

Being Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe
(self-determination in grassy narrows)

H. Aaron Samolesky Levere

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BY

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MASTER OF ARTS

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abstract

The community of Grassy Narrows (Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe) has maintained a logging blockade off-reserve on their traditional territory since December of 2002. It is shown here that this blockade represents the centre of Asubpeeschoseewagong self-determination and is a model of the much rhetoricized, but rarely practiced ideals of democracy.

acknowledgements

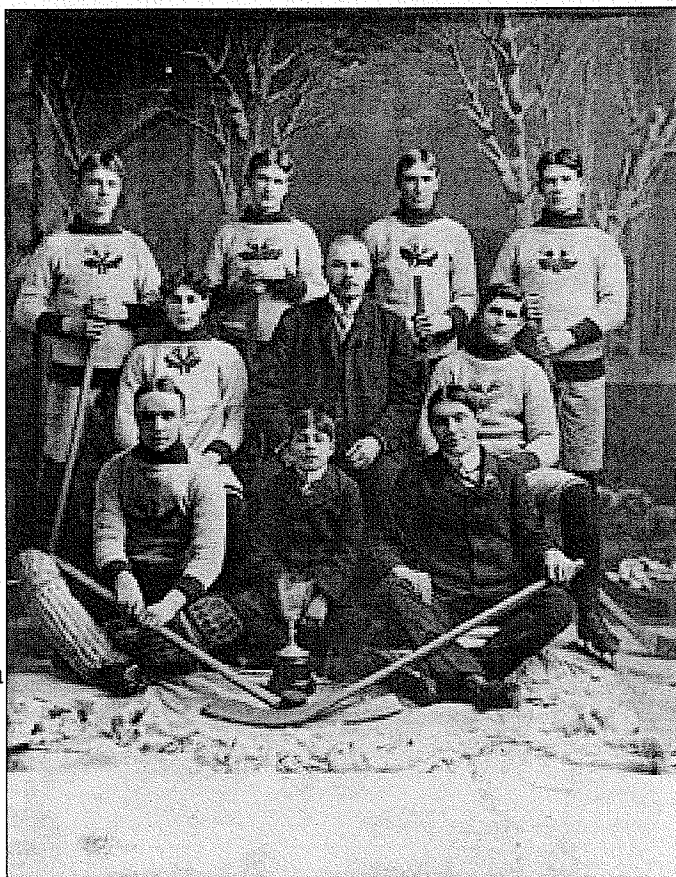
Miigwech Roberta Keesick, Don Billard, Judy DaSilva and Bepgogoti and family, Barbara Fobister, Bertha, Joe Fobister, Robert Fobister, Shoen Keewatin, Chrissy Swain and family, Charles Wagamese, and everyone in Grassy Narrows who has stood in the road for us all. Thank you for letting me be with you. Chi miigwech!

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Introduction

In this picture is my great grandfather, Matthew Brown (middle row, left side), a member of the Rat Portage Thistles in 1895. Ten years later in 1905 the team, largely unchanged, became the Kenora Thistles, after the town changed its name. (Apparently, the word “rat” on bags of flour produced at local mills was a significant marketing challenge). The idea for the town’s new name came from Matthew’s mother, my great great grandmother, Julietta Brown and her



friend “Mrs. Walter Ross.” “Kenora” was a combination of the names of the three adjacent communities that still exist within Kenora as a whole: Keewatin, Norman, and Rat Portage. Matthew Brown Sr., an immigrant from Scotland, ran a local lumber company along with his partners, Walter Ross and Richard Hall. The thistle emblem suited these and other prominent Scottish industrialists of the area.

These bits of Kenora's historical trivia are part of my family’s history as colonizers, one which I have encountered through my coincidental involvement with Grassy Narrows in a part of the world to which I thought I had no connection at all.

The name Rat Portage reflected the much older land-based trapping economy of the region. The word *keewatin*, means “a high place” in Anishinaabe. As names, they signified something of the land and its inhabitants. The lumber for my ancestor’s mill came from Anishinaabe lands, maybe even from Grassy Narrows. This mill must have given him the start he needed to move west and start a ranch on Blackfoot territory where subsequent generations were born, including mine.

The exploitation of Anishinaabe lands, the imposition of nation-building mythologies and foreign symbols, the renaming and commodifying processes of colonization begun by my ancestors are the forces that the people of Grassy Narrows continue to face today. It is remarkable, but no coincidence that my research in Grassy Narrows circles back so sharply upon my own people. My family. Me. After all, confronting processes of colonization is partly a self-reflexive vocation. This photo and the personal history that turned up in this part of the world, emphasize that colonization is not a distant and abstract entity.

As Albert Memmi has so pointedly shown, the relationships of colonization dehumanize us all. We are all guilty as oppressors, complicit in maintaining systems of oppression. An analysis of colonization is also an inquiry into our roles as colonizers; as academics, as consumers, as workers, as citizens, as tourists, as white-skinned males, as activists, as writers, as environmentalists, as bureaucrats, as religious adherents, as audience members, or simultaneously, as all we are not or do not. In his book, *the Colonizer and the Colonized*, Memmi convicts us all. Even the colonized, he argues, are complicit in denying their own humanity, or more accurately, in not asserting their own humanity. What Memmi offers is an assessment of what colonization means for each of us. He deconstructs each person's role, as colonizer and/or colonized and considers the options within that role: the myth of the "colonial," who lives in the colony, but remains detached from the struggle between colonizer and colonized; the colonizer who refuses to be an oppressor (and fails); the colonizer who accepts oppression (and fails); the myth of the colonized who is innately inferior and deserving of a lower status; and the two answers of the colonized, similar to the options for the colonizer, to assimilate or resist.

The reason Memmi is important to a telling of what is happening in Grassy Narrows is that self-determination in Grassy Narrows is the building of relationships, between the band council and the residents of Grassy Narrows, between Grassy Narrows and all of their new neighbours, between Grassy Narrows First Nation and the Crown,

between generations, between like-minded people of different cultures, and most importantly, between people and their land. Memmi writes that his book is “not a work of protest or even a search for solutions” (145). And it is not. He does not offer ‘solutions,’ but offers a portrait of the colonial relationship. This is worth examining as a measure of what a decolonizing of relations looks like in comparison. One thing he makes clear is that the sociopathic psychological profile he describes for us all cannot survive. The point he makes is that the mentality of the colonizer who denies he is a colonizer or of the colonized who accepts the superiority of the colonizer is an unstable one. There are three significant gaps in Memmi’s portrait of the colonizer who refuses that suggest some viable choices in this ethical paradox.

First, Memmi suggests that the only ethical choice for a colonial to make is to go back to his country of origin, to stop being a colonial. Ironically, he dedicates the American edition of his book to “the American Negro, also colonized.” In this case in particular, the ‘ethical choice’ of leaving is complicated. This is one flaw due to aging for an otherwise enduring analysis. Literal ideas of being in ‘the colonies’ or of having a mother country no longer apply. Leaving is generally no longer an option and in most cases would be of questionable ethical value, even if it were. There is nowhere in the world where one can stand outside of colonial oppression. The question now and here is how we share this terrain. We are in a lifeboat.

Second, Memmi makes the assumption that the colonizer who refuses is likely classically left-leaning. It is his adherence to his particular ideology that is ultimately responsible for his failure to support the political aspirations of the colonized. Like Ward Churchill, he is suspicious of how committed a white, liberal leftist would be of armed resistance by the colonized (unfortunately called “terrorism” by Memmi) (30). He also questions how this lefty would reconcile his orderly and self-congratulatory vision of ‘the revolution’ with an ethnic/religious/nationalist one if that were favoured by the People. But Memmi does not consider at any length a colonizer who refuses of any other

ideological stripe. Much of the relevant literature to this thesis comes from people who could be loosely categorized as humanists, in the sense that ontological humanity, the right to be, is valued above the dogma of any ideology. Similar values can be labelled anarchist, bioregionalist, or indigenist, in the sense that all of these ideologies share a common premise that smaller, engaged polities are better able to be responsive to the needs of 'citizens.' This will be discussed further in following Kulchyski's focus on cultural, community politics.

Memmi writes that in attempting to come to terms with his situation, the colonizer who refuses is condemned to a life that "will be a long series of adjustments"(39) and a "perpetual compromise" (43), but a large part of what gives this position strength is that it is not dogmatic. It responds and changes based on the particular circumstances of contextualized interactions. Below I will also discuss Michael Asch's work as an example of this kind of humanist approach.

This brings me to the third point that Memmi makes. He writes that the colonizer who refuses with any gusto places himself in such an obscure position that he becomes alien to both sides of the struggle and is irrelevant to such polarized politics. This, he claims, is the main reason for the impotence of this position. The choice for the colonizer who refuses, he writes, "is not between good and evil, but between evil and uneasiness" (43). This is true. To come to rest on any action or position in a colonial state is a capitulation. But rather than see this constant uneasiness as an unbearable burden, as Memmi does, it can also be seen as position of resilience. My contention is that humanity is defined above all else by the constant movement of contradiction and paradox. The exact opposite of life is to hold everything still like an insect collection pinned to a board, which is what bureaucracies, borders, ideologies, and White papers are intended to do. Below I will apply what Kulchyski has argued: that the very fact that positions of contradiction persist means that this project of totalization has not succeeded. In this sense, obscure and complicated political views are not ineffective and irrelevant, they are

essential forms of resistance. Even more so in our current political climate where thoughtful dialogue is becoming scarce, in favour of a with-us-or-against-us, cowboys and Indians, us-them extremism. Ambiguity is out of fashion, but must be retained for the sake of a fuller critical discourse.

This thesis relies on the work of several people who have flourished in these gaps (widening over time) in Memmi's portrayal of the colonizer who refuses, finding ways to make this a meaningful position to take; Asch, Kulchyski, Edward Said, and Peter Puxley. I will turn to their work to outline the theoretical framework of this study. Before I leave Memmi's insightful book, I would like to recognize the most successful refuser I have ever met, Don Billard.

I met Don at the Slant Lake blockade on my second visit to Grassy Narrows. He is a trapper and activist. I have had some good conversations with Don. His carefully considered lifestyle has given him a unique knowledge of a white person's responsibilities. Don is proof that living with integrity is possible. He challenges any privileges offered to him and makes no assumptions of his own right. He acts and lives as a guest. It is inspiring to spend time with him learning about respect. I mention Don here because from him I have learned how to put these rhetorical concepts of relationship and responsibility into practice. I am citing him as a source for the writing I do on the land in Grassy.

Michael Asch has written several useful essays on the role of an anthropologist 'finding a place to stand.' He searches for ways to make his work as an anthropologist something that is of use to Indigenous struggles, which he sees as an ethical responsibility that has been historically shirked by social scientists as their *modus operandi* in maintaining a position of objectivity. For Asch, claims of appropriation of voice, ethnocentrism, and the historical problems of translating culture into writing are to be considered continually, but are not reasons to be paralysed and silent observers. To present an alternative, Asch raises the idea of a conversation between, using Martin

Buber's terms, an I and a You, (which Buber differentiates from the objectified relationship of the I - It). He finds the concept forwarded by Buber to be similar to the political thought of Leroy Little Bear (2001; 8). For him this means, "political relationship framed through I-It or I-You exists in both Indigenous and Western cultures [so] there is no cultural divide that inevitably separates our voices. . . . We can have a conversation. . . . and I can express my choice with my own voice" (ibid.) Asch joins the call for this type of relational understanding, which he argues is already represented by treaties. He finds his place to stand in seeking common ground through a common understanding of what it means to have a relationship through treaty. This idea of a relationship between two mutable, living entities (people or peoples) which Buber calls I-You, which Asch claims is the relationship represented by treaties, is also similar to what Said has described.

Months before his death, Said wrote a new preface to *Orientalism*. In it, referencing the Palestine/ Israel conflict as an example, Said underscores the broader applicability of knowledge aimed at "coexistence, and not further suppression and denial," (xxiv). He poignantly underscores the larger objective of his life's work, "rather than the manufactured clash of civilizations, we need to concentrate on the slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways (ibid. xxix). These points are equally relevant in a Canadian context as they are in the Israeli/ Palestinian context. The reason Grassy Narrows has always received so much attention (of various kinds) from the Canadian public, is that it is a particularly bold example of the 'more interesting ways' that Anishinaabe are reconciling with the cultures around them. This is one impetus for this study, these examples of creative coexistence are important to observe. Ironically, proving that this type of coexistence is possible and viable is an act of resistance in itself. It contradicts the historical founding tenets of colonial power and exposes the continual unnecessary use of

force. Further, this research is intended to show that Grassy Narrows provides one model of an alternative to Indian Act governance and corporate control.

Another text that Asch introduces to the discourse is the debate between Chomsky and Foucault on the nature of political struggle. Foucault argues that these struggles are best characterized in terms of power, while Chomsky argues that these struggles are better understood, from the view of the oppressed, as struggles for justice (Asch 2002). Asch takes his lead from Chomsky's line of reasoning, and I do find it to be more relevant in the the Canadian colonial context where this is often the view expressed by Aboriginal leaders. It is not conducive to this fledgling dialogue between peoples to speak in terms of allotting or gaining power. This is an important distinction to make in the current international political climate where even liberal observers see 'ethnic nationalism' as a threat to the social and political stability of nation-states. The emphasis on justice better reflects the context of Indigenous nations' resistance in Canada. This distinction between power and justice also keeps me grounded in some strain of structuralist thought to counterbalance my post modern approach to notions of objectivity. To argue that improved relations between Native and non-Native people in Canada are possible, it is necessary to assume that there are some shared values, a shared concept of justice for example, and that this has some definable characteristics to which we all relate. It should be pointed out that Chomsky readily admits to Foucault's counterpoint that these ideals of justice will never be perfectly achieved, but that they are a model whose pursuit and creation is to be continually refined. I too will use Chomsky's take on the importance of justice to "find a place to stand."

There is one other point of agreement between Chomsky and Foucault that is especially relevant here, and leads well into raising Kulchyski's work. Both scholars seem to agree that creating a model of a just society, "a humanistic social theory," as Chomsky puts it, as well as understanding how oppression works are two necessary

fundamental projects (Chomsky and Foucault 41). On the study of oppression and power

Foucault raises some interesting points. He states:

Political power goes much deeper than one suspects; there are centres and invisible, little-known points of support; . . . its true solidity is perhaps where one doesn't expect it. One must locate . . . the places and forms in which its domination is exercised. Domination is not simply the expression in political terms, . . . it is its instrument and, to a large extent the condition which make it possible. If one fails to recognize these points of support of class power, one risks allowing them to continue to exist; and to see this class power reconstitute itself even after an apparent revolutionary process.

(ibid.)

Here Foucault identifies one of the central aspects of political change, what Kulchyski discusses as the 'politics of form.' The politics of form represents one of the main conceptual shifts that he contributes to the discourse of Aboriginal politics. While Foucault puts this into the context of class struggle, it is just as germane to struggles against colonial power. In Grassy Narrows, the blockade can be said to represent a form of governance. For Kulchyski, it is the form of governance that is significant. As an example of the politics of form in practice, a suggestion he makes is that in agreements made between a First Nation and the Canadian government, that the legal version of the agreement be the one that is in the Native language, while the English and French versions are translations. In Fort Good Hope, Kulchyski finds that establishing a community-based form of government is more of a priority for people than deciding what authority or function their government should have (2005; 177). In a community based government, these functions or vested powers are always negotiable every time you encounter a councillor on the river. These are not important to formally codify and define. Having a governing system that allows these negotiations to occur, however, is essential to the maintenance of "participatory democracy" (ibid.). This idea is indigenous to Dene political thought. In *Dene Nation: the colony within*, George Barnaby states, "Sometimes I say, that if the commissioner and the top executives of the territorial government were all trappers and hunters things would be different, but I see it would make no difference. It is the system which is wrong" (Watkins 122). Barnaby not only reiterates the

importance the form of governance, but also indicates how tempting it is to pursue surface reforms and miss underlying causes, (echoing Foucault's observation that "there are centres and invisible, little known points of support") to existing power structures. .

In general, a consideration of form allows for a prioritizing of the Indigenous, rather than a subservient adaptation to the dominant form. It resists totalization. To acknowledge another of Kulchyski's theoretical contributions to the discussion of self-governance, the concept of colonization as totalization, has become inseparable for me from the Indian Act and the policies of the Canadian government in negotiating Aboriginal self-government. The concept of totalization contextualizes the continual push and pull of the dominant social model and the resistance to that model. It denotes the processes and systems of domination which can be seen at work in every negotiation of cultural expression. Kulchyski uses Jean Paul Sartre's definition of totalization as a starting point, wherein totalization is described as the "developing activity" of the totality, making "each part an expression of the whole and which relates the whole to itself through the mediation of its parts" (Kulchyski 2005; 23). Colonization understood as totalization describes the dehumanizing processes that have characterized all oppressive regimes and by doing so illuminates the commonalities between struggles against capitalist domination, environmental destruction, and colonization. It is used here, following Kulchyski, to consider how Anishinaabe forms of governance might be viewed as resistance to totalization.

defining some terms

there seems to be a euroassumption that all languages are translatable
that all ideas can change languages just like changing socks or one's mind
or exchanging batons in a relay race p[r]ooof! and they're off
there seems to be this presumption that everything can be interpreted
known uncovered discovered into the English language
language relay on your marks teg tes log .

(Cole 2006; 47)

One of the central ongoing tasks of Native Studies inquiry is the study of meaning. The language that is used in the discourses around Aboriginal politics is often identified as a central problem in relations between Aboriginal peoples and Canada. From recognizing the oral version of the treaties to expanding the idea of a nation, the words used and their meanings are the first agreement that has to be reached, tacitly or otherwise, before discussion can proceed. This examination of language usually involves giving a word a broader definition. A good analogy is that words as they are used by the Canadian government or by the dominant society are contained within colonizing parameters, like a reserve. A broader, more flexible use of language is like recognizing the right to use the wider traditional territory surrounding the reserve. One decolonizing struggle is for the recognition of the right to use this epistemological territory as well. The words that are used in a decolonizing discourse must be understood in a broad enough way to encompass Indigenous understandings, especially when the language being used is not an Indigenous one. In Native – non-Native relations there is a broad and under-acknowledged problem of translation. Hugh Brody makes the important point that all languages have the creative capacity to translate any foreign concept. Native people have found ways to describe the complexities of their situation in English, in ways that give some sense of how their conceptualization of their rights differs from the federal or provincial governments' interpretations. However, while there are ways to translate any concept into any language, there is still the problem of using English words that predispose these dialogues to misunderstanding and misrepresentation.

This suggests that it is not necessarily the English language that is the problem, but that it is the language of Western economics and colonial power relations that creates the most egregious false premises from which this dialogue is supposed to proceed.

The issue of devolution of services serves as a good example. Devolution is the federal government's practice of passing off their responsibilities to provide services to Native people under the terms of Treaty and the BNA Act onto Native governments under

the guise of 'moving toward self-government.' In this way, Indian Act band councils are handed the files for their band on "education" or "health" and told that they are now responsible for managing these "services." The problem is that categories such as education and health are not necessarily categorized in the same way by Native people. Therefore, devolving authority over these "departments" forces a way of thinking and being onto a band council which is already being structured by Indian Act guidelines that dictate what a local government looks like and acts like. There is no room to recognize that education and economy and spirituality can be so intertwined that there cannot be a change in curriculum or any possible training for the nurses at the health centre that could address these aspects of life holistically.

The mechanistic organization of a bureaucracy is the defining feature of "the First World." Bureaucracy is a pathologically inefficient, paper-based technology, where education and health and family services and economy and water and waste and birth and death are compartmentalized and managed in isolation from each other. In this sense, it is not the translation into English which is the problem, it is the translation of Savage/ Indian/ Oriental/ Aboriginal/ Native/ First Nations/ Ojibway concepts into these primitive tools used by 'First World' institutions.

Drinking or drugs or abuse, it's all connected and it's because of the land, because we're losing our land. It's all connected it's not all separate issues.

(Judy DaSilva addressing Treaty 3 chiefs, 2002)

In some sense my research is a study of "resource management." However, someone looking for a "resource management plan" in Grassy Narrows will probably (hopefully) never find one ever again. Land and government are two categories that are not exclusive of each other from an Indigenous perspective. They overlap in so many ways that being on the land and governing could even be considered concomitant actions.

One of the central premises of this thesis is that the idea of "self-government" is much broader than conventionally conceived by policy-makers. This is an idea that has been best articulated by Aboriginal political philosophers who have attempted to reframe

the idea of self-government as self-determination, something more in accordance with Aboriginal political thought and practice. Aboriginal leaders have retained this thread of political history. Since 1973 and most noticeably since the patriation of the Canadian constitution, the work of translating Indigenous political thought into terms that are recognizable by other governments in Canada has framed the discourse on “rights” and “governance.” Both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal thinkers and policy-makers have taken up the task of writing down interpretations of these translated concepts, creating an academic canon of what Indigenous understandings of self-determination might look like. Ladner’s constitutional analyses, which exemplify a synthesis of these often contradictory concepts of ‘governance’ are one good example. Her analysis begins from the perspective that Native people already have constitutions and governing practices. As Ladner points out, the federal government’s policy is to negotiate self-government agreements strictly with the Indian Act band governments that they created. So the development of this kind of “relationship of equals” is founded on a colonial construction.

Another way that Western ideals are imposed onto Indigenous forms of government is through the connotations of the Western terminology used in reference to the political institutions of Native people. Several scholars have paid particular attention to language used in the self-government discourse, including Alfred (1999), Monture-Angus (1999), and Little Bear, Boldt, and Long (1984) in their discussions of adopting the Western idea of sovereignty. The idea of Aboriginal ‘sovereignty’ may be inseparable from its hierarchical connotations and therefore, counter to the creation/ revival of more egalitarian forms of political autonomy. Each of these scholars brings a different nuance to the applicability of this particular word, but also to other questions of the language used in self-government discourse, as I will show.

the responses of the colonized

The research presented here is a description of how one group of people has enacted their own decision-making processes. This represents one of many possibilities, which look different than Indian Act governance. It is not a prescriptive model for other communities, but is an indicator of the breadth of potential possibilities. In his “Indigenous Manifesto,” Taiaiake Alfred writes that describing what Native leadership might look like is “not so much a matter of positing rules, features, criteria,” but is rather, “a matter of advocating an approach to politics combining innovation and flexibility with a core commitment to uphold the basic values of respect, tolerance, harmony, and autonomy” (1999; 139 – 140). A description of the actions taken in Grassy Narrows provide one example of how Indigenous governance can look, but this depiction is also meant to recognize the need for non-Native politics that uphold these same values. It is an important example of decolonization. Non-Native communities in Canada also need to see that innovative and flexible forms of decision-making that uphold respect and individual autonomy are being practised, partly so that these forms are also recognized as governance by non-Native governments; and partly to be reminded of what democracy means.

I will draw on the academic literature on Aboriginal self-determination and self-governance in Canada to draw connections between current political thought and this body of knowledge in praxis in Grassy Narrows. Accordingly, this research uses both Indigenous and non-Indigenous political thought, but also recognizes the many places where non-Indigenous writing about government has a root in Indigenous political thought.

One of the distinct features of leadership in Grassy Narrows is the way relationships between people are created and affirmed at every turn. In Grassy Narrows (Asubpeeschoseewagong), no formal self-government agreement has been established, but the community organizes and makes decisions about its own future in various

grassroots ways. This research gives the non-formalized community decision-making processes that exist in Grassy Narrows their due acknowledgement as governance. This is a type of governance that is not mandated by the Indian Act, nor formalized by a self-government agreement, but is vested in the continued right of Anishinaabe to be self-determining. This thesis will examine self-government in practice in Grassy Narrows to determine what advantages these forms of government have over formal institutionalized (Indian Act) governance for sustainable resource use and for enhancing land-based economies. A significant measure of the advantage of one form of government over another will be the democratic values it embodies. The question of whether or not people in Grassy Narrows are heard and are free to act to better their own lives, through one form of government or another, will be the way the efficacy of a form of 'governance' is discerned.

This thesis will include three chapters. First, a critical analysis of Shkilnyk's *A poison stronger than love* that will serve as a site of analysis on research, ethnography, and ethics in working in Aboriginal communities. An analysis of Shkilnyk's text lends itself to engaging in a discussion of methods of research in Native studies in general and to the methods used for this project. This is a necessary starting point. The second is a review of the academic literature on self-government and self-determination in Canada. The third is an analysis of the ongoing assertions of self-determination in Grassy Narrows.

Anastasia Shkilnyk's *A poison stronger than love* is notorious in Grassy Narrows. She intends for her book to be a chronicle of "the destruction of an Ojibwa community," but the community that I have seen in Grassy Narrows is far from destroyed. The blockade in itself is a powerful sign of resilience. What has flowed from the blockade is strength and vitality. Grassy Narrows has seen a lot of destruction, but has obviously never been destroyed. There is longstanding desire in Grassy Narrows for someone to

“debunk” Shkilnyk’s salvage ethnography. It is important that Anastasia Shkilnyk’s book about Grassy Narrows is addressed.

The harm done to the image and esteem of a community is reason enough to counter the ethnocentric assumptions that underlie her entire project. Some of what Shkilnyk portrays as destruction can be seen as resistance from a decolonizing perspective. The dismantling of existing manifestations of colonial authority is, after all, an assertion of a human element in response to totalization. Seen in this light, her work must be called into question as a manifestation of a colonizing ideology. *A poison stronger than love* as a whole raises questions about the ethics of social research.

As a starting point for my thesis, Shkilnyk’s work offers a case study of research that perpetuates colonial processes. This type of research needs to be addressed as part of the reflexive thinking that differentiates a decolonizing methodology. As a non-Aboriginal researcher in an Aboriginal community there are many ethical questions to be continually considered and reconsidered. Native Studies as a body of knowledge is a qualitative study of the attitudes and assumptions that underlie the research and the researcher at the same time as it engages in the relationships of research.

In the second chapter, as a way to give the literature review a cohesive structure, it is framed as a sort of concise, recent history of self-determination. Aboriginal struggles to have their autonomy recognized by outsiders must be attributed to multiple origins, including the broad political gains made through the longstanding assertions of the Mohawk and of the Nishga’a, for example. In reality, the origins of this struggle are too varied to pinpoint, but one of the most significant for bringing this struggle into the public eye, was the Dene resistance to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. George Erasmus, Steve Kakfwi, Frank T’Seleie, and George Barnaby are prominent Dene leaders who have articulated what it means to have the right to be self-determining, eventually working to create the Dene Declaration, establishing the idea of Aboriginal “nations” within Canada, and later reiterating this understanding for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

(RCAP). The RCAP report and much of the academic writing to be published by non-Aboriginal people are 'translations' of written and oral explanations of these Dene legal concepts of their right to be self-determining. Many recent academic and legal writings are founded on these or other translations of Indigenous legal/ political concepts, acknowledged as such or not.

From this root, it is possible to sketch some of these ideas of nationhood and self-determination that are derived from or echoed by other scholars who have been effective at communicating these Aboriginal conceptualizations of rights and responsibilities. Directly linked to the Dene experience are scholars such as Asch, Puxley, and Kulchyski who carry what has been gleaned from the North in the 1970s into the current negotiations that define relations with the state now. Another commonality between these academics is the way each one brings Western philosophy to bear on affirming Aboriginal rights in Canada. They are the telephone operators who connect the conversations between: Emanuel Lévinas and Philip Moses (Asch); Alexis Arrowmaker and Paulo Friere (Puxley); and Leo Norwegian and Jean-Paul Sartre, or Pauloosie Angmarlik and Jacques Derrida (Kulchyski). Others, such as Smallface Marule, Little Bear, Boldt, Long, and Cassidy and Bish built the foundations for this dialogue from the experiences of Native peoples in the South. Alfred and Monture-Angus have been able to add to this from the parallels derived from Mohawk political thought, seeking to find a wider applicability to Native struggles everywhere in Canada. It is in this milieu that Aboriginal political theorists like Youngblood Henderson, Venne, and Ladner have done significant work in envisioning what the co-existence of state and 'self' governments might look like. These scholars draw extensively from both Indigenous and Western political traditions, but are adept at articulating what "Aboriginal jurisprudence," governance, and rights mean from Aboriginal perspectives. They situate this dialogue in such a way that the equality of both legal traditions is presupposed, which provides the starting point that is needed for developing a relationship between equals. I hope to replicate the dialogue that

I see taking place between academia and these communities while recognizing that there are no clear lines between these two collectives.

Grassy Narrows First Nation's (Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabek) traditional territory is in the Treaty 3 area that covers a large part of Anishinaabek land in what is now northwestern Ontario as well as the south-eastern corner of Manitoba. The Grassy Narrows reserve is 80 kilometres north of the mill town of Kenora, Ontario. For people in Grassy Narrows, the disregard shown for their treaty rights has included a denial of their right to fish, their right to sell fish, their right to sell agricultural goods, and their right to sell wild rice. They have been relocated, subjected to residential schools, had their water and fish contaminated with mercury by the Dryden pulp and paper mill, and have only slowly, arduously, and inadequately been compensated. I am grateful to Dave Brophy for his helpful concise history of colonization and Grassy Narrows (2005). Currently, Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabek still live with the past effects of colonization while facing the current realities of lingering high levels of mercury in their waters and ongoing threats to the viability of their land to support their economic activities of trapping and harvesting and the perpetuation of these skills.

Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabek have maintained a blockade of a logging road for over five years in an assertion of their unrecognized treaty rights. It is widely heralded as the longest-running blockade in Canada, but this distinction is not the most remarkable thing about the blockade. This blockade is at least as important for what it has started, as it is for what it has stopped. I will discuss the politics of this blockade and the concurrent structural, social, and philosophical changes that have emerged because of its inception. Ultimately my purpose is to explore the idea of this blockade (and its concurrent creations) as a form of self-determination that eschews Indian Act governance or, in fact, subverts Indian Act governance and creates a more human alternative. Blockades are, in part, a negotiation tactic deployed when other forms of nation-to-nation diplomacy have stagnated or deteriorated, becoming ineffective. One of the meanings

they convey is that the negotiations of the relationship between peoples are in need of renewal. Non-compliance with the terms of the Crown and the logging company, Abitibi, is one way to remind these agencies of shared responsibilities. Pushing back against this affront, gives Grassy Narrows the space they need to be Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe, which is the ground needed before any relationship at all can be maintained.

I will use the work of Peter Puxley, Tony Hall, and Taiaiake Alfred to frame two main characteristics of self-determination: One, that self-determining Indigenous polities act on a nation-to-nation basis, or in other words, internationally. This is indicated by an awareness and willingness by the traditional leadership in Grassy Narrows to operate in a globalizing world. And two, that there is a re-emergence of local and “traditional” forms of decision-making and action, which is evident in Grassy Narrows, as well. The central role of women and youth, the use of consensus decision-making, an annual environmental gathering that uses some of the customs of a powwow, and the creation of land-based education programs are some of the examples of the local and “traditional” praxis of Anishinaabek political thought. I argue that the way decisions are made in these actions stands outside of the band council system and represents the much rhetoricized, but rarely practised ideals of democracy in a way unique to Grassy Narrows. I also consider how this relates to Canadian government policies on the Aboriginal right to self-government.

A style of writing that characterizes many Native Studies texts is that they seem to follow some of the narrative styles of oral knowledge. Kulchyski uses this style well. My intention is to build my arguments through layers of narrative and reflexivity, as well as through a more conventional use of the literature and ‘fieldwork.’ I want to be transparent about the fact that even a callow and bone-dry academic thesis is in some way still telling a story.

Part of what I write, will be an ongoing reflection of my own role and a consideration of my responsibilities as a researcher. My description and analysis of the

current politics of Grassy Narrows are drawn from my involvement with the blockade over the past three years. The Clan Mothers and traditional leadership who maintain the blockade give a lot of time and energy to continually expressing their being-as-Anishinaabek. They have been very generous with their time in meeting with me. They have expressed enough trust in our relationship and in my support of the blockade to grant me permission to watch and listen, and to write and speak about the way I understand what is happening at the Slant Lake blockade and throughout the traditional territory of the Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabek. I would not have accepted the generosity of people in Grassy Narrows in allowing me to be there if I did not also know that I am there as a "Friend of Grassy Narrows." The role I play there as a researcher is predicated on my role there as an ally. The inherent hypocrisy of course being that my student/city life often makes me unavailable for a lot of the activist organizing that goes on around me. I live with this hypocrisy under the premise that by learning what is happening at Grassy Narrows, and by letting this broaden and form my understanding of what it means to be self-determining Indigenous people, I will be a more effective in my part in building relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples throughout my life. This is a largely intangible and debatable benefit to the community of Grassy Narrows, to be sure, but I am 84% convinced that it has significant value to the overall relationship between Native and non-Native people.

It is my contention that there is a lot for both Native and non-Native people to learn from what is happening in Grassy Narrows. One of the main problems that has plagued Grassy Narrows is the (wilful) ignorance of the people with whom they interact, their neighbours who run the fishing lodges, who carry out the deforestation of their land, who run the businesses in Kenora, and who carry out the state's continuing colonization. This thesis is intended as another way to translate and communicate, as has been asked by traditional leaders in Grassy Narrows, what the rights of the Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabek mean to them and what that means for everyone else. However, I am

writing with the understanding that the most effective way of translating and communicating what I have learned in Asubpeeshoeseewagong is not so much through an academic thesis, but through my continued interactions and being on Anishinaabek land, in Grassy Narrows and in Winnipeg, or in any other traditional territory where I stand.

endnotes

For this thesis, I will use the name “Anishinaabe,” for the people in Grassy Narrows because it is the name that the people I know there prefer to use for themselves. When talking about Native people as a whole, as is sometimes necessary, there is no term upon which everyone agrees. I generally use the adjective “Native” because currently it seems to be the word most commonly used by Native people when speaking English.

“Aboriginal” has come to sound very formal and imposed to my ear, but I use it in contexts dominated by government discourse, which revolves around the recognition of “Aboriginal” rights and “Aboriginal” peoples. I find “First Nations” can rarely be used without wrongfully excluding Inuit and Métis. “Indigenous people” implies a broader range of people and a broader range of issues globally which adds an unnecessary level of complexity to the specific issues dealt with by Indigenous people in Canada. It makes me feel like I have to consider whether or not what I am writing equally applies to Indigenous people in Australia and India and Paraguay and Finland. I do use “Indian,” generally only in contexts where what is being described or analysed is the mythical figure of an “Indian” or the Canadian legal entity of an “Indian” as defined by the “Indian Act.” Sometimes I also use it ironically. However, “Indian people” is still regularly used by many Native people, and it never sounds to me like they don’t know better or have internalized the colonizer’s language or they are just old and used to using this term. It is significant that in this context it is usually used as an adjective for people. While there is no term that is universally self-applied, anything that declares (or admits) people to be people sounds emancipatory to me. Whatever term is used, the context usually indicates the level of respect as much the words used.

Chapter two

By 1976, Grassy Narrows was in a state of turbulence. The people were angry. They had had enough of journalists, photographers, do-gooders, and researchers who came to get the most sensational story on their predicament. They were tired of the glaring lights of television cameras. They resented having the horror of their community's social pathology exposed to the rest of the world.

(Shkilnyk 1985; 216)

Indigenous people and other groups in society have frequently been portrayed as powerless victims of research which has attributed a variety of deficits or problems to just about everything they do.

(Smith 2004; 176)

because if white indian experts were no longer required/necessary there would be a crisis of legitimacy (which there already is)

[...]

this crisis would mean that white 'able-bodied' middle class straight white researchers wouldn't be researching or otherwise objectifying or profiting from aboriginal and indigenous people

[...]

who would they research they'd be out of a job they'd lose their pension(e) they'd have to find a more ethical way to pay their mortgage make car payments ...

(Cole 2004; 21)

going canoeing

Native Studies is a state of liminality. As a white male in Native Studies, I am constantly reminded that I can never stand with any certainty on any ideological or even physical ground. It is constantly my responsibility to question my place here. Native Studies research is not just a matter of asking an objective question and getting the answers. It also demands existential questions of the researcher about the role of research and the researcher herself. There are implicit ethical questions that surround the very presence and subsistence of all non-Indigenous people on lands that are not our own. For non-Indigenous people, Native Studies is a site where these ethical questions are spoken aloud. As a student of Native Studies, I acknowledge the inherent assumptions that I am making by being here – whether it is on this land, in this community, on this research project, or in this department – and question those assumptions, both my own and those that are the legacy (or inherited debt) of colonizers, academia, history, and anthropology.

These questions are complex and never satisfactorily answered. This self-questioning is a continual part of doing ethical research.

I want to replicate the idea that the work I engage in is a dialogue, and that what is written here is my attempt to affirm what I have heard. To do this I have tried to embed the subtext of the dialogue of which I am a part. When I read Peter Cole, he presents some of the questions that are put before me in my interactions with Native people or in being conscious that I am in Indigenous spaces as I try to decolonize these relations. His writing is like the continual flow of a conscience, the one that I too ignore in order to conduct the colonial business-as-usual in my day-to-day life. It is the articulation of the unresolved terms of our relationship and the understanding that, as colonizers, we are here without having yet honoured our obligations that allow us to be here. To maintain the (aesthetic and vocal) integrity of his writing style and as an acknowledgement of this subtextual dialogue, I have included excerpts of his work that respond and demand response, that surface in the flow as I consider my research methods. These are ideas that bother and nudge my own conscience to challenge colonialism and racism. In Cole's book *Coyote/Raven go canoeing*, for example, I am reminded that my research methods must acknowledge that my writing comes from the many interactions that form who I am and what I think. It is a call for research that is relational and simultaneously 'ethical protocol.'

for us ethics and ethical action are not add-ons
postordained bridges joining
methodology is part of the weft and weave darn and logjam
not just a backwards informing or practice a backeddy the backstop of method
methodology includes what is absent not perceived not addressed
it is a kind of *en route* montage still life running *misanthropic en scène*
my partner my father my mother my family my ancestors are everywhere
in this writing though I do not quote them do not cite them continuously

indeed the act of not quoting them is more powerful
because they are more than the words I could put down to legitimize what I am saying
they legitimize me we dance together

(Cole 2006; 323)

In her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith addresses her description of the colonialist research project to Indigenous academics. It is partially an ethnography of the Western social scientist. In the tradition of ethnography, it is written by an 'outsider' for an audience of 'outsiders,' those researchers who would be within the field of study by Western social scientists. So I am forced to ask myself why I am here, listening in on the dialogue between Smith and Indigenous researchers.

Decolonizing Methodologies for non-Indigenous researchers is a thorough critique of our past, and outlines how research is changing and must continue to change. It is fitting that social research at last begins to take its direction from the people most invested¹. For all the zealous use of the word "discourse" in the pages of anthropological journals, it seems that the conversation is still too often one-sided. Smith invites or reminds non-Indigenous people of the challenge to listen.

Smith begins by stressing that the very word "research" is stigmatized in Indigenous communities, conceptually inseparable from colonization and imperialism. It has been my experience that, for many people, "anthropology" is also a four-letter word. Upon entering a Native community, I often find myself applying these words to myself (my undergraduate degree is in anthropology) within a few minutes of first meeting someone. Immediately, I feel the weight of association with the colonial history of exploiting Indigenous knowledge. The suspicion I encounter is a form of the implicit (or explicit) question, "Why are you here?"

One summer at the annual Grassy Narrows Powwow, Dave Brophy and I spent the weekend talking with people, eating fries, feeling the drumming, and watching the dancing, occasionally joining in. On the morning when he was heading back to the city, I was intending to stay behind to "do some research." As he packed up to leave, he asked what exactly I was going to do for the next few days. I said I didn't know. Half-joking, I

¹ "Invested" in the sense that my research is made possible by Grassy Narrows allowing me to be there. They are trusting that my presence will be worth their while, taking the risk of investing their time and energy in me.

told him that first I was going to spend the rest of the day wondering what I was doing there.

Smith emphasizes that the intentions of the research have to be transparent. This means that a first step is reflexivity in considering how research is conducted and the researcher's place within that, but also having a clear idea of what I as the researcher am looking for and what I can offer. One person I met in Grassy Narrows was vocal in his criticism of anthropologists and "Indian experts" who come and just hang around.

One of the ways that Native Studies research differs from 'disciplined' research is that it involves developing longer-term relationships with a community. The researcher develops a personal vested interest in the people and place where they work. Ideally, the demands of the academy are secondary to the needs of the community. The relationship I have with people in Grassy Narrows cannot be taken for granted or compromised because these relationships will continue long after I meet my commitments to academia. Maybe I can use my time in academia on behalf of a community who see some benefit to that arrangement, rather than the conventional use of a community for some vaguely conceived ideal of the betterment-of-humanity by stockpiling knowledge (a big pile of theses). It took me two years to be able to articulate whatever purpose I thought I might have to the Clan mothers.

My objectives as a researcher have to be negotiable and flexible. I have to be willing to set aside what I want from the research relationship in order to prioritize the building of that relationship, despite the demands of university bureaucrats. Smith writes about this as the "many levels of entry which must be negotiated." She writes that "indigenous researchers speak of the long-term relationships which are established and extend beyond a research relationship to one involving families, communities, organizations and networks" (15). Approval and permission for my research does not come from the elected band leadership and the ethics committee alone. It must come from many different family members and community leaders in Grassy Narrows, from

other students who talk to me about my research, from my family and community, and from my department and thesis committee. This is a continual process and never really ends. This is likely the main reason why ethical research and the demands of an academic institution, not to mention the demands of every researcher's insular, busy life, are so rarely reconciled. I have partially succeeded. I feel assured that the relationships I have built in Grassy Narrows are ones that will continue to grow. I am writing about Grassy Narrows based on a shared trust with people there that I will do so with care and respect.

On the other hand, I have found myself missing opportunities to have and give time with the people I know in Grassy Narrows because of obligations that I have in my own life. Working with other communities is always a challenge because our own communities need us too. Which, as Memmi argues, is the reason why the colonizer who refuses is ultimately still the colonizer who accepts. In his view, compromises are a capitulation to colonization's order and we are in a compromised position by working in communities that are not our own. Of course, the alternative of ignoring any community but our own is not a resolution. The point is be aware of the compromises that are being made and challenge them.

I have some other basic responsibilities to the people in Grassy Narrows that have been part of my research. One is to ensure that the information gleaned is given back to the community in the most accessible way that can be imagined. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the knowledge that she holds, is reported back not just to the select few who officially endorsed the study, but to the whole community. Smith refers to a criticism from Haunani Kay Trask who "accuses anthropologists of being "takers and users""(1999; 67). Another element of decolonized research addresses the convention of arriving as if collecting specimens for the Royal Botanical Gardens, then leaving, never to return. Being transparent about the goals and methods of research is an important part of making this research useful, relevant to the people in that community and of being respectful of those communities. However, approval and transparency are perhaps the

minimal first step. A personal relationship of any kind entails the take and also the give. Aside from a conscientious relinquishing of some degree of control over the direction of the research, there is also a responsibility to contribute to the community while I am accepting its hospitality.

Something to consider when getting involved in a community is that I become someone who is no longer neutral. One of the underlying assumptions of science is the idea of the observer, an imaginary passive role of recording what is seen. The idea is that the observer remains detached in order to be objective. The idea of the objective observer has been dismantled in recognition that history is always a subjective narrative, one of many. Acknowledging my subjectivity as a researcher can place me in a complicated position where, as someone involved in what is happening, I am expected to be explicit about my opinions on what is happening in a community. It is not possible to choose to remain neutral on issues that are dividing a community. I may disagree with with a plan for economic development that benefits only an elite few within the community, for example. This quickly becomes ethically difficult territory. But, I think that attempting to remain objective looks suspicious and may ultimately mean that I am of no use to anyone in the community.

That summer, I ultimately decided that the best way to spend time in Grassy Narrows for that week was to do physical labour around the blockade site. I was new. The political situation that I was there to learn about and eventually write about is (as always) tangled. It didn't make sense to start asking questions, to start by talking and making demands, but there was a lot of fire wood to be cut. It gave me a reason to be there, allowed people to approach me when they wanted to, gave me time to consider my place there, and made some tangible contribution. It also began the building of a relationship through the give and take of the many conversations I had with people during those evenings by the fire. As I have come to understand, this is what Native studies research looks like.

One aspect of decolonizing research is the particular attention to the contribution being made to the Indigenous community being researched. This takes the form of “giving back to the community,” working collaboratively, giving control of the project to the community, and engaging in projects that are of value to those communities. Done with the requisite time, humility, reflexivity, and respect, this allows research in Indigenous communities by non-Indigenous researchers to be ethically responsible and avoids the colonial enterprise of positivist research. It does, however, leave a non-Indigenous researcher in a privileged position as a holder of knowledge. This too needs to be addressed.

Smith writes that a question that she often hears coming from people being researched is: “Why do they always think by looking at us they will find the answers to our problems, why don’t they look at themselves” (198)? Elsewhere she observes that, “many researchers, even those with the best of intentions, frame their research in ways that assume that the locus of a particular research problem lies with the indigenous individual or community rather than with other social or structural issues” (92).

Research wherein a non-Indigenous researcher arrives in a community to contribute to a community, where this contribution is possible because the researcher has access to the means to effect public opinion or policy because of an advantageous social position, are still in some way upholding a hegemonic system. The researcher protects their role as spokesperson, translator, advocate, and intermediary. It is certainly an important part of this kind of research to be aware, not only of my own societal position, but also of the larger “social or structural issues” within which my research is possible. One effective way to do this is to focus research on the unequal distribution of power and the dominant society itself. Any research that examines the effects of colonization, must also be an examination of colonization itself. This seems to be the standard for Native Studies research. One role that Native Studies can play in this, as a non-discipline, is to critique the epistemologies of academia. Any research involving Indigenous communities

must also be aware of colonialist assumptions. As Smith points out, the 'Indian problem' still has to be de-problematized, and understood in its larger social context.

For my own decolonizing research (research which I am in the process of making decolonial), I may involve myself in a specific Indigenous community, but my focus must also include the study of my social, legal, historical, and political context, as someone who continues to gain from the advantages of an unequal relationship. It is a process of decolonizing myself, while at the same time attempting to decolonize the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, recognizing that it is a relationship between people. It is not possible for Native people themselves to change the nature of this relationship, but so far most of the effort toward reconciliation and diplomacy has come from Native people (and been continually undervalued or ignored). In the same way that it must be understood that all Canadians are signatories to Indian treaties, I think it is necessary to understand that we are all involved in the colonial/decolonizing relations between us.

they could research themselves but they probably wouldn't want to do that
because they already know the results they live them they are them
and they probably wouldn't want the results to be published for public readership
they probably wouldn't even want the results to reach their own consciousnesses

(Cole 2004; 22)

The phrase "decolonizing methodologies" generally has one of two meanings, as Smith has used it. One where we actively seek to move attitudes and practices toward being decolonized. Another where it is recognized that this is a process that is in progress, where the methodologies are being decolonized. How we decolonize methodologies and methodologies that are somewhere in this process. A third meaning that could be attributed would be to infer that these are methods for decolonizing our own ways of thinking and being. In all cases it refers to a process, somewhere between colonialism and a more ethical, respectful, inclusive, and critical relationship. Social science research is also a relationship between people and by removing the idea of object and subject – so that these categories are dissolved into something less-easily defined, but

more equitable in its relations of power – we restore the humanity of research and mitigate its conquest of knowledge.

Smith emphasizes that the very word “research” is stigmatized in Indigenous communities, conceptually inseparable from colonization and imperialism. She writes that research has to be “ethical and respectful,” “reflexive and critical.” She adds, “it also needs to be humble” (1). These are sound tenets for decolonizing method.

For researchers attempting to conscientiously understand what we offer Indigenous communities in this context, Smith offers some suggestions. She lists 25 “projects,” which are ways of decolonizing the way Indigenous research is conducted. Smith is writing her book for Indigenous researchers, but acknowledges that some non-Indigenous researchers may be listening in. Of the 25 types of Indigenous research projects she lists, there are some in which I feel I have a role, as a non-Indigenous researcher, and others where I feel I do not. For example, it is not my place to take part in research aimed at “indigenizing,” “representing,” or “testimonies.” But of the research projects Smith lists, the ones where I can take a role include: storytelling, intervening, reframing, connecting, reading, writing, gendering, and naming. Responding to these suggestions for ways to engage in research, I will outline a framework for some of the specific methods I will use.

One reflexive device is to ask myself how my research is any different from those who perpetuate a colonial relationship through their research. Anastasia Shkilnyk’s *A Poison Stronger than Love: the Destruction of an Ojibway Community* is notorious in Grassy Narrows. People in Asubpeeschoseewagong have expressed to me their longstanding desire for someone to “debunk” Shkilnyk’s salvage ethnography. It is important that Anastasia Shkilnyk’s book about Grassy Narrows be addressed. Some of what Shkilnyk portrays as destruction can be better understood as resistance from a decolonizing perspective. The lines between destruction and resistance are certainly blurry, even in instances of self-destruction. The causes of destruction become more

complicated if it is acknowledged that even suicide is not an individual act. Seen in this light, her work must be recognized as research into the justification of colonization. *A Poison Stronger than Love* prompts inquiry into the way we do social research. It offers a case study of research that perpetuates colonial processes and compels me to consider my place and the way I do research in Grassy Narrows. It demands a response.

This is the kind of research to which Smith and Cole seem to be responding, but they too want a reply. In the pages that follow, in outlining my own decolonizing research in praxis, I would like to imagine another dialogue by juxtaposing Smith's writing and Shkilnyk's (along with a few interlopers). I will use those of Smith's 'projects' that are instructive to me as a non-Native researcher to frame a critique of *A Poison Stronger than Love* while considering my own methods.

a poison . . .

Shkilnyk initially spent one winter in Grassy Narrows in 1976- 1977 working on a DIAND project on how to "alleviate the economic disruption caused by mercury pollution" (1). She confesses that she had read about the loss of commercial fisheries in the paper, but "knew very little about Canadian Indians and even less about the Ojibwa" (1). Shkilnyk writes that she saw in Grassy Narrows an opportunity to "bring my knowledge and experience in the Third World to the problem of underdevelopment in my own country," though admittedly soon saw the shortcomings of this approach (3). She returned the following autumn to work for the band as a community planner and as a researcher for a mediation process between the band and the provincial government. At the end of this term, Shkilnyk left because of "burnout" and took another job with DIAND, writing a report on the relocation of Grassy Narrows in the early 1960s.

storytelling

vis à vis aboriginal languages being saved on paper
words being pressed onto clearcut forests arranged in reams seams spines
bindings in the translation of transcription of spoken sounds rhythms
what becomes of ambiguity playful misdirection trickster discourse
gesture eye contact being in good relation with
audience participation breathing the same air

(Cole 2006; 48-9)

Part of the reflexivity involved in Native Studies research is seen in the way personal experiences become part of the written texts produced. Narrative is intrinsic to most work in Native Studies. Stories and their telling are also incorporated into the writing of my own research. In his discussion of the prominence of a narrative style in many Native Studies works Kulchyski writes, “the forms of these narratives, the manner in which they are told as well as the multiple meanings enfolded within, comprise much of the substance of thought and inquiry within Native Studies” (2000; 17). In this sense, I am able to build my arguments through layers of narrative and reflexivity, as well as through a more conventional use of the literature and ‘fieldwork.’

There are several reasons for a narrative style. First, it is more accessible to a reader. Native Studies narrative writing is occasionally apocryphal, rich with meanings, but it is accessible. We all recognize a story. This relates to another of Smith’s 25 projects, which is “returning,” by which she means that the knowledge that has been commandeered by Western institutions is returned to the people from whom it came. The approachability of a narrative style helps to ensure that what is being returned is familiar, rather than interpreted and jargoned beyond repair. This idea reminds me of a National Film Board video I once saw of Claude Levi Strauss in the Royal BC Museum, explaining Haida ‘artifacts’ (masks) to a Haida carver, using his structuralist analyses. The carver disagreed, and told the story of the figure depicted. Levi Strauss corrected the carver and moved on to the next artifact. I am also reminded of a friend who lent out his

brand new copy of *Down and out in Paris and London* and had it returned to him burnt and soaked.

In her book, Shkilnyk quotes at length a description of life on the old reserve given to her by Maggie Land, a woman from a prominent Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe family. It is a rich and personal portrait of Land's life. What Shkilnyk does with this life story is vandalism. She categorically dissects Land's history, discarding most of what she has been told, and narrowly sorting what is left under a few anthropological terms, all neatly boxed up and set aside. Shkilnyk demonstrates a condescending admiration for Land's understanding of "economic activities" and "the quest for food," "marriage taboos," and "close ties with the natural world." She misses an opportunity to observe the limits of her own understanding of life in Grassy Narrows, something that could offer a counternarrative to the 'destruction' of a community. Instead, she situates Land as a quaint artifact from a past that is lost, adding dramatic effect to the story of Grassy Narrows' ruination, as Shkilnyk insists on telling it.

Second, an overtly narrative style is a subtle acknowledgment that decolonizing research recognizes Western ideology as a complex, entrenched set of overarching narratives. By responding to the dominant narrative with stories, alternative epistemologies are brought to the attention of the dominant society in a form that is widely shared across cultures. At the same time, Native Studies works that use this form of 'data' are revealing that the data used in social sciences or sciences are essentially just another way of telling a story. For research that relies on concepts of justice, ethics, equality, and sharing, communication of these concepts is most effectively made by example. Native studies research widens what counts as knowledge to include anecdotal evidence, spirituality, "bush encounters," paradox, and parables.

In *A Poison stronger than love*, certain types of knowledge are given more value than others, creating a narrowly Western understanding of something as profoundly complex as a community struggling with colonization. The language favoured betrays

Shkilnyk's bias for her own culture's ways of knowing. When talking about the history of Grassy Narrows, Shkilnyk writes that people in Grassy Narrows "like to say" and "feel" certain aspects of their history, which she juxtaposes with the "historical evidence" to create two contrasting versions of Grassy Narrows' history (54). She later indicates that her understanding of the history of the old reserve, before the community was relocated, comes from speaking to Elders in the community. This is the only passage in the book where she provides a disclaimer to say that the words of the person she is quoting are "highly subjective," and that the "actual" and "ideal," "memory" and "desire" are indistinguishable. The outsider perceptions of authorities such as teachers, police, priests, and government agents are never given the same disclaimers undermining their validity. While the inclusion of two different ways of understanding a history does indicate a departure from the more 'scientific' approach of early 20th century anthropology and history, the presentation of one as a feeling and the other as scientific evidence, situates the former as decoration and the latter as knowledge. She exemplifies the racism of this bias, by stressing the subjectivity of Native historical experts, but accepting the narratives of teachers, bureaucrats, and clergy as authoritative. A way of decolonizing this type of research is to recognize the singular expertise of the people who have lived experience and to value these tellings of history as knowledge. It is also then necessary to expose our own storytelling as subjective, whether this telling is through statistical data, photographs, or transcribed interviews. One way to do this is to include our own stories, to widen the lens far enough to include the photographer taking the picture. A narrative implicitly includes the teller. This means, as Kulchyski emphasizes, that a narrative form itself gives away the secret that what is being read is someone's interpretation, whether that person is an elder, or the academic.

Further, Emma LaRocque has brought attention to the idea that 'traditional knowledge' is routinely seen as dead or dying, as something to be preserved (2000). Storytelling counters this idea as a practice and form of knowledge that is, in its essence,

vital. If orality itself is understood as a form of knowledge, then the idea that traditional knowledge is living and present is understood.

Third, a narrative style is a challenge to the formal academic standard of writing, creating a style of writing that recalls a feel of orality. This serves to mitigate the privileging of the written word in academia to some extent and reminds the reader that writing is not so different from speaking, that it only indicates experience.

language can lead us toward or away from spirit

(Cole 46; 2006)

she is speaking and crying which I guess are a single activity sharing a single verb
(ibid.; 182)

intervening

Part of decolonizing methodologies is listening and responding, rather than observing. Research has to be a relationship of give and take, not of scrutinizing and interrogating. For me, this is the main contribution I can make to a community like Grassy Narrows, to continually listen and then convey those lessons of resistance and cooperation that I keep learning there. Studying and describing the ways Canada, as a state and as a society, continues its colonial interactions with Native peoples is a necessary part of this. There are also, I suspect, ways of understanding colonization (and our role in it) that non-Indigenous peoples can only begin to understand through longterm dialogue with Indigenous resisters.

Smith calls intervening “changing the institutions that deal with Indigenous people.” This project has a lot of potential for collaboration between those who live with the institutions and infrastructure that delivers their services and those who are still in some ways responsible for these institutions and infrastructure.

As James Waldram points out in his review, Shkilnyk uses statistics and figures provided by the government of Canada with an alarming amount of faith, “The data

speak for themselves,” she writes (152). Of course, the data do not inherently speak for themselves, they speak for Indian Affairs, so that they can conduct their business. They are used to justify inadequate funding or paternalistic interventions on reserves. Too often, the statistics are the entirety of Shkilnyk’s analysis. When she resorts to her ‘what about the children?’ argument, she uses documented interventions of Child Welfare as an indication of the severity of the problem (10). The problem with this is that it uses the ethnocentric standards of the dominant society to measure child welfare and to justify almost any intervention on the grounds that these people are savages. These statistics and Shkilnyk’s reading of these statistics characterizes people in Grassy Narrows as less than human, as people who are sociopathic enough to be utterly indifferent about caring for other people. This creates a perception of a need for any type of intervention, even reestablishing a residential school, as Shkilnyk advocates. The effect of these policies is to establish a relationship of dependence in perpetuity by reinforcing the message that the people in Grassy Narrows are not capable of caring for themselves. Therefore, Shkilnyk is part of an industry made viable by continually creating a need for itself. This does not allow her to be critical of her own position, which is a responsibility of a researcher. Smith writes that decolonization “is now recognized as a long-term process involving bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic, and psychological divesting of colonial power” (98). This includes the power of defining and representing Native people in terms of government statistics and myths of savages.

Shkilnyk makes superficial mention of ethnocentricities that might skew how Grassy Narrows is viewed, but tends to assume in the end that her perceptions are probably accurate. She admittedly has not thought through the meaning of her data or her position. She writes, “even though I was committed intellectually to seeing things from the inside, I still had to rely on my developed senses of perception, ways of knowing, and value system to guide both my observation of present conditions and my analysis of past experience” (3). Elsewhere she notes that the statistics of CAS might be inadequate, but

rather than consider their ethnocentric basis, assumes that they “do not reveal the full extent of the problem” (38). She argues that resident teachers observe that “their own background and upbringing influence their perception,” but she ultimately ignores the fact that the perceptions (of white people) are ‘influenced’ and relies heavily on their observations to portray Grassy Narrows. She quotes one teacher at length to establish her claim of “pervasive child neglect:” This teacher claims that at the age of four, mothers cut their children off from care (39). A claim that she does not investigate any further, or qualify as one person’s biased view, or consider any further whatsoever. It is noted as fact, even though this is not a human behaviour anywhere.

Shkilnyk’s refusal to be more self-critical easily becomes an exoneration of colonial institutions. Her uncritical acceptance of her own position, leads to her uncritical acceptance of those who think like her. At times, Shkilnyk seems to be downplaying the impact of interventions by the federal government, particularly the impact of the relocation. She makes a loose comparison to other reserves that have been relocated, yet do not stand out for their disfunction the way Grassy Narrows did at that time. In response to a quote from an unnamed resident who identifies the relocation as the cause of the changes in their community, Shkilnyk writes that the people of Grassy Narrows “blame the relocation for the change . . . yet, similar changes in the political life of Indian reserve communities occurred elsewhere in Canada as a result of Indian administration policy. In the case of Grassy Narrows, relocation was simply the physical event that captured, symbolized, and manifested government policy in action” (101). Perhaps her intent here is to broaden the blame to government policy more generally, but she is refuting the way people in Grassy Narrows understand their own lives and ignoring what they are telling her. In terms of research methodology, she is omitting one set of data (from the people who know more about the situation than anyone else), and accepting another set of data that is likely biased in at least two significant ways: the ethnocentrism

of the observers and the economic gain and political control to be had from data that supports the status quo.

my experience says coyote is that it takes time for white people to figure that out they don't can't get it because if they did get it the system would have to change the way funding is awarded the way research is done

(Cole 2004; 22)

A responsibility I take on as a researcher is to push myself to be as vigilant and open as possible in showing these types of differences in social position in order to critique a system that allows someone like me to succeed, simply by complying. At the same time, it must be recognized that this contribution is possible because the researcher has privileged access in institutions of power because of a particular societal position. A simple example is that I have less reason than a Native person does to fear police retribution for being outspoken or visible at a political demonstration.

To say that I know this system well is only partially true. I am so much a part of it, that separating what parts are me and what parts are my environment is a very complex task. Reflexivity is not a separate part of my thesis, but is a continual aspect of what I write. This includes identifying and discussing aspects of my position that make me uncomfortable, that undermine my comfort and unseat me from that inherited legacy. I must acknowledge the power that I have resulting from gross systematic racism that is maintained by me to the extent that I cooperate. I need to avoid creating a need for myself in Native communities. I consider this system to be a necessary part of the object of my analysis, so that I can identify the relationships of power that are present and identify how these are colonizing institutions. This kind of research can contribute to the indigenizing of Native governing practices by recognizing that they do not need non-Native people. Maybe we are invited to participate, or maybe we are respectfully listening in, but the role we play in "intervening" is in learning when not to, and to participate in our own institutions (including universities) accordingly.

reframing

What Smith describes as reframing is a way of undermining the ethnocentric assumptions that turn the pathologies of colonization into the “Indian problem,” or protest into “militancy.” Reframing is about challenging the terms of the dominant discourse surrounding Native people and their lives. Smith writes that reframing occurs “where indigenous people resist being boxed and labelled according to categories which do not fit” (153). I would add that the categories Native people are assigned are also not their own, much less the idea of categorizing at all. As non-Native researchers, our role is to respect the names and descriptions that people use for themselves. This is one reason why I use the Anishinaabe name, Asubpeeschoseewagong, when it fits. In fact, reframing is significant to all of Smith’s ‘projects.’ Changing the terms of the discourse has the potential to create a shared vocabulary. More will be said about this in relation to naming and writing, but there are some elements of Shkilnyk’s work which demonstrate the flaws of a confined, ethnocentric view.

First, Shkilnyk does not really understand what racism means. She describes Kenora before the 1950s as a place where “only a handful” of Native people were living, but insists that they were welcome there, even when she adds that there were “no real opportunities for Indians to participate in the economy” (124). When Shkilnyk lists some of the demands of the Ojibway Warriors Society in their 1974 occupation of Anishinabe Park they include: more job opportunities in town, an “end to discrimination by the townspeople,” and “an end to police brutality and harassment” (125). It is naive of Shkilnyk to assume that these kinds of problems had arrived and escalated to the point of an armed occupation in the twenty years that had elapsed since the 1950s. It is also naive not to consider how welcoming a town economically and socially dominated by white people would feel to people from the surrounding reserves.

She does not say much about the occupation, apparently because she does not understand the reasons for it, which leads to another of the gaping omissions in

Shkilnyk's book, resistance. She tells stories of resistance, but does not frame them as such and remains unaware of their significance.

One example is the story of Pierre Taypaywaykejick, who went ahead and built his house outside of the allotted area for the new reserve, despite threats from the allegorically named Indian Agent, Eric Law. Law was convinced that Taypaywaykejick was trying to inspire dissent. All Law could do as the Indian Agent was make Taypaywaykejick pay for his house himself, which he did. In reflecting on this story at the end of her chapter, Shkilnyk unconsciously follows the thinking of Law by assuming that rules of the federal government would inevitably be imposed, and that this order would be established. She writes that it was "impossible to challenge the system" because the Indian Agent had so much power, yet Taypaywaykejick had done just that! Law tried to exercise an authority that proved to be meaningless and Taypaywaykejick had shown that his rights still stood, as they always had. In a footnote, Shkilnyk points out that people in Grassy Narrows resisted the move for a year, while the houses on the new reserve remained empty. She footnotes it, but continues the story she insists on telling of people being crushed by progress.

This conveys a significant difference between the way I see Grassy Narrows, the way I read Shkilnyk's account of Grassy Narrows, and the way Shkilnyk and others see Grassy Narrows. Where I see resistance and cultural persistence, Shkilnyk sees helpless victims of destruction. Here her ethnocentrism takes on another dimension. She recognizes that social norms are not the same in Grassy Narrows as in her own society, but still seems to use the standard of the dominant society as a measure, "In our society, high offense rates are widely accepted as an indicator of deteriorating social conditions" (25), but in this context these "offense rates" could equally be seen as an indicator of racial profiling, or of social unrest. Smith writes that many indigenous activists have argued that, "mental illness, alcoholism, and suicide are not about psychological and individualized failure but about colonization or lack of collective self-determination"

(153). Shkilnyk's treatment of alcohol in Grassy Narrows is certainly not as thorough as she launches into a racist discussion about the "way in which Indians use alcohol," not just in Grassy Narrows, but "in Indian communities across the country" (20). Her opinion is based on a study published by the "Addiction Research Foundation" and by her own surveys and observations about alcohol use. Maybe one of the reasons Shkilnyk's analysis is so narrow is her fixation on the single symptom of alcohol use.

The most significant difference between these two ways of framing these social issues is the responsibilities it places on the researcher. For Shkilnyk, these changes were inevitable (racially inherent, no less) and are finished. Nothing more can be done. For Smith and others, these changes are continually challenged and subverted, and create the responsibility to listen and respond. Declaring something over is a way to say that nothing can be done. It loses sight of the continual creative processes involved in reviving and renewing traditional practices. It emphasizes the loss of a way of life, leaving no room for the possibility of its persistence in new ways, as is now happening in Grassy Narrows. What Shkilnyk describes as a "world beyond their control" (80) is not, of course. Again, describing the world as beyond their control maintains the perception that this is a relationship of dependency.

Not only does Shkilnyk spread the notion that people in Grassy Narrows are not self-reliant (self-governing), she argues that their previous self-sufficient lifeways did not survive the relocation and were hardly better even if they had. She claims that a lack of government involvement would mean "a constant struggle to eke out a subsistence living from the land," noting that this way of life "was not an easy one" (121). Elsewhere she claims that the structures of extended family did not survive the relocation (84). Of course, these family ties may be more enduring than she realizes, though subtle and difficult to discern. Throughout the book, one of the tragic elements for her is the fact that traditions have not been retained in some sort of 'pure' form, which undervalues and ignores the recreation of these traditions in new forms (107). While Shkilnyk may be

right in observing that the needs met by family, such as caring for those without food or shelter, have fallen more to an impersonal bureaucracy, this is due more to the imposition of bureaucracy than to the dissolution of family bonds, which are still relevant in Grassy Narrows today.

In general, she seems to assume that her recording of it brings the story of Grassy Narrows to a close. She writes about Grassy Narrows in the past tense. To her, it is not a living thing, it is a fable. Ethnographies tend to confine their subjects to a moment in time, but she never acknowledges a future for Grassy Narrows. It is entirely possible that someone could conclude from her book that Grassy Narrows is gone.

connecting

Ultimately, in a broad, indeterminate way, the purpose of my project is to support assertions of Aboriginal rights. Elizabeth Furniss (1999) has shown that racist attitudes among the non-Aboriginal population of Williams Lake, BC have had a negative impact for Aboriginal people in institutionalized forms, such as schools, law enforcement, and the Court. In the *Delgamuukw*' Supreme Court case it was MacEachern's conceptualization of the lives of savages that won out over days of testimony by the world's leading authorities on Gitxan history and culture, the Gitxan Elders. Smith recognizes that much of the writing being done about Indigenous histories is being written primarily for a non-Indigenous judiciary or non-Indigenous policy-makers. This means that a lot of research in Native communities is being conducted with intention of influencing the way these communities are viewed by outsiders. Connecting, according to Smith, is "about establishing good relations" (149). She writes that, "researchers, policy makers, educators, and social service providers who work with or whose work impacts on indigenous communities need to have a critical conscience about ensuring that their activities connect in humanizing ways with indigenous communities" (ibid.). It should be

noted that in Canada, everyone in these fields is doing work that impacts on Indigenous communities in some way, particularly just by maintaining the status quo.

Certainly, Shkilnyk's research in Grassy Narrows lead smoothly into her employment as an "Indian expert" for the federal government, but did not further the assertion of the rights of people in Grassy Narrows. It contributed to the way Grassy Narrows was viewed, but likely affirmed what many people already assumed. This perpetuates a colonial relationship. Should non-Native people be writing about Native communities at all? Maybe not. But if not, what is lost? I do believe that it is necessary for non-Native researchers to look at our predecessors to uncover where they have made mistakes. This way, we might learn how to write about the communities where we do research and show that we are able to understand. This is a challenging project, as Smith attests. This type of research responds to the Native communities in which we work, who might see that they have been heard. It seeks to confirm some commonality.

The ways of thinking and the ways of doing things being a process of everyday experience. In this way, culture can be seen as a process, and language can be seen as one of the receptacles and vehicles by which the process is shared, transmitted, learned.

(Jeanette Armstrong in Cole 2006; 297)

The following points relate to the few ideas about governance that are raised by Shkilnyk, and provide a contrast between this analysis and the assumptions she makes. The way governance is conventionally understood by policy makers, the judiciary, and policy makers is a barrier to negotiating or respecting Indigenous forms of government. Shkilnyk views Indigenous forms of government as a sort of interim, ad hoc measure that existed in lieu of actual government. She writes that indigenous forms of social order were necessary because of their isolation, leaving them with a lack of "prescribed rules" and the "machinery of government (95). Another of the assumptions Shkilnyk makes is that government entails a coercive power, that people need to be controlled by fear. In Grassy Narrows, she claims, people believed in supernatural powers because the fear of these powers maintained social order in the same way that fear of punishment is used as a

means of control in Canadian society (97). She transcribes a story of supernatural power about harm coming to someone who touches a sacred item belonging to another clan. My view is that Shkilnyk was not sure how to deal with a story like this, and being unable to place it, reduced it to this observation: "One has to wonder how the people of Grassy Narrows can ever achieve a high degree of mutual cooperation and trust when their outlook continues to be colored by the expectation of covert malevolence from other clan groups. . . Such attitudes obviously have a bearing on the nature of politics and government in the Indian community" (98-9). She does not openly call these supernatural beliefs into question, but blames people for being so suspicious of each other. She considers this another reason for their failure to 'pull themselves together.' Obviously, conflict and cooperation can coexist. Surely Shkilnyk can imagine institutions or communities where there is internal conflict, but a shared pursuit of common objectives. This story of the sacred object could more plausibly be about knowing your place and respecting the sacred spaces of others. Perhaps this is even why the story was told to her. Native communities are often criticized for their internal divisions, even though Indigenous forms of government, when being allowed to function, are better equipped to deal with disagreement than anything that exists in a Western democracy. What if the governing institutions of Asubpeeschoseewagong are the sacred object that belongs to someone else in this story?

Related to connecting is the problem of translation. Even if all of our conversations are in English, there is a process of translation happening. This is a difficult and significant problem. One of the reasons that the needs of reserve communities are not met is that their needs are always translated into areas that correspond with the municipal departments of a non-Native town. For government bureaucracies then, the question to be answered by negotiations is how much funding each of these departments needs in order to function according to a model that is not a reserve and is not based on Indigenous

concepts. Shkilnyk gives a perfect example of one of these sorts of translations, when she relates a time in Grassy Narrows where:

the chief asked both [the provincial and federal] governments to give top priority to helping the community develop economic self-reliance and self-government. In his presentation, he identified three critical requirements: a land and resource base, a development fund, and education and skill training. In our terms, the Grassy Narrows people simply asked for the basic building blocks of development -- land, capital, and investment in human resources.

(227)

Shkilnyk's interpretation of "a land and resource base" is simply "land," but there is a difference. The chief's words are likely already a translation into the terms that government ministries understand, but probably reflect something closer to traditional use of the land, than ownership of real estate. Similarly, "a development fund" is misconstrued as "capital," and "education and skill training" becomes "investment in human resources" to Shkilnyk. A lengthy quote that follows, elucidates the chief's meaning when he describes his community's demands in terms like: "our children having a better life," "good teachers to teach the Indian language," "compensation [that would] make us less dependent on government," and "productive land and resources, so that people who want to live the Indian way have a chance to do that" (227- 28). Only a capitalist interpretation could render these demands as capital and labour. Even from the quotes she uses, no one standing in Grassy Narrows could agree with Shkilnyk's interpretation of these words.

One of the most misunderstood concepts of Aboriginal cultures is the idea of ownership or property. Again and again, Canada's occupation of this land is widely justified with the claim that Native people did not "own" the land because they had no concept of ownership. To clarify this concept, a distinction must be made between individual ownership and the idea of family or clan rights. The idea that the rights of certain families to use a very specific place or resource is not the same as private property, but it was just as important as a governing concept. Not that this idea needs

proving, but Shkilnyk herself quotes “a seventy-year-old elder” who said, “It wasn’t private property, but it was a sense of place, your place, your force around you” (173). In this case, Shkilnyk seems to understand this idea, but again predicates her understanding of Asubpeeschoseewagong governance in Western terms, “In spite of the lack of a concept of private property among the Ojibwa, one cannot fail to observe distinct areas of the old reserve that once belonged to individual clans” (66). A people’s understanding of their own governance concepts is not a lack of Westernness. This way of translating culture, by measuring it against our own, and insisting on imposing our own terms, is a way of categorizing for ourselves, rather than an attempt to find a common language.

reading

... we were identified as being prehistorical
because we spoke together and listened rather than spending our time scratching out
meaning secondhand (. . .)
we had iteratur iterati we were iterate

(Cole 54; 2006)

Reading in Native Studies takes on a much broader meaning in two ways. First, as Penny Petrone articulates in the introduction of her edited volume of Native literature, the West’s tendency to privilege the written has meant that oral literature has not been given the same consideration as written literature, and was for the most part, not even recognized as literature (1990; 3). In Native Studies the idea of what constitutes literature is more fully developed to include the oral literature and written literature of Native people. Second, it requires a rethinking of the idea of writing, or of texts. Kulchyski, following Derrida, argues that the long-standing distinction between literate and non-literate peoples is an ethnocentric myth. All people are understood to be literate if we get past the ethnocentric notion that a text is limited to words written on the page. In the same way that a written word is a signifier, so too is an inuksuk, tracks, ripples in the water, a facial expression, the movement of clouds, a doorway, a gesture, or a song. Reading in a decolonizing mode involves critical thought on the bodies of knowledge that

comprise Western ways of knowing. The importance of listening has been mentioned, but this includes reading the voices of Indigenous writers. This broadens the body of work from which my own writings take shape, and further breaks down the barriers between Indigenous and non-Indigenous, often maintained by the academy.

It is for this reason that I prefer to imagine my research method as a broadly conceived type of reading, rather than as participant observation. This anthropological method places too much emphasis on the problematic idea of the objective observer. Besides which, in my opinion, it is too high falootin' a term for something like clearing brush with people at Keys Lake or eating ice cream in Kenora while paying attention.

To show how this type of ethnographic work by white researchers in an Indigenous community can look, Julie Cruikshank is one noteworthy example. Reading Cruikshank, there is a clear sense that the relationships she has built with people in the Yukon communities where she works are still active and alive. In contrast to Shkilnyk, it can be surmised that maybe one of the reasons Shkilnyk has proclaimed Grassy Narrows a destroyed community is that she never looked back. Grassy Narrows is over in her mind. This description is a confession that she succumbed to hopelessness or self-interest. How else could she justify to her reader and to herself that she witnessed a desperate situation, described it, then left? As researchers, maybe we maintain an air of objectivity because, with our busy lives back home, we are not willing to take on the responsibilities of being in relationship. This explains why for so long, anthropological research described people who are not us. This 'objectivity' was the racism that allowed us to say that nothing could be done. Shkilnyk came from an era in need of new excuses, where it could be acknowledged that these people are us, that they could be helped for a time, but ultimately that it is too late. While Cruikshank's work speaks to a universality of human experience, in the ways that stories define us all, Shkilnyk creates an artificial divide. By claiming, with some empathy, that any of us would respond the same way to this kind of social turmoil, she still sets herself and the reader back far enough from the suffering to

allow us to think, “thankfully, that’s not me.” But it is. Shkilnyk never reminds us of this and never reflects on where she stands. She describes Grassy Narrows as an isolated phenomenon, not even as a cautionary tale, just as a fateful tragedy.

writing

writing is a kind of fixed soundless often contextless speech
we spell by speaking pronouncing doing rather than striving to replicate essence

(Cole 2006; 53)

Writing is a complex action. In considering my research methods, it is necessary to list writing as one, though it is not widely recognized as such. I admit there are times, while writing, when I have surprised myself with something that I didn’t realize I knew until I wrote it out.

Mary Hermes distinguishes method from theory, but at the same time acknowledges the relationship between the two. She refers to a sort of feedback loop between method and theory wherein her methods continually changed to suit an evolving theory, while theories were formed out of her changing methods. Part of her approach involved embracing the “messy and confusing” process of research (Hermes 157).

The interesting thing about this style of writing, is that it must be considered a method. The aim of Hermes’ writing is to convey a means of approaching a “First Nations methodology” and she does this by making it explicit that her own notes and style of writing are a part of her methodology. Hermes shows that her methods had to change to respond to the specific needs of each situation. She includes her notes as her own internal subtext to her work. These can be considered to be approaching a “First Nations methodology” because it shows that she is able to respond to direction given by the people with whom she is working. But it also shows that writing itself responds to the process of her own thoughts, which is another reason why she includes them.

There is a good argument to be made that writing is its own method. New lines of thought are built in the process of putting ideas onto a page (or a screen). Donna Haraway

calls her style of writing “intuitive” (333), by which she means that she uses her writing to work through ideas that she admittedly does not yet fully grasp. This allows her to explore these ideas, but also means that the meanings that eventually come out of her writing remain open-ended or even ambiguous. As she thinks more about an idea, her written work is intentionally left open to various interpretations, even by her. This is part of her research method. She writes:

I like to write a sentence in such a way that — by the time you get to the end of it — it has at some level questioned itself. There are ways of blocking the closure of a sentence, or a whole piece, so that it becomes hard to fix its meanings... I am committed politically and epistemologically to stylistic work that makes it relatively harder to fix the bottom line.

(Haraway 333)

It should be pointed out here that Haraway specifies that this does not mean that writing is necessarily unclear, simply that it does not provide boundaries or perhaps, answers. I bring up Haraway’s points because she identifies what Mary Hermes, Emma LaRocque, Peter Cole and others have exemplified, that writing is in itself a method, one that recognizes the mutability of knowing and also of any text.

I try to use words so as to gesture to directions not common
to ucwalmicwts and english weave an alter/native text
whose direction cannot be scripted read written
broached breached beached abrogated interrogated exacerbated

(Cole 2006; 57)

Something acknowledged in Native Studies, is that categories and the names given to them are never that simple. As an example, I often use the instance where someone I encountered at a coffee shop in BC told me that his dog understands commands in “Indian, German, and white.” Nothing, particularly in talking about issues involving Native people in Canada, ever has a concrete category (or answer). As Cole points out, this recognizes the contradictions of knowledge, which makes it resistant to cooption or confinement.

Like Cole, Haraway points out that in recognizing writing as a method it allows us to write in a way that respects paradox, that leave questions open, and that avoids

establishing authoritative categories in an analysis. Categories can be written and used, but only in pencil, or with a nudge and a wink, maybe. This acknowledges that the writing itself is a part of the process of doing research. This also calls attention to the idea that written documents like the '*final report*' of the RCAP or the '*final agreement*' between the Nisga'a and the Crown freeze a relationship at a moment in time. Something that Shkilnyk has demonstrated by reducing Grassy Narrows to an historical allegory. One of the fundamental problems with her book is the finality of her judgements. By writing in the past tense and in declaring Grassy Narrows destroyed, Shkilnyk closes the door, leaving no room for anyone to take any further action. Worse, she leaves the reader feeling confident and comfortable with that inaction. Writing in a way that leaves room for interpretation carries the research further because questions are raised continually, the reader is forced to consider their role in that relationship, and the continuity of living time is implied beyond the page.

I set as my task to write for meaning rather than correctness
even at the risk of being misunderstood mis-taken
which is part of what language is all about — risk
negotiating meaning agency power relations

(Cole 2002; 450)

Cole recognizes in the way he writes that writing itself is so full of conventions of language and style that to write at all is an acceptance and compliance with a specific way of understanding the world, that of the colonizer. His writing not only presents his ideas through its content, but also through the way it is written. The praxis of his writing is in describing an Aboriginal epistemology by presenting how such an epistemology would look, simultaneously claiming and showing that writing itself represents a way of knowing. He also leaves the kind of ambiguity to which Donna Haraway refers without compromising clarity and meaning. His writing embodies the multiple facets that his topic demands. Cole writes about negotiation and relationship in his writing, but in such a way that the reader is so engaged in interpreting meaning(s) that there is a lively relational aspect of the writing.

language is such a powerful technology
it can bring together drive apart isolate in/to islands of 'truth'
archipelical cognizances depending on the tide grandmother moon
it can make us afraid of contradiction
make us believe in reason rather than reasons or synchronicity acausality stories

(Cole 46; 2006)

For this project, I strive to convey the paradoxes of research (and human interactions in general) through my writing. My intention is to make something as manipulative as the written word more honest by carrying through with the relational aspect of research right onto these pages, an imprint of a series of interactions in which I am involved.

with so many moving parts the english language suffers wear and tear
need for replacement parts and there's no guarantee
the words will be there when you get back
or mean the same thing as they did when the treaty was signed
or not signed

(Cole 51; 2006)

gendering

Colonialism effects men and women differently. To talk about colonialism without talking about gender is to embed sexism into this discourse. Women have been underrepresented, misrepresented, and endlessly represented. At the same time, their social roles have been limited and erased. It is also important to recognize, as Smith points out, the damage that has been done to gender relations through colonization. Gendering involves a self-critical evaluation of the role of gender politics in our own assumptions and the inclusion of gender relations in our analyses. As a research method, this will mean reflexivity in writing and an effort to use language that does not give priority to men's ideas, men's work, and men's roles. It also involves a critical eye in reading, identifying gendered language and looking for the other ways that women and the roles they play are defined, confined, or excluded.

Another aspect to this which is more complicated as a non-Indigenous person, is that Smith is able to talk about the particular roles of men and women in Indigenous

cultures, whereas I do not feel that this is my place. Of course I must recognize that there are cultural ideas about these roles, but these are not for me to analyse. In my own society I feel compelled to question socially-patterned gender roles, based on the idea that these roles are (or have been) so prescribed that they are oppressive. In her paper on culture and ethnic fundamentalism, Joyce Green attempts to separate the politics of cultural identities as resistance and the cultural or nationalist fundamentalism. She writes, "the challenge then is to retain the political space for resisting colonialism latent in cultural authenticity, while avoiding imposing social roles or racist or sexist boundaries for the community" (18). Trying to analyse gender roles in a culture that is not mine can lead to either imposing the gender roles of my own culture, as Shkilnyk does, or to assuming that what is oppressive in one society, must be oppressive in another. To digress, I suspect that the reason gender roles have become oppressive in Western societies is not something inherent to gender roles, but is due to the simultaneous collective forgetting of what these roles mean and the hegemonic attachment of other meanings.

Shkilnyk laments what she sees as the loss of culture in the 1970s generation of youth, "particularly women," she adds. Yet this is the generation of women in Grassy Narrows who have brought about the blockade and its concomitant assertion of older ways of living and being. Once again, Shkilnyk leaves the impression that she has been steeped in some of the ideas of the changing social sciences, without really absorbing what these ideas mean. In this instance, she is aware that 'modernization' effects men and women differently, but does not accurately describe what that entails. She does not give a gendered analysis, but notes in passing that such a thing could be relevant. The buzzwords of her time are there, but so is the botanist mentality of the salvage anthropologists who came before her time. In fact, her gender analysis has aspects of blame to it. For Shkilnyk, the situation that Grassy Narrows is made worse because women are not fulfilling their roles as caregivers. The effect of this is to place blame on women for the social problems in Grassy Narrows. While it may be that the destruction

of other support systems through colonial processes puts more pressure on women to play the role of caregiver, it is a mistake to be critical of women for not playing this role, particularly to the extent of damning the community as a whole. This is what Shkilnyk is lacking in her gender analysis. It is not just a question of looking at women too, it is also a question of looking at how colonial processes, including representing them, effect women. Smith indicates that an Indigenous feminism is a tenet of decolonization. Shkilnyk's analysis is neither an Indigenous one, nor a feminist one.

naming

Non-indigenous people play a role in naming by respecting the names that Indigenous people use. The terminology used in Native Studies is a visible indication of the political importance of words. There is a big difference between the Queen Charlotte Islands and Haida Gwaii. There is also a big difference between a "Treaty" and a "Final Agreement." Whereas "Grassy Narrows" is an Indian reserve as per the Indian Act of Canada, Asubpeeschoseewagong is the living relations between the people, their ancestors, and their land; unmappable, uncountable, inextinguishable, and immovable, since time immemorial. Naming is similar to "reframing" in that it tries to loosen the West's grip on deciding what counts as knowledge. At times it seems as though Shkilnyk is guilty of nothing more than just careless wording, which could be overlooked if such a thing were harmless. The words we use are significant, particularly in a colonial context, and we are required to be vigilant in considering how and why we use them. Here is one example of Shkilnyk's carelessness: "However painful this portrait may be to a people seemingly disfigured and broken in spirit by historical circumstance, it is the price they have to pay to make us understand their case for social justice"(10). Surely she does not mean that we all have a right to portray people as hopeless and desperate savages because it will help us understand justice . . . I hope. And she must recognize that

blaming “historical circumstance” is the most disingenuous kind of euphemism. Doesn’t she?

I have to assume that some of these are mistakes made in haste, but in other cases, there is less room for benefit of the doubt. The first example, already mentioned is the word “destroyed,” used in the title of her book and as the title for Chapter 1, “A Community Destroyed.” She calls life on the old reserve “primitive” (80). She frequently uses “Indians” when “people” could be used. She never once mentions “Asubpeeschoseewagong.” She assumes throughout that the reader is one of ‘her own people’ by using phrases like, “our own society,” or “our own children.” These examples all show that certain assumptions are being made about Grassy Narrows, but she never deconstructs these assumptions, even though they are the underlying ethic of her entire analysis. Semiotically, “destroyed” and “primitive” connote past tense and the inevitability of these primitives becoming past tense. We are reminded that these are not citizens or just people, they are Indians, and therefore different, other, not ‘us.’ This is not a people with its own names and language, this is a government-created, government-run reserve.

Another recurrent problem is that Shkilnyk does not name the Native speakers she quotes. Father Lacelle is named each time she quotes him, but Native people are always, “a resident,” “a 70-year-old elder,” “one band member,” “a band elder,” “say the old-timers,” or “the old people.” The book is full of quotes that are not attributed to anyone. This is an old criticism of anthropology, but maybe this reveals something about Shkilnyk’s background. She is not an anthropologist or even a social scientist. These disciplines have become more self-critical and continue to change. Shkilnyk is an urban planner. There is a sense throughout her book that she has a passing association with current social thought, but that it has not informed her approach. Another example is her use of social space as an analytical tool. She tries to consider the social impact of space, not because it proves to be a useful mode of analysis, but because it is an emerging

intellectual trend of her time. As a researcher, many of us talk about doing “research with,” rather than “research on” a particular community because this responds to critiques of how research is conducted. But making this a meaningful difference has more to do with the spirit of our research, than the letter. With the words I use, my intention is to be as true as possible to what my research actually says. As with Shkilnyk’s research, the words she uses say more about her research and her forgone conclusions than her actual results and her apparent conclusions do. My words need to reflect a respectful approach where everything is named its own name.

ever wonder what the difference is between eurocentrism and racism

(Cole 16; 2004)

epilogue

The epilogue of *A Poison* reads like the author is revealing the ‘moral’ of the story, which is fitting of the moralistic tone that characterizes the book as a whole. There is a sense throughout that Shkilnyk knows better what Grassy Narrows should have done, if only it were not too late. She proposes further study of the conditions that cause social upheaval, “to see if they might shed some light on the principal causes of breakdown at Grassy Narrows” (232). She exonerates the Canadian government for its policies. In her view the intention to “lead the Indian people to a fuller participation in Canadian society” is a worthwhile pursuit. The problem for her is that the good intentions of government bureaucrats went awry. For example, Shkilnyk claims that the mercury poisoning “accelerated the wrong kind of government intervention,” exposing her abiding faith in her new employer (237). The reader is bound to ask the obvious question of what the ‘right kind of government intervention’ might look like.

But not only does Shkilnyk fail to consider her own biases and those of her white informants and those of the statistical data, Shkilnyk also misses what Grassy Narrows says about Canadian society and about colonization. One of the biggest shortcomings of

Shkilnyk's book is that she holds up these proofs of a society in disarray at Grassy Narrows that apply equally to the broader society from which she came. For example she writes, "One of the signals of a society in disarray is when an entire generation fails to realize its inherited potential for development of the intellect and the spirit" (34). She never makes the connection that this story is a single case study of our own destruction. The real problem that needs to be addressed is the imposition of a destructive dominant system onto other people, rather than the symptom of this system, the desperate state of more victims of global capitalism. The failing of this study is that it is disjointed from larger processes of colonization and corporatization. This is the context in which self-government becomes a pivotal question and where there are narratives of resistance and persistence within the tragedy of our dehumanizing of the world. The fact that, "this extraordinary waste of human potential brings no cries of protest, no voices of alarm, from the larger society" (37) may be because it is not so extraordinary. Waste of human potential is a common byproduct of a capitalist society. As researchers we need to be critical of our societal assumptions.

Shkilnyk makes one final point in closing. She tells the reader, whom she has presumed to be non-Native throughout, that ultimately the responsibility for change in Grassy Narrows must come from the people of Grassy Narrows themselves. She writes that "as long as they continue to blame others for their circumstances and decide that others are responsible for their survival, very little will change in their society" (241). When will they learn?, she asks. This is Shkilnyk's final excuse. She is making the claim that everything that outsiders can do for this situation has been done and that it is now up to Grassy Narrows to capitalize on all of the help being offered. She claims that "their entire way of life [has] been rendered dysfunctional," and in doing so implies that it is now time for them to take up 'ours' (239). In her mind, she has done her part and moved on. She is not exonerating the government or Canadian society or the reader (which she

has already done), this is Shkilnyk easing her own conscience for washing her hands of Grassy Narrows.

Chapter three

I strongly believe that we do have something to offer your nation, something other than our minerals. I believe it is in the self-interest of your own nation to allow the Indian nation to survive and develop in our own way, on our own land.

Philip Blake, Fort McPherson July 9, 1975

What happens in the North...will be of great importance to the future of our country; it will tell us what kind of a country Canada is; it will tell us what kind of a people we are.

Berger, 1977

I think if we can all come together and help one another, then we might have a chance of survival.

Judy De DaSilva, Kenora June 5, 2007

The above quotes, read together, trace a sort of lineage of a decolonizing relationship, eventually arriving at what has been the core implication all along: that this is a matter of our own continued coexistence. In the 1970s, it slowly began to dawn on Canadians that there was more to the "Indian problem" than had previously been imagined. In the period between the Berger inquiry – when (non-Aboriginal) Canadians began to realize the extent to which their very identity and existence depended upon their relationship to Aboriginal peoples – up to the present day – when this same message is being delivered more urgently in terms that are as clear as possible, lest anyone continue to miss the point – Aboriginal people in Canada have continually been trying to communicate with the consumers and staffers who self-destructively refuse to develop, but seem to be catching on to some vague notion of self-determination.

In a broad sense, it appears that what was being said by Dene in the North in the 1970s was transmitted by the Berger Inquiry (amplified through the Calder decision, through Harold Cardinal, through the armed occupation of Anishinabe park . . .) to the government of Canada and its citizens regular so that they could finally hear what Aboriginal people all around them had always been saying. "We're still here."

Decades of Canadian governments have held strong to a narrow view of Aboriginal self-government, even in the face of their own litany of committees. But "self-government" for Aboriginal people has always been expressed before all of these committees and within each of these communities as a wide-ranging, localized, adaptable

way for Aboriginal communities to meet the needs of their people, as they did before Canada intervened. Self-government for Aboriginal people is about being, and in this sense is better described by the term, self-determination. Despite exaggerated reports of their death, Aboriginal communities have retained a vibrant political tradition. Following the Calder decision and accelerated since the patriation of the Canadian constitution, the work of translating Indigenous political thought into terms that are recognizable by other governments in Canada has framed the discourse on "rights" and "governance." Both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal thinkers and policy-makers have taken up the task of writing down interpretations of these translated concepts, creating an academic canon of what Indigenous understandings of self-determination might look like.

Some of the earliest of these translations of a political philosophy of self-determination derive from the political stance taken by the Dene in response to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline project. In a recent paper reflecting on the era of political engagement surrounding the Berger Inquiry, Peter Puxley writes:

The Berger Inquiry proved what a positive force true political engagement can be. Today, one suspects, that lesson is well understood and, ironically, has become a reason to avoid this kind of democratic exercise. Not only is such an exercise likely to complicate the political landscape - democracy is, after all, a messy affair - but it is also unpredictable. . . . Effective government will become increasingly difficult without such involvement. . . . If they need a reference for the future, they can find it in the recent history of the North.
(2002; 12 -13)

The work of Thomas Berger is considered one of the first attempts by a Canadian government inquiry to truly engage the idea of Aboriginal rights on the terms of Aboriginal people. It was also one of the first government initiatives to consider whether these rights might be reconciled with the demands of industry and the state. Berger reproached Arctic Gas in his report for suggesting that the scope of his inquiry had exceeded his mandate. Berger gained the understanding that questions of land use were broad ones, inseparable from the history of colonization and the future relations between Native people and the state. He writes that he is responsible for considering the social, economic, and environmental impacts and that, "these impacts cannot be disentangled

from the whole question of native claims” (164) and elsewhere that, “the settlement of native claims must be the point of departure for any political reorganization in the Northwest Territories. That is why the decision about the pipeline is really a decision about the political future” (176). Despite his use of the conventional idiom “native claims,” Berger shows that he also understands the full implication of this claim. He includes in his report a concise but detailed history of treaty-making and self-determination in Canada, and in the North in particular, to come to a suitable interpretation of what a “native claim” entails. He writes, “These people are now insisting that we recognize their right to develop political institutions in the North that will enable them to build on their own traditions and on their own past so they can share more fully in our country’s future” (174). He makes no recommendations as to what form these political entities might take, he only charges the Canadian government and Native people with “exploring together” all of the possibilities. These ideas are commonly found in the recent and contemporary literature on self-government in Canada. They are also found in the words of many Aboriginal elders, leaders, and scholars, prior to and since the Berger inquiry. Their sense of urgency is always evident.

According to Peter Puxley, the Berger inquiry into the effects of the pipeline project on the people of the Mackenzie Valley became a vehicle for Dene leaders to communicate with each other, as much as with the Canadian and territorial governments (2002). The Berger Inquiry provided the forum needed to solidify Dene political philosophy and to define it in terms of nationhood. Kulchyski refers to a political environment in the North that fosters day-to-day democratic engagement and lists the range of leaders who have emerged from this “hothouse” political environment. George Erasmus, Steve Kakfwi, Frank T’Seleie, and George Barnaby are prominent Dene leaders who have articulated what it means to have the right to be self-determining, eventually working to create the Dene Declaration, establishing the idea of Aboriginal “nations” within Canada, and later reiterating this understanding for the Royal Commission on

Aboriginal Peoples. The RCAP report and much of the academic writing published by non-Aboriginal people are reiterated 'translations' of written and oral explanations of these Dene legal concepts of their right to be self-determining. The testimony of Dene leaders before the Berger inquiry has not just influenced the discourse around Aboriginal rights in Canada, it played a major role in setting the terms upon which this discourse has been carried forward.

A prototype of these reiterated translations is found in Mel Watkins' collection of essays, research reports, proposals, and transcriptions of statements made to the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, entitled *Dene Nation: the Colony Within*. It is an example of the space that is created by Native Studies, in that it affords the same consideration to spoken testimony as it does to academic writing. It balances different ways of knowing and writing, but always takes its overall direction from Dene epistemologies. This volume compiles Dene political philosophy in the transcriptions of oral testimony presented to the Berger inquiry and displays the complexity of colonial relationships by addressing everything from the mapping of Dene territory, to the testimony of Dene leaders, to Peter Puxley's essay broadly describing the experience of colonization and its dehumanizing effects on everyone, not just 'the colonized.'

Puxley's "the Colonial Experience" follows in the vein of Said and Memmi in deconstructing the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. His essay goes a respectable distance toward understanding what it means to Dene to be self-determining, which Puxley describes as a people's right to pursue their own decolonization and their own development. This idea of development is evident in the above quote of Philip Blake (page 61) and in the way Berger came to understand the future development of the North. Puxley places it in contrast to the accusation made against the Dene that they are opposed to development. "Development," as it is used by Blake and understood by Puxley, is about the human vocation to pursue living well, rather than the exploitation of resources.

Or as Berger puts it, "these peoples are now insisting that we recognize their right to develop" (174).

Michael Asch, another contributor to *Dene Nation*, also derives his philosophy of Aboriginal rights from the Dene struggles of the mid-1970s. The Dene experience is an evident influence throughout his many articulate arguments for a more human relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian state.

Michael Asch sets a broad philosophical framework for discussions of Aboriginal "self-sufficiency" in his paper, *Self-government in the new millennium* (1992). He attempts to set out a more substantial definition of self-government than the one that is used by the federal and provincial governments. He then reviews existing self-government agreements to show why these do not live up to a true model of self-government, using his concept of "self-sufficiency" as the ideal goal of a self-governing society. What Asch also offers are reasons why it is in the interests of Canadian society in general to support Aboriginal self-sufficiency and to change itself accordingly.

Asch does use the term "self-government" and provides this definition: "the ability of a group to govern its lands and the people on them by setting goals and acting on them without having to seek permission from others" (66). He adds that a "self-government" will be autonomous and "self-sufficient in financial and jurisdictional aspects"(66). From this Asch goes on to differentiate that the Canadian government's vision of a self-government lacks the authority of a self-government that is "self-sufficient." His ideas of what self-government means are based on Dene ideas which, in his recent work, he then relates to Western philosophy to illuminate the existence of a Western basis for relating to Aboriginal political thought.

Asch draws upon his understanding of Dene positions to argue that the terms "sovereignty" and "self-determination" do not accurately represent the political aims of Dene and gives two reasons why they are not conducive to building good relations. First, he points out that these terms connote Québec separatism which makes any claims to

“sovereignty” politically unpopular and unlikely to have wider public or government support. While this may be strategically relevant in certain contexts, it would weaken decolonization struggles if they were confined to being popular or palatable. Almost by definition it serves the status quo. Asch does make too much of this point and stands isolated in the literature in rejecting the term “self-determination” which does seem to best reflect Aboriginal conceptualizations of this struggle, even if it is distasteful to the mainstream Canadian public.

Asch cites a 1970 interview he conducted with a “Dene leader and supporter of the *Dene Declaration*,” Philip Moses, who states, “While others are trying to negotiate their way out of Confederation, we are trying to negotiate our way in” (Asch 2003, 7). While it might be questionable whether joining Confederation is an accurate description of Dene political aims, the larger point that Moses makes is that Dene want recognition of their right to negotiate the terms of their relationship with Canada. The negotiating ‘in’ or ‘out’ is for Dene to decide and is not the point of entry for further analysis. The significance of Asch's use of this quote is that he does not publicly debate what Dene should be negotiating or why. Asch's most valuable contributions concern the way to build relationship, thereby focussing more on Moses' point about negotiating the terms, whatever those terms may be, rather than on whether the Dene will be inside or outside of Canada, which is more likely a Canadian concern than an Aboriginal one. Accordingly, the majority of his work critiques the idea of sovereignty on the grounds that it lends itself to a “collision of sovereignties” to be resolved through litigation or other conflictual means rather than through building a relationship. He ties this means of resolution to “an important line in Indigenous political thought, which I am calling ‘Treaty’” (ibid.; 8).

This is interesting because it conceptually connects the self-determination of Dene to wider Indigenous struggles, particularly in southern Canada. He defines “Treaty” as a concept through which peoples “enter into an enduring nation-to-nation relationship based on the principle that the parties respect each other's autonomy and establish a

common project that involves sharing . . . and therefore always includes ways to resolve difficulties and improve relations” (ibid.; 9). On this point Asch states that he is in agreement with Alfred 1999, Borrows 1997, RCAP 1996, Treaty 7 elders, and Venne 1997. He also notes that a relationship based on sharing, creating peace and friendship, were themes that emerged throughout his interviews with Dene in 1969 and 1970, who were present at the signing of their treaty in 1921 (ibid.; 9). Here he takes his reading of a Dene perspective to relate it to the broader discourse on Aboriginal and Treaty rights and in this respect a parallel path can also be seen to the thinking of Georges Erasmus, as I will discuss.

There is also a demonstrable convergence of this Dene-based idea of building a relationship and a Mohawk perspective found in the work of Patricia Monture-Angus. Western social scientists’ scrutiny of what was happening in the North in the 1970s, provides insight into similar political struggles in other parts of Canada.

Not surprisingly, a significant portion of Monture-Angus’ *Journeying Forward* is dedicated to illuminating the terms upon which this relationship is based, both literally and ideologically. In both her capacity as a legal scholar and as an Aboriginal woman, she carefully reassesses the definition of words used in the discourse of Aboriginal independence, paying particular attention to the difference in the way they are understood by Aboriginal people and by the federal government and judiciary. She extends her examination of meaning to more than just the words themselves to reframe the entire conversation in a way that is emancipatory. She uses the freedom of Aboriginal peoples as the basis for what can be considered just and, very pointedly, equitable.

Each of these political philosophers express a commitment to many of the same goals and values, but not in the same words, which is interesting because it leads to one of Monture-Angus’ main points. She writes that, “the essential and often overlooked step in creating a renewed relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and Canadians is an examination of the meaning of the concepts we are building our relationship with” (33).

The way concepts such as rights, equality, self-government, 'Canadian,' and 'Aboriginal' are construed is treated at length throughout *Journeying Forward*. For Monture-Angus, a failure to consider what these terms mean privileges the Canadian legal definition over all others and leaves Aboriginal voices unrepresented (33). An Aboriginal perspective provides a very different understanding of these concepts and this must be understood in order to facilitate further dialogue. One example discussed by Monture-Angus are the concomitant responsibilities that are inseparable from rights, but are not often articulated by Canadian-centred discussions of rights alone. For Monture-Angus, her rights comprise the right to be Mohawk, with all the living experience that that entails, including the responsibilities inherent in being a Mohawk woman. Conversely, Canadians rarely think of their presence on this land as a treaty right, so are disinclined to consider the responsibilities which accompany these rights. A fundamental divide, to be sure.

It is interesting that Asch and Monture-Angus use some of the same terms, but define them in different ways. Is this another example of a culturally-patterned divergence of worldviews? I think not if we glean the underlying goals and values of their overall discussion.

Monture-Angus rejects the term "self-government." She uses a critique offered by Deloria Jr. and Lytle to show that "self-government" has a condescending implication that people are only now able to govern themselves (29). Following this point, it can be observed that governments that are state-sanctioned do not talk about themselves as "self-governing." The phrase implicitly raises the question of who else would logically be doing the governing, making the word "self" redundant *unless* we are talking about people who, it is implied, would normally need help governing themselves. Monture-Angus also adds that self-government as a political demand is too often considered a delegation of some, but not all, authority, which is ultimately a struggle to achieve a subordinate position. The term that Monture-Angus identifies as most useful is self-determination (although she also uses independence, sovereignty and self-government in

similar contexts). She considers self-determination a broader and more inclusive term. By her definition she considers self-determination a way of fostering “the good life” of communities as whole entities, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically (30).

Monture-Angus and Asch use terms that are different, but complimentary. Monture-Angus deals extensively with the idea of equality. She differentiates the idea of formal equality, which blindly treats all people the same, versus an equality that would balance the needs of different members of society, allowing them to be socially “equal” (142). For Monture-Angus this becomes a question of individual and collective rights. Where discrimination acts upon whole groups of people at a time who are denied rights because they must all be treated equally. She uses the Lavell and Bedard cases as an example, where all people falling into the marginalized category of Indian women were treated equally and therefore, equally oppressed (142). Monture-Angus uses this discussion of equality and rights to show that the term “rights” misconstrues the realities of Aboriginal politics. It is not a question of establishing rights to any set of needs, but rather the decision-making authority to meet those needs that is essential.

Asch adds another dimension to the idea of equality. While assimilation policies are based on the idea that all individuals should be treated equally and have been rejected by Aboriginal peoples on these grounds, Asch uses the idea of collective rights to reinforce the idea of a nation-to-nation relationship. Like Monture-Angus, for Asch it is not the question of individual rights, but the fact that Aboriginal people have equal political authority *vis-à-vis* the federal government that is important (1992; 73).

In his *Peace, Power, and Righteousness*, Taiiiake Alfred also challenges some of the terms used in the discourse surrounding self-government. Through Monture-Angus and Alfred, some parallels can be drawn between the Dene political philosophy that informs the work of so many of the scholars and leaders being discussed here, and Mohawk political traditions. Both Monture-Angus and Alfred are forceful in their insistence that these political traditions form a strong basis for moving forward.

For Alfred, the collaborative project of imagining self-governance is “not a matter of red versus white,” but is rather based in “values we all share: freedom, justice, and peace” (xviii). His stated intent is a synthesis between Mohawk political traditions and academic modes of discourse. He emphasizes that the content of Mohawk political teachings are dependant on their conveyance through narrative. Alfred states that he is attempting to “communicate an interpretation of the traditional teachings that is relevant to the contemporary situation” (xvii). In this sense, it is another translation and another text that represents the intersection between Western and Indigenous political traditions. Alfred’s project is familiar. It has many parallels to the work that has emanated from the Mackenzie Valley. It is a search for common values that begins by translating Indigenous philosophy into a written form so that it can engage Native and non-Native people. His emphasis is that these traditions are not a return to the past, but that these traditions have worked to meet the needs of people and to build good relations that must be brought forward into the future. So what are the concepts that Alfred brings from these traditions to the current project of creating Aboriginal governments?

Like Monture-Angus, for Alfred, one of the most significant concepts is the shift from thinking in terms of *rights* to thinking in terms of *responsibilities*. This way of relating to Indigenous lands is certainly resonant in Grassy Narrows. As Alfred shows, the idea of being responsible for the land does not preclude using and harvesting from the land, but it does not align with exploitative models of “resource development.” People in Grassy Narrows have been attempting to convey this very difference to representatives of Abitibi Consolidated or the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, without many signs of success. This is analogous to those who accused the Dene, who opposed to the pipeline, as being “anti-development.” Alfred responds to these types of accusations and draws out some of the nuances of two different perceptions of land use. He writes that “Native people do not reject modernization or participation in larger economies . . . (but) recognize a responsibility to participate in the economy with the intent of ensuring the

long-term health and stability of people and the land” (61). From his perspective, there are contradictions between the machinations of industrial capitalism and Indigenous people’s responsibilities as “stewards,” but these contradictions are not as simple as being for or against land-based economic development. However, Alfred does see Indigenous people’s relationship to their land as something that does run counter to the capitalist mode, in that this responsibility entails understanding and respecting certain limits. Here is where ideas of self-determination converge with struggles to decolonize, and face the ongoing opposition of a state founded on capitalism. The question is whether the state in entering into a treaty relationship can accommodate or entertain political models that inherently represent limits to exponential economic growth. If not, then Indigenous communities have no other option but to find other means of governing themselves and honouring their responsibilities for their land.

Something that Alfred deconstructs well is the term sovereignty. For Alfred, it is misleading to discuss Indigenous self-determination in such hierarchical terms. This lodges the discourse in purely Western conventions. This way of thinking, he further argues, implies authority that is granted from an external source, and thereby also carries with it the idea that it can be taken away. He balances his critique recognizing that while operating in the sphere of Canadian politics, it can be effective as a “defense mechanism” to speak in terms of sovereignty, but that this is a rhetorical device that does not reflect Mohawk ideals (66). This is significant in considering the problem of translating Indigenous political thought into terms that are understood by the Canadian public and policy-makers. Framing the use of sovereignty in this way, Alfred makes a distinction between the translation of a Mohawk concept and simply engaging in the Western political rhetoric. The former can be said to serve the longterm objective of building a mutualistic relationship while the latter may in the short term establish an approximation of a people’s political position. The difference is analogous to the purpose of the Dene Declaration versus that of a soundbite on the news. This is an indication of the ‘diversity

of tactics' that are at play and acknowledges the complexities of Indigenous politics. Unlike Asch, he does not simply reject using 'sovereignty' because it is unpopular and inflammatory, but recognizes the term's strategic value, even while admitting that its uses are limited. The problem, as Alfred sees it is when sovereignty becomes an "internal concept of governance" rather than as a political response to Indian Act impositions (109). Another analogy for this duality is the function of a traditional leadership in comparison to the function of a band council. One works from what Alfred would call a traditionalist perspective, while the other often works 'within the system.' Implicitly, Alfred is suggesting that both are significant, while making it clear that he sees that the larger political goal of self-determination will only be met by a revival of traditional praxis.

Following this line of thinking, it should be recognized that while band councils strive to administer to the needs of their communities, they are too often left with inadequate resources to take on the task of envisioning and enacting ways to meet more abstract, longterm needs as autonomous peoples. However, Cassidy and Bish's *Indian Government, its meaning in practice* (1989) gives insight into the ways in which power is exercised within the existing system. This is important to consider as well, especially in making the argument that traditional and 'official' leadership can effectively work in tandem. Where Cassidy and Bish fall short is in adequately considering the significance of both. They provide an analysis of what has been done within the Indian Act system, and consider the strengths of this approach, but they seem limited to viewing this as the primary approach.

In their historical overview, Cassidy and Bish observe that initially Canada and Aboriginal peoples governed themselves as parallel and separate polities. As questions of jurisdiction collided more and more, Aboriginal self-governance was asserted in the face of the colonizing power through a wide range of forms including: "overt protest, refusals to cooperate, continuance of traditional patterns," but also through the persistence of

cultural and political practices (ibid.; 11), working closely with the federal agencies responsible for service delivery, or through pushing the Indian Act to its most humane limits (ibid.; 25-26). One of the main themes that emerges through Cassidy and Bish's description of the historical context of Aboriginal self-governance is the flexibility of Aboriginal polities throughout history. Power has always been and continues to be exercised by Aboriginal peoples through whatever means are available within imposed constrictions. As *Indian Government* points out, this has even meant working with the rules imposed by the government of Canada at times. Treaties that are not honoured by the Canadian government, are honoured as the self-imposed limits to authority by the First Nations who govern themselves within the conditions agreed upon through their treaty. But Cassidy and Bish also discuss those nations within Canada who work within Indian Act rules or closely with regional INAC bureaucrats, despite their arbitrary imposition by the federal government. They write, "quite often, Indian governments act in ways that are at odds with their assertion of inherent jurisdiction, although seldom will they deny or renounce it" (ibid.; 32).

The flexibility and creativity of Aboriginal leadership comes from an effort to respond to the needs of their communities as quickly and effectively as possible. People within Aboriginal communities have a good sense of what services their communities need and how services like health and education can best be delivered. A community empowered to govern itself would be able to make the best decisions for delivering these services. However, in the short term some band councils described by Cassidy and Bish, like the ones in Six Nations or the Pas, have passed bylaws and applied to have them approved by Indian Affairs. These bands use the existing Indian Act system because it is there and offers one immediate means of meeting the needs of their communities. In doing so, Aboriginal leadership often finds itself somewhat compromising its position that self-government is a right and works within the less-effective-but-existing federal

government system. For Aboriginal leadership, there are times when meeting the needs of its people is too urgent to adhere to a more longterm political ideology.

Kulchyski, in his critique of Cassidy and Bish, acknowledges that they come from the perspective that Aboriginal self-government already exists in many different forms, both within and external to Indian Act governance. The shortcomings of their analysis identified by Kulchyski are based on a failure to consider the significance of the form these governments take and in overstating the degree to which the state will accommodate Aboriginal governments that differ from the Indian Act model, or some other recognizable and compatible model (2005; 242). *Indian government* goes a long way toward approximating Aboriginal perspectives on what government means to Aboriginal communities, but perhaps still falls short in the ways Kulchyski describes because of an ethnocentric attachment to particular ideas of government. In other words, it seems that Cassidy and Bish imagine that there are a variety of forms of government possible and make the case for the practice of Aboriginal governance along any of these lines, but do not fully consider just how diverse these forms could be, nor the potential political strength of forms of government that are a distinct departure from Western models. For example, Cassidy and Bish, recognize that “comprehensive intergovernmental agreements require extensive intergovernmental interaction” (152), but do not discuss the structural inability of the state to engage in the “extensive interactions” that would make the implementation of shared jurisdiction possible. This has been a significant reason for the failure of the federal and provincial governments in Canada to honour their responsibilities under nation-to-nation agreements. This also raises another question of terminology and translation. Alfred and Monture-Angus have raised the question of whether in fact the right being asserted is, in fact, the right to have a “government,” which connotes a specific and limited idea of what Aboriginal self-government might look like. It implies a hierarchical elected leadership who make decisions to be imposed on the citizenry to benefit the public order. From a broader

perspective we might consider why anyone would engage in such a struggle for the right to be governed. By anyone.

This is what is vested in the ideas raised by Kulchyski. An analysis of self-government must consider the act of autonomous, community-based decision-making as a political act in itself. In doing so, the significance of form is emphasized and the idea of what a government looks like is exploded to allow for recognition of the ways that Aboriginal communities are self-determining without "governments." It allows for an analysis which includes not only the governments-in-practice, as identified by Cassidy and Bish, but also enables us to reconsider an ethnocentric idea of what a government-in-practice looks like to include many more democratic decision-making processes. This study, centred in Grassy Narrows requires a very broad definition of self-government.

In *Like the Sound of a Drum*, Kulchyski emphasizes the importance of Marie Smallface Marule's analysis which centres on the significance of form in creating any meaningful type of self-government. That is, a government that is truly democratic in its responsiveness to a people who have temporarily delegated leadership to a few people, and further, a government that enacts and perpetuates Aboriginal cultural values. Marule refutes the idea that replacing "white bureaucrats with brown bureaucrats" is a solution, making specific reference to the Bureau of Indian Affairs which, although staffed by Native people, "continues to function as an ineffective, oppressive agency because of its structure, its systems, and its processes" (1984; 40). For Marule, a form of government befitting Native values is by definition more democratic than any Western forms because the first premise is that it "places the locus of authority on the smallest political unit," the autonomous individual (41). Another concept raised by Marule involves the perception of Native cultures and practices as obsolete or endangered, or concurrently as though they are incompatible or even a threat to the way other governments in Canada operate. She hints at how these perceptions are used to dismiss Aboriginal forms of self-government. For example, Marule is emphatic on the point that, contrary to popular perceptions,

communal sharing is not a lost concept in Native cultures. This aspect of Native cultures has “not been allowed to function,” according to Marule (42). She writes, “It is not known to what degree the Canadian government has been successful in its efforts to eliminate traditional Indian attitudes and values. It is assumed by many that very little remains of traditional Indian ideology and philosophy because the traditional Indian life-style is no longer in evidence; that is, we don’t live in tepees anymore” (37).

In many ways the idea of communal sharing does not compute with a capitalist state executed on models of social Darwinism. The concept of sharing is central to the idea of a treaty. It is also, as Marule notes, the underlying reason for an adherence to consensus decision-making by Native communities (*ibid.*). Sharing entails negotiation, and more generally, a relationship of mutual respect between equals. This is precisely the terms upon which self-governing Aboriginal peoples have always approached their relationship with the state. The strength of this position is that it holds a moral authority. Consistently held, it means that any approach taken by the state that ignores the option to negotiate as equals, reveals itself as negligence and oppression.

Taken together, this reveals the core contribution of Marule’s discussion and what is particularly useful in looking at self-government in Grassy Narrows. The fact that the treaty relationship and negotiation are still the main way that Native peoples define their position in relation to Canada speaks to the fact that “Indian ideology and philosophy” do persist in spite of efforts to enforce hierarchy, patriarchy, the commodity form, and capitalism through the Indian Act and other government policies. A narrow idea of what the “traditional Indian life-style” is, means that a blockade in Grassy Narrows is not seen by governments and industry as “government decision making” or “foreign policy” or “resource management” or “democracy” or “education,” though these would be the most accurate descriptors in the jargon of Western institutions. This aligns with another of Alfred’s points, that being ‘Mohawk’ and being a ‘nation’ are synonymous with simply being (1999; 65). From this it is possible to see that a good way to identify activities that

are a part of self-government or self-determination are those activities which entail being 'Mohawk.' Or in the case of Grassy Narrows, self-determination can be considered anything which involves being Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabek. This removes us from Western ideas of 'government' and allows for a clearer understanding of the broad range of activities that must be considered when talking about 'governance.'

Marule is also saying that the *form* self-government takes must convey the values of Native peoples. In his analysis, Kulchyski aligns with Marule, arguing that decision making processes that demonstrate these cultural traditions, make these the skills that Aboriginal youth must learn in order to become effective social agents, making their culture "a part of everyday life, rather than something to be trotted out on special occasions" (2005; 259). Simply put, this is the recognition that *politics are cultural practices*. Using Western political bodies and practices to impose cultural programs, for example, replicates the idea that Western ideas are dominant. It gives the message that Aboriginal cultural practices should be managed and preserved, but that Western cultural practices should be learned and used to accomplish these (or any) objectives. These same ideas are raised in some of the testimony quoted in Berger's report. Bob Overvold's testimony is quoted by Berger's report. He states, "no imposed educational system . . . will work for the Dene. Instead only one that is initiated and developed by the Dene and that is rooted in Dene tradition, culture, and values will be successful" (1977; 181).

The question is, if the Dene were making the importance of Dene control clear in the 1970s, and Marule was emphasizing the importance of Mohawk forms of decision-making in the early 1980s, why did the federal government put so much energy into coming up with a federal model for Indian governments in this same time-period?

The work of preeminent Aboriginal scholars Long, Little Bear, and Boldt was an indication of the Indigenous political leadership (particularly the National Indian Brotherhood) emerging in the early 1980s, and their focus on the active debates around recognizing 'Indian self-government' and other rights in the Canadian constitution. The

paper, "Federal Indian Policy and Indian Self-government in Canada" is an assessment of a then-recent DIAND proposal of a self-government model. Long, Little Bear and Boldt make it clear that self-determination is synonymous with the "preservation of the Indian cultural heritage" (1982; 68). The authors see recent shifts in federal policy, such as the grudging adoption of the term "self-government," as a break from the colonial paradigms of the past. Writing within the post-White Paper political climate, they observe that the "reoriented policy direction" of the federal government can be characterized as a response to Aboriginal resistance to the paternalistic policies exemplified by the White Paper (79). This response, they write, is to balance the demands of the National Indian Brotherhood and of provincial Indian organizations with the "desire to retain the historical legal relationship between the Canadian government and the Indian peoples" (ibid.). In other words, Native activists and their supporters made Canada's assimilation policies embarrassingly public and demanded equitable treatment as governments. For the federal government, the distance they are willing to go to create a renewed relationship is limited by the short-sighted nature of Canada's political system. The official adoption of the word "self-government" around this time is better understood as the cooption of the term. Rather than hear the way Long, Little Bear, and Boldt, were expressing self-government, Canada adopted an approach to Indian self-government that focussed on the word 'government.' This is likely why the discourse has since been mostly engaged in terms of 'governments' and 'sovereignty,' that have been the object of the recent critiques discussed above.

In hindsight, maybe the most insightful aspect of Long, Little Bear, and Boldt's analysis is to document a moment in time when change was afoot, but the status quo still dominated the way self-government was talked about. They capture a gradient in the middle of the spectrum between the Campbell Scott era and the Judy DaSilva era. This can be seen in the shift in federal policy observed by Long, Little Bear, and Boldt in the early 1980s. For them, these changes are considered significant first steps. For them, the

pathways to self-determination are paved with new and improved government policy. (What's that expression about something paved with good intentions?) They write that Aboriginal self-government will depend on adequate government funding and on federal assistance in developing resource management. They write that a revised policy and new legislation will mean that it will become "easier for Indian leaders to seek clarification and redefinition of these issues" (1982; 80).

Reading this paper more than 25 years after it was written also gives the impression that the authors are clearly aware of the activism that brought about the controversial changes in legislation that are their primary focus, but have not turned their attention there. The efficacy of grassroots resistance is implied, but is not the focus of their analysis, though this is actually *the* significant narrative of this time period. The idea that self-government is inherent and does not require any revised Canadian policies, any clarification or redefinition of what any legislative enactments mean is not considered here. Given the time-period and the way Long, Little Bear, and Boldt are focussed on how far the relationship between Canada and Native peoples *had* come in the preceding decade, their narrower focus is understandable. Perhaps few people in academic or political circles had yet begun to articulate how much further assertions of self-government could go or the extent to which Native autonomy was already vested in Native communities or just how much of a role resistance had played and could play. They inadvertently record the significant role of Aboriginal resistance in changing the relationship, as a passing acknowledgement, but their focus is on what concessions have been made by the Canadian government in their treatment of what self-government will be allowed to entail.

Of course, the scholarly contribution of Long, Boldt, and Little Bear goes far beyond their focus here on critiquing federally-directed proposals for self-government. More recently, Boldt (1993) describes the treaty relationship as a "living legacy" in the spirit of autonomous coexistence. While Little Bear (2004) has emphasized that

Indigenous traditions of law and science must be brought to bear on relations with the state. My intent is not to condemn these groundbreaking and influential thinkers as obsolete. What this single paper does demonstrate is the time lag between the praxis of various Indigenous community leaders and the translation of this praxis into the mainstream political sphere. The reason I have included one of Long, Boldt, and Little Bear's less insightful analyses is to point out the transition that occurred: from the Indigenous political uprising of the 1970s, to the very narrow visions of self-government in the 1980s, to the current time where the political vitality of Native communities in the 1970s has come to inform the academic discourse. This has also brought Indigenous political thought to bear on mainstream Canadian politics and jurisprudence. Recognizing this historical thread and its influences offers insight into continued efforts now. This history shows that grassroots political efforts have altered the prevailing assumptions that underlie decisions made by judges, teachers, bureaucrats, journalists, government officials, and other power brokers. Just as the Dene "insisted on the right to be regarded as a nation" in the 1970s, which resulted in (among other changes) "First Nations" becoming the predominant term used for Native communities in the South, Grassy Narrows' assertion of their treaty rights has the potential to make these rights a widely acknowledged reality. Knowing that this could take twenty years or longer is important. The transition of this time period is an example of a shift from a colonized to a decolonizing worldview.

In her article "Rethinking Aboriginal Governance," Ladner writes that prior to 1982, there was little discussion about Indigenous governance. In her historical overview, Ladner identifies the narrow vision of the early 1980s time period, writing that the focus was on "Alternative Funding Agreements," which would have devolved the responsibility of allocating federal funding to band councils (2003; 51). This is an indication that imagining a decolonized relationship had hardly begun. Ladner contends that what little had been studied about self-government was not "Indigenous politics and governance,"

but rather, "the interplay between Indigenous people and the settler-state, from the colonial perspective"(43-44). Much of her work focusses on understanding both Canadian law as it pertains to Native people and Native law as it pertains to Canada. She writes, "in depicting Aboriginal politics as the interaction of Aboriginal people and the state, the existence of Indigenous political traditions and the entire pre-colonial histories of Indigenous peoples are ignored" (44). Along these lines Ladner also argues that negotiations (past and present) between the Canadian government and Indian Act band councils perpetuate a colonial relationship. She shows that a government system based on the Indian Act "an instrument of oppression and domination," becomes the basis of whatever relationship emerges from these negotiations (54). Ladner recognizes that this is an assimilative process. Indigenous political traditions swept aside by the Indian Act are further devalued and will be absent from the institutions that emerge from such a process.

Ladner can be associated with a stream of current Indigenous scholars like Venne, Monture-Angus, Alfred, and particularly with Youngblood Henderson, who are putting Canadian legal tradition and Indigenous legal traditions onto the same path forward, which they imagine as a renewed and shared one, rather than a colonial one. To do this, these scholars have become knowledgeable in the complex social/ spiritual orders of their own people *and* in the intricacies and hypocrisies of Canadian law and politics. Which explains why Canada-centric documents such as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Constitution Act of 1982 are so often referenced in the writing of these Indigenous political scholars. These documents represent the closest Canada has come to working toward a similar relational or collaborative understanding. For example, Ladner is able to make the argument that the right to self-determination is recognized in Canadian constitutional law as well as in the constitutional orders of Native peoples and points to ways in which RCAP is using the same reasoning in their findings (46).

Ladner writes in terms of "constitutional orders," engaging Canada and its constitution and simultaneously the constitutions, the 'legal' matrices, of the

Haudonosaunee or the Plains Cree. She situates these constitutional orders as equivalent parallel entities, rewriting the colonial history of Canada to include the concomitant persistence of Indigenous law, wherein 'self-government' is a continual historical fact. (This is similar to Little Bear's call for Aboriginal interpretations of the meaning of treaties; 2004). According to Ladner, "since the 1970s, the federal government has responded to the Aboriginal agenda," rather than Native people meeting the demands of the colonial agenda (50). She cites the prominence of the Aboriginal political agenda through the 1970s as the main reason for the inclusion of Native people in drafting the constitution. She quotes Sharon Venne who writes that the drafting of the constitution was seen by Native people as a joint responsibility with Canada, and as a potential basis for a revitalized relationship between equal partners (51). Through the constitutional meetings and into the 1990s, deciphering the meaning of rights recognized in the Canadian constitution was seen by many as the way to build a new relationship. Canada stated that this was their intent, and these talks proceeded, as they had to, on the understanding that these intentions were sincere. And maybe they were, but the barrier that is presented by Canada's narrow range of vision when it comes to Aboriginal rights, still remained. It was the continuing grassroots efforts and community-based politics, suddenly made most visible at Oka, that brought about another approach.

This approach was the extensive effort made through the Berger-like Royal Commission to achieve a better understanding of the challenges ahead. While many people hoped that the creation of *the Constitution Act* would be the basis of a new relationship, it led to an overemphasis on the legal traditions of the state. It was centred on Canadian law, rather than fulfilling the promise of what Venne describes as a joint responsibility.

Meanwhile, the exercising of Aboriginal rights, and the continuation of a land-based way of life, of pre-Indian Act, community-based decision-making carried on in Native communities. While elsewhere, so did isolated, esoteric debates on the nature and

extent of "the existing aboriginal and treaty rights." The point to be taken from this is that legislation of the federal government is not the basis of Native self-determination. Ladner shows that negotiation for 'Alternative Funding Agreements' or band council, land-claims negotiations are largely ways in which the colonial relationship is maintained. Self-determination derives its precedent and authority from Native people's political traditions. This is the position from which people in Grassy Narrows have asserted their right to make decisions about their land. The inability of various levels of government or industry to enter into negotiations with Grassy Narrows as equals is a blockade erected by government.

The Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples is still widely considered a relevant and respected study by many scholars, partly for the extensive work that was done to hear from an extensive range of people,¹ and partly because it was conducted under the leadership of Native people, a belated first for any large-scale Native consultation process. Coming from a colonized state government, maybe it is the best that can be hoped for under this current regime. Maybe it will be looked upon as a quaint relic of the days when the state was still played a significant role in Native communities. Its existence in the parliamentary library in Ottawa highlights two current realities: one, that the most insightful and workable models that the Canadian government has ever produced have come from listening to Native people, and two, that the most innovative federal government approach to self-government is still not advanced enough to recognize the autonomy of Native peoples.

The experience that Erasmus brought to his role as co-commissioner of RCAP is evidently informed by his background in Dene politics. In the Berger report, James Wah-Shee, is quoted in a speech given in Ottawa in 1974:

A land settlement in the Northwest Territories requires a new approach, a break in a historical pattern. A "once-and-for-all" settlement in the tradition of the treaties

¹ Some people, particularly Native people, have observed that certain elites were the ones heard in this process.

and Alaska will not work in the Northwest Territories. What we are seriously considering is not the surrender of our rights "once and for all" but the formalization of our rights and ongoing negotiation and dialogue. We are investigating a solution which could be a source of pride to all Canadians and not an expensive tax burden, for ours is a truly "developmental" model in the widest and most human sense of the word. It allows for the preservation of our people and our culture and secures our participation as equals in the economy and society of Canada.

(cited in Berger 171; 1977)

In a 2002 lecture, Erasmus calls for improved means of having dialogue between Native and non-Native people in Canada. He expresses his frustration with the current state of this relationship exclaiming that "litigation is no way to build a community!" (105). Later, in a discussion with the boldly moderate, John Ralston Saul, he further describes the problem of a decolonizing people (the Dene) trying to deal with a country that misconstrues and resists the obscure, ancient Indian concept of democracy.

Democracy has evolved to be an election every four years. (. . .) We're still a long way from having the kind of society in which people can really participate. We spend a lot of time in the north considering how we might create a society in the Dene area that actually reflects the values of the Dene. When we tried to do it we found we needed more public participation. It wasn't possible for us just to create a society that redistributed our power among a few people and said, "Okay, you're the best among us, you govern," because it was so alien to the kind of values that we grew up with. We always maintained the right to participate. (. . .) It's easier in a smaller society, and it gets more challenging with a bigger country and all the rest of it.

(Erasmus cited in Griffiths, 130- 1; 2002)

Democracy is a living Dene tradition that has been consistently articulated through Dene interactions with the Canadian state. It is evident in Wah-Shee's testimony in Ottawa, as much as in Erasmus' recent political discussions in academic circles. There is every reason to believe and ample evidence that these democratic ideals persist in Haudonosaunee tradition, in Cree tradition, and that they are found in the ongoing decision-making processes in Grassy Narrows. Aside from finding that democratic values have always been and still are found in Native politics, the history of self-government in Canada clearly shows that these values have been consistently expressed by Native peoples. As much as this shows the strength of this democratic tradition in Native communities, this also shows the paucity of this tradition in Canada. If democracy is

understood to mean that all people have a voice, it is clear that the voices of Native people have been strong and steady all along, and yet, have somehow been ignored.

So we did things the passive way in the beginning. We met with Abitibi. When they had their consultation sessions in Grassy, we asked questions. They were unanswered. We went to meet with MNR. We just went through all the protocol, we went through all the procedures, and it was always against walls, always unanswered questions, and no action. Just a lot of paper. Paperwork. And then in November, it's like we were just pushed right against the wall. . .

Judy DaSilva June 5, 2007

Chapter four

... And then in November, it's like we were just pushed right against the wall because there's the pollution, there's the sicknesses coming out. It's just so many different elements of why we started the blockade. It was a word that was kind of floating around our community for maybe two or three years. Then finally, one day, these young people in the forest, there was three of them, and they just started cutting trees by the road and they fell down, one almost fell on them. Their car broke in the forest. They had thin jackets and their dad had to go take them out of the forest after they were there for six hours. It was like another red signal. Like, when are we going to do something?

So then on December 2nd ... no actually I think it was before then that the logging trucks were stopped. There was actually one man, I know he doesn't want his name to be said, but he stayed there all night. He stopped a logging truck by himself.

Then that was like an alarm for the whole community and the next day the youth came, the young people. They actually started pushing logging trucks away.

So it started like that, but it's been a long long process of frustration, of unanswered questions and no action and us being passive and allowing things to happen to us. It was just the right time for us to start speaking up.

And that's how it started. They might have a different version. I might be telling you all lies.
(laughter)

Judy DaSilva (Aitkenhead 2007)

The recurring theme in the land-use conflicts in Grassy Narrows is the exhaustion of all other avenues of diplomacy until unilateral action is the only reasonable option. People from Grassy are always careful to say that many other avenues were pursued before the blockade was finally begun. If people were "passive" it was only in the sense that Canada's protocol for "consultation" was vigorously attempted in good faith before Anishinaabe political forms were given a higher priority.

While the blockade is the focus of so much attention, its place in a series of diplomatic efforts might be overemphasized to the point where it is not recognized as a way to build rather than to block. The blockade is touted in newspapers as the longest-running logging blockade in Canadian history. Environmental organizations have rallied around the blockade in a kind of 'last chance' campaign to "Save Grassy." The drama of the last stand motif is routinely employed to portray the blockade as a symbol of the desperate state of affairs between Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe and their neighbours, the loggers, sportfishers, provincial ministries, forestry companies, and foreign governments who encroach upon their land. In using this motif, the 'last stand' story told is one that comes too close to the story of the dying race and lost culture. The 'last of the Mohicans' story. This is not the whole story of the Slant Lake blockade. This blockade is also about everything that has emerged from this action. As any beaver can tell you, a dam does not entirely stop the flow of the water, but it creates a pond. The dam itself is not the point; the environment it creates with its whole

pool of resources are what matter.

I think one thing we've got to get past is racism, that the Indians are doing another blockade. Oh no! Then you shut your mind to us and what we're doing. There's these young people that are sitting here, Dave and Thor and Jeff, these people went past whatever blocks they might have and they stand with us, not as a white man or a Native person or Anishinaabe, but as human beings. They stand with us. They walk with us.

Judy DaSilva (Aitkenhead 2007)

Emphasis on the blockade as an end in itself limits the focus of the media or of any supporters to the length of time that the blockade stands. The idea of "walking with" that Judy alludes to, is more in line with the sustained support network that only comes through building relationships over time. The issues that brought about the blockade and everything that has come about along with the blockade have long histories and enduring implications. My intention here is to recognize the importance of the blockade, (and for lack of a better term, I do refer to the practitioners of the blockade as "the blockaders") but also to contextualize the blockade and the actions of "the blockaders" in the larger self-determination struggle of Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabek.

In his book, *the american Empire and the Fourth World*, Anthony Hall juxtaposes the histories of these two (potential) world orders, an empire or an alternative 'Fourth World.' The american empire is considered the outcome of a long trajectory of European conquest of Indigenous lands worldwide, while the Fourth World is presented as George Manuel's vision for a departure from and response to this trajectory. Hall quotes Manuel's articulation of this idea: "We know we cannot move very far unless you also choose to move . . . We cannot become equal members in *your* society. We *can* become a member of a new society in which everyone chooses to share. But that cannot happen until you begin to consider and reformulate your understanding, and your view of the world, as we have begun to reformulate ours" (243). Hall's purpose is to show that versions of these two models for a world order coexisted at one time, but diverged in the founding of the united states of america. In doing so, he shows that Manuel's Fourth World vision also has deep roots for the relationship between Aboriginal people and the Canadian state, as deep or deeper than a relationship based on conquest and colonization. Hall argues that the present-day emergence of the empire and of the Fourth World models are partly based on the american historical choice of conquest, and Canada's historical choice of diplomacy and trade. These different choices are almost indiscernible as corporate interests expand beyond all state borders, but they are important because they leave all of us on this shared land with the

legacy of this alternative precedent, and its possible implications. In the Fourth World version of a founding narrative, we have responsibilities to each other.

Like the responsibilities codified through treaties in Canada, it has mostly been Aboriginal people who have continually upheld these covenants that create the capacity for a mutually beneficial existence. Though, as Hall shows, there have been times and places when both parties honoured their debts. The epitomizing example of one such time and place for Hall is an epicentre of British trade and nation-to-nation diplomacy in Haudonosaunee territory called Johnson Hall. Johnson Hall was the home of Britain's first 'minister of Indian Affairs,' William Johnson and his wife, the prominent Mohawk trader and diplomat, Molly Brant. According to Hall, Sir William Johnson played a major part in the British treaty-making approach in North America, to the extent that this approach was the one enacted in the 1763 Royal Proclamation's recognition (of sorts) of Aboriginal title. This is the point of divergence for Hall between the military conquest and usurpation that defines the American empire, and the nation-to-nation relationships of the Fourth World. This, he argues, is the neglected approach that Canada is founded upon.

The blockade site at Slant Lake, in Asubpeeschoseewagong territory exemplifies one more case where nation-to-nation diplomacy in the Johnson Hall tradition has been maintained, by Native people if not by Canada's governments. Here is a description composed by historian Heather Divine that Hall uses to illustrate his vision of what Johnson Hall represents:

The mansion itself was a hive of activity, with individuals of diverse race, colour and creed – Mohawk Indians, German tradespeople, British army officers, and Indian Department officials, Irish relatives and cronies, visiting gentry from the cities – all going about their business in the entourage of Sir William Johnson. Outside the mansion, militia units, comprised of Johnson's tenants and local community members, practised their drills. The regular activities of the Indian Department attracted groups of Indians, who camped on the grounds of the estate. During his stay at Johnson Hall, [one] would have observed the civil and even preferential treatment accorded to the Natives by Johnson and his non-Native associates, noting they had free access to the house and surrounding property even though their peaceable incursions would leave these areas in a perpetual state of untidiness.

(2003; 15)

To relate this picture of life at Johnson Hall to life at the Slant Lake blockade it helps to invert the image so that it might read:

The blockade itself is a hive of activity, with individuals of diverse race, colour, and creed – Mohawk warriors, white schoolteachers, Treaty 3 police, and OPP, relatives and elders, visiting riff-raff from the cities – all going about their business in the entourage of the Clan Mothers. Beside the road, activist units, comprised of Canadian tenants and local community members, devised strategies. The regular activities of logging companies and the Ministry of Natural Resources attracted groups of Indians, who camped on the roads of the state. During a stay at Slant Lake, one would have observed civil disobedience and even deferential support accorded

to the Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe by Native and non-Native allies, noting that everyone had free access to the roundhouse, the cabin, the tipis, and the wigwam housing the sacred fire even though their peaceable incursions would leave these areas in a perpetual state of untidiness.

The description of the intercultural life at Johnson Hall does bear a resemblance to the dynamic interactions that characterize large gatherings or meetings at Slant Lake. What these pictures also share is the common historical thread described by Hall, though the respect and honouring of our nation-to-nation relationship seen at Slant Lake is upheld by regular folk, rather than the Crown's political elite.

Both Johnson Hall and the blockade at Slant Lake represent a living manifestation of democracy, diplomacy, and a shared responsibility. In this sense, the blockade is a means of building relationships, rather than an end of relations. It represents motion and possibilities, rather than an impasse. To focus too much on the blockade itself, dismisses everything that the blockade makes possible, everything of which the blockade is a part, and the historical nation-to-nation tradition that it keeps alive.

The assertions of the Anishinaabek blockaders can be described as a form of self-government, because it is one of the main ways that decisions are made by the people about their land and their community. It is important to recognize that self-government is a loose translation that describes a people making decisions about their own lives as a people. A better term for this is self-determination, which encompasses the range of duties that a government might perform, but also encompasses everything that relates to being Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe. While there are times when the term 'government' is communicatively easier, it should not be forgotten that for people in Grassy Narrows, government is integrated and inseparable from all other aspects of their being.

But am I superimposing the idea that this blockade is anything resembling a type of government? Before elaborating on the political functions of the blockade, I must first show that this is something that can be considered, to use the crude colloquialism of Western parlance, a government.

There are some clear indicators that I have not imposed my own academic hyperbole onto what is happening in Grassy. One of the first of these appears just by travelling to the blockade. All along Jones road leading to Grassy Narrows, there are giant signs erected by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources warning people to be careful not to start forest fires. After all, every forest fire takes that

many saleable timber licenses out of the provincial coffers. Arriving at the entrance to the reserve, there is a sign in the form of a drum telling visitors that they are entering Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabek reserve, and continuing down the road just past the reserve at Slant Lake is another giant sign that says this:

Let it be known that this sign marks the centre of Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe territory. From time immemorial this land has been occupied by and cherished by Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabek. This land is integral to our identity and existence as a people. From this point as far as the Asubpeeschoseewagong have travelled is by divine right declared Anishinaabe territory.

While the MNR signs indicate a vested interest, and the sign at the entrance to the reserve tells you that this place is the community of Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabek, only the last sign makes the clear statement that the being of a people is inseparable from the land that you have now come upon. There is no mistaking that decisions about this land do not just involve protection of an industry, or questions of place and identity, or even an assertion of jurisdictional domain. This final sign and its placement indicates that the the blockade site marks nothing less than the centre of Grassy Narrows' self-determination, embodied by the patch of dirt where you stand. The decisions being made here about this land are decisions about, "existence as a people"

Community activist, leader, and blockader, Joe Fobister described the process that shows how the blockade came to be more than a logging blockade in this way,

The original goal was to be part of the planning process when it came to forest management. For years we weren't even consulted. I think the goal has changed. For me I think the goal is now to maintain control of our territory, or to regain control. We went from trying to be part of forest management, you know, being part in decision-making, and now it changed. We want total control of our territory. I think we also have to move toward traditional governance because the present system that we have has not worked. It will never work.

(Cheechoo 2005)

This shift that Fobister describes is analogous to the signs that line the road, moving beyond "forest management," beyond the reserve and the present system of Indian Act governance, to maintain or regain control of their territory, reviving traditional governance. At the same time, this road analogy is also inadequate because the traditional government aspect is neither the end nor the beginning of the road. It invokes something simultaneously old and new. The type of government envisioned is something different than the existing band council system. It indicates that there are governance practices that have been in place in Grassy Narrows previously, and that these practices are still understood to exist, even if not always exercised. However, at Slant Lake, the site of the blockade,

these practices are clearly alive.

Like Johnson Hall, and as indicated by the sign declaring this the “centre” of their territory, the short bend of road that grazes the shore of Slant Lake is a hub of activity. There is a sacred fire burning continuously there, symbolizing the life of this space, the heart. This is where meetings are held, guests are accommodated, celebrations are marked, and disputes are resolved. It is where people from elsewhere come to offer support. There are places of prayer here. The blockade is a place where people from Grassy come to feel grounded.

One of the greatest outcomes of the blockade was the necessity to hold high school classes out on the land in the middle of winter. As classes broadened to include land-based learning of traditional practices, making snowshoes, building a cabin, and being on the land. An experienced trapper and unassuming leader, Andy Keewatin Jr. (more commonly known as Shoen), became the headmaster of an auspicious Asubpeeschoseewagong institution dubbed Shoen U. The necessity of reinventing school on the land, lead to reexamining school as another colonial intrusion. Shoen U is the antithesis of residential schools. Like government, this type of school also defies categorization as education or mode of production or healthcare or resource use or tradition or innovation. It expands the purpose of the blockade even further and reveals the diverse resources of self-determination.

A big secret of the “longest-running blockade in Canadian history” is this: it is not currently blocking anything, and hasn’t for years (although logging trucks no longer try to pass that way). One of the blockade’s most important functions is as a symbol. The trees that were felled across the road have long since been removed, and the single wooden pole that acted as a gate at times has lain in the grass along the road side for all the times I have been there. The importance of this site is clearly derived from something other than being the site of a blockade. It has taken on a much larger significance.

There is a kempt powwow circle. The log cabin that the youth built in the first months of the blockade is still used regularly. There are two tipis, a roundhouse, and a wigwam. There are the shed-like cabins ready to hold visitors in large numbers. Even if you are there alone, you can feel the kinetic activity that radiates out of this place. This is a place of vibrant capacity, and it is a place where the traditions of Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe are thriving. This place has become a centre of life in Asubpeeschoseewagong, and if we acknowledge that these activities of life are not separated from

the activities of 'governing' in Anishinaabe tradition the way they are in nation states, then there is no denying that what happens here can easily be identified as self-determination.

I've learned that the band, Indian Act-elected chief and council are ineffective, and I also learned that the grassroots people have to show leaders how to be leaders. I think we have to eliminate this election process because it wasn't done that way many years ago. The people became leaders because of their skills, their leadership skills their . . . I guess, wisdom. The Indian Act system has created leadership that's not effective.

Joe Fobister (Cheechoo 2005)

The blockaders are leaders in the traditional sense that Fobister describes. At times, I have also heard Fobister and others talk about the consensus decision-making of the blockade. When asked how it would be decided to end the blockade, for example, the answer from any of these 'leaders' is always that it would have to be a consensus decision. This response to the question of how the blockade would end also reveals something else, that the decision rests with this traditional leadership and not with chief and council, or any other authority. This is especially significant in light of the fact that most of the negotiations with the logging company Abitibi, with the Treaty 3 council, or with the province (when the province has grudgingly been at the table), have been attended by Grassy Narrows' elected chief. This arrangement has resulted in a situation where the chief comes back from Kenora or Winnipeg or Toronto with an offer from Abitibi¹, and through informal discussion with the blockaders, is forced to reject the offer. These negotiations have involved Fobister as well at times, as a representative of 'the community.' But whether there is a blockader present at these meetings or not, decisions about land-use in Asubpeeschoseewagong traditional territory ultimately remain centred around the blockade. This has caused some strain at times with the between the chief and council and the blockaders, or at other times between the Treaty 3 leadership and Grassy Narrows, depending on the council's shifting level of support for maintaining or ending the blockade. It is a seemingly delicate trust relationship. There has always been the possibility that the band council could come to an agreement with the province and distance themselves from the blockade, which would allow the blockaders to be singled out as a dissident group and targeted by the armed authorities. The fact that this has not happened demonstrates two things: First, it demonstrates the strength of the (familial, cultural, historical) ties that bind smaller communities, smaller polities. And second, it shows that the idea of a traditional leadership, based on leadership skills and wisdom as Fobister describes, are still

¹ One such rejected offer was to stop cutting within 10 kilometres of the reserve and to stop clearcutting within 20 kilometres.

seen as legitimate, even by the elected leadership. This is an indication that the traditional cultural practices recognizing leaders in the community persist, and that even the band council acknowledges this older form of leadership to some extent.

On my first visit to Grassy Narrows, Leon Jordaine, the Treaty 3 council Grand Chief came to the Slant Lake blockade to meet directly with the informal leadership of the blockade, an indication that he also acknowledged the traditional leadership as such. Most of this meeting, like many meetings I've attended in Grassy Narrows, was in Ojibway. Jordaine emphasized his past support for the blockade, tried to show that he too supported this kind of political activism by telling stories of his own youthful acts of defiance (reminiscent of Jean Chretien's pandering), but eventually came out with his position that he thought the blockade had done enough. What he heard back from Robert Fobister was that the blockade needed an indication of continued support from the Treaty 3 council. The meeting did not appear to amount to much. Jordaine is regarded by some people in Grassy Narrows as an example of co-opted leadership. When I asked someone's opinion on Jordaine once, I got the rhetorical reply, "do you trust your politicians?" What this meeting does reveal is an egalitarian distribution of political power. Jordaine, like the band council, talks to the blockaders by coming to the blockade and meeting with mutual respect. His speech was intended to persuade. Disagreements were voiced, and rather than undermining each other's position, the disagreement meant continuing to talk. Jordaine did not commit to the expression of support that Robert Fobister asked for, but did not publicly denounce the blockade either.

This is what I understand Alfred to mean when he outlines some integral defining features of a 'traditional community.' He describes a solidarity of the community as a whole that respects the diversity of its members (82). Solidarity, for Alfred is a awareness of and respect for the goals of the community as a whole (in this case the signatories to Treaty 3, for example) in spite of differences. He writes, "solidarity is found among people of different groups who recognize the value, even the necessity, of supporting other groups because of the similarities that exist between them" (87-88). The fact that the blockade is not always a point of agreement with other leaders, but that it continues without their condemnation shows that these are the political ideals at play in Grassy Narrows. The solidarity that Alfred talks about in the Mohawk context as a feature of "traditional communities" is

clearly a feature of the self-determining actions arising from the blockade. Here is one example of the extent to which solidarity, along the lines that Alfred lays out is also emphasized by Judy DaSilva:

My grandmother, who passed away in '84, told me we were one community. We weren't Grassy, we weren't Whitedog, we were one people. I see us as being very critical in this area because we are so rich as a community, if we don't think of Kenora, Grassy, Whitedog, Whitefish, all these people. And yet we are so poor because all the consumerism pulls from us, they leach from us, they survive from us. Young men . . . they go and work themselves to the bone for that consumerism that comes from the big cities. And here we are fighting with each other in this little area, fighting with each other and hurting each other. Roberta always tells me we've become micro, where everything's so small, when we should be macro and come together as a unit.

(Aitkenhead 2007)

The word 'community' here is used to mean everyone in the area surrounding Grassy Narrows, encompassing neighbouring reserves, but also Kenora. In DaSilva's view, the motivation for this solidarity as a community extends beyond Grassy Narrows and even beyond cultural boundaries because there is a shared environmental implications of the situation that override these political affiliations, but also because of an underlying understanding of connection and common purpose. She identifies with everyone in these other communities and in Kenora as being subject to the same struggle against the global economic system. If it seems naive to accept that people are this capable of setting aside differences for a common goal, I have reason to believe that this respect for difference does run as deep or deeper than it appears to here because of a gender dynamic that I noticed among the blockade leadership.

On a long drive once with Roberta Keesick, I had the chance to ask why she or one of her politically active sisters had not ever run for a position on the band council. In terms of traditional leadership, these women are highly regarded and their decisions hold a lot of influence. At the time, it seemed natural that they would want to participate in the decision-making of the band. It also struck me as odd that none of these Clan Mothers participated in negotiations with the Crown or with representatives of Abitibi. Through our conversation that day and through other similar conversations it was notable that these negotiations with governments and other areas of band politics are largely considered areas to be left to men. Not that women are excluded, but that it is seen as a minor, or maybe tangential, political activity that is left up to the men. These political fora are not seen as central to community politics. The impression she gave me was that the women had other important things to do. This dynamic also shows that the values of equality and respect for people's autonomy are present at a very basic level. Power is broadly dispersed and decentralized in this way. These roles are loosely

divided along gender lines where both domains are seen as important, and each shows a profound trust in the other's ability to manage their own domain. This kind of complimentary management is foreign in bureaucratic institutions where proof of what was said and what was done is first and foremost at all times. The majority of what most governments do is record and monitor who is doing what. The efficiency of an approach where power and tasks are equally divided and left entirely in those hands is mind-boggling. No wonder Asubpeeschoseewagong has accomplished so much! But, there is another aspect to this division of labour, that demonstrates even more pointedly just how profoundly the respect for each person's autonomy is a part of this political system.

Quoted above, Joe Fobister talks about the shift in his political demands from the demand to be consulted on forestry practices to being about total control of the land. This objective of control of the land is similarly stated by other people in Grassy Narrows, but there is some indication that it does not mean the same thing to everyone who is part of the struggle for control. An interesting bit of dialogue I heard provides an example. There is a retired city councillor in Kenora who has been active in a local community group whose purpose is to build bridges between the non-Native community in Kenora and the Native communities in and around Kenora. I heard this councillor speak about this group and its partnership with the Treaty 3 government at a conference in Peterborough. It sounded to me like he had gone to a lot of effort to try to make Kenora a more welcoming place for Native people and to try to ease some of the racial tension there. It also seemed as though he had not gone very far outside of his own ethnocentric assumptions. Elsewhere, at a meeting, in an effort to understand what motivated the blockade, he asked, "What I hear you saying is respect us with the land and ask us and consult with us before you come on the territory. Is that it?" To which one of the men from Grassy Narrows replied, "yeah." Then Judy DaSilva gave her reply:

For me its more radical than that. Some of our community members might say different than what I say, but what I say is just totally get out of our traditional territory and I could say our traditional territory goes all the way to your city limits.
No more. No more cutting at all. Not even . . . I don't like that word "consultation" because Abitibi used that one on us all the time. I don't like it. I don't even want any kind of, what they call "development," which is what I call devastation. No "resource extraction." All this "resource extraction" that comes here, all the big fancy boats that are coming on the waters, it's making our water undrinkable. It's causing E-coli. The way you all go in there with 4x4s and 4-wheelers, ATVs . . . you show no regard for our children's future or grandchildren.

(Aitkenhead 2007)

In contrast, at a later point in the meeting, one of the men from Grassy Narrows voiced his frustration

that the Ministry of Natural Resources would not meet with a delegation from Grassy Narrows. A request for meetings with bureaucrats is a very different demand from the more 'radical' position, "no more."

These kinds of difference of opinion about the objectives of the blockade are common. The fact that the men are willing to participate in negotiations with the logging company or the province, while other blockaders are not convinced of the value of these (often) narrow discussions is a recurring difference. In this sense, the men work alongside the band council, looking for an arrangement that will satisfy all parties. The women work with the band council in a different way. Some of the Clan Mothers are also part of the band council's environmental group, but it is as though this affiliation with the band council is used by the blockaders at times when it is politically advantageous to use official channels to achieve their environmental mandate. It appears this way because they so often step beyond the bounds of the band council, acting in a non-official capacity when there is disagreement. The women work alongside the official Indian government, but also subvert it for their own ends. This relationship between different authorities is understood by all parties. And in this way, all parties subvert the expected hierarchy of a government and its 'committee.' (Though the environment group is notably the only committee not called a committee). Rather than see this as a threat to the band council's authority, the relationship is maintained. Difference of opinion, and even dissent, is an accepted practice. This is either out of an egalitarian ideal of respecting one another's autonomy or because both are recognized as leadership bodies, or both. In any case, there is a strong indication that enduring cultural values, that could rightly be considered aspects of traditional government, are underlying these interactions.

Since the beginning of the blockade there has been an annual youth-run environmental gathering that has incorporated a powwow and traditional teachings. In keeping with the environmental urgency that provides so much common ground, the gathering brings together youth from neighbouring reserves, distant reserves, and non-Native participants as well. Warren Ashopenace, is one of the Grassy Narrows youth who has been involved in the blockade from the beginning and is often called upon to speak to non-Native audiences about the what the blockade means. He has gone across Canada to talk about the blockade and has also addressed youth in Russia and Finland.

Ashopenace also sees that this blockade is a way to meet the needs of a broader range of people than

just the people in Grassy Narrows. In a panel presentation in Winnipeg, he explained how he sees the environmental aspect of the blockade, and also sees it as a way to protect a land-based way of life for Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe. Ashopenace identifies other implications of the way their land is being exploited as well. He makes the connection that this blockade is also for people in Kenora. He says that something that he would like to see is the workers at the Abitibi mill be compensated in some way if their employer does eventually close the mill and lay them off. For him, this blockade is a stand against the corporate *modus operandi*, which in his view does not distinguish between the varied effects of these clearcuts on a wide range of people. It exploits indiscriminately. Joe Fobister talks about hearing this too, "At one of the blockades that happened during hunting season last spring, there were non-Native hunters thanking us. They said they feel powerless. They're not able to do anything. We've heard a lot of comments like that. People feel powerless and you know they're expecting us to do the fighting for everybody" (Aitkenhead).

What Roberta described to her sister as being macro, and coming together as a unit, rather than being micro and small, is a good way to interpret many of the stories I have heard around the fire at Slant Lake. There are many stories of these "micro" day-to-day confrontations, stories of racism in Kenora. Judy has said that she doesn't go into town to get her teeth fixed at the dentist because of racism. There is the story of face-to-face intrusions on people's traditional practices, the OPP in uniform who barged in and kept suggesting that the Clan Mothers move their trucks further off the road while they were in a ceremony at a sacred space, blocking no one. There were non-Native bear hunters who had set traps in an area where Judy and her kids were harvesting berries. The hunter warned her that he wouldn't want anything to happen to her kids, so they shouldn't be there. These stories show wasted potential, opportunities for the OPP to learn what it means to keep the peace, spaces where land-use could be compatibly shared, the chance for dentists to gouge the federal government with exorbitant bills for services rendered.

One of my favourite stories shows a different type of confrontation, a face-to-face confrontation that has "macro" insight into Grassy Narrows' self-determination. Throughout the existence of the blockade, logging trucks have found other routes into Asubpeeschoseewagong territory and carried on. Sometimes this logging activity has been disrupted by roving blockades. Another tactic has been the

placement of conscience-reminders left on the machinery after hours. One night, three women in Grassy were talking amongst themselves about another approach. There was a logging camp that housed a dozen workers somewhere on the edge of a dwindling forest and the women decided this camp should not stay. Dressed in their powwow attire they drove out to the site to speak to the workers getting ready for bed somewhere beside yet another clearcut. They brought a photographer, and their drums and knocked on the first trailer door. According to the way that Barbara told me the story, the man who opened his door in his long underwear was surprised to see them. They let him know that in the morning, there would be a blockade on the road that would trap them all out here for days or maybe weeks. He was told that this was his last chance to leave if he wanted to go home for the weekend. Each and every man grabbed his pants, got into his truck and drove off while the women sang and drummed. In the morning, the machines were silent, and no loaded trucks drove away through the blockade that never materialized.

In this story, there are many of the defining elements of the politics of Grassy Narrows' 'land-use management/ government:' cultural practices, empowered decision-making, personal autonomy and personal responsibility, respect, creativity, flexibility, and a longer time frame than is available to other polities.

The idea that Native governments have traditionally been more egalitarian, consensus-based or that each individual is accorded "tremendous respect and trust," as Russel Barsh has described (185), is not new. These values have been shown in terms of treaties with the Crown and in other interactions with Canada. In her article, "Rethinking Aboriginal Governance," Ladner makes it clear that treaties between the Crown and Native peoples were intended to establish, and understood in their verbal forms to establish, a "constitutional order," a mutualistic type of governance. While Native leaders still uphold this understanding of our coexistence on shared land, Canada has chosen dominion and the rule of power, rather than the rule of international law. Ladner writes, "While the colonial nations agreed to respect the sovereignty of Aboriginal nations and to establish a treaty order under international law, as soon as circumstances allowed they abandoned international law and institutionalized a new regime based on domestic law" (48). There is clearly a strong case that can be made that Canada is another colonial nation that has abandoned the principles of international law that it once claimed to uphold. At

the same time, there is also strong evidence that Asubpeeschoseewagong is a nation that continues to uphold these principles and their responsibilities. This can be seen in their interactions with the Canadian government, but the politics of Grassy Narrows expand beyond the state-centred relations between 'Indians' and the Crown. The resistance marked by the blockade and the actions that coincide with it, have wider implications. How these tenets of governance play out internationally in other contexts, and particularly in the context of international trade and resource exploitation, is also evident. People in Grassy Narrows are truly pushing the boundaries of what it means to live in an empowering and humanizing way in a globalized world. This shows that their political system has the flexibility to adapt to changing global politics, which the nation-state model lacks. Truly the form of these two models is the critical factor. At the same time that the nation-state is becoming irrelevant, so too is the band government instituted by the state.

Here is another secret about the 'anti-logging' blockade in Grassy Narrows. Twice now, at the request of a blockader I have gone out to her traditional territory and helped her cut down trees! She has begun building a cabin on her trapline and continues working on it every spring after the lake breaks up and every fall just before it freezes. For people who are on the land for a lot of the winter, a cabin like this provides critical emergency shelter and a base for trapping activities. It serves other purposes as well. It marks the trapline, lest anyone make the mistake (highly unlikely, of course) that this land is "empty" or not being used "productively" (not that anyone could ever see it that way). The cabin is partially a sign in the common language of the dominant society. While continuous use of the land is not understood to be the same thing as ownership and therefore makes the land available for sale, a house-shaped object, in this case a trapper's shelter, is well-understood in the dominant society to mean that someone is there on this patch of earth, that it is 'property' in the dominant world view.

Gwa wich sees the construction of this cabin as an assertion of her Treaty rights. This is the challenging process of translation that constantly faces Asubpeeschoseewagong. They have decided that in order for the agents of power to understand, they are willing to make their continued being as legible as possible in certain strategic places, in the same way that an 'x' might be needed to signify to Canada that an agreement to share has been reached. If Gwa wich continues trapping as she and her ancestors always have, the government marks down the 'official boundaries' of her registered trapline

and co-opts this Anishinaabe practice as a state-sanctioned one, obscuring the fact that this practice is an Aboriginal right. If Gwa wick makes this practice more visible by building a cabin, as is her right protected under Treaty 3, then she makes it clear to the Crown authorities that what she is doing is not, a state-sanctioned practice, registered and approved, but an Aboriginal practice. This, she realizes, makes it more difficult for the Crown to know where to file this occurrence, and forces them to reckon with the question of Treaty rights. The Crown didn't know where to file it, so charged Gwa wick with contempt of court, as is apparently their traditional practice for resolving questions of international law.

Distinct traplines on the traditional territory of Asubpeeschoseewagong existed before the provincial government began registering areas as people's 'official' traplines. The traplines that are now recorded by the Ministry of Natural Resources correspond with the Anishinaabe system for delineating these lines that was already in practice before white people began recording them. The white laws were written directly over top in a sense, so that the original underlying text is not visible to Canadian law, but is still there. This is similar to the way 'band membership codes' are approved by Indian Affairs. This approval is irrelevant to the nation in question, who continues to recognize who their people are as they always have. The pattern that emerges here reveals Canada's colonial reality. A state superimposed over top of existing nations denies that these original nations ever existed, ever had social orders, ever had governing structures.

There is an interesting subversive phenomenon at the place where Gwa wick is building her cabin. At this place, she is affectionately referred to as, "the Queen." There is even a throne. It is the tarp-walled privy that only Her Majesty is allowed to use, while her loyal working subjects are sent off into the bush with a shovel. The name takes on the profound levels of humour that are often layered between the tragedy and injustice of the colonial mentality. Is this Crown land? If so, then whose crown? This place is being leveraged as a challenge to the Queen's authority, and there, on her throne sits another kind of queen. One who doesn't take herself and her 'station' too seriously, while at the same time making an unmistakable statement that her claim to the title Queen here holds a solemn legitimacy that breezily mocks any other, even from the most humble of thrones.

A similar strategy to the one used by Gwa wick has been used at other times on Asubpeeschoseewagong traditional territory. Once there was a work bee organized to clear the brush in

an area beside Keys Lake that would serve as a new powwow grounds. Grassy Narrows has usually held its annual powwow in an area beside the band council offices on the reserve. But in the same way that Gwa wich felt compelled to make her being-as-Anishinaabe more visible, other blockaders thought that the powwow should move off the reserve onto another part of Asubpeeschoseewagong traditional territory that, in this case, was being used by white people, more than it was being used by Anishinaabe. 'Officially' it would be considered Crown land.

Like the blockade these actions are intended to remind people, both Canadians and Anishinaabe, that they have a treaty relationship. These acts have the potential to create dialogue. They are designed to provoke a response to the existing colonial realities. The processes put in place by the Canadian governments as a way to interact have also been pursued in good faith by Grassy Narrows, but have been found to be ineffective. While Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe can be said to have an established and effective protocol for engaging in international relations with Canada, or with any international body with whom they interact, the same cannot be said about Canada's primitive diplomatic protocol.

The failure of Canada's system for fostering its treaty relationship with Anishinaabe comes across in the way people talk about Canada and its corporate partners' disingenuous approach to this relationship. In the above quote, DaSilva makes it clear that 'consultation' has a particular duplicitous usage in the resource extraction industry. She says of consultation that Abitibi "used that one on us all the time," indicating her experience of consultation being "used on us" as one might use a weapon.

Charles Wagamese, a Cree teacher who has worked at Grassy Narrows' school also recognizes the inadequacy and irrationality of Canada's approach when he states that when he hears the word "consultation," the first word he hears is "con." The problem he points out, is that when Canada or Abitibi say consultation, they are not open to the possibility that people might say no. As he has explained, "It's not a negotiation if you can't say no." (Aitkenhead). The common theme through these gross mis-interpretations of nation-to-nation diplomacy is that Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe are willing to engage on Canada's terms, if they would work. Canada does not go the same distance, and people in Grassy Narrows are forced to first bring Canada to them, even if that means making Canada arrest them.

Fortunately Grassy Narrows recognizes that the Crown is only one vested interest in this shared land and the way they engage with other parties demonstrates the depth and adaptability of their political system. The same values that govern Asubpeeschoseewagong's 'internal affairs' are also brought into the international forum. And while the treaty is held as a sacred covenant between its signatories, the people who represent Canada can also be defined broadly. In the same way that equal authority is vested in the band council as in the Clan Mothers, it is also evident that people in Grassy Narrows are equally as willing to accept that anyone in Canada can uphold their treaty obligations and responsibilities. It is here that the nation-to-nation relationships are played out to their fullest potential and in the process, a different model than the one employed by Canadian government policy is created. It is in these interactions between Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe and other 'nations' that there is a resemblance to what Hall describes at Johnson Hall as a model of diplomacy between peoples. Here is how Joe Fobister described some of the activity at the blockade to Jocelyn Cheechoo, "About a month after the initial blockade, we had 25 chiefs from Treaty 3 come and discuss, I guess show their support and discuss strategies. We've had community gatherings. We've had feasts. We've had powwows at the blockade site. We've had youth environmental gatherings."

From the beginning of the blockade it became a rallying point and a centre of activity. There were supporters of Asubpeeschoseewagong who arrived from Winnipeg. These supporters became "Friends of Grassy Narrows," a loose organization of dedicated people who organized donations, publicized what was happening, and spent time listening and learning about being allies. Probably the most dedicated member of this group was Dave Brophy, who always did the work that was needed to organize and deliver any requested support. Dave took on his role whole-heartedly with profound humility and respect. He demonstrated how sincere and committed an ally can be. Another group of supporters were members of the Christian Peacemaker Teams, an organization dedicated to non-violent, but forceful, intervention in violent conflicts around the world. CPTers often act as witnesses in places where there is potential for a confrontation to turn into bloodshed. Since the blockade began they have become consistent and responsive allies. Later in the blockade, Grassy drew supporters from environmental organizations through its annual youth environment gatherings which invited participants from anywhere. This included small 'local' environmental groups like the Boreal Forest

Action Network in Winnipeg, to the more global Rainforest Action Network who took on Grassy Narrows as one of their major campaigns (Save Grassy!) for 2 years before moving on. Eventually the juggernaut human rights organization, Amnesty International visited and publicly reported on Canada's embarrassing track record for respecting Indigenous rights in Grassy Narrows.

At the blockade, I have also seen birthday parties, political meetings, organizing meetings, meetings between international academics and keepers of Anishinaabe political thought, meetings between non-Native ally organizations, and meetings in Ojibway about band bids on logging contracts. I have seen three white guys put up a teepee under the direction of a trio of perversely amused mothers and grandmothers. I have seen a mass of Toronto hippies camped out in a roped-off area to keep other people out. I have seen Mohawk warriors arrested in the middle of the night and I have heard the thawing lake make beautiful ungodly sounds in the middle of the night. I have heard horrible stories and hilarious stories. I have celebrated and mourned. This blockade is a vibrant and active place that recalls the hotbeds of democratic action that emerged in the Mackenzie Valley or in Greece or at Johnson Hall or in . . . Port Alberni.

The first place I witnessed the reality of Native politics in a globalizing, post-state world was in the resource-use conflicts in the area surrounding Port Alberni. Chief Judith Sayers of the Hupacasath First Nation gained Canada-wide notoriety as the chief who requested that the ballots for BC's 2004 treaty referendum be sent to her address as a rejection of the referendum process and BC's demonstrated reluctance to support the 'land-claim' process. I heard Chief Sayers speak in Victoria shortly after the referendum and, at the time, found what she had to say a revelation of the power that First Nations can have. She saw an impasse with the provincial and federal government. Treaty negotiations were proceeding with Canada, but for the Hupacasath, an understanding with states was no longer the relevant currency in a world that was overcoming borders in every significant way; financially, culturally, communicatively, and legally. Chief Sayers saw opportunities for a small nation in such a world. The Hupacasath had begun negotiating directly with companies that wanted to use their land. These companies saw Hupacasath First Nation as a significant stakeholder in their interests and the First Nation saw these companies as the actual political leadership with whom they might reconcile their collective interests. The Hupacasath were not selling out, they were leaving the outdated

dominion behind and negotiating their treaties in a new world order. Canada deferred to this order through NAFTA and the World Trade Organization and is now severely, if not fatally, limited in its ability to define its terms. The Hupacasath on the other hand still have a large degree of adaptability, as they are demonstrating. They have found one way to disarm Indian Affairs' financial control that is widely seen as the largest barrier to self-determination.

The way the blockade leadership has worked with large and small organizations of non-Native and Native allies and the wide variety of tactics used reminds me of this approach. It is not the negotiating of land-use agreements with companies, but it is the negotiating of a range of strategies for maintaining access to the land in its intact state. All of the organizations that the blockaders have worked with have different reasons for being there. Some come from an ideological perspective that lacks an understanding of colonial relations. Some of these differences are overcome by people being out at the blockade or on the land with people from Grassy, who have taken on this kind of education as a part of their struggle to build relations with others. In some cases, the message does not get across to people who are there to help, but are not able to overcome their own assumptions. But a cultural respect for difference endures to the extent that there is still room to work together. The Rainforest Action Network and Forest Ethics are good examples of organizations that represent a dogmatic environmental ethic that cannot and has not always served the best interests of Native people. At times environmentalism can be another form of colonialism, particularly when white, wealthy, urban people attempt to decide what should be happening on Native lands. The collaboration with these groups in Grassy Narrows was an interesting experiment in reconciling these differences.

David Sone has been a supporter of the blockade from the beginning, like members of CPT or Friends of Grassy Narrows. At the same time, he was involved with organizing environmental campaigns with Rainforest Action Network. He approached the Clan Mothers and blockade organizers with the idea that this environmental organization had a lot of resources that could be put to use on the blockade's behalf. RAN was able to launch an international campaign on many fronts, and gave the blockaders options that were not otherwise available. There were international tours, presentations to the Weyerhaeuser shareholders, websites, boycott campaigns, and the coordination of a high-profile blockade of the Trans-Canada highway in July of 2006. The blockaders put a lot of trust in Sone. Not

everything went the way the blockaders might have expected. The message that got out through this conduit was mainly an environmental one in the Noble Savage vein. This mode of communication did not engage the discourse of Native self-determination. Some readily admitted the inadequacy of this approach, but all agreed that there were some benefits as well. From some of the conversations I have had since RAN ended their campaign, it is clear that the trust that people in Grassy had in Sone remains intact, even while they express reservations about the larger organization that campaigned on their behalf. The main thing that I think this shows is that despite disagreements and differences in underlying values, Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe were able to work with these organizations because of the democratic principles that their traditional governance is based upon. Particularly a respect for autonomy and expectations of responsibility. This was one more way of engaging with people in an international context, with different people representing the original spirit and intent of the treaties. An open letter released by "the community of Grassy Narrows" in February of 2006 welcomed this wide range of support in its many forms. It reads,

We warmly invite our friends in the environmental, human rights, indigenous solidarity, faith-based, anti-poverty, anti-globalization, and all movements for social, ecological and economic justice to support our struggle, and take non-violent action in solidarity with us against the corporations that are plundering our homeland – starting with Weyerhaeuser and Abitibi. Stand strongly and proudly with us as we safeguard the basis of a bright future for all of our children and grandchildren and unborn generations.

Back in Port Alberni, there was more to the Hupacasath strategy than establishing their terms with industry's demands. Sayers also talked about the way they built connections with the local government in Port Alberni. They joined the school board and instituted some education practices more befitting the sizeable proportion of Hupacasath students. They began joint economic ventures with the town and have now built and run their own small-scale hydro dam that meets the needs of both communities. And they came up with a shared strategy for land-use. The interesting thing about all of these initiatives is that they too largely by-pass federal or provincial involvement. They focus globally and locally, while recognizing that as Sayers has said, "we want a treaty with [Canada], but [Canada] needs a treaty with us." The Hupacasath Nation, and probably any other nation, is able to continue on with its own self-determination with or without a treaty. It is not Native people who need to legitimize their place here in international law. Without a treaty, or in the case of Grassy Narrows, without recognizing their treaty obligations, Canada is still in a position of establishing its legality as a

government. If they do not, could it be possible that they will be left behind as corporations ignore their borders and Native people ignore their Indian Act? Asubpeeschoseewagong does not yet have the economic resources that the Hupacasath have, but there is enormous capacity. They are not pursuing the same kind of economic development, but where relations with the Crown are stunted; they are pursuing local and international opportunities for cooperation in the direction of self-determination over their lives and land.

In the above quote, DaSilva reveals that in her Canadian English - Anishinaabe English dictionary the word "development" translates as "devastation." This echoes Puxley's deconstruction of a dual concept of development, one that uses the human pursuit of our own potential as a measure and one that is the irrational idea that people can be developed by some external force. "No healthy human being opposes [her] own development," he writes, "on the contrary, all human beings, by nature, seek to develop" (107).

DaSilva also expresses the duplicity of the phrase "resource extraction," that resonate with Taiaiake Alfred's analysis of resource use and resource exploitation. In a sense Alfred is more specific than Puxley (although along the same humanizing trajectory) and says that not only do Native people not oppose development, but that they also "do not reject modernization or participation in larger economies." The important consideration for the Anishinaabe blockaders is, as Alfred describes, that there is "a responsibility to participate in the economy with the intent of ensuring the long-term health and stability of people and the land" (61). In other words, there are more common objectives and values than is generally recognized by most non-Native people and this is another indication that the way these objectives are pursued/natural resource managed/governed is the crucial difference.

This common interest has been one of the hardest concepts for people in Grassy Narrows to convey to governments, industry, and the general public, but the concept is simple. Any land-based community understands that their viability as a community depends on sustaining a land-based economy for generations. Non-indigenous people who live in mill towns or fishing villages understand this as well. They know that the logging practices that their corporate employers conduct will mean the end of their communities. In this sense, there is an unrecognized potential for a common struggle between people in Grassy Narrows, whose land is being exploited, and the people in Kenora, whose

labour is being exploited.

One of the barriers erected by people in Kenora is the acceptance of company rhetoric that replaces a broader consideration of what this type of intensive, short-term land use means. Spokesmen for Abitibi or Weyerhaeuser deny their employer's responsibility for any consequences on the lands where they operate. The bureaucratic model of governance provides a protocol where each person is 'just doing their job,' and responsibility lies in a non-existent somewhere else. In a demonstration of what consultation actually means, the blockaders held a public meeting in Kenora to explain why the blockade was happening, to answer questions, and, in my view, as a remarkable exercise in nation-to-nation diplomacy. People in Grassy Narrows tried to bring this discussion back to the here and now to build on the common ground that exists, to focus on the "macro" rather than the "micro." Like the collaboration with many different interest groups, this meeting was another way for Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe to honour their treaty relationship. It is also another indication that the blockaders act as, and are perceived as, a government in a very real way.

At the meeting, Joe Fobister described his frustration in trying to talk to the bureaucratic super computer, "You go to a meeting with representatives of Abitibi and you tell them, we don't want you guys clearcutting anymore and they say, 'what do you mean by clearcutting? What's the definition of clearcutting?' It's like you're talking to people that are . . . you know, idiots" (Aitkenhead). The idea of the meeting was to foster dialogue and to encourage the development of the common ground that exists between blockaders in Grassy and the town's need for a forestry-supported economy. Even in this forum for open dialogue, here was one forestry representative's response to Fobister's frustration trying to communicate and part of the exchange that followed:

From what I see, we're really told what to do by the Minister of Natural Resources. They tell us the guidelines. We go through big books, like that. It's the provincial government that lays out the guidelines, what should be cut, how big of an area should be cut, how far away from a stream and all those things.

I understand that the clearcuts are designed to emulate natural disturbances and that's how cutting is kind of planned. You're supposed to emulate a fire or some kind of blowdown some natural disturbance. I guess from my perspective we're really looking at the forest in a prescribed way where we're following rules and regulations.

To which Fobister replied:

I totally disagree when the government or logging companies say that they're mimicking natural disasters. Like, I've never seen a forest fire completely wipe out an area a mile by a mile and a half. I think logging the way it was done in the past, selective cutting, was more mimicking a natural disaster because a forest fire will always leave a few standing trees, a few trees will fall.

And the further response from the Mill employee:

I think the other side of the equation though is that MNR is cutting, but at the same time, they're putting out lots of forest fires, that would be raging forest fires that would clear acres of land.

Later in the meeting this company man conclusively announced that the solution to everything was that people in Grassy Narrows ought to be given contracts to replant the clearcuts, which would replace the forest and provide people in Grassy with jobs, all in one fell swoop.

In a letter from Abitibi in 1998, almost 10 years before the meeting in Kenora, Abitibi's PR spin doctors make the nonsensical claim that even though their logging practices "may be considered catastrophic, we believe that in the long run it is best for the forest. If the forest were left with no cutting, it would become old and would not renew itself" (quoted in Braun 16). A few months after the blockade began, Abitibi spokesman Marc Osborne is quoted as saying, "This is not clearcutting to me" and adds to his pitch for Abitibi words like consultation, sustainability, and responsibility (ibid.). From the meeting in Kenora, it is clear that not only is this still the company line, but that there are enough people in Kenora that believe it to give it the rule of the majority. This makes dialogue difficult, though people in Grassy persist.

We all have our own stories of confronting bureaucratic barriers (especially those of us at the University of Manitoba Inc.), but the ones faced by Native people everywhere through Indian Act policy and the diversion of responsibility between various levels of government and giant companies have lasted for decades or even centuries. The question put to the blockaders has repeatedly been, "what do you want?" And at this meeting, the question was voiced by people who live in Kenora, by the police chief, by forestry employees, by a former city councillor, and the answer came back from Judy, stop. Get out.

Writing on the Dene rejection of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, Puxley writes,

The expectation of the federal government that the Dene should be able to respond, as if to a questionnaire, with a detailed description of a 'land claim' so thoroughly misses the point. The Dene have announced their intention to decolonize themselves. . . . They are much more realistic than the federal government when they recognize that their first task will be to come to terms with their colonial experience in a long-term effort to rebuild their nation on the principles of non-exploitive development. . . . The first task for the Dene, and one that takes a great deal of time and effort, is to identify and discard colonial conditioning. Then, the Dene will be in a position to plan the course of their own development.

One of the greatest strengths of the Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe forms of 'governance' or 'resource-management,' is that they take as long as they need to. "Stop" is not a word that is available anywhere else or in any other political system. The very definition of progress in the dominant society is movement, almost any movement, in any direction. The measure of the Canadian economy, the Gross Domestic Product, is the measure of goods and services being sold, any goods, for any reason. Sustainability, in corporate terms, means sustained economic growth, regardless of circumstance. This is the cadence of machinery. "Stop" is a radical idea, because it is completely counter to the totalizing logic. It is the announcement that Puxley describes that Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe are decolonizing themselves and are claiming the space that makes their being meaningful and possible.

Alfred's *Indigenous Manifesto* lays out some of the objectives of a decolonized community government. Not all of them pertain to the present situation in Asubpeeschoseewagong, but there are three that are significant. The first, which he emphasizes throughout his book, is that there needs to be a focus on local, traditional leadership and decision-making. In Grassy Narrows, the Clan Mothers, the youth leadership, and the blockade that incorporates these leaders into its core decision-making structure have real authority that is respected by the band council and by the larger community. This group of Clan Mothers or youth leaders are not exclusive. Anyone in Grassy can play a role in these decision-making bodies. This traditional participatory model has been more effective in meeting the community's need to protect their land and the practices that accompany the integrity of the land, than anything else implemented since the creation of the reserve. Grassy Narrows has more control over their traditional territory than they have had since the relocation of the reserve in the 1960s. The form of government that has thrived around the blockade has led to a revitalized sense of community empowerment and has forced outside institutions to listen. This relates to the second objective Alfred emphasizes. He writes that "a political space must be created for the exercise of self-determination." This means "negotiating innovative ways for the state to recognize the principle [of self-determination]" and "acting on that right as much as their capacity to do so allows" (137). These first two objectives of a Native government can be expressed as a need for communities to assert their local authority and to assert their authority in their international relations, with the state or other invasive powers that be. The blockade has given Grassy Narrows considerable leverage in their interactions with

the province or with Abitibi. It has been the basis for broad support networks and successfully demonstrated Asubpeeschoseewagong authority over their traditional territory. The third objective that Alfred holds up is also related to these two jurisdictions and that is economic self-sufficiency. The logging contracts that have been offered to people in Grassy Narrows have not been worth the cost of investing in the required startup costs of a logging operation. On the other hand, the blockade leadership has led to Shoen U, where more and more youth are being taught the land-based economic systems of their ancestors. Grassy Narrows has also recently bought canoes for anyone to use to harvest wild rice, which is cooperatively marketed and distributed. There is now planning underway for an ecotourism operation based from the blockade site and run by the Asubpeeschoseewagong youth. Alfred writes that community governments must act on their right to self-determination "as much as their capacity allows." The blockade is gradually proving, not only to act on their rights in the fullest possible way, but also to be a means of increasing that capacity.

In the past year, talks have been ongoing with the province and Abitibi-consolidated with band leaders and blockade leaders. After several months of these meetings, it was announced in June of this year that Abitibi was abandoning its timber licenses on Grassy Narrows territory and that it would not be logging there anymore. Yet the blockade remains. The blockade that blocks nothing remains. The final secret of the blockade is revealed! This is not a blockade, it must be something else. A parliament? A new country? A new reserve? An unreserve? An embassy? A summer retreat? A school? A university? A universe? The united nations? A commune? Nothing? The very being of Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe (hint: "this sign marks the centre")? Hopefully, we will keep guessing forever, because this is the strength of the blockade.

Russel Barsh writes a clever response to the scientific need to know as it contrasts with the Mohawk understanding of a paradoxical universe. I find it helpful here as well:

Indeed, we should hope that science never discovers an ultimate "answer" to the mechanics of the universe, because the end of riddles would be the death of the human soul. A world of perfect knowledge would quickly become a damnation of eternal boredom. A loving Creator would have invented an unending and unpredictable universe.

(183)

This is why the form that government takes is the crucial factor. A government or decision-making process that is as adaptable, as responsive, and as flexible as a human being, or group of human beings,

has so many more options for meeting the needs of its people and is therefore better able to do so. It is possible for a body like this to sustain the process of building relationships with other peoples and with their land. A body like this can have living treaty relations and can adopt different uses of its land as needed. It can sustain relationships.

It is telling that the impact of the clearcutting is routinely put in terms of the worst human atrocities: Joe Fobister has described having his heart pulled out of his chest each time he drives into a clearcut. Judy DaSilva mentioned someone observing that the logs piled on the trucks look like dead bodies. Judy herself has noted that seeing the trees being hauled away is like seeing children being taken away to residential school. There is a protest slogan chanted by women in Grassy Narrows, "Keep your hands off my bush!" These descriptions liken the damage done to Anishinaabe lands to dismemberment, infanticide, cultural genocide (genocide), and sexual assault. These are powerful messages that proclaim that the land is not conceptually separate from Anishinaabe bodies or from being Anishinaabe, from being people. The human body, being human underlies the actions being taken, the constitution of this type of governance is the protection of a peoples right to live in a humanistic way.

The point of the photo of my great grandfather and the reflection on my family's roles as colonizers that I began with is not meant simply as a confession of guilt. The point I want to include is that our roles as colonizers are not as distant or as abstract as they may seem. This picture symbolizes to my how close this relationship is. It reminds me that my relationship to people in Grassy Narrows is as close as my own family. One hundred years later and so much distance travelled in between, has brought me right back to the same relationship that presented itself then, and forces me to ask how much has changed, to reassess our relationship. The barrier between colonizer and colonized is frail. Edward Said wrote, "rather than the manufactured clash of civilizations, we need to concentrate on the slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways (xxix). This is how I understand Judy's observation that we find ways of walking together. We each take on our own responsibilities. We each announce our intention to decolonize ourselves. To do this we need to be reminded that we have those treaty obligations. Self-determination in Asubpeeschoseewagong is the process of taking on these responsibilities to the fullest possible

extent.

Chrissy Swain is one of the angry youth who cut down the trees that began the blockade. There is a drum song that I have heard her sing on many occasions, that has the English lines, "Stephen Harper is not my leader, our true leaders are our children." This song reminds me of the old-fashioned idea that governments are ultimately accountable to the people. In Asubpeeschoseewagong, governments are not accountable to the people, the governments are the people. And as people we are all accountable to our future generations.

In living on this land, in our very being, in being 'Canadian,' in doing research, as academics, as friends of Grassy Narrows, as environmentalists, as religious adherents, as religious dissidents, as human rights crusaders, as writers, as families, as people we all have the common task of decolonizing. This is the thread that cinches together the pieces of the work presented here. Who I am as a descendant of Matthew Brown, and who I am as a student, and who I am as a resident on this land, every facet of my being brings me back to the relationship I have in the colonial relationship. The decolonizing self-determination efforts of Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinaabe that I have shown are their part of the work to be done. What I have shown even more starkly is the decolonizing work to be done by me.

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