

**“To rob the world of a people”: An Instance of Colonial Genocide in the Fort
Alexander Indian Residential School¹**

By

Natalia Ilyniak

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University of Manitoba

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¹ This title is from a quote by Theodore Fontaine, a Survivor of Fort Alexander Indian Residential School from Sagkeeng First Nation. He explains the Canadian Residential School System was “implemented to eliminate First Nations people from the face of our land and country, to rob the world of a people simply because our values and beliefs did not fit theirs” (2010: 20).

Abstract

This paper demonstrates, through Sagkeeng First Nation narratives, how the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School (FAIRS) is a micro-instance of genocide. An understanding is offered from the perspective of a settler colonial academic, in consideration of decolonizing principles. Using relational theory, namely Actor-Network Theory, this paper discusses how FAIRS's practices were designed and operated to disrupt relations between Anishinaabe children and their community, and the ways children and their families negotiated and undermined these practices. Data was collected through critical narrative analysis and sociohistoric inquiry to identify and unpack themes of "language," "space/place," and "the natural environment" as identified in FAIRS Survivors' testimonies, interviews, stories, and memoir.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Sagkeeng First Nation and all the Anishinaabe children that attended the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In this thesis I offer an understanding of one micro-instance of genocide in Canada from the perspective of a settler colonial academic. Specifically, I draw upon local narratives to unpack the relational processes of colonial encroachment onto the Sagkeeng First Nation in Fort Alexander, Manitoba. Using relational theory, and carrying out my research in consideration of decolonizing principles, I demonstrate how the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School (FAIRS) was designed and operated to disrupt relations among the Sagkeeng community in ways that threatened to destroy the group. My relational theory draws from Actor Network Theory (mainly a combination of Michel Callon's and Bruno Latour's approaches) to stress the local-level agency of actants in the conflict.

As I carried out my research, I remained reflexive about how colonial genocide can be studied by a settler colonial researcher working from within the academy and a Master's program. In particular, I considered Eurocentric assumptions within the Sociology of genocide, as well as my own European and colonial-based assumptions. I aligned my theoretical and methodological frameworks with decolonizing and Indigenous epistemologies. I highlighted contradictions between Western and Indigenous epistemologies (Harris 2002). As well, I translated the experiences of Sagkeeng community members into my own understanding and into academic writing with the hopes of sharing what I learnt with the academic community about genocide within FAIRS.

Data was collected through a critical narrative analysis and sociohistoric inquiry to address the central argument of this thesis: to demonstrate through Sagkeeng First Nation narratives how the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School is a micro-instance of genocide. To this end, I focus on themes of "language," "space/place," and "nature" as presented in

Anishinaabe narratives through testimonies, interviews, stories, and memoir. I demonstrate how FAIRS's micro-level practices worked to disrupt local relational processes integral to creating and sustaining Sagkeeng group life in ways that can be considered genocidal. Narratives were collected from various sources produced and shared by Survivors from Sagkeeng First Nation.

Sociohistoric sources include the Davin Report (1879), Treaty 1 (1957), and secondary sources on residential schools in Canada. I focus on the local because it is often overlooked in the genocide studies literature. However, broader structures – policies and ideologies – are also considered because they shaped local colonial actions in FAIRS. National goals of settlement, governance, and nation-building created the residential school system and the racist curriculums that structured the actions of school staff.

This project is warranted by the need to learn about specific community experiences with colonialism. Only then can we begin to discuss issues surrounding group destruction. It is important to delve into the complex relational dynamics that reproduce and maintain a group to understand if these relations are being disrupted in a way that could destroy the group (Woolford 2013). As Woolford points out, “this entails more than just a desire to protect the lives of those whom we perceive to be group members; it involves an understanding of the ways in which such a group constructs itself as a group” (Woolford 2013: 72). Once we understand something about a group's culturally-based relationality, we can discuss whether these relations are being threatened.

My target audience is the white settler academic community. For this reason, I translate what I learned from Anishinaabe narratives into the language of the university and the Sociology discipline. It is important for this information to be disseminated amongst non-Indigenous society to unsettle the “founding white myth” of a peaceful Canadian settlement. Many

Canadians deny our violent past and present, believing we settled the land through peaceful means (Regan 2010). Giving prominence to Anishinaabee voices in the debate on genocide in Canada debunks myths that justify colonial practices and policies that threaten Anishinaabe collective lives and identities. Decolonization needs to happen on both fronts, involving both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. My work can therefore speak directly to settlers and compel a shift in thinking about the settlement of Canada towards a decolonizing lens. Non-Indigenous populations will benefit from greater awareness and understanding of Anishinaabe experiences. The success of this nation is built upon the exploitation and destruction of the original inhabitants of this land (Milloy 1999). Ongoing plans implicating Anishinaabe land are being made in the name of “progress,” including expansion of cities, farms, and hydroelectric projects (Milloy 1999). It is imperative that non-Indigenous Peoples gain a critical understanding of colonialism as it has been and continues to be experienced by Anishinaabe people today.

From this project, I have learned about the ways that FAIRS worked to disrupt communal ties in Sagkeeng. I have also learned the ways Survivors and their families undermined colonial encroachment by maintaining communal relationships. During my visits to Sagkeeng, I observed that the language and culture have not only been maintained, but are consistently strengthened. There are critical discussions happening in the Sagkeeng Anicinabe High School about colonialism, residential schools, Treaty 1, racism, and ongoing government and corporate practices that affect their community. Clearly, FAIRS failed in removing Anishinaabe-specific ways of life from the Sagkeeng community. Nevertheless, the actions of the school could be considered genocidal because they functioned to destroy communal relationality that was sustained through language, space/place, the natural environment, and in many other ways.

A Note on Terminology

It is important to define certain words and terms used in this paper. Language is loaded with history and meaning. I use the term Anishinaabe to talk about the Indigenous community in Sagkeeng. Anderson explains that “Michif, Nehiyawak, and Anishinaabek are known as Metis, Cree, and Ojibway or Saulteaux in English” (Anderson 2011: 180, fn 5). Although the Indigenous and English terms can be used interchangeably (Anderson 2011: 180, fn 5), I will avoid using Ojibway and Saulteaux and stick with Anishinaabe. There is a distinction between Ojibwa and Saulteaux; however, I am not clear on how to differentiate between the two and often the way people self-identify seems to be contextual. Some community members identify as Saulteaux while others prefer Ojibway or Anishinaabe. Different people have different perspectives on what they identify as and why. I was unable to discern a clear rule that guided all such identifications. Also, I have not met the majority of the people whose narratives appear in this paper, and therefore do not know how they identify. I do not want to impose a term upon them. Identities are complex and fluid and I want to avoid labelling someone in an inappropriate way. Therefore, I use Anishinaabek or Anishinaabe when speaking of the people of Sagkeeng because it seems to be an acceptable term for both those who identify as Saulteaux and Ojibway.

Another term worth noting is “Survivors,” which refers to the people who attended the residential school and whose testimonies, stories, interviews, and memoir I draw upon in this paper. There are many misgivings with the term. It can connote that Indigenous Peoples merely existed through the residential school experience, rather than thrived and flourished in strong and resilient ways. I do not use the term to suggest that the individuals discussed in this thesis merely physically survived the residential school. I stress children and their families maintained relationships and cultural practices despite the school’s efforts to remove them. Anishinaabe

Peoples resisted colonial encroachment all along the way. Individual agency undermined the attempts of the residential school to destroy communal ties.

Another loaded word that needs to be unpacked is “traditional,” which is used to describe lifestyles and worldviews of Anishinaabe peoples that are in line with Anishinaabe culture. Traditional can be problematic because it can imply that Anishinaabe culture is frozen in the past. It can suggest that Anishinaabe ways of life have not modernized or changed over time. I do not intend to use the word that way. In this paper, traditional means Anishinaabe ways of life that, while originating in pre-colonial contact era, have persisted in some ways and changed in others in response to social changes. It means Anishinaabe ways of life according to the worldviews held by Anishinaabe Peoples at the temporal period in question in this paper (1940’s to 1960’s).

Some of my secondary sources include information and stories from other Indigenous authors from different communities (not Sagkeeng). Specifically, Metis, Cree, and Anishinaabe (or Ojibway and Sauteaux) writers’ work is consulted to gain an understanding of Indigenous worldviews, history, and experiences. Drawing on information from various peoples to understand Sagkeeng experiences does not mean that these groups are homogenous. Kim Anderson points out, “these peoples ... are part of the same language family and, at mid-twentieth century, they had many similar characteristics in terms of hunting/harvesting life ways, social and political organization, and the ceremonies and teachings that supported these worlds” (2011: 27). However, she continues that, “this is not to discount the diversity between, and indeed within, Nehiyawak [Cree], Michif [Metis], and Anishinaabek [Ojibway and Sauteaux] peoples and communities; in ‘the bush’ or in small towns; in Christian, ‘traditional,’ or mixed spiritual communities; within different economies, and so on” (Anderson 2011: 27). I use Cree,

Metis, and other Indigenous Peoples' narratives to discuss broader colonial processes that affect Sagkeeng along with many communities in Manitoba and even Canada.

Finally, using the word genocide to frame discussion on settler colonial conflict can be seen as contentious. Genocide is not necessarily an appropriate word to describe Anishinaabe experiences with colonialism. For example, genocide often suggests an ending of life, whereas in Anishinaabe culture, life is cyclical and ongoing. This paper will demonstrate that people do not necessarily need to be killed for genocide to occur. Also, the term genocide is increasingly appearing in the narratives of Indigenous communities in Canada. Some people do use the word genocide to describe their experiences. Judy da Silva, Anishinaabe Elder, community leader, and activist from Grassy Narrows First Nation describes residential schools as genocidal:

People did not receive the values of the Anishinaabek. Instead, they inherited the feeling of loss and doom carried by our parents and grandparents due to the genocidal tactics they have had to live through. The genocidal tactics I mean are the direct attack on the strength of the Anishinaabek: our children. The major weapon the government used was the residential school system (da Silva in Settee 2011: 89).

Indigenous communities are adopting the word “genocide” to describe their experiences. There is therefore a need to consider the term and its usefulness for understanding colonial processes.

Phil Fontaine, a FAIRS Survivor and former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, has repeatedly called on the Federal Government to acknowledge that the Residential School System was an act of genocide. The Canadian Museum of Human Rights recently rejected the use of the term “settler colonial genocide,” sparking a fresh debate on the importance of the term. There is “growing academic consensus Canada did indeed commit genocide, and repeated calls by aboriginal leaders – including, most recently, Phil Fontaine – for the federal government to recognize its role in the destruction of indigenous culture and institutions” (Welch 2013: pp 2). Justice Murray Sinclair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada also

called for residential schools to be recognized as genocide. The discussions and debates over the term are already taking place. It is necessary for white settlers to take responsibility for their role in the colonial process and participate and be accountable within these discussions.

Chapter 2: Historical Context and Literature Review

Earlier approaches to genocide tend to represent the history of colonialism and the residential school system in Canada in limiting and even colonizing ways. The long and complex processes – varying spatially and temporally – are often overlooked. Also, the experiences of individual communities are often overgeneralized. In this chapter, a brief glance at the history of colonialism and the residential school system in Canada demonstrates its variation and complexity. Following is a critical review of earlier approaches to the sociology of genocide. As well, I explain the tendency for genocide studies to ignore localized experiences – a gap in the literature this paper addresses. This chapter concludes with a historical introduction to the local community and residential school discussed in this paper: Sagkeeng First Nation and FAIRS.

Colonial History in Canada: A Brief Historical Background

Initial Indigenous and non-Indigenous contact in what is now known as Canada occurred in the eleventh century, beginning with missionaries. It was not until after the seventeenth century that Europeans began developing fur trade and military partnerships (Woolford 2009). Settlement in eastern Canada began in the seventeenth century, and in the eighteenth century entrepreneurs began claiming territory on the west coast for resource exploitation (Porter 1994). Gradually, settlement and resource exploitation shifted power and relationship dynamics among Indigenous populations, as well as between Indigenous and European groups. This occurred earlier in some communities, while others remained unaffected by colonialism until as late as the mid-twentieth century (Vecsey 1987).

An important policy that had profound effects on settler-Indigenous relations was The Royal Proclamation. Implemented in 1763 by the British Crown, the Proclamation was meant to protect “Indian Territory” from aggressive prospectors and to preserve military alliances (Satzewich & Liodakis 2007: 35). Initially, the Proclamation seemed to be a source of protection for Indigenous lands. While European settlement was encouraged, it was regulated through this policy. In many areas, the success of the fur trade relied on having large amounts of undisturbed lands for hunting space. The shift to agricultural and resource development, however, made regulation and Indigenous claims to their territories a hindrance, creating the so-called “land question” (Woolford 2005: 43). Canadian settlers became dependent on natural resources for economic prosperity (Ali 2009: 97). One solution to securing access to land came in the form of land surrender treaties.

Indigenous Peoples and the Federal Government maintain different perspectives on Treaties and their terms. Understandings of treaties are contextual and place-specific. The government tends to “favour narrow, literal interpretations of the obligations outlined in the treaties” (Satzewich & Liodakis 2007: 39). Governmental application of land surrender treaties is rigid and static. They initially tried to buy land in exchange for one-time cash payments, but as pressure for settlement in the West grew, this became too costly (Satzewich & Liodakis 2007). Instead, smaller payments were made in perpetuity. This is why some communities continue to hold a “Treaty Day” on which band members each receive five dollars from the government (Satzewich & Liodakis 2007). This policy was implemented in several parts of Canada and by 1930, the Numbered Treaties were assumed (by the government) to be completed. By that time, the treaties covered northern Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, the Northwest corner of British Columbia and present day Northwest Territories (Satzewich & Liodakis 2007).

Indigenous communities, however, tend to describe different perspectives on the treaties. Some described them as living documents – a more fluid perspective than Europeans’. As Woolford notes, “Since treaty negotiations were happening in the afterglow of the fur trade, which involved a lot of trust and honesty between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, Aboriginal people assumed that they would be living documents that could be altered as their needs changed over time” (2009: 84). As changes occur within society, the documents are expected to change to suit the current standards (Satzewich & Liidakis 2007). Treaties were meant to secure Indigenous groups’ traditional territories, self-government, and self-determination (Satzewich & Liidakis 2007), rather than simply being a land purchase.

Authors of *The Saskatchewan Indian* explain that treaties are more than a “contractual undertaking by the Crown to grant certain payments, rights, and benefits to Indigenous people in return for cession of the tribal land and Indian commitment to keep peace and obey laws of the land” (Saskatchewan Indian 1975: 6). They are meant to “[affirm] both the integrity of tribes and bands; as well, they recognized the right of Indian people to manage affairs on their own land, in accordance with their customs and traditions” (Saskatchewan Indian 1975: 6). From these perspectives, everyone should be able to live according to their own worldviews and nations should maintain interdependent relationships without undermining each other’s ability to flourish (da Silva 2008). Respect of each group’s ways of life was to be maintained. This aspect was completely overlooked in the government’s documents (Clement 2003). Anishinaabe Elders assert that their ancestors never agreed to have their land and way of life taken away (Willow 2012). Indigenous Peoples traditionally use oral history to keep records (rather than written), and oral versions stress the importance of sharing land. The Federal Government often refuses to recognize oral contracts to be legitimate (Gray 2014).

Many Indigenous groups report feeling that the government did not fulfill their treaty agreements. Leanne Simpson, a storyteller and activist of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg ancestry, says it was a shame what the government did to Indigenous Peoples because they were “tricked into surrendering [their] life, land and sustenance during the William Treaty process” (Simpson 2011: 14). She explains that, “Indigenous Peoples attempted to reconcile our differences in countless treaty negotiations, which categorically have not produced the kinds of relationships Indigenous Peoples intended” (Simpson 2011: 21). Some Indigenous groups assert the federal government’s intent was to “destroy Aboriginal rights and to eliminate bands as separate cultural and political entities” (Saskatchewan Indian 1975: 6). Others, such as the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, refer to the treaty process as a “systematic genocide” because the treaty process was another method for land dispossession and contributed to the demise of Indigenous ways of life (Chartier 1981). Treaty violations turned into systematic land theft and “in stealing that land, those who came after also stole biography, history, and identity” (Satzewich and Liodakis 2007: 34). Non-Indigenous negotiators used treaties as tools to confine Indigenous Peoples to reserves and to extinguish Indigenous claims to their traditional territories (Woolford 2009: 84).

From there, Indigenous populations’ access to their land continued to diminish. The reserve system was introduced in the late-nineteenth century. Indigenous communities were “parcelled onto reserves and subjected to a ‘pass system’ that gave Indian agents control over where First Nations people could go, when they might leave the reserve, and when they had to return” (Anderson 2011: 28). In between 1896 and 1911, over one-fifth of reserve land on the prairies was surrendered (Anderson 2011). Much of the remaining land was expropriated by capitalist and industrial expansion and settlement (Anderson 2011). Howard Adams refers to

reserves as “prisons of grass,” which “marked the beginning of an era of increasing oppression and control of Indigenous Peoples on the part of church and state” (Adams in Anderson 2011: 28).

The problem of acquiring land for settlement and resource extraction was resolved. Now a strategy was needed to address the issue of Indigenous Peoples’ lifestyles; traditional skills useful within the fur trade, but not in capitalist industries and agriculture, needed to be changed. The Federal Government introduced various assimilation policies. Beginning in the mid-1800s, the government began prohibiting traditional cultural and religious practices. In the 1840s, industrial schools were implemented in Eastern Canada as an “age-specific resocialization [strategy]” (Satzewich & Liodakis 2007: 41). In 1879, following Nicholas Flood Davin’s investigation of mission schools in the United States, the residential school system was implemented in Canada (MacDonald & Hudson 2012). Part of the treaties, schools were promised to each reserve. Many communities wanted to send their children to schools to access opportunities for white education and, presumably, white success. The written versions of most treaties state: “Her Majesty agrees to maintain a school on each reserve hereby made whenever the Indians of the reserve should desire it” (Woolford 2013: 66). By the late 1800’s, many communities were excited about the schools and even requested to have them built on their reserves (Woolford 2013).

The residential schools, however, did not serve the purpose and function that Indigenous communities had hoped for, and instead became a gross violation of treaty agreements (Simpson 2011). The government, along with Christian missionaries, used the schools to push capitalist ideals and religious conversion through education (Milloy 1999). Students did not receive a meaningful or useful education (Fontaine 2010). Living conditions were poor and children were

mistreated (Milloy 1999). Not surprisingly, recruitment was low in the 1880's and 1890's, causing the government and churches to encourage enrolment through coercive practices and policies (Milloy 1999).

The Indian Act (1876) was one of the most devastating pieces of colonial legislation, defining and categorizing who was and was not Indigenous (Woolford 2009), and granting or denying rights (Satzewich and Liodakis 2007). More amendments followed; however, they were unpopular amongst Indigenous families and many did not comply. In 1895, an Amendment to the Indian Act made residential school attendance compulsory. In the 1920's and 1930's, the Indian Act was amended several more times, making it mandatory for all Indigenous Children between ages of seven to sixteen to attend residential schools. Amendments also gave the government power to force children out of their homes and into residential schools (Miller 1996). At the schools' peak in the 1930's, almost 75 percent of Indigenous Children in Canada between the ages of seven and fifteen attended (Anderson 2000). Theodore Fontaine, FAIRS Survivor and former Chief of Sagkeeng, explains that the school, the Indian Act, the 1951 Indian Act amendment, the 1960 granting of voting rights, and the "1969 attempt to legislate assimilation were all failed attempts to 'get rid of the Indian'" (2010: 174). He explains that "they failed because residential school survivors have confronted and tried to repair the damage of that system in particular" (Fontaine 2010: 174).

The schools functioned as total institutions of assimilation. Missionaries employed in the schools worked to replace Indigenous cultures with white Christian ones and educate the young to live in the "civilized" world as a subservient class (Adams 1989; Bolaria and Li 1988). The government systematically removed Indigenous children from their communities and placed them nearly year-round in a setting that allowed minimal to no contact with their previous

lifestyles and their families (MacDonald & Hudson 2012; Milloy 1999). Upon his visit to Canada, James Anaya, former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, stated:

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been documenting the horrifying stories of abuse and cultural dislocation of indigenous students who were forced from their homes into schools whose explicit purpose was to destroy their family and community bonds, their language, their culture, and their dignity, and from which thousands never returned. Generations of aboriginal children grew up in residential schools estranged from their cultures and languages, with devastating effects on maintaining indigenous identity (Anaya 2014: pp. 8).

Indigenous communities report varying degrees of these experiences. Some remember positive aspects of the schools (Grant²). The common trend was, however, devastating.

Within these schools, students experienced an assault on all aspects of their being. The government, church, and school officials attempted to erase Indigenous identities. This destruction happened on many levels – cultural, physical, emotional, and sexual. Propaganda and stereotypes were distributed in every form and through every possible media (Adams 2005). Indigenous Peoples were portrayed as inferior and subhuman, and despised as the most barbarous and cruel creatures (Adams 2005). These racisms became part of the Canadian atmosphere (Adams 2005). Children were victims of murder through the use of torture and negligent spread of diseases (Annett 2001). Some also experienced forced sterilizations (Annett 2001). Sexual abuse was rampant (Churchill 2004; Fontaine 2010). The degrees of abuse and application of assimilative policy varied between schools (Woolford 2009). As well, the number of children that attended the schools varied between communities (Woolford & Thomas 2011).

² Grant is not his real name. I use pseudonyms for all the Survivors whose testimonies I use from the TRC to protect anonymity. The statements were made at public events for research and public education. It was unclear whether each Survivor was aware that their statements would be made available for public use and I felt, since I was not asking them for permission to use their statements, that it would be more ethical to protect their identities.

Nonetheless, almost all of the children who attended residential schools experienced an attack on their traditional identities as a result of attempted assimilation. Sam explains, “You know, all of this [speaking about treaties, language, culture, land, history, ways of life] may sound like it isn’t part of the residential school – it is. There’s a lot of impacts that we had to learn and to understand”. The residential school system consisted of many complex processes that affected different communities in varying ways. Many groups struggled to maintain cultural ties because colonizers worked to undermine the existence of their communities.

Understanding Colonialism as Genocide: Shortcomings of the Sociology of Genocide’s Earlier Approaches

Many earlier theoretical approaches to genocide rely on problematic methods and assumptions for understanding Indigenous experiences. Knowledge is often inadvertently produced through a colonial and Eurocentric lens. Scholars and activists draw on the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948, hereafter UNGC) to discuss colonial genocide in Canada (e.g. Annett 2001; Churchill 2004; Craven 2000). This forces the complex dynamics of Indigenous group formation into European-derived “restrictive social categories” of race, ethnicity, religion, and nation (Hinton 2002: 4). As will be discussed below, the UNGC impedes understanding of Indigenous experiences because it leads scholars to make sweeping claims about colonial destruction. The UNGC also isolates particular genocidal events from broader colonial processes. This glosses over unique local experiences and creates a tendency for only one static moment of genocide to be considered.

Shortcomings of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide for Understanding Settler Colonialism in Canada

The Problems with Categorization

Authors such as Ward Churchill (2004) and Kevin Annett (2001) draw on the UNGC as an authoritative source to argue that Indigenous groups in Canada experienced genocide. They categorize various destructive colonial policies and practices under each condition in Article II of the UNGC. This article defines genocide as:

[A]ny of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such

- a) Killing members of that group;
- b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of that group;
- c) Deliberately inflicting on the group the conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

There are several drawbacks to using this approach when seeking to understand Indigenous groups' experiences with colonial destruction.

To begin, the UNGC leads one to adopt a synchronic approach that focuses on social structures and social phenomena as they exist in one static point in time (Senturk 2005). Each category of the UNGC is a highly specified event and Indigenous Peoples' complex group experiences cannot be understood by looking at one particular moment. As Woolford and Thomas point out, "Such binding categories fail to capture the negotiated and processual nature of many forms of Aboriginal group life" (2011: 65). Instead, a relational approach utilizes a diachronic approach, focusing on the development of events and phenomena across time (Senturk 2005). Rather than viewing Indigenous Peoples' complex and diverse experiences through the rigid and static synchronic classifications of the UNGC, a relational and diachronic approach accounts for the dynamic processes of relationality of Indigenous group life, and

colonialism's interruption of these processes. As well, a relational approach can look at multiple levels of society – the micro, meso, and macro. This makes it possible to analyze how large-scale colonial strategies and policies applied (and resisted) across the country, provinces, and territories, have disrupted local communities in very particular ways.

The UNGC, mutating from Lemkin's flexible and more open definition of genocide, was whittled into a very specific and highly politicized definition of genocide via negotiations among UN member nations. Imperial countries involved in this process excluded certain victim group categories that could potentially implicate them in the crime of genocide. Evans (2010) refers to the UNGC as a "product of compromises" (2010: 136). The Soviet Union had political and social groups excluded (Evans 2010), while the United States and Canada demanded removal of cultural destruction (Churchill 1998). The Convention "passed through the mills of the United Nations bureaucracy, [and was] hammered in the General Assembly, into an internationally consensual and compromised shape" (Evans 2010: 136). The result was a fixed definition to be used worldwide as a strict legal tool, rather than an instrument for investigation that could generate both local and global understandings of group destruction (Evans 2010).

The UNGC's restrictive definition does not leave room for Indigenous groups to define themselves according to their own worldviews (Woolford 2009). For example, the only groups that can be targeted by genocide, according to the UNGC, are "national, ethnical, racial or religious groups" (Power 2002: 57). The dimensions of Indigenous group boundary formation are fluid and complex, involving "a combination of self-definitions, externally imposed categories, historical precedent, and biological and cultural lines of descent" (Satzewich & Liodakis 2007: 178). Historically, some Indigenous individuals moved or married between groups, creating important inter-tribal links (Woolford 2009). Also, neighbouring Indigenous

groups often shared territory, allowing for multiple communities to use lands and resources (Woolford 2009). Many settler European cultures consider groups to be much more fixed and delimited. Forcing Indigenous experiences into restrictive definitions disregards multiethnic dimensions of Canadian Indigenous communities and places their collective life under European classifications. Totalizing categorization leads to an over-generalization of specific group experiences and denies local groups their right to self-determination.

Defining Indigenous groups using any one of the Convention's categories – national, ethnic, racial or religious group – immediately ignores other important aspects of group formation. These categories also focus on Eurocentric aspects of group life, overlooking important dynamics of Indigenous identities, such as the role of non-human actors in their social hierarchies. The term 'nation,' which is embraced by some Indigenous groups to assert their self-determination in the face of the Canadian government, tends to connote the Western notion of a fixed group with permanent and rigid boundaries (Woolford 2009). It overlooks the often fluid nature of historically specific Indigenous groups' relations – both between and within communities – that are involved in shaping group life. Using 'ethnicity' or 'religion' trivializes Indigenous cultures by suggesting that the many Indigenous groups across North America can be understood as one culture, or as defined solely in terms of religion or ethnic identification. This process also involves stabilizing ethnic or religious categories into static ethnic groups with clear boundaries, which does not take into account the inter- and intra-group relations involved in Indigenous group formations.

Similarly, race, like ethnicity, is “above all a matter of drawing boundaries” (Rattansi 2007: 88). Labelling Indigenous groups as a 'race' is a subjective European practice of binding heterogeneous Indigenous populations together as one group. Race and ethnicity are also human-

centric, inconsistent with many Indigenous epistemologies that define the group as extending beyond its human members. These challenges are in addition to the problems that come with racializing groups, a historically oppressive practice that subjugates Others and values white supremacy. Each category overlooks other cultural or ontological aspects of group life from and falls short in terms of Indigenous self-determination.

The Problems with Intent

Another issue with the UNGC and the sociology of genocide is the focus on proving intent of a genocidal perpetrator. In order for the definition to apply, the perpetrator's intentions to commit genocide must first be established (Chalk and Johansson 1990). The Convention necessitates a perpetrator to clearly exhibit an intention to destroy a population in order to charge someone with genocide (Moses 2010). In international law, specific intent is determined by individual acts, a stated plan, or a pattern of actions (Schabas 2008). An exception to this tendency was seen in 2007 when genocide law was extended by the International Court of Justice in 2007 by the ruling made in the Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia case, allowing states to be also tried for genocide (Gill 2007).

Pinpointing an individual perpetrator of settler colonial destruction of Indigenous Peoples in Canada is challenging because it has been a long and complex process, varying spatially and temporally throughout history. Trying to identify one perpetrator also takes attention away from potentially more useful ways of understanding Indigenous experiences. The Convention's focus on individual "specific" intent is embedded in Western notions of individualism (Moses 2010), rather than holistic Indigenous perspectives (Simpson 2011). A more relational and sociological understanding of colonialism and intent in Canada takes into account broader processes

(including policy and discourse) that trickled down to different communities to determine interpersonal relations between settlers and Indigenous Peoples. For example, the Davin Report (1879) demonstrates a national discourse which sees Indigenous Peoples as an “Indian problem” that can be dealt with through assimilative and destructive tactics. As well, the Indian Act (1876) shows how the government’s definition of Indigenous Peoples in racist and patriarchal terms was used to disenfranchise certain Indigenous groups. These policies generated destructive practices such as the residential school system. Focusing on the intent of individuals in these complex processes diverts attention from the fact that colonial genocide occurs as a collective project through the spread of macro-level ideologies and the meso-level implementation of policies.

Perhaps a more important project is to begin understanding Indigenous communities’ experiences with the “long-term network [of colonial] destruction” and how these processes became normalized within communities (Woolford 2009: 86). The tendency for the sociology of genocide to focus on perpetrator’s actions also overlooks victim groups’ experiences (Moses 2010). This risks simply becoming another colonial practice. Historically, Indigenous Peoples’ accounts of history are overlooked and government perspectives are valued instead. A focus on the specific intention of individuals prioritizes settler experiences rather than Indigenous ones, and ignores the broader destructive processes that resulted through settler colonial relations.

The Problems with Ignoring the Local-Experiences with Residential Schools

Indigenous groups in Canada have unique relationships with residential schools that should not be overlooked for the sake of applying the “official” definition of genocide to Canadian colonialism. The UNGC risks encouraging a “cut and paste” approach of plugging examples of destructive colonial practices and policies into the categories of Article II (e.g.

Annett 2001; Churchill 2004; Tatz 2011). The logic is excessively selective and reductive (Woolford & Thomas 2011). For example, paragraphs a and e of Article II of the UNGC state that “Killing members of that group” and “Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” are genocidal practices (Power 2002: 57). In Canada, there were many Indigenous Children forced out of their homes and into residential schools. Once there, many Indigenous Children were murdered or died from disease. But not all Indigenous communities shared these same experiences, and therefore sweeping claims about Indigenous physical genocide at residential schools simply reproduce the homogenizing practices of the Indian Act rather than taking seriously Indigenous diversity (e.g. Annett 2001; Churchill 2004). This approach also overlooks the role that residential schools played in broader colonial processes, eliminating “any sense of the historical trajectory of these developments, including their unintended consequences and elliptical dimensions” (Woolford & Thomas 2011: 67). Discussion on how colonialism and genocide are interrelated is vastly limited, and the dynamic relationship that connects the events “pasted” into the UNGC’s classifications is overlooked.

Colonial History and the Residential School System: Sagkeeng First Nation

This thesis begins to fill the gap in the literature which overlooks localized experiences with colonial genocide by focusing on one residential school and the community forced to attend it: FAIRS in Sagkeeng First Nation. I offer a micro-level understanding of the school’s functioning from 1940 to 1970. Sagkeeng First Nation reserve was laid out in 1876 (Fontaine 2010). Fort Alexander is the European settler name for the community; Sagkeeng is the Anishinaabe one. The territory lies 90 miles north of Winnipeg, Manitoba. The word “Sagkeeng” in Anishinaabe translates to “at the mouth of the river” (Thomas & Paynter 2010: 57). The

Winnipeg River runs through the community and pours into Lake Winnipeg. In 1737, Anishinaabe from Sault St. Marie migrated to the Sagkeeng area and are the ancestors of those currently living in Sagkeeng (Fontaine 2012b).

Fort Alexander is on Treaty 1 territory, which was signed in 1871 at Fort Garry by Chief KaKaKepenaise or William Mann I, who became the first Chief of the Fort Alexander Band (Fontaine 2012b). In a play about Sagkeeng colonial history, written and produced by Liz Gray, a teacher and mentor at the Sagkeeng Anicinabe High School since September 1983, and who roots her teaching in critical Anishinaabe history and knowledge, describes the treaty process as being made “with crooks ... [whereby land was] stolen, resources taken, environment destroyed, compensation none” (Gray 2014: 3). Rather than sharing the land, the government expropriated their territory (Gray 2014). For example, Treaty 1 promised 160 acres to each family in Sagkeeng – this did not happen (Gray 2014). When Anishinaabe ancestors signed the Treaty, they believed they were securing land for future generations (Gray 2014). Instead, the government assumed a Eurocentric, static perspective on the Treaty, using it as a land grab. The Europeans who drafted Treaty 1 left out many important aspects of the deal that had been agreed to verbally with the Anishinaabe Peoples (Gray 2014).

Sam, an Anishinaabe Survivor from Sagkeeng, reflects on his position within the Treaty process:

I am not Canadian ... I am of Eagle Clan. My homeland is Turtle Island. There's a state called Canada that's operating on my land. My citizenship is that I am Anishinaabe of Turtle Island. I am not Canadian. That's my belief. That's what our ancestors left me. That's what the Treaties say. That's who I am.

This offers a glimpse into what Anishinaabe self-determination might look like in Canada. Sam explains that what needs to be reclaimed in treaties is their spirit and intent. He says, “To me, spirit means peace and harmony with all creation. The intent means to me to consult, to

accommodate, and come to a consensus on how we share this land and how we can work together as a family. To me, that's what our ancestors meant". European perspectives of the treaties do not acknowledge these aspects. Former Chief Albert Fontaine, also a FAIRS Survivor, explains the different understandings of the treaties and the language barrier that was exploited by the Europeans:

... when they signed the treaty ... the Anishnabek ... nobody understood the English language except for maybe one or two who understood a little. What they did was, they went by the sun, rivers, and the grass. As long as they grew, no one could break treaty. That's all I know ... there was no interpreter there to explain to the Indians, only that that is what they follow yet ... those three things, the sun, rivers, and grass" (Chief Albert Fontaine in Fontaine 2012b: 38).

Numerous community members feel the treaty process did not fully represent the perspectives of Anishinaabe people. European settlers did not recognize Anishinaabe oral agreements as legitimate and used coercive tactics to negotiate the treaty (Gray 2014).

The government, treating the agreement as a land grab, pays each Sagkeeng member five dollars annually, while exploiting their land. The community takes advantage of these days to gather for celebration at Treaty Point (a peninsula within the community along the shores of Winnipeg River). They camp as a community for days at the point. This point was historically used as a look-out spot and frequented by passing "explorers, hunters, and traders" who stopped for "food, rest and friendship" (Fontaine 2010: 51). During Treaty Days, some community members mocked the government's meagre cash and food allotments. Marcel Courchene remembers:

Treaty days was a sort of get together, I would say. They had treaty point and it's still there. People would pitch tents and the whole community would go to that point and pitch tents and enjoy themselves ... Treaty days had square dancing and rations. If you had 10 kids you would have 10 kernels of beans, 10 kernels of peas and maybe a chunk of yellow salt pork – rancid – didn't taste right. My mom used to throw it in the river to the cat fish and fatten up the catfish. Then they would get their 5 dollars and buy bologna – bologna was a great thing. As far as eggs go

my mom was a self-supporting woman. She had chickens, cows and pigs year round (Marcel Courchene in Fontaine 2012b: 24-25).

Still today, Sagkeeng Treaty Days are huge celebrations, including a Pow wow, fireworks, delicious food, games, and live music.

The community, situated at the mouth of Winnipeg River, was an important hub in the fur trade. Between 1734 and 1740, Fort Maurepas, the first fur trade establishment in Fort Alexander, was built (Fontaine 2012b: 72). The North West Company, however, opened in 1792, initially called Fort Bas De La Rivere (Fontaine 2012b). Hudson's Bay posts went up in 1795. Shortly after, between 1801 and 1822, the North West Company dominated the fur trade in and around Sagkeeng (Fontaine 2012b: 72). In 1882, the two companies merged and 'Fort Bas De La Riviere' was named Fort Alexander (Fontaine 2012b: 72). The fur trade was an important economic activity for the community until industrial capitalist production largely replaced it. Between 1850 and 1870, many community members cleared the land, participated in agricultural pursuits, and built homes (Fontaine 2012b). This was a shift from their traditionally semi-nomadic lifestyle. Before signing the Treaty, Anishinaabe peoples were nomadic, but the Treaty shifted communities towards more static lifestyles and building of log houses (Chief Albert Fontaine in Fontaine 2012b: 32). In 1878, band members spoke out against settlers encroaching on their territory through timber extraction (Fontaine 2012b: 73). In 1923, Manitoba Pulp and Paper Company sold 304 acres of Sagkeeng land (Fontaine 2012b: 74). Industrial development, including hydro dams (there are now seven along the Winnipeg River) destroyed forest and land needed to sustain a traditional land-based local economy (Fontaine 2012b).

FAIRS was established as a part of the Treaty 1 Agreement. The school opened in 1905 and was run by the Oblates of the Roman Catholic Church (Fontaine 2010). The first Catholic Church opened in 1880. Theodore Fontaine says the Church did not have control over the

community right away; families still raised and provided for their children (2010). The church's control would tighten drastically over the next twenty years (Fontaine 2010). Some Survivors recall their parents wanting an education for their children. That was their reason for sending their children to school (Fontaine 2010). This was also the reason for signing the Treaty and wanting a school implemented in the first place (Gray 2014). The agreement was signed, giving the state control over the education of Indigenous Peoples upon Treaty 1 territory.

The schools did not fulfill the treaty promise of education for which Anishinaabe parents hoped. Parents could not have foreseen that the residential school system would be the outcome of the Treaty 1 agreement (Gray 2014). Students did not receive a useful white, capitalist-based education, or the opportunity to flourish with their land-based ways of life. Instead, children experienced an assault on their culture and community life through violent processes of assimilation. They were denied the right to speak their own language and confined inside the school and away from their families. They were unable to interact with their environment in a way consistent with their traditional beliefs and livelihoods. Students were abused for demonstrating any connection to their Anishinaabe ways of knowing. Unlike some of the larger industrial residential schools located far away from any town or reserve, FAIRS was located right on the reserve. This made the school's task of alienating children from their community more challenging. To sever communal FAIRS had to operate on emotional, symbolic, and cultural levels, since the school did not have the benefit of physical distance for interrupting relationships.

This paper looks at the temporal period of 1940 to 1970. This period is of interest because by the 1940's and 50's, abuses within the school were supposed to be lessening. The Federal Government was fully aware of the mistreatment in the schools and had apparently taken

the appropriate steps to end human rights abuses. On the contrary, Survivors report the same abuses. For example, the Department was apparently sending out inspectors to ensure students were receiving healthy quality and portions of food (Milloy 1999). Being such an isolated community meant less visits from inspectors and Indian Agents, who potentially could have reported the mistreatments in the school and done more to regulate and improve the treatment of the children. When inspectors did visit, children remember their portions becoming suspiciously bigger and healthier (Fontaine 2010). But when they left, food became meagre and disgusting once again (Fontaine 2010). Students in this school continued to suffer spiritual, emotional, sexual and physical abuse (Fontaine 2010). Phil Fontaine, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations and FAIRS Survivor, was one of the first Survivors to speak publicly about the abuses he and others experienced within the school. Many others stepped forward with their stories after him, bringing to light the ongoing destructive practices of the school on children and the community.

Focusing on localized histories such as Sagkeeng allows for a more in depth understanding of community experiences with colonial destruction. This approach addresses some of the colonizing tendencies in earlier approaches within the sociology of genocide. It is important to learn from Anishinaabe voices about their experiences in the residential school system, rather than relying on outsider sources. Often these sources are government-issued, valuing perpetrator's voices over the victim's. Perpetuating colonial ideologies through the sociology of genocide simultaneously perpetuates the very ideologies that legitimate colonial oppression. As Spivak points out, "A developed theory of ideology recognizes its own material production in institutionality" (1988). Philosophers such as Foucault, "reject all arguments naming the concept of ideology as only schematic rather than textual," which means they do not

acknowledge the fact that ideologies do have textual effects on people implicated within the colonial empire. Colonialism created a "fixed world" (Bhabha 1987: 146) in which a very real power is maintained. Not acknowledging Anishinaabe communities' right to self-determination is the attitude that prevents the recognition of Anishinaabe rights, including treaty negotiations, the right to speak Anishinaabe language, live according to their cultures, and maintaining their ways of life. A better understanding of Anishinaabe groups comes from local voices. Only then can a discussion take place on whether the residential school disrupted group relationality in a way that can be understood as genocide.

Chapter 3: Theory, Decolonizing Epistemology, and Methodology

This project utilizes Relational Theory and Actor Network Theory (ANT) to carry out a narrative analysis and sociohistoric inquiry, in line with decolonizing epistemologies, to map out networks of relations within the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School (FAIRS). Relational theory and ANT can be used consistently with Anishinaabe ways-of-knowing. Relational theory addresses Eurocentric assumptions within earlier approaches to genocide. ANT stresses the importance of local knowledges and takes into account non-human actants that exist within Anishinaabe social hierarchies. Methodological approaches in this study are informed by decolonizing epistemologies.

Historically, formal Western research has been a colonizing process. Canadian history has been written as “fact” by white settlers, giving authority to the perspective of the occupiers over the occupied. This practice “deform[s] the history of others” (Abu-Lughod 1989: 118). To avoid perpetuating this tendency, my research approach will adhere as much as possible to “philosophies and knowledges that emerge from Indigenous thoughtscapes and landscapes” (Bruchac, Hart, & Wobst 2010: 51). Decolonizing methodologies seek to undermine problematic research practices and assumptions within the field by adhering to a new set of goals that work in favour of the colonized rather than the colonizer. Decolonizing researchers must realize “that all inquiry is political and moral” (Denzin & Lincoln 2008: 2). Methods must be critical and work towards social justice. And perhaps most importantly, they must value “the transformative power of indigenous, subjugated knowledges” (Denzin & Lincoln 2008: 2). As Kincheloe and Steinberg point out:

Understanding derived from the perspective of the excluded of the ‘culturally different’ allow for an appreciation of the nature of justice, the invisibility of the process of oppression, the power of difference, and the insight to be gained from a

recognition of divergent cultural uses of long hidden knowledges that highlight both our social construction as individuals and the limitations of monocultural ways of meaning making (2008: 140).

One must try their best to understand the position of the marginalized. It is the duty of decolonizing researchers to listen carefully and respectfully to Anishinaabe Peoples who willingly share their experiences and interpretations of their own histories (Kincheloe & Steinberg 2008: 147). I am aided in this work by using practices in translation and reflexivity, continuously checking issues of power and privilege throughout the research process.

Theoretical Framework: Relational and Actor-Network Theory

This project explores how relational and processual conceptualizations of genocide can address some colonial tendencies within genocide studies. Drawing upon Actor-Network theorists, mainly Bruno Latour and Michel Callon, I offer a partial mapping the network of relations within FAIRS. The focus is on the school's attempts to control and assimilate Anishinaabe children, and the way the children and their families responded to these processes. Relational theory and ANT offer approaches that can work harmoniously with principles of decolonization to study genocide.

Using Relational Theory to Study Genocide

Recent sociological and historical approaches to genocide define it as the violent interruption or destruction of the relations that create and sustain a group; that is, the relations that allow the group to maintain a collective identity (e.g., Bloxham & Moses 2010; Powell 2007, 2011; Woolford 2009). Groups exist as ongoing culturally-specific processes of relations fundamental to building and preserving group life. These processes require protecting (Hinton

2002; Powell 2007, 2011; Wolfe 2006; Woolford 2009) – an ongoing need since, as Woolford points out, “Group life is not simply about the lives of the group members. Group life is about the continuous creation of groups” (2013: 72). Group relations braid together macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of the social world, and cannot be understood as separate from broader historical processes that span across space and time. Societies exist as “tangled network[s] of relationships,” which includes processes of “interactions, interdependencies, balances of power, all in a constant state of flux” (Powell 2007: 537). These are essential for sustaining group life, and the destruction of such processes can be detrimental to the collective’s continued existence (Hinton 2002; Powell 2007; Wolfe 2006; Woolford 2009).

A relational theoretical stance assumes individuals cannot be understood independent of their collectivities. Relational thinkers such as Norbert Elias suggest that the belief that individuals exist autonomously from their society is “pure fiction” since “from before our birth we depend on other human beings for the necessities of life, and for all the possible means by which we could realize our selves in the world” (Powell 2007: 537). Similarly, social structures cannot be understood as fixed entities separate from living beings. Instead, social structures, people, and the environment exist through the fluid and ever-changing processes of relationality (Powell 2007: 538). Cultures are an example of social structures, since they exist as networks of interactions and negotiations (Woolford 2009). These interactions can be interrupted, potentially preventing the social group from continuing to reproduce itself. This occurs with genocide; social interactions are interrupted and stopped, thus preventing the group from reproducing and maintaining itself.

A relational approach's flexibility allows the inclusion of local Anishinaabe knowledges based on their unique experiences with group destruction through the residential school system.

This theoretical approach is able to follow the relations as they are described in the narratives of community members. Anishinaabe perspectives view social relations in fluid and holistic ways (Anderson 2011; Simpson 2011). Relational theory can be used to describe how actants identified in Anishinaabe narratives relate to each other, as described in the narratives. Relational theory challenges generalizations made about Indigenous People's experiences with colonialism – a colonial practice which homogenizes diverse groups and cultures into one that is more easily controlled and dominated. This approach also recognizes that residential schools are instances of genocide amongst a broader colonial network that spans time and space, and links individuals, institutions and social structures. Unpacking the various ways that a residential school destroyed a particular group acknowledges that group's unique suffering. This also shows that schools interconnect with other colonial processes and occurred due to the super-imposition of a culture that 'othered' and dehumanized Indigenous people.

Using Actor-Network-Theory to Study Genocide

I utilize Actor Network Theory (ANT) to map out some of the networks of relations that operated at FAIRS and their effects on the Sagkeeng community. ANT uses a networked approach to understanding the social. The main ANT theorists (e.g., Michel Callon, Bruno Latour, and John Law) see society existing as ongoing processes of relationships (Buzelin 2005). Identifying and analyzing networks of relations is useful for explaining social change, defining positions, and stabilizing actors, objects, and institutions in society so they can be explained (Latour 2005; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). ANT offers a flexible, localized approach to understand group life. It is also congruent with the emphasis on multilogicity in decolonizing epistemologies, which aim to ground our understanding of colonization's effects by

understanding the locally affected Indigenous people's perspectives. It is important, however, that this focus on the micro-level does not erase the broader colonial systems that affected individuals in Sagkeeng, or the issues of the power and privilege within academia in general.

Colonial research has historically glossed over local experiences. Starting research at the local and then considering the broader colonial processes directly linked to the micro relations is one method of understanding how local experiences might fit into broader colonial history in a less problematic way. Latour's focus on micro actions and routines not only involves a focus on the local, but involves a deliberate removal of all structural properties (Guggenheim & Potthast 2011). Latour sees the influence of meso- and macro- level organizations and structures as marginalizing actors within their field(s) and as being deterministic (Guggenheim & Potthast 2011). I agree that individual agency is a pivotal force in social change. At the same time, I think ANT is too extreme in its effort to completely remove acknowledgment of structural influences and I therefore build from the micro level towards an understanding of the macro-level structures and meso-level institutions that affected Sagkeeng First Nation.

ANT's actor-networks are unpredictable because individual agency is understood to be the guiding force in social change (Latour in Buzelin 2005: 197). I use ANT's approach of focusing on the local to identify actants. Latour "starts with localized networks and delocalizes them as his theory develops" (Guggenheim & Potthast 2011: 159). Actor-Network Theory (ANT) understands society as a system of networks that involve relations between material actants and semiotic influences. ANT traces "the enactment of material and discursively heterogeneous relations that produce and reshuffle all kinds of actors including objects, subjects, human beings, machines, animals, 'nature,' ideas, organizations, inequalities, scale and sizes, and geographical arrangements" (Law 2009: 141). Natural and social actors are interconnected in

the network of relations. Semiotic influences are concepts that mediate and influence actants. Following Callon's method, I trace complex interrelations between the material actants and semiotic influences that create and maintain power imbalances at FAIRS. Specifically, I focus on how colonizers encroached upon and attempted to assimilate the Sagkeeng community through the residential school, how the community responded to these efforts, and what semiotic influences mediated the relations between colonizers and colonized.

Actor-Network Theory: Multilogicity and Animism

Moving past the dichotomy between human and non-human beings overcomes the Eurocentric tendency to think of society and nature on binary terms. One complexity of Indigenous cultures is the fluidity between the natural environment and culture, sometimes referred to as animism (Woolford 2013: 72). "Animism" is a Western anthropological word that describes a "relational interaction with those who are not human, and acknowledges that plants, animals, and spirits exist in a communicative relationship with humans" (Barrett & Wuetherick 2012: 4). As Chief Lawrence Morrisseau of Sagkeeng explain, "All Indian people ... were related to some kind of animal ... or something like that where the land that they came out of" (Fontaine 2012b: 51). Prescilla Settee describes her understanding of the essentialness of nature to community from her Cree worldview: "The idea of relationship is extended to the animals and the natural environment as well. These are the ones who cannot speak for themselves, but whose existence is essential to human survival. The extended community takes in all relationships, human and nonhuman, and is reflected in our interdependence" (Settee 2011: iii). It is important to try and understand these perspectives when discussing genocide as it is experience from an Indigenous perspective.

Actor-Network Theory: Focusing on the Local

ANT can be inclusive of local Indigenous knowledges regarding unique experiences with group destruction. To know what destroys a group we must understand the complex relational dynamics that make up a group. Then we can look at whether or not these processes have been threatened or destroyed by colonial intervention (Woolford 2009). ANT stresses individual agency as the main factor for understanding social change. Latour advocates for a complete flattening of society to accurately trace networked relationships (Latour 2005). From an ANT perspective, all relationality occurs from personal decisions rather than influences from broader social structures. As a result, ANT theorists believe that human behaviour is not predictable and “neither the actor’s size nor its psychological make-up nor the motivations behind its actions are predetermined” (Callon 1997: 2). According to Buzelin, “... the motto is ‘follow the actors’- which means observe the network as it builds, consolidates and transforms itself through the production process” (Buzelin 2005: 198).

To root my analysis in voices of Sagkeeng community members, I begin with a focus at the micro level. ANT’s focus on the local is useful for avoiding essentialist ideas about “who people are” or the idea that any one person or group is at all times oppressive or oppressed. Instead, the emphasis is on how individuals are situated within shifting positions of power and privilege depending on time and context (Collins 2000). Agency and resistance are important points of focus. As Simpson points out

To me, this colonial shame felt like not only a tremendous burden to carry, but also felt displaced. We are not shameful people. We have done nothing wrong. I began to realize that shame can only take hold when we are disconnected from the stories of resistance within our own families and communities. I placed that shame as an insidious and infectious part of the cognitive imperialism that was aimed at convincing us that we were a weak and defeated people, and that there was no point in resisting or resurging (Simpson 2011: 14).

Simpson demonstrates the importance of always talking about resistance when discussing colonialism. Presenting Indigenous groups as passive victims is a subjugating process that subdues rather than empowers. Limiting focus to broader systems of power relies on generalizations and outsider perspectives from the get go. This is especially problematic when the meso- and macro-level sources are government generated. Rather, I concentrate on micro-interactions, grounding the research in local narratives, and then tracing networked relations outwards to also recognize the structural aspects of colonial practices within the school.

Flattening out society overlooks the layered structures of the social that can influence actants' behaviours (Vaughan 2008: 74). Since “explanations are no longer found in contextual ‘macro-level’ or structural determinants” (Buzelin 2005: 197), ANT overlooks patterns from history, structures, and institutional logics. Also, the study of genocide is inherently structural since it considers the destruction of a group or the destruction of individuals based on their belonging to a particular social group. I agree with Latour that starting with “micro-sociological observations” is important to avoid relying only on “externalist explanations” of local experiences (Guggenheim & Potthast 2011: 159). At the same time, an awareness of structures is important for understanding how broader systems of organization and control are perpetuated at the micro level.

For example, disruption of communal ties in Sagkeeng did not simply occur from the intervention of individual priests and nuns working on their own accord. Priests, nuns, and other micro-level actants' behavior can be traced upwards to organizations, institutions, and structures, such as the provincial and federal governments, the Church, education systems, curriculum, the Department of Indian Affairs, racism, sexism, and Eurocentrism. Their actions were often directed by colonial ideologies and regulations. Priests and nuns implemented national colonial

policy, disrupting relations between Anishinaabe Children, their families, and the community. At the same time, focusing on agency allows for the interpersonal relationships of Anishinaabe children and their families that maintained their relationships in the face of these structural effects to be highlighted. Both micro and macro are important to consider.

This being said, for the purpose of this thesis, I am tracing my analysis outwards only as far as personal narratives from Sagkeeng take me. Some of the larger systemic aspects of colonialism, although obviously inter-related to the experiences of Sagkeeng, are secondary to the thesis and are therefore not included to avoid the project becoming too broad. The point has been made in the literature that residential schools were a colonial institution existing as part of broader colonizing processes of nation-building and settlement across Canada (see Churchill 2004; Milloy 1999; Shingwauk 1996.). My thesis will complement these broader, structural histories of residential schools, by drawing connections to the meso- and macro-level fields only in the specific ways they are linked to the micro-relations of actants involved with FAIRS between 1940 and 1970.

Methodology: Critical Narrative Analysis and Sociohistoric Inquiry

I use a combination of critical narrative analysis and sociohistorical inquiry to identify micro-level actants and the semiotic influences that mediate their interactions. Specifically, I use critical personal narrative analysis combined with intrinsic narrative analysis. Sociohistorical inquiry is used to a lesser degree to identify meso- and macro-level structures. I also consider how these methodologies can be carried out in a way consistent with decolonizing methodologies in hopes of overcoming Eurocentric tendencies of settler colonial genocide studies through critical analysis. The goal is to better understand history without treating

Sagkeeng Survivors as passive victims. I also seek to understand their experiences and to be more reflexive of my own position in Canada's colonial reality as a settler colonial academic.

Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis is heavily drawn upon for my micro-level analysis and to guide my focus at the meso- and macro-levels. I use critical narrative analysis to identify actants and semiotic influences and to try to understand experiences of Anishinaabe Peoples in FAIRS. To begin this research, I obtained security clearance for access to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission archives in August 2012. Data collection took place between September 2012 and January 2013, when I worked as a Research Assistant for Dr. Woolford at the TRC offices. During this period, I transcribed testimonies made by FAIRS Survivors and Intergenerational Survivors. Sagkeeng First Nation is the spatial focus of this paper. The time period of interest is from 1940 to and 1970 because the data from those people attending the school during this time period is abundant. It is also a time when the government claimed to address mistreatment and abuse within residential schools. The narratives of former students suggest otherwise.

I collected data from various resources containing first-hand accounts from Anishinaabe Survivors of FAIRS. There are also several Intergenerational Survivors who provide insight on the effects of the school. Survivors whose narratives I draw upon entered the school as young as 5 years old and stayed until as old as 20. They attended the school for as little 10 months and up to 12 years. No matter how old or how long, most Survivors report negative, long-lasting effects on certain relationships, whether between them and their parents, siblings, or even with their future children. I drew from public statements made at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) events in Winnipeg and in Sagkeeng First Nation, interviews with Anishinaabe Survivors

from Sagkeeng compiled by Craig Charbonneau Fontaine in the book *Speaking of Sagkeeng*, John C. Courchene's stories that were published by Craig Charbonneau Fontaine in *Sagkeeng Legends*, FAIRS Survivor Theodore Fontaine's memoir *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of the Indian Residential School System*, public statements made by Phil Fontaine about his experiences at the FAIRS , and time spent in-community with the Sagkeeng Anicinabe High School staff, Elders, and students, as well as at the Turtle Lodge with Elder Dave Courchene. I draw upon Survivors' testimonies, interviews, stories, and memoir to gain insight to the experiences within the school. The majority of the narratives are from members of the Sagkeeng First Nation. Several Survivors attended the Fort Alexander School, but did not live in the community. The majority of the statements are from males; only two female's testimonies are cited in this paper. This is a significant drawback of this research.

I utilized critical narrative analysis to identify and organize themes, patterns, inconsistencies, and contradictions in the testimony and literature. I combined critical personal with intrinsic narrative analysis. Intrinsic analysis "investigates meanings that social actors themselves gave to events, and how these meanings structured their actions and interactions with others" (Hall 2007: 87). I sought to understand and translate meanings Sagkeeng Survivors gave their experiences. A critical personal narrative takes the intrinsic narrative a step further: Indigenous meaning-making is presented as a counternarrative to official colonial white-washed history.

I treated Anishinaabe narratives about their experiences with residential schools as "critical personal narratives," which "disrupt and disturb discourse by exposing complexities and contradictions that exist under official history" (Denzin & Lincoln 2008: 12-13). From this approach, Indigenous voices tell their own histories, and are creating what Foucault calls a

“return of knowledge,” or an insurrection of “subjugated knowledge,” that was silenced and oppressed by colonialism (Foucault 1993). Subjugated narratives are inherently critical of the knowledge perpetuated by the status quo and play an essential role in contemporary decolonized writing. Testimonies, or *testimonio* (such as those made in the TRC), especially raise political consciousness because the writer or speaker “bears witness to social injustice experienced at the group level” (Mutua & Swadener as quoted in Denzin & Lincoln 2008: 13). Counternarratives undermine colonial assumptions within our society because they assume the “subaltern can speak, and does, with power, conviction, and firsthand experience” (Denzin & Lincoln 2008: 13). This validation of Indigenous voices is an essential component of a decolonizing research framework.

Initial themes included “family,” “community,” and “territory”. Upon my second reading of the narratives, I identified themes of language, space, nature (plants and animals), jobs and livelihoods, and way of life. I chose three over-arching themes to organize my narrative analysis: language, space/place, and nature. Within each theme, I identified the actants that interacted within that context, and what semiotic mediators influenced those relations. I learned about the different ways children and other community actants questioned, negotiated, undermined, and resisted FAIRS. Next, I shifted to a broader focus and began a sociohistoric inquiry into the meso- and macro-structures.

Sociohistoric Inquiry

I collected sociohistorical data on broader colonial processes in Canada, focusing on information directly linked to local group destruction expressed in Sagkeeng narratives. Historical documents, including the Davin report (1879), Treaty 1 (1957), and secondary sources

on residential schools were consulted. There is also a significant amount of historical information in *Speaking of Sagkeeng* and *Broken Circle* – two books I used in my narrative analysis.

As I read through the sociohistoric data, I connected social structures to the behaviour of actants in FAIRS. After reading and codifying the sociohistoric data, I did a third reading of the narratives. I focused on the variation and complexity found in the narratives. Sociohistoric research provides a foundation for recognizing meso- and micro-level actants, as well as the semiotic mediators, that might not be clear or specifically identified in the narratives themselves. This step allowed for consideration of social structures and their influence on micro-level actants, as well as micro-level actant effects on social structures (such as by undermining them). There are many actants and semiotic influences that could be identified. The ones I highlight are by no means a comprehensive account of experiences within FAIRS. They represent particular relations and interactions that I felt demonstrate some of the assimilative attempts the school utilized to disrupt group relations in Sagkeeng.

Decolonizing Epistemologies: How Narrative Analysis and Sociohistoric Inquiry Fit

As mentioned, I endeavour to carry out this work in ways that are consistent with decolonizing methodologies. Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies “[reject] rigidity and fundamentalism as colonial thinking” (Simpson 2011: 19). It is difficult to think in these terms for white researchers. Margaret Kovach, a Plains Cree Professor in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan, points out two main barriers for white researchers attempting to study in line with Indigenous methodologies: not having the language and not being raised in a tribal epistemological education setting (2009). Western and tribal epistemologies are inconsistent. Historically, Western epistemologies tend to be binary (de Leeuw 2007), static

(Roth 2009), rigid, and Eurocentric-based (Poulantzas 1978). Along with not knowing the language – an immense barrier, especially in trying to understand the TRC testimonies where many Survivors chose to speak the majority of their statements in Anishinaabe – I also am an outsider to the culture. While reading through Anishinaabe narratives, there are cultural subtleties and nuances that I likely did not understand. As Basil Johnston points out, “many [non-Indigenous] readers are unfamiliar with the old traditions and the allegorical nature of many Indian stories” (1995: xiii). I might not catch Sagkeeng-specific nuances and assumptions that present themselves through tones, hints, jokes, and references. Education paradigms are embedded in the socio-cultural (Freire in Sacadura 2014). Leanne Simpson describes teaching within an Anishinaabe framework as having knowledge “interpreted within [an Anishinaabe] cultural web of non-authoritarian leadership, non-hierarchical ways of being, non-interference and non-essentialism” (2011: 18). I adopted theoretical and methodological approaches that move towards a more holistic understanding.

Teaching and learning from narratives stems from Anishinaabe practices of storytelling and oral history. Narrative analysis involves learning from stories told in Survivors’ narratives. Oral history is a knowledge transfer system (Anderson 2011) through oral storytelling. Rather than writing the history, it is passed along to new generations by the old ones through teachings in the stories. Patricia Margaret Ningewance, an Anishinaabe-kwe linguist and artist originally from Northern Ontario and currently lives in Winnipeg (Settee 2011: i), describes a scene from her youth, travelling camp to camp in the summers with her family’s fishing livelihood, demonstrating what oral history in action might look like:

On rainy days we stayed in the white canvas miner’s tent all day. ... Mom told us folk stories that she’d heard from her uncle. ... The summer stories included ghost stories, biographies, love situations, humorous happenings, tragic events, people turning into Windigos (cannibalistic monsters), war stories and, of course,

supernatural feats by gifted individuals. None of this was fiction. It was all true. The same with the fourteen or so legends that she told us in the winter. Those too were all true. That was our real schooling (Ningewance in Settee 2011: 12).

Neal McLeod, a Cree and Swedish professor in Indigenous Studies and visual artist and entertainer, explains that culturally-based (Cree-based) interconnectedness between people, histories, land, and all living things are perpetuated through stories. He explains

The connection Indigenous people have to the land is housed in language. Through stories and words, we hold the echo of generational experiences, and the engagement with land and territory. [Cree] language ... grounds us, and binds us with other living beings, and marks these relationships (2007: 6).

Some narratives, such as Theodore Fontaine's memoir, are already transferred into writing (rather than direct transcription of oral words, such as the TRC testimonies and *Speaking of Sagkeeng* interviews), making the work more accessible to non-Indigenous peoples that might not be exposed to oral history, or might not grasp the meaning in Anishinaabe stories. It is important to note, however, that Survivor's narratives are not meant to represent the whole community. Communities are not static or uniform entities and no singular narrative represents an authentic experience of a group.

Power, Privilege, and Sociologists: Translation and Reflexivity

Translation

Callon raises issues surrounding sociologists' power and privilege when they conduct research. He uses the notion of translation to discuss how sociologists create information about a group toward which they are outsiders. He considers how power imbalances manifest during this process and how to address inequalities between researcher and researched. This is especially problematic in situations where the researcher's social position historically has power-over the

group being studied. Translating experiences into the researcher's worldview as a sociologist is a form of controlling others because of the hegemony academics traditionally have over knowledge.

Callon defines translation as “researchers [imposing] themselves and their definition of the situation on others” (Callon 1986: 1). This imposition is the nature of sociology since sociologists work with other cultures all of the time. For this thesis, I am working as an outsider with the Sagkeeng community. I translated the experiences of colonizers and Sagkeeng community members within FAIRS to define it within the context of the sociology of genocide. The translation will be from my own worldview. Translation is an ongoing process that is never a “completed accomplishment, and it may ... fail” (Callon: 1986: 1). Groups exist as ongoing processes of negotiations, always changing and adapting. As Callon suggests, “the observer does not fix the identity of the implicated actors if this identity is still being negotiated” (Callon 1986: 4). Therefore my paper is not meant to be a static definition or explanation of group phenomena. One can never capture the experiences as a group in a complete and finite way.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is generally seen as the process by which “authors should explicitly position themselves in relation to their objects of study so that one may assess researchers' knowledge claims in terms of situated aspects of their social selves and reveal their (often hidden) doxic values and assumptions” (Maton 2003: 54). The “rule of reflexivity” is that “any way of knowing, understanding, or explaining social phenomena is itself a social phenomenon” (Powell 2007: 43). A person exists through their relations with others and that is how their knowledge

and assumptions are shaped. Awareness of one's position in society, or their standpoint, and how that shapes the way they perceive social phenomenon allows one to think reflexively.

Adopting this more individualistic and self-centered approach to reflexivity, I can position myself as a white European researcher in the academy. At the same time, being reflexive must involve consideration of different worldviews to try to understand the position of others in society and how their position might make them view the same social phenomenon differently. Reflexivity can incorporate multilogicity, a key concept in decolonizing epistemologies. As Maton points out, a researcher's interpretation of social situations is "just another viewpoint among many equally partial and equally valid views" (Maton 2003: 57).

Research on Indigenous peoples has historically been a colonial process. European settlers came and created a system of knowledge which defined Indigenous peoples as an inferior race in order to justify the theft and exploitation of these peoples and their land (Churchill 1997). According to Smith, "research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized" (2012: 8). Racist colonial methodologies were used to create "structures of attitude and reference" (Churchill 2004), where white Europeans were defined as civilized and all 'Others' were something of lesser quality. In Canada, Indigenous and European peoples were forever established as opposites, under the narrative that Aboriginal peoples are savages, the Europeans are civilized. These binary notions of "self/Other" (Bhabha 1985: 158) allowed one group to dominate another. The success of the European project gave widespread legitimacy to the apparent superiority of the white race (Rattansi 2007: 52).

One Elder describes Indigenous peoples as being "researched to death" (Castellano 2004: 98). This has literally been the case, as the justification for the destruction of Indigenous communities has been racist views formulated within most academic fields – social and scientific

(Smith 2012). These structural power dynamics influence the thesis writing process. I attempt to take certain steps to avoid this paper merely paying lip service to reflexivity by attempting to design my methodology within a decolonizing framework.

By remaining reflexive throughout the research process, acknowledging the practice of translation involved in this research, and utilizing particular theoretical and methodological frameworks, I attempt to align my research with decolonizing epistemologies. Relational Theory and ANT are used to carry out narrative analysis and sociohistoric inquiry to discuss networks of relations within FAIRS. Throughout the research process, I think about how these theories and methodological approaches can be used in line with decolonizing epistemologies. Relational theory and ANT are flexible approaches that can incorporate Anishinaabe ways-of-knowing, such as animism. Critical narrative analysis and, to a lesser extent, sociohistoric inquiry rely on local Anishinaabe narratives to identify actants and semiotic influences within the school. Learning from stories and testimonies is consistent with Anishinaabe practices of storytelling and oral history. To root my inquiry in Sagkeeng stories, I begin with a focus at the micro level. Broader colonial structures' influences on interactions within FAIRS are also considered; however, the focus is mainly on interpersonal relationships between Anishinaabe children, their families, and the school staff. Themes of "language," "space/place," and "nature" are used to discuss the colonizing practices of FAIRS, and how Sagkeeng community members negotiated and undermined the school's attempts to destroy Anishinaabe relationality.

Chapter 4: Analyzing the Removal of Anishinaabe Language in FAIRS

Micro-Level Relations Surrounding Language within FAIRS

This chapter focuses on language. Language is an important field of contested power between Anishinaabe Peoples and colonizers that was manifested within FAIRS. Language loss is one of the greatest threats in terms of connection to culture and history. More broadly, the language Anishinaabe people speak in Canada is influenced by law, economy, religion, politics, racism, white supremacy, and Eurocentric ideologies. Within the residential schools, at the macro-level, curricula, assimilative techniques, Christianity, and the Eurocentric ideologies influenced the school staff who forced Anishinaabe Children to speak English. At the micro-level, struggles over language occurred between individuals within the school.

This chapter unpacks relations between micro-level actors, mediated by teachings, to demonstrate the ways that school authorities attempted to assimilate Anishinaabe children, and the children's responses to these attempts, through language. The actants considered in this chapter include children, their families, peers, nuns, priests, and children's names. Other technologies such as the school's registration form, application form, and ledger also forced children and their families to relate to each other and school officials in English, but are not discussed in this chapter. First, I discuss the links between teachings, language, and culture, to demonstrate how nuns and priests forced European teaching approaches onto children while forbidding Anishinaabe ones. This was to sever children's ties to their families, community, and cultural understanding. Next, I discuss discrepancies between European teachings and Anishinaabe ones, showing how European teachings were inappropriate for Indigenous Children. European teachings were used to shame children for speaking their language while instilling settler language and worldviews. Finally, I highlight specific relational moments through which

nuns, priests, and other micro-level actants worked to remove Indigenous language. I highlight inconsistencies in these attempts as reported by the students, and the different ways children responded to the school staff. Not all Survivors lost their language, but many did (Fontaine 2010; Chris; John; Cheryl). Several people identify language loss as the greatest source of disconnection to their culture. And those who did not lose their language speak to how lucky they feel they are (Cheryl).

Understanding the Interconnectedness of Language and Culture

Removing language destroys an important bond with one's culture. It makes it difficult to continue to relate to one's community in culturally-specific ways and prevents people from understanding their universe through culturally-specific linguistic tools. Ngugi, a Kenyan writer who specializes in the role of language in decolonizing the mind, describes language as the way that people understand the world and themselves in culturally-specific ways (Ngugi 1986). He argues that using the colonizer's language immediately acknowledges the present reality of colonial dominance. For Indigenous groups, speaking one's own language exercises power through articulation of an Indigenous present. Ngugi states, "Communication creates culture: culture is a means of communication. Language carries culture, and culture carries ... the entire body of values by which we perceive ourselves and our place in the world" (Ngugi 1986: 15-16). Culture and language are inextricably linked; one cannot exist without the other and the destruction of one leads to the destruction of the other.

These arguments resonate at a local level. By teaching in English and prohibiting Anishinaabe language, colonizers within FAIRS denied children access to their culture. Leanne Simpson, a storyteller and activist of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg ancestry, discusses Indigenous

languages, saying they “carry rich meanings, theory and philosophies within their structures” (Simpson 2011: 49). She describes how Indigenous languages “house ... teachings and bring the practice of those teachings to life... The process of speaking Nishnaabemowin, then, inherently communicates certain values and philosophies that are important to Nishnaabeg being” (Simpson 2011: 49). Storytelling is an empowering teaching method; removing it from the children’s lives also removes their ties to their families and their history. Maria Campbell, a Métis author, playwright, broadcaster, filmmaker, and Elder from Saskatchewan, talks about growing up with lots of stories. She remembers, “Some were nonsensical, others were riddles. There are *ahtyokaywina*, the sacred stories, and others that were *tahp acimowina*, the family histories” (in Anderson 2011: xv). Settee adds that, “In Indigenous communities, women are the first educators of children, and they maintain this influential role throughout the child’s life. Women believe that education should reflect the needs of community, preserving culture and helping young people adapt to the challenges in their lives” (Settee in Settee 2011: 96). In Anishinaabe communities, oral teachings in Anishinaabe language are traditional forms of education that reproduce culturally-based knowledge and worldviews.

Understanding where one fits into the world is empowering and the residential school attempted to break down this empowerment. Vicki Wilson, an Elder originally from White Bear First Nation who is part of the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program and the First Nations University of Canada, teaches her children about traditional ways of life to empower them. She says, “... you have to make children proud of who they are. They do [traditional ceremonies and dances] now so they’re proud of themselves, so it doesn’t hurt them when somebody calls them names and stuff” (Wilson in Settee 2011: 97). Simpson also explains that you need language to pray, demonstrating all cultural practices tied together by language –

spirituality, teachings, theory, philosophy, history, and cultural meaning (2011). Taking that connection away isolates the individual, fractures the group's cohesiveness, and destroys many cultural ties linked together through language.

Survivors speak to the importance of language and culture. A FAIRS Survivor and Elder describes language as being the greatest connection to her culture she ever lost (Cheryl). She explains that with "knowledge comes with language. ... Knowledge of culture and stories ... pass along knowledge of past generations and 'reconcile with the next generation'" (Cheryl). Chris, another Survivor, explains that, in the face of losing many cultural ties, preserving his language was the only way he could conceive of staying connected with his history: "I didn't want to forget my language. Through all of that, through all those hardships, I never wanted to forget my language. At least I could start somewhere if I had to start over. I always said to myself, I've got to start somewhere. I don't know where, I don't know how". Theodore Fontaine also speaks to the importance of language: "[Anishinaabe languages] are unique to Canada and are the main means by which culture, identity and spirituality are articulated, shared and passed on to successive generations" (2010: 112).

Craig Charbonneau Fontaine says that language is the only route to understanding traditional Anishinaabe ways. He explains that "everything else is just mimicry. After, all language is the context of any culture" (2012: 8). For Dan, an Intergenerational Survivor, his Cree language is a source of cultural pride: "I'm proud that our people and our language come from the four winds". Language, and the meanings it carries, is a source of strength and connectedness for cultural groups.

Considering European and Anishinaabe Teachings

There are disparities between English and Anishinaabe teachings. However, there is no strict binary between Anishinaabe and settler teachings; Intergenerational experiences with residential school blurred perspectives, often creating a hybridity of worldviews. For instance, by the 1940's, some families in Sagkeeng spoke English and incorporated European ways of life into their own. Some Survivors say their parents believed that white education was the only way to be successful in their colonial reality (Fontaine 2010). Many felt that, in order to survive, language, livelihoods, and lifestyles had to adapt. Some parents protected their children from abuse by not letting them speak their own language. Priests had a strong community presence in Sagkeeng, instilling Catholic guilt to compel white lifestyles in Anishinaabe homes (Fontaine 2010).

Offered here are some generalities within teachings styles that are historically linked to European and Anishinaabe cultures. This demonstrates how Western ways of knowing and teaching clash with Anishinaabe ones. English teachings in the school were inconsistent with how many Anishinaabe Children understood the world. "White education" was not very relevant for Indigenous Peoples, but students in the school were still forced to participate in it (Fontaine 2010). When Indigenous education began in Canada, the government and church officials' mission was to educate the young to live in the "civilized" world (Bolaria and Li: 1988). Sagkeeng Survivors speak to how confusing and inappropriate English teachings were. Fontaine explains that his "education in English was long and tedious" because it did not resonate with his worldviews (2010: 108).

Teaching styles vary based on cultural values, history, experiences, and understandings. The English language does not contain the same cultural relational understandings and values

that Anishinaabemowin does. For example, many European scientific traditions value universal truths, whereas “Indigenous epistemologies are narratively anchored in natural communities ... characterised by complex kinship systems of relationships among people, animals, the earth, the cosmos, etc. from which knowing originates” (Ermine in Hammersmith 2007: 2). In many Indigenous communities, oral teachings are the traditional way to pass knowledge between generations. Children are taught culturally-specific morals and values through stories. Jo-Ann Archibald, a Sto:lo educator, points out “the word ‘teachings’ is commonly used among Indigenous Peoples to describe Indigenous knowledge that is passed on through oral tradition” (in Anderson 2011: 181 fn8). She defines teachings as “the cultural values, beliefs, lessons and understandings that are passed from generation to generation” (Archibald in Anderson 2011: 181 fn8). Marcel Courchene from the Sagkeeng community explains how residential school teaching methods were inconsistent with Anishinaabe teachings. He notes that teachings in the residential school were very direct and directive; the teachers would tell you what you needed to know rather than allowing you to figure it out for yourself. Oral teachings are, in contrast, indirect and often occur through storytelling (Marcel Courchene Fontaine 2012b: 28). He explains the value he received from the latter:

Some stories they would mix it up so you would come out with the answer – you. They don’t tell you, it’s in there, it’s in the story. That’s how they taught you things. You had to figure them out, like life. You had to figure out every step. What step you were going to make. That’s what they did but that’s gone (Fontaine 2012b: 28).

The direct style of Western teachings did not provide such critical thinking skills.

Indigenous teachings of non-industrialized Indigenous groups contain a holistic worldview (Settee in Settee 2011: IV), whereas European ones often expresses a worldview that is rigid (Simpson 2011), binary (de Leeuw 2007), and boundaried (Gregory 1993). Each set of

worldviews hold different sets of values in esteem. Survivors spoke of communal values of holism (Sam), peace, harmony, respect, and sharing (Fontaine 2010). Anishinaabe Elders teach “respect for others, respect for self, respect for our mother, the earth” as central to Anishinaabe belief systems (Gray 2014). Sam provides an explanation of what a holistic view of teachings in an Anishinaabe framework might look like:

And when I look at our way of looking at life, we look at life in a holistic point of view. Everything is related, interrelated, and all creation. I look at four things. First, what’s most important in our lives is language. Second is our land. The land means everything to us. Third, is our history. And the fourth and the last one is our way of life. When I look at four of those, I begin to see a picture. They wanted to completely eliminate- take us out of the picture of this country. Eliminate. And try to make us something that we could never be. I am Anishinaabe and I’ve always heard our elders of our past saying, ‘You are Anishinaabe’ (Sam).

This in many ways contrasts the cultural values contained in the English language.

English tends to promote individualism (Adams 1999), exclusion (Said 1978), rigidity (Poulantzas 1978), competitiveness, “self-reliance and industry” (Milloy 1999: 32), as well as “neatness, industry, thrift, and self-maintenance” (Milloy 1999: 36). These characteristics are inconsistent with the holistic nature of Indigenous worldviews, “[undermining] what is at the heart of the concept of *wakohtowin*, the betterment of all our relations” (Settee in Settee 2011: IV). These characteristics of the English language undermine notions of cohesiveness and instead value an individualistic and parcelled view of humans and society. The school instilled “a deep sense of and belief in one’s unworthiness, causing hate, despair, skepticism and cynicism” (Fontaine 2010: 121). Fontaine explains that the individualism and competitiveness of Western teachings taught students to be “deceitful and untrusting,” as well as imposed loneliness and sadness upon the children (2010: 118). One priest taught Fontaine to cheat in sports- a lesson in dishonesty he carried over into other areas of his life and work. He explains, “It was easy to lie because a priest could it, too” (Fontaine 2010: 158). Oral storytelling, on the other hand,

strengthens intergenerational communal bonds and cultural values of sharing. A Survivor Elder implores, “[Children] have to learn by the stories. The Elders have to speak to the young people in Ojibwa so they will learn how to speak their language” (Cheryl).

Specific Moments and Encounters through which Colonizing Relations were Acted Out through Language

Tracing relational encounters mediated by teachings within the school shows how the colonial actants worked to sever ties between children, their families, and their community. The colonial staff (mainly nuns and priests) imposed the English language on Anishinaabe Children via shaming and abuse, preventing them from speaking their own language. Children responded in various ways. Some found the teachings meaningless to them and their worldviews, while others describe feeling shame and fear about speaking Anishinaabe. Some children communicated to their friends and siblings in secret and maintained their language within their own minds. The following sections discuss the role of nuns and priests in language removal and the effects this had on relations between children and their families, children and their communities, and children and their friends and family members who also attended the school. The chapter concludes with a look at the significance of FAIRS removing children’s Anishinaabe names and replacing them with English ones.

The Nuns’ and Priests’ Roles in Removing Anishinaabe Language from Sagkeeng Children

Nuns and priest interacted with the children on a daily basis within FAIRS. When children entered the schools, they often only spoke Anishinaabe. Nuns were at the forefront of forcing them to speak English. Cheryl remembers wanting to speak his own language but “was

told to speak English”. Nuns abused the children, conditioning them to be too afraid to speak their own language. Theodore Fontaine once accidentally spoke Ojibway and was locked in a dark closet under the stairs that was used as storage for cleaning materials. He panicked and tried to sit up but banged his head. He tried peering under the door to see his classmates. He disassociated by visualizing playing at Treaty Point with his family. He remembers: “I sobbed for a while, to no avail. Eventually she let me out. Her first word was ‘*Tiens!* (Take that!)’ followed by a warning not to speak my ‘savage’ language” (Fontaine 2010: 107). This traumatic experience prevented him from sleeping without a light for years. Shirley also recalls being abused for speaking her language and how deeply it affected her: “But being hit for your language is a big thing, because that’s who you are. That’s part of you”. Nuns washed children’s mouths with soap (as noted by Brian), strapped them, hit them with rulers (Charles Courchene Fontaine 2012b: 12), locked children in closets and removed the light bulbs (Fontaine 2010; George Bruyere Fontaine 2012b: 6), made them write lines, and instigated hostility between children by showing favouritism to those who tattled on their peers for speaking Anishinaabe (Fontaine 2010). These “teaching” tactics prevented children from speaking Anishinaabe.

There were some nuns who the children did not consider to be “wicked” (George Bruyere Speaking: 6); some tried to be supportive towards the children. Fontaine remembers receiving praise from a nun for a note he wrote to his mother in a Mother’s Day card. He described this as a “rare moment of praise” that he still remembers today (Fontaine 2010: 11). Also, Fontaine remembers being comforted by a nun on his first night:

Because of my whimpering and other boys’ crying, the nun emerged that first night several times to walk around the dormitory. As she passed, it would be quiet for a while. She’d stop briefly to whisper something to console the young children in various beds. Although my English was then very limited, her words and manner were somewhat soothing when she whispered to me. The soft pat of her fingers as she ran them through my hair provided some calm. I was scared of this

woman in black, but she appeared to understand my pain and sorrow, and I thought she might hold me until I fell asleep... It did instill in me a spark of trust that lessened the pain of capture (Fontaine 2010: 37).

But, Fontaine reminds his reader that not all nuns were “kind and loving” (Fontaine 2010: 37). Tina also notes that there was a mix of personality types: “I remember those nuns, there was some kind ones and then there was some mean ones”. Even the kind nuns, however, insisted on teachings and speaking in English.

Priests administered violent teachings as well. Students were sent to the principal’s office, who was normally a priest, when the nuns felt they had misbehaved more seriously. Some survivors recall a certain priest between the 1940’s and 1960’s who actually spoke Anishinaabe and became a friend to some of the students. Edward Charles Bruyere remembers the priest speaking Anishinaabe “really helped [them] out” and that the students were “really amazed at him because he was able to speak [their] language” (Fontaine 2012b: 2). Charles Courchene remembers when this particular priest started working there, “things began to change, we used to go out more. He used to take us out to other places, St. Boniface, to play hockey. He also used to take us to small towns down south.... That was a big thing for us” (Charles Courchene in Fontaine 2012b: 14). But, Courchene notes that, while the priest did not abuse the children himself, he still knew about the abuses from other priests and did nothing to stop them (Charles Courchene in Fontaine 2012b). This priest was an exception and Theodore Fontaine recalls most priests scaring children, which had negative long-lasting results.

Teaching through fear did not make the children successful students who respected priests, nuns, the Catholic religion, and European cultures. Theodore Fontaine remembers a priest strapping him and making him write lines while students waited, missed playtime, and

almost missed dinner: “The incident didn’t teach me respect, but it did make me angry at and distrustful of the priest” (Fontaine 2010: 111). He describes:

I couldn’t comprehend the nature of their teachings, the way they instilled fear and apprehension in my parents and the rest of the congregation [community members who attended church]. I still don’t understand the power those teachings had; I can only assume that the spirituality of our people invoked a strong and deep respect and fear for the messenger and his helpers. The priest was the messenger and representative of the Creator they called God (Fontaine 2010: 30)

The priests used the Catholic religion to scare children into speaking English and to fear their own language. These intimidating tactics caused children to feel shame about their Anishinaabe language into adulthood as a result (Cheryl).

The Effects of Removing Language on the Relations between Sagkeeng children and their Families

Language is an important part of family cohesiveness. Parents and grandparents taught children about their family, history, and culture through their language. These relations bonded families together. Kevin describes:

I was born March 12, 1945, in Pine Falls and I grew across the river – across the river from the residential school and from 1 to 6 years of my life is very important to me because this is a time when my grandparents were alive, my mum and dad were together, and I grew up in an environment where we spoke the language Anishinaabe-mowin.

Dan, an intergenerational Survivor, speaks to his mother’s memory of having a strong community and language before residential school: “She remembers growing up, before being taken to residential school, how strong the community was together. She told me how everybody had a role. And that the language was strong, the love in the community and amongst the people was strong”. Theodore Fontaine only spoke Anishinaabe at home when he was a young boy

(Fontaine 2010). Chief Albert Fontaine remembers community bonding activities, such as Treaty Days, where merchants came to trade with the community and everyone would camp in tents for a few days. These days involved celebration and dance, and importantly, opportunities for children to learn communal morals and values from the Elders. Chief Albert Fontaine explains:

There, the elders would speak to and instruct the young people. They used to tell you what's right and what's wrong. They used to try, direct and influence you on how you should live... not to hurt or harm each other, to treat your fellow humans. That is how they used to preach while the treaty days were in progress... some times for a whole week (Chief Albert Fontaine Fontaine 2012b: 31).

Theodore Fontaine also remembers Treaty Days and the important knowledge he gained from the stories told:

Usually older folks – grandparents, mothers, fathers, friends and other relatives – sat outside the tents, smoking drinking tea and visiting. Many times they'd call for us young ones to come and sit with them beside the fire, and they'd tell us family stories about ghosts, devils and such mischief-makers in the Ojibway culture as Weendigo and Weeskayjak.... We'd listen enraptured and awestruck as the elders imparted their wisdom. We learned why ducks waddle, why muskrats and beavers build dams, why the willow is red. I often wondered why we never for to see Weeskayjak. Every aspect and explanation of nature, of why things were, were attributed to him. Our imaginations were as free and wild as those animals of the forest that we imagined were hunched just behind the edge of the dancing firelight (Fontaine 2010: 78-79).

Stories like this are an important way to pass along culturally-specific values and beliefs.

While some Survivors remember speaking Anishinaabe at home and having a strong bond with their family and community as a result, others have less fond memories of life before residential school. This is because, as a result of intergenerational effects of the residential school, not everyone experienced a harmonious home-life filled with traditional teachings. Many parents had lost their language as a result of the residential school and were disconnected from their teachings and history. They were raised within an abusive environment that taught them their language and ways of life were worthless at best and evil at worst. Parents would pass this

way of thinking to their children. John, a Survivor, recalls his childhood: “Why is that? Why do we have to go through that [abuse at school and home]? Is it because of our skin colour? Of our language? When we talk about love, my mom and dad didn’t show me love cause me mom was raised by the nuns and my dad was raised by United Church minister”.

The Effects of Removing Language on the Relations between Students within the Residential School

Students tried to communicate with each other within the school. Being caught speaking their language often meant getting strapped. To maintain ties with their siblings and friends within the school, students would sneak looks and waves at each other, often not daring to speak (as noted by Kevin). Boys and girls were kept separated and shamed when caught communicating with each other. A Survivor reflects:

Being one of the youngest and smallest of the boys, we were seated near the entrance. In the centre of the cafeteria, our backs to the youngest girls, sometimes we would get a strap if we boys were caught talking to the girls behind us. And I got my share of straps right in front of all to see. But I didn’t know better (Grant).

Edward Charles Buyere also recalls:

Nuns would strap children for talking to their siblings. If a boy was caught talking to his sister, the nun would make him go into the girl’s playroom or sleep in the girl’s dorm room. Made him wear a dress. “that’s how much you want to be with the girls’ they said. It wasn’t that at all, all I wanted to do was talk to my sisters and see how they were doing and getting along, I used to tell them that I was getting hit and I didn’t know what for (Buyere Fontaine 2012b: 2).

Kevin also remembers seeing his friends punished for attempting to communicate his siblings:

I’ve seen my friends who were punished when they waved hello to their sisters. It seemed to be – and the nuns’ explanation was this was a sin. And I wondered how

the hell it can be a sin to love your own sister? You know, it just boggled my mind. So the affection between family systems was being torn apart.

Bullying was meant to shame children for wanting to communicate with a sibling.

Despite the efforts of the nuns, students still stole looks and glances between each other, found hiding spots to meet, catch up, gossip, and maintain connections with each other. Students found ways to resist the school's attempts to sever ties between the children, finding "hiding places where food could be stored, conversations could go unheard, plans could be made, love could blossom, or tears be shed" (Woolford 2014: 22). When visiting Sagkeeng today, it is clear that students found ways to maintain their language despite the priests' and nuns' efforts to eradicate it. The Anishinaabe language and cultural is strong amongst numerous Survivors of FAIRS (Personal observations at the Sagkeeng Anishinaabe High School, November 22nd, 2013, March 19th, May 28th, June 28th, 2014; Turtle Lodge, July 16th, 2014; Sagkeeng Treaty Days Powwow, August 2nd, 2014).

The Disruption of Familial Ties through the Replacement of Anishinaabe Names with English Ones

One important actant that connected children to their families was the names they were given in Anishinaabe. After a child is born, one of the most important ceremonies that takes place is the naming ceremony. Elders give children their spirit names, which are "considered both sacred and significant" (Anderson 2011: 52). Some names carry spiritual power "transmitted through dreams or visions" (Anderson 2011: 53). According to the Ojibwa in Berens River, naming a baby is crucial for "ensuring him or her a lifetime of health, wellness, success, and longevity" (Anderson 2011: 53). Nehiyawak (Cree) also believe spirit names are a form of protection for the child. If children grew ill, some groups would ask Elders to give the

child a second name for more protection. The residential school removed the protective quality of children's names by replacing them with European ones. This also severed the bond created between namers and namees (Elders and infants).

Children's Anishinaabe names were replaced with European English ones upon entering the school (Adams 1989). This was another way Anishinaabe identity was removed. In some cases, children never received their Anishinaabe name before entering the school because their families lost the practice through FAIRS intervention in previous generations. Kevin remembers being baptised upon entering the school: "[I] was baptised and given a Christian name. I was 40 years old when I came to my traditional name and I was to share that. How I identify myself". Anishinaabe names were also an important tie to land and its removal disrupted their understanding of their place in their community. Chief Lawrence Morrisseau explains how:

All Indian people had their Indian name and all were related to some kind of animal... or something like that where the land that they came out of. I could never understand that because this is the reason we got taken into residential school and we were not allowed to learn about Indian culture and it was taken away from us... see. That doesn't coincide with the Christian religion (Fontaine 2012b: 51).

Kevin recalls the day they finally received their traditional name and how useful this was in connecting with their spirituality and healing from residential school:

When I started into the traditional thing I got my name and was told, 'Come spring, go out to an open field, take your tobacco, when the Thunderbeings come.' Because I was called Rain Thunderbird ... This was a realization for me that I was now praying for the first time in my life. I understood what prayer was. It was not a recital, it came from the heart and this would aid me in my journey.

Several Survivors reported leaving the school very disconnected from each other and isolated from the world. Sam reflects on a conversation he had with several other Survivors, many years after leaving the school:

We all asked ourselves one question: Who are we? What are we? When we came out of the residential school. We were all quiet. We were all probably thinking. At the end we all agreed that we all came out of there as a mechanical robot. A mechanical robot, to my understanding, you only operate from here up. Something is missing from down here. The emotions, the feelings. And those were all things that was taken from us, from me, and from the ones I am talking about. What is love? We all have to relearn.

Brian discusses relearning his culture while in Stony Mountain Correctional Facility:

My Anishinaabe name is ... Sun and Bear from a Distance. My clan name is ... The Thunderbird. I got that name when I was working in Stony Mountain. A very special dear friend ... invited me to his place so I could get my colours and my Indian name. An Elder from down south gave me that name – the Thunderbird Clan.

Replacing Anishinaabe names with English ones was a devastating practice meant to erase children's cultural ties.

The residential school broke down the strength that came from children's connection to their culture by removing their ability to communicate with their families and community. Nuns and priests used fear and shame to prevent children from speaking their language. Many aspects of Eurocentric education, namely using English language and direct teachings styles that clashed with the oral story-telling approaches. Replacing Anishinaabe names with English ones was also used to remove children's identity and replace it with Eurocentric ones. Despite these efforts, children found ways to communicate to each other, maintain their language, and sustain relationships throughout and beyond their school experience.

Language embodies a group's worldviews. Language enables a group to define themselves from their own ways of knowing – a great source of power through self-determination. Removing language from Anishinaabe Children made them submissive. Language was a means of “spiritual subjugation” (Ngugi 1986: 9) – an important factor in alienating the child from the family. The spatial placement of the school directly within the

community meant that there was less of a physical separation between children and their families and so a greater emotional and spiritual separation was necessary. The next chapter looks at this and other ways that space and place within FAIRS played into the genocidal process.

Chapter 5: Analyzing the Roles of Space and Place in FAIRS

This chapter focuses on micro-level interactions between actants in FAIRS mediated by semiotic influences, conceptualized in terms of space and place. Spaces are treated in this thesis as actants, and places as semiotic mediators, in the contesting relations within FAIRS. In brief, space refers to the physical dimension of a locality while place is the process of constructing meanings about that space, which influence actant relations, including relations with spatial actants. Space and place are equally important since the material (or physical) and mental (non-physical) cannot be separated. As Ingrid points out, “space is produced from material social relations and is contingent on the perception of, and interaction with, mental and physical space. Space, then, is not already formed ready to be occupied, but rather constantly in a state of becoming” (Ingrid in Roth 2009: 211). Lefebvre makes a similar argument, stating that “space is then clearly both material – rooted in actually existing social relations and ecologies, and dynamic – in a constant state of becoming” (in Roth 2009: 211). Analyzing how space and place interact and mediate interactions with FAIRS staff and Sagkeeng community members demonstrates that ways colonialism was actualized against Sagkeeng community members and how children and community members negotiated potentially destructive relations of space and place.

This chapter is split into 4 sections. First, I define space and place and explain how they are incorporated into relational theory in the context of colonialism and resistance. Second, I discuss how the forced movement of students’ bodies through routines and rituals within the school’s colonial spatial layout indoctrinated Eurocentric values into students, while simultaneously erasing Indigeneity. Third, I discuss how the physical border around the school had ideological effects on the relationships between the students who were forced to stay inside

school grounds and their families and community outside the school's boundary. Fourth, I demonstrate how the physical architecture inside the school created gendered binaries amongst the students, preventing family, friends, and loved ones from maintaining relationships.

Space and Place: A Spatial and Relational Theory of Colonialism

Space as an Actant

Space as a physical entity can be understood as an actant. Physical space is a social product – the physical manifestation of perceptions, planning, and building (Lefebvre in Razack 2002) – and is theoretically known as “space”. Space is “produced through social relations of power” (Roth 2009: 209). Once created, space exists as a physical manifestation of certain sentiments. However, once created, depending on whom is interacting where and when, space is given different meanings and serves different purposes. Space is context dependent and is perceived differently by different actants. Physical spaces in this context exist as actants that interact with other actants, and these interactions are influenced by semiotic influences. At a micro-level, examples of spatial actants include the school itself, the chapel, classrooms, the school yard, closets, and so on. Space played a pivotal role in the colonizing process, since securing Indigenous land for capitalist expansion was fundamental to European conquest. Space is “produced in relation to capitalist and imperialist relations of power, and is enrolled in the creation of bounded territories for such purposes” (Roth 2009: 209). The structuring of the modern nation involved shaping physical space, presupposing colonial and capitalist relations of production and societal relations in general. Colonizers grant or deny access to spaces, including land and resources. They have the authority and power to define these spaces and the people who inhabit or have access to them (Tyner 2006). The colonial government monopolizes the

organization of space (Poulantzas 1978), forcing many Indigenous communities into a colonial spatial organization. As Lefebvre points out, “every society – and hence every mode of production with its subvariants ... – produces a space” (in Roth 2009: 209).

Government inscription of meaning onto space is a method of exercising power – a process that can be explained using Poulantzas’ theory of the spatial matrix (1978). Writing from a Marxist perspective on the state, Poulantzas (1978) argues that the spatial matrix is the presupposition of capitalist relations of production. It is the material framework, or social mould, that embodies the relations of production of the state (Poulantzas, 1978: 65). In Canada, colonialism and the building of the modern nation is embedded in the rise of capitalism. Indigenous populations were forced into the spatial matrix on every structural level of society, from the macro-level reservation system, to the micro-level classrooms within residential schools. The spatial arrangement of the nation not only affects community’s economic lives, but every other aspect of their lives as well. Indigenous people are kept subjugated in order to exploit their land and resources (da Silva 2008).

Poulantzas describes pre-capitalist space as “continuous, homogenous, symmetrical, reversible, and open” (Poulantzas 1978: 103). These are characteristics more consistent with Indigenous worldviews that often demonstrate a “preference for relative versus metric distance and dynamic, multiple boundaries versus static, singular ones” (Roth 2009: 210). Capitalist space, then, is “serial, fractured, parcelled, cellular and irreversible” (Poulantzas 1978: 103). The social space of the state is mapped out and physically organized through the “growth of communications, transport, and military apparatuses and strategy, the emergence of borders, limits and territories” (Poulantzas 1978: 100). As the modern state is mapped out, “territory and tradition are inscribed,” replacing old knowledge with new meaning (Poulantzas 1978: 97).

Capitalist (and colonial) space is different from all others and brings every aspect of social life under its new organization and assignment (Poulantzas 1978: 97). Transformation of the spatial matrix refers to the “practices and techniques of capitalist economic, political and ideological powers – they are the real substratum of mythical, religious, philosophical or ‘experiential’ representations of [space]” (Poulantzas 1978: 98). Therefore, all avenues of life are implicated in this knowledge creation, and all aspects of people’s lives, not just the economic, are affected by the spatial matrix.

In Sagkeeng, colonizers used the spatiality of the school to “define and confine” (Wacquant 2000) Sagkeeng students, forcing them into a colonial and capitalist spatial matrix to destroy their cultural understanding and replace it with Eurocentric and racist ideals. As an actant, certain spaces interact with other actants and these relations are mediated through various semiotic influences. Colonizers use physical space to control and repress relations amongst children and their families. These coercive practices were meant to interrupt the children’s relations with their cultural network. Children also found ways to utilize space to maintain connections with other students, siblings, their families, non-human actants, and their Anishinaabe identity.

Place as Semiotic Mediator

Space not only exists as a physical entity, but also as a conceptualization, or perceived space. From this perspective, space can be understood as a semiotic mediator and is theoretically known as “place.” As place, perceptions of space guide actants’ behaviours and relations within the school. How a physical space is perceived by actants shapes the relations that happen within the place since “subjectivity is embedded, or nested, within place and that place is narrated both

by those subjects who occupy and make sense of it and by events and social interactions which also construct it” (Malpas in de Leeuw 2007: 343). Place is where “social relations are constituted” (Agnew in de Leeuw 2007: 342). It is where “social and political ideologies are made to function, are put into practice and are understood, in part through their emplacement” (Cresswell in de Leeuw 2007: 342). Perceptions give place meaning and influence people’s behaviour as a result. Social and political ideologies affect behaviour as semiotic mediators.

In the residential school, spatial aspects of the school meant to be colonizing – such as the serial lay-out of the building – were re-defined by children to serve different purposes in their favour. Meanings of place were reconceptualised through the ways that actants related with the space. In Sagkeeng, an example is the weekly chapel visits. Priests inscribed meaning to the chapel as a Catholic, European space where people related to each other in a Eurocentric context. For the priests, the chapel was a place of Catholic indoctrination and white supremacy. At FAIRS, the intention of chapel was never to provide an opportunity for children to maintain relations with their relatives, but rather to intensify their relationship with the Church. However, some Survivors remember going to the chapel as an opportunity to see and discreetly connect with relatives who they did not have opportunities to visit on regular school days. This was a small way they were able to maintain a bond with their families. Theodore Fontaine explains: “[Mass] had no special significance other than it was one of the rare occasions when the girls were near the boys. Brothers and sisters had a chance to be close and even brush against each other as they returned from going up to receive Communion” (Fontaine 2010: 44). The colonial space of the Chapel, intended as a place of conversion, became for a place for children to connect with their families.

Social and political ideologies influenced the relationality between school staff, students, parents, and other actants. As de Leeuw points out, “Residential schools become both places experienced within the colonial contest and places narrated by the in situ subjects, who have agency, whom the colonial process sought through education to assimilate and transform into non-Indigenous Peoples” (de Leeuw 2007: 343). Children were able to perceive colonial sites as opportunities to undermine the school’s attempt at disrupting their cultural ties.

Space, Place, and Colonial Resistance

Space and place can exist as products of resistance to colonial processes. Reclaiming colonized space, whether on broader scales through treaty negotiations, or on local scales as children within the residential school, undermines colonial power. Lefebvre theorizes the process of space creation and conceptualization, demonstrating how groups can resist power-over relations. He suggests that space may be viewed in two basic forms: representations of space and representational space (Tyner 2006). Representations of spaces are “conceptualized spaces, the spaces of scientists and planners, the ‘dominant’ space in society” (Tyner 2006: 64). From this perspective, “space is purposefully representational of certain societal ideals, and therefore the holders of these ideals attempt to control its use” (Lefebvre in Tyner 2006: 64). Even seemingly naturalized spaces such as public parks are regulated and policed. Representations of space often become sanctioned, controlled by dominator’s policy and law (Lefebvre in Tyner 2006).

This system of spatial control is not concrete. Representations of space can be opposed. “Representational spaces” are sites of resistance through “counter-discourses which have not been grasped by the apparatus of power” (Lefebvre in Tyner 2006: 64). Within these spaces, rules of consistency and cohesiveness do not need to be obeyed. Representational spaces are

where representations of space are contested (Tyner 2006: 64). By breaching the borders of spaces created and controlled by the dominant group, oppressed peoples begin producing their own space, along with decolonized identities and relations. Identity, like space, “is produced through the contestation of representations” (Tyner 2006: 65). Resistance in this form involves a variety of “insurgent social practices that eluded ‘proper places,’ mocked established grids, and defied imperial cartographies of power” (Gregory 1993: 195).

New space was constituted in FAIRS when Sagkeeng students and community members were able to maintain their connections outside of colonial discourse. We can see both space and place in terms of Lefebvre’s theory of spatial resistance at work here. Anishinaabe Peoples and colonizers both interact with spatial actants in ways advantageous to their needs and goals. For example, the FAIRS kitchen is a space where food is prepared for children and school staff. The best quality foods go to the school staff, and the dregs (often rotten with no nutritional value) went to students. This perpetuated the power divide between Anishinaabe Peoples and staff within the school. Children also accessed the kitchen in beneficial ways, where they were able to sneak bread while the breadmaker turned a blind eye (Fontaine 2010). This undermined school staff’s power.

Students also found ways to utilize “places” as resistance. Colonizers intend the rooms and layout of the school to be places for Anishinaabe Children to be transformed into subservient subjects in a colonial society, whereas children perceived places as opportunities to resist and hide from these colonial advances, often out of fear and sheer survival. For example, bathrooms represented European ideals of sanitation and whiteness, while Theodore Fontaine recalls hiding fruit his mom brought him in the toilet tank. He revelled in not being caught, duping the priests and nuns, and maintaining a bond with his mother (who brought him the fruit) in this small way

(Fontaine 2010). de Leeuw sums this aspect up nicely: “Material and the non-physical geographies of residential schools sought to shape and transform First Nations children while simultaneously acting as sites within which First Nations subjects asserted agency and Indigeneity” (de Leeuw 340).

Analyzing Movement within the Building’s Physical Spaces: Schedule, Routine, and Ritual

One way that school staff imposed the colonial assimilative project onto students was through the forced physical movements of students’ bodies in day-to-day life within the school. Survivors recall rigid and structured daily routines and rituals, which did not resonate with their lifestyles at home. Students were forced to interact with physical spatial actants in specific ways, influenced by certain semiotic mediators. These actants include the serial grids within the school (the square rooms, rows upon rows of beds in the dormitory – “probably 40 to 50 beds, in rows of 8 to 10”, according to Theodore Fontaine [2010: 42], tables in the lunch room, and desks in the classrooms), as well as daily routine, schedules, chores and tasks, prayer, and cleaning/sanitation. The daily interactions between these spaces, children, and school staff were mediated by the semiotic influence of European disciplinary values. Priests and nuns enforced strictly-regulated relations as a result of a European emphasis on individualism (Adams 1995), rigidity, serial spatiality, structure (Poulantzas 1978), as well as white supremacy (Adams 1989), and in this particular school, Catholicism (as noted by Chris).

The physical shape of the building represented certain meanings. The architecture was “culturally disorienting ... replacing the openness of Indigenous territory and structures with the regulated and compartmentalized space of the classrooms” (Woolford 2014: 41). Within the enormous school, “students were not only dwarfed within a colonially built environment, they

were materially reminded in their every movement that their lives and culture were subordinated to a more imposing and powerful force making effort to overtake and transform them as Indigenous Peoples” (de Leeuw 2007: 345). The three story building was a typical design of Canadian Residential Schools, being “symmetrically divided” with an “institutionally convenient layout” (de Leeuw 2007: 346). Other spaces that served as reminders of the punitive power of the white man (de Leeuw 2007), include the cemetery, principal’s office, fenced-off school grounds, the farm and barn where students were forced to work (Fontaine 2010), and the play room where students were put when they “weren’t in class, in the dormitory, at church or in the school chapel, or playing and working outside” (Fontaine 2010). Theodore Fontaine remembers the playroom as being “no different from the common area in places like penitentiaries and provincial jails” (2010: 26). Grant describes his memories when first experiencing the school:

There we met- we were met by a sister... Let me down to a hall, up to a large flight of stairs, down another short hallway that led to a large doorway. The sister opened the large cabinet door just before the big door and grabbed some blankets and instructed me to follow her. She opened the big door and in we went. The room we entered was huge, high, hardwood floor. I looked across the room and could see beds of steel, row on row, and many other boys my age and older.

de Leeuw explains that the huge rooms and long straight hallways “facilitated staff supervision and control of First Nation students and ensured the students were always within the monitoring and colonial gaze of school staffs” (2007: 346). The large open spaces overwhelmed and disoriented the children, making it easier to impose new lifestyles upon them.

The hugeness of the building, in comparison to the small houses within the community, also gave the impression of European superiority and grandeur (Woolford 2014). One Survivor points to the notoriety within the community of the schools’ size, as he approaches the school on his first day: “It was then that I finally found out about that big school in Fort Alexander, Manitoba” (Grant). The school’s architecture and size “transmitted a colonial narrative of non-

Aboriginal domination and superiority over First Nations peoples ... [and] implied an importance above and beyond any local traditional authority” (de Leeuw 2007: 343). Chris describes how small he felt in the school:

For some reason I didn't know what my gut feeling was – I hated that day. I didn't want that day. And then they put me – my dad put me on a boat. I hated that day. I was small. I knew we were going somewhere. Half way down, I started to cry because I wanted to get off the boat. But I couldn't. I'd get heck. I had to face up to it. When we got to the bank across the river, there was a big building and that's where that residential school was. I hated that place and I didn't want to go. I wanted to put up a fight. And I did! But I was small. I'm small. It didn't matter how much resistance I put up – I was small, I was helpless.

Other Survivors also remember feeling dwarfed by the building's size, and by the staff. Theodore Fontaine describes the priest on his first day: “After a moment, Mom and Dad emerged from the office, followed by a priest in a scary black robe. He looked very big and serious and agitated” (Fontaine 2010: 27). The school's architecture existed as a “material articulation of colonialism's assimilationist violence and its agenda of eliminating Indigenusness” (De Leeuw 2007: 346). By making children feel small, they were meant to feel helpless, which in theory would make them easier to mould.

Children acted out routine movement within this huge and compartmentalized school. Student interactions were specific and regimented. Theodore Fontaine remembers the routine: “Morning mass in the school chapel was at seven, and the chore of getting ready for it was very regimented ... The assigned tasks remained pretty well the same; only the workers changed each week” (Fontaine 2010: 41 and 47). Brian recalls: “I just remember that room there, and my mom talking to someone, I guess it was the principal. And after that I settled into the life of, you know, rigidness, for the next 7 years”. George Bruyere explains the daily regiment: “Our daily routine as far as I can remember was washing, making up the beds, washing the floors in the dormitory. After all the tidying up you were told to line then go to the chapel for morning. Mass and that

was every day of the week. As I grew older around 15-16 or even earlier 12-13, we used to be ordered to get wood” (Fontaine 2012b: 4-5). Adding to the serial nature of the school, the children were given numbers. Survivor Leo Morriseau explains: “I still remember my first number – I was number 72. They had it embroidered on all my clothes. Even my socks and underwear. All at once, I guess I must have grown up and I was number 36” (Fontaine 2012b: 59). This promoted the erasure of their past identities, replacing it with a number.

Levebvre describes the routine movement of people as “perceived space,” through which “the space comes to perform something in the social order, permitting certain actions and prohibiting others. Spatial practices organize social life in specific ways” (in Razack 2002: 9). The physical movement of children’s bodies into particular spaces, where only particular activities were allowed and others forbidden, was meant to inscribe European ideals and erase Indigenous ones. According to Foucault,

the “practice of exercising upon the body such micro processes as disciplining bodies to produce ‘subjected and practiced, ‘docile’ bodies’... [where] ‘the smallest fragment of life’ becomes subject to minute calculation, ‘a codification that partitions as closely as possible time, space, movement.’ Timetables, specific, repeated movements, continual examinations, penalties for lateness, absences, inattention: all these capture and fix individuals, placing them in a field of surveillance” (Foucault in Razack 2002: 11).

Having the students perform the routine of the school, from the moment they woke up to the moment they went to bed, not only made them easier to control, but also attempted to remove their agency.

The movement of the children’s bodies in rigid, formalized ways, as well as their uniform attire, operated to erase their previous identities as individuals within their Anishinaabe community. Another imposition of colonial ideals via forced movement came with writing lines on the chalk board as punishment. Students were also forced to wait in line-ups between most

activities, including mass, going to the bathroom, washing up, and going to class (Fontaine 2010). This queuing system was so strict that students had accidents while waiting in line. Shower routines imposed values surrounding cleanliness (Bruyere in Fontaine 2012b; Fontaine 2010; Brian), re-enforcing notions of European superiority through ideals of sanitation and whiteness (de Leeuw 2007).

Prayer was also a daily practice. Prayer was a ritual meant to promote conformity in Catholic thought and action among the student population. Leo Morrisseau remembers:

It was a hard life being in that boarding school. Day after day. It was the same routine. You get up you pray and then you go down, breakfast, again you pray before you eat and then after again you go into the play room and then you went outside for maybe an hour and then you went to class. The old cow bell would be ringing for us to get ready for class. Same thing there – Pray, pray that’s all I used to learn in that school, is praying” (in Fontaine 2012b: 59).

The social meanings of prayer, as well as other routines such as cleaning, are emphasized through repetition. Rituals serve as mnemonic devices to bring attention to and keep in mind certain thoughts and sentiments (Bird 1980). In FAIRS, the rituals repeatedly drove home the notions of white superiority, Catholic-based guilt and fear, and the dominance of European culture. Rituals in general function to regulate social interaction, particularly in transitional settings, in terms of codes of meaning which people already know, but which the rituals reinforce (Bird 1980). By the 1940’s to 1960’s, Catholicism and colonial ideals were already widely imposed upon Sagkeeng community members who had not converted to Protestantism. The two religions divided many members of the community (Fontaine 2010). Through intergenerational effects of the school and missionaries, some children attended Church with their parents before entering FAIRS between 1940 and 1970.

Despite the power of these routines and rituals, children found ways to undermine the assimilative processes. Brian recalls another student standing up to a nun's imposition of religious beliefs, despite the fact that he was physically abused:

There was this one boy, I don't know if he didn't want to brush his teeth or something and a nun came there and called him 'devil child' and asked him, 'Who do you love? Do you love god or do you love the devil?' And this kid said, 'I love the devil.' And when he said that, the two nuns grabbed him one on each side, put him over the sink and scrubbed his mouth out with lye soap and a scrub brush. They left him alone and asked him again, 'Who do you love?' It went on like that for a while, maybe a good half hour. They couldn't break this guy- couldn't break this. I don't know what happened, but he didn't say that he loved god. Each time he said he loved the devil.

Others resisted by building relationships with other students, undermining the school's fracturing and individualizing routines. Grant recalls being assigned a mentor to help him adjust to daily life. School staff may have intended mentors to instill rules onto newcomers. Mentorship was also seized as an opportunity for students to bond and help each other. He remembers:

After a deep sleep that night, I woke to another day in the life of a boarding school boy. That morning when I woke, I had to drag myself out of bed. It was so early in the morning! ... I was then introduced to the rest of the other boys. I was immediately assigned a mentor to show me the ropes of living a firmly structured boarding school life. At first, not one of the older boys would volunteer to be my mentor, but finally one stepped forward and agreed. He was a good mentor. I remember him well, still today he's a good friend of mine. ... My mentor would help me comb my hair, over to the side, as it was the proper fashion at the time. He also showed me how to brush my teeth properly (Grant).

Students managed to build long-lasting, meaningful relationships within the school. They managed to band together against the school's alienating regime and found ways to survive and thrive.

Spatial Borders: Physical and Emotional Separation used to Severe Ties between Children and Families

Spatial Borders and their Meanings

In their conquest of the world, Europeans gained their position of superiority through the designation of spaces using grids and mapping (Said 1979). European colonizers created knowledge about people within these borders, representing themselves as modern, rational, and good, while “Others” were considered undeveloped, primitive and evil (Said 1979). Organizing Indigenous communities onto reservations is one macro-level example of spatial designation. On a micro-level, creating borders and grids within communities is also used to control populations and inscribe meaning upon them.

In Sagkeeng, the residential school was surrounded by a clear, physical border – a fence lined with barbed wire – separating the school from the community. This border existed as a semiotic mediator, creating meaning and determining relationships inside (the school) and outside (the community) of its border. In this relational network, actants included the school itself, the walls, children, parents, relatives and siblings within the school who were also students, relatives within the school who were on the staff, relatives in the community, gifts, priests, and nuns. The fence, as place, influenced how actants interacted inside and outside the boundary of the school. The act of crossing the boundary was rife with meaning. Once in the school, the boundary created a rift between those in the community and those in the school.

Some residential schools in Canada are built far away from the community itself. In such circumstances, severing the ties between child and family was simpler because of the physical space separating them. It was almost impossible for the children to maintain ties with their community, aside from controlled and supervised interactions. Proximity of school to the

community plays an important role in how the relations between students and their families were severed (Woolford 2014). FAIRS was directly inside the community; however, this did not necessarily have any positive or empowering effects for the community (Woolford 2014). Students could see their friends and family walking around day to day, yet students still reported feeling extremely lonely and still experienced deep cultural loss (Woolford 2014). In fact, in some cases the close proximity enhanced the loneliness because students could see relatives on the other side of the fence, reminding them of their inability to communicate with loved ones on a daily basis. This increased longing and resentment (Fontaine 2010), provoking constant reminders of what you could no longer be a part. Nuns, priests, and other staff members worked hard to instill a fear-based respect of the school's border in the students, their families, and the broader community, to avoid it being breached.

The physical boundary around the school created both a material and ideological divide. A number of Survivors recall the significance of the physical border. Sam describes his mother leaving him on his first day, noting the fence and the feeling of loss of the child/mother relationship:

That same beautiful lady [mom] on that day, when I see her walk down those steps goin' home, her head down, her shoulders hung, and I'm on the other side of the fence, a ten foot mesh fence, holding on to my brother's hand and my brother saying to me, 'Don't cry.' I'll never forget that picture. It's forever ingrained in my heart. To see your mom look defeated, like she lost something (Sam).

Chris describes the fence, the school's walls, and the desperate feeling of being trapped and trying to escape:

Through that, inside those four walls, not only was just there walls, but there was barbed wire. I remember that! They even put barbed wire around – around the outside so you couldn't go very far. I seen that barbed wire and I got some of it in my arms trying to get out of there, trying to fight for survival (Chris).

The fence and barbed wire represented the tearing apart of families and constantly reminded those inside the fence that they could not rejoin their families on the outside, and vice versa.

The act of crossing the school's boundary carried meaning for parents and children. The act of bringing a child inside the school and leaving them created feelings of abandonment amongst children (Fontaine 2010). Each time parents came in and out of the boundary it re-instantiated feelings of abandonment in the child (Fontaine 2010). Theodore Fontaine describes his thought process as a child, showing how the school's tactic successfully created rifts between parent and child: "We watched parents and family leaving the school on that first day and blamed them for leaving us. We blamed ourselves for being left behind, abandoned because we weren't wanted or had been bad. We blamed ourselves for still being hungry, isolated and alone" (Fontaine 2010: 132). Mark remembers feeling hurt and confused: "I didn't know why – what was happening. I couldn't figure it out. But to me, I felt like I was being abandoned by my dad. And I know my mother had nothing to say – she couldn't say nothing. She couldn't- she had no say in these decisions that my dad made". Shirley recalls being left at the school as a rejection from her place in the universe: "... the rejection – the rejection of being who you are. The rejection as a child. The rejection of being sent to school."

The first day of being left at the school stuck with a number of Survivors. The experience was remembered as painful and confusing. Leo Morrissette says, "My granny left me there and I ran after her crying because I didn't want to stay there. I felt that bitterness already in there, just walking in that school" (Fontaine 2012b: 58). For some, that would be the last time they would ever see their parents. One Survivor explains, "You see, I don't remember anything after my mom left me at those steps. I don't remember if she said goodbye or if I said goodbye, but that was the last time I'd seen my mom" (Brian). Sometimes parents would visit children, re-enacting

the process of abandoning their children at the school when they returned once again to their homes. Another effect of the border manifested when children returned home for visits. They sometimes felt uneasy about crossing the border back into their community. Theodore Fontaine explains,

For the first two or three years I distrusted Mom and Dad when I got home, and would start away from them and my siblings, sometimes by myself, sometimes with my cousins... By the end of the first two or three days, I'd have forgotten my mistrust and would greet Mom and Dad enthusiastically when they returned from work. Reflecting on these initial reactions, I see that I had learned to become aloof in my mistrust. This would be one of the typical behaviours that I and other survivors bestowed on people we love (Fontaine 2010: 130).

Some siblings were allowed to stay home, while others were forced to attend the school. This happened to Mark, who explains:

And I had – like I said, I was born into a family of 15, 9 boys, 6 girls. And three-two of my other brothers came into the seminary when I was there. But they took them home because they got very lonely for my mom and dad and of course they came and got them right away and I was forced to stay behind. And that even hurt more, to know that they loved my other two brothers more than me, I thought at the time.

Not only was the parent/child relationship fractured, but the relations between siblings as well.

Repeated acts of abandonment were coupled with debasement, penalization, and abuse from school staff when children expressed positive sentiments for their families. Theodore Fontaine remembers staff constantly telling him his family was not capable of caring for him – a rhetoric touted throughout the entire residential school system in Canada (2010). He explains, “They pounded into our little minds that our families couldn’t look after us as well as the school could. This was the biggest hoax and tragedy bestowed on Indian people and their children in Canada by residential schools” (Fontaine 2010: 133). Charles Courchene describes constant abuse from the nuns. Courchene told his father, who, in turn, yelled at the nuns. The nuns, in return, further abused Courchene for having told his father about his experiences within the

school. This abusive cycle eventually stopped Courchene telling his parents about the abuse, denying himself the natural protection from parents (Fontaine 2012b: 13).

The first-day abandonment process was also used to sever ties between children from the same family attending the school. Sometimes children's siblings and cousins were students at the same time. When parents brought their children into the school, their siblings or cousins were forced to restrain the new student. Theodore Fontaine remembers his cousins restraining him as his parents left him there the first day (Fontaine 2010). Fontaine's cousins were forced to carry him away from his parents (Fontaine 2010). He describes:

I twisted and turned, kicked and yelled, and even tried to bite as I was practically dragged down the hall. Not once was there any intervention by the priest, who had quickly disappeared into his office. The significance of that hit me years later when I realized that the arrival and prominence of my cousins in this time of discomfort and terror was intended to shift the pain, hurt and blame toward them and, more particularly, Mom and Dad (Fontaine 2010: 33).

Fontaine explains that blame was shifted to his family members rather than school staff. This was a cunning manipulation by the priests:

In some cases, the actual caring and benevolence by Church people was genuine. It was nevertheless very effective in manipulating the minds of young First Nations children. I remember the emotions and desperation of that first day of school incarceration in my first direct contact with the Church and priests. I still experience overwhelming feelings of horror, anger, grief and abandonment when I think of that day. Father R. allowed me to see my parents walk out the door and down the sidewalk and recruited my cousins to restrain me. Clem and Marcel used force to hold me. I blamed them then, and Mom and Dad... The blame had been shifted from the priest and the Church to my family members (Fontaine 2010: 133).

It took years for Fontaine to work past the guilt and pain he felt towards his family (2010).

Sometimes community members were employed as staff in the school. At the end of each day, these staff members would go home. Similar to having parents visit weekly, the repeated action of relatives going home while children were forced to stay strained relationships. Fontaine

explains the process: “I’d slowly become indifferent to them. Eventually they were neither band members nor relatives. They were just workers at the school. Even children with mothers or fathers working at the school sometimes came to see them as ‘just workers’ or servants” (2010: 129). Fontaine explains how other students felt about their parents and family members working there, saying that “some lost all understanding that the far-off woman in the kitchen was their mother,” while others experienced “shame that one or both parents worked there” (2010: 129). In a few cases, students saw their family members as part of the school “regime” (Fontaine 2010: 129), categorizing them as enemies rather than loved ones. On the other hand, these staff members sometimes served as small comforts to the students. If they were not their immediate family, they could serve as “a connection to home and the reserve, and as friends of your family” (Fontaine 2010: 129). These relational moments disrupted the school’s alienating processes.

This severing of ties between relatives within the school was resisted by students and community staff. For example, Fontaine reports developing a strong bond with his two cousins who restrained him on his first day. They bonded through their common experience and Fontaine realized they genuinely cared for him (2010). Connections grew where they were meant to be broken. Fontaine explains: “Over the years, I came to appreciate my cousin’s genuine caring and concern. I remembered that they stayed with me through supper and the early evening. This gave rise to a brotherly love that remained with me until their deaths” (Fontaine 2010: 133). Another contradiction came from positive experiences with the school bread-maker. Her children were enrolled in the school. Fontaine explains that it must have been a horrible experience for them to see their mother go home every day and not be able to show them affection at the school. But, other students remember the bread-maker fondly (Fontaine 2010). She baked extra loaves and turned a blind eye when children “snuck into her domain to steal bread” (Fontaine 2010: 125).

She was “one of a few of our loved ones who worked at the school... restricted from direct contact with us, these caring few acknowledged us from a distance, without fanfare, but such instances brightened our days and we craved even a glimpse of them” (Fontaine 2010: 128). It was these small moments that allowed communal relations to continue and develop.

The Consequences of the Spatial Border on Familial Relations

An outcome of these place-based interactions was a loss of familial ties and fracturing of intergenerational social networks. Theodore Fontaine explains his mother’s experience: “Mom had lost her closeness with her father’s side of the family; going to school when she was only four or five had completely alienated her from knowledge of them. I think the church and school destroyed almost completely her memory of her Indian heritage and family” (Fontaine 2010: 68). Alexander Twoheart describes a similar situation: “After 12 years in that boarding school, I came out and never really knew my mom and my dad. That’s why I was in the bush all the time; why I joined the army. I didn’t know my parents. I went in when I was small 6 years. By the time I was 18 I didn’t know my family” (Fontaine 2012b: 66). Chris describes how the school disrupted his parents’ wishes for raising him:

When that part was over, I didn’t know I was carrying the effects of that residential school. I didn’t know that. Nobody said anything because these people, they don’t prepare you for life. You were used- we were used to change to what they wanted. No what- what we wanted. Which meant to me, no matter what my mother wanted for me, no matter what my dad wanted for me, it did not count. It did not count (Chris).

Anishinaabe family systems were interrupted, removing the comfort and strength that comes with them.

The process of severing ties was not consistent, however, because students struggled to maintain relations with their families. Children kept relationships alive by recalling fond

memories of their families. Theodore Fontaine and Sam both thought of their mothers, despite the school's attempts to shame these behaviours. Theodore Fontaine recalls:

Mom was a good storyteller, and her stories of the family life and values hastened the rising sun. I know Dad also enjoyed those moments. I'd catch him hovering close by to hear parts of Mom's stories. He'd call her the *att soo kay quay* (storyteller woman). Through this early-morning togetherness I began to know her family, not fully realizing that it was mine, too. If only I'd known then that it would be impossible to relive these moments after I'd gone to school. Perhaps I'd have paid more attention if I had understood that these history lessons were unique and that only my mom could relate them. I wish I'd retained more of what she told me. I didn't learn most of this family history because of being isolated at residential school (Fontaine 2010: 40).

Sam remembers his mom tucking him into bed and that she was a beautiful person. She would play with him and he recalled her love for him.

A frequent way that students breached the school's borders and undermined its power was by running away. The physical act of crossing the border was an act of defiance and resistance. Edward Charles Bruyere explains, "We ran away lots, you know? We couldn't get used to the staff there. They were too abusive, you know? That's why we ran away lots... my cousin, Larry and me. He started school a year after me, Larry and me got to be close looking after each others [sic] backs in there" (Fontaine 2012b: 1). George Bruyere ran away 3 or 4 times (Fontaine 2012b: 8). Fontaine ran away the first time when the priest wouldn't let him go to the bathroom during class and he defecated in his pants. He snuck out at the end of class and ran home to his parents (2010: 48). The second time he ran away was after being hit by the boys' supervisor, Brother B. (Fontaine 2010: 101). The children's desire to be home often overpowered their fear for the school and its border.

Architectural Binaries: Severing Relations between Genders

As place, the bifurcated architecture inside the school existed as a semiotic mediator. It inscribed gendered binaries onto the student population and maintained divisions between boys and girls (de Leeuw 2007: 351). Actants influenced by the gendered division are Survivors, siblings, friends, dormitories, nuns, and priests. Inside FAIRS were two dormitories separated by a massive staircase. Grant remembers, “I never forget those stairs. There was a full body sized window separating the small boys and the girls.” Classrooms and the lunchroom were split into two sides. These physical constructs existed as a place that was “gendered and segregated, function[ing] within residential school to separate families and erode familial ties, furthering the colonial goals of assimilating and transforming Aboriginal peoples” (de Leeuw 2007: 351). Separation according to gender contributed to “familial breakdown” (de Leeuw 2007: 350) by keeping relatives apart, undermining Anishinaabe-relevant gender relations, and further “entrenching Euro-colonial gender ideals” (de Leeuw 2007: 350). The architecture segregated brothers and sisters, cousins, friends, and loved ones. Nuns kept siblings apart by abusing and mocking children (Edward Charles Buyere in Fontaine 2012b: 2). Nuns and priests used shaming and fear tactics to reinstate the meaning inscribed upon the architecture within the school. These aggressive practices intimidated students and made them self-conscious and withdrawn (Adams 1989).

Family cohesion is a source of strength and destroying relationships undermined this source of power. Grant remembers entering the school on his first day fearless, saying “I don’t know why I was fearless, maybe it was the fact that I was going to be there with my older siblings.” But the separation of genders removed protection from older siblings. Atomizing and alienating a population reflected a system of “divide and rule,” which has been used by

governments and churches throughout colonial history. Colonizers saw themselves as “grand organizers,” bringing “civilized order to primitive chaos” (Adams 1999: 3). Howard Adams, a Metis Marxist scholar from Saskatchewan, explains that “divide and rule” is a basic method of oppressive action that is as old as imperialism itself. Colonizers maintain Indigenous subordination and domination by dividing populations (Adams 1989). The oppressor cannot permit the unification of Indigenous Peoples because it would create a threat to the status-quo. Accordingly, colonizers prevent any method and action by which the oppressed could be awakened to the need for unity. Concepts such as unity, organizations, and struggle are immediately labeled dangerous because they are necessary for action toward liberation (Adams 1989). It is advantageous for colonizers to weaken the oppressed by isolating them through the creation and deepening of rifts among them (Adams 1989). The gender division of Sagkeeng children in the residential school can be understood this way – as an oppressive tool to alienate and atomize Anishinaabe Children in an attempt to destroy the strength that comes from unity.

Several Survivors remember the physical separation of genders and the manipulation and abuse used to promote shame and fear about cross-gender relationships. As noted in the previous chapter, both Kevin and George Bruyere (Fontaine 2012b) experienced sibling separation and were abused for their efforts to overcome this separation. Grant further outlines the abuses around gender separation:

Being one of the youngest and smallest of the boys, we were seated near the entrance. In the centre of the cafeteria, our backs to the youngest girls, sometimes we would get a strap if we boys were caught talking to the girls behind us. And I got my share of straps right in front of all to see. But I didn't know better (Grant).

He continues to describe the forced gendered division and the use of religion to inflict shame:

The biggest boys would be seated the furthest to the back on the boys' side, while the biggest girls would be seated to the furthest back on the furthest girls' side. I guess maybe this was structured this way to ensure less contact between the older

girls and boys. To the school's nuns, it was a sin. The oldest boys, such as my brother Dave, and the older girls would already be finished having their breakfast as they had chores to do. They also had their own dorm room and lounging area as well, as we did (Grant).

George Bruyere describes sneaking waves at his sister: "As far as seeing my sister there I didn't see her much except for glimpses at mealtime. I used to wave at her and the nun would come right away and ask me what I was waving at and that's the only contact I had with her" (George Bruyere in Fontaine 2012b: 4). An especially violent example of the physical and emotional abuse children experienced is described by Charles Courchene. He explains how a girl was stripped in the boys' area and whipped, after which "she lay crying for a while then she ran back to the girls' area" (Fontaine 2012b: 14). Priests and nuns went to extremes to keep boys and girls separate. Even so, Survivors managed to maintain connections with the opposite gender.

Boys and girls found ways to connect within the school. Youth even found ways to foster cross-gender romances, despite the school's best efforts to prevent this. Chief Albert Fontaine remembers, "Some of the guys that got married they got their wives from the residential school... where they met. There were quite a few who found wives through the boarding school" (Fontaine 2012b: 33). Theodore Fontaine also remembers students dating: "Boys had girlfriends, girls had boyfriends, even at residential school, but they had very little opportunity to talk and interact, let alone hold hands" (2010: 44). Others recall sneaking waves at their siblings at school or during chapel (George Bruyere Fontaine 2012b; Fontaine 2010). Boys and girls found ways to maintain bonds within the school.

This chapter considered how spaces and places played roles in the colonizing process in and around the school. It demonstrates the ways that children negotiated space and place within FAIRS. Broadly, securing land for resource extraction and settlement was the driving force behind colonization. Residential schools were used to assimilate Anishinaabe children by forcing

them to relate to each other and their families through. Anishinaabe Children's relationality amongst themselves and with their family were controlled by the spatiality of the school and by the meanings inscribed upon their bodies. The structured daily routines and rituals instilled European values of individualism, rigidity, serial spatiality, structure, white supremacy, and in this particular school, and Catholicism. The border around the school created a physical and ideological divide. The fence and barbed wire prevented families from connecting physically, while constantly reminding children of this rift. The physical layout inside the building reflects European values, including its serial spatial layout and its bifurcated design that promoted binary separations of Anishinaabe boys and girls.

Nuns and priests attempt to force children's interactions within the school in colonizing ways by instilling colonial representations of space meant to alienate and subjugate them, while children found ways to manipulate representational in their favour and maintained relationships with each other and with their community. The next chapter considers the ways that FAIRS disrupted the relations between children and non-human actants within their community, namely with the natural environment, plant-life, and food.

Chapter 6: Analyzing Relationality with the Natural Environment, Livelihoods, and Food in FAIRS

A Micro-Level Analysis of Nature, Livelihoods, and Food

This chapter focuses on FAIRS attempts to disrupt Anishinaabe Children's relations to their community through the natural environment, livelihoods, and food. I look at micro-level interactions between plants, vegetables, animals, children, school staff, the Department of Indian Affairs inspectors, and children's families. These interactions are mediated by various semiotic influences in the contexts of livelihood and food. Many Indigenous communities mid-century in the prairies lived off a land-based economy. Anderson explains how many groups

sustained themselves through hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering plants foods and medicines, and, in many cases, managing gardens or small farms. As well, their communities engaged in the cash economy through casual and seasonal work, which, depending on their location, included trapping, commercial fishing, logging, working as guides, or working as farm hands (2011: 31).

Land-based living was a significant part of many Indigenous cultures and livelihoods between the 1940's and 1960's. This was true in Sagkeeng, although the community did incorporate colonial and capitalist influences. Relationships to nature and land in the context of food and livelihoods were not the same as they were during the pre-contact era. By the 1940's, industrial capitalism developed in the territory in the form of the Pine Falls Paper Mill. Also, intergenerational effects of FAIRS interrupted transmission of knowledge about land-based living, replacing it with capitalist lifestyles. In the 1940's to 1960's, Survivors describe their families living off both foraging and wage labour (Fontaine 2010; Fontaine 2012b).

This chapter is split into five sections. First, I discuss my understanding of Sagkeeng livelihoods between 1940 and 1970. I consider how Marxism and Homi K. Bhabha's notion of hybridity help understand colonialism's effects on traditional, land-based livelihoods. I also argue that Sagkeeng families' culturally-relevant ties to nature and the environment were

maintained despite colonial economic encroachment. Second, I look at the importance of children participating in Anishnaabe-based territorial practices to family cohesion. Removing children from their families and culturally-relevant work severed their connection to their families. Third, I discuss how FAIRS assimilated Anishinaabe Children into menial work in white society. Fourth, I consider how FAIRS shifted children's understanding of the natural environment from a land-based to agricultural context. Finally, I look at the role of food in FAIRS' assimilative process and what this meant for children's health, well-being, and cultural understanding of plant life, animals, and natural environment.

Colonialism, Marxism, and Hybridity: Considering European and Anishinaabe Relationships to the Natural Environment

Anishinaabe and European cultures relate with the natural environment in different ways. Western culture maintains a binary view on nature and human society (Plumwood 2010). European cultures in North America tend to "Other" the environment. Following human exceptionalist assumptions, human beings are removed from the equation and assumed to be *the* model living organism in the universe (Goldman and Schurman 2000). In comparison, other living organisms are understood to be deviations from this perfection and are accorded less legitimacy and value. Europeans tend to understand the world through a nature and animal/human dualism (Plumwood 2010). Indigenous understandings, in contrast, often consider these phenomena in a relational and holistic way (Wheeler in Anderson 2011). Eurocentric human exceptionalist understandings of nature are consistent with capitalist ideals that see nature as an extractable resource for humans to use.

Dickens explains that, from a Marxist perspective, nature within a capitalist economy is merely a resource to be exploited (Dickens 2002). Marx believed that capitalism was inherently destructive and exploitive for workers. The owners of labour, the bourgeoisie, equate workers with exchange value, creating “naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation” (Marx & Engels 1976: 487). Marx also explains that, “Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole” (Marx 1986: 660). According to Marx, the first contradiction within capitalism is the system undermines labourers’ ability to work and survive by deskilling them, decreasing wages, having poor working conditions, and alienating the nature of the work itself. Dickens extends this argument, explaining that capitalism is considered an inherently destructive system for the environment as well (2002). Environmental problems are labour problems in a capitalist society. Capitalism destroys the environment, threatening the resources needed for economic expansion and the system’s general function (Dickens 2002).

Capitalist perspectives on the environment sit in sharp contrast to Anishinaabe ones. Nature is a central component of group life amongst many Indigenous cultures. Plants and animals exist within the Anishinaabe social hierarchy. Therefore, plants and animals are necessary actants in the reproduction of Anishinaabe cultures (Hubbard 2009). Destroying nature simultaneously destroys Anishinaabe societies (da Silva 2010) because “land and environment are not simply means of sustaining group life, but [...] key components of group life” (Woolford 2009: 89). Marcel Courchene reflects on his grandmother’s teachings about industrial capitalism’s destruction of wildlife:

But those [wild animals] are disappearing. Because it’s dying, poisoned, polluted, it’s pollution that kills. Take these power lines, they used to have people brushing but now, what do they use, chemicals. That chemical kills trees also kills the

ground. Wildlife and what they eat. Those little things want to come up but there is too much chemicals. It's pollution that kills" (Courchene in Speaking: 26).

He also explains the disparity between his grandmother's teachings about Anishinaabe relationality with nature in comparison to capitalist and colonial ones:

I guess there is no way to keep nature out, it's going to creep in somewhere. No matter what you do. See this is what one the things my grandmother told me about nature you know, you can't go against it. It's one of her teachings, you'll always lose, you have to go with it. Nature is fighting back because it is unbalanced. It's industry, well they call it progress – I don't think so. You don't have to kill everything around you to achieve your goal, eh. Well, what they white man says, I guess its progress. But all they're doing is killing nature and ourselves their killing our own creator (Fontaine 2012b: 30).

Despite colonial and capitalist encroachment, there is still "an unmistakable reverence for life that defined many of their cultural norms and practices" amongst Anishinaabe communities (Anderson 2011: 39). Relationships are maintained with the environment, animals, and spirits through ceremonies, stories, and daily practices (Anderson 2011). In Sagkeeng, community members continue to live in accordance with pre-contact ways, while also participating in the capitalist economy.

In the 1940's to 1960's, Sagkeeng maintained traditional ways-of-life despite colonial advances. Sagkeeng had experienced colonial economic encroachment since the 1700's through missions and since the 1800's through the fur trade (Fontaine 2012b). Schools, operated initially as day schools before conversion into residential schools, have existed in the community since 1877 (Fontaine 2012b). Many community members changed and adapted to capitalist work, while maintaining Anishinaabe beliefs and practices. This process is described by post-colonial scholar Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity (1985).

According to Bhabha, hybridity is the negotiated identities and practices that emerge amongst colonized populations in order to survive and thrive in their colonial reality (1985). He

argues that when a colonized group adopts aspects of the colonizer's lifestyle, this does not necessarily mean the group is succumbing to the oppressor. He suggests moving past the binary of colonizer/colonized to understand the process as more complex (Bhabha 1985). Sometimes colonized groups adopt dominant practices that are beneficial for them, and even undermine the colonizer's power over them. Bhabha explains this using the concept of mimesis – the process of mimicry (1985). Colonized populations sometimes mirror dominant practices in ways not exactly the same as the original. Instead, it is a hybrid form of the practice, manipulated to suit the colonized group. They mimic some aspects to appear submissive, while maintaining their cultural integrity. The example Bhabha gives is of a group of Indigenous Peoples in New Delhi. Colonizers forced Christianity upon them. The Indigenous group adopted the bible because they saw some values in its teachings, but steadfastly refused to eat beef – a cultural sacrilege. After contact, the oppressed group looked for something relatable and useful. They pick and choose what customs to adopt and reject. They undermine colonial power by taking some of their practices and making them their own (Bhabha 1985).

Bhabha describes the colonized group as ambivalent to the practices of the colonizer – the experience simultaneous and contradictory feelings of both attraction and repulsion. This process is not necessarily meant to be political (often it is a means of survival). It can nevertheless be seen as a form of resistance because to oppose power is to legitimize it (Bhabha 1985). Therefore, if the colonized group simply goes on living as if the power does not exist, then it does not. Bhabha explains:

Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the 'content' of an other culture, as a difference once perceived. It is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power – hierarchy, normalization, marginalization, and so forth" (1985: 153).

As society changes, the colonized population appears to adopt colonized lifestyles on the surface, while selectively participating in cultural practices that do not undermine their own cultural existence.

These processes of hybridity, mimesis, and ambivalence were reflected in livelihoods of Sagkeeng community members between the 1940's to 1960's. Their livelihoods and ways of life developed over time as a result of families adopting certain practices of the colonizers that allowed them to participate in, and benefit from, capitalist society. At the same time, their traditional relations with nature were also maintained. The often hybrid nature of Sagkeeng home life still provided a nurturing environment based on traditional cultural understandings of nature.

The paper industry that employed some of the men from the community exemplifies the hybrid livelihoods in Sagkeeng. The Abitibi Pulp and Paper Mill in Pine Falls operated from 1920 to 2012. Some community members from Sagkeeng, including Theodore Fontaine's father, worked for the corporation out of necessity. The family needed money to survive within an increasingly capitalist-orientated lifestyle imposed through colonialism. The job provided employment in line with Anishinaabe worldviews. It provided opportunities for families to work together in the bush. Fontaine's family incorporated a mix of settler and Anishinaabe economic practices. His father worked for the corporation and also hunted and fished. Fontaine's uncle started a pulp cutting business that his father helped get off the ground:

Mom told me that Dad sometimes adjusted his activities in order to be with and work with J.B. [dad's brother]. In the 1940s, when J.B. established a pulp-cutting operation to employ our own people and to sell pulpwood to the mill, Dad temporarily left his employment to work at the bush camp and help J.B. make the operation successful (Fontaine 2010: 86).

This business brought Ted's family together.

The whole family would spend weeks living in pulp-cutting tents, where children picked blueberries, gathered rice, and sampled their mother's cooking while men gathered pulpwood to sell to the mill (Fontaine 2010). Wives ran the camp; they "did the hiring and firing and ensured that the wonderful mess hall where you could have a snack or meal any time, the family quarters and the single bunkhouses all ran smoothly" (Fontaine 2010: 88). Other Anishinaabe families interacted with settlers for various business purposes, while continuing to live off the land in whatever ways they could (Courchene in Fontaine 2012b; Fontaine 2010; Fontaine 2012a; Chief Albert Fontaine in Fontaine 2012b).

John C. Courchene describes working for the mill as a livelihood consistent with his worldviews on living off the land. He was in FAIRS briefly in the 1920's, but was pulled out by relatives to work in the bush. He was considered illiterate by school staff, who assumed English was the only legitimate language. He could speak his own language and was "not illiterate in the ways of the bush" (Fontaine 2012: 8). He worked at Abitibi Pulp and Paper Company for 30 years – work that he considered in line with Anishinaabe ways of life. The company also instilled "a lifetime commitment to hard work," which Craig Charbonneau Fontaine suggests is culturally valuable (2012: 7). The community resisted exploitive practices by the corporation. In 1928, community members refused to sell Sagkeeng land to the paper company (Fontaine in Fontaine 2012b: 75). They protected their land. Participating in the capitalist economy did not render cultural-based living obsolete for many families before entering residential school between 1940 and 1970. Once in FAIRS, students were taught that wilderness was "uncivilized." They were forced to relate with nature in a Eurocentric way.

Anishinaabe Family Cohesion within a Land-based Economic Framework

FAIRS worked to remove children from traditional family systems of living off the land. Anishinaabe Children received cultural meaning from and understood their place in their community through their roles within their family's livelihoods. FAIRS removed understanding of these roles, which was an alienating practice. The school attempted to destroy children's culturally-relevant connections to nature. Actants in this section involve children, their families, life stages, social functions, agriculture, wildlife, and labour. The semiotic influences of these actants are culturally-based views of nature within an economic context.

Just as any society, employment is an important part of group identity and belonging. Meaning comes from the job they fulfill in their particular social group. Historically, Johnston explains, social groups in Anishinaabe cultures were organized into a totem of five basic needs of individuals and societies: "leadership, protection, sustenance, learning, and physical well-being" (1976: 59). The totem demonstrates the importance of work roles within Anishinaabe communities. These needs are fulfilled by social groups organized as "government, defense, provision of necessities, education, and medical practice" (Johnston 1976: 59). Each group trains individuals born into the group to specialize in these jobs (Johnston 1976). The more resourceful and able individuals were, the more useful they were for the community and the more "whole" they were (Johnston 1976: 70). Communities prepared individuals to fulfill their duties. This benefited the community and individual. Johnston stresses that, "youth are required to acquire skills such as hunting and fishing, sewing, and cooking" (Johnston in Anderson 2011: 7). Finding food in nature was an important duty. Johnston explains about hunting, fishing, and providing food and sustenance in general: "no men more honoured than the skilled hunter who kept family and community amply supplied with food and materials for clothing and shelter"

(Johnston 1976: 66). Overall, “customs and ceremonies that were largely about encouraging children to be more productive community members and preparing them to contribute to the survival of their people” was central for maintaining a cohesive and healthy community (Anderson 2011: 45).

By the 1940’s to 1960’s, Anishinaabe communities shifted and adapted their functioning in ways that might not neatly fit into the “totem” of social functions. However, fulfilling one’s role of supporting and providing for the community still created meaning and unity amongst families (Fontaine 2010). As Anderson points out, “the twentieth century also saw new forms of political organization and resistance ... Many families and clans held together and supported each other. Women maintained some of their authorities ... Spiritual and cultural practices that had to go underground were preserved, and Indigenous men and women did what they could to maintain their land-based economies” (Anderson 2011: 31).

In Sagkeeng, while life may not have neatly fit into the totem, many describe their work roles giving them meaning and purpose within their communities. Theodore Fontaine remembers his role of gathering food for his family in his youth. He recalls, “Most mornings my routine included a foray with my slingshot into the bush by the river to check my snares. I’d gather rabbits and any ptarmigan that had been caught or wandered into the path of my slingshot. I felt important providing a delicious meal for my family” (Fontaine 2010: 138). Fontaine also gathered wood and collected water for his family. This gave him a sense of purpose within the family. He explains about wood chopping:

Mom and Dad instilled in me a work ethic that stayed with me all my life. As a young boy, before I entered residential school, I cut and chopped wood and brought it inside and stacked it. I had to ensure that the pile would last for two or three days. I Know I would have done this prior to leaving for residential school because it was fall and winter responsibility, from before the snow in fall to its

melting in late spring. I also helped my grandparents and other relatives get ready for Christmas by stocking their woodpiles (Fontaine 2010: 137).

Making sure his family was always supplied with water was another important task of his:

Every day, sometimes twice, sometimes three or more times, I went to the river with two five-gallon aluminum pails and fetched drinking, washing and cleaning water. In the winter, my tools included an axe, an iron chipping pole and a piece of rope that was attached to an older, banged-up pail. I used this pail to clean out the freshly opened waterhole and then draw water from the hole and fill the other pails. We often joked and laughed in the family about the length of my arms. For years I thought my arms were longer than other people's because of all the heavy pails of water I'd carried from the river, and I still attribute my muscular legs to all that water-carrying (Fontaine 2010: 137-138).

Hauling water from nearby lakes and streams was common amongst many prairie reserve communities because running water was scarce until around the 1970's (Anderson 2011). Once in school and no longer being able to work with his family, Fontaine "missed the rewards for doing the work (bannock and sweetened tea, mostly, and sometimes cookies and pie) and the closeness with [his] family and relatives" (Fontaine 2010: 138). Once in school, he recalls becoming "an outsider and a non-contributor to family life." He explains, "I could never again on a daily, full-time basis help maintain or contribute to my own family, or help relatives or elders" (Fontaine 2010: 139).

Fontaine's family, extended family, and other Sagkeeng families went blueberry picking each year. They rented vehicles, took boats, or travelled via the old Canadian National Railway. Families "set up campsites like little villages in the blueberry area. Most years they were at a place called Belair" (Fontaine 2010: 76). Everyone participated and it was educational for children. Blueberry picking was celebratory, with music and dancing during the nights (Fontaine 2010: 77). Foraging, ceremony, celebration, and family were interconnected through the processes of working in the bush. Family and community cohesion was maintained. The loss of these cultural and economic activities through FAIRS was harmful for children. They were

unable to fulfill their familial and communal roles. This also created hardships on the broader community because other members had to take over children's jobs.

Numerous Survivors from Sagkeeng remember participating in land-based economic activities with their families and community. George Bruyere recalls trapping, berry picking, and lifting fishnets with his father (Fontaine 2012b). Marcel Courchene recalls his connection to fish and how importance these connections were to nature and surviving:

I remember we used to go out and you could actually hear sun fish down below. They make a certain noise and I would ask my dad, 'What is that'? It's fish, sunfish... They make some kind of a noise where you could actually pick up the sound without help of instruments. There was that many. You learn these things and would have to survive by that... You'd have to know their habit, at certain times you would know when to do things by nature (Fontaine 2012b: 26).

He also describes the interconnectedness between land, ceremony, clans, and subsistence through trade:

Sacred land is where you have certain ceremonies, honor the earth. The earth is everything to people then they would gather and have ceremonies. Like the clans, although I don't know much about clans, I think that's where they came together and meet at sacred ground. At other places they met where they traded with each other. Like, ah, in the city where the Assiniboine meets the Red River. The forks where people would come from the North, South, West, and all gather there and trade. ... This is where the rivers met and traded with whatever they had. Clothing, ideas, and stuff like that (Courchene Fontaine 2012b: 29).

George Courchene remembers his family's relationship with moose through hunting, and how that system ensured they would always have meat and never go hungry:

They used to hunt only a certain times of the year they didn't hunt deer or moose on their ruts. They used to share their meat too, when they killed a bull moose they cut off the bell and hung it, they would say that if they did those things they would always have meat because the moose would come back. Today when you do those things they laugh at you, today the people abuse animals they over kill and show no respect (Fontaine 2012b: 21).

Despite colonial encroachment up until and after the 1940's, Sagkeeng families hunted, fished, and lived off the land. FAIRS worked to remove these remaining ties to Anishinaabe ways of life that created important bonds between children and their families.

FAIRS: Socializing Anishinaabe Children's Relations with Nature into a Capitalist Framework

FAIRS socialized Anishinaabe Children into a capitalist social hierarchy. Capitalism is an economic system that involves goods and services being bought and sold by private individuals or groups, not governments. The economic system is run by businessmen principally for their benefit; workers are exploited for profit (Cox 1948: 177). The cheaper the labour input into production, the higher the profit, or return. Once an initial flow of labour is secured through the colonization of a nation, the basic problem is how to keep reproducing labour at a low cost so that even the undesirable work can be performed efficiently (Bolaria and Li 1988: 28-29). The residential school system served this purpose.

The residential school system worked to socialize Indigenous Children into capitalists. Oliver Cox, a Trinidadian-American Sociologist and Marxist scholar, explains that the defense of capitalism and nationalism requires the population be socialized through the education system under a patriotic European bias (Cox 1948). Howard Adams, a Metis Marxist historian from Saskatchewan, argues the residential schools were bureaucracies that worked to indoctrinate children into "docile and manipulable consumers" (Adams 1998: 159). This transformed individual needs into demands for goods and services (Adams 1989). Church staff worked through the school system to convert Anishinaabe Children into Christianity and socialized them into the proletariat (Adams 1989).

The curriculum taught children the importance of submitting to the established order. Teachings were oriented towards the market economy; children were rarely informed about the realities of poverty, war, corporate power, or state violence (Adams 1999). Schools negated Indigenous histories and cultures. Governments and corporations propagated racist ideas to create artificial distinctions between groups of workers. By perpetuating ideas of racial superiority, white business owners were able to create discontent within the working class, reducing the unity of workers to better control them (Satzewich and Liodakis 2007).

The residential school accustomed Anishinaabe Children to menial types of labour. Children performed menial jobs within an already marginalized agricultural economic field. This ensured their underdevelopment (Bolaria and Li 1988: 92). When asked if they were taught trades, Chief Albert Fontaine explained they learned menial tasks: “The only thing there was through that barn. We used to have to shovel feces twice a day, once in the morning and then again in the evening. They had this big dump supported on a track and pulley and we used to dump it right at the end of the barn polluting the river. From there we fed the pigs. In summer we had to dig bugs, potato bugs” (Fontaine 2012b: 43). Similarly, Theodore Fontaine remembers “scraping and hauling refuse from the big red barn that houses the horses and cattle the school owned” (2010: 141). George Bruyere remembers a lot of grunt work, like wood chopping (Fontaine 2012b). The school staff attempted to inscribe Anishinaabe Peoples’ inferiority through farm work. That way, “the physical sites of residential schools impose[d] themselves on First Nations students, [and] the students were forced, quite literally, to embody and live the colonial apparatus by partaking in its very creation” (de Leeuw 2007: 345). Fontaine also remembers working the fields, storing food in a root cellar on the riverbank, hauling harvests around, and retrieving vegetables from the cellars (2010: 139).

Traditional methods of acquiring food and relating to plants were removed while children were prepared for working class roles. Fontaine explains:

But at school, my tasks were only labour-intensive activities and not intended to improve my skills or knowledge. Jobs normally done by school employees, like piling wood in the furnace room for hours at a time in the winter and on cold days, ensuring that the furnaces were full of fresh wood, and sweeping and washing dormitories, playrooms and washrooms, were all part of our 'education' at school" (Fontaine 2010: 139).

George Buyere explains how the skills learned at home were more useful to his livelihood than anything learned at school:

The education wasn't much. I don't feel that I got an education in there ... In that school we went through more abuse than learning. I don't believe I got an education and lucky for me I got taught by my peers, here, you know? How to do this and that and that's why I know carpentry today. I learned through my own people (Buyere in Fontaine 2012b: 2, 3).

Other Survivors also reflect on how their lack of proper education prevented them from succeeding in the white world. Chief Albert Fontaine explains, "To me there was no grade. I didn't get an education then and today I still got none. I have a hard time to spell... yes. Yes, it used to be hard back then to feed your family" (Fontaine 2012b: 44). Another Survivor says he does not "remember ever being told [he] could make a life living ... as a plumber [or] mechanic" (Kevin). Kevin also explains that the residential school never taught him how to be a critical thinker. It was not until high school (not a residential school) that he realized that education involved thinking critically and asking questions.

Female students were also denied useful education and instead were socialized into domestic work such as sewing, cooking, and child-rearing. Fontaine remembers mending clothing as being girls' work within the school, although boys sometimes did it too because there was so much (2010). de Leeuw points out this is a common theme amongst residential schools. The curriculums enforced the Eurocentric female gender-roles of being the mother and nurturer.

She explains that, “Teaching and enforcing Euro-appropriate domestic skills, including keeping a clean house, cooking scheduled meals and performing as a dedicated wife and mother, were all part of a civilizing mission” (2007: 351). The school did not provide a useful education to boys or girls. Girls were prepared for such jobs as being housekeepers for the white women that lived in their communities. They were denied being raised within their land-based Anishinaabe economy, where women had important decision making roles right alongside with the men (Fontaine 2010).

Coming out of residential school, students did not have land-based living skills to return to their community with. They felt alienated from their families, having lost foraging, language, and other Anishinaabe knowledge and practices. At the same time, students were alienated from white society as well, socialized into the lowest jobs. Being denied a useful education prevented children from moving up the capitalist economic hierarchy. Students left the school feeling alienated from both worlds.

Shifting Anishinaabe Children’s Relationality with Plants from Wildlife Foraging to Agricultural Farming

FAIRS attempted to shift children’s relationship to plant life, traditionally through wildlife, to an Agricultural/farming framework. Colonization is the “seizing and transforming ‘others’ by the very act of conceptualizing, inscribing, and interacting with them on terms not of their choosing; in making them pliant objects and silenced subjects of the colonial scripts and scenarios” (Woolford 2005: 40). Forcing Anishinaabe Children to relate with plant life in Eurocentric ways was coercive assimilation. Colonizers regulate and police land and territory to maintain power over Anishinaabe resources. Forcing children to relate nature in the context of

agriculture was meant to shift their lifestyles and identities to a Eurocentric context. Agriculture was used to tame so-called uncivilized, wild nature (de Leeuw 2007; Woolford 2014). Students were taught the “values of the civilized society in which the child was destined to live” through agricultural farming (Milloy 1999: 34).

In FAIRS, nature was controlled rather than related with on a respectful, equal footing. Anishinaabe perspectives held plant life in high esteem – it not simply something to be tamed. As Johnston points out, according to Anishinaabe perspectives, “you can take the life of plants, but you cannot give them life” (1976: 45). Instead, plants need to be respected and cared for in their natural ecosystems. Farming contradicts this. In this section, an influential semiotic mediator is examined: competing worldviews on plant life. Actants include children, parents, grandparents, plants, food, the farm, wilderness, and school staff.

Several interconnecting dualisms come into play here: civilized/uncivilized, Indigenous/European, tame/wild, superior/savage, and civility or progress/regression (de Leeuw 2007; Woolford 2014). Imposing an agricultural framework connoted certain meanings: by taming the wilderness, Anishinaabe Children were also civilizing their savagery. The school grounds rested on cleared wilderness and stood “in contrast to the ‘uncivilized wilderness’ which surrounded the grounds” (de Leeuw 2007: 345). de Leeuw explains that colonial discourse equates “(Euro-colonial) civility and progress with settled and agriculturally managed lands and savagery and regression (Indigenoussness) with unaltered or undomesticated lands” (de Leeuw 2007: 345). One Survivor remembers constantly being told his ways of life were inferior to whites’:

... even the school curriculum perpetuates the myth that we are pagan, that we are not worthy of an education – we would not do it, and their hidden agenda of the day was not to educate us but assimilate us. I began to understand that later in my

life and how it was done so brutally subtle that we didn't even know the forces that were affecting us during" (Kevin).

One subtle method was to equate Anishinaabe Peoples to wildlife and paganism. Farming symbolized civilizing Anishinaabe Peoples.

Basil Johnston, in an Anishinaabe Creation Story, describes the unique strength and abilities of plant life. Creation stories give "ontological context from which we can interpret other stories, teachings, and experiences" (Simpson 2011: 32). The story Johnston tells explains Anishinaabe reverence toward plants. First the physical world was created, which includes the sun, moon, earth and stars. Secondly, plant world was created. Since the plant world was created before animals and Anishinabeg (humans), plants are able to exist independently, without relying on animals or humans. This gives them unique power. Johnston reminds us that

All four parts are so intertwined that they make up life and one whole existence. With less than four orders, life and being are incomplete and unintelligible. No one portion is self-sufficient or complete, rather each derives its meaning from and fulfills its function and purpose within the context of the whole creation" (Johnston 1976: 21).

Animals and Anishinabeg rely on plants for survival. Johnston explains that each plant "was a composite being, possessing an incorporeal substance, its own unique soul-spirit" (Johnston 1976: 33). Plants need to be respected, rather than controlled and exploited.

Johnston explains that plants, when left to grow in their natural state, "conjoin with other members of its own species and ... other species to form a corporate state" (Johnston 1976: 33). He is describing here ecosystems, such as meadows or lakes. Ecosystems reproduce and maintain themselves; they are living beings with soul-spirits (Johnston 1976). It is important to interact with ecosystems in ways that allow them to naturally reproduce and stay healthy. Johnston explains that if you "destroy or alter or remove a portion of the plant beings, and the mood and tone of that valley will not be what it was before" (1976: 34). While the earth is

“bounteous” and ever-providing (Johnston 1976: 25), agricultural pursuits and industrial capitalism’s inherent destruction of the land can throw the four orders off-balance. These orders ensure the earth’s ability to provide for everyone.

A number of Sagkeeng community members discuss the need to respect plant life in its natural state for a healthy life balance. They maintained ceremonies and belief systems surrounding nature. Marcel Courchene discusses his grandmother’s teachings about the land’s ability to provide for Anishinabeg, as well as the need to ensure that the land is taken care of and left to function in its natural way:

I was taught by my grandmother ‘if you go out everything is out there for you. Son, you have to go get it’, ‘it’s there for you and if you take anything make sure it’s covered right’. ‘If you go out for medicine you cut the root out at a slant’ but I used to say ‘why?’ ‘Because it will absorb whatever it needs better instead of just crunching’ If you crush it, it has to heal first before it starts absorbing it’s (own way)? And if you cover it good the tree won’t die. You need that help again it will be there and if you go there and chop it down and just leave it, it will die. When you need it, it will be there. Nature will always get back at you. She believed it, in nature everything is there for you and she is right and I still believe her, still do. Even those things we lost through pollution, you know a lot of this medication, it’s gone through pollution, it died. Because it’s sensitive, this medication was meant for you and I. If you destroy it you will destroy yourself’ (Marcel Courchene in Fontaine 2012b: 26).

He goes on to explain about the need to maintain the earth in order to continue to be provided for:

My grandmother used to call the earth, mother. She believed in the earth. She used to say, “This is where we came from” “this is where we are going to go when we are finished” We have to have our children so that life can go on. She put everything here for us. But you have to go and look for it. It’s there and it’s out there. Everything is there for you” but you have to go and get it”. She was right... Everything I see comes from the earth. Everything and everyone has a purpose. We all have a purpose. Ours is to have children so life can go on. If we don’t do our thing everything stops (Fontaine 2012b: 28).

By attending the residential school, students were removed from their families who passed on these worldviews about plants and animals.

Marcel Courchene remembers living by their traditional ways, saying “Life, in general, was not really tough as they say it is. We didn’t have welfare and we didn’t need welfare. The wildlife was plentiful and we would go out there in the bush and get yourself a rabbit” (Fontaine 2012b: 25). The land and wildlife provided the community with their needs for subsistence as long as they attained food in respectful ways. The school, by removing these skills and instead forcing students into an agriculture relational framework with plants, removed traditional knowledge regarding finding food in the wild.

FAIRS: Assimilation and Destruction through Food

Food is important for cultural and physical survival. In FAIRS, students were denied access to food in both regards – they were not fed enough, and the food was unhealthy, spoiled, and inconsistent with their cultural understanding. School staff rarely served protein, which is a staple in Anishinaabe diet. The vegetables were not familiar or liked by the students. Children systematically starved within Canadian Residential Schools (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2012; Churchill 2004; Milloy 1999). Fontaine remembers waking up hungry most mornings (2010). Forcing European foods upon Indigenous children was also part assimilative process; the residential school as a total institution invaded every aspect of children’s lives, including sustenance. They were “forbidden to eat ‘traditional’ foods and a poor Euro-colonial diet was imposed ... Food constituted both physical and emotional abuse” (de Leeuw 2007: 348). Actants in the conflict surrounding food in the residential school are children, their families, nuns, priests, Assembly of First Nations food inspectors, and Indian Agents. Semiotic mediators are cultural perspectives on food and nutrition. Food sustains growth and existence (Johnston 1976). The residential school denied children this basic need.

Up until the 1940's, food was reported to be at its worst in the Canadian Residential School System. The Federal Government provided churches running the schools money for students' food. Up until 1946, "the Department [of Indian Affairs] and the churches failed to "ensure, throughout the system, that children were well-fed and adequately clothed, safely housed, cherished, and provided with the education that was the fundamental justification for removing them from their parents and communities" (Milloy 1999: 111). There was never enough money to successfully feed and care for all the children and the system "overwhelmed the Department and the churches" (Milloy 1999: 111).

Church leaders would often save healthy and delicious food for themselves, while feeding the children unhealthy, stale, or even rotten food (Churchill 2004). George Bruyere remembers priests and nuns eating feasts while the students received dregs (Fontaine 2012b: 6).

Fontaine also remembers

Two or three times a week we discovered solidified pieces of bacon and pork grease instead of lard. That happened when the kitchen staff had collected enough discarded cooking grease to feed to all of us. The congealed fat would be a treat of sorts and a welcome break from our usual lard allotment. How often we got it depended on how many bacon-and-egg breakfasts or pork-roast dinners the priests, nuns and brothers had consumed (2010: 126).

Although children did miss home cooking – Fontaine remembers daydreaming of his mother making bannock every morning (2010) – this was not the leading cause of complaints about food in the schools. As the TRC reports:

These are not just childhood memories of children sick for home and their mothers' cooking. Children were malnourished and starving within the schools. Studies carried out by agencies such as the Red Cross in the 1940's confirm the students' recollections. Furthermore, the inadequate quality and amount of food available at the residential schools was an acknowledged problem from the very beginning... The government not only was aware of the problems, it was aware of their continuity (2012: 34).

This was an acknowledged problem that was unattended to for decades.

Eventually the Federal Government made a show of addressing food problems in the schools. In 1957, the government placed Department of Indian Affairs in charge of making sure students received enough healthy food. School staff “still found it difficult and at times impossible to live within the allowances set out” (Milloy 1999: 277). While there were some improvements, such as having “Indian Health Service’s dietitians inspected the schools more regularly than had ever been the case before” (Milloy 1999: 278), children still reported abysmal food conditions. In Sagkeeng, the situation was as bad as or worse than in 1879 to 1946, when living and eating conditions were supposed to have been at their worst throughout the country. As mentioned in the historic overview, when the Department sent out inspectors, students’ portions became bigger and healthier, only to diminish in size and quality after they left (Fontaine 2010; Johnston in TRC: 2012). Across the country, the same problems continued within the schools, even after 1969 (Milloy 1999).

Another issue was different food preferences that Anishinaabe Children had. Milloy explains how “Cultural practices, the ‘peculiarities of taste,’ were certainly not replicated in the schools” (Milloy 1999: 121). For example, meat and fish were staples in the Anishnaabe diet. In residential schools, “there are constant references in the reports by local officials that school dietaries lacked adequate amount of meat or fish ... Unlike some root vegetables or grains, which could be produced in bulk and had a long shelf life, fresh meat and fish were difficult to procure in quantity or to store” (Milloy 1999: 121). The vegetables, while farmed by the school itself, often spoiled in the cellar. Root vegetables farmed there were not what students were used to at home. No real effort was made on the behalf of the Department to take into account local needs and situations (Milloy 1999).

The denial of traditional food was a part of the assimilative program of the school. The school wanted to ingrain “new food habits” – a systemic approach of the school to erase Indigenous cultures and replace it with European ones (Milloy 1999: 275). Milloy explains:

Indian Affairs’ assimilative intention insinuated itself into all aspects of life in the school. Food was no exception. The dining room table was every bit as much of a site of struggle as was the classroom desk. There was order, there was discipline according to non-Aboriginal norms, and there was, for the newcomer, strange Canadian food (1999: 275).

Food choices matched European rather than local Anishinaabe needs and cultural relevancy (Milloy 1999). These “new food habits” also indoctrinated capitalist mentality towards eating: “They were to be not only producers but also consumers, like all other Canadians” (Milloy 1999: 277). “New food habits” were assimilated through routine and repetition (Milloy 1999).

Children were used to a certain type of diet and were reluctant to eat European foods. In FAIRS, the meals were of poor quality and children were not used to the foods. School staff did not take the time to help children adjust to new foods by making them appealing. They took a cheap and easy route of serving cheap and unhealthy food that the children tended to eat because of their high fat content. Theodore Fontaine explains the “food had an overabundance of unhealthy fats, starchy food, carbohydrates, sugar and salt (2010: 125); Lard and grease were staples” (2010: 126). George Buyere remembers the unhealthy spread:

The food wasn’t all that great in there. It was always porridge and some food with fibres in it, you know? The milk was sour and if you barfed it out... Well they would force you to drink it anyway. The cereal was so dry it was hardcore. Sometimes the bread had mold in it and as for lard – we didn’t have very much lard (Fontaine 2012b: 3).

Chief Albert Fontaine remembers eating worse diets than what dogs eat today:

... well you know what kind of breakfast we had, black molasses porridge and a slice of bread. We never saw milk, no way, even though there was all kinds of milk. We never saw butter in that school even though we made all kinds... the dogs eat better now than we did in them days (Fontaine 2012b: 42).

Theodore Fontaine actually remembers eating dog biscuits – this was a norm (2010). Since children just needed to appear to be fed, they were provided with a high fat and cheap protein intake. Fontaine explains, “The Church realized huge savings in its food budgets that way. Expenditures must have been far less than the huge transfer payments received from the federal government for feeding and supporting students in residential schools” (Fontaine 2010: 124). The negative effects of these diets would follow Survivors throughout their lives.

Unsurprising consequences of starving children and feeding them unhealthy food are that children become unhealthy and more vulnerable to sickness (Milloy 1999). Milloy explains “... children who were overworked, overtired and underfed were also more susceptible to disease including tuberculosis. Poor diets, and indeed unfamiliar food ... were yet another factor, that lead to disease spread” (Milloy 1999: 121). Infectious diseases (Health Canada 2004; Macmillan et al. 1996), rise in life threatening illnesses, and shorter life expectancy (Statistics Canada 2004) were experienced by many Survivors from school diets. Fontaine explains, “I’d acquired a taste for a high-fat, low-nutrient diet, which later contributed to my clogged arteries and need for open-heart surgery” (2010: 127). A huge shift in their relation to food was necessary for many Survivors to lead healthy lives and surpass the low life-expectancy of residential school Survivors (Fontaine 2010).

Within the school, students would take a stand against the disgusting food diets. Phil Fontaine often refused to eat. He remembers:

As a result of that I started being called ‘King.’ King was something that wasn’t acceptable in there. If kids didn’t like the food it was thrown on the floor. I was forced to eat off the floor a couple of times and the kids were told to watch the King eat, so the King ate. I felt horrible and humiliated. Eating became a real psychological terror” (Fontaine in Jaine 1995: 32).

Any quality food came from their parents: “For many students, the only memories they have of being well fed are associated with visits from their parents” (TRC 2012: 33). Theodore Fontaine hid fruit from his mother (2010). Children stole bread – another act of resistance in their struggle for survival. Others refused to starve or eat the garbage fed to them. Controlling what went into their bodies was an act of defiance and a shifting of power. Unfortunately, some children lost their taste for traditional cuisine.

FAIRS worked to replace students’ relationality to plants, animals, and food from Anishinaabe ways of knowing to European ones. Land-based living was a significant part of Sagkeeng economy and diet between the 1940’s and 1960’s. While the community did incorporate colonial and capitalist influences, such as working with the Pulp and Paper Mill, they also relied on hunting, fishing, foraging with their families, as well as respecting and relying on the wilderness for their survival. The schools removed children from their community “totems,” that ensured everyone had a meaningful role in their community. Totems also ensured all tasks needed for community survival were fulfilled. Instead, children were socialized into menial and gender-specific roles within capitalist society. They were not given an education that would allow them to succeed in the white economy. Rather than producing and consuming food with their families according to Anishinaabe land-based economic practices, children were raised within an agricultural economic framework. They were deskilled from living off the land to keep them from surviving off the bounty that wilderness provided outside of the school. Severing children’s relations with wildlife alienated children from their families. Families could not live according to Anishinaabe ways of life from wilderness in their traditional territory. Instead, they became reliant on capitalist commodities. Anishinaabe children were force fed food inconsistent with protein-based Anishinaabe diets and often were malnourished and starved. FAIRS’ attempts

to shift Anishinaabe Children's relationality to the natural environment worked to removed children from their Anishinaabe ways of life and assimilate them into European ones.

Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusion

This thesis unpacked an instance of colonial genocide within FAIRS. I considered the micro-level relations within the school in the contexts of language, space/place, food, and the natural environment. Using Actor Network Theory, and drawing on local narratives, I traced relations of the school staff, Anishinaabe children, their families, and the community more broadly to demonstrate the ways the school worked to disrupt the community and how children and families negotiated and undermined these attempts. The school used both aggressive and subtle tactics to remove children's connections to each other, their families and their culture.

One of the most devastating practices was forcibly removing the Anishinaabe language from children. Language connects individuals to their history and worldviews. Taking Anishinaabe language away isolated children and, throughout generations, fractured families. The school imposed English teachings while simultaneously removing Anishinaabe ones. The school denied children of learning Anishinaabe knowledge, beliefs, and teachings through oral history and story-telling. In the face of nuns' and priests' shaming and abuse, however, children found ways to communicate and connect. Anishinaabe language survived through the moments children seized to sneak conversations with their relatives and friends. As well, language was preserved in the minds of Survivors who found solace by reverting to memories of their home life.

Children also found ways to maintain connections in the oppressive building by manipulating colonial space and place to benefit them. The physical spatiality of the building represented colonial ideals and European superiority. The space was parcelled and rigid, having an atomizing effect on the students. Children were forced into regiments that worked to erase their Anishinaabe identities and alienate them from each other. However, children found

comradery, mentorship, and support amongst each other within these daily routines. The physical boundary around the school physically and emotionally separated children from their families. This same boundary, however, bonded children in their experience within the school. Children perceived places within the school as advantageous for hiding snippets of their home lives and ties to their community- whether it was food from their parents, a space to reflect on memories of their loved ones, or even spaces for fostering relationships with other children within the school.

Finally, the schools' efforts to assimilate children into Eurocentric diets, livelihoods, and relationality with the natural environment were also negotiated and challenged by children and their families. Children stole food to survive, the bread maker working in the school helped by turning a blind eye, and parents brought their children snacks from home. Some families pulled their children out of school so they could work with the family. Land-based economic frameworks in Sagkeeng often promoted family cohesion and a relationality with the wilderness based on respect and reverence. The school attempted to disrupt these communal ties by shifting Anishinaabe children's views of the natural environment to a capitalist-framework based on agriculture and farming. By assimilating Anishnaabe children into agricultural relationality with plants and food, children were isolated from their families and the wilderness. They were disempowered by losing their right to self-determination. As well, the school curriculum only included working class tasks, preventing children from receiving an education that would enable them to succeed in a capitalist economy. Many children left the school malnourished and with unhealthy eating habits. They were also taught a consumer lifestyle that relied on purchasing food, rather than hunting and foraging. In many ways, the school removed cultural practices from Anishinaabe children, destroying many familial ties. But through cunning, perseverance, and sheer survival, the Anishinaabe language and culture lives on in Sagkeeng today.

This thesis offers several contributions to academic inquiry on genocide, the residential school system, and colonialism in Canada. It demonstrates how unique primary archival data on personal experiences within residential schools can be drawn upon to offer new insights on colonial processes. Local Survivors' stories complicate and disrupt problematic national rhetoric about settlement and nation building in Canada. For example, narratives from Sagkeeng taught that colonial processes of nation building were not peaceful. Also, the belief that Anishinaabe communities were passive to colonial encroachment is also shattered. This is an important step in the direction of decolonizing mainstream knowledge about how Canada came to be. This paper offers a framework for understanding Anishinaabe group destruction that can be centred on Anishinaabe rather than European knowledges. It is important to move away from relying on government-issued resources to understand Canadian history. Moving the perspectives of the marginalized to the forefront is an important step in decolonization. That being said, decolonizing research can and should move far beyond archival research.

If I were to move forward with this research with a PhD, I would incorporate a participatory element. This would help to not only address certain colonial tendencies within academia, but also within the relations between Indigenous communities and white settler society. Making this a participatory and collaborative project, involving ongoing dialogue with Sagkeeng community members, would address issues of misrepresentation and assumption-making on my part, or that of other non-Indigenous researchers. Sagkeeng narratives helped me understand the ways FAIRS worked to disrupt the community. The narratives also illuminated the many ways Anishinaabe children and their families struggled to maintain relationships. Unfortunately, my research involved minimal consultation with the community. Due to time constraints posed by the MA thesis program, I did not undergo the Tri-Council Ethics process. If

I could do it again, I would begin with the Tri-council ethics to consult with the community before beginning the research process. I would explore what type of project community members think would be useful for them. In this respect, my project falls short. Community-participation and action are important aspects decolonizing research.

This project did create opportunities for discussion amongst family, friends, peers, and colleagues. I shared what I learned from Anishinaabe stories with people I encountered in my daily life. Many exchanges and debates blossomed from this research. These critical conversations are important for unpacking deeply entrenched colonial thinking amongst settlers. Changing attitudes and discourse can happen through these interpersonal dialogues. My target audience, the settler community, was reached in this fashion. In this respect, this thesis was a success.

Focusing on themes of "language," "space/place," and "nature" as presented in Anishinaabe narratives from Sagkeeng First Nation through testimonies, interviews, stories, and memoir, I demonstrate one reading of Sagkeeng narratives from a relational and decolonizing genocide framework. FAIRS disrupted the culturally-based relational ties within Sagkeeng First Nation in ways that were meant to undermine the groups' ability to maintain and reproduce itself in Anishinaabe-relevant ways. From a relational perspective, this disruption of communal ties can be understood as genocide. The school violently interrupted children's links to their community by removing their language, severing relationships to their families and community through physical separation and forced interactions within a colonial spatiality, and by forcing a Eurocentric relationality with the natural environment and food. Children were alienated from each other, their families, and the broader community, fracturing and atomizing a generation of

Anishinaabe Children. FAIRS worked to interrupt the community's collective identity and ways of life.

Understanding actions of the residential school as genocidal does not suggest that the Anishinaabe community in Sagkeeng First Nation was destroyed. Throughout my analysis, I highlight moments when children and families negotiated the school's oppressive tactics, often in their struggle to survive and maintain connections to each other. Narratives demonstrate how children and their families negotiated and undermined colonial and assimilative advances. These actions, intentionally or not, undermined the school's assimilative goals. Some Survivors kept their Anishinaabe names, or received them later in life from Elders. Survivors resisted by hiding and stealing food, running away, helping each other, and standing up to the oppressive actions of nuns and priests. Children maintained relationships, often by merely sneaking glances and waves. Survivors even found ways to have fun, laugh, love, and learn, despite the harsh conditions and mistreatment. As a result, Anishinaabe ways of life persisted and Anishinaabe history, knowledge, and language continue to flourish in Sagkeeng. My time spent within the community has shown me this. I feel privileged and grateful for the relationships I have built and am honoured to move forward with Sagkeeng community members in their journey of decolonization, empowerment, and self-determination.

Appendix 1

Background Information on Survivors

Nine testimonies are from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Grant is a male from Sagkeeng First Nation. He entered the school in 1968, when he was 5 years old. Today, he is a musician. Upon entering the school, Grant was told he would be there as a day student only. He ended up staying as a boarding school student for at least two years. Kevin is a male of Sagkeeng First Nation. He entered the Fort Alexander School in 1950 and attended for 10 year, from ages 5 to 15. He experienced a stint in Stony Mountain Correctional Facility shortly after leaving the residential school and had worked at the Sagkeeng mill. Today he lives within the community and urges his children and grandchildren to get leave the reserve for their education.

Mark, male, is a member of the Sagkeeng First Nation. He is currently a drug and alcohol abuse counsellor. He attended what he describes as a seminary school in Fort Alexander from 1959 until 1964. During his time in the seminary, he describes abuse at the hands of a priest who also was reported to have worked in the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School between 1940 and 1970. He explains about the seminary:

They [the government] say it wasn't part of the residential school. They say there were no records of it. Anywhere. But I see pictures of it on the wall around here. I also pull the information off the internet – the Saint Boniface archives. It says right there that it was run by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. That's the Fathers, the Oblate Fathers that ran that- the seminary" (Mark).

Whether the seminary school was a part of the residential school or not, it was certainly a part of the same assimilative system and he shared his story as a Survivor in the TRC; therefore, his testimony is included in this study.

Sam, a male member of Sagkeeng First Nation, attended the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School from 1944 until 1954. After leaving the school, Sam went on to play hockey and baseball. He also continues to advocate for the right to live accordingly to Anishinaabe ways of life. Dan, also male, speaks in his statement about being a Survivor and Intergenerational Survivor. This family is not originally from Sagkeeng. He lives there now with his wife and children. His mother attended residential school in Sturgeon Landing; He does not specify what school he attended. Dan went on to play professional football and is university and college educated. Dan explains how he and his family are accepted into the Sagkeeng community and he participates in the Sundance as a Cree. For this paper, I draw on his discussion about his mother's difficult experience of being taken from her family. These experiences are not Sagkeeng-specific, since his mother's family did not live in Sagkeeng.

Shirley, one of the few female Anishinaabe voices from Sagkeeng First Nation that I draw upon in this paper, is also a Survivor and Intergenerational Survivor. She attended Fort Alexander Indian Residential School. She entered the school when she was 6 years old in 1961. She does not remember much because she attended at such a young age. She was there for a number of years. She describes herself as a "wife, a mother, and a grandmother" (Shirley). Chris, a male from Sagkeeng First Nation, attended the Fort Alexander School for five years between 1940 and 1970. Today, he participates in the Sundance. Tina is a Cree woman. She is from Spit Lake Reserve and attended Fort Alexander Indian Residential School for an unknown amount of time. She attended the school sometime between 1940 and 1970. I learned from her story that some of the nuns in the school were kind.

Brian attended Fort Alexander School from 1951 until 1958. He was born in Pine Falls, but while he attended school his family lived in Northern Manitoba. After leaving the school,

Brian worked cutting pulp in Sagkeeng and then went to Red River College. I am unsure if his family reunited after he left the school, however he did remain in Sagkeeng and identifies as Anishinaabe and Catholic. He moved around from job to job, spent some time working in Stony Mountain Correctional Facility, and now enjoys volunteering and living with his wife in Sagkeeng First Nation. John is a male day school Survivor and an Intergenerational Survivor from Sagkeeng First Nation. He attended the Fort Alexander School during the days and came home at night. He went for six years. Cheryl is a female Elder and teacher from Sagkeeng.

From the compilation of interviews collected by Craig Charbonneau Fontaine, I draw upon Edward Charles Bruyere, George Bruyere, Charles Courchene, George Courchene, Marcel Courchene, Chief Albert Fontaine, Chief Lawrence Morrisseau, and Alexander Twoheart. All of these Survivors are male, attended the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School between 1940 and 1970, and are members of the Sagkeeng First Nation. Edward Charles entered the school in 1953 at seven years old and stayed until 1959. He reported not receiving an education in Sagkeeng and rather, his useful skills such as carpentry came from his peers in community. George Bruyere also reflects on how his father taught him all his useful skills after the residential school: “He taught me his trade, cutting timber, saw milling, pulp, and he took me out to Dorothy Lake to work in the sawmill” (Fontaine 2012b: 10). He was in the school for 8 to 9 years.

Charles Courchene is a Survivor and Intergenerational Survivor. His mother went to residential school and Charles attended the Fort Alexander School from 1945 until 1949. George Courchene entered the school in 1944 when he was 10 years old. He was only there for 10 months and then was brought home where his dad taught him to hunt and trap. Marcel

Courchene was born in 1927. After the residential school, Marcel reports never having a steady job. He worked at the mill but was always laid off when off-season white farmers needed work.

Chief Albert Fontaine attended the Fort Alexander School for 8 years, until he was 15 years old. He left to find work, which he did in Manigotagan at a logging camp. After the winter, Chief Fontaine moved back to Sagkeeng to help his father with work and obtained a government job transporting a nurse around the reserve. He was Chief for two years and during his term, the residential school was closed, an arena was built on the reserve, and some new jobs were created as a result. Chief Lawrence Morriseau was born in 1925. He was also Chief of Sagkeeng for two years, from 1978 to 1980. He does not specify how long he attended the residential school. Finally, Alexander Two Heart was born in 1919. He was sent to the residential school in 1925, where he stayed until 1937 when he turned 18 years old. After school he joined the army and upon his return, took a job at the Abitibi pulp and paper mill for the next 30 years.

I also use information laid out in a timeline in *Speaking of Sagkeeng* by Craig Charbonneau Fontaine- an excellence source that demonstrates what community members consider important events in Sagkeeng's historical trajectory. He attended the residential school briefly, but was pulled out by a relative and ended up working hard at the Abitibi mill for about 30 years (Fontaine 2012a). Craig also published a book of his grandfather's stories called *Sagkeeng Legends* (2012) which Craig describes as "two pebbles of knowledge where a mountain stood before the onslaught of colonization began to erode the very foundations of our culture" (2012b: 8). Glimpses like this into oral traditions are rare and very special. Stories like these contain traditional knowledge that is not easily accessible to outsiders because communities were forced to take the stories and teachings underground and hide them from colonial attempts at destroying Anishinaabe culture (Anderson 2011; da Silva 2010).

I rely heavily on Ted Fontaine's memoir *Broken Circle* for both learning about how the residential school disrupted his family life, as well as for historical information about the reserve. Ted attended the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School from 1948 until 1958, entering when he was seven years old. Ted was Chief of Sagkeeng from 1979 to 1958. He also has worked for the federal Secretary of State Department, the Northwest Territories Region of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and as executive director of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

Phil Fontaine, one of the first Anishinaabe politicians to speak publicly about the abuses, specifically sexual, children endured in the residential schools. He attended the residential school in Sagkeeng in his youth. He was the Chief of Sagkeeng for two consecutive terms, beginning in 1973. He served three terms as National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, which ended in 2009.

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