

**Imagining Possibilities for Shared Place:
Sense of Place Investigations into Local Connections and Visions for the Common
Ground Land on Tunnel Island, Kenora, Ontario**

by

Mya Wheeler Wiens

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth, and Resources

Natural Resources Institute

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

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ABSTRACT

The creation of working relationships between First Nations and non-First Nation peoples is the focus of the Common Land, Common Ground movement, which created partnership between the municipality of Kenora, three nearby First Nation reserves and the Grand Council of Treaty #3. This research explored, through the concept of Sense of Place (SOP), connections and visions people have regarding land gifted to this partnership on Tunnel Island (TI) in Kenora. Data were collected through interviews, modified focus groups, and participant observation. Results are organized into three themes, with 'Connections' revealing representations of people's sense of place of TI, 'Perspectives' outlining people's views about TI, and 'Visions', establishing people's thoughts on the future of TI. Recommendations include: using SOP research to authentically engage people in place connections to allow for holistic participation and engagement and recognizing at a institutional level that increased awareness and participation will not result in homogenized agreements.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

If I have learned anything, it is that places and people cannot be separated. In this past two and a half years, I found myself surrounded by wonderful, amazing people and I dare to hope my appreciation for these people will reach them in some form or another.

To the people and place: Thank you to my participants who willingly spent time with me, answering my questions, taking me seriously and trusting me: thank you all. The sense of gratitude I felt at times during the writing of this work was almost tangible, I wish I could hand it back in some form. And, of course, thank you Tunnel Island, with your many names, for taking me under your wing in ways I had not imagined possible.

To my Committee: Thank you for giving me a place to think about place.

John – Thank you for this experience. Your patience, guidance, calmness and friendship have made this thesis journey one of great and increasing joy. Thank you for always encouraging me and for sharing your time, family and quirky humour with me (and Josh).

Iain – Thank you for your insight and help in getting me going in the field. Your questions and concerns challenged me throughout but also helped me to find a voice for new ways of thinking. Thank you for also sharing your family, connections and canoe with Josh and I in Kenora.

Trish – It has been so wonderful having your help, thoughts, articles and clarifications, especially around places and senses of it. Thank you for your careful and ever so friendly time and energy to be there for me whenever I needed.

Rory – Thank you so much for being a part of this work and for taking it seriously from your own context. Your friendly support and kind words found Josh and I all around Kenora, during the time there, and it was always wonderful running into you around town. Perhaps, one day, we will be back!

To my Family and Friends: Thank you all, in so many ways, for your love and listening ears throughout. Special thanks to my family – Cora, you were integral for keeping me sane and what would I have done without that last minute proofing party?!

Josh - You are my place of all places, how can I thank you? You came with me, listened to me with enduring patience and truly gave me the *enoughness* I needed to be open to these things that require such vulnerability – people and places. I also want to add a note of thanks to our Little, yet to make an appearance, who has taught me a new kind of patience and a sense of deep clarity. It would have been a different thesis without you.

To the NRI: A big thanks to the wonderful staff, who constantly eased my troubles with a few miraculous words. Also thanks to the professors who gave me a hundred things to ponder and the arena in which to do so. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience in this program.

To the Funders: Thank you to the SSHRC/CURA project in Kenora who gave me the monetary support to live and work the past two years but also to the Common Ground Research Forum committee, especially Tieka (thank you!), who gave me their time, energy and continuing interest. Also thank you to the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Manitoba and the Coastal CURA project in Nova Scotia for funding that allowed me to travel to Halifax to present on my work.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

SOP – Sense of Place

TI – Tunnel Island

OFI – Old Fort Island

CLCG – Common Land, Common Ground

CG – Common Ground

NRM – Natural Resources Management

CSS – Critical Social Science

FN – First Nations

LOW – Lake of the Woods

RPCGCO – Rat Portage Common Ground Conservation Organization

CURA – Community University Research Alliance

Chapter 1

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1. Returning to Place

There is increasing interest in creatively redefining places and other geographic or spatial concepts (Hay 1988; Massey 1994, 2005; Relph 1976; Tuan 1977; Soja 1996). The result is inquiry, through notions of place-based politics and resource management, into the power of place to influence our lives (Agnew & Duncan 1989; Billig 2005; Casey 2001; Cantrill 1998; Cheng, Kruger & Daniels 2003; Hay 1988; Norton & Hannon 1997; Yung, Freimund & Belsky 2003). Individuals and groups are the focus of these studies in an attempt to uncover what they perceive regarding a place and, to a deeper extent, their values, feelings, and *sense of place* (Beckley 2003, 2007; Cresswell 2004; Hay 1998; Tuan 1977, 2004). This *sense* is a proverbial window into the values and visions of persons and communities regarding their resident locality and the environmental issues (assets and usage), community health, probability they will remain or desert the area...and the list goes on (Carter, Dyer & Sharma 2007; Beckley 2003; Hernandez et al. 2007; Norton & Hannon 1997). Inquiry into *sense of place* is itself a participatory process that has great potential to engage the public in policy and provide needed input, collaboration, and commitment to the community (Davenport & Anderson 2005; Hay 1998; Kopra 2006; Yung, Freimund & Belsky 2003).

1.1.2. Defining Sense of Place in Natural Resource Management

A person's sense of place (SOP) involves attachment to a particular place understood through three dynamic components: 1. physical geographic or biophysical experiences of a place, 2. social and cultural discourse or perspectives, and 3. personal identity of the individual

herself/himself (Beckley et al. 2007; Hay 1998; Relph 1976; Sack 1997; Tuan 1977). The strength of the SOP can be dependent upon the vibrancy of the historical and spatial experience as well as the temporal aspect or the amount of time spent in the place (Hay 1988; Soja 1996; Tuan 2004). It is believed that connection to land through one's "sense of place" or intimacy with the area, due to regular physical contact and presence, fosters awareness and engagement (Beckley et al. 2007; Casey 2007 in Cresswell 2004; Relph 1976). Developing this sense happens naturally, as it were, but can also be strengthened through personal reflection and public voicing of perceptions and knowledge, in other words, active participation in the area (Sampson & Goodrich 2009; Yung, Freidmund & Belsky 2003; Williams & Stewart 1998). It is this type of participation that is of importance to the project and organization in focus: Common Land, Common Ground in Kenora, Ontario.

1.1.3. The Context for Common Land, Common Ground in Kenora

The region surrounding the current city of Kenora in Ontario has been a place of movement of people for several thousand years. This is due to its geographical placement at the intersection where the Lake of the Woods feeds into the Winnipeg River on its journey north so people used these lakes and rivers to travel and connect (Common Ground Research Forum 2010). As people came and went they often stopped on a small island in the meeting point between the lake and river, which is currently known as Tunnel Island (TI) or *Waa'Say'Ba'Go'* (Common Ground Research Forum 2010). It has held other names in the past such as, *Ka'ga'pe'ke'che* meaning, "A place to stay over," in Ojibway and also Steep Rock Island (Common Ground Research Forum 2010). However, though TI might be a place of connection, it sits within a region where much conflict and struggle over resources and cultural identity has

occurred (Davidson-Hunt 2003). There has been historical separation between Aboriginal population and European settler groups in Kenora, primarily beginning with the signing of Treaty 3 in 1873, which allowed Canadian government access and control over the vast land (Morris 1880/1991). The relationship, established through this treaty and the subsequent Indian Act of 1876, created conditions of segregation, discrimination and overall inequality against the Aboriginal population (Wallace 2010). That said, not all relationships in Kenora and surrounding areas were subject to such extreme disconnection, however tension did exist enough to warrant the desire for the municipality of Kenora and the Grand Treaty Council #3, among other partners, to seek ways of resolving conflict and working together (Wallace 2010).

In 2000, the city of Kenora, Ontario and Grand Treaty Council #3 began an initiative called Common Land, Common Ground (CLCG) in response to an opportunity to work together. The goal was, “to foster constructive working relationships between First Nation and non-First Nation governments on a variety of mutual concerns in a region that is shared by all” (Dovetail Resources 2006, pg 2). In 2005, when Abitibi-Consolidated Inc. closed its paper mill in Kenora 390 jobs were lost (Common Ground Research Forum 2010), but a part of the aforementioned island near Kenora (Tunnel Island or *Waa’Say’Ba’Go’*) became available; provoking Common Land, Common Ground to make a bid for the land to be given over to the community (Wallace 2010). Abitibi consented to gift the land in a joint property ownership to the City of Kenora, Grand Council Treaty #3, and the three surrounding First Nation reserves with the intention that the land be used cooperatively. Given the history of the land, there are many individuals and organizations that have an interest in how it will be managed and the nature of development that will take place (Aiken 2008). Thus, the land use management implications for

sense of place, in connection to this Common Ground, were twofold: to develop a deeper understanding of the importance of Tunnel Island and a shared understanding from which to make management decisions. Also, the vision for and connection or re-connection to Tunnel Island within the CLCG initiative could be a beginning point for discussion around new ways of learning to live together.

1.1.4. Common Ground SSHRC/CURA Project

The research was a part of the broader Common Ground SSHRC/CURA project being carried out in Kenora and titled *Common Ground Research Forum: A Cross-Cultural Learning Platform for Resource Sharing*. The purpose of the broader project is to, “understand and build capacity for cross cultural collaboration and social learning for sustainability” (Sinclair 2009, 14). My research work was to directly address the long-term outcome of increasing, “the sense of place and connection to Common Ground” and also contribute to the first objective by beginning discussion about visions for Common Ground and building collaborative capacity among participants.

1.2 Purpose and Objectives

Awareness of an individual’s sense of place and connection to land is a possible key to building common visions/goals in order to create the economic and social bonds needed for sustainable livelihood. The **purpose** of this research was to understand how different people connect with place and how engaging this connection informs their perspective, vision and ability to imagine future possibilities for shared place.

I addressed the purpose with the following **objectives**:

- 1). To explore, through understanding their sense of place, peoples' past and present perspective of, and connection to the common ground land on Tunnel Island.
- 2). To investigate how sense of place changes through time, individually and collectively, regarding Tunnel Island.
- 3). To discern people's vision for the use of the common ground land on Tunnel Island.
- 4). To determine how perspective of the place impacts an individual's vision for the use of the land.

1.3. Research Methods

The geographic location of my research was the land owned cooperatively by CLCG, called Tunnel Island in Kenora, Ontario and the region surrounding it. I was working from a critical social science worldview (also called advocacy/participatory), which is reflected in my choice of strategy of inquiry and data collection procedures. Research is an iterative process that involves the researcher continually and I drew on the examples provided by Wilson (2008) who explores Indigenous research methods. Qualitative research is humanistic, often specific to context, aware of one's own lens or personal bias, and more holistic in nature than many quantitative research methods (Creswell 2009). Narrative inquiry is a qualitative strategy that influenced the data collection procedures and data analysis. I planned on using the data collection strategies described below and in Chapter 3 to satisfy the objectives.

1.3.1. Literature Review

The first step was an in depth literature review, the first iteration of this review was completed for the writing of the proposal, but my reading continued as the project progressed. I have focused on sense of place and its use within Natural Resource Management.

1.3.2. Participants

In order to elicit participation that was diverse, but also connected in some way to Tunnel Island and the CLCG initiative, I contacted the partner groups of CLCG. Snowball sampling (Berg 2004) within these organizations provided a list of potential research participants that reflected the desired range of diversity.

1.3.3. Data Collection

Several procedures were used to provide substantial information with which to satisfy the stated objectives and purpose. *Document collection* for a document review provided a background to historical perceptions of place. *Semi-structured interviews* were used as well as *group interviews* (drawing on focus group and modified sharing circle methods). *Participant observation* took place throughout the fieldwork to enrich the insights of my researcher by providing first-hand experience of the place.

1.3.4. Data Analysis

Narrative analysis through discourse was the guide in the search for storyline and thematic nodes throughout the research process. I began transcription and assessment in the field, as I planned to use the primary individual interview data to partially direct the topics for the group interviews. I employed NVivo™ software to assist in the organization of the data.

1.4. Organization of the Research

The thesis is organized into six chapters. Following the introduction, Chapter 2 considers the literature related to sense of place in natural resource management. Chapter 3 outlines the philosophical worldview, strategy of inquiry and data collection procedures used to fulfill the objectives and research purpose. In Chapter 4, I present a description of the study

area observed during my time in the field (my own sense of place of TI) while Chapter 5 contains collected data results. My overall conclusions of the analysis follows in Chapter 6.

Chapter 2 – Assessment and Summary of Related Literature

2.1. Introduction

The Common Land, Common Ground (CLCG) project is focused on a specific place: Tunnel Island. The community is attempting to build cross-cultural communication and deepen awareness of their connection to the place, which creates a unique opportunity.

Understanding perspectives of Tunnel Island, and senses of the place, is a useful starting point to building this awareness. However, ingrained in these connections and perspectives is the complexity of the dynamic historical discourse of Tunnel Island, the configuration of diverse cultural groups, and the SSHRC/CURA project's focus on developing collaborative learning outcomes. How can increasing a person's sense of place be helpful to this diverse community desiring a framework for communication and deeper awareness of their connection to land and each other?

This literature review introduces the concepts of space and place, as they set the stage for developing a definition in which to frame the complex interplay between perspective and sense of place (SOP) connections. The next section explains the multi-dimensional aspects of SOP, giving a definition of SOP that will guide the development of a framework to structure the fieldwork and analysis. This framework, outlined at the end of Chapter 2, also includes literature from contested space and discussion on the communication of a sense of place.

2.2. Place and Space: Re-conceptualizing the concepts

For much of academic history, the study of "space" and "place" was confined to geographic location on a map where regional geographers defined sections of area based on physical and occasionally cultural differences (Cresswell 2004; Johnston 1991; Relph 1976). Not

until the 60's and 70's did renewed interest in the concepts of place and space herald a shift in academic and also political and social perspectives. The popularity of space and place in the literature is, in part, due to numerous changes: from seeing places as experiences between humans and their physical environment to accepting other forms of knowing (i.e. traditional knowledge) (Berkes, Colding, & Folke 2003).

Space, the partner to place, has been described both as the unknown realm and the absent void (Casey 2001; Relph 1976; Tuan 1979), but also as the arena of possibility, in the context of ideologies and meaning making (Massey 1993, 1994, 2005). However, within sense of place (SOP) the focus is on place, which is complex, dynamic and generally thought to encompass deeply profound expressions of human habitation (Buttimer 1980; Hay 1988; Relph 1976). In the words of Windsor and McVey (2005), "Places, then, can be seen as a centre of human meaning, intentions and values...a focus of human emotion, sentiment, attachment and experience" (pg 148-149). Places are embedded with meaning that is individual in experience while being intertwined with social dynamics and can also be held collectively (Cantrill 1998; Carter, Dyer & Sharma 2007; Casey 2001; Feld & Basso 1996; Hay 1998; Massey 1994; Yung, Freimmel & Belsky 2003; Tuan 1979). Place is thought by some to be synonymous with concepts of home, comfort, the routine and the known lived world (Tuan 1979). However, other perspectives define place as a dynamic event where the intersection occurs between people, the self and the biophysical world (Cox & Holmes 2000; Massey 2005). Both perspectives, however describe place creation as a process: embedded in routine, chance, "pauses in time," tradition and revolution (Massey 2005; Tuan 1979, 2004).

Out of this dialogue, new understandings of the concept of place are being used in a broad array of disciplines with diverse implications. Some of the examples include: critiques of geometric power relationships within globalization (Massey 1993), the effects of environmental degradation (Stedman 2003), community displacement (Carter, Dyer, & Sharma 2007), conflict over resource allocation (Norton & Hannon 1997), and the use of architecture to unite or separate people (Billig 2005). However, one common thread in the literature is the importance of the connection between people and places, boldly called “the power of place” (Agnew & Duncan 1989). Research speculates that a loss of meaningful connection to place produces a collection of negative consequences: from oppression of people and the degradation of the environment, to mental health issues such as depression or anxiety (Billig 2005; Carter, Dyer & Sharma 2007; Escobar 2001; Relph 1976). Alternatively, connection to places can promote positive self-identity, community engagement, and care for one’s surroundings (Casey 2001; Hay 1998; Smaldone, Harris & Sanyal 2005; Relph 1976; Tuan 2004). This is effectively summarized in the words of Sack (1997); “Realizing that we are geographical increases the effectiveness of our actions, the clarity of our awareness, and the inclusiveness and generosity of our moral concerns” (p. 1).

Studying place is usually undertaken with a phenomenological or ethnographic approach to determine a person’s attachment to a place and/or the degree to which their identity is linked to a particular place (Billig 2005; Beckley 2003; Davenport & Anderson 2005; Hernandez et al. 2007). The findings, through this engagement process, can then be communicated by individuals and community into values and recommendations that can be useful to policy makers, developers, and other people group needs (Cheng, Kruger & Daniels

2003; Billig 2005; Norton & Hannon 1997). Doing so is called place-based politics, concentrating on particular places as unique conglomerations of social/cultural and biophysical aspects to create plans and programs specific to the needs and issues of each place (Davenport & Anderson 2005; Cheng, Kruger & Daniels 2003; Yung, Freimmel & Belsky 2003).

2.3. Sense of Place in Natural Resource Management

SOP research within natural resource management (NRM) has recently become the focal study for place-based politics due to the fact that “*Place is a powerful social influence in natural resource politics,*” (Cheng, Kruger and Daniels 2003, pg 89). Changes in policy regarding ecosystem management are now requiring more community input into resource decision-making regarding the creation of parks or reserves, allowing or limiting resource extraction and other NRM decisions (Natural Resources Canada 2008). Importantly, the concept of “collaborative planning” requires “*civility, dialogue, and building common ground,*” which will take more time and energy than just eliciting responses (Yung, Friemund, & Belsky 2002, p. 855, emphasis added). Community engagement of this depth can begin through SOP research; asking people about their connection to the place, provoking conversation and reflection, and then providing the results to the residents of the area (Norton & Hannon 1997). Davenport and Anderson (2005) speak of “place-based management,” which is a more appropriate term for describing management that is local, specific and oriented toward being suited to a place.

However, in order to build a research method, the concept of SOP needs more explanation, as it is an elusive topic, discussed in many different contexts and alluding to a variety of connections between three main facets: people, the self, and the physical environment. Commonly considered concepts regarding the degree of these connections are:

place attachment, place identity, and rootedness (Altman & Low 1992; Beckley 2003; Cantrill 1998; Sampson & Goodrich 2009). Some authors conclude that SOP is a person's attachment and/or identity (Altman & Low 1992; Beckley 2003), but others (Casey 2001; Hay 1998) assert that the concept encompasses these understandings but is broader in scope. I appreciate Hay's discussion on sense of place in which he includes both a 'sensing' and a 'bonding' element (Hay 1988). In a paper discussing his work in the late 1980's he defines *sensing* as including "perceptual, spatial, and structural constraints" while *bonding* involves "emotions, motives, insider traits, and taken-for-grantedness" (Hay 1988, pg. 162). During this study he interviewed 270 residents of Banks Peninsula in New Zealand regarding SOP and using an "interpretative approach...by examining: how sense of place developed and was lost; how it varied cross-culturally among modern and indigenous peoples; and how it developed in various contexts (Hay 1998, pg 247). The focus of his work was on, what he called, a "rooted sense of place" and an effort to understand and encourage community stability and sustainability (Hay 1998). These two elements proposed by Hay (1988, 1998) were created to encompass the many factors that develop and display SOP as well as to create the beginnings of a framework for evaluating SOP.

Many SOP studies also find the actual research process – inquiring about SOP – useful to produce community engagement and suggest it as a collaborative planning mechanism. One example is a study conducted in Ramat Gan, Isreal, regarding neighborhoods experiencing urban revitalization projects (Billig 2005). SOP was used as an indicator of the success or failure of new residential buildings introduced in six different places in Ramat Gan. Billig (2005) found SOP to be useful as an indicator but also suggested using SOP research in the early stages of planning. Architectural design and placement of the new buildings could be enhanced to create

development that is actually revitalizing to a neighborhood (Billig 2005). In another study, Carter, Dyer and Sharma (2007) explored the displacement of SOP and place-identity on the Sunshine Coast of Australia. This coastal region, they argue, has been subject to a struggle for place-identity resulting from continuous influx of immigrants and, more recently, global market driven landscape transformation through commercialization of the area to attract tourists (Carter, Dyer & Sharma 2007). SOP research was conducted to attempt to grasp the senses of place that are locally created as opposed to powerful outside forces (such as global markets) that create a place-identity that is inauthentic to the region. This study suggests the use of SOP dialogue to empower local communities and produce more collaborative engagement concerning development of the area (Carter, Dyer & Sharma 2007).

Finally, in a study that focused more upon the nuances of SOP attachment itself, Beckley et al. (2007) used an emergent method called Resident-Employed Photography to conduct SOP research in 4 communities in Canada. This is an example of the use of SOP to determine which factors, socio/cultural or natural environmental, have more influence upon a person's values and attachment to a place. In communities that depend upon the natural environment for their livelihood this is an important question that again links to planning prior to development. Though the study was inconclusive regarding which aspect was more important, they did uncover unique perspectives and also discovered, "after carefully considering the varied sources of their attachments, many respondents suggested that their attachments to these elements became both clearer and stronger" (Beckley et al. 2007, pg 926).

As a result, when a SOP is communicated it produces a more tangible SOP possibly creating a clearer understanding of one's attachment to a place. This understanding can be

called a perspective (or in many cases perception) of place, which some authors would view in conjunction with SOP stating, “A sense of place is the perception of what is most salient in a specific location, which may be reflected in value preferences or how that specific place figures in discourse” (Cantrill 1998, pg 303). However, much of the literature reflects a SOP that is more than a perception, as it includes the physical experience of the place (Hay 1998). I include this discussion on the perception of place in regards to the three examples I gave above (and others that I refer to) due to the interesting observation of the interplay between one’s *sense of place* and the *communication* of the sense of place. The emphasis here is not on the degree attachment, but on this complex and dynamic interplay.

In conclusion, within the context of this project where building relationship between people is important, I am using SOP as a platform to allow people to communicate connections. This is an important distinction because some SOP research focuses on understanding the factors of SOP and the degrees of attachment people have to places and they use a definition of SOP that sees SOP connections to be, very generally, affective bonds to places (Billig 2005; Tuan 1979). In other words, as Windsor and McVey (2005) point out, this understanding of SOP can lead to a conclusion that if one does not have an affective, “rooted” bond to a place then one does not have a SOP of that place. However, I prefer the understanding of SOP forwarded by academics such as Massey (2005) and others where SOP is more of an intersection of connecting factors that is constantly changing.

The use of SOP research to provide a platform for discussion around people connections to places was discussed in several examples above but I will note two example in particular. The case of the Sunshine Coast (Carter, Dyer & Sharma 2007) where SOP research was used to

determine that the communication of local people's SOP has been suppressed (the term used in the study). The research was looking at change occurring in the area and trying to understand whose ideas about the place were being heard and whose were being excluded. The other example Beckley et al. (2007), uses emergent methods to allow alternative ways of communicating one's SOP through a method called photo-elicitation. Therefore, using SOP research in this manner engages the individual/group in developing awareness of one's SOP connections by allowing them to creatively convey these senses of place to others (like myself). Drawing on the above discussion and literature, the definition of SOP that I choose to use in my research follows: **Places are a dynamic intersections between people, self, and the physical environment and a *sense of place* is an understanding of this intersection that engages and brings the three parts together through sensing and bonding aspects. These sensing and bonding aspects create a variety of dynamic *connections* and these are communicated through a diverse range of *perspectives*. Creating a platform to view SOP connections and perspectives about a particular place encourages participation in that place.**

2.4. Sense of Place in relation to Contested Space

As stated in my definition, SOP research is useful to begin dialogue regarding places, exploring values and perspectives. However it would be naïve to suggest that such exchange of ideas can deliver a succinct outcome. Instead, due to the individual and experiential nature of SOP, one can expect a cacophony of voices and place-meanings to emerge (Carter, Dyer & Sharma 2007; Escobar 2001; Yung, Freimund & Belsky 2002). Thus, as asserted by Yung, Freimund & Belsky (2002) these *differences* must be explored, along with commonalities.

Exploring differences is a facet of contested space literature, which provides another part of a framework for exploring perspectives of sense of place.

Contested space is defined as, “geographic locations where conflicts in the form of opposition, confrontation, subversion, and/or resistance engage actors whose social positions are defined by differential control of resources and access to power” (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, p. 18). Much of the literature is devoted to visible conflicts regarding spaces (or places) such as West Ireland and Palestine (Morrissey & Gaffikin 2006; Peace 2005) and/or contested spaces within urban environments, such as the revitalization of neighborhoods in Ramat Gan, Isreal that created conflict between old and new residents (Billing 2005). It is less common to find discussion regarding place contestation in SOP literature, but it is just as relevant, especially in place-based management (Massey 1994). The underlying contested nature of a place is often taken for granted, but it is important to acknowledge that a specific geographical place will contain diverse connections and perspectives from people who each come with an eclectic collection of experiences and ways of understanding.

An example of the need to link SOP research to contested space can be found in a study by Yung, Freimund and Belsky (2003) who focused on an area called the Rocky Mountain Front in Montana. This is a large area of land east of the continental divide and home to federal park preserves, private ranches, rural communities and game reserves. This place has been experiencing change in demographics, as the wealthier class moves in and attention to conservation increases. The researchers used SOP methods to flesh out the various images, values and visions regarding area and discovered it was important to recognize the differences along with the commonalities between people. They suggest, “the need for place research that

recognizes both shared and contested meanings, without presuming the presence or absence of either” (Yung, Freimund & Belsky 2003, pg 857). SOP literature can explore divergent place meanings, attachments, identities and perspectives allowing for more meaningful participation and collaboration (Sampson and Goodrich 2009; Yung, Freimund & Belsky 2003). Accordingly, I plan to focus on uncovering the perspectives of place that will include differences and commonalities.

2.5. Communicating a Sense of Place

In summary, SOP literature connects with contested space literature because of the inherent differences between people’s experience of place. In my definition above, I propose that how people connect to place is then communicated through a variety of different perspectives. A particular concern implied by contested space literature is the different meanings a place can have for different people and then how this is communicated. One notion is the concept of “inscribed place.” This “implies that humans ‘write’ in an enduring way their presence on their surroundings” (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, 13). Thus, collective and personal experiences with a geographic place are communicated to others through this inscription. Examples might be signs, trails, items left behind, and other things that show human presence in the place. As Lowenthal (1979) notes in an essay on “Age and Artifact,” all kinds of things can be remembered in a place, from a particular geographic feature to a crumbling building. However, there are disturbing aspects of remembering such as, what gets remembered, why and how. The creation of a sense of *pause*, where, for a period of time, a place is held in individual or public memory is considered by Tuan (1979). This manifestation of

the communication of a sense of place has both positives and negatives. As Lowenthal (1979) states,

“The past, like the present, is always in flux. When we identify, preserve, enhance, or commemorate surviving artifacts and landscapes, we affect the very nature of the past, altering its meaning and significance for every generation in every place...for even to appreciate the past is to transform it” (1979, pgs 124-125).

So these inscriptions can be dynamic because they represent a person’s perception or sense of a space and place (Massey 1994, 2005) but great care must be taken when attempting to communicate a shared understanding of a place. Perhaps, resolving issues of contestation does not mean “naming” or choosing one definition or vision of a place. Rather it means creating a framework for alternative and divergent perspectives to be heard and remain present within the narrative of the place (Wisniewski 2005).

2.6. Summary with Proposed Framework

The beginnings of a SOP framework that might begin to create a process for continued understanding and dialogue hopefully come from allowing a person to explore their own SOP by explaining their connection and perspectives of the place, such as TI (Cantrill 1998; Escobar 2001). These perspectives will be varied and depend on 3 factors in SOP: 1) physical experience of the geographic location, 2) social and cultural perceptions that include discourse found in signs, historical and current documents, news media, and societal communication, and 3) personal identity. The figure below gives a visual representation of this concept.

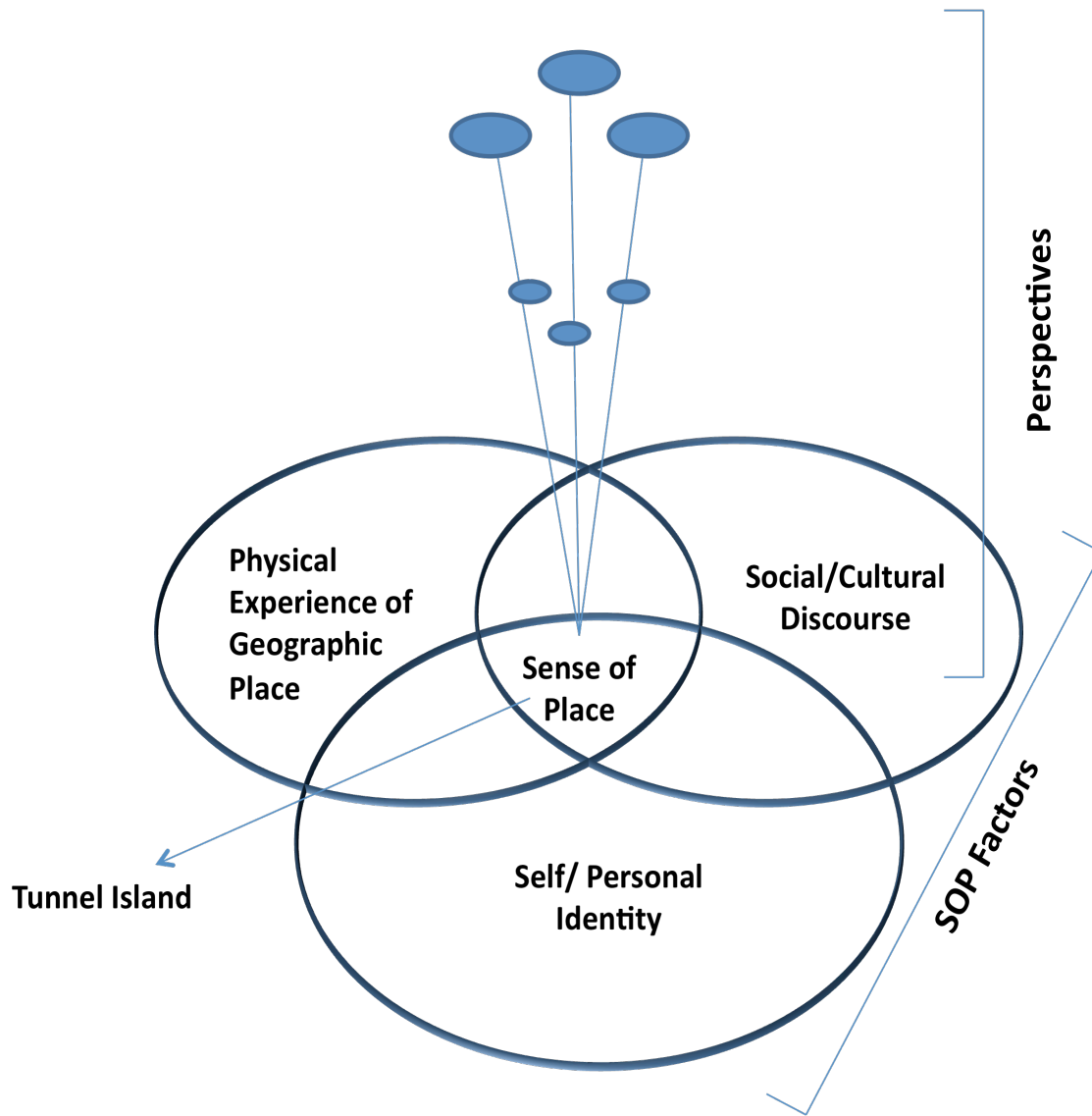


Figure 1. Sense of Place Framework¹

It is useful to keep in mind that this is a representation of something that is dynamic, because one cannot determine the SOP of a person. Rather the researcher can identify some of the connecting SOP factors that might influence some of the perspectives communicated about

¹ This figure is a modification of two figures depicting the three “forces” affecting human action: Social and Political Processes, Social and Cultural Meanings, and Biophysical Attributes and Process. Each force is a circle and where the circles intersect is “place”. (Cheng, Kruger and Daniels 2003, p. 90). I have also included aspects of Sack’s (1997) figure depicting the relationship between “forces” and “perspectives” (p. 28). The terms I use are derived from my own reading of the literature leading me to speak of “factors.”

the place. TI is the focus of this particular research and there for it will be the focus for these SOP discussions. Perspectives stem out of this complicated intersection between the three SOP factors, in other words, the SOP connections. Drawing on this framework, my worldview is incorporated through narrative inquiry using data collection procedures that I feel uncover the beginnings of each part. I revisit this framework in the conclusions of Chapter 6 where I begin to explore the diversity of relationships revealed through my research.

Chapter 3 – Research Methods

3.1. Philosophical Worldview

A philosophical worldview is defined by Creswell (2009, 6) as, “a general orientation about the world and the nature of research.” I would add that this is a way of living, molding and guiding the person or researcher, but is also created by the lifestyle or life choices of that person and other persons sharing the same general perspective. The worldview that shapes and directs me is called Critical Social Science (CSS) (Neuman, 2000), or an Advocacy/Participatory paradigm (Creswell, 2009). It stems from a long tradition of critical theory including reference to the works of Marx, Freud, Adorno, Marcuse, Habermas and many others (Neuman, 2000). I immediately identified with these writers, especially writings by Marx and Marcuse that I had studied in some depth during my undergraduate courses in international development and politics. Indeed, there are many connections between my current worldview and CSS, which I think is not a surprise, but rather a confirmation of the ways I currently think and plan to do research. In the following sections, I will explain the personal development of my own critical social science and the interconnections between my worldview, my project choice, my strategy of inquiry and the data collection procedures I used during this thesis.

My worldview, most closely based in critical theories and similar to CSS as a research guide, shapes the way I live: I am constantly uncovering structures and ideologies within myself, through external and internal dialogue, and then acting upon this newly discovered “truth.” I believe this to be partly a product of my cross-cultural upbringing in Indonesia and subsequent experiences in other countries, including my choice to study and reside in Canada. I questioned

my personal need to travel to other countries and deal with issues in foreign fields, and then I decided to work, instead, on a project close to Winnipeg, dealing with issues concerning this area and my personal sense of place. As I explored my connections to land and people around me, I decided to research connections between people and Tunnel Island in Kenora. This thinking, I realized as I read literature about research paradigms, is very indicative of a scientist practicing CSS.

From my perspective, CSS is a complicated paradigm, in contrast to the simplified, deterministic and still dominant paradigm of post-positivism. I found much of the recent literature to contain various critiques of the current understanding and use of CSS with the author's own rendition and suggestions for bettering the process (Bohman, 1999; Baert, 1998; Wisniewski, 2005). According to Cresswell's (2009) understanding of this paradigm, various feminist and Indigenous critiques and other strains such as Critical Race theory are also a part of the large literature. This is encouraging because, as I read Wilson's (2008) definition of an Indigenous research paradigm, I agreed with many of his underlying beliefs regarding knowledge and ways of knowing. These include a deep regard for relationships with both people and places and also redefining the way we conduct ourselves during research by prioritizing the relationships over the goals and outcomes (Wilson 2008). Though my heritage is not Indigenous to this land, I was glad to receive this guidance and incorporated these understandings into the overall project. As I draw this section to a close, there are 4 components I feel are key to my understanding of this worldview and its research foundations. First, it is qualitative and challenges the dominant form of knowledge forwarded by positivism (Neuman, 2000). Second, internal criticism and self-examination have been present since the

beginning and provide a mode for the practitioner of CSS to practice upon herself/himself (Sayer, 2009). Third, it has the ability to embrace disagreement within dialogue so that no participant should need to transform to a majority view (Wisnewski, 2005). Last, and the most inspiring to me, is the quality towards uncovering illusions and structural powers in order to stimulate transformation (Baert, 1998). These components strongly influenced my choice of strategy of inquiry.

3.2. Strategy of Inquiry – Narrative Inquiry

I chose to use Narrative Inquiry because it presents an approach to research that is compatible with my critical worldview since it is a “mode of knowing” (Lyons & LaBoskey 2002). This iterative knowing also determines procedures for data collection and the analysis, which is confusing because one can use a narrative approach but also collect narratives (Chase, 2008; Polkinghorne, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Also perplexing is the scale of narrative; the researcher can develop a meta-narrative of a situation, collect a life-history of a single person, or explore (as I did in my research) the stories regarding a specific place from a variety of perspectives (Berg 2004). It is the act of storytelling that is of particular interest to me within narrative inquiry, which is argued to be an event in itself (Berg 2004; Maynes, Pierce & Laslett 2008). Sense of place literature, according to Massey (1994) and others, suggests deepening through contact, which can be strengthened through recalling experiences. In this way, my work was able to begin to fulfill one of the objectives of the overall CURA project, which is to increase sense of place (Sinclair 2009) by soliciting stories by individuals and groups regarding Tunnel Island through the use of narrative inquiry.

Furthermore, I appreciate the fact that the qualitative researcher enters into the discourses of the field: gathering stories, interpreting them and weaving them together based on the research objectives (Barton 2004; Chase 2008). Narrative Inquiry also played a key part of two other important components of this project: the cross-cultural aspect, by including an indigenous worldview (Barton 2004; Koch 1998; Wilson 2008), and bridging sense of place to contested space concepts in the act of “creating, sustaining and mediating conflict” (Briggs 1996). In the context of the Common Land Common Ground (CLCG) partnership, which is cross-cultural, I suggest a narrative strategy created space for alternative ways of storytelling and understanding connections to place (Wilson 2008). Concurrently, it allowed contested or divergent place-meanings to be written into the analysis in the form of narrative discourse (Briggs 1996; Gelcich et al. 2005).

3.3. Data Collection Strategies

Both Sense of Place and Narrative Inquiry literature contributed to my choice of data collection strategies, as did my worldview. The spatial and temporal (time-related) aspect of sense of place relates to the use of particular strategies to uncover the sense of place of the moment (those collected during my field study) but also to allow the dynamism of Tunnel Island connections and perspectives to become apparent. Collecting data is in itself an event in that participants are elicited and predetermined topics/themes become the focus of questions (Berg 2004). Research, conducted in the field, therefore must create its own sense of place, which involves the participants and is then interpreted by the researcher. I employed qualitative strategies – interviews, participant observation, and document review – with modification derived from emergent methods such as sharing circles. In order to link these methods into the

purpose and objectives of the thesis, I have created Table 1 (below), displaying the interaction between objectives and methods.

I conducted a brief document review to ascertain past perspectives regarding Tunnel Island and to better understand the context surrounding the area. Throughout my time in the field, I was a participant observer and collected more informal data by spending time in the actual place. Concurrently, I also conducted an in-depth interview with each participant and then invited her or him to participate in a group interview. The group interviews allowed some verification of the data collected during the individual interviews, but also accomplished data collection regarding the sense of place of Tunnel Island in a different setting. Narrative inquiry often employs ethnographic forms in order to collect the life history of a person, which entails becoming very close to the participant through many hours of interviewing (Taylor & Bogdan 1998). I did not use quite this approach because my focus was people’s connection to a place but the combination of methods did allow me a proverbial “window” into the life-history or story of a place; Tunnel Island. In other words, by involving the participants in individual interviews and then bringing them together into group settings, I hoped to deepen or broaden awareness of individual and group senses of place regarding Tunnel Island.

Objectives	Data Collection Procedures
1. To explore, through engaging their sense of place, peoples’ past and present perspective of and connection to the CGCL land on Tunnel Island.	1. Document Review 2. Interviews (Indiv/Group) 3. Participant Observation
2. To investigate how sense of place	1. Document Review 2. Interviews

changes through time, individually and collectively, regarding Tunnel Island.	(Indiv/Group)
2. To discern peoples' vision for the use of the CLCG land of Tunnel Island.	1. Interviews (Indiv/Group) 2. Participant Observation
3. To determine how perspective of the place impacts an individual's vision for its land use.	1. Interviews (Indiv/Group)

Table 1 – Objectives in relation to data collection procedures.

3.3.1. Document collection for review

To begin to grasp the past perceptions as they related to objectives 1 and 2, I gathered documents pertaining to TI to conduct the beginning of a simple narrative discourse analysis that will take place throughout the analysis of the research. During this review, I searched for storylines or themes (Gelcich et al. 2005; Wood & Kroger 2000) regarding peoples' perspectives of Tunnel Island. The document search was bound in three ways: 1) Documents between the years 2009 and dating back to the North-West Angle Treaty 3 of 1873, 2) The type of document was government and private organization documents and newspaper articles, and 3) Documents that contained the topic of Tunnel Island. The reason for the large segment of time (1873-2009) is related to the importance of the Treaty 3 to CLCG (Common Ground Research Forum 2010). However, I mostly focused on more recent documents pertaining to the last 50 to 60 years that would be of importance to the individuals I interviewed. I contacted local sources for help with this document search, such as the museum curator or historically minded

CLCG partners that could direct me to collections and helped me to limit the amount of documents and time spent on this review.

3.3.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

Personal Narratives have been used to create situations for people to share their stories regarding an event or place (Maynes, Pierce & Laslett 2008). These stories are dynamic, and the telling of them, events (Koch 1998) and, thus as I mentioned above, interviewing creates its own sense of place (Berg 2004). Beckley (2007) and others have taken this aspect into account by using emergent interview techniques involving photo-elicitation or photo-voice (see also Kopra 2006). Semi-structured interviews, on their own or with a form of photo-elicitation, allow for a somewhat formal but also conversational space within which to hear people's stories and thoughts (Berg 2004; Chase 2008; Taylor & Bogdan 1998). This form of interview is loosely guided with topics and possible follow-up questions for suggestions (Berg 2004). Sense of Place research often employs this type of interview, focusing on particular topics but giving the participant liberty to lead the discussion (Cantril 1998; Hay 1998; Yung, Friemund & Belsky 2003).

I used this interview method to gather stories regarding Tunnel Island, which included actual experiences on the island and/or stories relating to the island. This is derived from the 3 categories of the aforementioned framework: Physical experience of Tunnel Island, Social/Cultural discourse, and Personal Identity. The issues of perspective and vision were addressed directly in the interviews, however they became clearer through the collection of stories and experiences that influence a fluctuating sense of place. The object was *not* to establish an authoritative individual or group perception and/or vision, but rather to create a

space for ongoing discussion and nurturing of valuable community connections. Both interview guides, for the in-depth interview and the modified focus group, are attached in the appendix.

Due to the intensive nature of these data collection procedures and the time that was required to interview each person and also conduct a modified focus group with the same people, I proposed to find at least 20 participants. I decided on this particular number partially due to time constraints, limiting myself to a manageable number of people, but also in consideration of the literature (Seidman 1998). I allotted roughly 60 minutes of time per interview and planned to use a simple common-use room or allow the participant to suggest a place that would be most comfortable for them (i.e., the home or a café/restaurant setting). Prior to the interview, the participant received a cover letter with a brief explanation including: the length of time of the interview, request for their consent to be recorded and have their responses used in this research and other possible publications, information concerning confidentiality, a very brief discussion of the focus of my research, and encouragement for the participant to bring photos or items pertaining to Tunnel Island that might help them elucidate their stories.

This research focused on stakeholders of CLCG and the perspective and visions of those who have invested interest in the area. Therefore, I focused only on residents of Kenora and surrounding FN reserves who have previous knowledge of the island and perhaps some knowledge of the CLCG. It was an intentional bias in order to produce needed input by those in the community whose values and concerns regarding Tunnel Island need to be included. Accordingly, to gather information from people connected to CLCG and having some firsthand knowledge and experience of Tunnel Island, I contacted the partner organizations of CLCG and

use a snowball method to elicit volunteers. Finding participants in this way also provided access to potential gatekeepers within the community and helped to create representation of substantially different type of connections and perspectives, as the partners are diverse and represent various stakeholders on Tunnel Island. It was also possible that, during the beginning of my fieldwork, I might find potential participants simply by spending time on the island and talking to people. In my selection of participants, I attempted to represent a range in the following groups: ethnicity (First Nations, non First-Nations and Métis), age, gender, group attachment, and years residing in the area. Some prior experience and knowledge of the island was required.

3.3.3. Modified Focus Groups & Sharing Circles

The plan was for the individual interviews to take place and then also to invite the same participants into a group setting to conduct another type of interview. Focus groups contain very different dynamics than one-on-one interviews, creating an arena for the study of social interactions (Berg 2004; Taylor & Bogdan 1998). A person's sense of place is an individual, biophysical, but also socio/cultural experience and therefore, eliciting discussion in a group setting potentially brought some of these collective elements forward. When I elicited participants for the first interview, I also explained the modified focus group, with consent for both in the consent form (whether they attended or not). Participants who attended the modified focus group would have also been interviewed individually, which allowed me to use the group to validate information from the individual interview. I decided to follow a similar line of questioning in the modified focus group that I used in the individual interview, to create a space that would allow participants to share their SOP with each other. Focus group

literature suggested a simple guide to steer the discussion, which is also attached in the appendix though I was aware that the focus of the main topics could shift in the field as I became more aware of the issues in context (Wood & Kroger 2000).

The type of modified focus group I conducted is based upon ideas I gleaned from literature both on Focus Groups and Modified Sharing Circles. Focus groups have been used most often by industries eliciting feedback regarding products or advertising campaigns (Berg 2004). It appears to be very useful in getting specific information from people that can be used in a variety of ways (Berg 2004). The second procedure comes from modified community sharing circle traditionally used by Indigenous people to share information and discuss issues (Lavallee 2009; Rothe, Ozegovic & Carroll 2009). It is an emergent method and therefore there is not much in the literature, although in reality little can be written or said about the traditional use, as the ways of conducting a circle are totally dependent upon the community's particular customs. As a non-Aboriginal who is not from the area, I had absolutely no authority to facilitate a sharing circle (Rothe, Ozegovic & Carroll 2009). However, I could and did borrow from the wisdom in the method and facilitated a group discussion - where we sat in a circle and used the key elements I describe below.

Key elements of sharing circles that I would like to highlight include: the importance of relationality within the circle (Wilson 2008) and 5 tenants outlined by Rothe, Ozegovic & Carroll (2009), who conducted a circle regarding injury prevention with First Nations communities, to create a safe area for speaking (p. 338). The 5 tenants, well summarized by these researchers, are verbatim as follows:

“Turn-taking is ensured by the use of a talking stick, which is given to the next person wishing to speak. Once a participant has the symbol in hand, he or she is expected to

‘speak from the heart’ –to express their feelings. Furthermore, participants are expected to ‘listen from the heart’ –to listen without judgment, with open minds, always respectful of the person with the talking stick. Participants are to ‘speak spontaneously’ and not rehearse what to say when it is their turn. Participants are to ‘speak leanly’ meaning speaking without embellishment” (Rothe, Ozegovic & Carroll 2009, pg. 338).

Using these tenants to set the stage for the group interview, were my attempt to create a respectful, solemn setting to discuss values, perceptions and possible visions for Tunnel Island.

The relationality of the circle is a piece from Wilson’s (2008) book discussing an Indigenous worldview. Relationality is the inherent valuing of relationships between people, with the environment, and to the cosmos (Wilson 2008). My worldview, though it is not Indigenous, also values relationality in the process of discovering and creating knowledge. Using group interviews with the same people I interviewed will increase the relationship between the participant and myself, between the participant and people in the community, and the participant’s connection to the research work itself.

As I mentioned above, I developed a guide to help me facilitate a group. I hosted 3 groups with a total of 12 people, which allowed enough time for each person to voice some thoughts within the 2-hour time frame. The first group consisted of 5 people, the second 3, and the last held 4 people. Each time, I used a room in a common area that could be reserved in advance, once at the recreation centre and twice at Woman’s Place. These meetings took place when it was most convenient for the people attending with a break for refreshments and, though I had their written consent, I gathered their verbal consent to record the event. These discussions accomplished; validation of individually gathered information, more discussion regarding people’s perspectives of Tunnel Island and their vision for possible usage, and

allowed space for respectful and meaningful voicing of connections to the place to other people in the community.

3.3.4. Observation

As a researcher in the field, I was constantly observing, acting, and re-acting to the place and perspectives of Tunnel Island. By including this procedure into my collection strategies, I instituted the ability to observe, record and gather data on the actual place of Tunnel Island (Taylor & Bogdan 1998). It was possible for me to participate first hand in using and observing the use of Tunnel Island by conducting several field studies, during my stay in Kenora. I conducted three formal studies and weekly (if not more) informal observational studies. The formal studies were simply one to two hour time periods where I sat and recorded people and their activities. Informal observation consisted in simply spending time on the island and observing the activities taking place while walking around (direct observation) and also in participating in events that occurred (Bernard 1988).

I was interested in the kind of events that take place (such as official tours of the island) but also in one event in particular that occurred; the fall feast. The date of this feast is announced by an Aboriginal elder in the community and then organized by various actors with the most recent feast being the responsibility of the Common Ground Research Forum. I felt that the feast presented a unique opportunity to witness what has been called in the SOP literature as, “the event of place” (Massey 1994).

3.4. Overview of Participants during the Field Research

I interviewed 25 participants, in total, 24 of them during my field study time and one in February when I returned to conduct one additional modified focus group. My goal was to talk

to people who were connected with TI and had spent time there recently (at least within the last couple years). I tried to talk to enough people to get something of a full picture of the different connections, activities and perspectives that take place on TI. I do feel I was able to hear from a representative assortment of the diversity of people that have some connection to TI and therefore to hear a variety of perspectives and visions. Also, 12 of these participants were able to attend a small group session, which allowed for discussion in a different setting around the same SOP questions I had asked during the individual interviews. Here is a very brief breakdown of the people who participated in my study as interviewees:

Gender	Place of Residence	Age (Approx.)	Ethnicity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •11 Female •14 Male 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 Tunnel Island •17 Kenora •3 Dalles •1 Shoal Lake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •20-40 yrs - 7 •40-60 yrs - 14 •Retired/Elder - 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •7 FN •2 Métis •16 Euro-Canadian

Table 2 – Demographics of participants

The categories of both age and ethnicity were drawn from my conversations with people but I did not ask specifically.

3.5. Analysis

Narrative Inquiry as a strategy of inquiry, also influences the way I analyzed and presented the data collected (Lyons & LaBoskey 2002). I conducted a narrative discourse analysis of the data I gathered including: a document review, interviews (group and individual), and the observations in my field notes. I used the organizing software called NVivo™, which aided me in developing the storylines and thematic nodes of the interwoven connections and perspectives of Tunnel Island.

Narrative Inquiry, as I mentioned above, focuses on themes and storylines that become evident during engagement with the data. My use of the concept of Sense of Place encouraged this type of data, especially due to my use of semi-structured interviews and modified sharing circle focus groups. I did not gather data that enabled a scientific approach to sense of place attachments, in other words measuring SOP, but rather data that encouraged participation by those involved and the development of a rich collection of stories heard and recorded. My use of Nvivo™ allowed me to filter through the data to find themes that related to what I heard and experienced and then to my objectives.

The creation of nodes in NVivo™ can occur in various ways and I chose to ground the node creation in the SOP concept by organizing the data into *connections*, *perspectives* and *vision perspectives*. The framework from Chapter 2 is a simple way to understand this organization because *connections* looks at the basic factors of SOP while *perspectives* and *visions* attempts to draw out the different ways people communicate their SOP. I also received some direction for the organization of the *perspectives* from a study conducted in northern British Columbia, Canada that focused on engaging the community in visioning and strategic planning (Halseth et al., 2006). The study identified issues people related regarding their “northern lifestyles” which, “come together in the places people live and work,” and thus is relevant to sense of place categories (Halseth et al. 2006, pg 8). I drew on the table (see Halseth et al. 2006, Figure 2, pg 8) to help organize what I coded as *perspectives*. This figure is presented and explained in depth, along with results, in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4 – Context

4.1. Tunnel Island – The Place for Sense of Place

Tunnel Island, also called Steep Rock Island and Kagapekeche, and containing what is now known as the Common Ground Land or *Wa'Say'Ga'Bo*, is an island within the city limits of Kenora, ON very close to the center of town. The southern tip of the island was developed with housing, a hospital, a railroad and highway beginning in the 1800's. The northern and larger part of the island is a relatively undeveloped (there are no houses or paved roads), piece of land



Picture Plate 2 - Main road path to the trails on TI and the western railroad bridge (2010)

consisting mostly of the transferred land, except the area near the dams, which do not figure into the Common Ground land retained by Atibiti Consolidated Inc. (Wallace 2010). The lack of town site development was due, in part, to being privately owned since the 1800's, most

recently by Abitibi Bowater Consolidated paper mill, but also because it was more difficult to access and relatively cut off by the railroad. TI was logged during the construction of the railway and subsequently earned its current name when a tunnel was blasted through the rock to make a path for the train. When the land was officially granted to the partnership of Kenora and Grand Treaty Council # 3, a celebration feast was held, a sacred feather given and the name *Wa'Say'Ga'Bo* returned (Common Ground Research Forum 2010). Therefore, this place has recently been in both the local and national media, especially when the CURA grant was received to fund work, like this project.

The shared land is crisscrossed by trails that wind through sandy open stretches into large trees and climb over rough rocks often along the shoreline. Some of the trails are well trodden and easy to walk, others are quite rough and require a bit more effort. Mountain bikers created many of the trails and these trails are very rough and they travel into the center of TI where people don't usually walk or hike. Handmade signs identify some of the main trails and there is evidence of trail maintenance in the form of bridges, ropes and areas where fallen logs have been cleared away. There are also handmade signs posted at various places along the trails with stories. Walking the whole circumference of the island could take three hours or more and the paths used most are those near the entrance to the highway, as people walk in a short ways and then walk back out. The southern piece of the island sits on the Lake of the Woods, which empties into the Winnipeg River around the island and there are dams on both sides of the island, the Norman Dam to the south and the Kenora Dam to the southeast.

One of the names for TI, Kagapekeche, also means "a place to stop-over" in Ojibway (Common Ground Research Forum 2010). There have been archeological digs on the island

where evidence has been found of human habitation for millennia. Due to its location on the LOW and Winnipeg River it was a major site for trade and travel. People would make a portage, due to the rapids at the mouth of LOW, across and then stay on the island. This was a key location during times when water travel was the primary mode of transportation and it made the place very important to explorers and the settlers that followed as the railway was built (Common Ground Research Forum 2010). During the fur trade the Rat Portage Hudson Bay Fort was on the island next to TI, remembered now as, Old Fort Island.

4.2. My Sense of Place of Tunnel Island – August to November 2010

It was my hope that this research would be a beginning into understanding the current senses of the place of the Common Ground Land and aid in the creation of meaningful community collaboration and unique bridge building regarding differences and commonalities among people in Kenora. However, the use of SOP research within my worldview demands my own immersion into the place and, subsequently, the development of my own sense of the place. I was immersed into a place, TI of Kenora during a specific time period, in which I gathered numerous stories about other people's sense of that place. I was asking questions that attempted to reveal people's social/cultural and personal connection, perspective and vision for TI. These stories influenced the way I experienced TI as well, especially as I came to understand the local contextual setting. I also spent time there walking, sitting and participating in a few events. In this section, I will explain my personal sense of place as a researcher from my field notes. These are stories that I heard and saw while I was spending time on TI, participating in tours, the feast and recalling things I had been told during the

interviews. I have broken these stories into 3 different kinds of observations: Activity, Physical, and Social/Cultural.

4.2.1. Activity Observations

It was warm summer when I began spending time on TI in August 2010. I spent time sitting on a large rock at the place where the trail splits and there is a convergence of hydro lines, which my partner Josh and I nicknamed, “observation rock.” We spent one to two hours sitting there a few times counting people that walked by and noting what they appeared to be doing. On average, there were between 15 to 25 people, mostly walking with at least one other person and often with one or more dogs. There were often small groups of people of largely varied age, perhaps a family group. People would also be trail running or mountain biking, but this was less common. I observed that most people appeared to be of Caucasian descent but this was only a visual observation and it was usually from some distance.

The trails appeared to be well trod up to the place where they split and then on for a while around the side of the island, especially towards the Norman Dam or the place from which one can view the Kenora Dam (See the map below – Plate 1). Continuing past these areas and around to the north and more western areas of TI, the amount of people and trail use sharply drops. Spending time in the area I would observe only between five to eight people, at the most. Usually I would see just one or two persons within an hour or two of time spent on the northern-most trail that went along the shoreline. However, the main, most used trail was always well kept with ropes and small logs or planks of wood placed over wet and boggy places on the trail. This indicated that some person or persons did spend time there and took the effort to make it accessible for use, even if traffic in that area was low.

Two times I observed small camps set up on the island near to the railroad tracks. The first time it appeared to be in use, clothes were hung up and there were pots and pans near a fire pit, though there were no people there during that day. The second sighting was of a large campground that appeared to be abandoned but there were remains of a recent fire pit and benches for sitting.

There was also activity, towards the later half of November, around the railroad bridge on the west side. The road leading up to this bridge was filled in with gravel and work was being done to the bridge so there was quite a lot of construction activity. There were several large storage containers, trucks and other equipment and usually around 5 people working.

4.2.2. Physical Observations

There are several physical geographic features about TI that make it unique and one of



Plate 3 – The Norman Dam, looking from the northwest on TI (2010)

the main, most visible features is the Norman Dam, which was built in the late 1800's, early 1900's (See picture plate 3, pg 39). It is accessible from the main trail and in fact some of the trail signs that have been created give directions to the dam. Many people spoke about it and mentioned going there to observe the fall of the water and to look for wildlife. I was also told about changes to the water surrounding the island and to the island itself that were created during the construction of the dam. At the spring feast in 2010, (prior to my field research) pictures were shown of the dramatic changes to the riverbed during construction. I was told that this area used to be rapids as the LOW drained into the Winnipeg River. I also observed, during a tour September 2010, the place on the island that was quarried for rock to block the river for the dam's construction. These pieces of rock were then placed across the middle of the island from north to south near the dam, creating a small mountain of rock the trail follows that is now grown over with grass, moss and small trees.

Another feature of the island, were a collection of signs on the trails (See Picture Plates



Plate 4 – A sign on the main trail, north side of TI (2010)



Plate 5 – “Please walk back out with your garbage” sign (2011)

4 & 5). Some of them gave directions, occasionally with distances, and others told stories about certain sites. These sites often marked places where an unusual tree shape or size had grown, but one site also contains a collection of old dolls.

In different places, I also observed old mattress beds and rusted barrels (perhaps for campfires). In one place there is a very small mostly decayed log cabin. I roughly estimated this cabin to have been no more than 5X5 feet.

I did not observe much wildlife, except for eagles and a few other birds, however I heard a lot of stories about wildlife people had observed.

4.2.3. Social/Cultural Observations

The Common Ground Land

The words “common,” “ground,” and “land” were used very frequently in articles I read and by the people I met. They are great words with hopeful meanings for the area but I also found them to create a good deal of confusion.

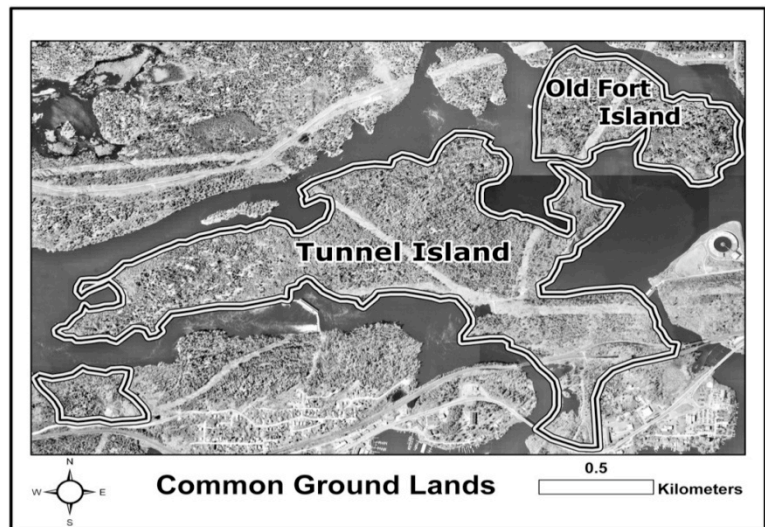


Plate 1 – Map of Common Ground Land

The Common Ground Land with capital letters is, in the context of TI, the land that was gifted by Abitibi Consolidated to the partnership between Treaty 3, City of Kenora and the three First Nation reserves surrounding Kenora. You can see from Plate 1 above the delineation of the Common Ground Land, note that TI itself is not totally included. This Common Ground Land also includes Old Fort Island and the Rat Portage Historical site, the small piece south of the western tip of TI. This land is called by some other names including: *Wasaygabo*, the shared land, the trails on TI, the Rat Portage Common Ground, and common grounds. People would speak of TI and be actually referring to the northern part yet use the name, “Tunnel Island,” to signify the Common Ground Land, which is only partly correct because Tunnel Island is not all a part of the official shared land. However, the distinction is not particularly important but I did specify occasionally when speaking to residents of TI, which area they meant. I felt it was important to remain open to stories about the island as a whole because for several participants, especially those who lived on the island, theirs was an experience that was often concentrated on the southern tip of the

island where they lived. The main distinction is that the shared land is more natura,l while the southern part is very developed with houses and business.

Common Land, Common Ground – The movement, partnership, research forum, etc.

I introduced Common Land, Common Ground, the movement and partnership at the beginning of this thesis along with the Common Ground Research Forum. However, when I arrived to the field, I discovered that there was also quite a bit of local confusion about the difference between them all. As I was asked questions and found myself explaining my role and the role of the Common Ground Research Forum (CG Research Forum) I begin to unravel some of this within the context of my work. This is not a comprehensive list but rather reflections from my field notes. First of all, I came to understand that there was a Common Land, Common Ground MOVEMENT (CLCG Movement). This movement became official, as I stated earlier, when the Grand Chief of Treaty 3 and the mayor of Kenora shook hands in the early 2000's. Later, with momentum from, and interest in this CLCG Movement and the verbal agreement to work together, the Common Ground Working Group (CG Working Group) was formed. This working group, which is not necessarily official, held several workshops but the most relevant was a workshop, called a strategic planning session for "Common Ground," with a full report. The title of this two day session was, "Common Ground: A whole new meaning for 'Tunnel Vision'" and it was held March 9-10 in 2006 (Dovetail Resources, 2006). There were twenty-one participants ranging from municipal and Treaty 3 representatives to local residents from Kenora and the surrounding First Nation reserves. This CG Working Group consists of these people or a collection of similar people coming together to work toward some common goals regarding the Common Ground Land.

Of course, there is also the CG Research Forum, which is the body that supported and directed my research in Kenora, along with other student and community projects. This forum is directed by a board with representation from universities, the parties involved in the land transfer partnership and local partners. The CG Research Forum has many goals but the one I often related to people, who questioned me on my role within this group, is that of observation. The CG Research Forum is here to observe the process of sharing land and building relationships by engaging in student led research project and also community led projects.

Finally, there is the Common Ground partnership, which *will* take over shared ownership of the Common Ground Land once all the requirements for incorporation are met. This is where the most confusion takes place. The land transfer took place with signatures from representatives of Treaty 3 and the City of Kenora (the three First Nations have not yet signed) and is currently being held in trust by the City of Kenora, but there is no clear organization or structure overseeing the land. Thus it was continually described to me as a “grey area” where no one really has much authority to make decisions. One main piece of evidence of this “grey area” was the very obvious “no parking” signs posted along the road by the main entrance to the Common Ground Land, which are actually not enforced. I parked there several times and never received a ticket. This fact was confirmed by several participants, who also parked there without receiving tickets, thus currently one can park there without fear of ticket or tow.

The partnership does carry an official name, the Rat Portage Common Ground Conservation Organization (RPCGCO). However, this name was only used by a few people and did not seem to be very commonly known. One problem I identified with my participants was a

lack of communication coming from this group (perhaps due to the fact that they have never officially met). Therefore, people often associated the CG research forum with the RPCGCO partnership body, to the point of feeling that the CG research forum was the active body of the RPCGCO partnership group (which is not the research forum's mandate). However, because the CG research forum does meet, has an official website (www.cgrf.ca), and organizes projects and events with the people in the area regarding the shared land and other aspects of the CLCG Movement (and that the name is similar), it is possible to understand why this would be the assumption.

There has been a bit more conversation regarding this partnership (aka the RPCGCO), which began with a municipal election for the city of Kenora in the fall of 2010. Candidates spoke of the Common Ground Land and also promised to get the partnership moving. Since my time in Kenora, I believe more news coverage has been written concerning other meetings, however, as of Sept 2011 as I write this, the RPCGCO partnership group has still not formally met.

Chapter 5 – Results of Sense of Place Investigations on Tunnel Island

5.1. – Introduction of Node Structure

As I described in Chapter 3, I used interviews and small groups to collect data using the concept of SOP. Using NVivo™ I coded all my transcribed data, creating a node structure that I have displayed in the Figure 5.1 below. I will use this as a framework for presenting my data. There are three “parent” nodes (visions, connections, perspectives) and numerous “child” nodes (e.g., activities, Physical Geography community). These nodes are grounded in the data I collected and reveal results related to main objectives, with Connections revealing representations of people’s sense of place of TI, Perspectives outlining people’s perspectives about TI, and Visions, which establishes people’s ideas of what might happen to the land in the future.

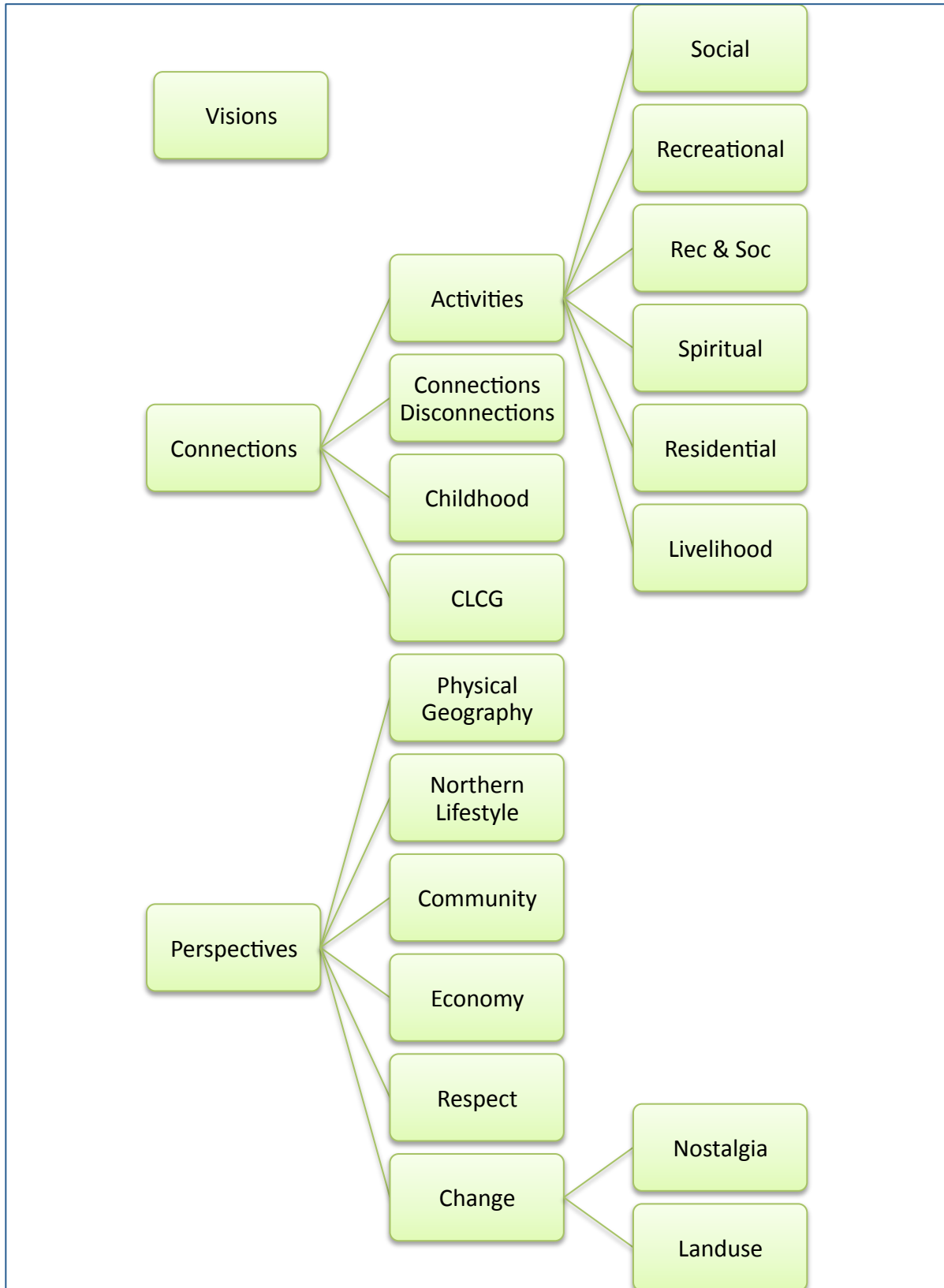


Figure 5.1. Thematic Nodes

Connections presents the storylines related to SOP directed questions from my interview schedule and pertain to these following questions: What do people do on TI, how did they become connected to TI, and what are their memories of time spent there? In other words, they describe different kinds of experience of TI, which can occur both on and off the physical location. This is explained by the SOP framework, which details how a person's sense of a place is more than physical experience of a place. In other words, reading about TI could be an experience that connected someone to the place, leading them to perhaps go there. *Connections* also lists people's activities that take place on the island. Thus, these *connections* explore and recount stories of SOP type experiences: geographic, social, and personal.

Alternatively, *Perspectives* begins to delve into a more layered understanding of how people relate to TI and how they describe their experiences. Here, the "northern lifestyle issues" as detailed by Halseth et al. (2006), became useful in attempting to sort out the themes that arose through people's perspectives. A person's experience is understood as more than just an activity but rather in the larger context of what seems to be important to the person or what aspects of the person's context seem to take a part in their experience. For example, for some participants their connection to TI caused them to begin to *respect* TI in a new way or, that their very worldview teaches them a deep *respect* for places and their connection to TI is simply an extension of that way of being. Either way, an aspect of this *respect* is layered in the discussion about TI and their experience and the activities they participate in on TI.

Finally, *Visions* contains the answers to the question: what would you like to see happen on TI? I did not break this node into smaller categories as I felt that it was not my purpose or objective to determine a vision for TI, but rather to allow space for visions to be heard.

Analyzing them by pointing to general themes, seen in the results section of this chapter, seems to best reflect my intention.

The presentation of the data follows what is displayed in the figure. In this section there may be some overlap, which occurs, I believe, due to the highly interrelated and dynamic aspects of people's SOP viewed through connections, perspectives and visions.

5.2. Connections

A wide variety of connections became apparent to me during my interviews, which I organized into activities, childhood, connection disconnections and CLCG.

5.2.1. Activities

Activities entail connections that involve some kind of physical movement and include: Social, Recreational, Recreational & Social, Spiritual, Residential and Livelihood.

5.2.1.1. Social Activities

Social activities include any mention of the purpose of the activity as being social in nature. Some key social activities are gatherings, social connection building, historical exploration, camping and travel with family, and tours. I separated these from recreational use due to the fact that the goal, purpose and primary reason for these activities was social. On TI, many of the activities that take place are for social reasons. Some examples include:

- Feasts (spring, fall, and other significant events i.e. solstice or fish fry on OFI)
- Picnics and similar gatherings to share food (family or friends)
- TI Facebook site (for planning meetings and sharing experience of TI)
- Tours (led often, but not exclusively, for CGRF purposes)
- Historical connection (archeological digs)

One participant spoke of TI as an “ice breaker” among family members, saying,

“It takes a lot of warming up to get them [the young nieces] together and that place (TI) always does it. You know? You do all kinds of things...but when they go to TI...next thing you know they’re talking and they’re buddies and they’re friends and its just seems to take that to warm them up” (Participant OA1013).

Another spoke of both the social gatherings and the historical connection when describing a fish fry on OFI. “We had a fish fry out there and...they exchanged stories from the past. How fishing was, how things have changed and being on that island life, where most of us we haven’t been on that island for a very long time” (Participant OE1019).

The spring and fall feasts, coordinated by both the CG Working Group but more often by the CG Research Forum, featured regularly in people’s social activities. However, only a few of my participants (less than 5) had been to more than one or two of the feasts. More often my participants spoke of going to one feast in particular as the first and only time attending, though they generally expressed interest in attending more often. They told me they had only just heard about it or that they were planning to go but had scheduling conflicts.

The feasts were always talked about as a very positive social activity. One participant brought some pre-teen children from the local school and remarked, “Those kids loved it, they loved being there. The whole gathering was just great for them. Yeah, they felt connected, so it was good. It was a good thing” (Participant AS112).

5.2.1.2. Recreational Activities

Recreational activities entail participants going to TI primarily to enjoy the physical and mental refreshment received from spending time there. Participants spoke about the wellness and health received from participating in recreational activities on TI. Here is a list of those that I recorded from interview data:

Table 3 - Recreational Activities on TI
Walking/Hiking
Photography (for enjoyment)
Dog Walking
Ice Skating
Mountain Biking
Bird and other Wildlife Watching
Cross-Country Skiing
Rock Climbing
Boating
Fishing (non-commercial)
Canoeing
Snow Shoeing
Sledding

These activities took place seasonally or continuously throughout the year, though some of them were dependent upon the status of the trails. For example, during the winter the trail might only go a short ways into TI and then dog walking would only occur to a certain point.

5.2.1.3. Recreational & Social Activities

I also included a category that captured recreation but with a strong social aspect. I believe participants were communicating a connection to TI that included exercise and enjoyment but in a way that also included family, friends, neighbors and the possibility to make new acquaintances. Several participants spoke of walking on TI with a spouse or significant other as a way to spend time together. This could also include family members and perhaps taking along something to eat or drink for a picnic. The purpose was both to get out and be refreshed by exercise and fresh air, but also to build relationships. There were also many small events mentioned that connected people through a certain activity. A couple participants, who were also dog walkers, organized events with their dog walking group: winter night walking or welcoming the spring. Mountain bikers have met to bike together on TI or to work together to

build jumps and maintain or groom new trails. Two participants spoke of childhood gatherings for ice-skating on a TI pond prior to the lake freezing up. One participant, as a part of their work, was able to go with a client to TI where there could be recreation in a calmer social situation. A few people spoke of participating in an event hosted by the CG Research Forum and the Lake of the Woods Arts Collective (LOWAC) during the creation of a mural. There was a boat trip and also walking tours that my participants found fun and also educational, connecting them in new ways.

5.2.1.4. Spiritual Activities

These activities might also go under a name like sacred rituals or activities relating to a belief in Other, but I felt that *spiritual activities* generally summarized a certain way participants were connecting to TI. Twelve participants spoke to me about their activities, (ceremonial and non), and associated them with a spiritual sense of place. These activities can be organized into four main groups:

1. Participants who go there to connect to “nature” – finding healing, comfort, and refreshment.
2. Participants who perform or complete ceremonial duties on TI through offerings.
3. Participants who did not have duties to complete but partook in certain spiritual ceremonies, such as the feasts.
4. Participants who experienced something they associated with the spiritual and this experience connected them in some way to TI.

The participants of group 1 would explain, in different ways, going to TI to connect in a way that was described as a “church” and “sanctuary” (Participant II1026) or “spiritual time” (AE1022). Another explains,

“Its sustaining and healing...a very healing experience...walking in the bush, it took, it was a very long time before I realized its not just a physical beauty thing. Its actually a healing and necessary to balance thing” (Participant UR111).

Ceremonial duties include participants who gave a small offering of tobacco when they visited TI along with a small amount of any food or drink they bring along. One participant noted that TI was the only place they gave offerings of tobacco and so the spiritual connection was fairly unique to other places. This person said,

“That is probably the only place that I can think of where I consistently remember to bring tobacco and its only because that’s sort of been the custom I was taught when I just started going there. But in other places, like that’s not my cultural tradition to carry tobacco around with me to offer the spirits, so there are lots of other places that I would consider sacred or beautiful...but where I wouldn’t offer tobacco because that doesn’t seem authentic or genuine or whatever, but for some reason it does there” (Participant EE920).

Other participants go to TI specifically to give tobacco, food and occasionally song offerings made at feasts both on TI and off of it. These offerings occur annually or bi-annually and the participants, who carry out these offerings, spoke about them as being a part of their duty given to them by the community or the spiritual guardians of the TI.

The third group simply consists of those persons who attend the feasts, partaking in the ceremony as a bystander or observer.

Finally, the fourth group is those persons who experienced something that they related to either a positive or negative encounter with a spiritual presence. One person spoke of a vision they experienced on TI about cleaning up a certain area (Participant AM1119). Another

participant explained the reason for their annual ceremony of offering on TI is due to a dream they had several times in a row, regarding TI and a need to pay respect to the “gatekeepers” or “wise ones” that guard the place (Participant RR108). One participant had a serious accident on TI and, upon reflection during a small group, commented,

“It was like an evil thing that happened here. That’s how I felt, you know, that there’s an evil spirit there or whatever...[explanation about the rescue]...so it was spiritual. And I think I have to go back there and put some tobacco on that point” (II1026 during small group).

5.2.1.5. Residential Activities

This category outlines the activities of those participants that lived on TI and/or live on TI today. Residents on TI seemed to fall into two types: property ownership (primarily on the south side of TI) and generational or traditional ownership (primarily on the north side of TI and nearby islands). There is a third group which may claim neither type of ownership but still has a type of residence on the island, which I will call seasonal residence. I did not talk to any of these persons but my participants mentioned them and I found evidence of their inhabitation a couple of times in my walks.

Residential activity of property owners on the south side of the island included participants whose families had lived there for one, two or three generations. It also included participants who grew up there and now live elsewhere. One interesting dynamic, noted by participants living on the island currently, is a change in demographics from families with young children to predominantly middle-aged or elderly retired persons whose children have grown and moved away (Participant OG1028 & AF114).

Generational or traditional ownership of TI was explained to me by one participant saying,

“Those are traditional sites where we’ve been using them for 10,000 years or whatever it is. And its just been handed down, you know just, some place where we go and have lived on all the time. This is our area, you know. And we never gave up that area... [though it was given away]...we always considered you know, this is our area and we live where we want to live you know...These places were traditional sites, handed down from generations to us to stay and, you know, do our business. Either trading with the town of Kenora, or back in the olden days, with other tribes coming from other areas” (Participant OE1019).

Thus, this type of ownership continues, however participants who actively resided on TI at one time of their lives, no longer do today. In fact, three participants I spoke with only have memories from their childhood or as young adults. According to these participants a couple things changed and their families were prohibited from living in the area in seasonal campsites (I will explain reasons in the section 5.2.4. Connection Disconnection). However, memories of living on TI include stories of hanging out with the other kids from Rideout Bay and also of elder siblings sneaking off the island at night to go into town (Participants LE1027 and LL1027).

5.2.1.6. Livelihood Activities

These are the stories of connection I heard from participants who, in some manner, obtain (or did in the past) a part of their livelihood from TI. Livelihood activities include direct and in-direct work or sustenance (food) from TI, which ranges from berries and fish gathered on or in the water around TI to photographs taken and sold for profit. During the period of time when people lived on the northern side of the island participants spoke of fishing, gathering berries and medicinal plants and doing odd jobs for people on TI or nearby. Indirectly some participants benefited from the logging industry during the time of the paper mill when logs were sent around the east side of TI to gather in Rideout Bay.

Currently (and previously) participants work in the hospital that is on the south side of TI, as either nurse or doctor-in-training. Photography, to sell, and also writing news articles for

the newspaper are other current ways in which people collect a bit of livelihood from TI. Lastly, there is work acquired as a part of the CG Research Forum in the form of tours and organizing.

5.2.2. Childhood Connections

Many of my participants who are connected today to TI remembered their first connection when they were children living on TI or nearby. Almost all of these stories are about play and then always in groups of 2 or more kids. TI was described to me as an “unsupervised playground” (Participant AE1022) and also as “unlimited backyard” (Participant OG1028). A vivid memory that did not include play was a recollection by a participant, living nearby in Keewatin, who came to TI to visit a Sunday school teacher and got lost by the hospital many years ago.

“I ended up at a shack...and I couldn’t find anybody, I looked in windows...and it turned out it was the isolation place they had for isolation for the hospital when the old one was there...my Sunday school teacher never let me live that down. Here I am coming to visit her and I’m in isolation, that stuck with me” (Participant AF114).

5.2.3. Common Land Common Ground (CLCG) Connections

As I explained in Chapter 4, even the words, “*common land, common ground*”, were confusing for some. Participants who did have a connection to TI, through some relation to the events that have overtaken TI in the last decade, used many different names and also different aspects of Common Ground. Here is a list of the events that connected people, which are in some way related:

- Rediscovery of the Rat Portage Historical Site
- TI Forest Legacy project (a document)
- Meetings with Abitibi Consolidated to turn land over to a Common Land, Common Ground partnership and final signing and ceremony with feast on TI
- Initial meeting with Treaty 3, 3 First Nations, City of Kenora and other representatives to discuss the possibility of a Common Vision
- Organization of a Common Ground Working Group

- Spring and Fall Feast organized by CG Research Forum
- The creation of the CG Research Forum CURA project and work done through this project (tours and feast)
- “Common Ground Initiatives” tours conducted, mostly through the CG Research Forum partner projects but also on behalf of the city
- Common Ground Storytelling events (these are actually not connected to TI directly but often get mentioned as being an offshoot of the land transfer somehow)

Participants while discussing their activities on TI, which they connect to a part of common ground in general, mentioned one or more of the above events. An interesting part of this association can be seen in the various names people used to talk about TI. One person, after being a part of a tour through a Common Ground Initiative, began to call that part of TI, “Common Grounds.” I asked why and the reply: “You know what, I’ve known it as TI all along, until Common Grounds came and then I started calling it common grounds” (Participant AS112). Another interesting aspect is that most people associate TI with a part of common ground and yet, they are often talking about *only* the northern part of TI. TI is the “common grounds” and visa versa.

I did find that one of the main CLCG connections people had with TI is through participating in a tour or feast on TI. This has primarily occurred through the Common Ground Research Forum and the projects it has sponsored. Thus, it should be no surprise that I too was linked in with that aspect of TI and people would often assume I had come as a representative of, what they specifically thought of as common ground, to get their feedback. Participants occasionally mentioned to me that, because I had contacted them, they had looked up some things prior to, or after, talking to me regarding the land transfer and/or common ground in general. Therefore, participating in my research was another Common Land, Common Ground link for them with TI.

5.2.4. Connection Disconnections

Finally, as I was going through the data I began to notice a theme or storyline that I decided was an important aspect of connection activities. These were activities/events that connected people essentially through disconnecting them or some kind of disconnection event that was a part of their connection story. Within this there were three main subthemes:

1. Disconnection between Childhood to Adulthood
2. Marginalization
3. Experience of and/or fear regarding disconnection

The first is a storyline I heard from participants who were quite actively connected as children and then, for several reasons, stopped going to TI for quite a while until, for other reasons, they returned. One participant explained,

“From the time I went away to college, I went to college in Toronto, and started working and all the rest I, you know, I never went there at all because it just wasn’t part of my routine. But when my kids, after that sort of break, when my kids were small I brought them over there on walks” (Participant AE1022).

Another spoke of getting a driver’s license and that being the reason they no longer spent days playing there (Participant OG1028). Yet another spoke poignantly about this disconnection as perhaps a sign of maturity, growing up. They said,

“It breaks from your childhood. It’s sort of a sign of maturity where you know your places of childhood, um, the best was to liken it is Puff the Magic Dragon. Ever heard that song? Ok, Little Jackie doesn’t come around any more” (Participant OF104).

The next storylines also include children who spent time there and then have only recently been back as adults, however these are also stories of marginalization. One participant became connected to TI and this area through work with these displaced peoples who used to live on TI in order to access the town of Kenora (Participant UO927). This participant spoke about evidence of marginalization in stories about the upheaval that took place during the

creation of Kenora and the subsequent movement of peoples off traditional areas. TI is one of those traditional areas and, up until the 60's and 70's people continued to live there seasonally to access the nearby town of Kenora. One thing about this particular place was the fact that people could live there, access town but also be mostly unseen and unknown; "There are these two communities living side by side and they don't know about each other" (Participant UO927). However the close proximity of these communities changed, as I mentioned before, when participants who spent their childhoods living there said that they were told they could not live there any more at some point in their childhood. In the stories I heard, this was attributed to both an effort to stop people from "squatting" on the island and also an Ontario Hydro concern to keep people from living near the hydro lines. This participant recalls,

"They told us to leave, halfway up from here that's where the power lines came and the told us elders to leave. So we started paddling, my mom and my auntie and the rest of the kids were small, the rest of us...Oh I don't remember how old I was that time...but I remember when they told my mom and my auntie to leave" (Participant LL1027).

Yet then, these are also stories of reconnection in adulthood as one participant told me a story of going back when the Rat Portage Historical Site was created and then later taking their family there to see places where they had lived as a child (Participant OE1019).

This disconnection due to marginalization affects some people simply because of knowing the stories, though they themselves never lived there nor would have experienced marginalization. One example is the story from this participant:

"...there are places that are sort of quaffed in sadness there because I know the reasons that those places were used and the ways that they were. Like there's a former campsite on the east end of the island [OFI] where a family from one of the First Nation's sought refuge in the 1960's and I know that during the big sweeps from the Child and Family services, agents would come and steal children away. One person I know lost a brother that way...and so OFI to me seems more sort of shadowy to me in that way, like it seems to have more of those ghosts of atrocities associated with it...and

there are times I can be sitting on the point on the east end of TI looking over to OFI and you can see the grass rippling in the wind. And I just think, Oh, it's the spirits of the lost children that are over there. And it makes me really sad" (Participant EE920).

The last disconnection theme focuses on stories about feeling disconnected due to lack of information or some event that took place and also concern expressed about the possibilities to be disconnected (which also comes up in Visions).

Disconnection due to lack of information includes participants worried about parking when they visit TI. There are signs that say that you can't park but it appears that they are no longer enforced. However one participant spoke about not visiting TI for some time because of these signs saying, "I had already been told, maybe erroneously, that you couldn't park on the highway so that caused me some angst" (Participant OA1013). There were discussions about this during one small group I held where various information was given regarding the future of that parking, that the "no parking" laws may be enforced due to some changes with the condo development on the south western corner of TI (Small Group). I often heard that parking was very unclear and also very dangerous.

Other information gaps came up when people spoke of desiring certain connections but finding the information inaccessible or difficult to find. Participants walking around wondering where the archeological digs sites occurred, or wondering who created the trail signs, or dismayed to realize they missed a feast or other event on TI. For example one person said,

"I missed out. They had, or the Common Grounds has had a couple of events on Tunnel but, even though I feel I am pretty connected in town and know a lot of people and kind of, I don't know, somewhat know what's going on, often times things like that happen. I am like, aww, how did I not know about that?" (Participant IM221).

Stories about events that took place that caused disconnection also came up in the course of discussions around what people do or did on TI. One example is a trash pick up day or

Kenora cleanup day that was organized and one participant, who is a regular visitor to the TI, was asked if they would be able to organize people for the northern part of TI (Participant IR106). This participant was glad to have a chance to clean up TI but then this same person told about their frustration when certain people did not agree with the clean up day for that part of TI. In fact, the next year (the year 2010) the whole plan to include the shared land on TI in the Kenora clean day was dropped due to the concern and opposition expressed. The issue, according to above-mentioned participant, was that people were afraid the trash pickers would pick up things that had historical value because they would mistake them for trash. The biggest problem they recounted however, was a lack of communication and respect given to people who want to take care of TI and get it cleaned up. Thus it appears to me that, what could have been an opportunity for two different groups who both care about TI to connect, create relationships and understanding, became an opportunity for disconnection.

Another event that created disconnection was in the creation of the partnership during the land transfer from Abitibi Consolidated where the Metis people were not mentioned or included. One participant explains,

“There’s lots of talk about First Nations and the city of Kenora and not mentioning the Metis, and it seems like we’re being left out, you know it feels like, yeah, I know maybe it’s not intentionally to hurt us or isolate us, but I know that the Metis are part of it.” And this person went on to talk about how things should change by recognizing, “We all own it. It’s not just First Nations people and Kenora, you know, city of Kenora, it’s, they have to look at it in a broader perspective and say yes, we are all owners of this land. Period. And that’s where it needs to come from” (Participant AM1119).

5.3. Perspectives

The various perspectives on people’s connection to TI that I heard were categorized into issues or themes that came through the stories I heard. These themes included: Community,

Respect, Northern Lifestyle, Economy, Change (Land use and Nostalgic), and Physical Geography. These themes highlight what is important to people about TI and also attempt to explore descriptions of the experience of TI. These were often answers to the question: Describe TI to someone who has never been there, or explain why its important to you. People also revealed perspectives during discussion around their vision for TI.

5.3.1. Community

This theme came through in every single interview and small group that I did, making it the most common. There are several ways in which the theme of community came through. First of all, as noted in the connections, there was discussion and explanation about the importance of social (and social & recreational) activities. In other words, TI is important for the community, my own personal community but also the larger community.

These are different aspects such as:

TI is important for communal well-being (health).

TI is important for families.

TI is important for connecting to generational and traditional places for well-being of all people (FN and non).

TI reflects a communal worldview about connectedness.

TI creates space for inclusive community process.

TI has inspired different arenas for community engagement (Facebook, newspaper, community events).

Often TI was seen as a “hub” or central area for Kenora and the surrounding area – a meeting or gathering place. This came through in many different ways, when people spoke about their vision for sure, but also as something already found there. The perspective was that TI is, and has been, about community in many different forms. Here are some examples:

“That place doesn’t shut anybody down. I think, you know, people, just people, all walks of life go there and check it out” (Participant OE1019).

“I feel a strong connection to the land that, you know like here (TI). I can identify I guess that the people’s have always used it because we did too. Like hunting and fishing and stuff...just being out there, and I think that’s what it is for all of us, you know, whatever reason we’re all out there, yeah, connecting to it” (Participant UR111).

These two people spoke of a generational need for the place and its role in the community:

“Yeah, its such a beautiful, beautiful place and I know everybody’s whose been there or who is going to there must have a special feel for it. And to me its totally a sanctuary and a sanctuary that deserves to be held on to...so that people behind us or ahead of us, I should say, are going to have the opportunity to go out there and have a feel for the real land” (Participant II1026).

“Oh its such a powerful place, and its powerful to different people in different ways...Its got a bittersweet history. Like there’s a lot of sadness associated with things that have gone on there in the past and a lot of injuries have been inflicted on the land and with the people associated with the land and somehow its always pulled through and its still there providing sustenance to the people of the community” (Participant EE920).

TI, and its part as a piece of the land transferred to the partnership, featured in this comment:

“But it was the first time, for myself, that I had seen our office (Treaty 3) [involved in discussion]...but that the town was involved in a mutual discussion. It wasn’t a discussion where everyone was at each other. It was like, Common Ground. Because everyone had a common interest in it. And that was part of the discussion” (AA118).

An interesting perspective came through several discussions regarding TI as an example of an inherent way of looking at all places and peoples as connected in a web of relationships. I placed this in community perspective because it seems to reflect the idea of a large complicated community, always in contact with each other (whether we know it or not). Here is one example of a participant describing TI:

“For me you know, but I feel like this about all of the land. To me it’s very spiritual and to me that’s what it is. Because you know when you, as Anishnabe people, that’s what we have been always taught right? That we are apart of the land, we are apart of the water. So that’s the way I see it when I look at it. And when I look at it its just beautiful, that’s all. That’s what it is. Like even when I walk there, because I usually walk here...And that’s what attracts me most is when I look at that water and the land right by the water. I like looking at that water, every time I walk by I do. And you know when you walk there the wind just comes. It just, I don’t know. And to me, that’s what it reminds

me of, that there is, it's living it is. And that's what I mean by spiritual. It's a living, living, living thing, I don't know what to call it but its alive. That's what I feel, that's how I see it" (Participant EP118).

Another participant seems to speak more to the human community connections saying,

"And that, when the rain falls its doesn't fall on any, you know, it falls on everyone...That its like finding thread that can go everywhere. And I mean everywhere. And that, if I'd like anything about TI or these places or this, this, Kenora itself, is that you can understand the world in a greater sense. It's that all of the threads are here. And that if you tug on any one of those threads you begin to see the interconnectivity of all things. And that's such a hugely important message of this place. So much has gone on here, it's so complicated but it's so connected that each and every one of those threads has an impact on something else. You tug here and it pulls over there" (Participant UO927).

This communal perspective was quite evident from these conversations but it also appeared to be important to people who spoke of TI as a place to connect. They would relate TI as a meeting or gathering place, historically and also presently. I only mention them here because it was not evident that they carried the same communal worldview type of perspective but rather that TI was a place to learn about connection and potentially, interconnectivity (i.e. ecologically).

Finally, not all community perspectives were of an affirmative nature. Some participants, perhaps reluctantly, spoke of wishing TI could stay hidden and unknown so they could have it for themselves. Yet, this seemed more of a reflection on the strength of their personal connection to TI, which they held close and were a little hesitant to share. Although, I must say that these same people were also quite adamant that TI needed to be shared and they expressed happiness that people could enjoy it. For example:

"I have to say, when [more people started visiting TI] first started I felt kind of, I don't know what the word is, not protective but, this is my, this was our area. You know, this was our recreational area, now everybody knows about it and everybody's using it. So...territorialism maybe? That's what I felt, you know, I recognize now that's a good

thing that people discovered it and I need to be a little bit more generous with it” (Participant OE932).

5.3.2. Respect

Respect was often something that came through, especially for people who had spiritual connections to TI. There were three different ways that respect was talked about in relation to TI: The need to have respect for the land by taking care of it and keeping it clean and available for those to come, the place and CG process respecting people’s pasts, traditions, and differences, and that TI in itself inspired and demanded respect because, in a sense, it was/is sacred.

Respecting the place by keeping it clean is noted in these quotes:

“We usually use the well trodden trails so I would expect if we’re going to see it [garbage] that’s where we’d see it, but it seems to have cleaned its own. You know, people just seem to have that respect...you know, its not beautiful if there’s garbage there” (Participant OA1013).

“Respect for the land, respect for how clean it is. We like to go there, we like to leave it the way we found it. So I think maybe it’s that people, I think people are becoming more mindful of what kind of trash they leave behind or, don’t leave behind I guess. I think people are being more respectful (Participant RA1026).

People being respected and respecting different traditions, histories and backgrounds was often mentioned as something important about the process and the place.

“People have been born in this area and call this area home. It shouldn’t matter what background you come from you know, like all of our ancestors have lots to do in this area so, it belongs to all of us and its nice when you can meet with each other and everybody sort of respects you for your own history” (Participant II1026).

“Well, I will just say for myself, I don’t think I have enough knowledge or history to really talk about it too much for myself right now. Because I am still learning so my thinking or the way I would go about it, is just to say, respect the territory, or respect it for now” (Participant AA118).

TI itself inspiring respect due to its own power or sacredness was mentioned by participants who would have spiritual connections to TI and perhaps a communal perspective but this also came through conversations with participants who would not have had the above.

“That land [TI] still looks after itself. And I just have tremendous respect for that. I think, wow, that’s an amazingly powerful place. And I know a lot of people have, when they visit there they always say, oh, it’s such a powerful place. And it’s powerful to different people in different ways” and also, “I think a lot of people approach TI as sort of a sacred place and a place for spiritual enlightenment” (Participant EE920).

“And even when we had our last feast there...[an elder] sang one of the songs and why he sang it because there was an, umm, elder, I don’t know what to call him, if he was a medicine man or probably a spiritual person. But he, this [medicine man/ ancestor] appeared to the elder in his dream and he told him he wanted to be remembered. And that’s why he sang that song for him to honour him. And apparently he lived on that side of the island before [TI where the feast was taking place]” (Participant EP118).

“The other thing, why I shared that [story] is because its respecting what I have learned from that [experience on TI]. It’s gifted me. That turtle [on TI] sharing that information with me. That was very spiritual to me. Very, one of the highlights of my life, just to have that connectedness...It’s unbelievable” (Participant AM1119).

5.3.3. Northern Lifestyle

TI for several people represented a sort of lifestyle that was only available in the north and/or away from city. This might be due to the fact that Kenora is still in Ontario, which is a province where most of the population lives in rather densely populated southern area. Several participants moved to Kenora, or back to Kenora, after spending time in a larger city (usually in Ontario) and therefore spoke of how important it was for them to be able to access a sort of untouched wilderness area. TI was a place that represented this “bush” but that was also very close to downtown.

One participant speaks about this in reference to this historical aspect of TI:

“Sometimes I think we tend to focus on history from, you know, southern Ontario and that whole thing, and we sometimes forget to look at the history in our own backyard” (Participant RA1026).

Another speaks of living on TI and not living in the city:

“I can live anywhere I want but yet, I still live here. I mean you got the lake right here, you got small town...I mean you live in town but yet you don’t really feel like you live in town. I mean, you can walk outside at night and actually see the stars...to me it is perfect” (Participant OG1028).

This following sentiment was echoed fairly regularly regarding the “undeveloped” aspects of both TI and the area.

“Here on TI, you know, like in this area, I guess since it is not so developed. We’re kind of on the edge of civilization...and there’s a lot of people here that are very, remaining very connected to the land...I guess it’s just because we have the ability to do that because it’s not built up, it’s not the city” (Participant UR111).

One person spoke about the “wilderness” of the north, in this great story about moving to Kenora.

“We moved here [from southern Ontario] and we came to a totally different environment including climate. In Windsor the temperature never went below freezing Fahrenheit...and when we got here the first winter we experienced minus 38. And that was really exciting! God, that was exciting and we bundled the kids up. You can actually go and live in that stuff. And that had been the stuff of stories for us” (Participant HU104).

5.3.4. Economy

The economic perspective came up often in discussions around TI’s potential in the changing context of Kenora and surrounding area as a tourist attraction. It also came up in discussions about development that occurred, is occurring and might occur on the island. This development was discussed in people’s hopes for TI but also when we talked about what people think might happen, regardless of their wishes.

“I think that place [TI] has tremendous potential. The city is sitting on a gold mine there, as far as what it has to offer in terms of usage and tourism” (Participant AE1022).

Many, pronouncing TI the “crown jewel” of Kenora, echoed this particular sentiment. I feel that this denotes a certain economic advantage that could come from the development or use of TI. This economic consideration displays some of the context of Kenora and the area (from Chapter 4) and was either a very positive aspect, as stated above, or something to be concerned about and possibly just face with a bit of a dismal attitude, noted in this quote and speaking about the new condo development on TI:

“You know, ultimately at the end of the day, money speaks. And any company, whoever comes to the table first with the amount of money and they go, sure. I don’t blame them for selling it. I would do the same thing too...Money speaks in the world now days, I mean, no matter which way you look at it” (OG1028).

5.3.5. Physical Geography

My interview schedule asked the question about what do you do on TI and so I heard about activities, which I noted earlier in this chapter, but I also got story after story about the place with detailed descriptions. Participants described an abundance of wildlife experiences, especially people who went there regularly:

“And I remember, you know, we started down the trail and I thought, bet we won’t see anything, but she started right away to see everything. Like the turtles and the, you know, certain little bugs and she was just, Wow! Wow! This is cool” (Participant OA1013).

“We’ve seen deer of course, um snapping turtles. I even have a picture of snapping turtles mating, which I have never seen before. We called it the Turtle Brothel and it was just one year where they came into this one area. The water levels were right that it was a perfect little habitat for them...Yeah so its just been a real, every time, everyday that you go out you can expect a new experience in a familiar surrounding” (Participant II1026).

“The exciting thing about TI...is that it’s very close to water. Almost anywhere you are you are close to water and you are close to edges, environmental edges. You have got

the water, you've got the shore, you've got the forest or the bush. And wildlife tends to congregate on edges...So we saw all kinds of wildlife. All kinds of nice things there" (Participant HU104).

"The treasure is undeveloped, uh, nature unimpaired by development, well actually that's a lie. I have to explain why. See this Sandy Nook, that's, uh, you know I have seen otters in there. Otters in the winter making runs and sliding on the ice and so on, and turtles half as big as this table it seems, ducks and everything else. And this little pond [Sandy Nook] wouldn't even be there if they hadn't needed sand for Norman Dam" (Participant HU104).

"One thing that really sticks out in my mind...was the fact that there is so much old growth forest out there [on TI] and being so close, and being right in town – old growth forest...I mean there's 300 year old pines on TI and you know there's trees that are growing out there before a white man ever saw Lake of the Woods" (Participant IR106).

A lot of participants spoke of the trails as their primary mode for experiencing TI - explaining which trails they often used, how they are kept, how long it takes and where their favorite spots are along the way. I had printed off maps and most people drew lines where they usually walked, circling places they liked and remembering things as they did.

"And the trails, people do use them, so they're clean and well maintained during the winter as well, so there's always a beaten path that you can follow" (Participant AS112).

"There's the main dirt road down the middle that was the mill or whoever else that created that access...but over the past 5 years or so I guess there's been a lot more trail maintenance and building and there's a central loop that kind of runs down the middle that has built up, like it has bridges built and ramps and stuff like that for kind of a north shore biking style stuff" (Participant IM221).

"I've often just walked down to the Norman dam and back but if you continue along that path you are walking along the river but high on a cliff and that's a beautiful walk...I have never actually looped, done the big one that loops around...it sort of depends on how much time I have and how much energy which walk I will do. But certainly the one that goes down past the dam is, it's very beautiful" (Participant OE923).

Some participants mentioned a certain person who maintained the trails and created the signs (Participants HU104, IR106 among others). Other participants mentioned ways to

experience TI by “meandering” slowly (Participant OA1013) or breathing in the smell of the air (Participant RA1026).

5.3.6. Change

I found TI discussions to continually reflect changes that had occurred in the area and on TI itself. This was mentioned in the context discussion in Chapter 4 but I also saw it as a perspective. There were two main change perspectives: Land use and nostalgic remembrances.

5.3.6.1. Land Use Change

The island and surrounding area has been a part of a large amount of change over the past years and reflections on this change continually featured in the interviews and small groups. I often heard about the steadily increasing amount of people that visit TI today and how that began to change over the last 10 years or so. Often this was attributed to the number of cars parked outside the entrance to the trails on TI and to the fact that people felt curious, seeing all the cars, and then would go and check it out themselves. Also people mentioned simple word-of-mouth that brought people to check it out along with the creation of a Facebook page specifically for TI and an increase in media coverage as the land was transferred from Abitibi to the shared partnership.

“[My friend] ended up making a facebook group and I saw a change after that, definitely...and it just seemed to grow at that point... and yeah definitely a change in involvement at that point. That has to be six years ago, five years ago...” (Participant II1026).

There has also been an ideological change as one participant observed in relation to TI and its place in the community, first as a prime industrial location and now in terms of eco-tourism.

“If you look at a picture of Husky the Musky (beside TI) say before 1975...it was full of wood. It was great big booms and full of pulpwood (around the west side of TI)...it was an actual set up for a paper mill, so that’s what it was developed as. And also in the thinking of my grandparents in my father’s era, the bush was an enemy. It was. You fought the bush back. Look at the way the city of Kenora is developed. Main street turns its back on Lake of the Woods. You would never do that now, you would turn it into a panoramic showcase, and its starting to develop that way...So that was the thinking of the day...people, society, and people in general, their way of valuing things and they way of looking at the world changes from generation to generation, a lot” (Participant AE1022).

Another aspect of change is the topographic change that people noticed on TI, from trail development to water level changes caused by the dams. One participant indicated he/she takes pictures of the designs left in the rocks by the changing water levels around TI as a reflection of the changes that occur (Participant UR111). Another spoke of the trails developing, primarily due to groups of mountain bikers who would make paths as they went opening up access to the island so that it was more possible to walk the whole circumference (Participant AH928). Most other participants noted change on the island occurred on the south side, especially with hospital development as it grew (Participant AF114). At one point, there was a section of swampland, which was a playground for kids in the area.

“But I still remember them filling in the swamp with bark from the mill...where the new parking lot is for the St. Joe’s hospital all the way over towards the laundry mat, that was all swamp. That was all, that, when you went on the highway you were looking down into a hole...and they filled that all in. So I mean that was our swampland, that’s where we went to, ah, that’s where we were the pirates” (Participant OF104).

There is also the more recent development of the condos on the southeastern corner of TI, which was mentioned only briefly by my participants. One participant was consulted about the nature of the condo development by the Qualico company. “They asked for that, they asked for advice. So I provided that advice and I told them, there’s people out there that can do the ceremony” (Participant RR108).

The last change that was mentioned fairly often was the change in ownership from Abitibi to the Common Ground partnership (especially UO927). There are few visible signs on TI that reflect this change but people mentioned hearing about it in the media.

“It started getting more publicity through the, you know there was quite a bit of press about the common land, common ground committee and so people started going out there and saying, I gotta check this out. And they did a few pieces in the enterprise and a few in the paper...about TI” (Participant IR106).

“All of the sudden I kind of heard that there was a lot more people exploring the trails and using them on a regular basis. So that’s when I kind of realized that something had changed or whatever but yeah, and then yeah, hearing that it had been gifted to the city or there was plans to gift it” (Participant IM221).

Or being apart of some of the first meetings:

“So January 2006 was when we first, when Abitibi announced officially in December that they were closing for sure. In early January, I went down to talk to the company manager and asked what they were going to do about TI. And I think it was around January 26th that the Grand Chief and the Mayor announced that they would be working together to acquire TI for the community from the company” (Participant EI1012).

5.3.6.2. Nostalgia

I noted nostalgia in stories where participants expressed a longing for something past. These stories expressed strong feelings about the “way things were” and a special desire, in some cases, to have other people remember these ways. In the literature, I spoke about the way people remember things or desire to have them remembered. Lowenthal (1979) and Tuan (1979) both spoke of attempts to hold memories in particular places and communicate these particular memories in different ways. Nostalgia was a grounded observation I made during the analysis of the data but I believe it relates to this notion of communication of SOP. For many participants thinking about how things have changed and remembering how TI used to be triggered deep emotions. Participants who spent their childhood on TI spoke of memories on

the island and occasionally articulated how things have changed since then, sometimes expressing sorrow and sometimes just noticing the change.

“I feel very sad every time I see the parking lot (on the south side) that used to be a swamp. I’m always reminded of that song ‘They paved paradise and put up a parking lot’” (Participant AH928).

“On any given day there would be half a dozen of us, sometimes only two of us, sometimes as many as eight or ten, and you know we’d all go out there [to TI] and have some kind of adventure...an unsupervised playground right? There’s no parental involvement. It’s very, very different now. Children nowadays, my two boys they’re twenty-three and twenty-six, they would never go out and build a fire in the woods and people wouldn’t allow it now. Or it would be supervised by parents or arranged by parents. I think it’s kind of sad or maybe I am just being nostalgic, growing up...No, it is all supervised now, it’s all arranged. And I guess people are going to be different as a result of that. So this is a huge big social experiment...and we’ll see. Time will tell” (Participant AE1022).

Another instance of nostalgia is noted in this participant’s desire for people to return to places on TI and OFI because,

“I think that the island is probably lonesome for people. You know like for people coming around and doing their things you know and using it, for meetings, whatever it is. Even just to walk around and enjoy the atmosphere and the island itself it brings back memories, even for people that weren’t involved here...they will probably feel the history of that place” (Participant OE1019).

The above participant is also commenting on the sense of the past that seems to be apparent on the island, something that can be felt. This is an important aspect for several people – remembering the past on TI.

“I hope that they leave the rest of it the way it is. You know, because it is so nice to go out to a place and be able to walk through the woods, without seeing anything man made, you know, sort of like it would have been thousands of years [ago]” (Participant II1026).

“The implication of both the good and the bad, the juxtaposition of these things...and I point out the old campsites and you look around the old campsites and you are just as likely to find whiskey bottles or you know, marginalized people the campsites and everything else. This is not happy, this is not a cool campground...And that part is so

important. If we are going to understand ourselves, if we are going to understand our relationship to place and to the land, then we need to see that range. The sublime and the ridiculous, the beauty and the horror...I guess that is why history is so important, why old age, why we respect our elders. Is that, the advantage of perspective, the advantage of being able to step back and see a big picture and not a selective picture, but a scope and panorama that gives us a real understanding of who we are” (Participant UO927).

There was also some nostalgia expressed regarding the land transfer and the shared process itself.

“I think it is unfortunate, because I think that when the initial overtures were made, I mean when Abitibi decided to give the land in a joint ownership situation, the stewardship committee was formed. I think this was such a unique opportunity...and the fact that it came to, you know, sort of a stall is, I mean to me that’s very disappointing. Because I had such hope. You know, not just for TI but for this whole relation. Because Kenora is, you know, we have a bad reputation in terms of race relations...and this was such a huge step in the right direction...and so for it to have stalled out really even before it got started is, I find that very disappointing. I am saddened by it, I am (Participant OE923 during a Small group).

These nostalgic reflections are examples of how SOP connections can weave together notions of place and time, affecting one’s interpretation of the place but also how they then desire the place to be interpreted by others, something that comes through in vision articulation.

5.4. Visions

During the interviews and small groups, I asked people to tell me their visions for the shared land on TI and what they might like to see happen there or what they imagine happening there. I heard lots of practical ideas, but noticed that these visions also reflected different perspectives about TI itself. I have categorized these vision perspectives into four unifying themes: Community/Inclusion vision, Respect vision, Economic vision, and a Fear of Disconnection vision. These categories were developed by me and are grounded in the data, I did not present them as categories during the interviews nor were they suggested to me.

These four themes capture what I heard from people, and I had data from most participants on two or more of these key theme areas. The quotes used are illustrative of what I was told and capture the sentiments of what I heard from others whose quotes I did not use.

5.4.1. Economic Vision

Five participants provided what I have categorized as an *Economic* vision of TI. Their ideas centered on TI as a “gold mine” for eco-tourism. These ideas included different ways to make TI accessible to tourists (as well as locals) in very practical ways that could potentially generate revenue, at least enough to cover the costs of upkeep, improvements...etc. However, even within this vision perspective there was an insistence upon development that would maintain the natural and semi-pristine characteristics of TI.

“I still think that place has tremendous potential. And the city is sitting on a gold mine there as far as what it had to offer in terms of usage and tourism...” (Participant AE1022).

“The thing is we have got this really cool gem right in the center of Kenora, but nobody knows about it, like when a tourist comes they don’t know that there’s this TI, with all these hiking trails around” (Participant IM221).

“...that is what I would talk about is a shared facility, there wouldn’t be any exclusive right to one group or another...now not everybody’s a biker, not everybody’s a skier but it could be a cross-section of different public facilities that are accessible to everybody...I could see that there would be a fee, I don’t think there would be a problem, like I wouldn’t see it as being any different than the local swimming pool...for the upkeep of it” (Participant AE1022).

One main aspect of this perspective is a desire to increase public usage of the area for recreation and education, even if that would decrease the enjoyment of the participant because more people would be using it.

“I wouldn’t mind if they made the trails more like developed in that way, just the trails. I know that it means more people would use them and it would be less peaceful for me

when I go there, but I think its good because I think it would be useful for our tourist economy” (Participant ER1118).

Within this vision perspective there were a lot of ideas, technological ideas, about how to make the trails more accessible, including different types of signage, lightening, creating and maintaining skiing trails, or possible kayak rentals. These ideas for improving the trails were also presented by participants that I did not include in this vision perspective because these participants spoke of these ideas *within the context* of generating public usage for community *and* the economy in very practical ways.

5.4.2. Respect Vision

The visions of the 17 participants associated with this perspective urged caution, carefulness and above all respect for the use of the land, the process and the people. I heard lots of ideas about keeping TI clean and developing it in a way that shows respect for “beauty” and/or “nature” (Participants RA1014, AS112, OG1028, OF104, LE1027 used these two words). There was insistence on preserving TI as a wilderness space (Participant OE923) and perhaps creating strict rules to keep out all motorized vehicles (Participant LE1027). Also, there was a desire for development that was culturally sensitive, including all voices in decisions about development (in some cases there was insistence on specifically Aboriginal voices) (Participants OE1019, II1026, AM1119, UR111). These participants also spoke about development that was architecturally appropriate and that it reflected the natural beauty of the island in a way that was environmentally friendly and sustainable.

“Anybody who does use it has to respect it. And leave no footprints, that sort of thing, ...like the bottom line is respect” (Participant II1026).

“If there is going to be a structure of some kind, and there probably needs to be to explain the history, that it not be designed by people in Toronto that don’t know

anything about anything...It can't be anything that doesn't really blend with the area. It can't stick out, like a blight" (Participant OA1013 during Small group).

"What I'd like to see is it [a center on TI] be ecologically friendly, powered by solar panels, so that it would be you know, a renewable energy, like it would be sort of self-sustaining...makes sense ecologically and not leave a carbon footprint. Blend in with the surroundings" (Participant RA1026).

"I think we need to educate people and it [TI] is a place of respect and I think as the generations come up we have to really work hard on teaching that. Particularly with the natural environment because a lot of people are becoming further and further away from it" (Participant II1026 during Small group).

"I mean, if they cleaned it out a bit, put some signs up, trailed it a little better, its all I really think they need to do there...let people use it as is. Try to keep it as natural as possible" (Participant OG1028).

There was also insistence on respecting each other and hopes for creating relationships where all people were respected.

"Teaching lodges maybe, maybe a round house, something that would be significant for teachings, you know, for people, traditional teachings. And helping, helping other people understand culture[s] and understand that, bridge the gaps of the unknown. People want to go and participate...I know that people want to know more because they don't understand it. You know when you don't understand it, you fear it, right?" (Participant AM1119).

"It shouldn't matter what background you come from you know, like all of our ancestors have lots to do in this area so, it belongs to all of us and its nice when you can meet with each other and everybody sort of respects you for your own history" (Participant II1026).

Some participants urged respect for traditional teachings and also that direction for plans, especially for any development such as a round house, needs to come from the Elders (Participants RR108, EP118, AA118).

"You know for me, I would have to look to the elders to ask them what they would see there [on TI]. Because that's how we've always been as people and I know we are going back towards that more and more and asking them for their direction and guidance, how they would like to see that place...because I believe they would have the most wisdom and the most knowledge to give that to all of us. Not only my people but the

non-native people as well. I believe our elders would give the appropriate direction and guidance as to how they would see that land being utilized by everybody. Because that's how our people have always been, they've always wanted to share. They haven't been exclusive. We've always wanted to be inclusive to everybody and we are still like that" (Participant EP118).

Other participants spoke of respecting each other and the process by being open to the place and the potential it can have for the community in unexpected ways. Also, for being able to continue to learn about the area and recognize the need to learn more before decisions are made.

"I don't think I have enough knowledge or history to really talk about it too much for myself right now because I am still learning. So my thinking or the way I would go about it is just to say, Respect it for now...[because] there is a lot of history there" (Participant AA118).

"You do need to hear it from other people as well. So, like if you have a different tour guide, here and there, it makes it different. It makes, gives you different perspectives. The same information could be shared but different story tellers put their own little niche to it that makes you go wow, that's, I don't remember the last person saying that way but I wanna look at it that way too now...it'd be hard to, like yourself, you come from a different place, to come in to Kenora and say, 'Yeah, you know everything about TI.' It doesn't matter who you are, you don't. Unless you, you're there, or you've been listening to the stories over and over again then you can say, yeah ok, at least I know a little bit more than so and so that just got here" (Participant AS112).

5.4.3. Community/Inclusion Vision

All of my participants spoke, in some way, of a community vision: that community is important and/or that community need to be included in some way into any vision for TI. This came through in talks about the purpose of TI and the need for access.

"It should be an area that's used as an anchor to bring people together" (Participant OF104).

"...have access for people with disability and things...That place doesn't shut anybody down. I think, you know, people, just people, all walks of life can go there and check it out" (Participant OE1019).

There were ideas about how the community could share and come together through gatherings (i.e., feasts), art, and other experience-based participatory education such as survival skills and learning camps.

“Have education about FN survival on the land itself, off the land...a survival course...and teach it in the older ways, like Europeans got certain ways of finding their directions too...[so bring students] and then you show them the customs of Canada and the FNs are working together” (Participant LE1027).

“I think if you can present [history of TI] in a way that its fun, but people are learning the history, and that there’s no resentment about ‘Oh my god, they’re jamming history down our throats’ sort of thing. But if you can do it in such a way that its enlightening, its, people can participate and its not just somebody talking history at you but its an interactive type thing” (Participant RA1026).

“I see TI as the perfect microcosm of our entire history that has played out. The marginalization, the conflicts, the fighting over limited natural resource spaces, figuring out how to share those natural resources, how to manage things, what role sustainability has. All these different things played out there...I just see that as the role it has in showcasing how things can work or not work” (Participant EE920).

Also, TI was often seen as a place that is good for the wellbeing of the community as a whole by being a quiet, peaceful place where people and nature could have a place together to reconnect. This reconnection also included spiritual connection to the ancestors and doorkeepers of the place through ceremonies (Participant RR108).

“I look at it as a vision, there’s an opportunity for people to get to know each other, you know in our busy world. A place for people to go and relax and enjoy, a park like setting, and unrushed learning. Participate in whatever capacity you want to participate in, that kind of thing, openness, sharing of knowledge, understanding. A place where we can be in tune with nature because to me, I look at it as, it is TI, but to me it’s about Turtle Island, about the people” (Participant AM1119).

There was also talk about how the community is involved in the whole process.

“Yeah there is a whole good cycle going on now. So positive. It’s awesome and like the common grounds thing...Like the concept was just great and that’s what we are all aiming for really. It just gave us a definition for the time being. And that’s what I said earlier too, its one of those, TI is just one of those, ah, let’s talk about it and then let’s

find out a little and let people find out and then let's talk about it...and that's what's going on right now. Everything's being discovered. Everything's being done and then its going to die out for a little bit and we are just going to fire a long, keep it going, and then something else is gonna, all in the same manner though. I like that, that little cycle that happens" (Participant AS112).

5.4.4. Fear of Disconnection Vision

This vision reflected the views of 14 participants who spoke of what they would like to see but also what they would not like to see and some of the disappointment and concern they had about things that had happened or may happen.

"I just hope that its there forever...to me its totally a sanctuary and a sanctuary that deserves to be held on to at all cost without too much change so that people...behind us or ahead of us, I should say, are going to have the opportunity to go out there and get a feel for the real land. You know, its disappearing before our eyes in so many areas it really, you know, I'm really quite fearful of anything that's going to change it to too much of a degree" (Participant II1026).

"I mean, I could never actually see it ever being developed really. I just don't ever see that happening. I was even kind of surprised when this got sold sort of, like where the condos are..." (Participant OG1028).

One participant spoke about their concern that all the diversity of people be included in a way that fosters this:

"...there was a discussion about that, people's vision for that place...One of the things we did was go around and everyone expressed their connection, what they felt was their connection to that land. And what came out of that was people's different experience of that place...You know, all these different sort of use of that place and I think that the danger of interpreting it for the public is, whose story do you tell? Because everyone that comes there probably experiences it in a different way and to impose then, an interpretation of that place, one interpretation of that place diminishes, I think, the stories of other people. And so, I think that's something we need to be careful of...so just leaving it as it is I think addresses that issue so that people, you know, they are made aware that it is there. You know, they can go in and use that space and interpret that space and experience that space as they wish. Hopefully everyone does that respectfully and I think that would be my ideal for TI" (Participant OE923).

Also there was a very clear need for more communication overall as some people felt excluded. There was also concern expressed about what might occur and there was speculation about what is going on and who has authority (if anyone).

“I wish there was more communication because I get, there’s some people out there that think that I have some sort of...inside track, or I know what’s going on or whatever and I get a lot of people coming up to me and saying, you know, there’s a lot of rumours flying around. Because people are scared that, you know, I will hear a rumour that...they are going to build condos out there or something...and ah, well have you heard anything that’s going on, or? Because a lot of people, you know they love the place. But they don’t want to see a lot of changes made. But there’s not a lot of communication. I think they can do a better job of communicating, in the media as to what, how far along they are, but you never really hear about anything...” (Participant IR106).

“Like, is somebody at some point going to say, ‘Ok, well they’re not, nobody is getting their act together to do anything about it [TI] so, you know, city’s broke so lets just sell it...because its been sitting in limbo, ever since it was gifted from Abitibi” (Participant IM221).

5.4.5. An Holistic Vision

The data and themes above present the main perspectives I heard when I asked people to describe to me their vision for TI, or what they would like to see happen there. It would be incorrect to understand each vision as an idea or plan put forward by my participants, rather they should be viewed holistically. Each vision is intertwined with the next and presents general ideas about “what” could happen on that land along with “how” it could or should happen. I was not asking people for their vision in the context of appropriating them to make a plan for the land. It would be safe to assume though that, at some level, people connected to TI have a vision for its future and that those visions include an economic element, concern about respecting each other and the place, the need for community involvement and inclusion and a fear about change that might exclude people from the place.

5.5. Summary

It is clear that there are a large variety of connections and perspectives held by the participants I interviewed. Many of the connections are current activities people do or take part in on TI, from walking there with a friend to bringing an offering of tobacco. Most of these activities are quite simple, not requiring a lot of items or planning ahead, and many of these things take place on a somewhat routine basis: daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly. Other connecting factors, including childhood memories and connections through the CLCG movement, are layered with more complexity and point to connections that might not include a direct experience on TI itself. Instead of being routine occurrences they are more related to contextual circumstances of the region itself and how TI holds a place in the community. The perspectives, stemming from these connections, tell stories that are even more contextual in that they begin to reveal how the person understands TI. Through the perspective of *respect* we are given a glimpse into differing worldviews about places and how they are seen. The perspective on *change* describes what has occurred in the area, how it has affected people, and how it continues to redefine the people living in the area. The vision themes echo these perspectives and perhaps also provide a window into people's hopes for the future of the place and of their community.

However, these are not static results and neither is this research conclusive as to people's SOP of TI. These results are representations of the wide diversity of perspectives that are communicated during the process of inquiring about people's sense of a particular place such as TI. They reveal, in a clear and fairly concise way, the plethora of stories I heard about TI. If I were to conduct subsequent interviews of the same people or perhaps more of the same kind of interview on other people connected to TI I would probably find more types of

connections and perspectives. I do not see this as being a disadvantage to the data I have already gathered, but simply an indication that inquiring into SOP about TI allows for the collection of a rich data set. In the following chapter, I will discuss the conclusions drawn from these results.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions & Recommendations

In the fall of 2010, I spent four months living and working in Kenora. My research was a part of a larger project, the Common Ground SSHRC/CURA project, which is observing the Common Land, Common Ground movement in Kenora and the partnership between the Treaty 3 Anishnabee government, the City of Kenora and three First Nation reserves surrounding Kenora. This partnership came together to acquire more than 800 acres of land being divested by Abitibi-Consolidated Inc., most of which is on the island near the center of Kenora, commonly known as Tunnel Island. My focus was on the main section of shared land on Tunnel Island and my goal was to talk to people who have experienced the place (in different ways) and hear their stories of connection and their proposed visions for what could happen to it as a shared place. I conducted a brief document review, 25 semi-structured interviews, three modified focus groups and was a participant observer of the area during the four months I was there. I drew on the concept of Sense of Place (SOP) to form my theoretical foundation for questioning and analysis and will report on my conclusions in this final chapter.

Table 6.1 provides a reference to my purpose and objectives and I will refer to each

Table 6.1 Proposal & Objectives
Purpose: To understand how different people connect with place and how engaging this connection informs their vision and ability to imagine future possibilities for shared place.
1. To explore, through engaging their sense of place, peoples’ past and present perspective of and connection to the CGCL land on Tunnel Island.
2. To investigate how sense of place changes through time, individually and collectively, regarding Tunnel Island.
3. To discern peoples’ vision for the use of the CLCG land of Tunnel Island.
4. To determine how perspective of the place impacts an individual’s vision for its land use.

objective and my overall purpose in turn as they relate to my results and conclusions. A discussion on sense of place research and also the use of sharing circle literature for the modified focus groups is also included. Finally, I end with a few recommendations that I feel are suggested by the results and conclusions of my work.

6.1. Perspectives and Connections to Tunnel Island

The first objective occurred in every aspect of my research through interviews, document review and participant observation. In both individual and group interviews I asked direct questions, derived from SOP literature (Beckley 2003, 2007; Carter, Dyer & Sharma 2007; Cheng, Kruger & Daniels 2003; Hay 1988, 1998) to ask about connection and perspective. I

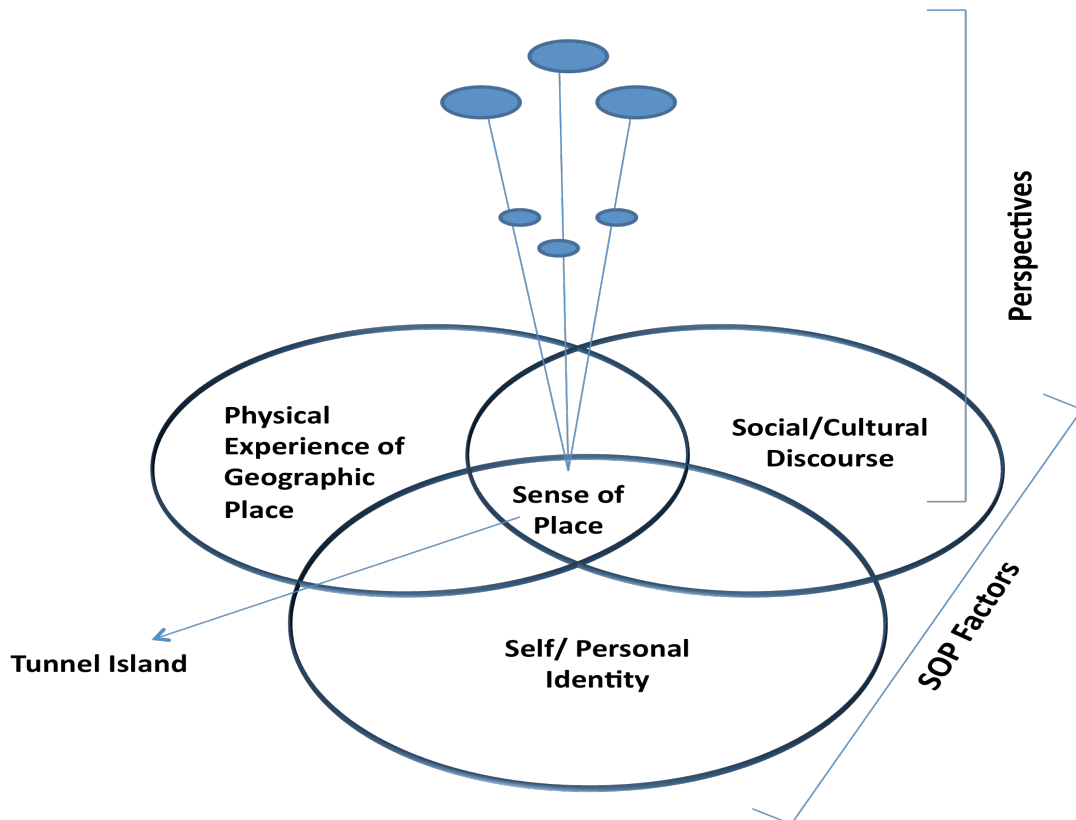


Table 3 - Sense of Place Framework (Revisited)

developed this framework (see Figure 3), which shows the three interrelated aspects of SOP and how perspectives are formed by all three. Using SOP questions in semi-structured interviews and the modified focus groups allowed the development of a rich collection of narratives regarding TI and its importance to people. These narratives are representations of the dynamic SOP connections to TI that people have, which continue to grow and expand. I conclude that there are strong connections held by people who have had experiences on TI and that, during my field research time, these connections were almost always regarded as being positive, healthy, and/or encouraging. These connections and the resulting perspectives were quite diverse, but the importance of TI was not limited by the length of time people had spent there. People who had spent much of their life living on TI certainly had more stories, but people who had only visited a few times and perhaps only gone to certain parts of the island still spoke of their connection as being very important.

These conclusions relate to SOP literature in the following ways: that SOP research allows place to be a “dynamic intersection between people, self and the physical environment,” that connection to places can promote positive self-identity, community engagement, and care for one’s surroundings (Casey 2001; Hay 1998; Smaldone, Harris & Sanyal 2005; Relph 1976; Tuan 2004), and that places can hold a wide diversity of perspectives, which is especially reflective of contested space literature (Cox & Holmes 2000; Cruikshank 2005; Massey 1994; Smaldone, Harris & Sanyal 2005; Yung, Freimund & Belsky 2003).

To elaborate on the relationship between conclusions and the literature, I chose my definition for SOP based on work of geographers such as Massy (1993; 2005) whom see places as dynamic intersections of relationships and interactions between people and places. This

relates to my conclusion that people hold strong connections (of different SOP factors) because they have relationships with TI. This understanding about SOP process, drawn from the literature and articulated in my definition of place and SOP (pg 19), is not concerned with degrees of attachment or how attachment is made, but rather looks at the connections created through experiences and how they influence and are influenced by a broad understanding of people's life. Statements in the data expressed emotional stories of connection that are felt and then described in these ways:

“...that is the glory of TI and I love TI” (Participant HU104),

“I look at it (TI) as my sanctuary” (Participant

“It's just nice to be on that island (OFI)” (Participant OE1019).

Also, the perspectives and connections, explored in Chapter 5, described a diversity of experiences and different things that were seen as important to people. My use of SOP research as a platform for participation did not distinguish these connections by degree, but rather created room for all types of connections and perspectives to be heard allowing TI, in the end, to be seen as a dynamic place within the community. This reflects the notion, developed early on in SOP literature by Relph, “Place is not a simple undifferentiated phenomenon of experience that is constant in all situations, but instead has a range of subtleties and significances as great as the range of human experience and emotion” (1976, pg 26).

Furthermore, there was much evidence presented in Chapter 5 to conclude that connection to places promotes the above mentioned positive self-identity, community engagement and, essentially, care for one's place. Every perspective and vision perspective spoke, in some manner, of the importance of TI. TI is seen, overall, as a place to promote

individual and communal health or wellbeing, to learn valuable lessons and to bring people together in different ways. The evidence of this was especially noted in the visions, which are all concerned with how to, essentially, *take care* of TI in a way that enhances it *as it is*. The anxiety expressed, again and again, regarding possible disconnection also leads me to conclude that continuing these connections with TI is extremely important to participants. If people are unable to continue being connected in whatever avenue they are connected today, there will be a possible loss of place connection. Their SOP will of course be changed to reflect this disconnection and the result could be fairly devastating to the community, especially obstructing the goal of building relationships.

The effects of “loss of place” are documented in the literature (Billig 2005; Carter, Dyer & Sharma 2007; Cruikshank 2005; Escobar 2001). In one study on “dis-placement”, the opposite of the above care of place occurs with loss of place as people’s connection is severed, either by physically denying access or by not allowing people’s voices to be heard regarding development taking place (Carter, Dyer & Sharma 2007). Loss of place, in the context of the SOP framework on page 86, means loss of meaningful or positive connection to TI with resulting perspectives reflecting disappointment, disengagement, and disconnection. The data I collected did mention stories of this type of loss occurring on TI in the past and recently with the shared land. People were told to leave several years ago but also, in recent deliberations, participants expressed a feeling of exclusion from what was going on. These are examples of how a connection to a place can be a disconnection and a loss of relationship to the place and to people. Thus, it is even more important to provide arenas and opportunities to hear all voices about both experiences and ideas that are held in common but also different from each

other, as illustrated by literature on SOP and contested space. As noted in the diagram of SOP, people are not only connected via physical geographic location but also through social/cultural discourse and personal identity. Yung, Friemund and Belsky (2002) cautioned that places and inquiring into people's SOP will bring up both shared but also divergent perspectives and these are just as important if connection and engagement in places is to be maintained. I did hear both shared and divergent perspectives, as did other participants during this process and other processes that have been occurring in Kenora with the CLCG movement. The essence of this concern can be seen in the following quote:

“There's so many different stories there (on TI) and I guess my feeling was, whose story becomes the story that's told. Or how do you express all those stories?” (Participant OE923).

The participant seems to be asking, how do we create a place for people's SOP to be heard now but also continue to be heard, as people's dynamic connections change.

6.2. Changing SOP Perspectives

Investigating how SOP changes over time, regarding TI, the second objective, did not yield such direct data, however I do believe aspects of this can be seen throughout and especially in connections and perspectives dealing with *change*. For example, many people commented on changes that occurred on TI once the CG partnership was formed, especially in the amount of people that now visit TI. This reinforces the notion, by several academics in this field, that SOP is dynamic and thus constantly in flux (Massey 2005, Cox & Holmes 2000). I did not investigate the precise mechanisms that cause SOP to change. However, one strong commentary on the possibility for SOP to change in a way that would produce negative connection, or disconnection, can be seen in the *fear of disconnection* vision that I presented. I

believe these results display the possibility for people to lose aspects of their current SOP in the future, which could be due to a lack of their engagement and/or dramatic physical change to occur, thus altering their physical connection to TI.

The third objective was thoroughly discussed in Chapter 5 through the four vision themes. This discussion is taken up again in the final objective that feeds directly into my proposal. Does perspective of place impact a person's vision? I am concluding that, yes it does. I came to see how visions themselves are a certain kind of perspective, thus the name "vision perspectives."

The perspectives from my results section are as follows: Community, Respect, Northern Lifestyle, Economy, Change (Land use and Nostalgic), and Physical Geography. As I began to look at the people's visions, I noticed a fairly clear pattern of people speaking about those things that were important to them and why they would like to see "X" happen. Here are some examples from the data presented in Chapter 5:

Participants who spoke about the importance of the *economy* in Kenora also often spoke, in detail, about ideas they had for TI that would be economically sustainable and perhaps even create profit for the partnership and/or for Kenora in the form of tourism.

Participants who spoke about *respect* and *community*, as they described TI, would also explain visions that included being respectful to the land and to other people for the community. One participant, in particular, stressed that anything that does happen must *respect* guidance given by the Elders, as that would be the best for the *community* as a whole (Participant EP118).

Participants who spoke about TI being an important place for meeting people, creating community, and spending time with family wanted things to happen there that enhanced these aspects. They spoke of educational centers so people could learn about each other, more communication so more people could go, and simple things like picnic benches for families and groups to eat together.

Within a *nostalgic* perspective the correlation is even stronger as the way people remembered TI or, the stories people knew about things that happened on TI, became an important part of their idea of what should happen on TI in terms of interpretation. The visions articulated from this perspective were identified in the themes of *community/inclusion* and *respect*. For example, participants who understood the history of TI to include stories of exclusion and marginalization had a vision for TI that included the community becoming aware of these stories as a way to respect the memories, in other words memorialize them. Other examples are of participants who had such positive memories of childhood experiences on TI that they wished for all the community to be able to experience TI in such a way.

Overall, though there is definite relationship between perspectives and visions it is complex – there is no formula for perspective to vision. In other words, because places and people are dynamic, perspectives and ideas about visions for the future use of TI are going to change due to a infinitely complex assortment of SOP factors. Yet, there are correlations with the possibility that understanding or articulating one’s perspective can also make the reasons for a particular vision more obvious.

Finally, drawing on the above, we come to the discussion of the purpose. This is the last linkage: Does a person’s sense of place connections relate to vision? (I will deal with imagining

shared place in a moment). Again, I will conclude “yes”. This, in fact, is already clear in much of the literature. If we look at the use of SOP in resource management, it is clear that the intention behind talking to people about the place they live is in order to create plans that are a better fit the area because people are involved with the changes that affect them (Davenport & Anderson 2005; Cheng, Kruger & Daniels 2003; Yung, Freimmel & Belsky 2003). I believe this is because there *is* such a relationship between a person’s connection to a place and their perspective on it.

One example, from the data, is a story from a participant whose connection is very recreationally wilderness based, spending lots of time there with or without people watching and observing (Participant HU104). As this participant described their activities, they often mentioned the need for preservation to allow further opportunities for observation of the events of nature. Thus, their activities were closely tied to their vision for what could happen there. In fact, when asked about visions for the area, I often received more connection stories and experiences as if I too might understand the vision because of experiencing the place through these stories.

Another participant very clearly explained to me how they became connected to the Common Ground land and hoped that other people might experience the place in the same way (Participant UO927). The vision could be described then, as a desire for people to develop this person’s vision for themselves. In fact, according to the participant, the message of the place itself (TI) was of this particular vision.

The above desire was actually quite common, but often less clearly stated. However, a pattern did begin to emerge as I noted that *how a person experienced and used TI* influenced

how they imagined other people experiencing it. If it was a place they used for dog walking, they hoped that to continue for themselves and others. If it was a place they camped at as a child, they hoped people to be able to camp there again. If it was a place where they began to learn the history of past people's, they hoped to share that knowledge.

I feel that these conclusions reinforce the framework (see Figure 3, pg 85) I developed from the literature, especially drawing on Sack's (1997) discussion on the factors of SOP in relation to perspectives.² There is a relationship, indeed, between SOP connections and vision, which could be unique to the shared land on TI. Unique because the people I spoke to had quite positive connections and often wanted these kind of connections to continue. Thus, their SOP connections could be used as a foundation for their imaginings of what they would like to see happen there because it was good for them. This was also true for the few negative experiences, which created disconnection as I explored through the data in Chapter 5 under *connections disconnections*. For these participants, there was a desire for a vision that reconciles those disconnections or at least, makes people aware of them, so that they do not happen again. Again, the relationship between connection and subsequent vision perspective was clear.

Finally the last piece of my purpose statement: People's ability to imaging possibilities for shared place and does engaging their SOP connection allow for this. The relationship here is certainly not as clear as simply asking people their vision for TI. When I asked specifically about the sharing of TI, some people would begin to draw on aspects of their SOP other than physical

² I had initially used the concept of "perception" in my work and framework but then received some guidance cautioning me regarding the complexities of the concept. In my work, I actually came to recognize that I was not interested in how people perceive the place (perhaps alluding to a more psychological sensing) but rather in how they communicate it through perspectives.

experience on the island. However, for some it was quite clear, TI is shared, was shared and can simply continue as is. For these participants it was due to the power of the place itself to bring people together. There seemed to be a clear correlation for those people whose experience on TI influenced a perspective that saw it as a place “to be respected” and a place that drew people together to care for them. For other people, this was less clear. One participant even found it impossible to imagine land ever being shared in a way where all were happy. Others drew on political experiences they had over the years and spoke more about the way the legal and formal partnership should be formed to bring people together, on and off the Common Ground land.

So, in the end, I do not feel able to say that engaging SOP always creates possibilities to imagine shared place because to know this I would have to ask my participants that question after having engaged their SOP and time, among other limitations did not allow for this. Furthermore, the notion of shared place is, in itself, complicated. For some participants, it is easier to imagine an idea of sharing place but hard to think about practical suggestions for what should happen to allowing sharing to occur. One hopeful conclusion from the data, however, does point to the sharing of vision through the four themes that overlap. Especially noticing that all of my participants found community and inclusion to be an important aspect of their vision perspective. Also the process does and did create an arena for discussion and I do still believe that, for some participants, these type of processes did change the way they imagine shared place. One participant told me a story about a workshop regarding the CG land that allowed people space to share their connections and, upon reflection, this person’s vision for a shared place on TI changed and also became clearer (Participant OE923). Another participant

explained their vision for TI including an experience in another shared place, which caused them to engage in that particular place and, again upon reflection, hoped the same for TI (Participant RA1026). So this conclusion is based, not on my own work to engage people SOP of TI but rather on participants relating stories of earlier SOP type processes they experienced.

6.3. Sense of Place Research – The possibilities for participation

SOP research can be used to engage people in a way that lends to increased and perhaps more authentic participation. This is something alluded to by Beckley et al. (2007) suggesting that talking about one's SOP itself strengthens awareness of a person's connection to that place (also see Sampson & Goodrich 2009 and Williams & Stewart 1998). Simply allowing people to talk about the place and voice some of their ideas is useful to them. This is something the study by Yung, Friemund and Belsky (2003) found to be an important aspect of their SOP research. In my own research, people often concluded the small groups by telling me how much they appreciated being a part of the research, that they enjoyed hearing what other people had to say and found the experience very positive. In the interviews, a couple participants spoke directly about how much they appreciated me asking them questions and being genuinely ready to listen to them. They saw this as being good for the overall project and goal of the partnership to share place and create relationships. A participant told me, towards the end of an interview, "You are actually aiding the, I guess the coming together and sharing, you are actually promoting that. Which is great, you don't realize you are actually maybe doing that, but you are doing that" (Participant AM1119). Others hoped I might take a more active role for the Common Ground partnership itself because I seemed to be working to help people participate by asking about their vision for the Common Ground land. This is indicative of the

ability for SOP research to provide arenas for people to voice connections to places that are important to them.

SOP research also provided a snapshot of the relational context of the area including how things have changed over time, how people related to this change and their hopes for the future of the place that they live. This, in the context of my data, appears to be due to the attention paid to, not only people's experiences in the geographic location, but also the reasons why these are important to them within their personal and social context. I was able to learn about the people in the area and their relationships to each other *by asking them about TI*, which allowed me a nuanced picture of the past and present relationships of the area (or lack of relationship) and the desire of many participants for the creation of relationships. This may be what academics refer to as the "power of place" to bring people together, or perhaps to reveal people's connections and the reality that "community is tied to place" (Hay 1998). In other words, that social connection must necessarily occur in places. Thus, investigating a SOP of a place reveals a web of relationships and can lead to a different way of understanding place and space, especially within political decisions (including NRM decisions). Massey (2005) speaks of, "a politics which pays attention to the fact that entities and identities (be they places, or political constituencies, or mountains) are collectively produced through practices which form relations" (pg 148). Thus, SOP research, which pays attention to relationships found *in places* is ideal to developing this new kind of politics, or in the words of the CLCG initiative, "to foster constructive working relationships between First Nation and non-First Nation governments on a variety of mutual concerns in a region that is shared by all" (Dovetail Resources 2006, pg 2).

This leads me to further conclude that places, themselves, play a part in facilitating relationships and they can play a larger role in the creation of new relationships. For many participants, their connection to TI was spiritual and they spoke of the need to respect the place due to its power and sacred nature. For others, they spoke of being able to go to TI and find respect and learn about nature and other people and the need for places where people can come and be respected and share knowledge about their perspectives in order to bring understanding. Both of these connections and perspectives focused on what occurs or what is allowed to happen to individuals when they spend time on TI. Several academics studying the use of SOP research, speak of this power of places that exists when we are able to experience them, in other words, when we are connected in some way (Cruikshank 2005; De la Cadena 2010; Hay 1998; Latour 1999). In the case of TI, asking people about their connection to TI led them to talk about relationship building experiences there (family and new friends or acquaintances) and also to comment on their desire for this to continue. This suggests that working towards the goal of the CLCG movement to build relationships in the area can be done through this shared place and that, working from **place-to-relationship**, at the same time as relationship to place will yield much better results. Place to relationship was the proposed avenue for the CLCG movement when the partnership was developed to acquire the land, which is why it is of such interest to so many and it has generated such excitement. The SOP research that I used also works from this direction, focusing on place and the relationships held therein, and therefore has exciting prospects for NRM decision-making, or better-said, place-based decision making (Davenport & Anderson 2005). To clarify, by place-to-relationship I mean allowing for the ambiguity of place to provide structure for relationships. Interpretation

can be imposed onto a place but that does not mean that the place will only be interpreted in that way. As the SOP diagram shows, places are interpreted and experienced from a diversity of factors that is constantly in flux. It is a nuanced difference but important because places intrinsically hold multiplicity of meanings, histories and experiences, thus they share even where it is difficult to share them.

6.4. Use of Sharing Circles in Modified Focus Groups: Building relationships and allowing further SOP discussion

I will close my conclusions here with a discussion about the modified focus groups and how I integrated use of sharing circle literature. During these groups, I followed the same SOP derived questions that I had used in the individual interviews. I hoped that this would create a sort of familiar place for people as they had already spoken with me about the same general topics. I believe it did as people easily spoke about TI, their connection and perspective, sharing with the group as they had with me. I often heard the same stories, but in more condensed versions. I also created a familiar (or safe) place for people to discuss by being very clear about how we were going to talk together but also about what we were going to talk about. This I drew from focus group literature.

Another aspect of the circle, that I feel was very important for providing a sense of security for people, was the bringing in of a sacred focus. In the sharing circle literature the use of a “talking stick” was discussed (Rothe, Ozegovic & Carroll 2009). I decided to use a “talking stone” and I also decided to bring in two other focus objects, which were important to me. I prepared a small cloth pouch of tobacco and I lit a candle. The tobacco was something I had learned during my field research as being something that people shared when they talked

about places – a sort of exchange for place knowledge. The candle was something from my own background and experience of being a part of contemplative circles where a candle is lit at the beginning to symbolize the Spirit’s presence. I explained these things at the beginning, along with the other tenets I mentioned in my methods section (pg 31), and that I would offer the tobacco to TI by bring it there after the gathering, to show my respect. I was also very careful to explain that I was not leading a traditional sharing circle but rather leading a small group drawing on ideas from different methods. One participant, who was familiar with traditional sharing circles, spoke of the significance of what I had done and brought to the group creating an avenue for communication between each other but also with the ancestors and doorkeepers of TI, which was very affirming.



Plate 6 – Picture of focus objects in center of circle

These things together seemed to create a solemn and respectful place for people to share, especially when it came to visions. All three times, as the circle began people would talk about what they agreed with and then expand a bit or add another piece. For example, one participant spoke about their desire to see very little development take place on the island and this was then spoken about around the group. During another group a participant mentioned the need for relationship building (as apart of the vision) due to the racial tensions that still remain and this was then discussed in some way by the rest of the group. This occurred even though I intentionally told people this was not a decision-making exercise but people seemed to look for ways that they could agree or affirm, at least in part, to what was said as the stone made its way around the circle.

Group sharing was also an exercise in listening and participating in new ways, especially for participants who were unfamiliar with some of the traditionally Aboriginal aspects of the method. I noticed that some participants would forget that they could not speak during the circle unless they had the stone, and they would begin to say something and then catch themselves. Also, at the end of the “formal” circles I opened the discussion to the group, without the talking stone, and found the group eager to speak and discuss in a more back and forth manner. Furthermore, prior to and following the formal meeting (and during the break in the middle), there was quite a lot of informal discussion and sharing. In fact, during one of the groups an idea was generated that this type of discussion needed to happen more often, perhaps people gathering to share stories about TI on TI and thus build relationships.

Here my own research circle comes to a close with the purpose for my research being to work towards the larger project goal to “build capacity for cross-cultural collaboration and

social learning for sustainability” and also increase “sense of place and connection to Common Ground.” I believe this project did this, especially in the events of the small group but also through the interviews, and perhaps just by my being there and doing research.

6.5. Recommendations

I make these recommendations to the partnership group and to the community. First, that communication is needed for community to be able to engage, participate and eventually build those relationships that are at the heart of the common ground shared land. Secondly, for shared land to be shared it seems obvious that decision-making must also be shared. I would recommend the partnership group to focus on becoming a facilitation body for the creation of arenas for community decision-making to take place. In fact, I have demonstrated that the Common Ground land is *already* a place where sharing is taking place through many different avenues. Consideration must be given to relationships that have been built and that *continuing* building and care should be taken not to undermine those. The data clearly indicates that there are strong connections to this shared place and also a strong desire to create a place for the community.

I have also illustrated how the use of SOP research itself creates useful avenues for discussion and even community building. Allowing TI and the other pieces of the Common Ground land to be the focus of community engagement is a way to encourage further relationship building. This can be practically done by holding meetings that encourage sharing and simply being together on TI. This must also be done by a dramatic increase in community wide *communication* about what is occurring, who is invited (explicitly everyone), and making that communication accessible. Opening channels of community-wide communication will

possibly create relationships as the different communities learn how to contact each other. Community-wide means the three FN reserves, the Treaty 3 network, the city of Kenora, and all other small organizations and groups within those larger bodies. As my research has shown, people living in Kenora itself, who spend regular time on TI, are at loss to understand and know what is happening on TI or with the partnership group. This is clearly a problem as one can imagine how difficult it might be for someone not living nearby, if those close by don't even know. Again, the data shows that people's connection to a place is more than just physical presence, thus disconnection can be caused by lack of communication. The data also suggests that loss of connection or perhaps a disruption to the place (such as development that is not done with involvement of the large body of persons already connected) might incur protest.

Creating common ground and sharing land is perhaps not as difficult as we might like to think but it does appear to require new ways of doing things. Intentionally allowing a place to be ambiguous by creating structures that promote sharing, instead of decisions that detail how TI should be shared, is a more practical way to be able to have both convergent and divergent meanings about place together. It means being a little uncomfortable with processes, realizing the importance of the place and working diligently to find ways to stay connected, and being careful and intentional whenever decisions are made. TI is common ground and in many ways it is shared. My hope as I end this work, is that it remains so.

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Appendix I:

Sense of Place of Tunnel Island - Semi-Structure Interview Guide

To be conducted in: Kenora, Ontario

Field Season: August 2010 to November 2010

Researcher: Mya Wheeler Wiens, MNRM Candidate of the Natural Resource Institute

Main focus of study/Research Question: *How do different people perceive or connect with place and how does this inform their vision or ability to imagine possibilities for place that are different from what is currently perceived?*

*Prior to meeting the participant was asked to bring photos or items from Tunnel Island which could be used as a focal point of the interview. I will provide a map of the island. The participant will also have signed a consent form, agreeing to be interviewed and fully aware of the implications.

Introduction: Thank you for taking your time today to meet with me! As you know, I am here studying people's sense of place regarding Tunnel Island. I will use this research to write my thesis based on our speaking together but, in order to be very clear, my role is not to make plans or changes to plans regarding the use of Tunnel Island.

Instead, I am much more interested in what you have to say regarding this place. I am glad to answer any questions or concerns you have at any time during the course of the interview or afterwards. We will take between about an hour for this conversation, if you need a break please tell me.

As we begin, please refer to the items you brought or the map here, if you need, at any time to clarify or help you to explain.

Main Topics:

- 1). Memories of Tunnel Island
- 2). Activities/ Amount of time spent on Tunnel Island
- 3). Current Perception of Tunnel Island
- 4). Vision for Tunnel Island
- 5). Questions or Comments

Main Questions with Follow-Up Questions:

*The main questions will guide me in my questioning but will not necessarily be asked directly. I will use the follow-up questions to flesh out the topic questions.

- 1). Memories – **What do you remember about Tunnel Island?**
 - a). When did you first hear about Tunnel Island?
 - b). What was your first experience of Tunnel Island?
 - c). Why do you think it is called "Tunnel Island"?
 - d). Do you know Tunnel Island by any other names? (e.g. *Wa'Say'Ba'Go* the Ojibway name?)

2). Activities – **How do you and/or have you used Tunnel Island in the past and currently?**

- a). How much time do you spend there? Do you go there weekly, monthly, yearly?
- b). What do you do there/ Why do you go?
- c). Where do you spend most of your time and why?
- d). What is your perception of how other use the land in this area?

3). Current Perspective – **How do you understand Tunnel Island?**

- a). How would you describe Tunnel Island to me, a visitor?
- b). *If a photo or item was brought and not yet mentioned* – Please show me what you brought and tell me about it/them.
- c). Here is a map of Tunnel Island, if you need it. Can you please describe the island to me? What comes to your mind when you think about it? What does it mean to you? Is there are certain place or area that you find to be meaningful in negative or positive ways?
- d). What is the most meaningful/important thing about Tunnel Island that you would like other people to know or understand?

4). Vision – **What is your vision for Tunnel Island?**

- a). What do you think is or should be the purpose or role of Tunnel Island?
- b). How would you use the land? How should it be used?
- c). How do you think it will be used?
- d). Do you know that part of TI is shared land? How should it be shared?

5). Questions or further comments

Debriefing:

Thank you again for sharing your thoughts with me and taking your time to be here! Tunnel Island is a very interesting, unique place and it is good to have your input. The next step of this process, for me, will be go over our conversation and look for keys themes you mentioned regarding Tunnel Island. I will bring those to focus group circle (group interview) that you have agreed to attend with a few other people regarding values and visions of Tunnel Island. I encourage you to reflect on our conversation today as well. During this group discussion there will be a chance for you to verify any of the information we discussed today and to add anything you may think of as you reflect in the next couple weeks.

It is a process to understand a person's sense of place, so thank you for being a part of this process with me. Again, if you think of any questions or have any concerns please call or email me.

Appendix II:

Guide for Modified Focus Group/Sharing Circle

Sense of Place and Vision – Tunnel Island in Kenora, ON

To be conducted in: Kenora, Ontario (common room to be found and reserved)

Field Season: August 2010 to November 2010

Researcher: Mya Wheeler Wiens, MNRM Candidate of the Natural Resource Institute

Length of meeting: Maximum of 2 hours

Main Focus of Study/Research Question: *How do different people connect with place and how does engaging this connection inform their perspective, vision and ability to imagine future possibilities for shared place?*

Purpose of Meeting: To give brief summary of individual interview results regarding general senses of place of and visions for Tunnel Island to participants and receive feedback and further discussion in a group setting.

Gathering: 8 people or less, previously interviewed individually by me, will meet in a designated room. The chairs will be placed in a circle with the facilitator (myself) being a part of the circle. Drinks and snacks will be available for people to get something as they arrive. There will be a tape recorder set on a table in the middle of the circle and possible a video recorder set up in the corner of the room (if possible). Also on the table in the circle I will place a “talking stone,” a candle, and a small pouch of tobacco. The map I used during the interviews will be placed in the room on a wall in the background where I will also place a poster with the 5 teachings as reminders. I will ask the group to be seated and then proceed to the introduction.

Introduction: This short piece by me will accomplish the following items:

1. To explain the tape and video recorders and ask permission to use them,
2. To introduce myself (briefly because we have all already met),
3. To introduce this method – modified focus group/sharing circle – and the 5 teachings;
 - a. Turn-taking with “talking stone”
 - b. ‘speak from the heart’ – express feelings openly
 - c. ‘listen from the heart’ – listen without judgment, open minds, respect
 - d. ‘speak spontaneously’ – no need to rehearse or perfect
 - e. ‘speak leanly’ – without embellishment, simply
4. To explain the flow of the meeting;
 - a. Opening
 - b. 1 time around the circle with the first topic/question in mind (listed below)
 - c. 1 time around the circle with the second topic/question in mind
 - d. 1 time around with 3 topic/question
 - e. 5 min break to stretch, refill drinks, eat a small snack
 - f. 1 to 2 times around with the 4th topic/question in mind
 - g. 1 last time around to respond or add further
 - h. Opening of circle for free discussion

i. Closing

Main Topics & Probes

- 1.) Activities on TI
 - a. What do you do on TI?
 - b. Main activities
- 2.) What is your experience of TI?
- 3.) What is the most important thing about TI?
- 4.) Vision for Tunnel Island
 - a. How best to share land?

“Common Land, Common Ground was based on the idea that governments whose people share a territory and its resources should create and maintain ways to live and work in harmony. Both municipal and First Nations leaders realized that an ongoing, constructive relationship could help avoid potential disputes in the future and could foster constructive working relationships on a variety of mutual concerns in a region shared by all.” (CGRF website).

Opening

The “talking stone” will be a stone that has some meaning to me. I will give its history and then read the 5 teachings again and also explain the “focus” objects with the stone (candle and pouch of tobacco). I will also explain the plan and the focus of the circles, explaining that this is not a traditional sharing circle but that I am drawing on the richness of that method. Then I will introduce the Topic 1 with the question about activities, pointing out that this is a question that was asked in the interviews. Then I will give my own recent and brief experience with the island as a way to begin the stories but also in order to establish myself as an interested outsider who is facilitating but also participating in a small way. We will begin going clockwise and after the break will go counter-clockwise so as not to bias one way.

Closing

I will close with a thanks and some words to express the value of the discussion, gratitude for peoples’ willingness to share and be open. Then I will ask people to participate in a handshaking circle where I will stand and shake the person’s hand on my left and then they will stand and do the same until all are standing and have shaken hands with each other.