicted between who we feel we are inside and the society we find ourselves in. Nêhiyaw writers Shawn Wilson, Margaret Kovach, Neal McLeod, and Michael Hart have written about their experiences in understanding who they are through their research. Shawn Wilson is a citizen of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation (formally known as The Pas Indian Band) in Manitoba, Margaret Kovach is a citizen of the Pasqua First Nation located in southern Saskatchewan, Neal McLeod is a citizen of the James Smith First Nation, near Melfort, Saskatchewan, and Michael Hart a citizen of Fisher River Cree Nation in Manitoba. Together their works converge and diverge through methodological research and cultural teachings. Wilson and Kovach are directed towards epistemologies and methodologies in academia with ceremony as the center of Nêhiyaw world views. McLeod emphasizes on Nêhiyaw world views through oral narratives and gives specific accounts of Nêhiyaw within landscape. This connection is important for Hart as he works in the field of social work that focuses on mental health and well-being. Each share important elements to weave Nêhiyaw methods and transfer of knowledge together as each author are interdisciplinary in form.

Together these scholars have reflected that the research we intend to do does not always follow to what we plan because in there is an unaccounted element. Kovach points out “our culture, family, kin, kith, clan, and Nation wait for us. We have the right to know who we are, and this right involves responsibilities – but there are people to help us out, that we are not alone” (2009:10). Often accounted for as skepticism or simply, I do not see them so they cannot exist, is that the spirits and ancestors that are within Indigenous research including the oral narratives of our Elders who channel the same voice heard millennia ago. The ancestors that watch over our shoulder as we write down traditions and customs, and the other than human entities that witness our everyday actions and live around us and those who watch from the sky. There is a spiritual dimension that is incorporated in Indigenous studies, and for a scholar to experience this embodiment requires them to change the very essence of how they view and perceive the world.

This realization is an important aspect of epistemology, as I begin to understand my self-in-relation to the world, but even more importantly my role within my Nation. Crazy Bull states that “the most welcomed researcher is already a part of the community, ... understand[s] the history, needs, and sensibilities of the community ... focuses on solutions, and understands that research is a life- long process” (1997: 19 in Louis 2007:131). Reflexivity is utilized within qualitative research approaches to reference the researcher’s own self-reflection in the meaning-making process (Kovach 2009:32). With the needs of my Nation in mind, I have thought extensively about my role as a Nation member and what I can contribute to academia as an anthropologist. Indigenous peoples cannot change what happened in the past, but we cannot forget it either, it is important to acknowledge this in every aspect of Indigenous research and study, but it’s also important to remember that these past injustices do not define who we are, who will become, and how we can redefine the society we are a part of and add to the discussion of where we go now.

By incorporating Indigenous knowledge and relation to the universe, we allow for Indigenous peoples to be authors of their pasts, and we decolonize the systems that we are indoctrinated into. As Sylvia McAdam states, “To begin decolonizing systems of the colonizer we will inevitably lead to a path of Indigenous self-determination, liberation, and freedom” (2015:36). Freedom from the constraints that impact our Nations and wellbeing is the goal within Indigenous research, as I, like those before me, have sought. Though there is still much work to be done, examining the differences and similarities between Indigenous, decolonizing, and Nation-specific methodologies allows researchers to be exposed to new ways of thinking and perceiving the world around us. What is fundamental to any Indigenous research is that Indigenous peoples must be the priority of researchers since this is their history, and without them, there is no research.

As Linda Tuhaiwi Smith (1999:1) points out, ‘research’ for Indigenous peoples is a dirty word because of past injustices and self-gaining academics, and we need to change what research means for Indigenous peoples by incorporating how they continue intellectual traditions and cultural continuity. Western academia often enacts ‘Methodological discrimination’ that limits the incorporation of Indigenous methodologies but to counter this view we need to increase the awareness of Indigenous inquiry and research (Ryen 2000: 220 in Kovach 2009:13). As each methodology grows within Indigenous research and breaks down the

borders of academic discourse, there is the hope that the voices of our ancestors will lead the discussion and change the very course of our world. There is no guarantee I will see the effects of the work written in my lifetime, but like those who have come before me, the prayers and tobacco have been said and laid down for the generations to come, and each step forward is bound to pakoseyimowin ekwa ahyaminawin, hope and prayer and realizing the importance of our descent into the physical world from the spirit world.

## Chapter Four

### 4 Nêhiyawak Being

“She spoke of a previous human civilization before this one. The people of that ancient civilization were given far greater power by the Creator than this current civilization. For example, people could fly. Those ancient people led themselves into a life of disrespect and they began to abuse their way of life.

At that time, there existed four good grandfather spirits who were responsible for that civilization. Due to the chaos of that ancient civilization, our Creator decided to discontinue them by causing a great flood.

After the flood, Grandfather Spirit (Wîsahêcâhk) took some mud and from it he molded some men. He then addressed Our Father and said he molded the men but the men had no life in them. Then our Creator reminded Wîsahêcâhk that He had provided him with a sacred life-giving whistle and instructed him to blow on it. When Wîsahêcâhk blew on the sacred whistle, the women were created by our Creator and were spiritually put on earth to join the men.

The people began to propagate and at some point in time they formed a circle to meet. With the powers bestowed on them they began to take responsibilities and duties upon themselves with the other beings. This was the time when a young man offered himself to be a communicator to the Great Spirit and would become the sweetgrass and the moose offered himself to be the interpreter of peoples' prayers, but his offer was not accepted but the same offer by the rock was accepted.

The succeeding new civilization sought after those four loving grandfather spirits to help them as they were bestowed with less power than the other previous civilization. Those four grandfather spirits came from the four directions to love this new civilization and answered their prayers to teach them a way of life to survive. The people then could still fly, and they tried to fly upwards in hopes of meeting the Creator directly again for more direction, and the Creator instead took away their ability to fly and gave them various languages after which they then, according to their linguistic groups moved to settle throughout the Peoples' Island.

The four grandfather spirits then bestowed these people, through the power of the Creator, with many sacred ceremonies and prayer lodges through which they could pray to the Creator and through which they could preserve their oral history and teachings. One of the most sacred gifts they bestowed is the Sundance and to this day four grandfather spirits are acknowledged and revered in the sacred pipe and other ceremonies”

(Elder Gordon Oakes (Nekaneet First Nation, Treaty 4) speaks about the story his grandmother told him, August 6, 1997, FSIN Elders meeting, Wanuskewin Heritage Park, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 23-24).

## 4.1 Introduction

“You have to learn to listen with your four sets of ears,” said Nimosôm Jerry while we were driving. Nimosômak George and Victor had sent me to talk to Jerry because I needed to hear the narratives of our people from him. Gifted knowledge through his late grandmothers, Nancy Smith and Agatha Goodin, Nimosôm Jerry has been taught the stories and teachings of our people from a young age. Nancy Smith lived to be 116 years old and Agatha Goodin said to have lived until she was 121 years old. “Our people are powerful, in the old days we didn’t have addictions, diabetes or cancers, we were capable of leaving to the spirit world on our own. We would enter ceremony to leave this world. We adhered to Creator’s law and that’s what gave us long lives.” Early on in his childhood the Elders within his family realized that Nimosôm Jerry had a gift. As he asked me what Nêhiyaw meant to myself, he diverged deeper into a philosophical understanding of self than I was ever aware of.

Nêhiyaw refers to a Four-Spirit person however, there is a depth within the understanding that includes: four sets of self, including our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual being; as well the directives from the east, south, west, and north; the four layers of communication gifted to us through how we can hear, feel, sing in ceremony, and importantly, love; through the four phases of life from infant to child to adult and to Elder; where we as a people are made of the four elements of life including fire, earth, water, and air; and how we have survived the last three phases of the earth from volcanoes to the flood and to the ice age, and the fourth, it is said that when that phase

comes, there will be a shift in consciousness. As Late Elder Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw from the Onion Lake Cree Nation furthers:

One day (and I am not trying to scare you), one day it will come to pass that something will throw us into crisis. For our relatives, do not pay attention to anything [i.e., ceremonies], and only then will they come fleeing to them, they will turn to the old men for help, they will turn to the old women for help (1998: 93).

The Nêhiyawak are capable of reaching to a deep understanding of how vast the world is and how interconnected they are as Kisê-manitow allowed us to learn through our four selves, that hopefully, four minds would give us a glimpse into the intensity of the universe and all its wonders and beauty. In our modern world, we focus on only what we can see as the reality. Where even though I tell you there are four sets of myself, you may only see one. In the years prior to the reserve system we could go even further into the understanding through kinship and family lineage as we could give you the four clans that our mother and father were a part of. Look at your hands, your thumbs are your parents, and your fingers are the parents of your mother and father. The eight individuals represented the clans you were born from and dictated who you should marry. The late Meyers Buffalo of Samson Cree Nation said the last known knowledge of our clan system within the reserve was lost in the 1930s (Nimosôm Jerry December 7, 2016). Diseases such as influenza ravaged Samson Cree Nation in the 1920s with a few of our citizens buried at Rundle Mission near Pigeon Lake, including my great-great-grandparents, Peggy Joshua and John Wellington Lee.

*Prison of Grass: Canada from the Native Point of View* (1989) discusses further as author Howard Adams, a Metis from Saskatchewan whose great-grandfather was the famed Maxime Lépine, who fought with Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont against the Canadian troops in the North-West Resistance of 1885, contends that the reserve system worked against Indigenous Peoples and limited their sense of power (in Louis 2014: 37). After the Resistance of 1885 and the defeat of the Canadian Militia, the government of Canada came down hard on the Western Nations. The “Treaty Ticket” was initiated between the 1920s and 1950s to monitor the men of each reserve (Louis 2014: 38). Within this process, the understanding of one’s own personhood became challenged as our names were changed from our traditional language and changed again when Indian Residential Schools aimed to give English Christian names. We witness this change in

my paternal great grandfather's name of Piché to Wildcat for my grandmothers, and as well as with Johnson, where it was once, Kehciyas.

Understanding who one is requires the strength to persevere and commit to learning not only our culture and language but also to embody the values and principles of Nêhiyawîhtwâwin, Nêhiyaw culture. This is a lifelong process that this work will not be able to teach you. Obtaining cultural knowledge is governed through the process of protocol. 'Protocol is much more than handing over a package of tobacco or the presentation of material gifts,' (Steinhauer 2007: 95 in Louis 2014: 108). The protocol that I gave to each Elder was not merely a token of gratitude but a reaffirmation of the continuity of the knowledge that was shared. Where lived experience, teachings from family and Elders, and participation in ceremonies and gatherings have continued the knowledge of our people and our ways. Where though you may hear the Elder speak in front of you, it is also the voice of an Elder or Elders from years, decades, and centuries past. Protocol maintains the balance of the transfer of knowledge and through its offering to a knowledge holder affirms the 'connectedness and identity with the environment' (Steinhauer-Hill 2008: 53 in Louis 2014: 108). Being a knowledge holder and Elder holds great responsibility and endless hours of understanding not only the world but also your being. While we may state it is Nêhiyaw identity, it is Nêhiyaw being, an ontological beginning that our sense of self is derived from. This origin of being begins in our gifting from the spirit world into the present.

## 4.2 Kisikosis: Little Sky Beings gifted into our Nation

When Manitow created our world, Creator took great pride and time to ensure that we not only had what we needed but gave us gifts through teachings and narratives that we could look within ourselves to understand the complexity of life. The Nêhiyawak origins begin not on earth but in another world, the spirit world. Notikwêw Atayohkan Ahcâhk, the Grandmother Spirit Star, placed the first being on earth. We are born from the sky. We are spiritual beings that descend from the gift of Creator's own soul into the sacredness of our mother and teachings of grandmother moon. When a child is born, they are sacred Sky Beings that can talk with Creator. Sky Beings are deities who have incredible gifts and intuition. When Creator made the first man and woman, their children



married Sky Beings. When you are born, you are of them as well. You are a gift from Creator.

Born within the sacred womb of our mothers, the umbilical fluid connects us to the Earth and is our first purification. The water that we grow in ties us to the sky and our initial meeting with Creator. The water we are born from is from the power of the piyisiw, Thunderbird. Our connection to the land and rivers and oceans is held in regard to our belief that the blood veins of a woman are seen in the rivers and streams on earth. Therefore, we are the keepers of the land, we have been gifted this role through our births.

Our children are gifts from Creator, and lent to us. Awâsis is a term used to refer to children, but is it derived from the word awihkosowin meaning, that which is lent to you in the most sacred and holy way. Awihew is the root word for awihkosowin used to refer to as He loans something to him or them. However, awâsis also is formed using the term kisikosis meaning Little Sky Being. This sacred understanding of a child goes further with the respect given to each new born until they reach the age of seven. A Sky-Being can feel the reverberations of the world and connect with their surroundings spiritually and intuitively. The Nêhiyawak are born of the stars. We are star people.

When Star Keeper was making his map of the constellations he added souls to numerous stars so they could watch us on Earth and be with us when we felt like we were alone. Elder Brother, who was interested in Star Keeper's Map, was too eager to wait for Star Keeper and threw up into the sky the stars we see today. Many of those stars we gaze upon are living deities. Our ancestors watch down onto us.

Our souls are connected to each other because we come from the ahcâhk iskotêw, the soulflame of Manitow. Gifted from Manitow's own flame, the ahcâhk iskotêw, connects us to all of creation and life. This flame within us is found within the essence of the stars, and is what gives us a deep spiritual connection when we are in our early years. When a child is born, we are told not to touch the soft spot found on the head and this is because we believe that the soul rests on this part of a child. Nimosôm Jerry explains that the infant is so powerful that it can communicate with other infants telepathically and to its surroundings. The Spirit Being of this child can tell other children if their parents are mistreating them or whether they intend to go back to the spirit realm of Manitow.

There were two infants that laid side by side with each other; one infant said their life was incredible and that if she cried that her parents would come to her and do what she needed. The other infant was astounded by what he was told and told her that his parents never did that for him. And knowing this he told the girl that he planned to return to Creator. And therefore, you must realize that these children are Creator's children. They are not ours.

There will come a time when even a Spirit Being will overstep. Pâstâhowin means the action of overstepping, and this indicates that a child is past the age of seven and has become a conscious and thinking person. Their actions will dictate whether the Ghost Keepers will allow them into the spirit world. The first man and woman on Earth are the Ghost Keepers. After living over four hundred years on Earth it was decided that they too must enter a new realm of existence. They belong to the southern sky and open the spirit world to all people regardless of skin color. Manitow told them that they would be accountable for all the people that will enter the spirit realm.

#### 4.2.1 Welcoming into our Nation Ceremony

The late Grace Swampy was a renowned educator in the Maskwacîs area. Swampy raised seven children while pursuing her Bachelor of Education in 1979 and Master of Education in 1981 from the University of Alberta. She would pursue her doctoral degree but never finished after she was told that her research could not have happened – it was about the residential school system. In 2012 she passed away, though an advocate for the continuation and preservation of Nêhiyawîhtwâwin, she did not maintain it within her household. Her late ex-husband, Fred Hodgson never allowed it, as he feared that what happened to him in residential school would happen to his own children. While my late grandmother was a woman of warmth and kindness to her students, I too longed for that warmth but was never shown it. I never had a matriarch to guide me, and I often wondered why she did not come around. As the years passed after her death, and I proceeded on with my studies, I wished that she were still here to assist me in any way possible. As I yearned for that bond, I realized that though I did not have the relationship that I desired with her, I grew to know her in her work. While I did not have the face-to-face connection to speak with her, this next section, weaves together her

voice and mine, with contributions from Sylvia McAdam and Jerry Saddleback. This section aims to welcome our children in our Nation, as it also reaffirms lost kinship structure to my grandmother and me, and is the basis of reciprocity between grandchild and grandparent.

The most important teaching a mother is given is that “any child she may have is not hers to own but rather is chosen by the Great Spirit to be a guardian of this child. She is to respect the child and teach the child everything [they] have a right to learn” (Swampy 1981:31). Nihtâwikiwin, birth, is a sacred and holy blessing for our women and Nation as a child is: “To learn one’s cultural beliefs and way of living is not only a line to life, but all the way a person is to feel, see, think, and behave. Each child at birth is destined to be, or to do, something for his people. In order to achieve what he is destined to be, the child is taught and trained by observation and by living his cultural ways [The elder uses the phrase ‘his native ways of life.’]” (Swampy 1981: 28).

Our original Grandmother, “Old-Woman-Spirit” gave us the ability to hold such a power through childbirth:

Truly, Our Grandmother is kind, 'Old-Woman-Spirit' as she is called. If it were not for that kind, if women had not been put here on earth by the powers, we would not be sitting here; who would give birth to our existence as humans? - no one; that grace [i.e., to bear children] was given to women. That is why the old people used to say, "Think of one another with compassion, you women! You all, think of the women with compassion!" There is no excuse for 'man' as he is called to be abusive to women; he is watched from over there, and when he is abusive to a woman, he is being mean to himself. He would not exist as a human being if it were not for a woman, and for him to be mean to that kind, that is not good. And I have told this many times that I have constantly seen that and that I have accepted it myself, too, what my father had told me: "Well! There in the future, when you have become an adult and marry a woman, try to think of her with compassion for your own sake!" - thus my father used to say to me; I always remember that. When I am upset, I go out and chant prayers to Our Father that he might help me, that he should give me something good to think about; this is what I do; I also keep these cloth offerings, and as soon as I arise, I go out without delay; I go and sing and give thanks to Our Father so that I might guide my children through a beautiful day. Many times my nephew [Eli Bear] has heard me when I stayed overnight at his place, as soon as I wake up I start singing out; I give thanks for the moment when I see another day. That is where we should try to lead our children and grandchildren, so that they might learn from that to think of one another with compassion. If we do not tell them these things, well, then these children will be led astray (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998: 93-95).

A woman's role within Nêhiyaw culture is taught early on in life, where "first of all, she will one day be a wife and mother, and second, she is responsible for the lives given to her. To be able to succeed in these two, the girl must be clean in mind, spirit and appearance; if she is clean in mind she has high morals; if she is clean in spirit she has the highest regard to life and nature; if she is clean in appearance, she regards herself with respect and dignity" (Swampy 1981: 29). "A girl is highly regarded and treated with respect from early childhood" (Swampy 1981: 29). "A woman, like a teepee, is the nucleus of a family, and therefore she is responsible for the personal and physical development of her children, not through punishment, but through love, for the children which she has borne are not hers but rather are lent to her by the Great Spirit" (Swampy 1981: Appendix 8).

Sylvia McAdam forwards an account from her great grandmother who was Nakawê, Sauteaux, and Nêhiyaw, Four-Body. Kîsikâwapiwisk, sits with the morning sun, was the last of the okicitaw iskwewak, law keepers, of her region and expresses how women would introduce their relationship with newborns:

"Niya ôma kokhom' (I am your grandmother) were the first words said to a child held by the Eldest woman amongst select women sitting in a ceremonial circle to welcome a new citizen for the Nêhiyaw nation. The intonation is almost in a revered voice, for the women understand as they carry the baby 'a newly born baby is the closest a human being will ever get to Creator.' It is with the soulflame and Indigenous birth teaching in their minds as each woman 'introduces' herself to the baby. The Nêhiyaw kinship structure is complex and has terms which determine the place of each relative. It is these terms that each female relative recites followed by such statements as 'niya oma kohkom' which means 'I am your grandmother.' This is generally followed with using the kinship term that the baby will know them by for the rest of his/her life. Possible the conversation will be saying 'I am your mothers mother and you are born for the Nêhiyaw Nation.' The baby is spoken to similar to an adult as they hear the language and the words of wahkohtowin (kinship) terms. The soulflame is at its brightest and still spiritually connected to the manitow iskotêw" (McAdam 2015: 32).

An oskawâsis, newborn infant, is descended into our Nation through its gifting of Manitow's own being. We are connected to Creator's essence and when Creator sends us from the spirit world into the physical we are taught not to touch the soft spot of our little sky beings as this is where their soul sits. Our Ahcâhk, spirit, is the closest we will ever experience Manitow on earth in our early years. Acâhkos refers to a star, and it is the

understanding of our being that ties us to all of creation, through both spirit and star matter. When a child is in the womb, we are taught to talk to them respectfully, as they have a spiritual power to pick up on vibrations around them, both negative and positive. The womb is a sacred place and is our first cleansing into the physical realm at birth. A father must embrace his child the same way he embraces his wife, and this is through tenderness and care. Before the first child was born, four Sky Beings talked amongst each other about how they wanted their children to be raised.

“This is a ten-month process,” said Nimosôm Jerry, “the child will be cared for through ceremony.” When they are born, they are not only little sky beings but they can give spiritual knowledge, and the women prepare for their arrival by setting up the *mîkiwâhp*, lodge. The father will smudge his wife on the new moon, quarter moon, half moon, and full moon starting from the right leg to the left leg with sweetgrass throughout her pregnancy. The father does this to take the pain away from his wife during labour. When our sky being arrives this as McAdam (2015) indicates, where we establish kinship with our infant and where the mother and father kiss the baby for the first time on the forehead or cheeks and say “*amî*” (awe-me) as a form of welcome. We do not kiss them on the lips because they are too sacred. Often the parents will cry when they see their little sky being(s) and the tears are from your heart and are one of seven offerings we can give to Manitow, and this is the highest offering one can give. New parents live with a deity (Nimosôm Jerry 2016). All men, except for the father, are not allowed to carry the baby until the *otisi*, belly button, has fallen off, and then the *Witâhâwasiwin*, Naming Ceremony, occurs. “A feast would be held to honour a child with a name” (Swampy 1981:39). Names are of importance to our being as they represent which spirit protectors walk with us through life. I am *sîpihkokîsikowiskew*, Blue Sky Woman, and my protectors are from the sky. Nimosôm George is *Wâpi-kihew*, White Eagle, and his protectors are from one of our grandfather animals. When the *otisi* falls off, a ceremony is conducted and it is placed in items of significant importance to the grandparents. Depending on what skills or expertise are hoped for the child, the *otisi* will be placed in different items for four days and buried on the last. The grandparents may wish for a male that he will be a skilled hunter, a good flint knapper, hide maker, or bow expert, while a female may be hoped to be a good thread maker, ribbon maker, sewer, or textile

maker. To ensure they grow healthy, a tiny hole is put on the bottom of the first pair of moccasins a child will wear, and this is so the smudge of the sweetgrass enters the bottom of their feet with prayers that they will outgrow their moccasins.

The birth of a new *ka kisci wekit awîyak*, citizen, of the Nêhiyawak Nation comes with laws given by the Star Beings and Manitow. *Miyo-ohpikinâwasowin*, is how to raise children in a good way. Out of traditional teachings, behavioural attitudes would soon develop (Swampy 1981:40). Our way of parenting and teaching has often been overlooked or looked down upon on various levels:

So many times I have head the white man say native children are not taught to be obedient; they are not taught, they learn how, and how they lean is through respect and care, not by demands. A child has learned not to play outside at night, not because it is bedtime, but because he is inviting spirits to play with him; a girl learns not to leave food and dirt dishes out at night because she is inviting undesirable spirits into the house; a child learns to respect and obey elders and parents and he will earn himself a long life; a child learns not to abuse or injure animals for he will encounter the same injury; a child learns not to ridicule other people for some affliction, for it will be upon him; a child learns to respect nature for this is his life. All cultural teachings cannot be taught, they have to be learned and lived. There are so many things that I can tell you, perhaps it would take from sunrise to sunset but these are not to be written, they are to be lived (Swampy 1981:34).

Our worldview impacts how we understand how to act ethically and responsibly. For instance, everyone is taught not to ask an Elder what their name is as this is an insult to them; rather they should wait for the Elder to present their name or will be introduced by another (Swampy 1981:7). A Nêhiyaw child is taught at a young age that if they respect Elders and parents, that they will earn a longer life (Swampy 1981:7). These laws of how to act and conduct our self that is vital to understanding how traditional governance was expressed in Nêhiyaw society. As Sylvia McAdam presents, these laws are rooted from birth:

Each Nêhiyaw child has a birth right that is steeped in the history of the land and their kinship with all of creation. They are born into responsibilities and obligations that will guide them from cradle to death. The world of the colonizer is an arm, an apparatus of the colonial state, laws and policies. To continue applying this apparatus is to continue the assimilation and genocide of Indigenous children, families, and nations. In the spirit and intent of Indigenous sovereignty and treaty, and honouring Indigenous relationships, non-Indigenous people must be being supporting and encouraging Indigenous laws and teachings, in every aspect, and by

whatever means possible. How this might look is up to the Indigenous nations working alongside these systems to intervene in colonial narratives, laws, and policies, and collectively work toward dismantling destructive and oppressive systems which have been imposed on Indigenous peoples through colonization. To begin decolonizing systems of the colonizer will inevitably lead to a path of Indigenous self-determination, liberation, and freedom. To do anything less is to allow the genocide to continue (2015:36).

The children of the Nêhiyawak Nation are the center of our existence and continuation of our way of life. We are structured around their importance, as we understand our selves within a larger context of practices and customs.

#### 4.2.2 The Circle

The circle is an important aspect of Indigenous culture as late Oglala Lakota Elder and teacher Black Elk affirms:

You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round.... Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle. The sky is round ... and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is from childhood to childhood and so it is in everything where power moves (Neihart 2008: 155-156).

The circle symbolizes oneness of Indigenous peoples with the Creator and the spiritual, social, and political institutions of Indigenous Nations (see Figure 4) (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 14). The circle represents the coming together and bringing together of a Nation and as this reunification of a nation occurs it reaffirms its unity under the laws of Creator. This reaffirmation through coming together ensured that the Nation possessed the capability to nurture, protect, care for, and heals its people (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 14). The renewal allowed for Indigenous Nations to retain their “inner strength, cohesion, and spiritual integrity” (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 14).

As Leroy Little Bear states: “The function of Aboriginal values is to maintain the relationships that hold Creation together. If Creation manifests itself in terms of cyclical patterns and repetitions, the maintenance and renewal of those patterns is all-important” (2000:81). Cyclical patterns reflect a continuous connection that is never broken, and are important since

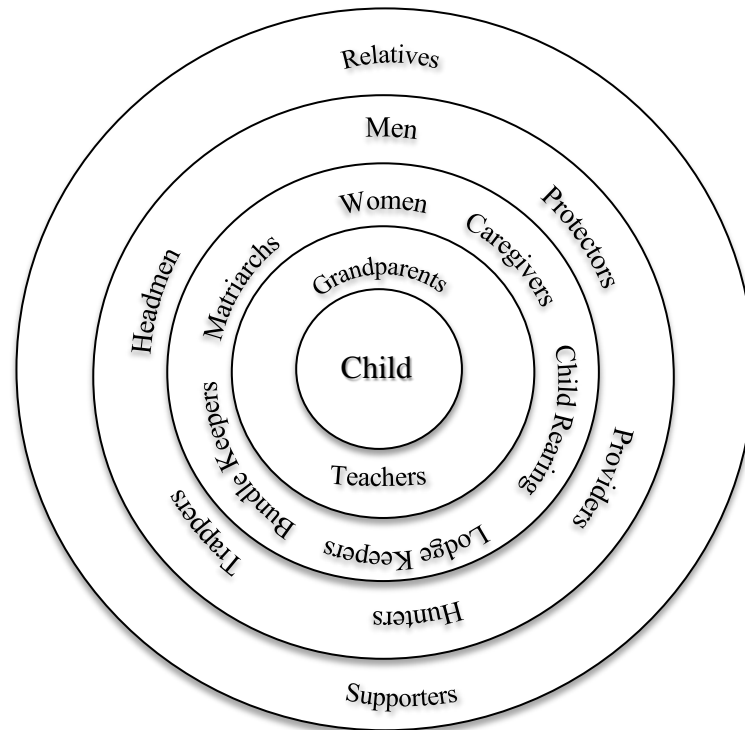
Indigenous worldviews are ‘cyclically governed by natural and spiritual laws’ and bound by wholism (Abolson 2011:59). Wholism as Jo-Ann Archibald (1997) stated in her dissertation:

...refers to the interrelatedness between the intellectual, spiritual (metaphysical values and beliefs and the Creator), emotional, and physical (body and behavior/action) realms to form a whole healthy person. The development of wholism extends to and is mutually influenced by one’s family, community, Band and Nation. The image of a circle is to show the synergistic influence and responsibility to the generations of ancestors, the generations today, and the generations yet to come. That animal/human kingdoms, the elements of Nature/land, and the Spirit World are an integral part of the concentric circles (in Abolson 2011:59).

This wholistic view is embraced by multiple Indigenous Nations around the world and incorporates a mindset that looks beyond scientific research as it attempts to bring in-depth qualitative research of knowing how and why.

The circle frames how one thinks, and those that hold linear views have “the incapacity to see and feel the sacred relation that exists between all beings in the universe” (Sioui 2009:83). As Chief Arvol Looking Horse of the Lakota Nation forwards, “Every human being has had Ancestors in their lineage that understood their umbilical cord to the Earth, understanding the need to always protect and thank her” (Devaney, Huffington Post, “Idle No More” 2013 in Monchalin 2016:28).





**Figure 4.** Family Circle by Clarence Whitstone, Onion Lake Cree Nation, Onion Lake, Saskatchewan. Center of circle looking out, hand-drawn image recreated, October 31, 2016.

The circle has come to be known as the praying circle, talking circle, healing circle, and a circle of reconciliation (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010:15). A Nation united under the laws of Manitow represents a healthy, strong, and stable nation that is capable of upholding and caring for its people. *Miyo-wîcêhtowin* is the law of good relations that solidifies the circular governance structure of our Nation. The *Miyo-wîcêhtowin wiyasiwêwina*, good relation laws, are powerful as they relate to human bonds and relationships in which they are created, nourished, reaffirmed, and recreated as a means of unity for the people (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010:15). So, we may restore peace and harmony in times of personal and community conflict and these laws form the foundation of new relationships that will be created (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010:15).

The circle is essential to understanding how we are interrelated within not only all of creation but also our values and teachings. *Pimâtiswin kâ-pimipayik* refers to our life cycles from infant till the child turns seven and into adulthood until they are an Elder.

Kâ-isi-ayâk misiwê-ita, are the natural cycles and how the animal world and plant world shift through their embedded knowledge and this can be a daily cycle or seasonal. Within the circle, we witness how great our knowledge of the universe is through kîsikohk kâ-ayâkik which refers to the celestial bodies. Yet, this knowledge of the world is nothing without understanding the connection between Manitow and the laws gifted to us.

### 4.3 Manitow wiyasiwêwina, Creator's laws

“Kisê-manitow is a compassionate God. Kisê-manitow's mind is so fast and ever expanding that to understand Creator's thought process would take us multiple lifetimes throughout various generations” (Nimosôm Jerry, October 2016). Nêhiyaw Wiyasiwêwina, human laws, shows us how to function within our society and is found in the songs, ceremonies, and in all our sacred sites (McAdam 2015:23). Yet, Nêhiyaw Wiyasiwêwina are mandated by Manitow wiyasiwêwina, Creator's laws. Elder Peter Waskahat from Frog Lake Cree Nation in Treaty 6 commented:

When you look at First Nations people on this land, in the past, even today, we are careful about what we were given to do. We were given the uses of everything on the land and Creation. We had ... our own teachings, our own education system teaching children that way of life, and how children were taught how to view, to respect the land and everything in Creation. Through that, the young people were [educated about] what were the Creator's laws, what were these natural laws. What were these First Nations laws. And talk revolved around a way of life based on these values. For example: respect, to share, to care, to be respectful of people, how to help oneself. How to help others. How to work together.... And when the other people came, all other First Nations know of these teachings of this traditional education system. Everyone had a role. Hunters, the elders, grandmothers. Even looking for food, there were teachings for the young, for the adults, for the grandparents. A livelihood that was taught, that was what they had ... survival of a people. In a lot of this, livelihood was taught ... [to] many generations teaching from Creation. That is how they saw their world and understood their world. For example, [we] Indians had our own doctors, our own medicine people. [There are] a lot of teachings. Lifelong teachings that were passed on from generation to generation. They know sicknesses, they know the plants, and they knew how to treat our people of certain sicknesses. So we had our own system as well. We had our own leadership ... very highly respected for a chance to lead their people. So we had all those things. We had our own First Nations government; we had our own life teachings on education. Even when a person had made mistakes in life, there were people that would counsel them. There was a process of reconciliation. It was done through the oral language. It was done through the Elders. There they talked about that person getting back into a balanced life and were made aware of how [to]

focus [on] what was important in life. And if that person had listened and took the appropriate guidance from those kinds of people and they would get back into a balance and be able to help them, to learn from these things. To become a part of the family, part of their nations. That is how we/they looked at life. That's the Indian way of life, and all First Nations people had understandings of different customs, different traditions ... that was their life (1997, FSIN Elders Focus Session, Saskatchewan in Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 15-16).

For the Nêhiyawak the gifts from Manitow are embedded in the very core of our existence. As I wrote the following paragraphs it is important to note that while I aimed to present the voices of the collective of Elders, I was not alone during the process. This experience reveals the deep-rooted spirituality of the nature of the following laws that we have learned from. I utilize John Borrows work *Canada's Indigenous Constitution* as it defines five distinct laws that are integral to Nêhiyaw governance and teaching. As I attempted to add what I learned from the Elders, a series of unforeseen events would occur and knowing that I am in no position to define these laws, I leave it to be done in an already published work.

#### 4.3.1 Kôtâwînaw Wiyasiwêwin: Natural Law

“Why do you think that the flowers bloom every spring or that the bears come out of hibernation? What makes them to do the things that they do? Why does the bee travel to the flower for nectar, why does the wind blow different directions – you must listen to the trees, and rivers, watch the sun, observe” (Joey March 2016). For many Indigenous societies, how we learn natural law requires an intimate knowledge of how to read the world (Anaya 2004: 16-19 and Tully 1980: part three in Borrows 2010: 29). Reading the world does not require an intimate knowledge of how to read legal philosophy (Borrows 2010: 29). To develop an understanding of the world around us through our senses of what we hear, see, and feel; “You are a woman, use the gift of intuition to feel,” said Joey, as I asked him about Kôtâwînaw Wiyasiwêwin, natural law. “Put down tobacco to the trees, the rivers, the air, and the sky, ask them to show you” (Joey 2016). Our concept of Natural law is not the concept of Natural law in Western concepts:

Very different from the understanding of law that Indigenous peoples generally have. The Eurocentric concept of “natural law” revolves around humans and is based on a certain notion of human nature and rationality; it is concerned only with human beings in human societies. By contrast, Indigenous views of law generally

describe a lawfulness inherent in the nature of things – humans, the natural world, and the unseen worlds all woven together (McCaslin and Breton 2008:523).

It is how the earth maintains function and where Kôtâwînow Wiyasiwêwin reveals itself and its power (Wayne Roan, Nature's Law retrieved September 2008 in Borrows 2010: 28). It is through Kôtâwînow Wiyasiwêwin that we witness an approach to legal interpretation that attempts to develop rules for regulation and conflict resolution from a study of the world's behaviour: "Law in this vein can be seen to flow from the consequences of creation of the 'natural' world or environment" (Borrows 2010:28). Where Kôtâwînow Wiyasiwêwin comes into understanding is a balance between all of existence that is intertwined within one another and where if we alter one area, there are consequences. Kôtâwînow Wiyasiwêwin takes care of what it needs and no one [human] controls it (Nimosôm Gordon).

However, there is also an element to Natural Law that is important to understand. Kici Wiyasiwêwin is Universal Law, and while some Indigenous Nations state that these two are different, for us in Maskwacîs, they are the same. Brian Lightning explained to me that there is a very slight difference between the two, and I think my Nêhiyawêwin may not be within the levels of ceremonial knowledge just yet. There is ê-micimanitômakahki, interconnectedness, among the sacred ceremonies, teachings, and beliefs of these Indigenous Peoples and though we have differing languages and traditions, there similarities exhibit a unique worldview and philosophy (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010:9). Granted, there is caution to statements such as these, but it is important to note that when it comes to Treaty, Elders express their uneasiness with any treaty process that is divided on a region-specific or First Nations-specific basis because such an approach does not accord with the fundamentally unified First Nations spiritual philosophies and teachings that accompanied the treaty negotiations in Saskatchewan (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010:9). Many discussions held with the Elders who presented descriptions of Nêhiyawak, Assiniboine, Sauteaux, and Dene teachings and belief systems were similar and consistent with each other. Particularly among the Nêhiyawak, Assiniboine, and Sauteaux Nations, the Elders pointed to the inter-nation aspect of their spiritual traditions, which enabled individuals from their respective nations to actively participate in different traditional ceremonies conducted by the different treaty nations

(Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010:9). Elder Peter Waskahat of the Frog Lake First Nation said, “We are all one voice. That is why I go from treaty to treaty asking that question and also sharing my teachings of treaty” (Treaty 6, 1997, FSIN Elders Focus Session, Saskatchewan in Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010:9). The law behind interconnectedness extends further through elements of natural law in which the entire universe is connected and this includes our earth, the stars, other plants, the sun, and the entirety of creation.

#### 4.3.2 Manitow Wiyasiwêwin: Sacred Law

The laws that exist within sacred law are given the highest respect as they extend from Manitow and are found in our creation story and ancient teachings that have stood the test of time (Borrows 2010: 24). Though Manitow refers to a being, a Creator, it is also a sacred force. Our “legal inheritance” comes from our spiritual principles of our beginning and shapes the rules and norms that we as Nêhiyaw people are given to live with the world and overcome conflict (2010: 24-25). We acknowledge a spiritual or “metaphysical” connection to our laws, while civil law and common law of Canada have significantly influenced ideas about religion as they attempt to secularize the two (Berman 1974, Randin et al. 2005, Young 1994: 113-120 in Borrows 2010: 25). Sacred law is one of the most important aspects of our past, especially the way we interpret the action of Treaty.

The government in Treaty said that the Indigenous Nations would “maintain peace and order between each other and also between themselves and other tribes of Indians or whites” (Treaty 4,5,6 in Borrows 2010: 25). Also, that the Indians would “aid and assist the officers of her majesty in bringing to justice and punishment any Indian offending against the stipulations of this treaty or infringing the laws in force in the country so ceded” (Treaty 4,5,6 in Borrows 2010: 25). Treaty for the Nêhiyaw is connected to Kisê-manitow who is sacred. This sacred source is the direct connection between our pipes that were used and the words spoken in Treaty.

### 4.3.3 Nakâyâtotamowin Wiyasiwêwin: Customary Law

Customary law is how “practices developed through repetitive patterns of social interaction that are accepted as binding on those who participate in them” (Brierly 1949:60; Black’s Law Dictionary 1990: 384 in Borrows 2010: 51). Put simply, it is the ways we have unconsciously come to know, where we learned from those around us of how to act. Nakâyâtotamowin, custom, is the label used for individuals who are unfamiliar with the complexity of these societies’ social organization (see Tim Schouls, *Shifting Boundaries*, 2003 in Borrows 2010: 51). Where customary law occurs through observations of specific behavior often leading to general conclusions about how to act and thus, these customs are regularly inferred from a society’s surrounding context (Postema 1999:255 in Borrows 2010: 51). The social practices are linked to our traditions but there are regional differences between Nêhiyawak in the west and east of iyiniwiministik, the people’s land. While I may kiss the Elders of my Nation on the lips, I acquaint myself with a handshake to those outside of my Nation. It is also based on whether I have come to know an Elder. As Nohkôm Sophie has indicated our custom of how we greet one another is through our relationship to the individual and if we are not aware of the relationship, we refer to them through their Nêhiyawî-wîhowin, traditional name, rather than our English names.

### 4.3.4 Kayâsohci isitwawin Wiyasiwêwin: Traditional Law

The teachings that were passed on to the Nêhiyawak begin with the creation and the placement of the Otawâsimisimâwak, the children of Creator who were endowed with mâmitonêyihcikan, intellect like Creator’s own (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 3). Creator intended us to understand sawêyihâtâkosiwin, blessings that would allow us to grow into the spiritual traditions that were given and developed through political, social, educational, economic, and spiritual structures and institutions (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 3). As our society developed, we evolved in our relationships with the lands given to us by Creator and specifically:

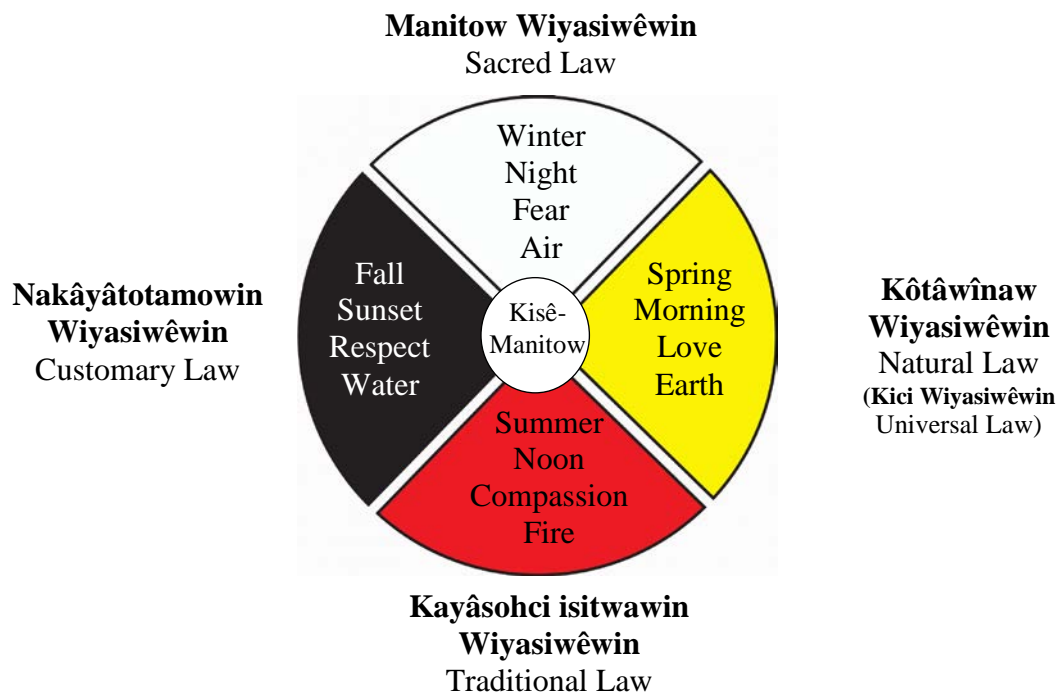
“The word ‘nistamêyimâkan’ means “the first born or the ones who first received our ways” — ways that we use to communicate with our Creator and His Creation. The Creator conceived the First Nations on this island [North America] - the

nations that were first created here were given a way to pray. The very first people who were here were very strong. Their prayers were very strong because of the way they were taught to pray — it is clear in their minds because they were the first generation when life began. So when a person is praying ... he thinks about the first generation of First Nations ... there he has a sense of identity and recognition and prays to them for help.... We remember the first born in our prayers because he was the one who first received the blessing from the Creator. That is what the word ‘nistamêyimâkan’ means” (Elder Jacob Bill 1997 FSIN Elders Focus Session, Saskatchewan in Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 5).

This is the generation of continual being known as Kayâsohci isitwawin, tradition, and it is derived from the foundations of our ontological being all linked to Manitow.

Traditional law continues to persist even in the changing society we as Nêhiyaw people face and it continues through our wiyôhtâwîmtâw, ceremonies, âcimowina, stories or oral narratives, ahyaminawin, prayer, and kisiopikowin, rites of passage, to name a few.

Traditional law is the continued flow and deliverance of the previous generation to the next that makes us incredibly interconnected to one another but back into creation itself through Manitow (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** How Manitow Wiyasiwêwina interconnect.

#### 4.4 Kihci-asotamâtowin, Sacred Promises to One Another: Treaty Six

Kitasotamâkowininaw êkây wîhkâc ka-pîkonahk ê-nisokâtêt ayisiyiniw, kî-itwêw êsa; kikî-asotamâkonaw êkây wîhkâc ka-pîkonahk awiyak, otasotamâkêwin anima (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998: 150).

Our Treaty was not only made with the British Crown but with Manitow as well; and, “When he, our brother the White-Man, made these promises to us, he did promise us that no human walking on two legs upon the surface of the earth would ever be able to break the promises made to us” (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998:109, as stated above in Nêhiyawêwin). Treaty is often also referred as: Nêhiyaw otinkewin, Four-Body people obtain something, or Okimâw asotamakewin, Chief makes a promise/obligation. The representative of the Queen had taken the pipestem into his hands:

“Indeed! No human walking on two legs will ever be able to break what I am hereby promising you. I will never pay you in full for your land, I will forever make continuous payments to you for it. No, I do not buy from you what is deep beneath this land, only one foot deep whence the White-Man makes his living, that is what I buy from you. Indeed, from her on, any monies drawn from beneath the ground, let people understand that this is one benefit which the Crees will continue to be paid from their homeland” (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998: 111).

Treaty enacted sacred law, and allowed the settler-state of what would become Canada to live among us and with us on our unceded territory while our Nêhiyaw sovereignty and nationhood persisted. No land or territory was ever surrendered, rather it was loaned and the only way that we could fully diminish ownership of our land was if our women were in the negotiations (Joey March 2016). Women like Sylvia McAdam’s great grandmother who fulfilled her role as okihcitâwiskwêw, the best translated from meaning mother/warrior woman (McAdam 2015: 54). Interestingly, while at Standing Rock Indian Reservation in the fall of 2016, I became friends with the Lakota from Cheyenne River call their warriors, akicita. Women play an important and integral role in Nêhiyawak societies and the okihcitâwiskwêwak, women warriors held specific influence and authority that placed them as advisors to the okimâw, chief, and his headmen. In Nêhiyaw society, okimâw had to give freely of his possessions to those that needed it, the term is derived from the verbal form of “gift-giving” (Waugh 1996:66). The role of the



okihcitâwiskwêwak was to speak on behalf of the land and whether it would be surrendered, and it never was through patriarchal custom of the British Crown as only men could negotiate (McAdam 2015: 55). A woman's connection to land is based on the understanding that the earth is female (McAdam 2015:56). Knowledge of our spiritual connection between land and women has yet to be acknowledged by the settler-nation we have come to know today.

John Borrows in *Canada's Indigenous Constitution* states that when we entered treaty, Canada's founding became sacred and many nations such as the Haudenosaunee would refute the idea that they would be participating in the creation of Canada and therefore became Canadian citizens (2010: 27). Canada's formation is not sacred through the numbered treaties, and especially not in Treaty 6. The Nêhiyawak enacted sacred law as it is our agreements with the settlers that would be held accountable not only by each other but through Manitow and God through the bible as well. Elder Jacob Bill from Treaty 6 states:

“It was the will of the Creator that the White man would come to live with us, among us, to share our lives together with him, and also both of us collectively to benefit from the bounty of Mother Earth for all time to come.’ He further said: ‘Just like the treaty, that’s what that is, one law was given, Indian and white, we both gave something special, something to keep, something to reverence, just like treaty, both Indian and white beneficiaries, we were given a gift from Creator. The Creator owns us, he is still the boss, nothing is hidden...just like that little flicker [of fire], that little flame’s going out, that’s the way the treaty looks, but now that we are sitting here it seems like we need a big flames so we can revive our lives and our relationship, just like we’re trying to revive this life so that our young people will have a good life for a long time, for many generations to come. That’s why we are here, that’s what the Elders seen a long time ago, if the white man listens he too will benefit, a long life for his children and his future generations because he, too, won’t sin [Pâstâhowin], he will not feel the brunt of that whip that the Creator has. Nothing will be hurt if both sides start taking to each other as beneficiaries of the treaty” (in Borrows 2010: 26).

When we negotiated with Treaty, our pipes were our connection to Kisê-manitow, and we believed that the presence of the bible was the Mônîyâwak's connection to their god. We entered agreements based on the belief we were entering kinship, and this does not indicate that it is a sacred process. It was about having Miyo-wîcêhtowin, good relations, with the entirety of existence and entering kinship and enacting wîtâskewin. Michael

Asch in *On Being Here to Stay: Treaties and Aboriginal Rights in Canada* presents a description of how Elders describe witaskewin:

‘Witaskewin’ is a Cree word meaning ‘living together on the land.’ It is a word that has multiple applications and multidimensional meanings. It can include or refer to individuals or nations who are strangers to one another agreeing to either live on or share for some specific purpose a land area with each other, or it can be applied to land-sharing arrangements between individual members of the nation (2014:114 citing Cardinal and Hildenbrant 2000:39).

In the context of treaty making, “witaskewin” refers to nations who are strangers to one another entering agreements for sharing land or territory with each other (Asch 2014:114 citing Cardinal and Hildenbrant 2000:39). This arrangement was not only made with non-Indigenous groups, as McAdam (2015) exemplifies through how the Nêhiyaw permitted the Blackfoot and bundle to pass through their territory:

The Blackfoot scout carries a painted rod with a small bundle made of hide tied at the top of the rod. The small bundle carried kinnikanik, “sacred tobacco” to many of the nations. He walks purposefully towards an invisible line and places the painted rod deep into the ground bordering the Nêhiyaw territory. Now he has to wait perhaps overnight as he makes camp nearby. In the early morning, he returns to retrieve the painted rod. The rod remains but the kinnikanik has been accepted and is gone. He has permission to cross the Nêhiyaw territory. It’s understood that, had the kinnikanik remained he would not have had permission to enter the land, it would have broken a territorial treaty (Atimoyoo interview, 2015:77).

Furthermore, Miyo-wîcêhtowin is a contributing factor to assessing treaty since it refers to having or possessing good relations and can refer to symbolic adoption (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000:14; McAdam 2015: 47). The root word of wîcêhtowin is wîcêw- meaning to come alongside or to support (Office of the Treaty Commissioner 2007: 93 in McAdam 2015: 47). Elder Simon Kytwayhat from the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation in Treaty states:

When our cousins (kiciwâminawak) the White man, first came to peacefully live on these lands (wîtaskêmacik) with the Indigenous people, the [Elders] used the pipe, sweetgrass and the pipe stem.... And when they took the traditional adoption with the White man, they used the pipe and they shared the pipe with them from where they adopted a peaceful existence (witaskewin) (in Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 32).

Specifically, Treaty intended for us as Indigenous Peoples to care for the settlers and in return they would care for us. A simple means of protecting one another was to ensure that we could care for one another and to ensure longevity of both parties. It was also intended

that we were to learn from the settlers and they too were to learn from us, and it was by no means a one-sided arrangement. Where *wîtisânîhitowin*, governing familial relationships, was the overarching principle and law that enacted this adoption, as Elder Simon Kytwayhat states:

When our cousins, the White man, first came to peacefully live on these lands (*ê-wîtaskêmâcîk*) with the Indigenous people, as far as I can remember, Elders have referred to them as '*kiciwâminawak*' (our first cousins). I have heard [from my Elders] that the Queen came to offer traditional adoption of us as our mother. 'You will be my children,' she had said (December 21, 1997, FSIN interview, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 33).

*Niciwâm*, our first cousin would ensure our Treaty and the promises made in it would be upheld. I do not think that we can state that Canada's foundation is sacred by any means; rather, we value respect and honesty, and the latter seems to be tested day in and day out. We abide to the sacred, but we cannot make anything sacred; Manitow controls that right. I will not state that when we entered Treaty it made the Canada's foundation sacred, it is the actions of Treaty that are sacred. The *Nêhiyawak* do not become sacred in Treaty, so why would the settlers? Treaty is sacred, and this does not mean that the people we entered into it with were made sacred. We are gifted with that ability to experience the sacred through our birthright and narratives of our creation.

Further indicative of the importance of Treaty in understanding of our philosophy is the pipestem. Manitow gave the *Nêhiyaw* seven pipe laws that include health, happiness, generation, generosity, compassion, respect, and quietness. As a Pipe carrier, it is custom that your actions reflect these seven attributes. The Pipe or Pipestem holds great importance to our political affairs and in our treaty making. Late Elder Jim Ka-Nipitehtew from Onion Lake, Saskatchewan expressed the importance of the Pipe in the "signing" of Treaty Six:

Well, I am very grateful of course that these our relatives who work for us in this place [at the Saskatchewan Indian Languages Institute] will have it [the Pipestem] as their witness of what these promises are which have been made to us; that they want for a person [i.e. me] to tell about this story, just as he knows it, just as he heard it in his own hearing. Just as I myself used to be told the story by my late father, that is how I am going to tell it to them. I wonder if I will be able to tell it exactly, just as he used to tell it to me. It cannot be helped that my memory, too, lapses, but to the extent that I know this story, I will nevertheless try to tell it to

them. This, for instance, I will discuss first, this which our grandfather casakiskwêš has left behind, the Pipestem.

He, my late father, used to say this, ‘Well, a certain old man had in fact foretold it, rising from his seat; then he has foretold it: The people must have something to rely upon as testimony, and we who are Crees do have something to rely upon as testimony, that which is called the Pipestem, that is all upon which we can rely as testimony.’

That is why they has used that [the Pipestem], ‘In the future, when these things are discussed, this is the bible of the Cree which he held, swearing upon it in response that no one would ever be able to break the promises he had made to us,’ thus then spoke these old men.

Indeed, thus now the promises which I have made to you, forever, so long as the sun shall cross the sky, so long as the rivers shall run, so long as the grass shall grow, that is how long these promises I have made to you will last; thus then our grandfathers have been told... (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998: 107-113).

The pipestem is one of our well-developed diplomatic and political traditions for negotiating and binding treaty agreements with various parties. A ceremony that incorporates the pipe is very serious as it is a sacred connection linked to prayer and Manitow. Alexander Morris, Treaty Commissioner, and A.G. Jakes, Secretary to the Treaty Commissioner, did not fully understand the importance of the pipestem. This is echoed in the government agencies to date.

Elder Lawrence Tobacco gave the following adherence:

“...what I have said, the sun, the river, and the grass, I have mentioned them; spirits for each one of them. If I don't deal with them, I could get punished too. My ancestors have set it up for me to deal with them in a proper way. That's what I'm trying to do. I'm not fooling around with the treaties” (Treaty 4 1997, Treaty Elders Forum, Saskatchewan in Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 19).

Treaty is not easily defined as the spirit and intent is bound to levels of sacred law, traditional law, and natural law. This is ê-miciminitômakahki, interconnectedness, among the sacred ceremonies, teachings, and beliefs pertaining to Kihci-asotamâtowin, Sacred Promises to One Another. Treaty and its intent not only include those present during the negotiation period but importantly, “We are here for a very important reason; it is for our grandchildren so that they may have a good future” (Senator Allan Bird, Montreal Lake First Nation, Treaty 6, November 27, 1997, Lac la Ronge, Saskatchewan in Cardinal and

Hildebrand 2010: 19). It is through this sacred promise to each other that we know Treaty trumps Canadian Law.

#### 4.5 Miyo-pimâtsiwin: The Good Life

Miyo-pimâtsiwin, the good life, is the behaviour in which we are to act and respect the very life that has been gifted to us through our state of mind and the laws and teachings we as Nêhiyawak are bound to. It is how we are to live our life in ceremony that we understand our roles and responsibilities to our people and through this role we are kept relationally accountable and on the path of living the good life (Makokis 2005: 13-14). It is a self-reflection of how we are to conduct ourselves in everyday life and essentially live morally and ethically on the land gifted to us. The land has always been inhabited not only by the Nêhiyawak and their Indigenous relations but also by the Ancient Ones that lived beyond. The prairies or “grassy place” were filled with living spirits, hungry spirits, and different spirits (Dion-Buffalo 1996: 69), and the teachings of their presence are important learning tools in how to live a good life. Whetiko was a “supernatural, cannibalistic creature who lived in an “earlier time” – a time when different conditions of human society and existence existed,” but the values of the spirit are important to draw from as:

Whetiko is a symbolic figure whose significance is multiple and inexhaustible. The whetiko being expressed itself in “dreamlike” and “contrary” language; symbolic words that related to cultural values. For instance, the Cree's underlying structures and practices were based on the sharing of resources, wealth and materials. Whetiko, on the other hand, represented the spirit of selfishness and overindulgence. In fact, one of the original meanings of ‘whetiko’ referred to a person who has become engrossed in oneself. And to be too self-engrossed is to become selfish or envious. By being “wrapped up in oneself” means becoming abnormal, unnatural or aberrant. In the end, what the Cree culture seems to be saying is that one needs to really see this shadowy figure. And to accept and work with this supernatural creature of the woods, through equality or mastery, or else face the consequences (Dion-Buffalo 1996: 69).

Insights into an earlier time present cultural values and beliefs about how one is to act. The narrative of the Whetiko expresses how working together is essential and as an individual to remember the whole of the people and Nation. Whetiko expresses how one can be selfish, and was a teaching given to my dad and his cousins when they would try

to hoard all the chocolate cake as children. The Ancient Ones left us clues into how to live accordingly through our origin and being, that we are allowed a glimpse into the complexity of our interrelated view on life. Where teachings of honesty, truth, and integrity shape our mindset and how we are to view the world since we must uphold a balance between what is right and what is wrong.

Miyo-pimâtisiwin goes further as it integrates not only our self-reflection but those around us. As Ermine states:

How human beings treat other human beings is based on our ethics; those things that have been given to us by our ancestors, our parents. A lot of how we engage in our relationships with other people are determined by the ethics. The boundaries we impose on our self for example, we do not cross these boundaries, we create this spiritual aura around ourselves; there are certain things we will do and certain things we will not do. These are the ethics we create for ourselves - We are cognizant that nobody should transgress that spiritual aura around us. These ethics are created by the self and by our families. When we do certain things we hear our mother's voice or our father's voice telling us you cannot do that or you should do this (2009, conference in Bruno 2010:190).

This is the "consciousness we walk around with" and that we can continue to learn from our ancestors and where: "We hear our parents and grandparents talk to us through our consciousness" (Ermine in Bruno 2010: 190). Inherited consciousness may come about long after our parents and grandparents have passed, but it is in our consciousness that their words are still present (see Bruno 2010: 190). Kiskinowasohtawew means that s/he listens to her/his teaching, where it means to act upon and live out what has been taught and this is part of an embodied consciousness. (Bruno 2010:191). It is not only the embodied consciousness that we come to know, but it is also the teachings associated with the result of what happens next when we misbehave as children. We laugh in our Nation when we talk about being "whipped by the willow" and if you hear that your grandmother is grabbing one, you either start running or apologize from the bottom of your heart. It is not the physical action of the willow but the teaching of the willow that is important for us to understand.

"You know, majority of our teachings are common sense. About being good to one another and thinking before we act" (Gordon Lee, December 2016). As simple as this statement is, it is incredibly powerful as we have blurred between the lines of common sense and impractical action or thought. Miyo-pimâtisiwin is supported through

our language, teachings, practices, and relationships bound by Manitow as these elements are connected to each other. Elders will often refer to this as ‘walking our talk’: we are not only talking the talk, but we are in fact going down the road of ‘walking or living our talk’ (Makokis 2005: 16). This is the basis of mental health wellness and healing that is essential for our Nation to be restructured around (see Fellner 2016). Through this view on life, there are factors associated with balance and harmony that comprises the life long journey of miyo-pimâtisiwin.

The medicine-wheel furthers this understanding of balance. As Elder Mary Lee explains, as previously presented, that Nêhiyawak, which means being balanced in the four parts that are found in the four directions of the Medicine Wheel. These parts are the spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental aspects of self:

Look at the four seasons and follow the sun. Spring in the east, summer in the south, fall in the west, and winter in the north. It tells the whole story of how all life came into being abundantly bright rising in the east and then fading away as it moves west and north. All life rises and sets like the sun (2006: <http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com/transcripts/cree.html>, accessed November 2015).

Therefore, Indigenous healing and wellness are grounded in how we are living on a moment-to-moment basis and how we experience periods of imbalance, disconnection, and disharmony (Hart, 2002; Lane et al., 1984; Lee, 2006 in Fellner 2016: 56).

Indigenous peoples need to attend to their socioeconomic health to strengthen the effectiveness of deliberation within our Nation to ensure the health of our governance system (Borrows 2010:36).

Miyo-pimâtisiwin can be extended further through pimâcihowin meaning the ability to make a living or livelihood. Specifically, pimâcihowin describes a wholistic concept that includes a spiritual and physical dimension and is an integral component of traditional Nêhiyaw doctrine, law, principle, values, and teachings regarding sources of life (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 43). When Elders describe the wealth of the land in terms of its capacity to provide a livelihood, they are referring not simply to its material capabilities but also to the spiritual powers that are inherent in it (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 43). Elder Dolly Neapetung states:

We were able to look after ourselves through the use of these gifts that God gave us, our ability to feed ourselves and look after our children. We were proud of

ourselves because we took care of ourselves, we had the animals to hunt, we had the food that God put on the land, the berries and the medicines that we carried out and that we go out and gather (Yellow Quill First Nation, Treaty 4, 1997, Treaty Elders Forum, Wapii-Moostoosis Reserve, Lebret, Saskatchewan in Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 43-44).

Pimâcihowin provides guidance for the ways in which individuals conducted themselves when exercising their duty to provide for their life needs from the gifts provided by the Creator. These teachings are central to the personal and skill training provided by First Nations to enable their peoples to achieve independence in terms of providing for their needs, those of their families and those of their communities. The teachings related to tipiyawêwisowin, self-sufficiency, provided to the individual direction and guidance and set out the requirements for achieving a sense of self-worth, dignity, and independence - values that were and are essential to a Nation's internal peace, harmony, and security.

The kakêskihkêmwina, teachings, include unwritten but well-known codes of behaviour for the Nêhiyawak in relation to Pimâcihowin (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 44-45). The codes of behaviour that a person was encouraged to acquire are:

- iyinisiwin: the ability to develop a keen mind;
- nahihtamowin: the ability to develop keen sense of hearing;
- nahâsiwin: the ability to develop alert and discerning faculties;
- nisitohtamowin: the ability to develop understanding;
- kakayiwatisiwin: the ability to develop an inner sense of industriousness or inner ability or desire to be hardworking;
- astoskewimahcihowin: the inner desire or need to work;
- waskawîwin: inner energy to move or develop a sense of personal initiative;
- manatisiwin: the inner capacity of respect; and,
- kisêwâtisiwim the capacity to be kind (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2010: 45).

These codes are in connection to Mother Earth and important because they aim to achieve the ability to make a livelihood founded on virtues of the Nêhiyawak Nation.

Pimâcihowin, ensures the continuation of Nêhiyaw livelihood that is essential for our culture, language, and being to persist. Pimâcihowin is also essential when we examine Treaty, as it affirms our Nêhiyawak ability to continue living and thriving through our own ways especially through our understanding of home.



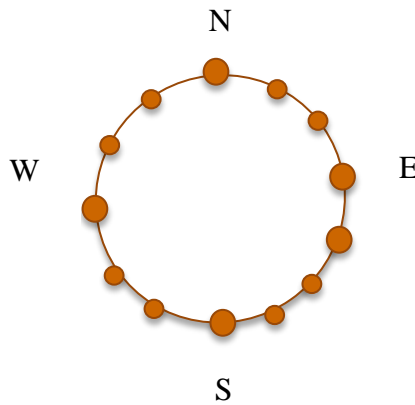
## 4.6 Mîkiwahp Ceremony

Our homefire is integral to understanding how we develop an understanding of how we are to act within our world. Our Mîkiwahp, *lodge or tipi*, provides us not only warmth and family, but is where our knowledge and teachings are first heard, and where guidance is given to offer protection and caution through wisdom and insight. When a child leaves the homefire, it is intended that their spirit protectors follow beside them to ensure that they come home safely. The Mîkiwahp provides a series of teachings through its structure. Designed as our first home on earth, the Mîkiwahp reflects the womb and is property of the iskwew, *woman*. Initially, our lodge was not the shape we see today in the structure of the tipi; rather it was the matotisân, sweat lodge. As it began to grow, the lodge allowed an iskotêw, *fire*, to be placed in the center. This fire is where woman gains her name, iskew from iskotêw, as a woman is the sacredness of the fire and the lodge itself.

When the Star Beings discussed how their children would be raised, they held a ceremony. They would marry the first man and first woman but needed to teach the humans how to raise child properly. Inside a Mîkiwahp sitting in the east sat one Sky Being and they presented their narrative when the sun rose. By mid-morning, the humans were sent to the Sky Being in the south to learn their insights. At mid-day, in the west of the Mîkiwahp they met with another Sky Being and were given teachings. At the end, when the sun was setting they met with the fourth Sky Being in the north. This initial meeting takes place every May and our Elders sit in the positions of the Sky Beings and teach how children are to be raised. Nimosôm Jerry told this story after he was given it to late Mary Elise Whitecalf from the Sunchild Reserve. The Mîkiwahp has niyânanosâp apasoya, *fifteen poles*, to hold up its structure and the door way faces east towards the sun when it is first raised (see Figure 6). Our Mîkiwahp poles are positioned on top of the ground with little penetration into the soil as it is our belief that we do not hurt our mother. A tripod is raised before the placing of the other poles, and these three poles begin the sacred teachings to live by every day and are said to be both parents and the child:

1. Nanahîtamowin – Obedience: Listening and accepting guidance from others;
2. Kistêyihtowin – Respect: Giving respect to one’s self and others;

3. Tapâhtêyimowin – Humility: Acknowledging that we are no greater or lesser than others;

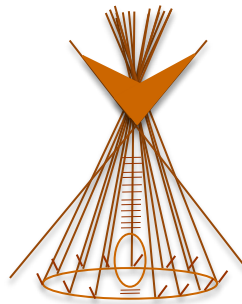


**Figure 6.** Placement of the 13 Inner Mikiwahp Poles.

4. Wiyâtikwêyimowin – Happiness: To encourage others through support;
5. Kisêwâtîtâtowin – Love: Giving loves to one’s self and the entirety of creation;
6. Tâpwewokeyihtamowin – Faith: Belief in the power of Manitow and the essence of Nêhiyaw life;
7. Wâhkôtowin – Kinship: Forming relationships and bonds with parents, siblings, extended relatives, and ultimately, knowing one’s Nation;
8. Kanâtêyimowin – Cleanliness: Purity through one’s spiritual and physical self;
9. Nanâskomowin – Thankfulness: To have gratitude for one’s life and all that we come to know;
10. Wîcêhtowin – To Share: Sharing knowledge of our Nêhiyawîhtwâwin through our knowledge, oral narratives, traditions, and customs for the generations to come;
11. Sôhkêyihtamowin – Strong mind: To persevere when we are faced with difficult obstacles;
12. Miyô-Opikinâwasowin – Good Child Rearing: To take care of our gifts and allow them to fulfill miyo-pimâtisiwin; and,
13. Iyitatêyihtamowin – Hope: That we as Nêhiyawak continue to thrive and maintain our way of life.

These thirteen poles represent the inner structure, yet, the Mîkiwahp has two poles used to control the flaps of the lodge.

14. Kanawêyimikôsowin – Ultimate protection: Protection of the four bodies we consist of including our mental state, our physical body, emotions, and our spirit; and,
15. Mâminawêyitatowin – Control the flaps from the wind: Where we must find balance through our red road's existence (see Figure 7) (Elder Mary Lee, Cree (Nêhiyawak) Teaching, Diagram for a Cree Curriculum, accessed February 2, 2017 <http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com/transcripts/cree.pdf>).



**Figure 7.** The Mîkiwahp.

The two outer poles reflect the importance of the Mîkiwahp as they bind the lodge together. Mâminawêyitatowin is reflective of how we must work together as a Nation to protect the core of the Mîkiwahp, our people, our homefires, our life source. At the point of the Mîkiwahp we place an eagle feather and this is Kistêyih towin, honour. At the base of the tipi and its material are pegs that hold the Mîkiwahp in place, and these are Sîtoskâkowin, the foundation of value. Raising a Mîkiwahp reflects the dignity and grace of a woman, it is the basis of our people and how our women blanket around the poles and their teachings to support not only the values and principles but those that stay inside. The covering is said to be like an nôtokêw, old woman, embracing you and filling you with warmth. The top flaps are astipâhkwâna and the fourteen pins that hold the covering together are ascipâkwânisa, pins. Ascipâkwânisa hold our family and Nation together.

Our Mîkiwâhp relates not only to our homefire but also our connection to the land through the miskinahk, turtle, who carries kiskinawâkêmôwin, values, on its back and makes this land known to us as Turtle Island. The rope that is tied to the top of the tripod connects to the earth and indicates protection. The rope is often referred to as the umbilical cord as the lodge maintains that connection to regeneration.

For our Nation to heal from the implications of colonization, we need to go back to the core of what makes us Nêhiyaw and to do so, we must recenter our focus on our homes and how we interact with one another. Together we create healthy citizens that shape our Nation as each pole supports each other. As introductory as this section is, it is the most powerful tool we can utilize to forward for a resurgence of cultural knowledge and maintain our values and principles through not only teachings but our language as well.

## 4.7 Conclusion

The Nêhiyawak of Maskwacîs can change the way in which colonialism has affected them and their way of life. It is not easy, and by no means do I hold all the answers. For us to tackle the mindset of colonialism that makes us think we are inferior and not worthy of the life Manitow has given us promotes discussion into the mental and spiritual health of our people. I will never admit that our culture is “dying” as I do not believe that it is possible as we in Maskwacîs can learn from our relations in other reserves. The transfer of cultural knowledge between our youth and Elders has seen significant decrease and the Elders must fulfill their roles. *Their example showed me the way: A Cree woman's life shaped by two cultures* (1997) presents the late Elder Emma Minde from Maskwacîs and how she expressed that Elders rarely retire; this is indicative of how the Elders in our Nation had a lot of people relying on them and retirement was never a thought that they had in mind as the Nation and their family counted on them for multiple circumstances. Our Elders need the ability to share their knowledge and reveal a deeper layer into our culture. We are children of Manitow and we descend from the Sky Beings, and this narrative is from our Creation story. I presented only small pieces of the introductory narrative as this story takes four days. The intermediate narrative will continue for four days. The advanced narrative will be told for another four days. And the final narrative of our creation will be told in a ceremonial

and spiritual context. Our children deserve the right to know who they are and where we come from as Nêhiyawak. Our Nation must remember the importance of our Grandfather teachings and laws.

The loss of our little deities to residential schools forever shaped our Nation's health. The Government took away the core of our Nation and it absolutely destroyed us on various levels. As much as they tried to eliminate who we are, the oral narratives continued. The teachings behind the Mikiwahp Ceremony add another dimension into how we relate to our world and understand the sacredness of our women as tied to the health of our people. These teachings offer the ability to learn about morality and ethics of how to live and strive for miyo-pimâtisiwin.

However, there is no guarantee that being a good person will make change. Modern holocausts and terrorism extend through the idea that people often exercise authority with goodness (Borrows 2008: 8). If the people who enact change are good and the rest of our people are living in ways that not aligned with this goodness, then any change will be fruitless (Borrows 2008: 8). I myself do not know if I am good enough for the task at hand. Through all of this, it is hope and prayer that continue the momentum forward, and hopefully individuals may learn from my mistakes and add value to the endeavor. To heal and move forward it is necessary to be open to a resurgence of our way of life prior to Treaty and not to dismiss what we have learned along the way, but utilize it to the best of our ability. Not all traditions may be good and like others before us we have learned. We as an Indigenous Nation must not be fixated on traditions that we lose the power to evaluate its usefulness; we can be open to learning from the world we find ourselves in without completely rejecting everything that those who have harmed us before have presented (Borrows 2008: 9). This acknowledgement must come from our people first and foremost before we even consider outside sources as an alternative way of moving forward since we are more than used to having outside sources telling us what we need.

We need to acknowledge the customs, protocols, traditions, and teachings that have directed us in a time immemorial. The Nêhiyawak Nation has proven to access knowledge from other Indigenous Nations throughout North America. As we understand our position within the larger frame of the settler-state we will shift in the ways of how we respond and make stance. The Nêhiyawak must be the ones to embark on the journey first and give

direction to how we will heal ourselves, restructure how we administrate and govern our Nations, and forge a new era of Indigenous sovereignty and autonomy. As we do this, we push beyond the theory of “What would happen if the *Indian Act* was removed?” and highlight how we have a pre-existing diplomatic narrative that can shape the future of Canada. This is how Samson Cree Nation endured the process to formulate their own form of governance while learning through the constraints of the *Indian Act* and the Chief and Council system.

## Chapter Five

### 5 Pushing beyond Theory: Governance in Action

From the Mohawk Nation in Kahnawà:ke, Taiaiake Alfred states that: “Native communities must focus on creating a new generation of leaders who are grounded in traditional values and capable of undoing the damage done to their nations by white society and two generations of complicit Native politicians” (2009:154). Where band councils are creations of colonial politics and have allowed the nation-state to dictate how we govern ourselves through elected leadership, in contrast to many Indigenous communities’ traditional governance. In addition, many politicians pay lip service to the youth of First Nations but increasingly ignore young people’s concerns. Because of this, the youth become increasingly alienated, and our communities are in real danger of losing the next generation of leaders. Some youth “self-destruct, through suicide or substance abuse. Others, disillusioned by the hypocrisy of the older people, especially politicians, simply turn their backs on their communities and drift toward the mainstream society, where racism still prevents their participation as full human beings” (Alfred 2009:154). Thus, Indigenous communities have a lot of work in front of them to ensure they remain culturally, spiritually, and politically intact. Indigenous Peoples can change the landscapes of heritage management, economics, sustainability, governance, and education. To do so, Indigenous peoples must reclaim knowledge and reveal the power they possess to shift the culture and society we know. We, as Indigenous people must realize that our power lies not only in the United Nations Declaration on Right of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution, but within ourselves, and within our sovereignty and nationhood that makes us distinct. To obtain resurgence requires the need to discover and discuss the theories and histories about Indigenous peoples including the Nêhiyawak. For this reason, I have included in the previous chapters’ information that some may find obsolete in this study, this study is for my Nation and not everyone has had the opportunity to access knowledge.

Wanda McCaslin, a Métis from northern Saskatchewan, and Denise Breton have written “Justice as Healing: Going Outside the Colonizers’ Cage.” They present ‘The Seasons of Healing’ that we as Indigenous peoples must take account of for us to heal

ourselves from the “sense of suffocating entrapment” (2008:517). Within this framework, the seasons are presented:

Winter: When Nation members confront how bad things really are and realize that it is not okay to let things slide unchanged.

Springtime: A thaw, that energizes for positive change to gather momentum, where hopes run high.

Summer: The honeymoon phase, as people realize that the scope of change needed takes more than good will and good intentions.

Fall: Pares away the most essential structures and asks the following: Which structures support our regeneration, and which extend our oppression? Fixing “problems” yields to the more fundamental task of changing systems and structures (McCaslin and Breton 2008:517).

Primarily, it acknowledges the system of oppression and domination that we as Indigenous peoples face. As their title explains, we are simply removing the cage that we find ourselves within. Justice cannot be a way of life for Indigenous peoples – or anyone else, for that matter—if colonization remains the ruling framework (McCaslin and Breton 2008:517). Instead of handing our conflicts over to experts or professionals, we call for a paradigm shift from the dominant society’s way of responding to harm (McCaslin and Breton 2008:517). We insert ourselves into the solution and where: “The past must be rectified not from revenge but as an essential means of transformation” (McCaslin and Breton 2008:517). Our solution lies in the strength and guidance of the Elders of our Nation. Through their lived experiences as “colonized” individuals but also as a form of resistance to the years of eradication and starvation our people endured on the plains (see Daschuk 2013). Through the guidance of the Kêhtê-ayak of Nipisihkopahk, we forwarded our Nêhiyawak Law.

With that said, “Indigenous law originates in the political, economic, spiritual, and social values expressed through teachings and behavior of knowledgeable and respected individuals and elders” (Borrows 2002:13). As Alfred explains:

A crucial feature of the indigenous concept of governance is its respect for individual autonomy. This respect precludes the notion of ‘sovereignty’ - the idea that there can be some permanent transference of power from the individual to an abstraction called ‘government’. The indigenous tradition sees government as the collective power of the individual members of the nation; there is no separation between society and state (1999:25).



The collective power of the people is stronger than any imposed governance system we have been placed into. To change the political, social, and cultural landscape of Samson Cree Nation, the collective of Elders and I attempted to go back to a time before 1982 when Canada became a “Nation.” Though this date is contested, with all due respect, I do not consider Canada a nation, as it never entered sacred agreements with us, and we believed it was with the Queen and questioned whether she could provide for us. If Canada was a nation in 1867 and we entered Treaty in 1876, why was the Queen negotiating the numbered Treaties? As well, if it is said Nation away from Great Britain than it must do better to listen to our concerns about the unjust treatment and disrespect to our Treaty rights. Thus, the collective went further past the signing of Treaty 6 in 1876, and we began with understanding ourselves through our relationships to one another, our oral narratives, teachings and songs, and furthermore, in the understanding of our being. To do this is a personal decolonization where we aimed for the resurgence of Nêhiyawak nationhood. Within these cultural customs, we found the underlying values and principles of our ancestors but tied it into our present-day realities, where “If Aboriginal people are going to transform legal principles to accommodate their understanding of law and justice, they must devote thoughtful consideration and effort to an articulation of their own laws. Efforts to define and apply these laws will assist First Nations to fulfill important philosophical and social responsibilities in the communities of Nations and peoples” (‘Resistance and the Cultural Power of Law’ 22-23 and Glen Morris quoted in Ulla Hasager et al. 1993:9 in Borrows 2002:26), and we initiated this articulation. As well, Indigenous law is not only able to persist and adapt but we give meaning to Indigenous engagement with other nations including the settler state (Stark 2017: 254). The settler state of Canada has implicated Aboriginal Law and Indigenous sovereignty through a series of policies and the burden of the Indian Act. For Indigenous Nations, it is not only our understanding of self that we need to resurge but the overall knowledge of the mechanisms of protection available to us that allow for continuity and change of our cultures but also educate our own people.

Through the guidance of the Kêhtê-ayak introduced in Chapter One, the collective created a series of laws aimed to hold our Nation’s citizens accountable to one another, but specifically to protect ourselves and our way of life. Through collection of the Kêhtê-

ayak's insights in unrecorded meetings and one-on-one interviews that forwarded our traditional governance system, we created a written document, titled "Kisê-manitow Wiyasiwêwina Kihcimasinakikanis: The Living Law of the People of Maskwacîs Document." We forwarded twenty-three laws that ranged from hunting to ethics, to provide a glimpse into our worldview and ontology. Understanding that everything in creation has laws known as *manitow wiyinikêwina*, and that human laws are called *Nêhiyaw Wiyasiwêwina*, we began discussions of relations to sovereignty and traditional governance. *Nêhiyaw Wiyasiwêwina* are in the songs, ceremonies, and sacred sites we have come to know. *Manitow wiyinikêwina* means Creator's Laws: *manitow* means Creator, and *wiyinikêwina* means an act like weaving (McAdam 2015: 38). This weaving refers to all of creation being bound together. When we think of law, it is not only a system of rules, but a deep spiritual connection that ties us all together. It is a continuous flow of energy that can be disrupted through a breach or overstepping of a law that then requires a need to balance itself out, often through our own procedures or natural law itself. *Manitow wiyinikêwina* consist of four parts: human laws, earth laws, spiritual law, and animal laws (McAdam 2015: 38). *Manitow wiyinikêwina* guide the *Nêhiyawak* in our daily activities, events, and ceremonies. We affirmed that *Nêhiyaw Wiyasiwêwina*, the human laws, as our spiritual laws that link to *Manitow wiyinikêwina* cannot be written. By forwarding our laws we challenge the legitimacy of the settler state as the sole or even primary source of law ('Resistance and the Cultural Power of Law' 22-23 in Borrows 2002:183). The document's name reflects how *Kisê-manitow* governs all of creation and we honour our kind and compassionate Creator through this endeavor. However, we drew from relations outside of our territory to learn how they created their own laws and processes of legislation as they affirmed their sovereignty.

The laws we created are not presented in this section but the importance of why they were enacted becomes apparent in the discussion of a few. It is important to realize that the reason I did this is largely in part because the Elders hold the right to interpret and deliberate about these laws, and I have no part in interpreting them here. We utilize the term law instead of by-law as well, because these laws have been in existence since our beginnings and into present day. They have been accepted prior to the formation of Canada and have guided us through different phases of the earth. The previous chapter

intended to allow readers to learn from the teachings and oral narrative presented as a thought provoking process of how the Elders would deliberate in relation to our beliefs and traditions. However, before we can discuss the laws we forward, we as readers need to realize the impacts of the settler state on Indigenous nationhood.

## 5.1 Settler Colonialism and the Settler State

To become visible, Indigenous peoples must take on the political and legal authority of the settler state of Canada and the province they find their selves in today. The settler state was made possible through European laws that enabled nations to assert legitimacy over Indigenous lands throughout the international arena (Stark 2017: 250). For us to challenge the hierarchy in front of us, we needed a mechanism that allowed us to control our fate and our future. As it stands, a “by-law” must be sent to Indian Affairs, a branch of the Federal government, and approved by Indian Affairs through their appropriate forms and measures. This is often referred to as a Band Council Resolution (BCR). First Nations and the federal government have relationships between each other, and for the most part, the province of Alberta technically does not have authority within our reserve due to the British North America Act where the federal government has responsibility for “Indians, and Lands, reserved for the Indians” (Cuthand 2007:74). The provincial government, however, has often overstepped these boundaries as Samson Cree Nation has had to deal with Alberta Fish and Wildlife, a provincial organization who enter our reserve to seize ceremonial objects such as eagle feathers and charge our people with charges related to fishing. Our legal traditions have continued for thousands of years prior to Alberta and Canada, and they are imprinted in the minds of our Elders and manifested in the words of our oral narratives and teachings.

Indigenous knowledge is “part of the collective genius of humanity. It represents the accumulated experience, wisdom and know-how unique to nations, societies, and or communities of people, living in specific ecosystems of America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. It represents the accumulated knowledge of the earth’s people that represent over 5000 languages and cultures contained in more than 70 nation-states” (Bastien 2004:77). Where Indigenous knowledge is a methodology, so that a person may claim, “I know” and speaks to multiple and diverse processes and includes other ways of knowing,

i.e. dreams, visions, insights and teachings that validate one's sensory intake (Little Bear 2009: 7).

Recently, critical approaches to the study of Indigenous law have stated that oral narratives lay out the central principles for how people should order their world (Borrows 2010; Napoleon 2010; Stark 2013 in Stark 2017: 250). As our oral narratives were denigrated as fiction and of the impossible we witnessed our pasts shaped through a lens that was not our own. Within settler colonialism we witness the effects on not only our history and experience but also essentially that 'Settler colonialism destroys to replace':

To replace means not the physical elimination of Indigenous peoples but: ...through a figurative recasting of Indigenous nations that persists as an organizing principal of settler society. Indeed, we can see this in settler law. Indigenous peoples (and specifically their treaty relationships or lack thereof) continue to structure settler society, and thus cannot be eliminated, as the settler state's own legitimacy and authority is contingent on the recognition of Indigenous sovereign authority. This recognition is nonetheless entangled in settler discomfort and fears that reconfigure Indigenous sovereignty as a threat to the stability of the state. Thus, Western law became the instrument through which the settler state sought to perfect their claims to Indigenous lands (Ford 2010). As Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd notes, 'settler sovereignty requires the indigenous as sovereign while it seeks to conquer it, appropriate it, and render it contained, if not nullified once and for all' (Stark 2017: 251).

Settler colonialism renders Indigenous sovereignty as "fictive" while the settler state asserts its perceived "authority" (Stark 2017: 251). It is as scholar Bain Attwood, who focuses on the history of colonialism in Australia, states:

In the case of settler societies, colonizers have found it necessary to persuade others as well as themselves that the land they have appropriated as their basis is rightfully theirs. This is done in large part through the formulation of legal stories of one kind or another, since the law plays a crucial role in creating boundaries between what is deemed to be legitimate and what is not (2011:190).

What is troublesome in many regards and important to forward is that the legitimization of state authority through settler law determines the relationship between the settler state and Indigenous Nation (Stark 2017: 252). Aboriginal law in Canada is the result of competing interpretations, such as what we forward in this chapter, of how Indigenous peoples entered these relationships, our treaty, and how this relationship is outlined and interpreted (Stark 2017: 252). Alongside the friction of these interpretations is the

language that has “obscured and buried central questions around responsibilities and obligations” (Stark 2017: 252).

Therefore, it is important to present the past and how these interpretations have shaped our understanding of settler law and Indigenous governance. We as Indigenous peoples must remember how we are bound to creation and how this impacted our initial conversations with the settler state and honour the treaties with not only the settler state but with creation as well:

We must speak for our relatives; we must uphold our commitments to the land, water, animals, flora and fauna. We have an obligation to protect creation. We are accountable for the damages being wreaked upon the land and water. Our survival necessitates we find ways to hold the settler state to the original spirit and intent of our treaties, which were and remain conditioned by our legal obligations to creation (Stark 2017: 255).

It is without question that “...our lands are occupied by first-world Western states based on an alien form of judicial sovereignty and a shared genealogy of predominantly British colonization” (Moreton-Robinson 2017: 69); but I feel that our constant presence and assertion of our own governance system not only allows us to voice our concerns but forwards a new emphasis on Indigenous law, and settler state relationships that holds them accountable as well. To do so, we allow “Samson Cree Nation” to allow its right to sovereignty through its own means the ability to challenge and create dialogue between the settler state and itself.

## 5.2 Traditional Governance and Nipisihkopahk

Late Chief Maskepitoon, *Broken Arm*, was one of the original inhabitants of Maskwacîs. His people were living east into South Saskatchewan, south into Montana state, west into the Kootenai Plains, and north into the Edmonton area (Louis 2014: 43). When Maskepitoon passed away in 1869, Kanatakasu was chosen to take his place as Chief, and after his death, Joe Samson became Chief (Louis 2014: 43). The first record of Treaty Annuity payments for what would become Samson Cree Nation occurred in 1878 at the Tail Creek Reserve located in present day Ferintosh, Alberta, roughly 40km east of Maskwacîs today (see Appendix 4). The annuity payment existed through the negotiation of Treaty Six that occurred at Fort Carleton and Fort Pitt in 1876 (see Appendix 5).

Treaty established parameters for a reserve location for the people of Maskwacîs who lived between four main lakes: Dried Meat Lake (now Bittern Lake), Buffalo Lake, Gull Lake, and Pigeon Lake (see Appendix 6) (Roy Louis, personal communication in Louis 2014: 43). During the 1880s, Catholic Church leaders would refer to the people of Maskwacîs as the ‘Battle River Crees’ (Breton 1968 in Louis 2014: 43). Chief Samson would negotiate with the federal government to settle on a land base recorded as Samson Reserve in 1889. Chief Ermineskin negotiated on behalf of families in 1885, and Chief Muddy Bull would negotiate on behalf of the families in the Louis Bull reserve in 1889 (Louis 2014:4). Chief Bobtail would attend the Treaty Seven gathering at Blackfoot Crossing in 1877 and requested adherence for the families who had been left out during the settlement and re-allocation of land within Maskwacîs. In 1909, Bobtail would establish the Bobtail Reserve, and is now known as Montana Reserve. The land base of the Maskwacîs people would be parceled into four distinct reserves amongst the Nêhiyawak families.

Before we go any further, I think it is important to address certain historical dates that are important for a variety of reasons. In 1867, “Confederation” made the Dominion of Canada and it is believed that Canada became a Nation. In 1876 the British North America Act was established. The forerunner to the *Indian Act* was called “An Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes in the Province and to Amend the Laws Respecting Indians” (Borrows 2007: 2). The 1876 *Indian Act* incorporated the Gradual Civilization Act passed in 1857 and the Gradual Enfranchisement Act passed in 1869. The Gradual Civilization Act states:

“any Indian, if he was male, free of debt, literate, and of good moral character, could be awarded full ownership of 50 acres (20 hectares) of reserve land, and would thereby be enfranchised. He would then cut his tribal ties and cease to be an Indian. The goal of full civilization through enfranchisement of individuals was to be accompanied by the disappearance of Aboriginal communities... Enfranchisement had attracted very few qualified candidates, and the tribal governments and their leaders were seen as obstacles” (Carter 1999: 116).

This simply meant that if you could act civilized, you were good enough to be a contributing citizen of Canada with no ties to being Indian; you were acting-white-passing. The Gradual Enfranchisement Act allowed for an increase of government control in our reserves. There would be little participation in our own governance because we

were forced to uphold a foreign governing system. When we entered Treaty we believed that we would continue to live our way of life. Samson Cree Nation was established in 1889, and while this date clearly is after 1867 and the early creation of the *Indian Act* and its predecessor, I have a hard time thinking that the Government would have been forward with us in any discussion of their political and territorial agenda. It is highly suspect that First Nations in the west would have known of this act and the forced governance structure that would be placed onto us, and if we did, the Indian Agent would soon appear on the reserve.

The *Indian Act* was by no means a way to affirm our sense of self or even our Treaties and the document itself was not consulted on with First Nations. Ideally, the goal was to assimilate the Indigenous peoples and regulate any contacts between First Nations and settlers. Specifically, it defines who could be determined as an “Indian,” how band money and land were to be administered, enfranchisement (giving up status), and the prohibition of certain activities such as our ceremonies, to name a few. Primarily, it aimed to eliminate anyone who would be able to call himself or herself an “Indian” and went after our entire being and understanding of self. It rewrote who could identify as Indigenous and created a patriarchal system of continuity through male heads of family. In 1894, provisions of the *Indian Act* demanded compulsory school attendance into federally funded industrial and boarding schools. The schools were officially called residential schools in 1923 and were run by church organizations. Ermineskin Roman Catholic Boarding School opened in February of 1891 in Maskwacîs. Parents who refused to send their children to residential school faced fines or jail sentences. They took our Sky-Beings and did their best to eliminate our world.

In 1880, the Department of Indian Affairs was created and Indian Agents were trained to regulate and enforce the *Indian Act*. The Indian Agent held all decision-making power for reserves, and this left no room for input from the Indigenous Nation and did not support self-government or continuation of traditional governance. This makes it no surprise that in 1881 apparently, Samson Cree Nation and Ermineskin Cree Nation “surrendered” land to the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). The Government of Canada introduced the Chief and Council system of government in 1869 and this system was continued in the 1876 *Indian Act* under sections 61-63. Band Council responsibilities

were established by the Government of Canada and enforced the rules and regulations created under the *Indian Act*. Most First Nations were no longer able to select their leadership through their own customary processes as they were forced to use an electoral system. Indigenous way of life was controlled through various facets under the *Indian Act* and the problems that existed still emerge in every context.

Not only did the *Indian Act* require written consent from the Indian Agent to sell items such as livestock or wood, but it also enforced a pass system before people could leave the reserve. Granted this occurred partially because of the Resistance of 1885 and the “Frog Lake Massacre” in Alberta. However, let me be clear about the alleged massacre; if your wife is being sexually assaulted and you feel powerless because the man that is doing it is the Indian Agent, I think that the “massacre” was inevitable (Conversation with Clarence Whitstone, October 31, 2016 Onion Lake, Saskatchewan). After all that the *Indian Act* had complicated, it would make sense that we have done something to right these wrongs. The *Indian Act* still exists as a form of federal legislation today and suppresses our freedom to make decisions for the betterment of our people. The Government continues to distribute the budget to each Nation every new fiscal year. It is a delicate balance between biting the hand that feeds you that they set up, and simply, it’s an inhuman power trip.

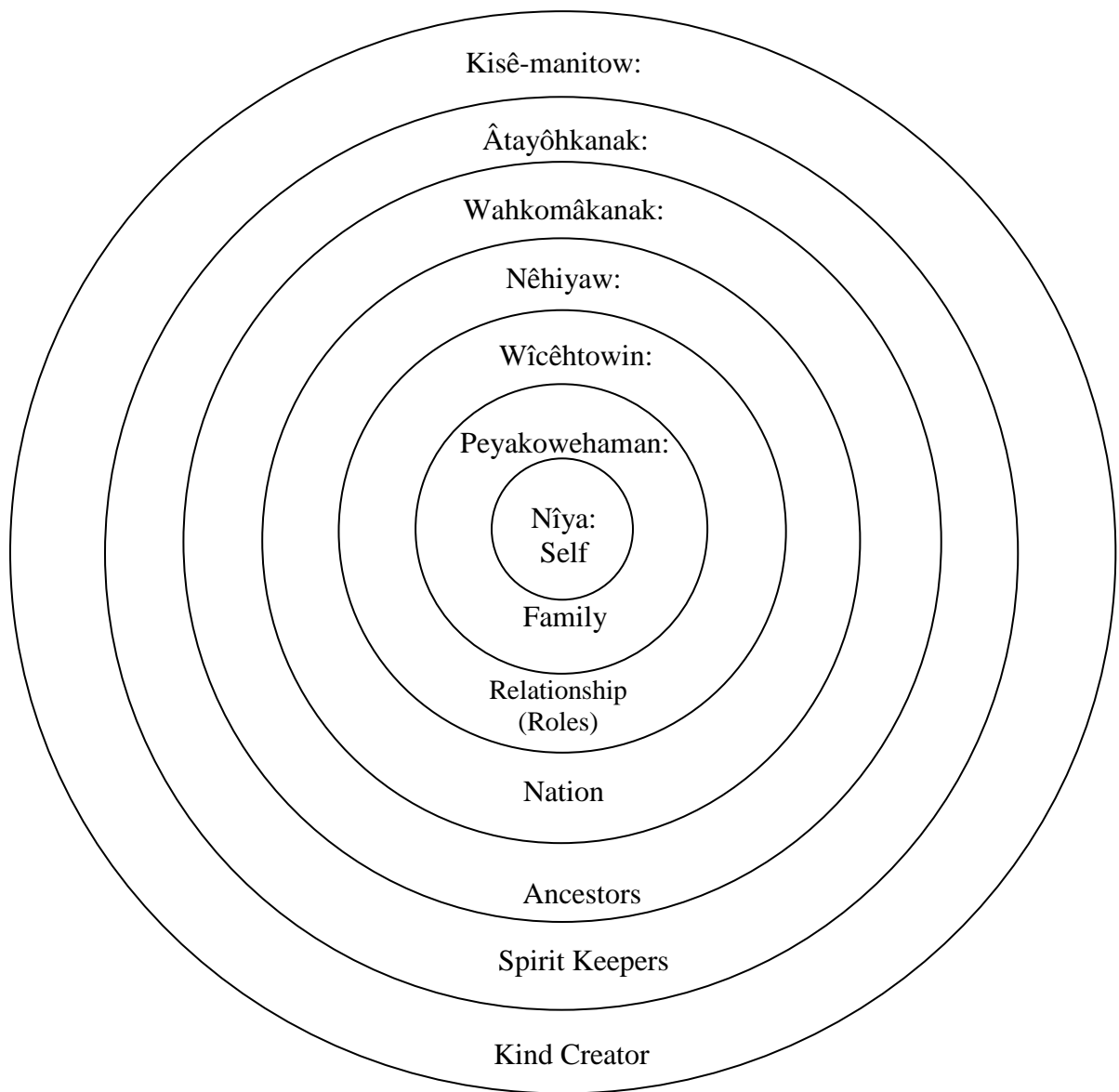
The *Indian Act* has limited Indigenous Nations through a variety of ways but none is as twisted as what it has done to some of our people who have become addicted to the *Indian Act*, not only in Ottawa but at home as well (Borrows 2008: 5). Often our citizens will stay within its reinforcing reach and while there are good leaders under the *Indian Act* too many of our people have learned to dominate others by mastering its intricate rules; this not only extends within the confines of the band office (Borrows 2008: 5). Specifically, the *Indian Act* gives a great deal of influence over Indigenous Peoples including matters related to: “where we live, whether we think we belong, how we elect leaders, how we live under them, and how we learn, trade and attend to spiritual matters” (Borrows 2008: 5). At the same time, the structure of the *Indian Act* has allowed outside agencies to avoid engaging in meaningful participation and consent (Borrows 2008: 5). The belief that Indigenous Nations had no form of government prior to contact constrains how we keep order of our daily affairs.



Traditional governance is completely different from the governments we find in Europe as these were designed to “maintain the privilege and power of those ‘superior beings’ who claimed dominion over the earth and the right to rule other humans” (Ladner 2006: 2). Indigenous governance particularly forwards:

within the parameters of Indigenous thought, governance is “the way in which a people lives best together” or the way a people has structured their society in relationship to the natural world. In other words, it is an expression of how they see themselves fitting in that world as a part of the circle of life, not as superior beings who claim dominion over other species and other humans (Ladner 2003 in Ladner 2006: 2).

The Nêhiyaw governance system accounts for familial ties, especially through wâhkôtowin, as this is how we not only interacted within our own spheres as a family unit but accounts for the Nêhiyaw Nation, our Ancestors, the Star Beings, and Manitow (see Figure 8). In addition, societies and bundles indicated further ordnance of how individuals worked within a Nêhiyaw way of living as these indicated the positions that each person filled through ceremonial, economic, social, and political realms. The entire camp was expected to work together for the best interest of their entirety, with each stage of the human life interacting with each other from child to Elder. Public shaming was common and we would indicate to other groups if an individual was removed from our camp. Often the braid was cut to indicate if the individual had done something wrong or a person’s nose was cut on the tip. Not all societies are perfect but most do their best to control the order of things.



**Figure 8.** Traditional Governance System.

The Nêhiyaw constitutional order accounts for the responsibilities of individuals, families, and leadership within each district of our spheres of governance. This constitutional order defined and limited the ability to make, interpret and enforce law within the nation and the roles and responsibilities of the members (see Ladner 2006). This constitutional order was not written; it is embedded in the teachings of our seven grandfather teachings, our teachings of the Mîkiwahp, our ospwâkan, our Creation story, and our understanding of sacred, universal, collective, traditional, and natural law extending from Manitow wiyasiwêwina. Together it binds our knowledge of self together and reveals a connection between our entire existence. The constitutional order is seen in our oral narratives, songs, ceremonies, bundles, and the pipestem. This is how we governed ourselves in the years before the *Indian Act*, and these foundations will continue as we emerge in a new era of Nêhiyaw governance in Samson Cree Nation.

Samson Cree Nation is the Federal Reserve #137 with Pigeon Lake as #138A. Samson Cree Nation forwards the following statements regarding their governance and outcomes of their perpetuity:

Vision Statement:

Samson Cree Nation is a healthy, educated, knowledgeable and industrious community

Mission Statement:

Samson Cree Nation is a Sovereign Nation that is dedicated to improving quality of life for all our People by maximizing our Human Resources and respecting our Cree Language and Traditions of our Peoples;

Samson Cree Nation is a Sovereign Nation that is dedicated to our language and Culture by maximizing Human and Natural Resources ensuring the continued survival of our people. We sustain the power of values and honour our Cree thought and Way of Life. Nêhiyaw and Iyiniyiw Pimâtisiwin.

Pimâcihowin: Way of Life

The knowledge and guidance of Elders make meaning to our Cree thought, language and way of life. We sustain and maintain the essence of promoting the ideal quality of living for all People by maximizing our human resources. We will collectively promote socio-economic growth within our community and for future generations.

**Wâhkôtowin: Kinship**

We believe in strengthening families and building positive relationships within our community.

**Sakitowin: Love**

We will continue to move towards productive lives, promoting our Cree culture, language and traditional values by being caring and compassionate with all our People. We believe that love and sharing are essential for the development of a safe and healthy community.

**Tapwewin: Honesty**

We believe truth and honesty are fundamental in empowering our Nation. We will provide guidance and make collective decisions, which benefit the community and future generations.

To develop a Constitution for Samson Cree Nation, and address accountability to the members; develop the roles and responsibilities in conjunction with the Code of Conduct for the Chief and Council. Further to address the need to preserve the understanding of Treaties and writing traditional Cree laws (Samson Cree Nation, “About Us,” <http://samsoncree.com/aboutus>, accessed August 2015).

When we begin to understand First Nations in Canada, we acknowledge that they are independent nations from the Government of Canada and its respective provinces. Yet, the premise of their creation put simply, is that of a colonial government. Samson Cree Nation exists through the negotiation of Treaty 6. When we look beyond the dates of

1876, the only nation that existed was the Nêhiyawak Nation. While Samson Cree Nation is its own Nation today, there are some unaddressed issues that still exist. The basis of Samson Cree Nation as a nation lies in its distinct traits and character of being rooted in Nêhiyaw culture through our beliefs, values, and principles. However, Samson Cree Nation may provide insight into our worldview and philosophy through our vision and mission statement, but their incorporation has been put into the margins of acknowledgement by provincial governments and the overarching shadow of *The Indian Act* (Borrows 2002:30). Furthermore, Indigenous exclusion on matters regarding the environment has been common practice and often undermined Indigenous institutions and ideas and directly weakened “ancient connections to the environment” (Borrows 2002:30). North American law has rarely recognized the integrity of watersheds, airsheds, or biotic zones (Doern 1990; Hahn and Hester 1989; Hoskins 1990; and Van Dyke 1990 in Borrows 2002: 31). The *Indian Act* and its creation also does not account for our human rights; if we were treated with human decency as an independent Nation our well-being would be different from what we have experienced over the generations since its imposition. If Samson Cree Nation is a nation made on its distinct culture and traditions, then we need to affirm our cultural knowledge in a means that allows us to continue our constitutional order since time immemorial. We forwarded this in the approach to Kisêmanitow Wiyasiwêwina Kihcimasinakikanis: The Living Law of the People of Maskwacîs Document.

### 5.2.1 Our Constitution lies in our Ospwâkan

The Ospwâkan, Pipe, can “tell the story of the promises which the Whites had made to us” in Treaty (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998: 101). The spiritual power of the pipestem prays to various spirits when it is used in ceremony. When the pipestem is turned, it is a request for help. The pipestem connects us to Manitow through the invocation of Creator’s presence but also it connects us with the physical and spiritual domains of our existence. The Ospwâkan is our prayers in their physical form as the spirit of the tobacco, and our sweetgrass through Sweetgrass-Old-Man will speak for you on your behalf to Manitow (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998: 121). Tobacco as Sarah Whitecalf explained was pîminikan, and is not the traditional tobacco we see today (1993:61). When tobacco was

placed in the pipe it was as if “they were giving the ‘spirits’ to smoke, as they say, you know, it is as if they were giving it to them to smoke. That is the reason why the smoking takes place, it is as if they were giving that kind to the spirits to smoke. And I have seen them, every time they have filled the pipe, already [before it is lit] lifting it up and praying in all directions, sometimes to the ground here, that is how that tobacco is used” (Whitecalf 1993:63). How one treats the Pipe is important, as the late Elder Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw expresses through its presence in a feast:

Behold, first Our Father came to charge the Sun here [gesture], when he had arranged for him to rise upon our day; wherein he passes through the beautiful day, that grace he gave him; next from there he had completed charging the other here in the south, that was the Thunderbird, where he leads his children and goes along chanting about that. Next from there, over there to the west, that is from where one smudges the pipe, well, now that one, the Sky-Spirit, looks down from there, from the sky. Now the north, and now it is the Wind, and now, the last one is like this [points the pipe]. Now when he starts pointing the pipestem, in order to smudge the pipe in this way, then he will turn it around in this way; now starting to point the pipestem over here to the south, the same; that is how he will turn it around, the same; and also over here, he will turn it around in the same way, now over there to the north.

Indeed, now that he turns the pipe around over there, only then now to give it for the first time to the old man, that pipe. That is how the pipe is to be handled. Always in this way, as the sun goes, so you turn that one, the stem. This is what they wanted to know, the pointing of the pipestem (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998:125-127).

The teachings of the pipe present the fundamental principles of our livelihood and how we agree to be governed. The Pipestem is aligned within Natural Law and mandates our constitution as a people and we are bound to its teachings and reverence in our culture. The late Nêhiyaw scholar Yvonne Dion-Buffalo who was also from Samson Cree Nation in her dissertation “Four Generations: A Story of a Family of Plains Cree Women,” details how the pipe was respected and how it communicated between parts of creation in regard to a buffalo hunt:

A few moments later, the keepers of the Cree rituals or the male and female protectors and warriors, would sit down before the door of the tipi; then the sacred pipe would be filled with tobacco and set on a bison chip altar. The pipe would be lit, offered to the four directions or winds (a condensed metonym for the idea of self as part of a community alongside notions of 'appropriateness', 'truthfulness' and 'beauty'. These concepts informed the indigenous peoples' perspective on maintaining good relationships with an intricately-related physical world); to the

Great Spirit above, and to Mother Earth (a composite epigram for the beating spirit of nature and of the entire universe). Then one of the keepers of this particular ceremony would pass the sacred pipe to the scouts while giving thanks to buffalo for giving the people food and shelter for an entire year. ‘The nation has depended on you. Now, we are coming to get you,’ the keeper would say, ‘but we will do it so your spirit will live on’ (Dion-Buffalo 1996: 61-62).

The Ospwâkan is how we govern ourselves to think and act and is the connecting component that ties our being and existence together and is how we continuously renew our relationship with Manitow. It is through our teachings of behind the ospwâkan that “Canada” would be able to share this land with us. The ospwâkan tells our principles and foundation as a diplomatic nation and acknowledges all that are present when we enter through its use in ceremony. Our ospwâkan is held in reverence as we conduct business today, it signifies a legal agreement through its promise to forward a new relationship or reaffirm one prior. When we examine traditional governance further, the pipe connects us to knowledge holders of the Nation including pipe carriers and Elders. Elders hold cultural and traditional knowledge linked to practice and custom and their insights allow us to formulate an approach to Indigenous law through deliberative law and accountability.

## 5.2.2 Deliberative Law and Accountability

There is no Nêhiyaw term for “guilty.” The best expression to use is Niyakâtôtamân indicating, I am responsible for doing it. This expression holds an individual akisow, accountable, for their actions. There are two Wiyasiwêwina that describe the ‘act of breaking’ a law with subcategories identified from these two main laws. Pâstâhowin is the breaking of a law(s) against another human being or also described as going against Natural Law and this leads to retribution for your actions against a human (McAdam 2009:8 in McAdam 2015: 43). The breakdown of the term includes past- that means to go beyond or over, essentially ê-pâstohêt which means to step over something. As well, pâstâho- indicates a transgression and is nominalized by the ending -win, and therefore, Pâstâhowin is when you over-step and are in transgression (McAdam 2015:43). This law is broken when someone steals or murders, for instance. A subcategory of Pâstâhowin is Pâstâmowin and is what someone said that leads to

something undesirable happening or is blasphemous or dangerous speech (Brightman 1993: 113 in McAdam 2015: 43). This law is broken when someone gossips, utters threats, or profanity to individuals, and when someone boasts of their success.

The second law is ohcinêwin meaning the breaking of law(s) against anything other than a human being (McAdam 2009:8 in McAdam 2010: 44). This breaking of law is the suffering for retribution for action against creation (Borrows 2010: 85 in McAdam 2015: 44). This law is when humans have a negative impact on the environment such as over-harvesting, when animals are tortured or land is being polluted (McAdam 2015: 44). A subcategory of Ohcinêwin is Ohcinêwîwin and is like Pâstâmowin, but refers to when you speak poorly of creation outside of humans (McAdam 2015: 46). Smudging is part of this process as one wants to be pure and clean when they interact with creation. A certain mindset is expected when one smudges and this includes not using inappropriate language. When we smudge, we cleanse ourselves of negative feelings, emotions, and energy. The smoke purifies us, our prayers are sent upward to Manitow and our ancestors. We do not wear jewelry while we smudge as it is believed that the negative energy can linger on the metal.

We understand these laws through the following account of the creation of man and woman:

Long ago after the human beings were created, they were allowed to walk with the animals and talked amongst each other like relatives. Even the trees, plains, all manner of life was able to communicate with each other. [This] was the beginning of understanding wâhkôtowin and the laws surrounding it. However, the animals and human beings broke this law, as a result the life-giver took away the ability to speak to each other as punishment. We still remember we are related to all of creation, that is still followed to this day (Frances McAdam Saysewahum interview 2011 in McAdam 2015: 47).

Abiding to these laws allows us to fulfill the premise of miyo-pimâtisiwin, the good life, as this is not simply to live careless and free of obligation but makes us think critically about our actions and our responses, which in turn makes us accountable not only to ourselves but our Nations as well. It is the ability to make good moral judgements based on our teachings and respect for ourselves. Without that knowledge, we deprive ourselves of being a Four Body Person and the ability to reach out to differing consciousness. This is how we develop



our relationships with one another, and this is through the law of miyo-wîcêhtowin that is having or possessing good relations (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000:14 McAdam 2015: 47).

The structure of this deliberative approach is rooted in the structural principles in the role of the Elder. Walter Lightning (1992) in his thesis “Compassionate Mind: Implications of a Text Written by Elder Louis Sunchild” forwards insight into how Elder(s) position themselves within their role, and this is important to our understanding of deliberation. It is assumed that there is effort to think mutually with an Elder and this entails listening attentively to the Elder, having humility for the listener; respect will formulate how these minds will meet on the same level (1992: 62). The Elder and hearer will establish a relationship where the Elder is vulnerable and makes himself or herself open to the individual. Though the Elder may criticize and be straightforward with the hearer, it is for specific purposes. The Elder does not seek to win favor with the listener, and their words of truth are often sharp, and “sometimes they seem to cut” (ibid). There exists a recognition of responsibility and authority, and this authority is not an authority that is physically enforced, rather it comes from the Elder’s having expert knowledge about the context for knowledge and about the place that specific knowledge is appropriately brought out, and the readiness of the listener to perceive it (Lightning 1992: 63).

The Elder is responsible to speak the truth and this is self-enforcing as the Elder is aware of the resonant implications in other areas of life (Lightning 1992: 63). Furthermore, the teachings are individualized, meaning that the kind of metaphor and the extent of the metaphor relies on the specification of the situation (author’s original emphasis, Lightning 1992: 63). The Elder will use speech and nonverbal communication to point out where the Elder, the hearer, and the conversation fit in relation to time and place. This means that the Elder often refers to what the hearer knows, where they are and ought to be in relationship to the earth (Lightning 1992: 64). The metaphors that the Elder uses will continue to unfold new meanings to the hearer and this may come as they observe the metaphors in their own experience (Lightning 1992: 63). However, being a Four-Body person indicates that though the Elder may present only one domain, for instance, the mental aspect of our being, it will extend into other domains of our spiritual, physical, and emotional domains, thereby, connecting within a deeper understanding of our being.

The connection between our mental domains and the spiritual domain in Nêhiyaw culture is not just our thoughts and reasoning but it reflects attributes of Creator (1992: 66). For us to forward the process of deliberation and council, the Elders and I drew from traditional practice of how Elder(s) assist and counsel individuals and current legal ideas that hold account of and even incorporate, where appropriate, legal standards from other legal systems (Borrows 2010: 36-37). These are kakeskihkemowina, counselling discourses, which illustrate how an Elder teaches:

‘Immanence... Respect for all life forms.  
 Balance... Our Traditional "scientific" truth  
 Interconnectedness... Our spiritual truth.  
 Self-In-Relation... Our identity statement.  
 We learn by Doing... Ceremony... Stories of our Ancestors.  
 Elders Say we Know, that is, we learn  
 Through direct experience... Observation  
 Face-to-face with the event... person... life force  
 We experience this Essence.  
 We learn what we Need to Know  
 What we Each need to know  
 What we are Open to... depending on Our life path’  
 (Graveline 1998:50 in Simpson 1999: 32).

We created a bridge between our traditional governance structure through the role of Elders and the written policies and by-laws of sovereign Indigenous Nations throughout North America. Indigenous law can occur in informal and formal meetings and gatherings and can be constructed through highly structured or ad hoc means. This can be done through elements of deliberative law (Borrows 2010: 36). The deliberative nature of Indigenous legal tradition is key to resisting fundamentalist and dogmatic legal practices and ideas (Borrows 2010: 36). There are arguments on how ‘backwards’ Indigenous Nations are through the experience of many pathologies linked to substance abuse, sexual abuse, residential schools, economic dislocation, and non-Indigenous political interference. Substandard government infrastructure and support continues to occur (Widdowson and Adams 2008 in Borrows 2010: 36). The remedy lies in helping these Nations to heal themselves so they can better their position to develop and follow constructive and dynamic laws (White and Maxim 2003: 18 in Borrows 2010: 36). What we created was the Wiyinikêwina, *Laws*, of Maskwacîs through the document, “Kisê-manitow Wiyasiwêwina Kihcimasinakikanis: The

Living Law of the People of Maskwacîs Document” and this was through the assistance of the Kêhtê-ayak Omaminowatamakewak.

### 5.2.3 Kêhtê-ayak Omaminowatamakewak: Elders who give oral decisions

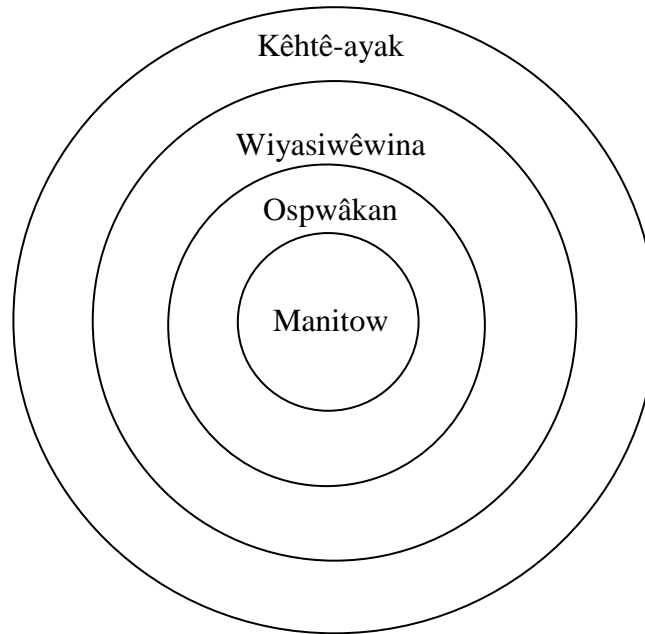
Kêhtê-ayak Omaminowatamakewak means Elders who give oral decisions based on their wisdom through teachings and oral narratives. The Kêhtê-ayak Omaminowatamakewak are the Elders that I learned and sought guidance from throughout the endeavor. Through their experiences within the constructs of colonialism and assimilation they have been able not only to retain the knowledge of our ancestors, but they are willing to make a difference within our territory for the betterment of our people through healing and educational initiatives. The Kêhtê-ayak Omaminowatamakewak bring forward our traditional governance structure linked to sacred laws, and laws made for man through Creator. We believe that for reconciliation to occur, we must be given the opportunity to put forward initiatives that allow us to maintain and rebuild our traditional foundations and institutions, as we heal from the destructive legacy of colonization.

The Kêhtê-ayak Omaminowatamakewak can achieve this because they through their right as Elders can bring forth our political and social institutions from a time before “cultural genocide” (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, “Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.” pp. 1. Accessed January 10, 2016). This allows us as Nêhiyaw people to move forward as we establish respectful and health relationships among all people as we acknowledge the past injustices that have had devastating effects, we approach this project in a positive direction by stating, that though the Government of Canada intended to break the bonds and ties of our people and our culture and wellbeing, they also created a lasting union amongst us to hold onto the teachings and values of our ancestors.

Each Elder holds specific knowledge and life experiences that are essential when advocating for miyo-pimâtisiwin and what Samson Cree Nation should advocate for. The Kêhtê-ayak Omaminowatamakewak challenge the constraints of the Indian Act, and deconstruct Canada’s notion of what our governance systems and laws should be as it

represents a collective and collaborative approach to self-government and autonomy by forwarding the position of the Elder. As someone able to enforce law, the Elder aims to establish truth and reconciliation for the future. These will be seen in the strengthening of our Treaty rights and acknowledging that we are from a distinct and vibrant culture that has much to share. The narratives collected have then been used as the foundations of numerous laws in draft that are intended for the best interest of the people of Maskwacîs.

The laws and the peace-making practices the Kêhtê-ayak Omaminowatamakewak will forward extend from our Grandfather Laws that are based within teachings of ceremony and specifically, the Pipe. The document is still currently in the process of coming forward to the community but the groundwork has been done to be presented by mid-2017. To increase knowledge and understanding about alternative ways of thinking and mindsets opens discussions into Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. Specifically, by showcasing how the Nêhiyawak ontological views differ from our dominant society we allow for a bridge of understanding to evolve while at the same time providing insights into cultural longevity and continuity of traditions and practices. Specifically, all the laws are rooted in cultural and spiritual values found in the oral narratives of the Elders. The very reason that the Kêhtê-ayak Omaminowatamakewak exists is that it calls on the Matriarchs and Headmen of our people to put forward our traditional laws in efforts to improve the *quality of life and social conditions* of those living in the territory of Maskwacîs or Samson Cree Nation. In the years before the reserve system, the Matriarch and Headmen were from each family and represented the core interests of their own lodge, and when called upon by the Chief they worked as a collective whole. No individual was greater than the core of the people. This model forwards how we would be able to fall into our traditional governance system (see Figure 9).



**Figure 9.** Connecting to Sacred Law, this figure represents the governing authority of our kêhtê-ayak, Elders.

### 5.3 Wiyinikêwina of Maskwacîs: Laws of Maskwacîs

The following is an excerpt from forth-coming document:

Through colonial policies and implementations, Samson Cree Nation has struggled within the frameworks of institutions foreign to us and our way of life. Respectfully, we have become a people whose sheer presence has been imagined and affirmed by those who do not know us and if they do it is on a very surface level of acquaintance. We are of the Nêhiyawak Nation, yet we now uphold the integrity of Chief Kanatakasu, Samson, through our territory as Samson Cree Nation also referred as Nipisihkopahk.

This document is not new as these laws are found in the basis of our existence and heard time after time within our stories of creation and teachings of how to conduct ourselves properly through miyo-pimâtisiwin, the good life. Yet, the very methods of how we understand our world have been under question not only in academia but the judicial

system of Canada as well. This is our attempt to not only educate our people in Nipisihkopahk, but non-Indigenous people who interact with us through various levels of relationship.

The Nêhiyaw are an oral culture and with that knowledge shared we often find ourselves constrained within having to produce and identify key components of our being into descriptions and paragraphs that do us no justice. Our being is not static, and our language is not bound to one description or knowing. This document is a guideline of how to approach our Nation, a Nation that honours the spirit of Chief Maskepiton and those who entered Treaty on our behalf with the settler state that would become the Government of Canada. This document is limited through its inability to share with you the mindset of our people, and this is a hindrance as it is the foundation of our Nation and approach to life.

The written laws that follow are in their very initial stages of creation, adaption, and editing. While we witness them in their written form for the first time, it is important to understand that every law that follows has been in effect since the beginning of our existence. The laws exist in the oral narratives, teachings, songs, and language of our people, especially our knowledge holders, the Elders. We as Nêhiyaw people developed an understanding of our being through our relationship with the land, water, and animals. We learned how to survive through each season but came to understand the teachings within the natural occurrence. We learned from the animals about our responsibilities and ourselves as Nêhiyawak.

Understanding ourselves in relation to the natural world and through stories and teachings gifted by Manitow allowed us to develop an understanding of who we are as Nêhiyawak and what future we want for our generations to come. We follow in accordance to Natural Law that is a respectful relationship with all living things through a wholistic foundation where we are all interconnected. It is through this philosophy and ontology that we exist as a distinct and vibrant culture.

It is when we fail to realize this intricate relationship to all of creation that we lose the very core of who we are as Nêhiyawak. We lose the spiritual importance of our being and knowledge of self when we lose that relationship with our environment. These laws are hopes to bring our future generations closer to understanding who they are descended through, and why we forward them in the English language with the hopes that one day they will be read in Nêhiyawêwin (From the “Introduction” of Nêhiyaw Wiyasiwêwina, 2017).

## **Preamble**

### **Kisê-manitow Wiyasiwêwina Kihcimasinakikanis: The Living Law of the People of Maskwacîs Document**

We are of the Nêhiyawak Nation, yet we now uphold the integrity of Chief Kanatakasu, Samson, through our territory as Samson Cree Nation also known as Nipisihkopahk. We are a Nation that honours the spirit of Chief Maskepiton and those who entered Treaty on our behalf with the settler state that would become the Government of Canada. We are the people of the territory of Maskwacîs and ordain and establish Kisê-manitow Wiyinikêwina as our supreme law in accordance to our Nêhiyawak, Four-Body People, values since their gifting.

Kisê-manitow Wiyinikêwina are Creator’s Laws, also known as the Grandfather Laws of the Nêhiyawak Nation. Kisê-manitow Wiyinikêwina have been in existence since time immemorial and are acknowledged through our constitution held in the spiritual and cultural teachings of our, ospwâkan, the pipe.

Through Kisê-manitow Wiyinikêwina we declare and acknowledge Kisê-manitow for the gifts of okâwîmâwaskiy, our mother earth, and our Nêhiyaw Wiyasiwêwina, Four-Body People Laws, that allow us to uphold our sovereign and autonomous rights to govern ourselves freely through our Nêhiyawîhtwâwin, Four-Body way of life, and Nêhiyaw askiy, land.

We acknowledge our ancestors and other world beings who have shown and taught us how to live accordingly on the land for the benefit and protection of those generations yet to come.

As Nêhiyawak we understand our pasts as Paskwawiniwak, Prairie People, and how we have come to learn from the land. It is with great reverence and respect that we honour our commitment to defend and protect what Manitow has gifted us and where Kisê-manitow Wiyinikêwina becomes reflected.

No Wiyasiwêwin, law, is greater than another Wiyasiwêwin, law, and this in respect to the four colours, four directions, and four grandfathers. The Wiyasiwêwina, laws, put forward are living entities that continue our spiritual and cultural understanding of who we are as Nêhiyawak. Each Wiyasiwêwin reflects our teachings and values of our Nation through the ordinance of our sovereign leaders the Kêhtê-ayak, Elders.

Our laws are followed by Nipisihkopahk Ka kisci wekit awîyak, Land of the Willows citizens, and those who enter our territory. The people of Maskwacîs are peaceful, productive, and thriving Peoples.

The Kêhtê-ayak enact ohwipaytahk, decision making, to those who have mâytôtamowin, violated a law through our own Nipisihkopahk Simâkansowiwîn, policing.

The following laws are living documents that through time and practice will change and reflect the interests and values of the people of Maskwacîs but remain rooted in the echoes of our ancestors and upheld by our Elders.

We offer the ability to create a bridge of understanding that combines our Nêhiyaw way of life within the Western Society we find ourselves a part of. We therefore, present our laws in written text but must state, these written laws are not stronger than the oral teachings and narratives from our Kêhtê-ayak. We acknowledge and support our traditional language speakers and our written syllabic language, as we affirm that the



Nêhiyawêwin language is part of our identity and provides importance to various understandings of our existence. Wiyinikêwina are reaffirmed and forwarded for the mutual benefit for our younger generations and our Mônîyâw brothers and sisters of Treaty.

### 5.3.1 Examples from Kisê-manitow Wiyasiwêwina Kihcimasinakikanis

The following sections indicate one of the twenty-three laws; however, the entirety of the law is not presented, rather is it the reasoning behind its creation.

#### 5.3.1.1 Kêhtê-ayak Pimayihewewin Wiyasiwêwin: Elders Governance Law

Kêhtê-ayak, Elders, have an important and specific role within our Nation through their wisdom and lifelong learning. They have also earned the respect of their peers to be placed in a position of protecting our Nation. The way in which we governed ourselves has changed since contact with settlers; however, a constant is the importance and role our Elders have in our day-to-day discussions and decisions as a collective body. The Law of the Kêhtê-ayak puts forward the Elders of Samson Cree Nation as the sovereign entities that are capable of not only assisting and holding Chief and Council accountable but also mediating and giving directive through Kisê-manitow Wiyinikêwina. We the People of Maskwacîs see the Kêhtê-ayak Omaminowatamakewak, meaning Elders who give oral directions, as a capable body able to assist and direct our People in not only times of need but in important decisions that impact us. The Kêhtê-ayak assist in various aspects of âhkam isîhcikêwin Nêhiyawîhtwâwin, continuation of Four-Body Culture. In addition, they also address Kwayasko mâmitoneyicikana, ethics, of how one should act not only morally but also for the good of the Nation.

#### 5.3.1.2 Nêhiyawaskiy: Traditional Territory

The Nêhiyawak have been aware of their traditional lands and territories through observation of features and the environment's natural contours. Like Indigenous peoples across North America, much of our efforts are tied up with a "care for and defense of territory" (Simpson 2014:3). The land is remembered through oral narratives that are

associated with different regions based on important occurrences in the past such as Sounding Lake in Alberta and Cypress Hills in Saskatchewan. Sounding Lake is where the last remaining of the buffalo made their way into the lake as they realized they were being killed at alarming rates and said one day that they would return. In addition, Sounding Lake is where the young Thunderbird lost his fight with a giant serpent. Each of these oral narratives gives reference to the sound of the lake as it rumbles. Cypress Hills was a “no-man’s land” where many nations would gather for safety and a place to hunt Buffalo.

Our knowledge of Creator’s territory extends into the Mississippi region and is seen in our language where Mistahi-sîpîy refers to the big river. Our territory will always belong to Manitow, but we acknowledge the regional claims of our Indigenous relations as we are the stewards and protectors of the land.

Askîy, land, for the Nêhiyaw allows us for mamâhtâwisiwin, tapping into the mystery, as this is concept that we can tap into the powers around us (Ermine 1995: 35). While the federal government attempts to state that the reserves, or what we call asîhkân, fake land, and iskonikan, left overs, are only 0.2% of the land mass in Canada, we disagree as this is Indigenous territory (INAC, “Indian Reserve Land Base in Canada,” modified September 15, 2010, [https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100034846/1100100034847#THE\\_INDIAN\\_RESERVE\\_LAND\\_BASE\\_IN\\_CANADA4](https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100034846/1100100034847#THE_INDIAN_RESERVE_LAND_BASE_IN_CANADA4), accessed September 2016). While we do not claim ownership, we are responsible to the land as we are born stewards of its protection and honour and if this means we must give ownership on behalf of Creator then we will. In addition, within the concept of ownership lies issues regarding borders as these have been colonial mechanisms aimed to separate Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in early years and are problematic since many settler states identify that they obtain the right to mandate who may enter fictive territories. Borders as Audra Simpson relates in *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*, convolute Indigenous notions of citizenship when tasked to present identification to border guards at both the apparent borders of the United States of America and Canada (2014: see 118-119). Simpson grapples with the fact a U.S. border guard continues to call her an American, while she retorts that she is Mohawk. In this narrative, borders become distorted images

relating to ownership and whether if Indigenous people step off reserves or reservations, they are no longer their nation or ancestry. Further, borders have come into question through the Jay Treaty.

In the “Treaty of Amity Commerce and Navigation, between His Britannic Majesty; and The United States of America,” and Article III, that this treaty created between the United State of America and Great Britain forwards:

It is agreed that at all Times be free to His Majesty’s Subjects, and to the Citizens of the United States, and also to the Indians dwelling on either side of said Boundary Line freely to pass and re-pass by Land, or Inland Navigation, into the respective Territories and Countries of the Two Parties on the Continent of America (the Country within the Limits of the Hudson’s Bay Company only excepted) and to navigate all the Lakes, Rivers and waters thereof, and freely to carry on trade and commerce with each other (Miller, D. H., and United States 1931).

Known as the Jay Treaty created by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Jay and signed by the United States and Great Britain on November 19, 1794, this agreement acknowledges that Indigenous peoples have crossed over the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel for countless of generations. The Nêhiyawak entered treaty with Great Britain, and we honour the treaty they made with the United States. While the people of Nipisihkopahk may reside in the territory of Maskwacîs today, our territory does not end within the confines of the reserve border. Land is held in the highest respect and is treated as our relative. Nêhiyaw survival is tied to the health of the land, but as it is today, we too must defend our borders and decide who we want to enter them.

### 5.3.1.3 Pihtokewin Nêhiyawaskiy Wiyasiwêwin (Entering Nêhiyaw Territory Law): Trespassing

Nêhiyaw custom has been to not only know our allies and our enemies but to know where they resided. Kwanta eteh patosayihk, borderland, is known by the Nêhiyaw and in the past they have taken the appropriate measures to enter one another’s territory. Within the territory of Maskwacîs there are six significant areas (see Appendix 8). Maskwasewininak, refers to the grassy meadows area; Kasakiykanitiwitihk, refers to the Battle River that goes through both Samson Cree Nation and Montana First Nation; Awasâyik, refers to the other side of the hill entering into Louis Bull regions; Paskwâk

refers to an open area with no trees and is derived from paskwâwaskosiya meaning prairie grass and is also seen in Paskwâwiyiniwak, referring to the prairie people; further, kiswepew sakiykan is drunken lake; and, pitahpek is where the water verges off into the other direction or water enters the river or body of water.

Following practice of asking for permission to cross other Indigenous nations territory, Samson Cree Nation is enacting Pihtokewin Nêhiyawaskiy Law meaning the permission to enter Samson Cree Nation territory. In years prior to the reserve system, if we were to cross other Nations territory, sacred tobacco and various other gifts were offered; however, in this case we have requested that permission be granted through an application process administered by Nipisihkopahk Pimihowin Department Justice and Legal Support and yearly fee to enter our lands to conduct business.

The Pihtokewin Nêhiyawaskiy Law protects the interests and safety of the People of Maskwacîs through authorization of who may conduct business within our reserve land. It also goes a step further to support the “Residency By-law” that removes citizens from the Nation for various reasons, including but not limited to threat to safety of our citizens or to eradicate the distribution of narcotics.

#### 5.3.1.4 Declaration on the Identity of the People of Nipisihkopahk

John Mohawk wrote, “Citizenship was, and for many Indian peoples remains, an alien idea, and for good reason” (2010:130). This is largely due to legal definitions which can cloud the term, and during the fifteenth century the concept was nothing that it is today at the beginning of 1492 (Mohawk 2010:130). However, as Indigenous Nations assert their sovereign right and ability to remain autonomous, they have had to combat or compliment the settler states perception of citizenship and nationhood. Specifically, this declaration affirms Samson Cree Nations identity as Nêhiyawak and in turn realigns our identity as Nêhiyaw first and foremost. This is the forthcoming Declaration on the Identity of the People of Nipisihkopahk.

We, the People of Nipisihkopahk, governed by the Nêhiyawak Nation, hereby issue the following declaration to be known as Nêhiyaw.

Nêhiyaw (singular) or Nêhiyawak (plural) is the name given to us by Kisê-manitow, as we are the ‘Four-Body People’. Nêhiyawak is derived from Nêhiyawêwin, the Four-Body language, where Newo means four and Miyaw, means body

We make this declaration due to historical and current inaccuracies of terminology used by early settlers, and colonial authorities and governments, as they do not adequately indicate who we are as a Nation and People.

We are not Indians, we are not Aboriginals, we are not Natives, we are not First Nations, and we are not the derogatory terms used in the past that still exist today. Furthermore, we are not Cree, or the references made in the early years of exploration that presented Kirištino, Kilistinon, Kiristinon, Knisteneaux, Cristeneaux, and Cristinaux, extending from an Anishinaabe reference of Kinistino.

We understand that cross-cultural miscommunication occurred during the early years of settlement, but in efforts to reclaim our traditional knowledge and reaffirm pride in our present generations, we make this declaration to be known from this day forward as the Nêhiyawak of Maskwacîs as we represent the Nipisihkopahk Nation and Nêhiyaw Nation.

To be Nêhiyaw is a gift from Manitow as we received our ahcâhk iskotêw, soul flame, from Manitow iskotêw, Creator’s flame. Together this bond is strengthened through our connection to the land and our ancestors who walked this territory before us. Manitow has gifted us with wiyasiwêwina, laws, that teach us how to live ethically and morally on the land as we acknowledge all our relations. We honour and protect Creator’s territory as we are stewards of the land and have learned from our regional area. We descend from the Paskwâwiyniwak, meaning prairie people. As people of Nipisihkopahk, we will remain Treaty People as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the river flows.

#### 5.3.1.5 Kiskeyitamowi Tipiyawehowisowin Wiyasiwêwin (Knowledge Ownership Law): Intellectual Property

The Nêhiyawak hold knowledge in trust for the next generations who follow. Our knowledge is transferred through traditional and customary practices that forward our spiritual and philosophical foundations. Our knowledge is collectively owned by the

whole of our people but in recent times there has been a need to protect it. The Research Ethics Board of the Kanatakasu Cultural Foundation will review each proposal to assess the research if it enters appropriation or misrepresentation of collective cultural knowledge. The Research Ethics Board's role is to ensure that our knowledge is protected and distributed with the utmost care.

Our oral narratives follow an oral footnote of where they come from and how they are received. Often payments can include tobacco, blankets, horses, or monetary amounts. This is how we trace the knowledge from source to source and legitimize the authority of the story. Our knowledge is collective, it is bound by cultural customs and protocol. All knowledge created about the Nêhiyawak belongs to the Nêhiyawak.

### 5.3.1.6 Kiskinohamâkosowin Miyomasinahikasowin Wiyasiwêwin (Academic Accountability Law): Research Ethics Approval

Marie Battiste in her article "Research Ethics for Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: Institutional and Researcher Responsibilities" forwards the work of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council of Mi'kma'ki. The Grand Council created the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch to oversees the research protocols on behalf of the Grand Council, and assesses each proposal by applying the principles and guidelines, making comments, asking for clarity, and signs off on the final document/study. What the Mi'kmaq Grand Council of Mi'kma'ki have achieved is that:

1. Principles underlying Mi'kmaw authority and holds that the responsibility for Mi'kmaw knowledge, heritage, and language, including their rights and obligations to exercise control to their cultural and intellectual properties.
2. Obligations and protocols and responsibilities for researchers seeking to conduct research among the people, and those that involve collecting information on any Mi'kmaw person regardless of topic
3. The obligations and responsibilities of the Mi'kmaw Ethics watch and their commitment to their community and the Grand Council (2008:507).

Indigenous knowledge is a "dynamic knowledge constantly in use as well as in flux or change. It derives from the same source: the relationship within the global flux that needs to be renewed, kinship with the other living creatures and life energies embodied in their land, and kinship with the spirit world." (Battiste 2008:500). The problem with appropriations and stereotypes is that they "create cognitive imperialism, which

establishes a dominant group's knowledge, experience, culture, and language as the universal norm" (Battiste 2008:504). It is about the commercial exploitation and appropriation of a living consciousness and cultural order. It is an issue of privacy and commerce.

The use of Indigenous knowledge for private or public profit by others under existing laws is a central issue (Battiste 2008:507). Indigenous peoples must actively voice their history, not for exploitation or financial gain, but to ensure that Indigenous peoples are no longer sidelined to the margins of academic, public, and political discussions. To enact change Indigenous peoples must declare what works and what does not. Indigenous Nations have the right to tell their history, the right to political authority and control; Indigenous peoples are principal characters in ensuring that this is achievable because it brings forward the truth about our society. Truth is an important aspect of decolonization and we need to break down the systems of oppressions, and inform Canadians so that they are unable to say, "I didn't know" (Tutu quoted in Wilson and Yellowbird 2005:204 in Lonetree 2009:326).

The law presented by the people of Maskwacîs enacts the right to determine if the "research" in question is applicable to not only supporting our well-being, but is enacted through our methodological praxis that aligns to our worldview. We cannot have researchers coming in and out of our Nation without establishing relationships. We are not indicating only yearlong initiatives, we speak of continuing the cycle of reciprocity for our knowledge to enlighten but also make its way back. Today, we are in a position that is needed to safeguard our knowledge and those who hold it.

### 5.3.1.7 Wâyino Wiyasiwêwin (Turning back/Returning Law): Repatriation of Belongings and Ancestral Remains

Wapahtehiwewikamika, museums, were once "ivory towers of exclusivity" but today Indigenous peoples are actively involved in making museums more open and community-relevant sites (Lonetree 2012:1). Patricia Erikson argues that Indigenous peoples have inspired change in museums through:

1. Protesting stereotypical displays of Native American history and culture at mainstream institutions;

2. Protesting the collecting, display, and holding of American Indian human remains;
3. Seeking to change museums from the inside by having Native people enter the profession;
4. Challenging the authority of Western museums to represent Native American communities without including the Native perspectives; and
5. Pressuring for the repatriation of Native American cultural objects, human remains, funerary objects, and objects of cultural patrimony (Erickson 2002:33 in Lonetree 2012: 17).

Though their active voice in museums aids in a variety of ways that changes the discourse of museums and knowledge production, there lies a deep-rooted issue within Alberta and Canada in regards to Indigenous belongings. Our notions of time do not account for a past, present, or future, as they are all interconnected; “belongings” refer to the notion that said “artifact” and “object” belong to someone. The Government of Alberta has a repatriation law that accounts for only Blackfoot materials and objects, and does not forward one for the Nêhiyaw, Dene, Anishinaabe, or Nakoda. Following closely the work done in the United States with the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), we forward a law pertaining to protection not only our graves sights in relation to the reverence of the land, but also in returning our belongings to our Nation.

#### 5.3.1.8 Omâciw Wiyasiwêwin: Fish and Wildlife Law

Hunters, fishers, and trappers are taught important teachings about respect and honour of the life they take. Pigeon Lake is known as Reserve 138(A) at one time was a traditional fishing station for Samson Cree Nation. In the 1920s four hundred licenses were issued that allowed men to fish from December 15<sup>th</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup> of each year. Most fish were sold frozen and packed at Benny Ouimette’s fishing plant. During this time for two years a contract was held that saw the fish sold in special markets in Chicago and New York (Millet and District Historical Society, 1978: 6). Those days are long gone as the lake is covered in Blue Algae caused by neighboring runoff from farms today, leaving a once prosperous resource of food and livelihood for our people to be obsolete. Commercial fishing and its impacts go against what we are taught in the Creation story and through teachings of how to respect our environments. We are cautious of how much we take, and we honour what we have been given. Ohcinêwîwin



gives the foundations to our hunting and all aspects of Creation (McAdam 2015: 52). The Nêhiyawak are careful not to breach this law regarding hunting as seen in this excerpt:

The birds and the eggs in a nest have been given a way to survive and to live. A human being is not allowed to bother or to touch the nest nor the bird. The nest is the bird's home, the egg its children, they too have been given something sacred from the Creation and that is life. How would a human being react if their homes was disrupted and their children harmed in any way? The animal are to be given the same respect for their children and for their homes. This applies to all creatures, human life, and then earth (Henderson 2007: 319 in McAdam 2015: 52).

Through the concept of relationality, the understanding that everything in creation has *ahcâhk*, spirit or soul, indicates that there is a certain *manitow*, force, and while we represent the *ayisiyiniw*, people, nation, there are nations for plants, animals, and water (McAdam 2015: 52). Each individual nation forwards a continuance through the gift of natural law and is bound by how each other responds. When we see the *pîwaya*, seeds that float in the fall, we are indicated by the plant nation that it is time to prepare for hunting (McAdam 2015: 52). Witnessing our environment change throughout *ispihtâskîwina*, seasons, gave us an in-depth knowledge of how to protect, conserve, and take only what is needed. The *Omâciw Wiyasiwêwin*, Hunter's Law, holds the integrity of the hunters to respect our animal and plant nations and to take only what they need. Trophy or leisure hunting is seen from our stance as disrespectful and a breach in the natural order of the environment. Overhunting, killing a pregnant animal, and taking only certain parts of the animal disregards the spirit of the animal, and we do not condone it in our territory and in Creator's land. *Mîtawâkîw pisiskiwa*, refers to he plays with an animal(s) and this term is associated with a wasteful hunter (McAdam 2015: 46).

### 5.3.1.9 Pîkiskwâsowewin Wiyasiwêwin: Consultation Law

In 1947, Leduc, Alberta, just 36 km south of Edmonton would strike oil and forever change the economy of Alberta (Waughe 1996:87). A century earlier the oil sands in Northern Alberta had been found and discussion pertaining to the extraction had begun. Canada's relationship with First Nations is intimately tied to the ongoing search for natural resources (Slowey 2008: xiii). Samson Cree Nation is no stranger to the oil and gas industry, as we made our wealth throughout the 1970s and 1980s with oil and natural gas revenues. The days of large payouts through oil royalties are long gone, and

we have learned a valuable and time honoured lesson. With fortune comes devastation, and devastation leads into a breakdown of family support systems and healthy relationships. While, this is one of only many factors that have impacted our family systems, it has been one that altered the path of the nation. Sometimes the benefits cannot outweigh the impacts we felt, and money cannot heal old wounds.

The Duty to Consult comes from the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling in *Haida v British Columbia* that formulated a directive to the Crown to consult in a meaningful manner with First Nations whenever they may be affected by the actions of the Crown or a third party (Newman 2014:17-18). Often, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is provided as this knowledge informs the relationship between humans and animals and the land and resources; often this knowledge is passed on through oral narratives between generations. As one father teaches his son to hunt and so on, our knowledge of the environment has sustained us for thousands of years. Consultation is essential for maintaining Indigenous culture and importantly the health of the Nation.

The Duty to Consult has led to a new realm of Aboriginal law, and this started as a court case of a tree farm license forever shifted the need to understand a new legal framework in relation to Aboriginal rights, title, and treaty rights (Newman 2014:19). Indigenous peoples know all too well of the canary in the coal mine reference regarding Indigenous health near sites of extraction that have presented an increase in cancers and pollution, and it exists today through various opposition as protectors fight for mother earth and her rights. If Indigenous Nations do not assert their sovereign rights, the provincial and federal government continue to lay implication in our right to say no. The Horse Lake Cree Nation in Alberta has forwarded their own Consultation Policy and details very specific expected modes of consultation ("Horse Lake Consultation Policy" in Newman 2009:72). Actions such as these make it mandatory for governments and industry to meet First Nations on their own terms, rather than stating they did and did not consult. Still as it stands, any court case follows the Canadian legal system, which still does not quite understand Aboriginal law and therefore limited.

Indigenous communities continue to be mistreated by the government, National Energy Board, and Industry; as it stands, many area of development or construction leave Indigenous communities as canaries in a coal mine. If the settler population is relatively

fine, there is no cause for concern. Therefore, we witness the rise of Indigenous communities protecting their territory.

### 5.3.2 Monopolization of Indigenous Knowledge and Uncertainty of the Band Council

Within the last decades, we have witnessed a commercialization of our ways of life; those who do not hold the responsibility of being a knowledge holder have been inserted into the position. The Government of Canada through old age pension has determined an elder to be an individual over the age of 65. Yet, our Nation has come to use the age of 65 years old as an indicator for our people and Elders as well. The effects of residential school are seen throughout the Nation as some elders do not possess this intimate knowledge. It does not mean that their insight is not worthy, but those that do not possess the right to give knowledge or do not feel adequate to give insight often may do harm rather than good. “You know, not everyone, is intended to doctor someone. Some people do not have the gift [or lack the exposure to training] – they lack insight. And this is bad for their family. It will come back to someone that they love. And that is worse” (Nimosôm Chris, 2015). In addition, we have witnessed a monopolization of knowledge within our Nation and this is where certain individuals have come to charge large sums of money. “Creator is not paid in money. He pays me when I enter the Spirit world” (Joey 2014). Monetary amounts have become systemic within how we conduct the transfer of knowledge or asking for a blessing and prayer. Universities and museums in the province offer upwards to \$350 per day for Elder’s knowledge, and while we cannot put a price on the intellect, there comes a harsh reality that often individuals who require assistance cannot afford it. Our knowledge is collective, and owned by the entirety of the people. No one individual can own knowledge for personal gain. Yet, as it is and as I was told “No Elder can sustain themselves on Tobacco alone” by a lawyer who would rather make it appear they have done good for the people but instead has been self-serving, we need to question who is a knowledge holder and whether this individual is capable of such task.

The late Grace Swampy in one of her major papers for her Master of Education wrote that the Elders she consulted with expressed direct opinions on the publication of her work. One

Elder expressed hostile reservations about the publicity of the research and stated that the use of such material could bring materialistic profit and that being both an academic and a Nêhiyaw gave her the insight to know what information should be made public the other to be kept confidential (1980:7). The other Elder stated the researcher who is fully knowledgeable of tradition must respect the insight that she has been chosen, as a special privilege, to acquire specific knowledge and not to abuse the knowledge, and that it was predestined for her to have and to use appropriately (1980:7). The Elders she worked with were her father and her uncle through custom, and her uncle is the father to the one Elder I work with. I have stated this before, I do not represent the academy by any means, I cannot. I stand for my Nation. I was gifted an opportunity, and somehow have come to the position that I am in. Accessing knowledge for personal gain is one thing, accessing knowledge to protect the Nation through our own worldview is another. This does not mean I did not accept the ability to work with anyone that was interested and I made offer clear in various public and private settings.

The initiative of the Kisê-manitow Wiyasiwêwina: The Living Law of the People of Maskwacîs has always been about addressing what is namoyakwayask mayitôtamowin, not right. The document's basis lies in the constitutional order of our way of life prior to the imposition of the *Indian Act*, and by doing so we claim our right to decide our own governance structure. While the federal government does not acknowledge traditional governance structures, we are autonomous Nations that have the right to decide what we implement within our Nation and what we envision for our future. We do not uphold the Government of Canada and the *Indian Act*, and they do not have to support our traditional governance because we will.

When the Nêhiyawak entered Treaty, we did not cede sovereignty or give up our constitutional orders for our government. We negotiated as nation-to-nation, the other Nation being Great Britain, and we never agreed to continuing these agreements with the dominion of Canada or the Government of Canada as they are not the nation we negotiated with. We agreed to maintaining meaningful and respectful relationships and allowed newcomers to peacefully co-exist in our territory. As Nêhiyawak 1982 is the only effective date we consider when Canada existed as this repatriated the Canadian Constitution and allowed for the support of Treaty and Aboriginal Rights, of which we have demanded since the initial discussions of Treaty. Colonial governments inserted

themselves into the affairs of First Nations when they did have the right to do so and this is the reason we have many issues that exist today.

This was a mission of “political genocide” that continues into the design of Chief and Council which follows “civilized” type municipal type governance structures that have very limited scope and delegated authority (Ladner 2006). Leaving First Nations in the position of being a municipal government means they are not in the position of authority of provincial and federal governments. While most would say that municipal governments have more power today in their autonomy since confederation, it cannot be said for First Nations (Ladner 2006). There are too many overhead limitations placed by the federal government through Indigenous Affairs (the new name for Indian Affairs). Indigenous Affairs controls of the Nation’s funds, forwards departmental administrative and accountability requirements, holds the ability to override election results and thus call elections or appoint new band councils (sections 74-79), its local law making capacity (section 73 allows the Minister of Indian Affairs to make regulations for such matters as compulsory hospitalization and the treatment of infectious disease, dog control, fish and wildlife, and the borrowing of monies for housing and band projects) and its ability to override all by-laws made by the band council (as outlined in section 82) (Ladner 2006). While Nations may administer federal policies and programs such as health care, education and social services, the influence and the pressure of Indigenous Affairs does not allow for Indigenous nations to determine our own well-being and quality of life through our freedom of action.

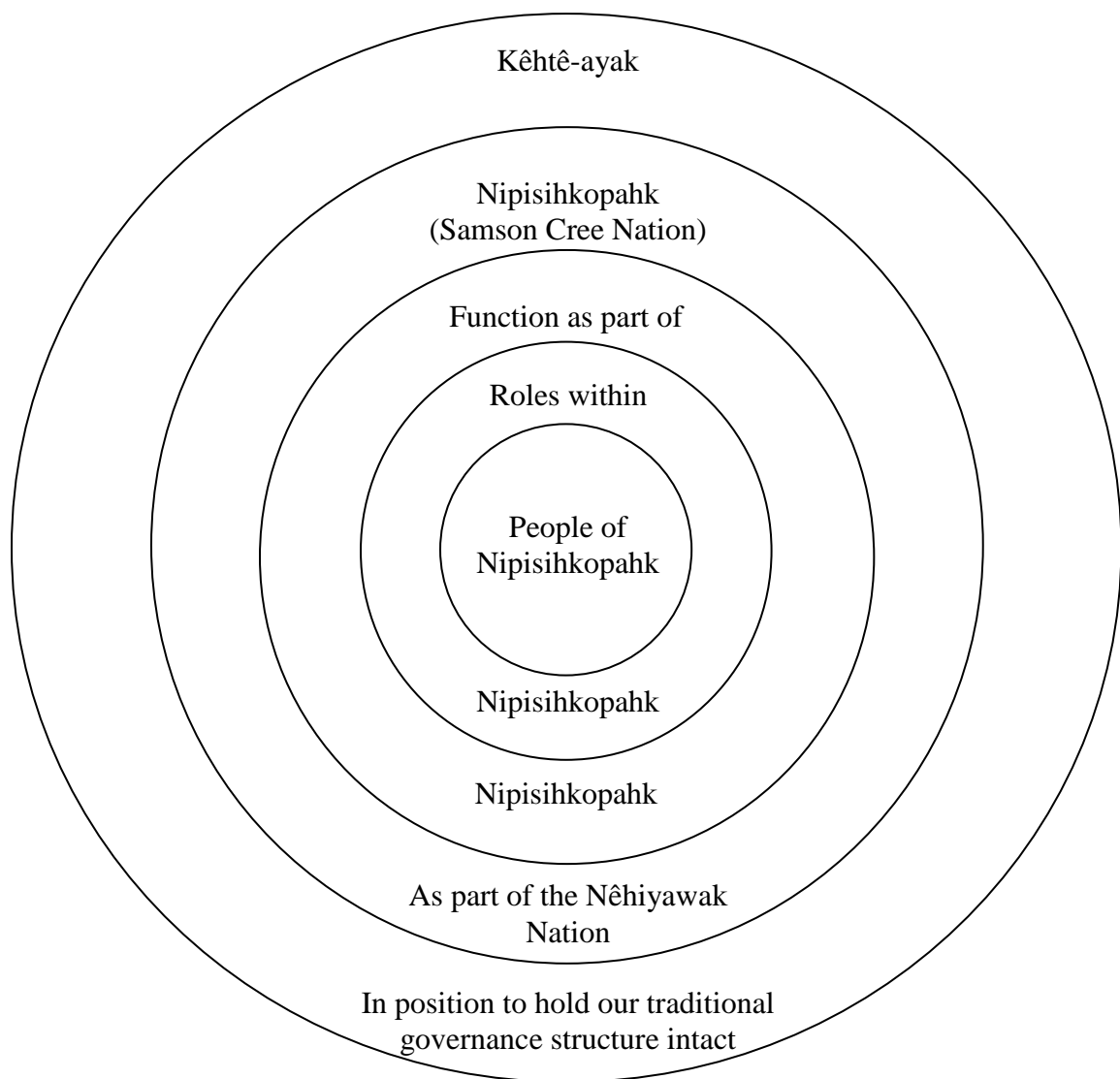
Band councils are subordinate governments that continue to place Canada as the hierarchy in our chain of command but Canada is underneath Indigenous Nations. Canada continues to say that it is “willing” to negotiate a range of responsibilities pursuant to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of Canada. We are not Canadians. We never surrendered our rights or lost any war. We never ceded our sovereignty. While the wiyasiwêwina that were forwarded by the Elders reflect our territory, culture and heritage management, and intellectual property they go even further by implementing laws related to air and water quality, taxation, and consultation. This is clearly only the beginning.

However, there are laws that the Kêhtê-ayak debated for a great deal of time as to whether we should address them. We have never acknowledged natural disaster plans, we

typically would never give thought to a natural disaster as this is sending those thoughts and ideas out into the universe. When Nimosôm Victor was the first Fire Chief in Samson, the province mandated that each unit would have to take body bags in case the individual(s) did not make it. He refused. When he left his post, the next Fire Chief took the body bags and within a short time, they were all used, not one more, and not one less. Some may say it was coincidence, but we do not think that way. Each summer, the Nations within Maskwacîs offer a summer student program. Ermineskin Cree Nation had hired some students to maintain the cemetery and someone instructed them to dig graves. They dug six, and within that time, six deaths occurred. We are told to be cautious. As Regna Darnell shared with me one reason people marry their distant relatives who live in other communities is in cases of natural or human-caused disaster – fire, flood, war, pestilence – there is a place to go where relatives will take you in (and would expect the same from you – though it may be several generations before there is need to call on such responsibility of care; in the meantime, the obligation and its impending reciprocity are passed on from one generation to the next). We are always understanding our relationship to the land, and the Elders say that there may be a time to change our perception of a natural disaster plan (as we witnessed in the summer of 2016 when the reserves around Fort MacMurray struggled with the outbreak of Wildfires). The Elders of our Nation oversee the burials and our cemeteries and this is important for our Nation to remember that our Elders can direct us for positive change.

“I was taught that there were certain individuals with gifts. They were given this gift by Creator and only they could paint on the tipis. It was ceremony. But when you drive through the town site, you see houses with images on them. I think that they need to be repainted. I think that is why a lot of problems happen in the town site. We breached a law of who has the gift by saying everyone can paint” (Nohkôm Sophie, 2015). Our community beautification department one year decided to paint the houses along Highway 611 East. During that time, our Nation frequented the news for drive by shootings and was done to promote vitality in the Nation. Granted it was intended to show pride of our Nation, in many cases, it looked as if clip art images found their way onto homes. What nohkôm Sophie indicated was not that they were painted, it was the fact that only certain individuals gifted by Creator have the right to create sacred symbols

and images that often are mnemonic devices linked to our stories and our past. These were images of pride that often told the story of the family and an event for the camp. The images on the houses, however, were neither of those. I mean no disrespect, but the individual in charge of the initiative was non-Indigenous. For the people of Nipisihkopahk to be able to change the suppression of our well-being we need to oversee the discourse of our Nation. This can be achieved through the utilization of our constitutional order found in the fabric of our being. We conceptualize this structure in Figure 10:



**Figure 10.** Governance of Nipisihkopahk through Kisê-manitow Wiyasiwêwina.

## 5.4 Canada's Nationhood and Asserting Indigenous Responsibility: Focus on Treaty Rights, Aboriginal Rights, and Human Rights

“If the whites overpower us when they are going to make laws for us, we will live in great misery; not only will the old people live in misery, but the children, too, who are coming after us in their various ages will live in misery, thus, as for me, I usually think” (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998: 115).

Leroy Little Bear asserted in his REDx Talk that “Canada is a Pretend Nation” (REDx Talks, the Indigenized speaker series, Leroy Little Bear, October 10, 2015). John Borrows (2002; 2010) goes further to question how in the Canadian Constitution can Canada affirm its nationhood when in reality, it does not have the territory to do so since lands were not seceded or surrendered especially in Treaty negotiations. Ted Chamberlin (2003) has presented the question “if this is your land, where are your stories?” as well. While this may be uneasy for most Canadians, it reveals an in-depth nature in the hierarchical narratives of Canada's existence and “conquer.”

When Indigenous Nations entered Treaty, they knew that it forwarded two very different worldviews. Though treated unjustly we continue to maintain the promise of relationship to the Crown and the settlers. Our relationship with the Crown continues through: Section 35 (1) of the Constitution Act, 1982, which states that “existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed;” and Section 25 of the Constitution Act, 1982, that preserved the Royal Proclamation of 1763 through recognition of Indigenous title to the land.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 had King George III claim British sovereignty over North America and acknowledged the rights of “Nations or Tribes of Indians” to govern themselves and retain title to their land (Jobin 2016:43). However, the Royal Proclamation never consulted Indigenous Peoples, leaving much of the authority still extending from a hierarchical colonial power. Though Section 35 and the Royal Proclamation are often contentious within legal discourse, they exist for various reasons that protect Indigenous Nationhood.

Our Nêhiyaw world differs greatly from the settler state, and too often we find ourselves caught up in the injustice of the *Indian Act*. Indigenous Nations do not



surrender to despair and we do not have to collaborate with colonialism as we envision liberation guided through ancient teachings that are patiently waiting as we engage in resurgence of our authentic Indigenous existence and freedom for our people (Simpson 2008: 11). When Indigenous peoples state that the *Indian Act* must be removed, we are not saying we are eradicating our reserve or Nations. Many critics would love to see the reserve system dismantled as a means of “equality;” we are by no means equal and we are not a minority group (Borrows 2008: 17). Equality will never be achieved in Canada because First Nations should be put in their respective positions as the only Nation in this territory. Canada does not exist within the political realm of our Treaty but we still offer the hand of adoption into our political spheres. This is what we mean by we are all Treaty people, and settlers are more than welcome to live miyo-pimâisiwin with us. Some would love to see First Nations dismantled in a “Trojan Horse-type” tactic that must be made clear to our people (Borrows 2008: 17). If we eradicate what makes us distinctly who we are as unique, resistant, and perseverant people then we lose that connection to the land, our ancestors, our origin, and our creator.

In Canada, the legal system seems to favor one source of law, and it rarely is ever Indigenous (Borrows 2002: 4). Aboriginal rights in Canada have not been extinguished no matter how oppressive and detrimental the Government of Canada has been (Borrows 2002:5). For instance, “Aboriginal Rights” have come to be known as “pre-existing,” “un-extinguished,” “customary,” “sui generis,” and “beneficial” (2002:6). This means that the courts must look outside the common law: where “pre-existing” and “un-extinguished” refer to a time prior to contact; “customary” are a set of practices that parallel the common law; “sui generis” indicates an incompleteness of conventional common law categories; and “beneficial” implies the rule of equity (2002: 6). This indicates that Aboriginal Rights have separate origins from rights associated within Canada and importantly, for Indigenous Peoples the rights are unique within the wider Canadian population as they are only held by Aboriginal Peoples (2002: 6, 9). Sui generis, a Latin term, refers to “forming a kind by itself; unique, literally of its own particular kind or class” (2002: 9). The concept of sui generis goes further as indicated in its use in *R. v. Van Der Peet* and *R. v. Delgamuukw*, two Supreme Court cases that set precedent for understanding and evaluating what are Aboriginal rights, that Aboriginal

legal systems continued to exist and survived the assertion of settler sovereignty and have found place within the common law (2002: 11). This assertion that Aboriginal Rights existed prior to confederation legitimizes Indigenous peoples' ability to state they have always been independent Nations. Taiaiake Alfred cautions however, that by accepting the definitions of Aboriginal rights as outlined by Canadian law and policy, we are still buying into a colonial system and limiting Indigenous ability to determine the future of our communities (in Poelzer and Coates 2015: 36).

As Late Patricia Monture-Angus, a Kanien'kehá: ka (Mohawk) trained as lawyer and past academic at the University of Saskatchewan acknowledges in *Journeying Forward* that she felt as a lawyer, she was "cooperating too fully in my own oppression" as law is an instrument of the state (1999:199). Monture-Angus acknowledges the shortcomings of Canadian and Aboriginal politicians who do not recognize the role that women play in Indigenous Nations, and how women were and still are vital in decision-making. Women have often been ignored within traditional governance, and as seen in chapter four are the ones that welcome Nêhiyaw infants into the Nation, and through the teachings of the Mikiwahp, essential to addressing core Nêhiyaw values. Furthermore, the Manitoba Justice Inquiry made this statement that still has a ring of truth today:

The unwillingness of chiefs and councils to address the plight of women and children suffering abuse at the hands of husbands and fathers is quite alarming. We are concerned enough about it to state that we believe the failure of Aboriginal government leaders to deal at all with the problem of domestic abuse is unconscionable. We believe that there is a heavy responsibility on Aboriginal leaders to recognize the significance of the problem within their own communities. They must begin to recognize, as well, how much their silence and failure to act actually contribute to the problem (in Borrows 2008: 16).

Human rights have been ignored in the *Indian Act* (Borrows 2010: 37). These realities occur because:

Colonialism is about, among other things, controlling the lives of the individuals who comprise the people. When, for generations, a people have been controlled, their ability to make decisions and advance change is impaired. In order to shake up our communities and get them thinking as communities again, relying on themselves instead of bureaucracies, all that needs to be done is to shift the pieces so the "common" answer, depending on the colonizer, is no longer available. It is out of this chaos that the change will come. I am quite certain that this is a gift brought to the people with the return or continued presence of the trickster (1999:159).

Indigenous Nations must take responsibility for their own circumstances and step away from meaningless dialogues with colonial governments to obtain Indigenous control over Indigenous lives.

Indigenous peoples within their respective Nations must know their traditions, practices, and values and demand to be heard by their Indigenous leaders (Alfred 1999). Nations such as Samson Cree Nation must have open and extensive discussions among the entire Nations and be willing to cooperate through all levels of support. First Nation governments must be participatory and consensus-based as in the years prior to imposed band councils, as dictatorships provide no collective voice or cultural stability. The citizens of the Nation must also be invested in the whole of the people and learn their Nêhiyawak knowledge, as this makes Indigenous nationhood different than all other citizenships.

Greg Poelzer and Ken Coates in *From Treaty Peoples to Treaty Nation: A Road Map for All Canadians* acknowledge that Non-Aboriginal people have had generations to speak their minds on Aboriginal issues (2015:79). Simply, from governors in New France to missionaries, military leaders, and government officials all too often have offered their opinions on how to solve the “Indian Problem” (Poelzer and Coates 2015:79). This commentary will never cease to exist, and as non-Indigenous peoples who enter this debate with Indigenous peoples must come to realize, their voices are overpowered by the lingering damage still felt by the original peoples who call them out on their ignorance (Poelzer and Coates 2015:79). Canada simply, needs to recognize existing Aboriginal authority (Poelzer and Coates 2015:80). Canadians must accept that Aboriginal people have certain legal rights that they do not, and those who disagree or forward statements such as “level playing field” and “one law for all Canadians” need to realize that these rights are integral to Canadian law (Poelzer and Coates 2015:195).

Canadians must be redefined as Treaty Peoples, and by doing this we honour the uniqueness of Indigenous cultures and certain common standards and expectations, where Canada and its Indigenous populations can develop a structure benefiting all (Poelzer and Coates 2015:205). Simply, Canada through the assistance of Indigenous Nations can

build the country both parties want, and not willingly accept the country we inherited (Poelzer and Coates 2015:205).

## 5.5 Learning from outside the Nêhiyawak Nation

“No need to rebuild the wheel,” my dad said to me one day while I was frustrated with what I was writing. At the time, he let me set up a make-shift office in his department’s file room and as small as it was, it still had a respectable view. It also made me slightly more accountable to writing as he knew whether I would be in and my mom’s office was across the hall. As I sat in my chair debating if I would be able to complete a task such as forwarding the laws through the work with the Elders, I thought about how the teachings throughout my life from my grandpa Chris had taught me how to treat people. I remembered when he told me about how the wolf received his colour after going on a journey for Creator, as this is the first oral narrative he ever taught me. He called the wolf, Santa Claus, because he went around the world. I stared at the blue sky out the window and reflected on how my mom and dad had made me think about my actions and while I may not be a lawyer trained in legal thought or exposed to colonial law and policy, I was still able to forward a conception of governance tied to my training as a historian and anthropologist.

Learning from the past and how ethnology presents differing ways of knowing and retaining knowledge made me question how we present our way of life in written text. How can I formulate an approach to self-government and traditional governance without knowing anything about Canadian law? It is not a matter of knowing Canadian law, it is about knowing the constitutional order of how our Nation responds and governs ourselves through our cultural knowledge and teachings. It understands the basis of how to live miyo-pimâtisiwin and pimâcihowin in relation to Manitow and the wiyasiwêwina. We deserve the right to be able to work towards a better future without the domineering presence of colonial policies and oppressive views within our own territory. As we developed a written constitution and adapted the laws from our traditions and beliefs, the initiative worked against the confines we are find ourselves in. “Our Ancestors worked towards maintaining peaceful international diplomacy with other Indigenous Nations, with mass mobilizations leading to many of the Confederacies and political alliances we

still see today” (Ladner 2008:227-228). As the threat of assimilation and colonization threatened our Indigenous ways, we were not passive victims but did everything that we could to resist and mobilize throughout our history (Simpson 2008: 13). With that said, as the Elders and I brought forward insights into how we governed ourselves as the Nêhiyawak Nation, it would have been naïve of us to not look outside our confines and learn from our Indigenous relations. As John Borrows explains, Canada’s legal system is incomplete (2010: 6), and to engage within only an Indigenous versus non-Indigenous narrative defeats the ability to learn from all Indigenous states, especially those I have learned from throughout my personal journey.

Susan Hill is of the Haudenosaunee Nation and Mohawk of the Wolf Clan. In my first year at Western University Susan took me out to Six Nations of the Grand River where she lives, and she showed me around and talked in depth about Gayanashagowah, *the Great Law of Peace*, and how this bound the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca together through Confederacy, and how they were later joined by the Tuscarora in 1722. Together the Nations were stronger and enacted sophisticated and complex legal traditions as “Law lies in the heart” of the Haudenosaunee (Borrows 2010: 72). I remembered how I had joked with Susan that those in Ontario have had to deal with white people longer than us in Alberta, and it struck a thought as I sat in my office chair that governance is taken not only from our understanding of how to conduct ourselves but, as seen in the multicultural identity of the Nêhiyaw presented by Neal McLeod and Rob Innes, there are overlaps within our narratives between the Nêhiyaw, Anishinabek, and Lenape. Therefore, Indigenous Nations can utilize what they believe is important to their own governance from their relations both near and far, and we went beyond the borders of Treaty 6 and studied the written laws of Six Nations of the Grand River and Tsawwassen First Nation.

The Haudenosaunee have been forward thinkers in Indigenous rights and sovereignty (Mohawk 2010; Alfred 2009; Simpson 2014). The Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke have been instrumental teachers as they also hold the view that they “share a genealogical kinship relation with other native peoples in North America and *they know this*” (emphasis in original Simpson 2014:2). Oren Lyons, a Faithkeeper of the Onondaga Nation and of the Rotinoshonni Longhouse, in conversation with Taiaiake Alfred in

*Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, states that we are not fighting the same battle as our ancestors did, it is a new battlefield (2005:237). Familiar with Six Nations of the Grand River (SNGR), I focused on studying their by-laws, especially those related to consultation and heritage.

Six Nations is the largest First Nation reserve in Canada and the main reserve is located approximately 25km southwest of the city of Hamilton, Ontario between the cities of Brantford, Caledonia, and Hagersville. In December of 2013 membership reached 25,660 with 12,271 living in the Six Nations (Six Nations, “Community Profile,” accessed November 6, 2015). Six Nations of the Grand River have a “Consultation and Accommodation Policy” that regulates how to obtain free, prior and informed consent of the peoples of the Six Nations of the Grand River. Effective since September 24, 2013, the policy states in the preamble that:

As the official governing body of the territory, Six Nations Elected Council (SNEC) on behalf of the peoples of SNGR has interests in and a duty to protect land, air, water and our Aboriginal economic base within the Haldimand Tract and the wider area specified by the 1701 Fort Albany/Nanfan Treaty. The Crown has failed in their fiduciary duty to SNGR which has resulted in land disputes that harms business, resources and hinders economic opportunities. This has caused frustration for developers, municipalities, communities, as well as the peoples of SNGR. SNGR is not to be considered as just a part of a larger Ontario community who might be consulted as a stakeholder only (Six Nations of the Grand River, Land and Resources, “Consultation and Accommodation Policy,” <http://www.sixnations.ca/LRConsultationPolicySept2413.pdf>, accessed November 15, 2015).

The policy enacted by Six Nations affirms the Crown’s Treaty obligations and how the Crown has failed in many regards to protect the interests of Six Nations members and has economically left them outside of development. In addition to learning through their consultation policy, Six Nations in 2014 redeveloped their policy in relation to “Conducting Research at Six Nations.” The preamble states:

Six Nations Elected Council recognizes that all research conducted on Six Nations of the Grand River Territory is a valuable learning experience and therefore should be respected for its merits. Furthermore, Six Nations Elected Council recognizes that research should be encouraged on Six Nations of the Grand River Territory when it is based on mutual respect, understanding and trust.

Six Nations Elected Council has the right and authority to authorize research being conducted on Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. Therefore, Six Nations

Elected Council has the right and authority to refuse a request to conduct research if it is not based on ethical principles of conducting research and preserving the integrity of our Indigenous Knowledge (Six Nations of the Grand River, Public Policies, “Conducting Research at Six Nations,” <http://www.sixnations.ca/admEthicsPolicy.pdf>, accessed November 15, 2015).

This policy accounts for the research and dissemination of Haudenosaunee knowledge, and allows the Indigenous Nation to assert what they would and would not like available. The research policy allows the Research Ethics Committee, appointed by Six Nations Elected Council, the authority to protect Indigenous interests through their cultural knowledge and worldview. Respecting the intellectual property and interests of the people, this policy goes beyond traditional custom and is essential as researcher come in and out of Indigenous communities. However, the Six Nations Elected Council is not the only government at Grand River, as the Confederacy Council maintains an authoritative role within the community. Often there is contention between the two as the Six Nations Elected Council was imposed upon the people through the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). While, the by-laws studied do follow the standard application for approval from INAC they offer important aspects in the governing practice of a political body outside of the Nêhiyawak worldview.

In the fall of 2015 the Justice Department visited Tk'emlups te Secwepemc formerly known as Kamloops Indian Band were the learned of Tsawwassen First Nation and were eager to let me know that they have created their own series of laws. Located in the lower mainland of British Columbia, and part of the metro Vancouver area, Tsawwassen First Nation in 1993 submitted their statement to the B.C. treaty process and in 2007, the agreement was ratified and received Royal Assent in the provincial legislature (Monchalin 2016:247). April 3rd, 2009 was the Effective Day of the Tsawwassen First Nation Treaty Final Agreement where Tsawwassen First Nation became self-governing with the constitutional authority to make laws. The Tsawwassen Legislature, the highest governing body of Tsawwassen First Nation, then passes these laws. Tsawwassen has created: Appropriations Act; Children and Families Act; Community Governance Act that include Animal Control Regulation, Annual Utility Charge Regulation, Business License Regulation, Discharge of Firearms Regulation; Conflict of Interest Act; Culture and Heritage Act; Economic Development; Education,

Health, and Social Development Act; and numerous other laws. While, Six Nations of the Grand River and Tsawwassen First Nation differ regionally from Samson Cree Nation, they offer the ability to learn mechanisms of protection through legal systems and laws through regional understanding and economic climates in their territory. It is interesting to learn about governance in various other regions as they debate between the imposed system of government and their own means of governance. To learn from the language and intent from both First Nations indicates an awareness of their needs and hopes evident in their laws.

## 5.6 Conclusion

Samson Cree Nation's governance structure is set up as a hierarchy of western principle, as it is a top-down approach of power that undermines our core principles of our traditional governance. For us to dismantle the positional power that affects all aspects of our Nation, the Elders through the directive of the Justice and Legal Department reimplemented a structural organization. While, Samson Cree Nation is in no place to dissolve Chief and Council as we are constrained under fiduciary obligations, we certainly can change how power is distributed. It is e-kawôtiniket, reclaiming, our traditional governance in a time prior to settler-state imposed rules and regulations that extend from the *Indian Act* in 1876. While we as Nêhiyaw are collective and aim to work together, there was friction between myself and the other writers of the laws who wanted to present what we were doing to the people. While, I agree that collective discussion is important to the structure and design of the governance structure, the laws are based in our teachings and through our sacred, customary, traditional, universal, and natural law, meaning they have been since time immemorial accepted amongst us as a Nation. Rather, we simply had to dust our understanding of what the law is in our territory. Nipisihkopahk, like John Borrows as he walked the philosopher's walk at the University of Toronto had to look for the Indigenous features, had to look inside ourselves and our culture to realize that we have everything we needed, it was a matter of how we formulate it in a written text.

Often, we hear that we need to go back to a time before Treaty and the negotiations that entered us into the plight that we are today. Treaty gives us insight into



how we thought about diplomatic relationships and how we interpreted our traditional values and principles. Treaty allows us to understand the interconnected structure of our Nations, or the “bands” we were part of under each Chief. As I drove Nimosôm Gordon home, he mentioned to me that we are not able to enact a completely traditional governance system today, as our population size is too large and does not account for people required to make it effective and to listen to all our needs. First Nations people are the fastest growing population in Canada. He said that we would be able to manage with two thousand people and after that it becomes difficult, as we would require the headmen to work basically night and day. It is about taking care of one another and fulfilling the needs of the entire camp. This is not to say we are not capable of enacting our traditional governance systems, but it means we need ways to implement our ways of life in the present situation we find ourselves.

We effectively need our citizens to remember their inherent rights as Nêhiyaw and how our births saw us not only enter the Nêhiyaw Nation but Samson Cree Nation as well. Samson Cree Nation exists through Treaty, and if we do not understand our Treaty and the processes in which we underwent, then we do not uphold the spirit of our ancestors and the prior process of learning and studying them. The Chiefs sent out men to learn about what Treaty was and even went themselves sometimes. They did not simply enter a diplomatic relationship without understanding the result. For us to understand Treaty we need to understand our origins, our beginnings. Nimosôm Jerry says that if you know the Creation story, then you know Treaty. This study is a process of realizing that knowledge is power. Nêhiyaw knowledge must include not only our cultural philosophies and methodologies, but knowledge of the settler state as well. This then allows us to continuously know where we are going and how we are going to get there. By understanding one’s role within their family and nation, we trace the law that binds us to our collective origin and from the confines of the *Indian Act* and we remember critical insights that have limited us in the present.

Native women have been forced to accept patriarchal rule, but as we learned in Chapter Four, it is women that define the nation and order the home. It is reclaiming the sacred feminine of women in traditional Nêhiyaw Governance that we ignite the embers of nationhood and allows Samson Cree Nation to fall into the arms of matriarchs past and

present. That is why the top poles of a tipi raise up, that is the role of a woman, to protect their family and protect the role of the community. While, Bill C-31 changed the Indian Act's statement of "Status Indian":

The term "Indian" means: First. Any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band. Secondly. Any child of such person. Thirdly. Any woman who is or was married to such person (Statutes of Canada, 39 Vict. c.18, 1876, s. 3 (3)).

Bill C-31, or a Bill to Amend the Indian Act, passed into law in April 1985, where its aim was to include gender rights (Monchalin 2016:111-112).

Much of what is written about Indigenous peoples is from a male voice, and this includes early ethnographic and colonial texts where Indigenous men dominated as informants or authority figures in Indigenous communities. This bias is in relation to patriarchy that ignored females as having the ability to be in leadership positions. This is evident in the "Pocahontas Perplex" that scholar Rayna Green exemplifies is a scholarly silence on gender, sexuality, and identity of Native American women due to the lack of anthropological and historical work in the subject area and this has left a void in source material available (2007:8). Kim Anderson (2011) echoes this void through the creation of her work *Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine* that presents accounts of female customs and traditions from Nêhiyawak, Anishinaabe, and Metis women through their life time. Materials such as these are opening and enhancing what we know and can learn from Indigenous women.

Women, as Joey has told me, hold a gift inside them that is important to remember that men do not have, it is intuition. Creator offered us the ability to feel and know without conscious reasoning because we hold the connection and power through their ability to connect the spirit world within the physical. When nohkôm Cecilia and nohkôm Ginger sit with their other sisters, they are so powerful together that I do not know whether to be afraid and intimidated or empowered and ready to take on the world. Native women are the resilience of the Nation as they are the first educators of our children and define what it means to be Nêhiyaw. It is through teachings such as those in Chapter Four, that we begin to realize how powerful and complex our traditional governance system is as Nêhiyaw people, and this is important in the territory of Maskwacîs to remember.

## Chapter Six

### 6 Nikanihk, Future

Taiiaike Alfred in the opening words of *Lighting the Eight Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations* states:

Settlers have serious difficulties thinking thoughts that are outside foundational premises of their imperial cultural background. Very few of them can overcome the ingrained patterns of authority and dominance that are the heritage of empire and colonialism. So, we have to do it for them. And for us (2008: 10).

For our fight is not only about survival, it is about finding new ways to love the land, and new ways to love ourselves and our people (Alfred 2008: 10). The task is not only a fight for liberation and emancipation from the burdens of colonialism but that we as Indigenous peoples have inherited disconnection from what it is to be Indigenous (Alfred 2008:9). The severing of the bonds that connect us to one another and the land has had devastating impacts on what made us distinct in our worldview first and foremost. The future of Indigenous peoples lies not only in maintaining the cultural traditions but is the mindset of what makes us unique through our ability to move between the physical, spiritual, emotional, and cognitive state of our being. Resistance and aggression towards the external enemy can only do so much, and where Indigenous power of resurgence and revitalization lies is in the ability for us to find new ways to love not only our selves but our people and our land (Alfred 2008:10). The ability to reclaim Indigenous mindsets is essential as everyday our society diverges deeper and deeper into capitalism and materialism and these continue the powerful and arrogant forces at play (Alfred 2008: 11). In Canada, we are First World Indigenous peoples with Third World social conditions, and yet, we still occupy a place of privilege within the world of Indigenous peoples (Smith 1999: 13). It is through our ability to share our voice that we hold the chance to change the very core of the society that fails to comprehend that our welfare is tied to the health of the land. Indigenous peoples must use that place of privilege and our fundamental teaching of Natural Law to advocate for all.

Colonial policies and the judicial system will always attempt to break our ability to be sovereign and attempts to walk delicately between what are Aboriginal rights and Treaty rights will continue. However, if Indigenous peoples like the Nêhiyawak Nation

maintain the ability to know where we stand, then the knowledge and efforts of our ancestors are not lost, as they have persisted in the face of assimilation and genocide. Further, our power does not lie in the proclamations and Treaty made with the Crown, our power lies in who we were as the Nêhiyawak Nation in a time prior to colonization and assimilation. It is about understanding our inherent rights that makes us culturally distinct and gifted to us by Manitow and the world we have come to know. It is about being Nêhiyaw first and foremost that allows us to continue living on mother earth through bonds connected to Manitow. Our strength as an individual, family, community, and nation lies in the ability to uphold traditional values between each level of governance and is always aware of ensuring we are active agents for our ability to thrive. It is important for the people of Nipisihkopahk to remember, and our traditional mindset holds that ability to create a paradigm shift that does not allow us to become complaisant to the circumstances we face.

Such circumstances include the impacts of colonial rule and policy or universal documents such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Though documents such as UNDRIP are important as it allows for a voice of Indigenous peoples, we as Nêhiyawak in Canada, hold the power to dismantle the settler state. It is about educating our citizens to learn about the western world that leads to our liberation. As our power is in our distinct worldview and understanding of self given to us by Manitow that predates any policy, act or band council we have come to know. The Nêhiyawak as seen in Innes and McLeod's narrative continue to adapt and change through their agency but remain rooted in culture and tradition. The Nêhiyawak realized our plains environment was changing and resources that we once were reliant on were depleting, the Nêhiyawak did what any family would do; take care of their own. We knew this when the last buffalo emerged into Sounding Lake, but we also know that one day they will return. However, until this knowledge can be shared within the nation and implemented in our own selves as individuals for the community collective, we need to realize what mechanisms we must protect ourselves with.

Nipisihkopahk over the last twenty years has been devastated not only by the impacts of settler society. When a five-year-old child was gunned down inside his grandmother's home, the media had a field day coming down hard on the nation. Citing

addictions to drugs and alcohol, low employment rates, and high numbers of dropout rates within the reserve. Samson Cree Nation offers roughly 400 jobs on reserve and has a population of roughly 5,200 living on reserve. Our homes on average hold thirteen citizens. We like many other reserves lack the resources to take care of ourselves, and the resulting poverty we find ourselves in (Manuel, “Art Manuel: What Are You Going To Do About It?” 2017, <http://redrisingmagazine.ca/what-are-you-going-to-do-about-it/>, accessed February 21, 2017). The root cause of this oppression lies in the dependency in the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs that limits our self-determination from the settler state by inhibiting Indigenous nations to work outside of the 0.2% of reserve territory and expand our economic horizons (Manuel, “What Are You Going To Do About It?” 2017). When Indigenous peoples can thrive, they hold the ability to change the state of despair we find ourselves in, and remove us from the constant battle for survival.

Those in positions of power such as the current leadership and those hired through nepotism need to leave their ego at the door as various opportunities for partnership have come and gone to our nation. I am often baffled when our Nation throughout the years has held a funeral every week for each suicide the people mourned as these were often our youth and yet little has been done to get to the root cause. Priorities need to be established and these must not be determined on the shoulders of individuals who need votes every three years. The Elders were placed in their traditional role in efforts to include them for the first time in many years, as they have been left to the sidelines of governance and counsel. Samson Cree Nation needs the ability to shift gears and redesign the governance structure and outlook of our people. What we forward through the laws and the authority of the Elders will shift and as we become educated, new leaders will emerge, but to get there, we need to change the outcome of our circumstances.

For Nipisihkopahk to realize our potential we must continue to support and allow our citizens to benefit from education and becoming doctors, lawyers, political scientists, and so on. Samson Cree Nation can do this, as we have Nipisihkopahk Education Authority that generates revenues from a trust fund set up through the oil royalties to give our citizens the ability to pursue postsecondary. This funding is how I could sit in the position that I write to you now. This study is emotionally invested in bringing change to

Nipisihkopahk and providing the people the ability to understand not only the culture and traditions but how Indigenous mindsets have allowed colonialism's sick and twisted views of self to impact how we view our lives.

The presentation of how the Nêhiyawak descend into the world through the Spirit Realm was aimed to allow Nêhiyaw readers to remember that we are gifts from Creator and have every right to live within the bounty of the land and be proud and strong Nêhiyawak. The teachings of the homefire were aimed to state that this change does not only begin in ourselves but how we raise our children in our own homes. It is about bringing forward the teachings of Elders past and present to spark the flame within ourselves and forge a new era of Indigenous governance within the confines of the reserve without inviting outside agencies to provide solutions for us; it was us as Nêhiyawak providing solutions for ourselves. It was about respecting ourselves again through our understanding of the beauty and originality of our spirit. Rebuilding the relationships allowed us as Nêhiyawak to not only to have our immediate family for support but the entirety of the interconnected relationships that extend out of kinship ties must be reaffirmed. Realizing that we can reconstruct these familial ties is essential, as the Government of Canada attempted to break them down. By doing this, we heal past injustices as we remember our right to live freely as Indigenous peoples. This study was aimed to always give back and protect the core of our Nation through the implementation of written laws. Research does not necessarily mean we gather, collect, and present, it should encourage academics to give back to communities.

## 6.1 Healing and Well-Being

Late Elder Dolly Buffalo, Pîsim o Iskwew, Woman of the Sun, spoke to the Lynda-Littlechild Cutknife before her passing and made a statement that is still relevant today:

When I think about my childhood at the Hay Meadows, it brings tears to my eyes. People were poor back then, but they were a lot richer than we are today because of the way that they treated each other with so much love and respect. We are poor today because we have none of these things that are really important in life...The people were so good to each other ("Dolly Buffalo, Hay Meadow Interview," Unpublished Transcript, May 2010).

Nipisihkopahk and the other three nations face incredible blows to their culture and way of life daily; from the ability to get to the city of Edmonton within forty-five minutes to the realization that technically our society does not require the collective role of everyone within the nation to work together, it gives an individual the ability to obtain what they need on their own without needing the community. This is not to say that the four nations have not maintained Nêhiyaw way of life, as there are traditionalists within each nation that continue to uphold the teachings, values, and principles of our culture. In 1967, Chief Robert (Bobtail) Smallboy and Lazarus Roan from Ermineskin Cree Nation established the Mountain Cree Camp, commonly known as Smallboy Camp, initially in the foothills of Nordegg near Kootenay Plains; however, by 1971 they would relocate to the Muskiki Lake area near Hinton, Alberta today. The aim of the camp was to maintain life in accordance to Natural Law that promoted the language, ceremony, and spirituality of the Nêhiyawak. Nimosôm Gordon, as mentioned above was the translator to Chief Smallboy. By maintaining the core of Nêhiyaw philosophy and ontology, the camp continues to thrive outside the confines of the Canadian Government as they do not recognize the camp as a reserve. Smallboy's Camp on February 6, 1976 gained notoriety as Leonard Peltier, who was wanted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents for the 1975 conflict on the Pine Ridge reservation, was arrested inside the camp and later extradited to the United States.

There is no doubt that the families in Maskwacîs have assisted and built relationships with other Indigenous Nations. One of the pipes used during the negotiations of Treaty 6 came from the Lakota Nation and Chief Sitting Bull. Montana First Nation was Chief Bobtail's way of protecting those from Montana state from what would be called the Indian Wars; later they would return and become part of the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation. As Innes and McLeod have indicated, one monoculture cannot occur in telling the history of the Nêhiyawak Nation and this is evident in the view that we are all related. The core of these actions is to ensure well-being, and its relevance to the notion of treaty where the adoption of the settlers was to ensure they would be cared for and the Indigenous Nations would receive that offer as well. As Nipisihkopahk returns to the teachings and reclaims their understanding of personhood and nationhood,

they simultaneously heal their selves. The study is alongside the proposed initiative to build a justice building where the methods of the police, lawyers, and judges are all put to the side, to allow Nipisihkopahk that ability to help their selves, and this may prove to be the fastest, cheapest, and safest way outside of the Western justice system (Ross 1996:213). Indigenous peoples are “born into networks of relationships and responsibilities” and they need to be able to reassert those roles (Ross 1996:211).

It is too easy to get depressed about Aboriginal conditions in Canada (Poelzer and Coates 2015:129). Media presents a sensational headline that may be of the impoverished conditions on reserves, urban violence, child welfare crisis or an Aboriginal protest that continues to highlight “statistics of despair” (Poelzer and Coates 2015:129). I have chosen not to present them, as this limit the ability to provide hope. Samson Cree Nation knows this phenomenon all too well, and though those lost are remembered for their lives they will not become another statistic in this narrative. The most important aspect of this study is bringing forward the quality of Nêhiyaw life in Nipisihkopahk

Claudine Louis in her dissertation in collaboration with women from Maskwacîs presents four main themes that were brought forward from her research:

1. Sohkastwâwin, resilience: surviving cultural and linguistic genocide;
2. Kiskeyihtamowin, knowledge and learning: exploration and engagement of Nêhiyaw epistemology specifically, engagement with Nêhiyaw epistemology and continuous learner engagement;
3. Pasikowin, standing up the challenges of today: to explore the space between Nêhiyawak and Mônîyâw education and ways of being; and,
4. Wâhkôtowin, kinship: reference to relationality and addressing both connection and disconnection to traditional knowledge sources (2014: 128-159).

All four of these realizations address that the people of Maskwacîs hold the ability to evoke change and Nipisihkopahk has the means to do so.

## 6.2 How the Kêhtê-ayak are vital to make “Kisê-manitow Wiyinikêwina” effective

As an Indigenous people, we are faced with trauma throughout our lives. Growing up my parents made sure we were busy children; from taking us to softball games or playing rounds of golf with us, we were given a life they said they never had. They



wanted better for us. Having felt the experiences of damnation through the residential school experience through their parents, my mom and dad went out of their way to ensure we had every opportunity. We lived off a single income and I learned the importance and value of hard work. March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016 is a day I will always remember. Four days prior I had prayed to Manitow to help me get out of a terrible relationship. I did not know the extent of the emotional and mental abuse that I had endured as I tried to deny it. My relationship was not love, but for power. He physically assaulted me two weeks' prior for the first time, and I could not tell anyone though I tried. I tried to leave and no matter what he was so good at pulling me back in. That day he made a false allegation against me. Without asking what had happened the Royal Canadian Mountain Police charged me without taking a statement. I chased him out of my apartment because he sexually assaulted me. He never mentioned that part in his narrative. Finger printed, photographed for a mug shot, and sent on my way after a twenty-minute ordeal, I told my dad and sister what had happened. My dad and I are very close. Upset, my sister called the detachment in Maskwacîs, as this event happened in Wetaskiwin. Lateral violence has a way of speeding in our Nation, as within two days' time I was the gossip of the Nation. I did not want to admit I was a battered woman, but I had eight of the most beautiful people I could have ever asked for to help me.

I called an "Elders Meeting" for the group who we came to call the Kêhtê-ayak Omaminowatamakewak, meaning Elders who give oral direction, the very Elders in this piece here. Derwin smudged my head and told me that everything would be alright. Celina smiled at me and gave me a look of endearment. Victor and George began talking about how the RCMP treat our people unjustly and unfairly. Sophie said it was not my fault and told me a story. Cecilia said to me that our men have lost a sense of their selves as they come from women. And grandpa Chris took on my burden to help ease my pain. At his home, Joey gave me medicine to help me sleep. Together they counselled me through teachings and personal experiences that they endured. Together as a collective they were more powerful than any one individual combined.

From there my parents went to Pat Buffalo, and Ron Buffalo, manager for the Justice and Legal Department and explained what had happened and did damage control. My sister Paula did my hair for me that day, my sister Becky helped me put on my shoes,

and my brother Chris took care of my husky, Chief. My dad drove me to Victim Services and they got me into a ten-week program for women of domestic violence. I met with two domestic violence officers after I went back to make a statement, and I remember the officer who took my finger prints asked me if I knew what public mischief was and sighed heavily as he took my responses as if he did not believe me. Three weeks later, the charges were dropped. The Kêhtê-ayak Omaminowatamakewak were not done by any means; they had forwarded the Okimâwêyihtâkosiw Wiyinikêwin, He/She is Honoured Law, aimed at addressing stalking and domestic violence. As this story has shown, our people can come together to aid in a variety of ways, and that we can help ourselves.

Nimosôm George explained to me that the reason this had happened and how all the other Elders were going through some legal matter both directly and indirectly was because we were bringing forward the essence of justice and law. Awakening it from its slumber as western law had dominated our people, it was time to see if we were worthy of the task. Of all our experiences with law it became clear that these charges we were associated with all that affects our people in Maskwacîs foremost, including with domestic violence, child welfare, assault, and possession and trafficking of narcotics. Though this experience is not the entirety of the initiative, it holds key insights into the effectiveness of our cultural foundations and the collective consensus of the Kêhtê-ayak – this is how we evoke traditional governance.

Rupert Ross, a retired assistant Crown Attorney for the District of Kenora in Ontario, in *Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice*, explains that to create an effective “Community Team” they must receive training in four separate areas:

1. Training about the Western Justice system, including summary of offence procedures, legal terminology, etc.;
2. Training in traditional teachings such as the circle of life, medicine wheel concepts, peacemaking, etc.;
3. Training in the principles of team building; and,
4. To the lesser extent, training in issues of intervention in alcoholism and suicide prevention, and the dynamics of family violence and sexual abuse (1996:249).

These four separate areas are envisioned so that those who are part of the traditional governance structure are given knowledge about both the western and traditional way of life, though lived, but also to prevent “burning-out” from taking on the needs of the

Nation. This initiative has already begun by having the Elders attend training in restorative justice and mediation.

### 6.3 Educating Academia: An Anthropological Perspective

For Indigenous peoples to break from misrepresentations of their historical narratives, including the confrontation of categories they have been placed into, we need to address the problems that exist in academia today. Anthropology is a young discipline rooted in global expansion and colonialism that has endured significant changes to its research paradigms, ethics, and relationships with Indigenous peoples since its initial beginnings; but it is within its early inception that these interpretations and understandings begin to drive general knowledge about Indigenous peoples. Anthropology emerged simultaneously as explorers, fur traders, missionaries, and colonial regimes reached around the world. Through these early journeys of so-called enlightenment, Indigenous peoples were documented, observed, and their cultural objects and material possessions were collected and analyzed. As *Indians and Anthropologist: Vine Deloria Jr. and the Critique of Anthropology* (1997:3) states, anthropologists tend to reproduce “self-conforming, self-referential, and self-producing closed systems with little, if any, empirical relationship to or practical value for real Indigenous peoples.” Anthropologists descended every summer onto Indigenous communities because they intended to “climb the university totem pole” (Biolsi and Zimmerman 1997:3 citing Deloria 1970:98-99). This academic hierarchy and progression saw anthropologists come in and out of communities and the research conducted rarely, if ever focused on the needs of the Nation, but rather the anthropologists’ self-interests and desires that would later result in the presumed assumption that they knew more about the Indigenous Nation than the citizens themselves. This in and out relationship was an abuse of trust on Indigenous peoples and many refused to share their knowledge since they witnessed their history manipulated first hand. This approach was the ideal for field research and often in our present-day rears its head time and time again.

The scholarly knowledges that were created about Indigenous cultures, language, and objects and remains have been subjected to appropriation and (re)presentation (Biolsi and Zimmerman 1997:7). Anthropologists often act as stewards of the past and this results in the cutting of ties with present day Indigenous peoples, and creates a myth that Indigenous peoples no longer exist today or that to find an “Indian” you must search for the feathers and traditional

regalia. The use of the term “Indian” in respect to every Nation contradicts specific identities and groups Indigenous people together, and void any differences that make them unique including regalia, art forms, and language. During this early period of research, there were rarely any initiatives for collaboration and consultation with Indigenous peoples. Any agreements with Indigenous participants or informants were rarely, if ever regulated by an ethics board. Today, the request for written permission or a signature from a participant is still problematic since many Indigenous peoples come from oral cultures, and the relevance of a signature is not as binding as one’s given word. For various Elders and Nation members, there is a chance that they do not understand the formal context of forms asking for their signatures or do not know how to read or write. In many instances, many students are not required to complete an ethics approval, since they are working with artifacts of a prehistoric era, which causes concern in relation to worldviews and conceptions of time and whether these items are alive and animate. These factors play into present day fears and relations between Indigenous peoples and scholars, and even if said scholar is Indigenous themselves this creates tensions between the home Nation and the scholar by revealing too much of our knowledge that leaves questions of how it will be interpreted and used by not only academia. Knowledge is power, but protecting intellectual insights for the good of the collective Nation has greater importance and reverence.

With that said, the dominant approach in taking back Indigenous narrative is best expressed in the policy statement of the journal *Indian Historian*: “Indians have good reason to distrust and even scorn the professional researcher. Too often have they misinterpreted the Indian history, misrepresented their way of life. It becomes necessary now to correct the record, to write the history as it should be written, to interpret correctly the aboriginal past” (in Miller 2011:20). This statement does not limit the study and research of Indigenous peoples solely to Indigenous peoples but non-Indigenous scholars may join Indigenous peoples in producing and creating great pieces of work, but not leading the movement since they may take part but not take over (Miller 2011:21). Understanding the importance of Indigenous peoples within this reclamation process is important to the study and to the emergence of Indigenous studies. The Indigenous Renaissance, as Mi’kmaw scholar Marie Battiste (2013) has forwarded allows Indigenous peoples to share and document their research by bringing back of theory and culture, and therefore, creating a new realm of Indigenous study.

Anthropology can be utilized through a multitude of dimensions to change the academic landscape we as Indigenous Peoples find ourselves within. Indigenous peoples can forward new insights into many areas of study and research as we have held this knowledge for time immemorial, as Regna Darnell forwards:

“We at Western have discovered that the environment and human health are closely related,” I intone piously, “and we have established an Ecosystem Health research unit to study that connection.” Everyone around the table nods sagely, “ah, you figured that out, did you?” I take the point; I quite deliberately make it ironically. “We are finally catching up with what you have long known.” Now perhaps we have something to offer you because we understand that we can work together as back-up to what is already known in the community” (forthcoming 2016: 14).

As she expresses, it often takes a while for our philosophies to break down the walls of the education system we have been built into as positivist learners. Darnell is presenting her dialogue between the research team at Western University’s Ecosystem Health team and Walpole Island First Nation as they collaborate for knowledge related to Walpole Island’s public health. As she furthers in the paper, often the collaboration of the scientific side “needs dramatic rethinking and encouraging us to remember that “all our relations” make their unique contributions to environmental sustainability” (forthcoming 2016: 14).

## 6.4 The Beginning

Hope and prayer have guided this study, and while I admit I am in an advantageous position that not many would have outside Indigenous Nations, it is through these actions that I hoped to give back to my community and prayed that in some form they can utilize the materials created. The goal for myself as an anthropologist has always been to conduct work that the community needs. Somehow, and in some way, it was decided that I would be in the position that I am today, and as I have faced personal hardships and learned from them, it has shaped me for the better. What is lacking in this study however, is the humour of the people and their voices directly. I approached this project this way because I want those that read this narrative to seek out these Elders and approach the Nation to create meaningful relationships.

There is no guarantee that the band council system will continue in the years that follow and there is no guarantee that the work completed in this study will ever be

enacted. What is known is that if the Nêhiyawak understand and commit to their culture, they have maintained the core of their livelihood and their connection to Natural Law and Creator. For myself, to understand the complexities of Nêhiyaw culture, we as individuals, require a sense of where we come from and where we are going. Through very surface level exposure to the intensity of Nêhiyaw mindset, this study shares the philosophical, spiritual, and ontological insights of the Four-Spirit People. The Nêhiyawêwin language assists in revealing the intensity and complexity of this understanding of consciousness. To underestimate Indigenous peoples is to underestimate the prayers of ancestors before us. This study aimed to ignite change between various dialogues of society both Indigenous, and non-Indigenous. While there are dangers and complexities within the material, there are profound benefits.

I am not sure that what I am doing will change the plight of our Nation, but I have hope and prayer and importantly, as nohkôm Sophie asked once, “Do you have what you need?” And the reality is, I think, that re-establishing the relationships of family with the Elders was all I ever needed. I had lacked my own immediate connection to my grandmothers, but as I realized, there are those that through kinship I can come to count upon. It is as our sweat ceremony teaches us how to cleanse our mind, body, and spirit, that this study is kehtwam nihtâwkowin, rebirth.

## Glossary

Aanjigone	Explores the “ethic of non-interference (Anishinaabe)
Âcimowina	Oral narratives
Ahcâhk	Spirit
Acâhkos	Star
Ahcâhk iskotêw	The soulflame
Ahkahcowin isîhçikêwin	Spiritual Customs
Ahkamihk	Across the River (Montana First Nation)
Ahyaminawin	Prayer
Akisow	Accountable
Amisk	Beaver
Ascipâkwânisa	Pins of a tipi lodge
Astipâhk-wâna	Top flaps of a tipi lodge
Astoskewimahcihowin	The inner desire or need to work
Âtayôhkêwina	Sacred oral narratives of a time before Elder Brother
Atiso’kanak	Mythical beings
Atoskewenow	Employee
Ayahchiyiniw	Who were members from other Nations, or our enemies or those who became ostracized from other camps
Ayawinasa	Clothes
Âtayôhkêwin	Legends and Spiritual stories
Awâsis	Children
Awasâyik	Refers to the other side of the hill
Awihkosowin	That which is lent to you in the most sacred and holy way.
Awihew	The root word for awihkosowin used to refer to as He loans something to him or them
Biskaabiiyang	The process “returning to ourselves” (Anishinaabe)
Cahkipewasinahikewin	Syllabic writing
Câhkipayiw	Meaning something that protrudes upward
Debewin	Truth (Anishinaabe)
E-kawôtiniket	The process of taking back, Reclaiming
Ê -micimanitômakahki	Interconnectedness
Ê-pâstohêt	Means to step over something

Eta ka wekihk	Premise
Gdi-nweninaa	Listening with our full bodies – our hearts, our minds, and our physicality (Anishinaabe)
Ihtâwin	Community
Ininiwak	People
-is / -ihk (locative)	Place marker or location
-iyiniwak (suffix)	People
Iskotêw	Fire
Iskwew	Woman
Ispihtâskîwina	Seasons
Iyiniwi-ministik	The people's land
Iyiniwiwin	The ability to develop a keen mind
Iyisahowin	Patience
Iyitatêyihitamowin	Hope
Iyiniwpimatisowin	Indigenous Life and Values
Ka kisci wekit awîyak	Citizen
Ka-kisikaw-pihtokew	Coming-Day
Kahkiyaw	All her/his living family members
kahkiyaw	All my relations
niwahkomakana	
Kakayiwatisiwin	The ability to develop an inner sense of industriousness or inner ability or desire to be hardworking
Kakeskihkemowina	Counselling discourses
Kakêhtawêyimowin	To think wisely
Kakêskihkêmwina	Teachings
Kanawêyimikôsowin	Ultimate protection/ Keep yourself safe and clean/ Do the right thing
Kanâtêyimowin	Cleanliness of Mind
Kasakiykanitiwitihk	The Battle River
Katipeyihitamihk	Owning real estate such as a building or land
Kayâsohci isitwawin	Traditional Law
Wiyasiwêwin	
Kâ-isi-ayâk misiwê-ita	Natural Cycles
Kâ-isiyihkâtêki ihtâwina	Place names
Kâ-nitocepihkwek	Ethno-botany



Kânâkatêyih tamihk	Conservation
Kâ-pê-isi-pimâtisihk	History
Kâ-isiwêpahk	Weather
Kêhtê-ay	Elder
Kêhtê-ayak	Elders (The Old Ones)
Kêhtê-ayak Pimayihewewin Wiyasiwêwin Kehtwamasinahikewin	Elders Governance Law
Kehtwam	Rewrite Laws
nahawascikewin	Reorganization
Kehtwam nihtâwkowin	Rebirth
Kici (prefix)	One of your kind/ Holy or divine/ Highest Form
Kici Wiyasiwêwin	Universal Law
Kihceyih tamowin	Regard with deepest respect
Kihci-asotamâtowin	Sacred Promises to One Another
Kisiopikowin	Rites of passage
Kicimasinakikanis	Sacred Document or Law
Kihêw	Eagle
Kisehpatinow	On the Edge of the Hill (Louis Bull Tribe)
Kisewatisiwin	Compassion
Kisikaw pîsim	Father Sun
Kiskeyitamowi Tipiyawehowisowin Wiyasiwêwin Kiskeyih tamowin	Intellectual Property (Knowledge Ownership Law)
Kisikosis	Knowledge and learning
Kisê-manitow	Little Sky Being
Kisêwâtitâtowin	Compassionate Creator
Kisêwâtitâtowin	Love
Kisêyiniw	Elder

Kisêyiniwak	Elders or Male Elders
Kisêyiniw	Derived from the word “kiséwew” which means protector or Old men
Kisêwâtisiwim	The capacity to be kind
Kiskinohamâkosowin Miyomasinahikasowin Wiyasiwêwin	Research Ethics Approval (Academic Accountability Law)
Kiskinowasohawew	S/he listens to her/his teaching,
Kistanowak	People of the North, Anishinaabe term
Kistêyihowin	Respect
Kiswepew sakiykan	Drunken Lake
Kîsikohk kê-ayâkik	Celestial bodies
Kîsopikiwak	Adult
Kîwetinohk kacakastek	Northern Lights; ghosts are dancing (Kanimithocik)
Kitimakeyitowin	Caring
Kôtâwînow Wiyasiwêwin	Natural law
Kwayask itatisiwin	Honesty in good clean living
Kwayasko mâmitoneyicikana Kwayaskotisahikewin	Ethics A course of conduct based on principle
Mahikan	Wolf
Mamâhtâwisiwin	Tapping into the mystery
Manitow Wiyasiwêwin	Sacred Law
Manatisiwin	The inner capacity of respect
Manâ-itôtamowina	Taboos
Maskepitoon	Broken Arm
Maskihkiy	Medicine
Maskwa	Bear
Maskwasewinak	Refers to the grassy meadows area

Maskwacîs	Bear Hills
Matotisân	Sweat lodge
Mâminawêyitatowin	Control the flaps from the wind, and is reflective of how we must work together as a Nation to protect the home
Mâmitonêyicikan	Thinking
Mawmosicikewin	Ceremony
Mâyitôtamowin	Violating the law
Mêtawêwin âtayôhkêwin	Play
Mihchetoskan	Blood lines or clans involved
Miskâsowin	Refers to finding one's sense of origin and belonging or finding 'one's centre' or 'one's self'
Miskinâhk	Turtle
Mistâpew	The Giant
Miyo- (prefix)	Meaning good
Miyô-Opikinâwasowin	Good Child Rearing
Miyo-wîcêhtowin	Good relations
Miyo-wîcêhtowin wiyasiwêwina	Good relation laws
Miyo-pimâtisiwin	Living the Good Life
Mîciwin	Food
Mîkiwâhp	Lodge/Tipi
Mosisepayiw	Becoming Visible
Mosôm	Grandpa
Naakgonige	Encourages Nishnaabeg people to make decisions slow and carefully and that warns to be careful or mindful (Anishinaabe)
Nacinekewin	Protocol
Nahihtamowin	The ability to develop keen sense of hearing
Nahâsiwin	The ability to develop alert and discerning faculties
Nakâyâtotamowin	Custom

Nakâyâtotamowin	Customary Law
Wiyasiwêwin	
Namoyakwayask mayitôtamowin, Nanahîtamowin	Not right/Wrong doing/Bad Obedience
Nanâskomowin	Thankfulness
Niyakâtôtamân	I am responsible for doing it
Niyânanosâp apasoya	Fifteen poles
Nohchawis	Uncle
Notikwêw Atayohkan Ahcâhk	Grandmother Spirit Star
Nanâtohk isîhçikêwina	Crafts
Nâh-nanâtawihik	Healing
Nêhiyaw	Indigenous Person (singular)
Nêhiyawak	Indigenous People (plural)
Nêhiyawaskiy	Indigenous Territory
Nêhiyawîhtwâwin	Indigenous Culture
Nêhiyawî-wîhowin	Traditional name
Nêhiyaw Iyinisowin ka masihtahk	Indigenous philosophy
Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin	Indigenous Knowledges
Neyaskeweyak	An Opening in the Forest (Ermineskin Cree Nation)
Nikamowina	Songs
Nimosôm	My Grandfather
Nîmihitowin	Dance
Nipisihkopahk	Land of the Willows (Samson Cree Nation)
Nipisihkopahk Ka kisci wekit awîyak	Land of the Willows citizens
Nîpisîhkopâwiyiniw	Willow Cree person
Nisitohtamowin	The ability to develop understanding

Nistamêyimâkan	The first-born man or beings
Nistawâyâw	Referring to Fort McMurray as the merging of three rivers
Nihtâwkowin	Birth
Nohkôm	My Grandmother
Nôtokêw	Old woman
Odebewin	Is 'the sound of the heart'; meaning the sound of my heart, and that my truth will be different from someone else's (Anishinaabe)
Ohcinêmowin	Indicates the use of language against creation, including such matters as gossiping, uttering threats, and profanity against animals or creation
Ohcinêwin	Meaning the breaking of law(s) against anything other than a human being
Ohwipaytahk	Decision making
Ohtaskanesowin	Origin
Okihcitâwiskwêw	The best translated from meaning mother/warrior woman
Okimâw	Chief
Omâciw Wiyasiwêwin	Fish and Wildlife Law
Opikinawasiwin	Clan
Oskawâsis	Newborn infant
Oskâpewisak	Male helper and learner in ceremony
Oskâyak	Youth
Oskawâsisak	Very young children
Oskîskewak	Female helpers and learners in ceremony or young women
Oskîskew	Female helper and learner in ceremony or young woman
Ospwâkan	Pipe
Otawâsimisimâwak	Children of Creator
Otisi	Belly button
Otôskwanihk	Refers to Calgary at the elbow

Pakoseyimowin	Hope
Paskwâw mostos	Prairie Bison
Paskwâwiniwak	Prairie people
Paskwâwinîmowin	"Y"-Dialect of our language
Paskwâwiyinînhâhk	Our Nêhiyawak country
Paskwâk	Refers to an open area with no trees and is derived from paskwâwaskosiya meaning prairie grass and is also seen in Paskwâwiyniwak, referring to the prairie people
Pasikowin	Standing up the challenges of today
Paspewin,	Freedom
Pâstâhowin	The breaking of a law(s) against another human being
Pâstâmowin	Indicates the improper use of language against human beings
Pâwistikowiyiniwak	People of the Rapids or A'aninin, White Clay People
Peyakowehaman	Family
Pîkiskwêwin	Oratory or Gossip
Pîkiskwâsowewin	Consultation Law
Wiyasiwêwin	
Pimâcihowin	The ability to make a living or livelihood
Pimâtiswin kâ-pimipayik	Life cycles
Pimâtisiwin kiskinwahamâkêwina	Life lessons or life teachings
Pisiskiwak	Animals
Pitahpek	Where the water verges off into the other direction or water enters the river or body of water
Piyisiw	Thunderbird
Sakitowin	Loving
Sakâwiyniwak	Woods Nêhiyaw/ Woods Cree
Sawêyihâtakosiwin	Blessings
Sâkitawâhk	Referring to the town of Peace River as the mouth of the river

Sâkihitowin	The act of being in love
Simâkansowiwîn	Policing
Sîpihkokîsikowiskwew	Sipiy, blue, kîsikow, day, iskwew, woman; Blue Sky Woman
Sîtoskâkowin	The foundation of value/ Assist or help each other/ Be there for someone
Sohkastwâwin	Resilience/ Strong/ Strength
Sohkeyimowin	The act of having strength, courage, or bravery
Sôhkêyihitamowin	Strong mind
Tânsi kesipaminsohk	Autonomy
Tapwewakeyihitamowina	Beliefs
Tapwewin	The act of telling the truth
Tapâhtêyimowin	Humility
Tâpwewokeyihitamowin	Faith
Wachiy	Notion of a big hill
Wahkohtahew	That we take an individual and treat them as family
Waskawîwin	Inner energy to move or develop a sense of personal initiative
Wapahtehiwewikamika	museums
Wawiyatwêwin	Humour
Wâhkôtowin	Kinship
Wâyino Wiyasiwêwin	Repatriation of Belongings and Ancestral Remains (Turning back/Returning Law)
Whetiko	A “supernatural, cannibalistic creature who lived in an “earlier time” or selfish
Witaskewin	Peace Hills
Witâhâwasiwin	Naming Ceremony
Wiyasiwêwin	Law, the act of weaving
Wiyasiwêwina	Laws
Wiyasiwêwin kosehtahk	Law making

Wiyâtikwêyimowin	Happiness
Wiyiniwak	People (can also use the term Ayisiniwak)
Wîcêw-	Meaning to come alongside or to support
Wîcêhtowin	Having or possessing good relations/Relationships
Wîsahêcâhk	Elder Brother; cultural hero and teacher
Wîtisânîhitowin	Governing familial relationships



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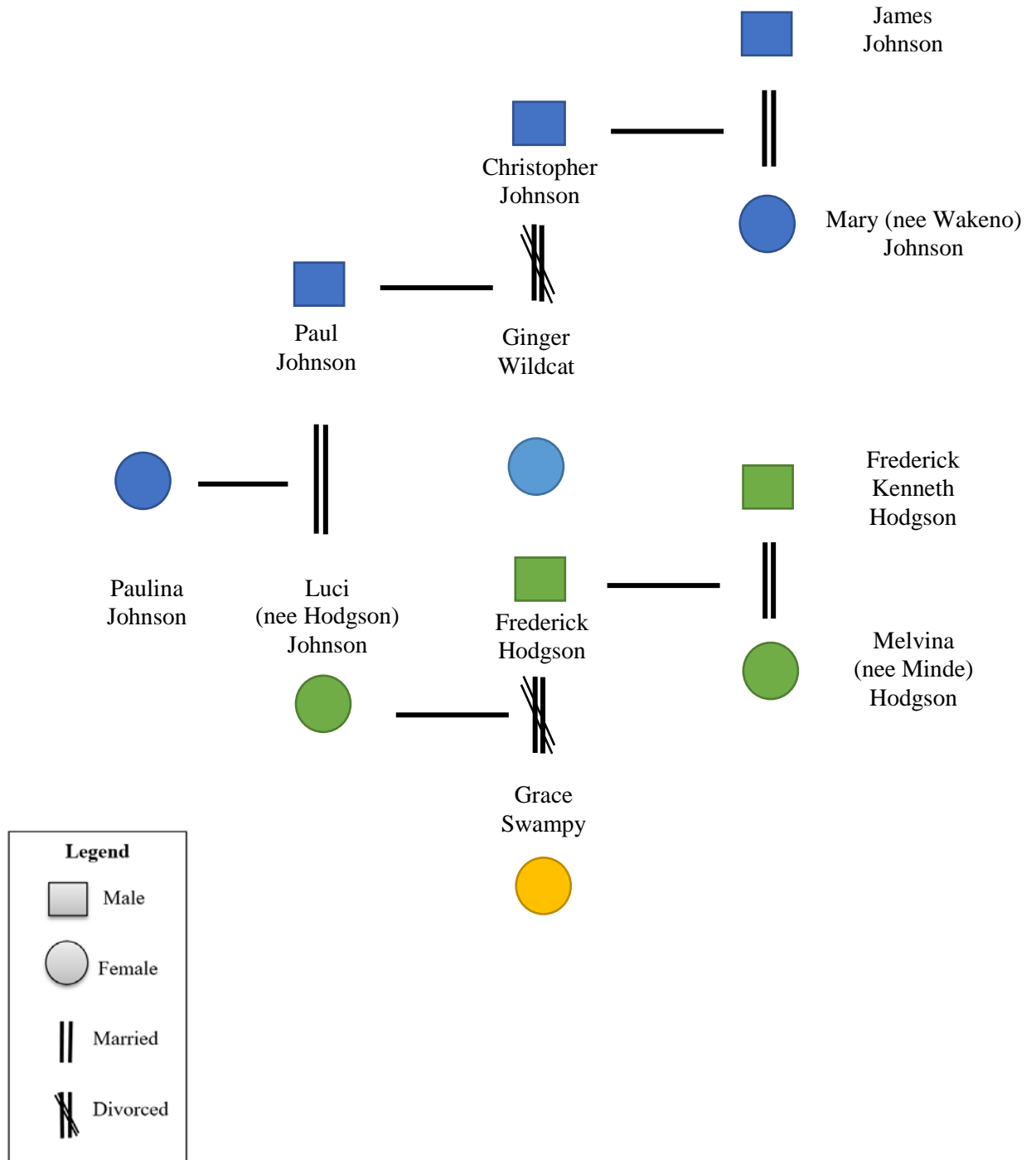
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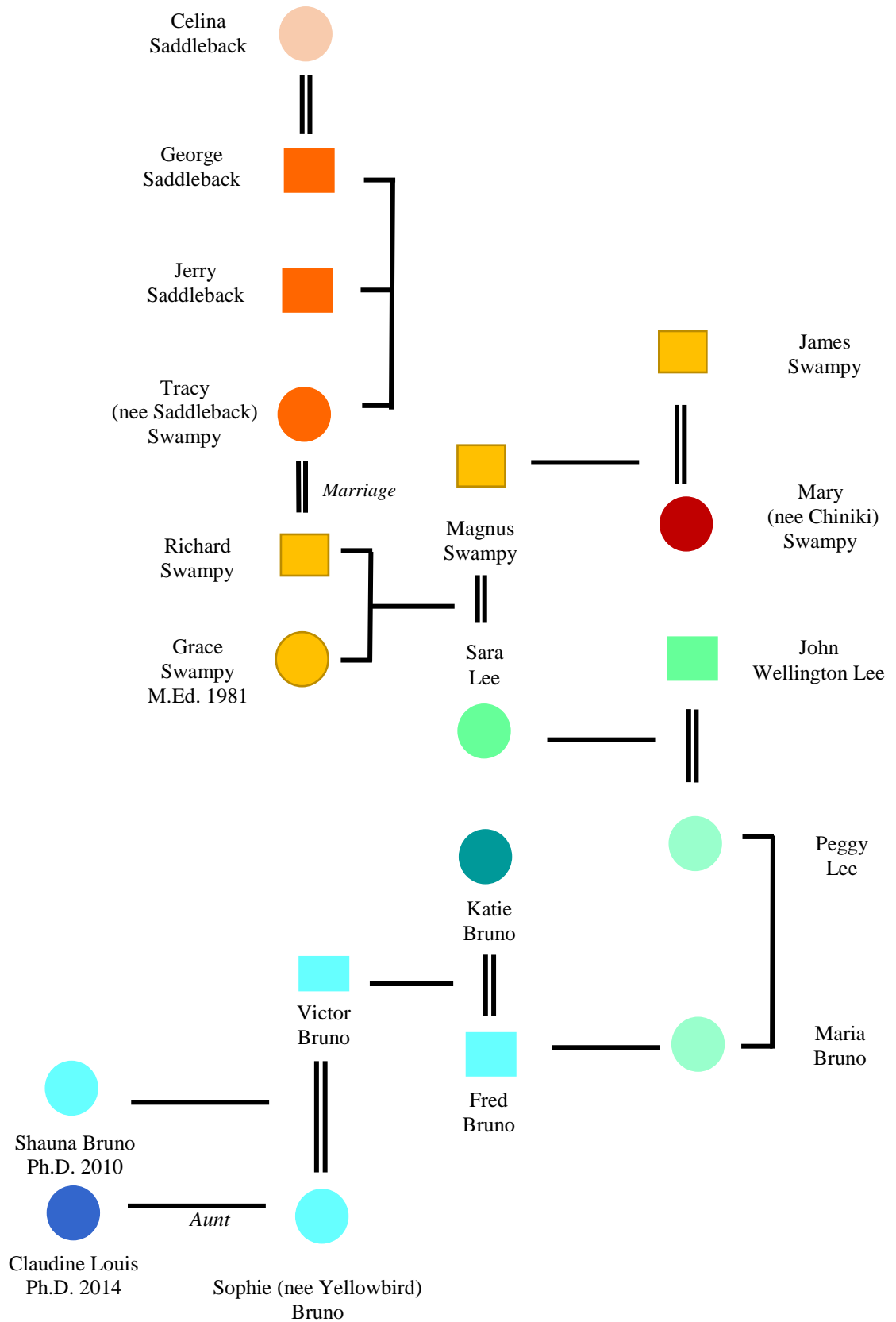
# Appendices

## Appendix 1 Johnson and Hodgson Kinship Diagram





**Appendix 3** Swampy, Bruno, and Saddleback Kinship Diagram



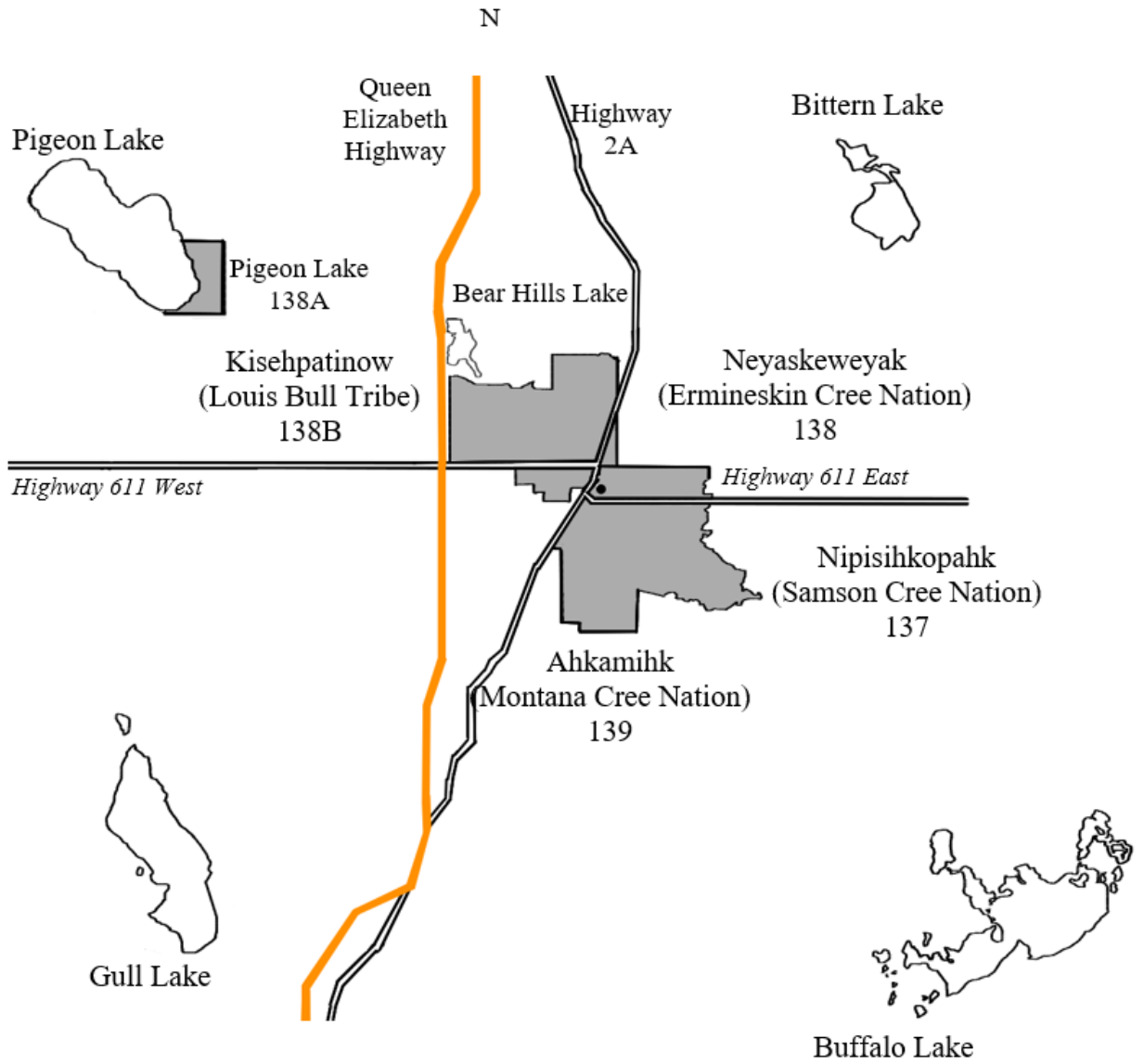
**Appendix 4** Map of Alberta



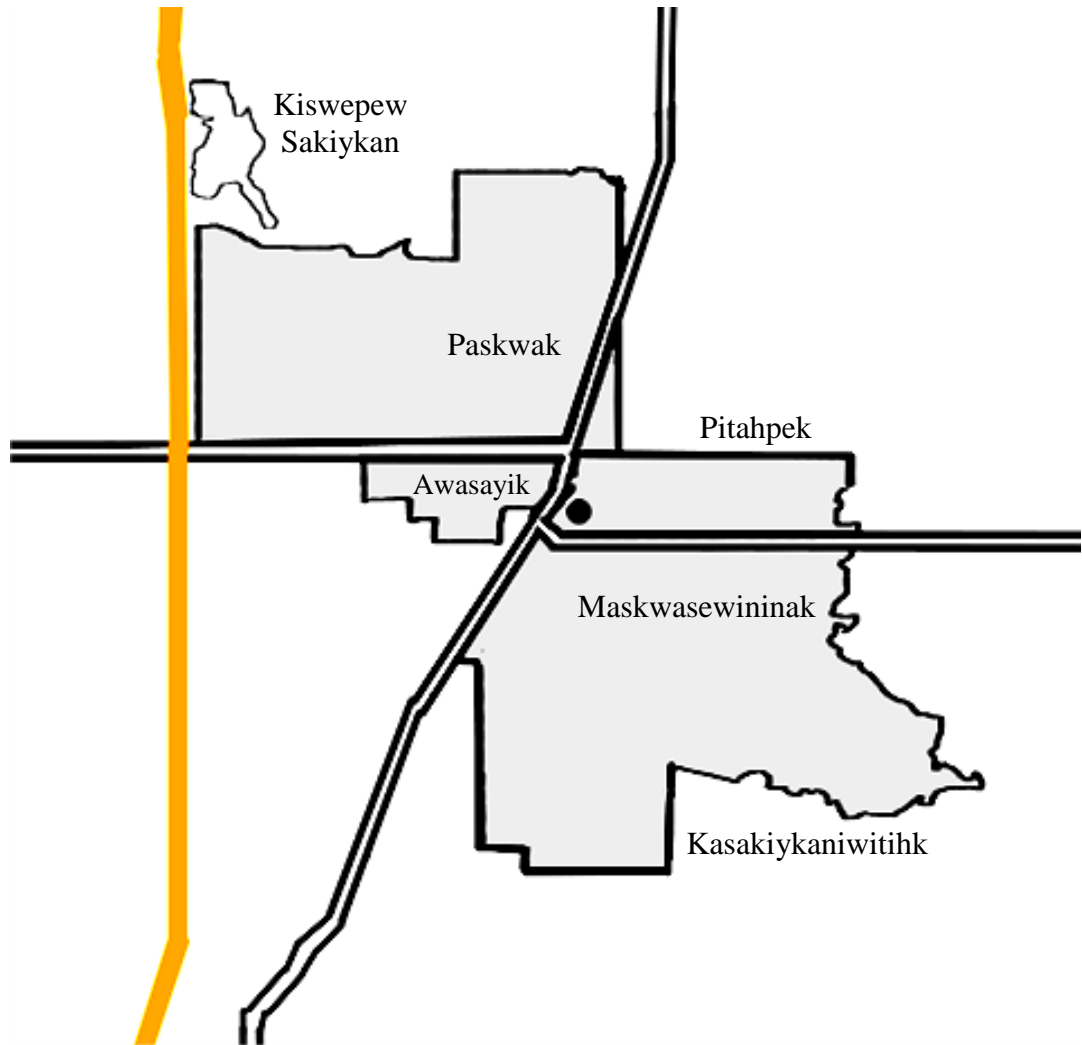
**Appendix 5** Map of Treaty 6 in relation to “Canada”



**Appendix 6** Map of Maskwacîs



**Appendix 7** Traditional Land use areas in the Territory of Maskwacîs





## Curriculum Vitae

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**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** Red Deer College  
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2007-2009

The University of Alberta  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
2009-2012 B.A. Double Major in Anthropology and History with Distinction

The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2012-2013 M.A. Public History

The University of Western Ontario  
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Columbia University  
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Indigenous Studies Summer Program at the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race  
Indigenous Rights and Policy Certificate  
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Indigenous Health and Well-being Initiative Summer School  
Topic: Indigenous Community Experiences in Community-Based Research: Best practices & Learning Lessons  
2015

The Fenimore Art Museum  
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The Otsego Institute for Native American Art History  
Topic: Materials and Materiality in Native North American Art History  
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Center of Study and Investigation for Decolonial Dialogues,

Decolonizing Knowledge and Power: Postcolonial Studies and  
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2016

The University of Western Ontario  
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**Honours and  
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Western Graduate Research Scholarship  
2012-2013, 2013-2017

National Indian Brotherhood Trust Fund Scholarship  
2016-2017

The American Philosophical Society  
Phillips Fund for Native American Research  
2015-2017

The University of Western Ontario  
Regna Darnell Graduate Award for Fieldwork in Sociocultural  
Anthropology  
2015-2016

Province of Ontario Graduate Scholarship  
2014-2015, 2016-2017

Indspire Scholarship  
2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016

The University of Western Ontario  
Dr. Valio Markkanen Aboriginal Graduate Award of Excellence  
2014-2015

Peabody Essex Museum Fellowship  
Salem, Massachusetts, U.S.A.  
2013

The University of Alberta  
The Faculty of Arts Outstanding Leadership Medal  
2012

The University of Alberta  
The Zita and Jack Rosen Award 2012  
2012

The University of Alberta  
 The Royal Bank of Canada Royal Eagle Award for Aboriginal  
 Students  
 2012

The University of Alberta  
 The Tkachenko Prize in Native Studies 152 (Introductory Cree)  
 2012

**Related Work  
 Experience:**

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 The University of Western Ontario  
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Instructor  
 Maskwacîs Cultural College  
 Maskwacîs, Alberta, Canada  
 2016

Research Assistant  
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 Franz Boas Documentary Papers Project  
 2013-2015

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 Royal Alberta Museum  
 Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
 2014

Native American Fellowship  
 Peabody Essex Museum  
 Salem, Massachusetts, U.S.A.  
 2013

**Publications:**

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*The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology*: Vol. 24: Iss. 1, Article  
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Johnson, P. and Munizzi, J. (2016) (Editors) *The University of Western Ontario Journal  
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 Cree Knowledge through Oral Narratives," *Totem: The University of Western  
 Ontario Journal of Anthropology*: Vol. 23: Iss. 1, Article 8. Pg. 70-81.