

Namegosibiing Anishinaabe Compassion: A Cure for Modern Day Ills

by

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Abstract

Compassion is a universal concept that is and has been cultivated in many different ways throughout time and across cultures. Most if not all traditions recognize that individuals must cultivate their own compassion, as it is not necessarily an inherent human trait. Compassion is has been defined in the western literature as the recognition of and desire to alleviate suffering in self and others. It is distinct from empathy, which is the vicarious experience of other people's suffering. Research based on neuroimaging has shown that the brain experiences suffering regardless of whether it is first-hand or empathically induced while feelings of compassion involve an entirely different part of the brain that do not overlap with empathy. These findings suggest that many of the common adverse effects associated with the condition of empathy (for example, burnout, depression, and desensitization to suffering) can be mitigated if one shifts his/her perspective from empathy to compassion. This thesis suggests that while Anishinaabe constructs of compassion are all but absent in the scholarship, they exist at the grassroots level embedded in language, traditional stories, and social practices. Interviews with elder members of Namegosib Anishinaabeg of Trout Lake, Ontario demonstrate that compassion was fully integrated into daily life, a central tenet of spiritual and moral beliefs and practices. Its manner of cultivation ranged from participation in dream fasting ceremonials to making and offering gifts for and to others. The belief that compassion brought about peace of mind and other beneficial states of mind associated with the good life was salient for the Trout Lake community. Moreover,

moving from an empathy to a compassion paradigm in health and social welfare based in traditional Anishinaabe understandings of compassion could have many benefits for Indigenous health as well as its workers.

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And, finally, my dad Garth Agger and daughter Emilia-Helen Maple Chernish, who were never at arm's length when a hug or a laugh was required.

Dedication

It is with profound love that I dedicate this thesis to my family: Greg, Emilia-Helen, Helen, Garth, and Nookum.

Also to my friend Tammy: thank you for always availing yourself for a laugh and a large burst of encouragement.

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Introduction

Research for this project began in the spring of 2019 and is primarily informed by a single contributor, my grandmother, Dedibaayaanimanook, Sarah Keesick Olsen (Figure 1). My mother, Helen Agger, was a secondary contributor, as she served as translator and assisted in the analysis of linguistic material. The topic of compassion resulted from how Dedibaayaanimanook reacted to the death of her only son Harald in 1998 after a hunting accident. Rather than becoming bitter and angry, she showed kindness and compassion to the man who had killed her son; this, despite the profound sadness she was experiencing. In fact, shortly after Harald's passing, Dedibaayaanimanook declared that the man was now her son. By this she meant that from this point forward, she would treat him as though he was her son and her children should treat him as their brother, as Dedibaayaanimanook recognized that their growing bitterness was harmful to them. This gesture initiated a lifelong relationship, represented by the giving and receiving of fish and wild meat, which in turn was emblematic of the giving and receiving of compassion and forgiveness. A short time later, the man left the community which immediately truncated the aspect of their relationship that involved the giving and acceptance of food. Nevertheless, his departure occurred in the context of forgiveness and the knowledge that their relationship would continue to be positive, even if they would never speak again. In return, Dedibaayaanimanook was emancipated from a lifetime of bitterness and suffering which served as example for the rest of the family. This reciprocal nature of relationship was well known to Dedibaayaanimanook and was often demonstrated in

the giving and receiving of things as simple as mittens, emblematic of her community's actualization of compassion and other ethics into daily life. What were the philosophical/spiritual bases/basis underpinning this act of acceptance? Did it imply forgiveness? Was it key to maintaining her peace of mind? Was this response unique to her or did it reflect a more generalized Anishinaabe worldview concerning suffering, kindness, forgiveness, peace of mind, and what constitutes a good life? These questions were foremost in my mind when I sought to get a deeper understanding of my grandmother's perspective on her son's death, and what this implied about her Anishinaabe worldview. This process of questioning and reflecting on the possible reasons for her decision was the main driver in the selection of the research topic.

This thesis shows that compassion, rather than empathy, is a fundamental aspect of how Namegosib (Trout Lake) Anishinaabe historically viewed health and living well. According to this worldview, compassion leads to peace of mind and works to diminish suffering of self and others. Accordingly, this thesis defines both empathy and compassion from a western neuroscientific perspective and draws parallels between this and Namegosib Anishinaabe philosophy. Namegosib Anishinaabe compassion knowledge continues to be applicable today not least because of the complexity associated with improving the physical and psychological health of Indigenous people in Canada, both on reserves and in urban settings. Neuroscientific knowledge about both compassion and empathy has an important role to play in this process. This knowledge illuminates the drawbacks of working

within an empathy paradigm as well as the benefits of working within a compassion paradigm. As a relatively new field of research, neuroscience has primarily been carried out with specific application to the helping professions as it can mitigate practitioner burnout, among other things. However, its applicability to other disciplines is well recognized, and this thesis identifies its specific applicability to Indigenous health, although this is not widely discussed, if at all.



Figure 3. Dedibaayaanimanook eating berries while in Trout Lake, Ontario, August 2018.

The Science of Empathy

There is an important distinction between compassion and empathy, despite the fact that these terms are often used interchangeably. Simply put, empathy is being with another in their suffering, while compassion is the desire that another would not suffer. According to neuroscientists Susanne Leiberger and Olga Klimecki (2014), empathy is the ability to share both the positive and negative emotional experiences of others. It is a fundamental human trait that is learned at an early age in response to receiving love, affection, and touch. As psychologist Martin Seager (2014) has explained, “mirroring and attunement of empathy” within the first two years of life is essential if a baby is to “develop [an] accurate or healthy sense of self of identity” (p. 2). Empathy allows us to “feel happy when we vicariously share the joy of others and [to] share the experience of suffering when we empathize with someone in pain” (Singer & Klimecki, 2014, p. R875). Even infants experience a lesser form of empathy called emotion contagion in which they do not distinguish between themselves and another person but nonetheless take on their caregiver’s emotions (Singer & Klimecki, 2014).

The research of Singer and Klimecki’s (2014) specifically on empathy and suffering has demonstrated that the same neural networks in the brains of suffering individuals are also activated in those who are empathizing. In other words, the mind experiences empathetic suffering the same way as it does first person suffering. Singer and Klimecki’s (2014) research also showed that generating empathy activates the centers of the brain that also process the emotional facet of physical pain, while

generating compassion activates different parts of the brain that do not overlap with pain. Thus empathy and compassion can be distinguished on a neural level.

However, a state of distress can arise when one becomes aware of the suffering of others and experiences this suffering him/herself, especially if this occurs repeatedly over time. This phenomenon was originally recognized in the field of psychology in the late 1990's but was (erroneously) termed "compassion fatigue", noting that this was prior to any study on the neurological differences between compassion and empathy (see below). Research of the time had identified the fact that people working within such helping professions as palliative care, psychology, and nursing experienced higher rates of burnout, depression, anxiety, and reduced ability for empathy. According to psychologist Francois Mathieu (2012), compassion fatigue was recognized as having a significant psychological affect on practitioners:

[they] were exhibiting signs of marked emotional and physical exhaustion with a deep shift in their ability to connect with feelings of compassion for others (clients colleagues, and loved ones). Many confessed that they were becoming desensitized to their patients' stories. In addition research found that exposure to traumatic material was negatively impacting helping professionals: Helpers were experiencing intrusive images, nightmares and difficulty getting rid of traumatic stories recounted by their clients. They were also noticing that the stories they heard were profoundly changing their view of the world [...]. In addition to this shift in worldview, some helpers were experiencing symptoms similar to posttraumatic stress disorder [PTSD], without having experienced

primary trauma themselves. (Compassion Fatigue)

Nearly two decades after compassion fatigue was first recognized, psychologists Inga Boellinghaus, Fergal Jones, and Jane Hutton (2012) continued to highlight the issue of burnout as it related to their specific field of work: “continuous work with people in mental distress commonly leads to symptoms of psychological distress in clinicians, which may lead to burnout” (2012, p. 129). Also in 2012, the *Encyclopedia of Trauma: An Interdisciplinary Guide* reported that the current standard treatment for those suffering from what continued to be (mis)understood as compassion fatigue was limited to changing one’s workplace habits, for example, increasing vacation time, reducing workload, working part-time, and professional development (Mathieu, 2012). Unfortunately, the phenomenon often returns once the practitioner returns to his/her regular working conditions, indicating that the long-term efficacy of such workplace strategies is poor.

Informed by their own social neuroscientific research carried out in 2014, Tania Singer and Olga Klimecki (2014, p. R875) identified the state of empathetic distress, which has similar if not identical symptoms as compassion fatigue. It is notable that the concepts of compassion fatigue and empathic distress currently coexist despite neuroscience which indicates that the symptoms displayed are actually a result of empathic distress not compassion fatigue. One possible reason is that the science of compassion, as a relatively new field, has yet to permeate other disciplines. Singer and Klimecki (2014) have described empathic distress as a: “strong aversive and self-oriented response to the suffering of others, accompanied by the desire to

withdraw from a situation in order to protect oneself from excessive negative feelings.” Empathic distress can result in a variety of negative emotional states including anger, frustration, sadness, narcissism, emotional exhaustion, burnout, and depression. Importantly, Singer and Klimecki (2014) found that a state of empathic distress renders one ineffective at helping when it is needed, which, unlike compassion, is considered a motivator of many pro-social behaviours. In other words, empathy can lead to sensitization to suffering and burnout from vicariously experienced emotional pain while compassion leads to self-preservation and the ongoing ability to care for the wellbeing of others.

While most of the current research concerning empathic distress is focused on the adverse psychological effects of this phenomenon, there are known and well documented adverse physical health outcomes associated with this and other negative psychological states. As early as 1993, cardiac psychiatrist Redford Williams and cultural historian Virginia Williams correlated negative emotional states such as anger, aggression, cynicism, and hostility with acute heart attack, stroke and sudden death, cancer, and depression. Though it is now generally accepted that that long term anxiety and stress increase one’s risk of a heart attack, cardiac research carried out in 2014 by epidemiologist Elizabeth Mostofsky, internal medicine specialist Elizabeth Anne Penner, and cardiac epidemiologist Murray Mittleman concluded that even short outbursts of anger increase one’s risk of a cardiovascular event shortly after an outburst. Moreover, the epidemiological research of Vera Tsenkova, Deborah Carr, Christopher Coe, and Carol Ryff (2014), determined that “anger is a potential risk

factor for type 2 diabetes [...and that] anger expression is associated with clinical indicators of glycemic control, especially among those with pre-existing risk due to obesity and high central adiposity” (p. 37). This begs the question: could the Indigenous epidemic of obesity and diabetes reflect an unacknowledged epidemic of unresolved anger?

The idea that anger is not only problematic to one’s physical health but to one’s emotional and spiritual health, especially when it is out-of-control, is shared by many people and cultures, reaching far outside the realm of neuroscience, medicine, and psychology. Not only was it identified by Namegosib Anishinaabeg who participated in this research, it is well articulated in Buddhist scholarship, where uncontrolled anger is considered the root of unhappiness and misery. Buddhist monk and scholar Thich Nhat Hanh (1991) described this emotion in the following:

Anger is an unpleasant feeling. It is like a blazing flame that burns up our self-control and causes us to say and do things that we regret later. When someone is angry, we can see clearly that he or she is abiding in hell. Anger and hatred are the materials from which hell is made. A mind without anger is cool, fresh and sane. The absence of anger is the basis of real happiness, the basis of love and compassion. (p. 57)

Moreover, research carried out in the context of chronic physical pain suggests that physical and emotional pain are mutually reinforcing and magnifying. For example, individuals who are persistently angry or who perceive a profound sense of injustice also experience more pain, which in turn exacerbates one’s sense of injustice.

In 2013, psychologists Whitney Scott, Zina Trost, Bernier, and Michael Sullivan reported that:

Discourses of justice and injustice appear inherent to the chronic pain experience. The experience of undeserved suffering or of multiple losses (e.g., loss of function, financial security, identity, etc.) might give rise to perceptions of injustice among individuals with chronic pain. Individuals with chronic pain may ascribe external blame for this suffering, which may increase the likelihood that pain is experienced with an elevated sense of injustice. (p. 1691)

The reasons outlined above point to the inherent problems associated with employing an empathy paradigm particularly in contexts where patients/individuals have experienced trauma.¹ For example, many Indigenous health and healing programs use a “sharing circle” method in which patients are encouraged to recount traumatic events to each other and a facilitator. This form of psychological debriefing likely unknowingly employs an empathy paradigm, and may actually reinforce the trauma participants are meant to overcome as well as reaffirm their victimhood

¹ This thesis uses the definition found in the *Encyclopedia of Trauma: An Interdisciplinary Guide* (2012), which is “a sudden, potentially deadly experience, often leaving lasting, troubling memories” (Figley, 2012, Abstract). It also highlights three categories of – emotional and psychological, spiritual, and cultural – all of which have the following in common: (1) they are caused by an external event, (2) they involve some type of violation that is unwanted and unexpected, and (3) there is an experience of lost control (Suri, 2012, Causes of Trauma).

(National Center for PTSD, 2018, para. 6). An empathy paradigm in helping contexts has the potential to cause practitioner/helper burnout and ultimately ineffective patient care, where there is no effective conventional treatment for practitioners other than natural attrition. Luckily, emergent research on the science of compassion provides another paradigm that avoids the pitfalls of empathic distress including desensitization to suffering, improves practitioner resiliency, and may even increase pro-social behaviours.

The Science of Compassion

Compassion is a concept about which many cultures have well-articulated philosophies and practices. Namegosib Anishinaabeg, too, have their own ways of understanding and living this concept, but is it not well identified in the Indigenous studies canon if at all, and is commonly misidentified as pity (see Chapter 1). This is unlike other areas of scholarship, particularly those rooted in Eastern religion and philosophy, where compassion is explored in great depth. Buddhist notions of compassion have become the recent subject of scientific investigation, most interestingly using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to compare real-time images of the brain in different emotional and meditative states. What has been termed “the science of compassion” reflects the convergence of scientists and religious thinkers whose methodologies involve applying the scientific method to Buddhist practices of compassion cultivation. In one famous experiment, the brains of Buddhist monks were scanned while meditating on the topic of compassion. Not only did such experiments lead to the conclusion that the generation of empathy (that

is, experiencing the emotional state[s] of someone else) has a fundamentally different effect on the brain than the generation of compassion, but a link was forged between traditional religious knowledge and modern neuroscience. The most current and active researchers in this intersection between science and religion include neuroscientist Tania Singer (Max Planck Institute), psychologist Mark Williams (Oxford University), the 14th Dalai Lama, geneticist and Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard. This research has moved the study of compassion beyond the realm of religion and philosophy into the world of applied science, with the (potentially) unintended consequence that it has been secularized, decoupled from its religious and philosophical roots, its morals and ethics. Nevertheless, the science of compassion suggests ways in which empathic distress can be effectively mitigated particularly in those who work in helping professions.

Compassion has been defined in the western psychological literature as the recognition of suffering in ourselves and others and the desire that others' suffering end (Keltner & Goetz, 2007). Research that is specifically considered "compassion science" defines compassion in this manner and understands that it is distinct from empathy. Building upon Keltner and Goetz's definition of compassion, neuroscientists Susanne Leiberger, Olga Klimecki, and Tania Singer (2011) explained that compassion is "characterized by warmth, love, and concern for the other as well as the desire to help and promote the other's welfare" (p. 1). And in 2013, neuroscientists Tania Singer and Matthias Bolz concluded that accepting and giving love and compassion generates an optimum internal physiological state in terms of

stress hormone levels, immune system functioning & frontal cortical processing (higher thinking).

Although most traditions consider self-compassion an essential part of compassion, it is helpful for the purposes of this thesis to also describe how it differs from other-oriented compassion. In 2003, psychologist Kristin Neff developed a well-regarded and often cited definition of self-compassion as: “[it is] being open to and moved by one’s own suffering, experiencing feelings of caring and kindness toward oneself, taking an understanding, nonjudgmental attitude towards one’s inadequacies and failures, and recognizing that one’s experience is part of the common human experience” (2004, p. 224). Self-compassion should not be confused with selfishness or self-pity – the latter of which is characterized by self-centered thinking and an over-attachment to and magnification of one’s own suffering. Self-pity makes it more difficult to view one’s own situation objectively and to consider other people whose situation may be similar or worse (Neff, 2003). Further, according to social psychologist Masi Noor (personal communication, 24 August 2018), viewing one’s self as victim not only limits one’s ability to see his/her own circumstances as temporary and transformable but also encourages competitive victimhood with others who have experience trauma. In contrast, self-compassion is a fundamentally different way of relating to self-suffering that situates one’s own experience into a larger social context. Adopting a self-compassionate outlook is believed to buffer against long-term, or even life-long, psychological suffering triggered by traumatic life events. It is therefore considered an essential part of

psychological health, functioning as an antidote to self-pity, shame, and overly self-critical thinking. This thesis assumes self-compassion an essential part of compassion and subsequent use of this term implies all forms of compassion.

The late 2000's saw the beginning of more and more publications concerning the science of compassion with implications on the health and wellbeing of individuals and society, noting again that all of this research is premised on a shared understanding of compassion as well as the idea that it is distinct from empathy (discussed in greater detail below). For example, in 2012 neuroscientists Klimecki, Leiberg, Lamm, & Singer (2012, 1552) concluded that compassion is a catalyst of pro-social behaviour, which neuroscientists Tania Singer & Matthias Bolz later defined as: "tak[ing] an interest in others, [...being] helpful and sharing; not only relieving stress but also facilitating the other person's well-being" (Singer & Bolz, 2013; p. 131). Similarly, psychologists Helen Weng and colleagues (2012, p. 1171) found that compassion gave rise to altruism, which, in turn, strengthen and reinforce social cohesiveness, which they identified as a fundamental attribute of "successful" societies. Conducting their own research on the social psychological effects of compassion on people and society, Hooria Jazaieri and colleagues (2013) reported that compassion is associated with acts of kindness and social cohesiveness. Jazaieri and colleagues have also correlated compassion with increased resiliency, which they defined as the ability to cope with stressful life events (2013), noting that resilience is considered a predictor of long-term emotional and physical health (Klimecki, Leiberg, Lamm, & Singer; 2013; 1552). Claims that compassion could potentially benefit more

than the individual by extending to members of one's larger social group suggest a roadmap for positive social change. Understanding how compassion was actualized into Anishinaabe communities provides an additional lens from which to understand the resilient nature of Anishinaabe societies prior to major disruptions brought about by colonialism.

Yet, the compassion research also suggests that cultivating compassion is complicated by a number of factors. Fear of compassion is one. A person who has experienced little compassion in his or her life, especially in early childhood, may fear extending it to and receiving it from others. The ability to accept compassion may be hindered if one has a negative self-worth narrative. It may be difficult to believe one is worthy of compassion, and may reject it when it does appear. Ironically, a fear of self-compassion can result in "self-criticism, insecure attachment, depression, anxiety, and stress [... where for] some, being the object or recipient of compassion can generate fear reactions, avoidance, or generate negative emotions such as grief or loneliness" (Jazaieri et al., 2012, p. 1115). Another barrier occurs when compassion and a confused understanding of forgiveness (in which maladaptive or harmful acts seemed to be condoned) are conflated, preventing one from extending compassion to those who do not live up to a particular subjective moral standard.

The conclusion from the compassion research that adopting a compassionate outlook can facilitate the acknowledgement of suffering without vicariously experiencing the suffering of others has the potential to improve psychological and physical health outcomes in a variety of areas. Specifically, this science suggests that

that shifting from empathy to compassion mitigates stress, anger, burnout, and desensitization to suffering that result from empathic distress as well as encouraging pro-social behaviours, at least in the short term. The decreasing physical and mental health status of many Indigenous communities is one reason for identifying the costs of an empathy paradigm not least because it renders caregivers (family, friends, and elders) as well as professionals (psychologists, nurses, and doctors) less effective in their delivery of care. This thesis suggests that compassion has a broader application that includes not only helping professions but also settler Canadians and Indigenous people in conceptualizing the suffering that has resulted from historical/colonial trauma.

A major critique of the compassion discourse is its particular emphasis on Buddhist understandings of compassion, which may leave the impression that it is solely a Buddhist idea, not one that is held by other cultures including Trout Lake Anishinaabeg. Ironically, compassion science has also secularized and decontextualized compassion presumably to make it more amenable to the scientific method as well as more palatable to a contemporary western audience. Stripped of its original moral and ethical dimensions, this creates problems not least because it could imply that a non-judgmental attitude towards self should be applied in all circumstances (see, for example, Neff's definition of self-compassion). Economist Ronald Purser (2019) has made a similar critique of the western mindfulness movement by his assertion that, devoid of its religious context, mindfulness can be applied in variety of circumstances including for nefarious purposes. For example, it

is used by the US military ostensibly to reduce civilian casualties by improving the precision of soldiers where Purser argues that its true intended application is to create more efficient soldiers able to withstand war. In contrast, compassion and other ethics and morals permeated many aspects of life for the Trout Lake Anishinaabeg. Perhaps dissemination of gichi Anishinaabeg's knowledge could lead compassion science back to its spiritual, ethical, and moral roots.

Compassion from an Anishinaabe perspective has not diffused into other areas of scholarship which leaves the impression that Indigenous people are in a perpetual state of suffering, that they are perpetual victims. According to this pathology, Indigenous suffering is neutralized only with the assistance of and/or monetary resources provided by the federal government, its agencies, or outside "specialists" such as psychologists. Among some of the unintended consequences include the eclipsing of community-held knowledge of compassion and self-compassion or the failure to conceive of wellbeing as a balance between a self-generated state of mind and one's external circumstances and/or environment. It is noteworthy that the primary contributor to this research considered victimhood and other negative emotional states antithetical to living well, reflecting how she was raised in the Trout Lake community. Accordingly, this thesis investigated whether parallels exist between the science of compassion and Namegosib Anishinaabe moral philosophy, which deserves recognition and much deeper consideration. Historically, this knowledge of the Namegosib Anishinaabe was situated in place and in community, but due to a process diaspora, it now rests with individuals, many of

whom live hundreds of kilometers away from its original source.

The Namegosib Anishinaabeg Community

This following section provides a short history of the Namegosib Anishinaabeg within living memory, the home of the primary contributor of this thesis Sarah Keesick Olsen, *Dedibaayaanimanook*. This description of community and its dispersal since the turn of the last century provides context not only for Dedibaayaanimanook's contributions but her willingness to participate in this thesis. As community was one of the most important structures for teaching and maintaining the values and practices that people routinely lived by, it was one of the primary means for preserving the practice of compassion.

Trout Lake, not to be confused with Big Trout Lake - Kitchenuhmykoosib Inninuwig First Nation, is located approximately 20 kilometers (km) northeast of Red Lake in northwestern Ontario (Figure 1). The oral tradition indicates that Anishinaabeg lived in Trout Lake long before living memory. For example, an archeological survey sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) in 2006, uncovered artifacts that dated to at least two thousand years before present (OMNR, 2007). Trout Lake is accessible by air and a combination of vehicle, foot, and boat travel. Despite being a thriving community at the time of the Treaty 3 negotiations, Trout Lake was never selected as a reserve, though a community representative(s) is noted as one of the signatories to the 1874 Adhesion to Treaty 3, which states: "We,

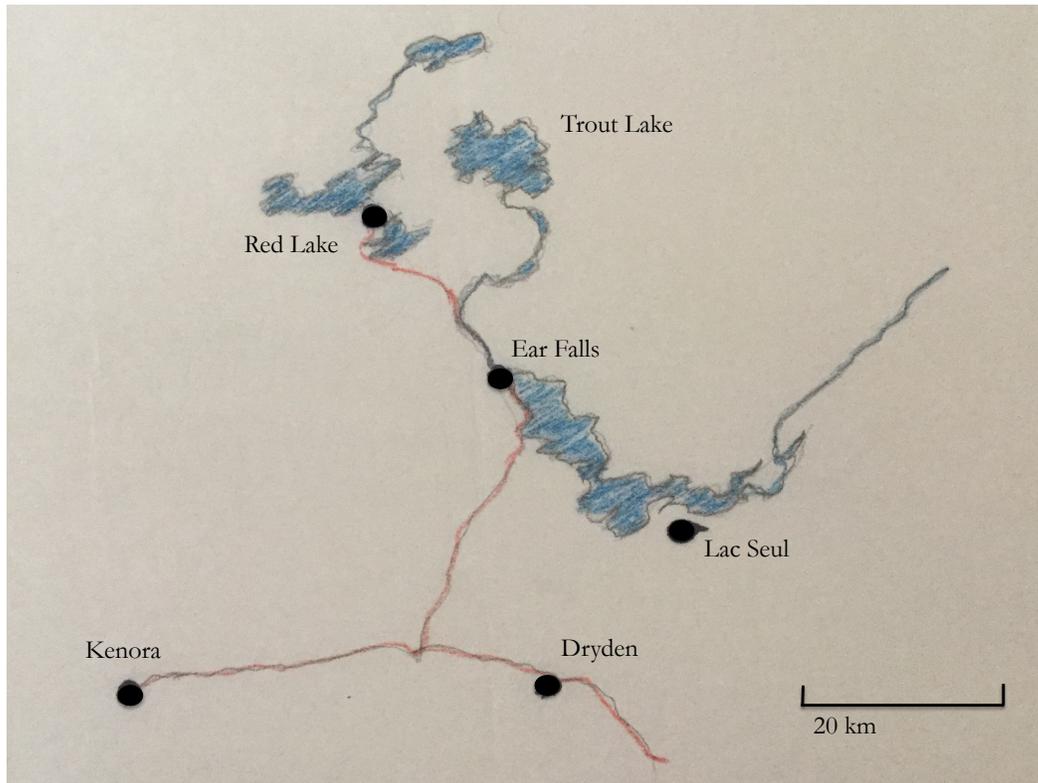


Figure 1. Map of northwest Ontario with approximate distances between Trout Lake and proximate communities and/or towns.

the Chiefs and Councilors of Lac Seul, Seul, Trout and Sturgeon Lakes, subscribe and set our marks...” (Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, para. 3). One possible explanation for its exclusion was that the individuals charged with surveying and selecting Treaty 3 reserve lands, engineer Simon J. Dawson and former Hudson Bay Company employee Robert Pither, were instructed to avoid areas proximate to existing or potential settlements and mineral deposits (Filice, 2016, para. 44). It is important to note that gold was discovered in 1897 in what is now Red Lake, near

and around the time that reserves in northwest Ontario including Lac Seul were being surveyed. Within a few years after signing the Adhesion, reserve land on the south-east portion of Lac Seul was selected on behalf of the people of Lac Seul, Seul, Trout and Sturgeon Lakes. As a consequence, many Namegosibii Anishinaabeg became enfranchised to the Lac Seul band, reflecting their existing and historical connections and travel routes between *Obishikokaang* (commonly translated as white pine narrows) and Trout Lake. After the Treaty, Namegosibii Anishinaabeg continued to travel to Lac Seul by canoe to receive their annual Treaty payments each summer. These connections continue today, as many Trout Lake people are also Lac Seul band members (Figure 2).

Beginning in the mid-1920's, Red Lake underwent an industrial boom as a consequence of the discovery of gold a few decades previously. What was considered a small quiet settlement associated with the Hudson's Bay was completely transformed within a relatively short period. Soon after in 1928, the Ear Falls Dam was constructed primarily to supply electricity for the pending gold rush and influx of spin-off industries. With the generating station constructed directly over Ear Falls, it was the logical place to construct a bridge and highway to link Red Lake with Vermillion Bay along the Trans-Canada Highway. The Ear Falls dam destroyed the rapids and displaced many Anishinaabeg families who had traditionally occupied the Falls and the larger *Obishikokaang* area (Lac Seul First Nation, n.d.). Lac Seul functioned as a reservoir, flooding Anishinaabe lands as far away as the reserve itself. The dam also obstructed travel routes to and from the reserve but did not flood

upstream areas including Trout Lake. These impacts were permanent, and stories about the flood continue to be the subject of discussions among Lac Seul people.



Figure 2. Primary contributor Sarah Olsen with longtime Chief of the Lac Seul First Nation, Clifford Bull, July 2018, Winnipeg, MB.

The Red Lake gold rush made it possible for the establishment of a commercial fishery in Red Lake and eventually in Trout Lake. This was significant because it rendered Trout Lake accessible by air in all seasons. For instance, Mennonites stationed in Red Lake took regular day trips to Trout Lake in attempts to

proselytize local people (H. Agger, personal communication, 20 November 2019). Although Namegosib Anishinaabeg accommodated and even enjoyed their visits, few became life-long converts. The commercial fishery provided employment opportunities for Namegosib Anishinaabeg until its closure in the mid-1970's and proved to be a greater draw than mining. A number of fly-in fishing camps also came into being near and around the late 1940s. Owned by non-Anishinaabeg, they catered mostly to American tourists. Yet, they offered seasonal employment, particularly after the commercial fishery closed, and continue to be an important way for Trout Lake Anishinaabeg to maintain their connection to the land.

Prior to the 1940's, the local OMNR constabulary did not overly regulate the hunting and fishing activities of Namegosib Anishinaabeg, who were relatively free to pursue their traditional ways of life despite being on Crown Land. But when the commercial and recreational fisheries and logging industry became increasingly prominent economically, the OMNR assumed a much more protectionist position with respect to natural resources, and, consequently, Trout Lake Anishinaabeg were regarded as poachers and squatters. It was common for the OMNR to confiscate bush food as a display of their authority, but they were unwilling to go as far as to vanquish Namegosib Anishinaabeg presence, likely because the commercial and recreational fisheries required their labour. Despite these methods to repress Aboriginal hunting and fishing, Namegosib Anishinaabeg continued to enjoy bush foods, albeit covertly at times.

OMNR policies concerning Aboriginal people's use of the Lake continue to impede living in Trout Lake for many people, even seasonally. For example, between the 1970's and the late 2000's, it attempted to prevent Namegosib Anishinaabeg from constructing new cabins unless they were specifically associated with a registered trapline. However, with only three traplines covering the area of the Lake, two of which Red Lake citizens rather than Namegosib Anishinaabeg operate, this option for cabin-building was not available to the majority of community members. At the same time, the Province issued numerous building permits to fishing camp owners, which appeared to many Namegosib Anishinaabeg as inequitable treatment. A notable 1999 Supreme Court decision *R. v. Sundown* has potential bearing on whether it is reasonable for the OMNR to continue to restrict the construction of Treaty cabins now and into the future, but this would likely require testing through the courts. This case involved a member of the Joseph Bighead First Nation of Cree Indians, John Sundown, who had constructed a hunting cabin in a Saskatchewan provincial park. The Court found that a modest cabin is "reasonably incidental to this First Nation's right to hunt in their traditional expeditionary style" (Judgments of the Supreme Court of Canada, para. 3). However, the Court made an interesting stipulation about Mr. Sundown's incidental cabin in that it belonged "to the band as a whole, not to the respondent or any individual band member" (Judgments of the Supreme Court of Canada, para. 4). As there is no single band to which all Trout Lake Anishinaabeg are members, it is unclear as to which First Nation such an incidental cabin would belong. To date, it has been the case that as long as

Anishinaabe cabins were used and maintained by the builders or their descendants, the right to their use continued. These were not common law property rights but customary laws that governed how Anishinaabeg and others used, avoided, and/or respected other people's things. My own family's homestead has an original log cabin having been constructed in the early 1940s on what is known as Olsen Island is a case in point.

Despite *R. v. Sundown*, in 2007, however, the Ontario Court of Justice saw a case in which one Namegosib Anishinaabe woman was charged with constructing a cabin without a permit despite her claims that it was necessary in order for her to carry out traditional activities on the land. The case served as a deterrent to others who had aspirations of building their own cabins and returning to their homeland. Though OMNR officers have not removed or dismantled any cabins associated with historical Aboriginal use, most are in a state of decay – well beyond repair – not having been used in many decades. The exception is at Olsen Island, where Sarah Olsen, the primary contributor/participant of this thesis, and her family have continued to use and maintain the site. The fear of being prosecuted, coupled with ambiguity concerning the proprietary nature of incidental cabins (despite a builder having used his/her own labour and monetary resources to construct a cabin) are obstacles to Anishinaabeg reestablishment in Trout Lake, even seasonally. Once the diaspora of Namegosib Anishinaabeg had begun in the mid-1960s, it has been difficult, if not impossible, to reverse this process – though many of the people who had originally lived there maintain an emotional and spiritual connection to their

homeland. How people construct their identity as Namegosibii Anishinaabeg today is primarily based on whether s/he (or a parent or grandparent) was born in or grew up on the Lake. Yet, despite all of these barriers, many continue to make yearly pilgrimages to the Lake, or take seasonal employment at fishing lodges so that they may enjoy the many “blessings” that returning home provides. However, one of the implications of this diaspora is that compassion and other foundational epistemologies and practices tend only to be known to the generation of Trout Lake citizens who were born and raised here. The documentation of compassion will contribute to its preservation, but the descendants of the original Trout Lake people will be required to find new and innovative ways to learn about how to employ compassion in their lives.

Chapter Summaries

This thesis has begun a process to preserve the Trout Lake Anishinaabeg’s philosophical ideals associated with living well. Woven into the lives of the people historically, compassion was one of the most important of these. As an essential part of Trout Lake Anishinaabeg’s moral and ethical framework, it was also viewed as an antidote to suffering. Among other things, this worldview buffered against the onset of psycho/social/spiritual pathology if and when trauma did occur. Yet, today, Indigenous health discourse is so strongly focused on the pathology of colonial/historical trauma that it becomes the singular most important issue obscuring the knowledge of how compassion works to buttress spiritual, emotional, and physical health (S. Olsen, personal communication, 20 November 2019). This

thesis asserts that Anishinaabe compassion knowledge, as well as emergent neuro-medical knowledge, are both relevant today as a means for alleviating suffering as well as preventing desensitization to suffering that results from an empathy paradigm.

Chapter one reviews the literature and discusses how compassion has been represented in the Indigenous studies canon. It specifically looks at how the concepts of *gizhewaadiziwin*, *ando bawaajigem*, and *mino bimaadiziwin* (see Glossary of Anishinaabe Terms), which are central to this thesis, have been presented in different literary genres. Though I have not identified literature that specifically references *gizhewaadiziwin*, its basic sentiment can be distilled from many texts. I therefore discuss the possible reasons for the lack of discourse especially in light of evidence that points to its importance in Namegosib Anishinaabeg worldview.

Chapter two describes the two qualitative methodological approaches I have used to gather, analyze, and contextualize information: participant observation and reflexivity. Though this thesis does not purport to carry out phenomenology, as it is understood in the field of psychology, it shares some of its characteristics, namely that it is primarily interested in participants' subjective experiences and their interpretations of these and other experiences. It also brings in the topic of the researcher's positionality (how the researcher is situated in the research) given my close familial relationship to the primary contributor. Chapter three delves into the concepts of *zhawenjigem*, *ogooapaadenimaan*, and *mino bimaadiziwin* from the perspective of Namegosib Anishinaabeg and discusses the ways *gichi Namegosib Anishinaabeg* (elder Namegosib Anishinaabeg) cultivated these internal qualities as well

as how they relate to the acquisition of *mino bimaadiziwin*. It is context specific, primarily representing the experiences of single contributor, my grandmother. As the oldest Namegosib Anishinaabeg, her perspectives reflect the historical values and practices of a historical community that has experienced diaspora. My mother, who translated all interviews into English, also provided invaluable information, based both on her personal experiences and on her understanding of Namegosib Anishinaabeg culture to contextualize my grandmother's stories. The conclusion illuminates the idea that compassion from a uniquely Indigenous perspective exists solely with individuals, primarily elders, whose knowledge and perspectives are not well represented in Indigenous studies or other areas of scholarship. It asserts that compassion, as understood and practiced by these *gichi Anishinaabeg*, is a much more effective and culturally authentic way of mitigating suffering including the suffering generated by residential schools and other historical/colonial traumas.

Chapter 1

Culture and Worldview: The Seeds of Anishinaabe Compassion Cultivation

Community interviews have identified compassion/ogooaadenimaan as a central aspect of senior Namegosib Anishinaabeg's worldview. Interviews have further identified a link between compassion and the historical practice of ando bawaaigem (the dream fast) and how mino bimaadiziwin (living well) is conceptualized. This chapter reviews how a select number of literary sources within the native studies cannon have represented compassion as well as the related concepts of ando bawaaigem, and mino bimaadiziwin. Not surprisingly, a review of literature has found a lack of compassion discourse while there exists scholarship pertaining to both the dream fast and the "good life". Accordingly, this thesis suggests that compassion is missing from scholarship's representation of Anishinaabe worldview – given that Namegosib Anishinaabeg perspectives are generalizable. Despite this gap, this chapter aims to identify seeds of compassion within the Anishinaabe literature. For example, the literature frequently contains references to the concept of pity, which I suggest should be expanded to include, and even be replaced by, compassion/ogooaadenimaan. Likewise, kindness and blessedness are terms that potentially imply compassion/ogooaadenimaan, but these are often incidental to other concepts and themes.

The word pity has frequently been used in the literature to describe what this thesis asserts are actually examples of compassion/ogooaadenimaan. One of the earliest examples of the conflation pity and compassion appears in the first Ojibwa

dictionary published in 1853 by Slovenian Roman Catholic missionary Frederic Baraga. Written specifically for his fellow missionaries, the *Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language* defines the noun *kitimagendjigewin* as “pity, compassion” (p. 192).² Similarly, in the English to Anishinaabemowin section of the dictionary, *kitimagendjigewin* is offered as a translation for both pity (p. 571) and compassion (p. 463), indicating that non-Anishinaabeg have confused these concepts for at least 166 years. It is notable that *kitimagendjigewin* is not used by Trout Lake people (H. Agger, personal communication, 19 November 2019), reflecting the fact that Baraga worked primarily with Anishinaabe nations south of Lake Superior and in Minnesota where a different dialect is spoken. In a more contemporary example, Overholt and Callicott (1982) employ the word pity in their analysis of legends and their place in Anishinaabe worldview. They state that:

In the stories power is often pictured as flowing from one “person” to another, the more powerful of the two assuming the posture of a bestower of blessings. We therefore need to turn our attention to the characteristics of what we might call the “situation of blessing.” We may say first of all that upon receipt of a blessing an individual’s circumstances are altered (or at least potentially so) for the better. The harassed son-in-law, for example, was aided when his life was in danger by beings who had “blessed” or “pitied” him in the past (a sturgeon, a gull, and a cedar...) (p. 144)

² According to Horton (2017), Otchipwe is a misnomer of the word Ojibwa and the root form of the word Chippewa.

In the above passage Overholt and Callicott have implied that the blessed and pitied are synonymous. In fact, they are quite different, with blessing a much more appropriate word to use in this circumstance for the simple reason that out of compassion comes a blessing (S. Olsen, personal communication, 10 February 2020). Moreover, the Canadian Oxford English Dictionary (2004) has defined pity as “sorrow and compassion aroused by another’s condition...[,] something to be regretted; grounds for regret or mild annoyance [...] feel (often contemptuous) pity for [...]” (p. 1184). According to this definition, pity can be associated with contempt, which is indicative of a relationship of disrespect. An individual can pity someone in a manner that is not only condescending but is without concern for that individual’s wellbeing. Pity does not imply a moral responsibility to assist the object of pity, which is implied in the word ogoopaadenimaan (see below) (S. Olsen, personal communication, 10 February 2020).

As Overholt and Callicott (1982) infer above, more powerful beings grant blessings when the less powerful require assistance. These are acts of love, not acts of contempt or condescension. They are symbolic of respectful relationships regardless of any power differentials that may exist. Kindness is the motivating factor for the granting of blessings, not pity. Interestingly, the Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language (1853), translates kindness as “kjadisiwin, kijewadisiwin, mino bimadisiwin” (p. 535), and, correspondingly, mino bimadisiwin as “good life; good health; good kind temperament, good humor” (p. 238). These definitions indicate a direct link between compassion/ogooapaadenimaan and gizhewaadiziwin and mino

bimaadiziwin which most if not all contemporary scholarship has failed to fully appreciate. Gichi Namegosibi Anishinaabe's understanding of these concepts appear to be precisely in line with Baraga's: perhaps one of the most important blessings one can receive is the knowledge to become a kind person – one of the ways in which *mino bimaadiziwin* is actualized (S. Olsen, personal communication, 19 November 2019). Similarly, historians Jennifer Brown and Robert Brightman (1990) have identified love to be the basis of the relationship that is formed between a human and its other-than-human spirit guide in a dream fast. As the western literature has defined compassion as the recognition of suffering in ourselves and others and the desire to alleviate this suffering (Keltner and Goetz, 2007), I suggest that compassion is a much more appropriate word to describe what has erroneously been referred to as pity.

The use of the word pity has become so ubiquitous that even language expert Patricia Ningewance of the Lac Seul First Nation translates *ogoopaadenimaan* as “pities him/her” (2004, p. 336). To further illustrate this point, pity is also offered as a translation for *z̄hawenim*, to “show loving-kindness, unconditional love for; compassion for”, according to The Ojibwe People's Dictionary (2015, para.1). It should be noted that Ningewance (2004) translates *gīz̄hewaadizi* as “is kind” (p. 325), which is consistent with Namegosib Anishinaabe dialect and nuanced meaning of this term. As these examples show, scholars and even local linguistic experts, have applied pity inconsistently, which I suggest is a misunderstanding of its English meaning rather than a misunderstanding of parallel or equivalent Anishinaabemowin concepts.

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to conduct an anthropology of pity as it applies to Algonquian translations, such a study is necessary in order to fully clarify how it has become such a taken for granted term.

Compassion, as it has been defined in this thesis, appears to be the most comprehensive English word to describe what are essential qualities of both ogoopaadenimaan and gizhewaadiziwin, although these are clearly different concepts. However, this, too, is an imperfect translation. Compassion and ogoopaadenimaan are similar in that they are both premised on the idea that one can recognise suffering and respond to it. However, the nature of the response differs in that compassion only requires one's mental awareness be focused on the aspiration of suffering alleviation whereas ogoopaadenimaan implies that one will provide assistance, if appropriate. While both create an opportunity for helping others, ogoopaadenimaan implies a specific role for gichi Anishinaabe because of their ability to determine the appropriateness of a particular intervention. In other words, one must employ wisdom in order to determine how best to administer help to avoid unintentional harm.

It is interesting to note that neither Patricia Ningewance, in her book *Talking Gookom's Language: Learning Ojibwe* (2004) nor the on-line Ojibwe People's Dictionary (2015) translate compassion into Anishinaabemowin, where the latter also omits the word ogoopaadenimaan from its database, indicating that further investigation of potential spellings or variations of this word is required. Yet, the concept of

compassion is clearly an important one as evidenced by the fact that it appears multiple times in Bishop Baraga's Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language (1853).

Beyond semantics, literature on the topic of Anishinaabe worldview contains the seeds of compassion. For example, in 1995, Basil Johnston – Anishinaabe educator, author, and language expert from the Cape Croker Indian Reserve – published *The Manitous: The Supernatural World of the Ojibway*. Johnston represents a departure from Overholt and Callicott (1982) and other authors because he writes from an insider perspective, noting that the majority of works written prior to the 1960's were written by outside observers (a characteristic common to ethnography). In this collection of 13 narrative stories, the source of which he attributes to both named and unnamed elders as well as the oral record³, Johnston (1995) features both well and lesser-known Manitous as central characters often embroiled in interesting, provocative, and often humorous circumstances. Incidentally, philosophers Thomas Overholt and J. Baird Callicott (1982), too, note the use of stories as a primary means for understanding Anishinaabe worldview. Readers may glean many things about the nature of compassion/ogooopaadenimaan from Johnston's retelling of these stories, although they must first recognize this concept. For example, he explains that Kitchi-

³ Johnston does not name his sources which might suggest that he is a primary source of information rather than an insider conducting primary research. But because he is an insider documenting stories that are known to and shared among many other people, I suggest that this particular book can be considered a secondary source of information.

Manitou has granted humans the power of mind and the capacity to make choices in an ultimate “act not only of generosity but of trust” (Johnston, 1995, p. 4), where Kitchi-Manitou is defined as “the Great Mystery of the supernatural order” (Johnston, 1995, p. 2). To cultivate internal qualities such as gratitude, selflessness, and generosity and to share physical and emotional possessions with those in need are acts that emulate Kitchi-Manitou, who serves as an ultimate example to humans. Moreover, Johnston translates Anishinaube as “good being or beings” (p. 239) and explains that “[t]he word is to be understood as meaning that human beings derive their goodness from their intent. Generally, men and women intend to do what ought to be done and what is of benefit” (p. 239). Although Anishinaube is typically translated as “person” (see, for example, *The Ojibwe People’s Dictionary*, para. 1), Johnston’s version communicates the importance of having appropriate internal states of mind, aligned with Kitchi-Manitou. In other words, an authentic “Anishinubae” is someone who cultivates positive intentions and mindsets, which in turn inform his/her behaviour. A further example is Johnston’s description of Nana’b’oozoo, the protagonist of many of his stories, as kind, compassionate, and unselfish. Throughout the book, Nana’b’oozoo takes on various causes to correct injustices, gives important life saving gifts to animals, and helps those in need, with the nature of gifts being that they will be reciprocated in some form and some time. Johnston explains of Nana’b’oozoo that: “No one had a better heart than he did” (p. 78). Despite his good intentions, however, Nana’b’oozoo was also capable of “gluttony, envy, lust, pride, anger, and impulsiveness, among others [negative human

characteristics]” (p. 78). As with humans, Nana’b’oozoo indulges in many of the most common virtues and vices with their respective positive and negative outcomes.

The concept of compassion/ogooopaadenimaan is also reflected in secondary research that uses the historical record (primary research) as its starting point. This genre analyzes and contextualizes primary sources, often unpacking the biases and prejudices of original authors. For example, historian Michael Angel (2002) utilizes 19th century Euro-American accounts of the Ojibwa Midewiwin in his book, *Preserving the Sacred* (2002), to reinterpret historical accounts of this religious tradition. Angel refers to “blessings” (or powers) that were requested and received during Mide ceremonials. According to Angel (2002), it was taken for granted that if one has been blessed with the power to do extraordinary things, s/he would use them to benefit the wellbeing of others. To misuse one’s blessings, for example, by using one’s blessings to benefit only him/herself, would result in “problems” (p 13). Although Angel does not elaborate about what these problems could be as other scholars have done, to do so may have been beyond his scope. The idea that blessings come with an obligation to advance the common good (as well as its corollary which states that their misuse leads to unhappiness and lack of contentment) has also been expressed in community interviews. An example is the idea that greed leads to unhappiness (H. Agger, personal communication, 9 June 2019; Miller, 2016).

A survey of the literature indicates that a compassion discourse has yet to emerge in Native Studies. The possible reasons for this are discussed below. Its absence does suggest that, without compassion, our current understating of

Anishinaabe worldview is incomplete. Within the specific context of Namegosib Anishinaabeg, community interviews show that compassion is a core value and philosophy that senior Anishinaabeg are well aware of but that others have yet to fully comprehend and articulate. This thesis is a starting point for understanding a specific and currently undocumented aspect of Namegosib Anishinaabe worldview that may be generalizable to Anishinaabe from other regions and potentially other dialects.

Literary Examples of the Dream Fast

With a few exceptions, historical accounts of European interactions with Anishinaabeg tend to concern the tangible and observable rituals and spiritual practices. Fewer historical accounts concern intangible concepts and ideas such as *mino bimaadiziwin*, in which contemporary authors seem to take greater interest. References to the dream fast can be found in a number of sources but none is considered more complete than the journals and letters of fur trader George Nelson (Brown and Brightman, 1990). Nelson penned a number of letters to his father in 1823 in which he described the dream fast, among other things. These letters were compiled and contextualized by historians Jennifer Brown and Robert Brightman in their 1990 book *The Orders of the Dreamed: George Nelson on Cree and northern Ojibwa religion and myth, 1823*. Nelson writes of the “orders of the Dreamed,” a Cree and Saulteaux fasting ceremonial that introduced children to their spirit guardians (the Dreamed) with the express purpose of “div[ing] into futurity” (p.35). This ritual initiated a lasting relationship between a child and what is known in Cree as *pawakan*,

out of which certain lifelong obligations arose. Namegosib Anishinaabeg refer to *bawaagan* (the subject of one's dream, one's mentor), who is not typically spoken of in everyday conversations (Agger, personal communication, 2 June 2019). On the one hand, the guide could be expected to “bestow [...] information, [assist one in his/her] technical and spiritual abilities, and sometimes [provide] physical aid” (Brown and Brightman, 1990, p. 139). On the other, people were obligated to respect their pawakan by performing certain rituals that indicated gratitude. This is in line with Overholt and Callicott's (1982) interpretation of the vulnerability of human beings relative to the spiritual world.

Brown and Brightman (1990) explain the nature of this relationship in the following: “The human-pawakan relationship, with its components of love, respect, obligation and danger, exemplifies the uncertainties and dynamics of interaction between humans and nonhuman beings more generally. The pawakan was distinguished from these other entities [spirit beings] by the enduring character of its tie to a specific human dependent” (p. 139). This interpretation of the dream fast suggests a profound interconnection between a person and his/her pawakan that can be expanded to include all other beings, human and other. The following passage summarizes what George Nelson observed while in the Lac la Ronge region in 1823:

In the spring of the year they chuse a proper place at a sufficient distance from the camp not [to] be discovered nor disturbed. They make themselves a bed of Grass, or hay as we term it, and have besides enough to make them a covering. When all this is done – and they do it entirely alone, they strip stark

naked and put all their things *a good way off* and then return, ly on this bed and then cover themselves with the rest of Grass. Here they remain and endeavor to *sleep*, which from their nature is no very difficult task. But during whatever time they may remain, they must neither eat or drink. If they want to Dream of the Spirits above, their bed must be made at some distance from the Ground – if of Spirits inhabiting our Earth, or those residing in the waters, on the ground. Here they ly for a longer or shorter time, according to their success, or the orders of the Dreamed. Some remain but 3 or 4 days, some 10, and I have be[en] told one remained 30 days without eating or drinking, such was the delight he received from his Dreams! When I laughed at this, the man was vexed, and the others not a little hurt.

Although Nelson's letters describe some of the measures that were taken in preparation for one's dream fast, he does not refer to those of a mental nature. Nearly 90 years after George Nelson penned his letters, Anishinaabe leader William Berens (of Berens River, Manitoba) explained to anthropologist Irving Hallowell in the 1930's that profound strength of mind was required to dream, although Berens did not take part in this ceremonial himself (Berens & Hallowell, 2009). In 2019, community interviews concerning approximately the same period of time indicated that mental endurance was considered a requirement for going to dream, and therefore the ceremonial was not deemed appropriate for everyone. Nevertheless, most children made all the necessary preparations (including those of a mental

nature) with the expectation that s/he would participate regardless if this proved not to be the case (S. Olsen, personal communication, 20 June 2019).

Nelson's letters also suggest how Cree and Ojibwa of the time viewed the role of the pawakan, which was to reveal a life trajectory for people. He reports that the dream fast was prerequisite for conjuring although not all persons who took part in dreaming could acquire the ability to conjure. Anishinaabe scholar Basil Johnston (1995) and Namegosib Anishinaabeg (Olsen, personal communication, 12 June 2019) share the view that a child's potential to acquire power may have been revealed in the dream fast. Likewise, Sister Mary Inez Hilger wrote in her 1951 monograph *Chippewa Child Life and its Cultural Background* that Red Lake Minnesota Chippewa viewed longer fasts, those in excess of four days, as signifying a more powerful experience. In the above examples, an individual does not intentionally seek out power but rather is open to the possibility that such a potential might be revealed to him or her through a dream. This recognizes that power is given and not purposely sought after, consistent with the principle of humility and respect for pawakan. Yet, Homer Kidder recorded a story told to him by Charles Kawbawgam between the years of 1893 to 1895 in which the young character Nin-gaw-bi-un fasted for nine days with the deliberate intent of gaining "power from the spirit world" (p. 48). This suggests that, at least in some locations, it was nevertheless possible to carry out fasting ceremonies with a specific purpose in mind.

George Nelson explained that dreamers were often gifted with a song or with the knowledge that a familiar object was a physical manifestation of one's pawakan.

In most circumstances, the meaning of dreams was not immediately evident and thus required interpretation. When needed, a person could call upon his or her pawakan by singing the song, or alternatively, a dreamer could see an object and be alerted to a message from pawakan. The songs and objects referred to in a dream fast assumed special significance and served to remind and reinforce pawakan's message throughout the dreamer's life. In 1951, Hilger wrote of "dream objects" (p. 45), which became sacred to an individual once s/he had dreamed of them. These were important mnemonic devices that reinforced the idea that a person was not alone in this world, a sentiment that gichi Namegosib Anishinaabeg, too, have expressed.

One of the principle pawakanak (plural) for northern Cree was Key-shay-mani-to, whom Nelson called "The Greatly Spirit" (p. 36), whom he described in the following: "He is uncommonly good and kind, addresses them and talk[s] to them as to children whoe he most tenderly loves and is extremely anxious for" (p. 36). Key-shay-mani-to is clearly concerned about the wellbeing of people; to receive Key-shay-mani-to in a dream suggests that the vision bestowed to a dreamer was rooted in love and compassion. It is important to highlight that these relationships were complex, not all pawakanak were considered benevolent, and even those who were described as having a kindly nature could become irritated if a person did not act appropriately (Brown and Brightman, 1990).

Some contemporary authors discuss the concept of the dream spirit, though their analyses are not necessarily based on the historical record, and may come from such other sources as the oral record. In the context of Northern Ojibwe, religious

scholar Theresa Smith (1995) uses the plural *pawaganak* (dream-visitors). She explains the nature of the human-pawaganak relationship as well as the dream fast's relevance to myths in the following:

the formation of the relationship between human and manitou or pawagan, which occurred in the dream vision, was essential to the traditional Ojibwe's identity and survival. But apart from meeting one's special guardian spirit, the dream/vision world offered one the opportunity to speak with and travel to the homes of various manitouk. These dreams existed in a dialectical relationship with the myths: legitimating and being legitimated by the tales of the grandfathers. (p. 86)

The idea that Ojibwe identity is in part informed by the dream fast is consistent with Namegosib Anishinaabe views and perspectives. From the perspective of gichi Trout Lake Anishinabeg, that one has the potential to become spiritually powerful, *mamaandaawizji*, and that one has the potential to acquire specific knowledge that would eventually designate s/he gichi Anishinaabe are both predicated on the dream fast. Brown and Brightman (1990) clarify that in George Nelson's time it was entirely normal for some young men and more often for young women to be held back from dreaming, noting that parents and grandparents determined whether and how a child participated.

Although the dream fast was a (if not the) significant event in a person's life, Brown and Brightman (1990) indicate that, historically, some individuals may have participated in multiple dream fasts when necessary. This is not the case for

Namegosib Anishinaabe, who emphasized that that their dream fast ceremonial occurred only once in a person's life, when s/he was pre-pubescent, noting that any other fast journeys taken as adults were not considered ando bawaajigem (H. Agger, 09 September 2019). Most certainly dreaming, generally, functioned more broadly in Cree and Saulteaux everyday spiritual life as a means for maintaining contact with the pawakanak (Brown and Brightman, 1990). Theresa Smith (1990) also discussed how dreaming facilitates the ongoing relationship between humans and non-humans. She explained that:

[...] it is in the realm of dreams that manitouk, other-than-human visitors, most often appear to human beings. And the relationships with the traditional Ojibwe formed with these dream visitors were essential to the maintenance of human life. In dream, however, the Ojibwe interact not only with the manitouk but with human and animal persons as well. They speak together, travel together, and sometimes one or more of them may undergo metamorphosis. And this pattern of interaction is mirrored not only in waking activities but, most profoundly and consistently, in the recurrent themes of myth. (p. 21)

Many historical and contemporary texts refer to dream fasting as an important ceremonial done by children of varying ages. The literature references two common outcomes of the dream fast: the initiation of an on-going relationship with one's pawakan and the revelation of one's life path. Namegosib Anishinaabeg cite both of these but also emphasize that going to dream will reveal how one should acquire

mino bimaadiziwin, for example, by cultivating gzhewaadiziwin.

Literary examples of Mino Bimaadiziwin

More and more authors are paying attention to topic of mino bimaadiziwin, as it is understood to be the foundation of Anishinaabe worldview. The question of what constitutes a good life is something that philosophers from every age and part of the world have pondered. This is no different for Anishinaabeg, although how it is understood and actualized in different contexts is culturally constructed.

In Anishinaabemowin, the literal translation of mino bimaadiziwin into English can be misleading precisely because of its simplicity. The Ojibwe People's Dictionary (2015) defines mino bimaadizi as "s/he lives well, leads a good life, has good health". As many authors have noted, mino bimaadiziwin is much more complex than its English definition might imply. On one hand, a relatively simple definition allows multiple understandings to co-exist, flourish, and even evolve (for example, a similar concept exists in Cree). On the other, mino bimaadiziwin is not an English concept but the English language is the primary means for conveying its complexities. This poses multiple challenges for non-Anishinaabemowin-speakers because each respective language has its own set of worldviews. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight how some authors have attempted to do so.

In their analysis of Anishinaabe legends, Overhold and Callicott (1982) have stated that the narratives convey a set of ethics as well as the concept of the good life. They have used a truncated version, *pimadaziwin* (to experience longevity without the afflictions of poor health or misery), which they consider the primary aspiration of

Ojibwa life. They also have discussed the antithesis of pimadaziwin, what they have termed anti-pimadaziwin, which occurs when humans act inappropriately, often resulting in hardship or sickness. The authors have emphasized that humans are inherently vulnerable and therefore require help to maintain a healthy spiritual life as well as achieve the goal of a good life. These goals require humans to cultivate their relationships with spirit beings in part by acting in accordance with social norms.

Overholt and Callicott (1982) have explained this idea in the following:

[T]he good life, which the Ojibwa designate by the term pimadaziwin, is to have “life in the fullest sense, life in the sense of longevity, health and freedom from misfortune.” Narratives also make it clear that man needs help in achieving these goals. [...] It seems that in the narratives men are always found in the role of receivers. Their condition is “pitiable,” and other-than-human persons are said to “pity” them, i.e., to grant them blessings. (p. 151)

The authors have clearly suggested that pimadaziwin acknowledges the fallibility of human nature that requires compassion in order to reach its full potential. In this respect, Overholt and Callicott have recognized this important link between compassion and *mino bimaadiziwin* which most other authors have not made.

Similarly, *Makeso Sakabikan Inninuwak* (the people of Fox Lake) use the term *mino pimatisiwin*, which “comes from the idea of ‘balance - mino puniho - to balance yourself.’ [...] [I]t can mean physical balance, balancing on a tightrope, or to keep things even, in balance. But it can also mean living a good and balanced life” (p. 15).

In the community’s unpublished memoir *Ninan: Our Story* (2012) that was submitted

to the Clean Environment Commission in 2013 in relation to the Keeyask Generating Station, Fox Lake member Jessie Anderson explained that:

The way I understand mino pimatisiwin today is how I was taught to live my life. Back then I didn't understand what my parents were talking about when I was told to "mino pimatisi, Jessie." I was playing with my nephew who was younger than I was. I got a little rough with [him] who I love dearly to this day. That's when my dad told me to "mino pimatisi." I asked him what that meant. He said: don't get rough or mean with your little nephew. Be kind to him because I can tell he loves you and I know you love him. I was taught to respect the land, animals, waters and people and always to lend a helping hand especially to elders and little children, no matter who they are, what they look like[;] you will never go wrong. (p. 13)

This quote suggests that mino pimatisiwin concerns the nature of appropriate relationships. It informs how a person interacts with other people, land, animals, and the whole spiritual realm. To "mino pimatisi" someone must show compassion for that person. It is the foundation of living well with others.

Other authors have chosen to focus on elements that emphasize things other than internal states of mind and being. Anthropologist Naomi Adelson discusses the concept of *miyupimaatisiin* ("being alive well") in her 2000 study concerning the Whapmagoostui Iyiu'ch (James Bay Cree of northern Quebec). Her analysis focuses on the material, non-spiritual aspects of *miyupimaatisiin*, instead linking it to ideas about health and environment. According to Adelson, *miyupimaatisiin* is not an

absence of disease but rather it is a set of ideals and practices that form the bases of Whapmagoostui Iyuu'ch livelihoods, identities, and beliefs. She highlights elements such as Cree food (which is gleaned from a clean environment), respectful relationships with the animals, warmth, physical strength, and bush activities, generally. Food as well as its procurement and preparation are considered essential to miyupimaatisiun and to Cree identity. Adelson's study demonstrates how concepts such as miyupimaatisiun can become politicized in response to major changes such as industrial developments. Within the period of living memory, there have been multiple hydroelectric projects constructed in the James Bay area, all of which have profoundly impacted Cree lands and livelihoods. That the elders interviewed by Adelson emphasize aspects of miyupimaatisiun that have been impacted by these projects (such as the quality of Cree foods) is understandable, having done so either out of conscious or unconscious intent. The apparent fluidity of this concept suggests a way for elders and community members to make sense of and adapt to some of the changes that have occurred in their community.

The challenge in developing a singular understanding of mino bimaadiziwin is that it does not allow for the concept to evolve and adapt to changing conditions. At the same time, the interpretations of gichi-Anishinabeg may be eclipsed by the tendency for contemporary writers to mystify this concept. The very act of publishing as well as a tendency towards relativism (that is, giving equal weight to all accounts of mino bimaadiziwin regardless of their historical merit on the basis that there is no single objective truth) may sideline the oral interpretations of the Elders, whose

understandings of this concept are comprehensive. This thesis is therefore interested in gichi Anishinaabe constructions of *mino bimaadiziwin* because it is they who have actualized this concept into their lives.

Indigenous Compassion Discourse

Although the literature makes many references to acts of kindness and compassion, these are often secondary to other concepts and themes. Few if any authors make the point that Anishinaabemowin distinguishes between acts of kindness and the internal nature of being kind, with the latter an aspect of *mino bimaadiziwin*. Yet the importance of cultivating *gizhewaadiziwin* as part of everyday spiritual life, as part of living a good life, and as antidote to suffering is evident in many sources. Compassion is embedded in the legends and oral histories of gichi Anishinaabeg and, to a lesser extent, in the historical and anthropological records.

Compassion may be less visible in the literature in part because it may appear mundane, noting that historians and anthropologists have long been fascinated with subject matters that concern the exotic and mystical. For example, in 1819 Northwest Company trader George Nelson referred to the French *une Jonglerie* (juggling) and the English *conjuring* to describe what is commonly known as the shaking lodge ceremony (Brown and Brightman, 1990). Conjure is a misdiagnosis of this ceremonial as evidenced by its definition which is to “cause (a spirit or ghost) to appear by means of magic ritual” (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, para. 1). The tendency for early Europeans to demonize things of a spiritual nature especially if they appeared different was apparently very strong. Nelson himself believed that conjuring was real

and not magic (which implies an element of trickery) and even commissioned ceremonies to assist him in his duties as a trader (Brown and Brightman, 1990). In contrast, that Namegosib Anishinaabeg refer to *mamaandaawizi* (s/he has power to do extra ordinary things) does not suggest mysticism because even extra ordinary things had their place in Anishinaabe life (Agger, personal communication, 2 June 2019).

The categorization of Anishinaabeg's spiritual traditions as mystical and therefore altogether distinct from European religions was in fact a product of the psychological process known as othering. Among other things, this process results in the failure to see the similarities that exist between groups, and may eventually lead to the dehumanization of one's out-group (that is, people who are not members of one's own social group) (B. Huebner, personal communication, 24 August, 2018).

Intentionally or unintentionally, Europeans failed to recognize that a central tenet of their own religions, compassion, also existed in Indigenous people's spiritual traditions. In fact, historians Jennifer Brown and Robert Brightman (1990) have identified love to be the basis of the relationship that is formed between human and other-than-human spirit in the dream fast.

Beyond mystification, the literature contains many descriptions of Indigenous people's spirituality in a pejorative and dehumanizing light. Michael Angel's *Preserving the Sacred* (2002), in which he contextualizes the historical record concerning the Midewiwin, highlights the dehumanization of Anishinaabe spiritual practices. According to Angel, Euro-American scholars of the 19th and 20th centuries were

biased observers, weaving their own prejudicial views into their descriptions of Midewiwin healing ceremonials by calling them “strange, savage, evil, and potentially dangerous” (p. 6). This thesis suggests that such descriptions are, ironically, antithetical to what Namegosib Anishinaabeg have stated are actually rooted in compassion. Despite this, the Midewiwin and other practices captivated Euro-American scholars as evidenced by their need to document their existence. It may have been precisely because they appeared mysterious, their seemingly pernicious nature adding an extra element of mystery that fuelled European interest.

The myth of European moral superiority, which is described by cultural geographer James Morris Blaut in *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (1993), rendered it difficult, if not impossible, for many Europeans to acknowledge that Anishinaabe spirituality encompassed moral elements, much less that some were in fact similar to their own. Moreover, some early missionaries concluded that Anishinaabeg had no religion at all (Smith, 1995), implying that Indigenous people lacked a moral framework (because morality was supposedly derived from religion). This served to further dehumanize Indigenous people and stifle the emergence of an Indigenous compassion discourse.

Even contemporary literature contains portrayals of Anishinaabe spiritual practices as mystical, although the reasons for this may be altogether different than they were historically. In Theresa Smith's *The Island of the Anishnaabeg* (1995), she describes some cosmological aspects of Anishinaabe worldview in the following:

It is my contention that the Thunder and Underwater manitouk are determinative beings and symbols in the Ojibwe world and that their relationship inscribes a dialectic that both reflects the lived reality of that world and helps to determine the position and existence of the human subjects therein. In other words, the human person is suspended between heights and depths both literally and figuratively.

It is important to remember, however, that this dynamic exists in a complex, if somewhat fluid cosmology. This cosmology includes the horizontal plane wherein directions – especially the four cardinal points – are highly meaningful. However, in the case of the Ojibwe, I would contend that the zenith and nadir take precedence and the radical awareness of this vertical dimension reduces the earthly realm to a kind of precarious middle ground. The human subject travels and dwells on this plane – an island at the centre of what I envision as a kind of dialectical cosmos – subject to protection and assault from above and below. (p. 3)

This description of what she refers to as “the traditional Ojibwe life-world as experienced and described through religious symbols, beliefs, and practices” (p. 2) tends to mystify Anishinaabe spirituality by rendering it imponderable to non-academics like the gichi Anishinaabeg. It implies that Anishnaabe spirituality lies far beyond the purview of everyday living that includes compassion. Smith (1995) also suggests that Anishinaabeg of historical times viewed their own “religion” as so

dissimilar to Catholicism because it was predicated on attributes other than ethics. She states: “The Jesuits, coming out of a tradition wherein the doctrinal, ritual, and ethical dimensions of religion were so strong, must have been confused at meeting Algonquians who, while deemphasizing those aspects, stressed the mythic and experiential elements” (p. 22). Smith’s narrative is in contrast to what Namegosib Anishinaabeg have identified as the essence of ideal spiritual and human relationships, which are rooted in the ability to show gratitude, deploy *gizhewaadiziwin* and acquire *mino bimaadiziwin*, an aspirational internal state of thinking and being that is readily recognizable but not easily acquired. On the contrary, the latter perspective asserts that a well-defined set of ethics and morals, which inform thinking and behaviour, are indeed at the heart of Anishinaabe spirituality.

In conclusion, this chapter has surveyed a limited number of literary sources for three themes identified by Namegosib Anishinaabeg: *gizhewaadiziwin*, and *bawaajigem*, and *mino bimaadiziwin*. It contains many helpful descriptions of these, although some themes were clearly more visible than others. Much has been written on the topic of the dream fast especially as it was carried out historically but less so on *gizhewaadiziwin* and *mino bimaadiziwin*, likely because they are intellectual constructs and are therefore less directly observable and describable (unlike ceremonies). However, most authors have identified a set of ethics in which love and compassion were at its core. For example, the cultivation of appropriate relationships with other-than-human beings often begins with the dream fast in which the dream-

visitor assists a dreamer in his or her life endeavors. Although these authors have recognized that a good life requires the compassion of other-than-human beings, seemingly none have equated the dream fast with acquiring such states of being as *gizhewaadiziwin* or with revelations concerning *mino bimaadiziwin*; this thesis further explains this relationship in Chapter 3. Finally, the lack of an Indigenous compassion discourse suggests that compassion has yet to be recognized as a fundamental aspect of Anishinaabe worldview and philosophy.

Chapter 2

Qualitative Research Methods

This thesis draws from two qualitative approaches that of participant observation and reflexivity and uses the personal interview as its primary format of data collection. As it is solely concerned with the participant's experiences and subjective understandings of the world, it shares this aspect with phenomenology, as carried out in psychological contexts, though this thesis does not suggest full compliance with this branch of study. In many ways, the methodology of this thesis is consistent with participant observation, which anthropologist Kathleen Musante DeWalt and museum curator Billie DeWalt (2010) have described as "a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspect of their life routines and their culture" (p. 1). According to this definition, "explicit" culture concerns the things that people are able to freely articulate about themselves and "tacit" the unconscious or unsaid expressions of their culture. This definition stresses the act of living alongside the participants (at least for a time), thus allowing the researcher to participate in and observe daily rituals in order to more accurately describe and contextualize the data collected. Although this project does not involve fieldwork per se, I have spent a significant amount of time with the primary participant, observing and learning from her on the land, Trout Lake. In this sense, I have been carrying out participant observation throughout my entire life. Yet my research is not strictly participant observation because of my positionality. As the

above definition implies, the researcher-participant roles are quite distinct, and I am *both* a researcher and a Namegosibii Anishinaabe (as well as a Lac Seul First Nation band member). That I do not speak the language of my grandmother also makes me an outsider.

The insider-outsider distinction implied in participant observation reflects classical ethnographic methods in which researchers, often from distinguished universities, carried out fieldwork in Indigenous communities. Fieldwork was carried out not at the request of the communities but in order to fulfill researchers' own agendas, reflecting salient power differentials between the researcher and the researched (see Brown & Peers, 2006). Contemporary ethnographic and Indigenous research methods (see, for example, Smith, 1999) have both arisen as critical responses to historical modes of fieldwork. The former calls for collaborative research and for researchers to be aware of and acknowledge one's personal and political orientations ("positionality") and the latter calls for research to benefit Indigenous communities and for research to be increasingly carried out or driven by communities themselves. My research is not being carried out at the specific request of a First Nation, although it indirectly concerns my own off-reserve community. Yet, I am honouring my grandmother's wish to pass down this knowledge directly to her descendants and it is my responsibility to present it with care and accuracy.

Indigenous and other contemporary research methods share the view that it is impossible for researchers to be neutral and value-free – as was the aspiration of anthropology and is the aspiration of positivist science. Rather, it is acknowledged

that both researcher and participant bring their own values and expectations to a project in a manner that shapes how and what data is collected. In other words, the interaction between participant-researcher shapes the research process as well as its outcomes. The acknowledgement and analysis of this interplay is what cultural anthropologists Emily Schultz, Robert Lavenda and Roberta Dods (2018) have identified as a “reflexive method”, the second methodological approach upon which this thesis draws. According to Schultz, Lavenda and Dods (2018), reflexivity “pays explicit attention to the ethical and political context of research, the background of researchers, and the full partnership with our in-culture teachers that produce collaborative relationships leading to anthropological knowledge” (p. 31).

Applying a reflexive approach to this research obliges me to acknowledge my non-neutrality as well as to reflect upon how I am situated in this project, for example, the nature of my relationships with the primary contributor and if and how this relationship has contributed to her willingness to engage in this research. As a Namegosibii Anishinaabe, Lac Seul First Nation band member, and granddaughter of the main contributor, I have been granted privileged access to the participant that non-family members would not have. It is precisely because my grandmother and I share a relationship of trust that she is willing to share her knowledge with me. She has also entrusted me to select a topic that is desirable to both of us, although my own “situated subjectivity” (Schultz, Lavenda & Dods, 2018, p. 31) has profoundly influenced what I have chosen to research. Yet in many research contexts, a preexisting relationship with participants is considered a conflict of interest. My

research is most certainly biased in this respect, but this bias serves as a benefit rather than a detriment. The enhancement, and indeed continuance, of my relationship with the primary contributor is dependent on whether she has perceived my treatment of her knowledge as accurate and respectful, and whether she views her participation as beneficial to herself and others.

As this research is primarily concerned with the lived experience of the primary participant and the meanings she attaches to her experiences, it shares aspects with phenomenology as it is conceptualized in the fields of psychology, anthropology, and nursing. Incidentally, Nurse Dr. Ruth Dean (25 June 2019, personal communication) emphasized that phenomenology, specifically that which is concerned with philosophy, is a conceptually challenging subject, rendering it well beyond the scope of this thesis to fully appreciate its complexity. Anthropologist Janice Morse and nurse Peggy Field (1995) have described phenomenology as “the researcher seek[ing] a deeper and fuller meaning of the participants’ experience of a particular phenomenon” (p. 151). Aspects of participants’ lived experience are essentialized into textual form in a manner that specifically seeks to reflect participants’ own interpretations of phenomenon (Morse & Field, 1995). Phenomenology alludes to the process of transformation that occurs particularly in qualitative research – where real-life experiences are condensed and expressed in written form as the primary means of disseminating knowledge. This research not only involves the transposing of ideas from one linguistic-cultural framework into another (Anishinaabe to English) but it involves a number of actors to make this

happen (the participant, the translator, the researcher/writer, the editor, and the publisher). The product, which in this case is the thesis, will undergo a series of transpositions of contexts, resulting in a much-distilled remnant of real-life phenomena. At any point along the way – from the participant recalling and describing events often from her past, to translating interviews from Anishinabemowin into English, to transcribing real-time translations, to preparing text that must satisfy academic criteria - meaning can be lost, misunderstood, or misrepresented. Acknowledging and understanding how these losses may occur can help mitigate at least some of them. For instance, a more robust verification process that includes the participant’s review of the field notebooks and all sections of text that are based on the interviews will ensure that the researcher and the participant agree on how information is presented and contextualized. As example, I suggest this thesis is in part consistent with phenomenology because it concerns the manner in which the primary participant constructs her own identity as Namegosib Anishinaabeg. Similarly, this work can be considered a part of the “writing home” genre, both because it is based on the living memory of the primary contributor who has experienced diaspora (Jain, 2015) and because her narratives concern a specific geographical space – her homeland – from which her identity is constructed.

Interview Methods

This thesis used the interview as its primary format for data collection. Prior to the commencement of the interview process, the primary contributor gave her verbal consent indicating her wish to participate in a series of interviews (see

Appendix for sample verbal consent form). Interviews were informal and open-ended to allow the contributor to select which aspects of the topic she felt were most important, in the manner consistent with the “conversational method.” To facilitate free-flowing conversations, the interviews took place at the home of the contributor, around the kitchen table or similar setting. My role was to facilitate a discussion that gave the contributor an opportunity to speak freely and openly without interruption. The following four questions were the essence of this research:

- (1) “What is the Anishinaabemowin word for kindness?”
- (2) “How is kindness shown to others (people, self, animals, plants)?”
- (3) “How did Namegosibii Anishinaabeg cultivate kindness historically?”
- (4) “In what contexts is it most important to show kindness and why?”

The primary participant was selected on the basis of her fluency in the Anishinaabe language as well as her knowledge of Namegosibii Anishinaabe culture and history. Future research projects could utilize the “snowball” method (which is similar to “word of mouth”) to identify any additional participants I have not already identified. This sampling method involves analyzing individuals' social networks to recruit participants given that the population is small and somewhat hidden (Browne, 2002), which is precisely the case for Trout Lake Anishinaabeg. I estimate there to be approximately 100 individuals who self-identify as Namegosibii Anishinaabeg, and, for at least 20 years, none have resided in Trout Lake full time. There is also no official written list of Namegosibii Anishinaabeg. Rather, individuals are known to one another through kinship and their historical connections to the land, and it is this

knowledge that I will tap into in order to identify other potential participants, should this be necessary at a later date.

Though this study is focused on one contributor, she was interviewed multiple times with the outcome that more and more detailed information was gleaned from each session. Emphasis was on obtaining higher quality information from a single individual rather than on obtaining a range of perspectives from more individuals, well in line with a number of different qualitative research genres. There are many examples of well-regarded ethnographic research that rely on only one informant (see, for example, Berens & Hallowell (2009)). A small sample size can be further rationalized based on the identity and life experience of the participants. It is important to highlight that Dedibaayaanimanook's life experience and depth of knowledge is unique. Having been born in and living most of her life in Trout Lake, Dedibaayaanimanook was mentored by her grandfather, Giizhig, until the age of eight, when he died in about 1930. Having not attended residential school, Dedibaayaanimanook received an invaluable Anishinaabe education from her grandfather, which included, among many other things, how people acquired *mino bimaadiziwin* and became *mamaandaawizi*. Dedibaayaanimanook continued to live and raise a family in Trout Lake until the mid-1980s, despite a diaspora of Trout Lake Anishinaabeg, which began in the late 1950s. Today at 97, she is the oldest living Namegosibii Anishinaabe, elderly enough to have observed and/or participated in ceremonials and other cultural activities that have not been practiced in many decades. She is highly regarded by her own people and speaks a very old dialect

unadulterated by residential school and other colonial experiences.

Dedibaayaanimanook's age, wisdom, and unique upbringing on the land means that she is a repository of knowledge not only about historical events but also about how her ancestors thought about and understood certain things. It is for these reasons that this thesis primarily focused on the particular knowledge and life experiences of a single individual. My own mother, Helen Agger who is fluent in Anishinaabemowin, provided translations and assisted in the verification process. She, too, has in-depth knowledge of Trout Lake dialect, history and culture, having grown up on the land, although her life trajectory included an English secondary and post-secondary education. Her contribution, as translator and participant, was necessary not least to facilitate my own understanding of difficult concepts. As she is familiar with the specific dialect preferred by Namegosibii Anishinaabeg, her expertise greatly reduced the potential for misunderstandings relative to using a non-community translator.

My first hand knowledge of the primary contributor suggested that it was unlikely she would have wished to be tape-recorded. To avoid the potential for undue influence, I did not pose this question to her, noting that should she have expressed the desire to be audio recorded, I would have arranged for this to occur. Instead, I took handwritten notes, which I have reviewed with the participant, at the beginning of each interview session, in an ongoing process of verification. The contributor took every opportunity to clarify, add additional, and in a few instances remove information at these times. All field notebooks were returned back to the primary participant upon the publication.

It is evident that knowledge is most accurately understood from within its own language. It therefore follows that in Anishinaabe contexts, if “*dadibaaajimowin* [the custom of narration as the format for transmitting knowledge across generations] stays within the framework of its own language and ontologies, it remains intact and its true meaning becomes self-explanatory” (Agger, 2017, p. 34). The corollary is that nuances that exist in one linguistic context may not be easily communicated and expressed in another. Yet, the dissemination of Anishinaabe ideas in their original language is not possible for many scholars and students because so few speak an Indigenous language, including myself. As this research seeks to identify and understand an Anishinaabe concept for which a specific definition exists in English, care must be taken to avoid projecting English definitions onto Anishinaabe ones. This would be problematic not least if the sentiment of compassion did not exist in Anishinaabe thought but, also, it is complicated by the fact that compassion is often misunderstood as an English concept. To avoid obfuscating ideas that are uniquely Namegosibii Anishinaabe, interviews were strictly focused on the Anishinaabe ideas identified and defined by the primary contributor. I did not discuss compassion as it is understood in the western literature to avoid any possibility of cross-pollination of ideas and selected terms for which there are known and easily understood translations, such as kindness. Analysis of the interview materials determined that compassion was the most appropriate English word to describe the essence of *ogooopaadenimaan*, although it is by no means a perfect translation.

In summary, this thesis will apply a variety of approaches that fall under the

umbrella of qualitative research including participant observation, reflexivity, and phenomenology. Common to these approaches, especially in qualitative research, is the acknowledgement that the researcher cannot be isolated from the research process but, rather, is an influential actor. In many instances, s/he determines what is studied, how participants engage with the research, and how data is interpreted. The unique nature of my relationship to the primary participant required me to clearly articulate my positionality as granddaughter and to occasionally write in the first person. This research is distinct precisely because the main contributor is advanced in years and holds a profundity of knowledge, having observed and participated in a way of life that is, in every practical sense, relegated to the subject of history. Yet, to this day, my grandmother aspires to cultivate a mindset consistent with her grandfather Giizhig's teachings and values.

Chapter 3

This chapter is based on conversations with my grandmother Sarah Keesick Olsen, who was born in 1922 in Namegosibiing (Trout Lake, Ontario). Dedibaayaanimanook was born in 1922 in Namegosibiing (Trout Lake, Ontario). Her grandfather, Giizhig Sam Keesick, known as Giizhig, named her Dedibaayaanimanook in a formal celebration that included a song that could be sung as a reminder of its meaning (Agger, 2008). She later assumed her husband's sir name, Olsen, upon her marriage to Norwegian fisher Einar, who had come to Namegosibiing to fish commercially in the early 1940s. Here, they operated a commercial fishery until the mid-1980's after which they retired to Red Lake, Ontario while maintaining their summer residence in Trout Lake. My grandmother continues to go by Dedibaayaanimanook although many of the old people who knew her by her "Indian" name, as she describes it, have long since passed.

This chapter explores the Anishinaabe concepts of zhawenjige, ogoopaadenimaan, oganawendaan, and mino bimaadiziwin which are approximately parallel in meaning to kindness, compassion, respect, and a good life, respectively. Although these Anishinaabe/English concepts are closely related, they have nuanced differences, which are most evident when communicated in their original context, Anishinaabemowin. For example, the particular dialect of Anishinaabemowin spoken by Dedibaayaanimanook distinguishes between a compassionate act, which can be situationally motivated, and a compassionate tendency, which refers to an aspect of a person's personality that makes up his/her moral character. It is this tendency that

Namegosibi Anishinaabeg have identified as being important and about which this thesis is most concerned. Interviews have revealed that *mino bimaadiziwin* is intrinsically related to one's mental and emotional frame of mind and, by extension, one's moral character. They have revealed that Namegosibi Anishinaabe acquired these qualities, not as a product of birth, but as a matter of intentional cultivation through such ceremonials as dream fasting. These two fundamental aspects of Namegosibi Anishinaabe worldview are all but absent from the literature though it is clear they are well understood by gichi Anishinaabeg. Although this chapter highlights only a few Anishinaabemowin words, there are many more concepts that could be explored.

Zhawenjigem and Ogoopaadenimaan

This chapter represents informal discussions I have over the past four years with two contributors Dedibaayaanimanook Sarah Keesick Olsen and Helen Agger, which culminated in a series of interviews that took place over the spring, summer, and fall of 2019. In May 2019, Dedibaayaanimanook provided the word *zhawenjigem*, which my mother, Anishinaabe scholar Helen Agger, translated as kindness (personal communication, 20 May 2019). A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe (1995) defines *zhawenjige* to be “merciful, be kind-hearted, have pity” (p. 124).

Dedibaayaanimanook described the internal state of being kind, *gizhewaadizwin*, which refers to a character trait rather than an act of kindness, and *zhawenindizom*, to show yourself kindness. She also provided the word *ogooopaadenimaan* – s/he feels compassion for someone.

In 2019, Dedibaayaanimanook explained that ogoopaadenimaan is one of the motivators of kindness. There is a sense of obligation to help someone who is having difficulty. Ogoopaadenimaan is therefore not triggered by “good” behaviour; in fact, it may be precisely because a person is acting inappropriately that s/he is most in need of ogoopaadenimaan. In Dedibaayaanimanook’s worldview, being mean to others, including animals, or acting in ways that are harmful to one’s self indicates that a person is in need of ogoopaadenimaan, preferably from gichi Anishinaabeg, who can help reorient the person’s way of thinking and behaving in ways that are more appropriate. This role of the elders was a community recognized institution of ceremony, where ceremony was how one conducted one’s everyday life, not exclusively formalized rituals. Inappropriate behaviours are not condoned in this belief system; rather, everyone deserves and even requires ogoopaadenimaan to become fulfilled as a human being. It is therefore considered unconditional (Olsen; personal communication, 20 May 2019). It was well understood that there were consequences for inappropriate behaviors, which could be in the form of sickness.

To further exemplify ogoopaadenimaan, in 2019, Dedibaayaanimanook recounted an incident from her adolescence in which her mother, Gaamadwayaashiik Emma Strang Angeconeb Keesick, had asked her to make mittens for her cousin Mazinigiizhig, as his personal circumstances of being unmarried and jobless in the late 1930’s were less than ideal (Sarah Olsen, personal communication, 20 May 2019). Dedibaayaanimanook explained that she had made the mittens with the best wishes of her cousin in mind, hoping that his situation would soon improve. Mazinigiizhig

reciprocated with a scarf and three pieces of fabric, which he felt she needed to make herself new clothes, as some of her dresses were threadbare. Dedibaayaanimanook noted that his gift was unexpected, and likely came at a personal cost that was beyond what he could afford, making their exchange all the more memorable for her.

This brief story suggests a number of important things about how ogoopaadenimaan is situated in Namegosibii Anishinaabe ontology. The first is Gaamadwayaashiik's recognition that Mazinigiizhig was struggling and her wish to assist him however possible. Though the mittens could not improve Mazinigiizhig's economic circumstances, they were a symbol of a mother and daughter's wish to show kindness to another person. The second was a mother's use of this situation as a teaching opportunity about the ethics of ogoopaadenimaan and zhawenjigem. Through the acts of beading, sewing, and gift giving, Dedibaayaanimanook learned to generate ogoopaadenimaan for her cousin as well as positive emotions about herself. These and other behaviours were part of a larger bundle of prosocial values and behaviours in which the social norm is reciprocated acts of kindness. The Namegosibii Anishinaabe tradition of generalized reciprocity was a means for maintaining positive relationships, where generalized reciprocity is "[an] exchange [...] without expecting an immediate return and without specifying the value of the return", according to anthropologists Emily Schultz, Robert Lavenda, and Roberta Dods (p. 170, 2015). In this example, reciprocity was in the form of gift-exchange but this was not simply normative, it reflected the inner values that people aspired to acquire as a part of living well (H. Agger, personal communication, 25 May 2019).

Parents, grandparents, and gichi Anishinaabeg reinforced these behaviours, emphasizing the importance of community in maintaining such practices. The processes of compassion expressed through the giving of the mittens, the acceptance of that compassion, and the sense of obligation to reciprocate with another gift illustrates how compassion has the power to self-perpetuate.

Though Namegosibi Anishinaabe ethos included helping each other, there was a particularly strong expectation to extend kindness to strangers, *biiwidgeg*. In 2019, Helen Agger (personal communication, 25 May 2019) recalled being taught that strangers were to be welcomed, fed, and offered accommodations if necessary. Namegosibi Anishinaabeg were expected to treat strangers respectfully, paying special attention to avoid upsetting or making offensive comments to them. As one never knew if a stranger possessed special helping or harming powers or was neutral, hospitality was extended in most circumstances. This ethic applied universally, as exemplified by the word Anishinaabe, which, although meaning “our people”, also refers to the larger human race, noting the exclusion of animals and other types of beings (H. Agger, personal communication, 27 May 2019). In the same conversation, Helen Agger explained that Dedibaayaanimanook’s two older brothers, Jiins Charlie Angecone and Jiibwaat Edward Angecone, assisted the newly arrived Norwegian Einar Olsen to set up his commercial fishery. They had observed that Einar was having difficulty recruiting workers from Red Lake, ironically, his fellow Scandinavians. Particularly motivated by the fact that Einar seemingly shared an ethic about the land, which was in contrast with the wild west frontier mentality typical of

Red Lake in the late 1930s, they assumed that he was also an ethical and fair person in other areas of his life. They recognized a potential to form a long-term relationship that would result in their employment for many years. Similarly, it was understood that Jiins and Jibwaat were reliable and hard working and that their commitment to Einar facilitated his living in Trout Lake for decades until his death in 1987. A shared land/environment ethic likely also played a role in Namegosib Anishinaabeg's acceptance of Einar as member of the Trout Lake community.

In 2019, Dedibaayaanimanook explained aspects of the nature of this land ethic, well articulated by her uncles and many other community members. She emphasized that it was equally important to extend ogoopaadenimaan to animals as well as humans (Olsen; personal communication; 21 May 2019). How one demonstrated ogoopaadenimaan to animals was through both the avoidance of and participation in certain activities. (S. Olsen, personal communication, 21 May 2019). For example, on the one hand, one avoided taunting or "playing" with animals (living and dead), and on the other, participated in certain rituals concerning animal remains. Both were carried out with the intent of reminding a person that s/he, as well as the animals, are part of the larger context of the natural environment (S. Olsen, personal communication, 21 May 2019). Agger (personal communication, 25 May 2019) also shared her recollection that Dedibaayaanimanook had instructed her children to bestow the bones of certain types of animals to the bush rather than to the fire, which was the standard means for disposing of uneatable food scraps. This prescription acknowledged the relationship with animals in general and, more

specifically, with the animal that had been eaten and is consistent with Hallowell's (1934) observation of Anishinaabe people. It included the bones of rabbits and large game but not those of fish or store-bought meat, noting that Dedibaayaanimanook did not explain the reason for this distinction. In 2019, Dedibaayaanimanook clarified that the shoulder blade of a vertebrate should not be burned, as this bone was of special significance. To mistreat this particular bone could bring about disastrous consequences through spiritual intervention. One could expect to hear the call of an owl, considered a manifestation of malevolent forces and harbinger of a terrible event (S. Olsen, personal communication, 30 May 2019). This example demonstrates that there were natural consequences for acting in discord with certain normative practices with the corollary that by following certain prescriptive actions, people could alter the course of certain events favourably. The rules concerning which items should and should not be burned related to the significance of the object itself, not the nature of fire, as is often implied in contemporary literature (H. Agger, personal communication, 18 May 2019). The idea that fire is not the important object of significance in such a practice is specific to Namegosibii Anishinaabe historical views. Contemporary Anishinaabe perspectives may include fire, for example, scholar Kathleen Absolon of the Flying Post First Nation west of Timmins, Ontario, constructs fire as the centre point in how she teaches Anishinaabe worldviews and moral principles, though this idea seems to be her own and does not necessarily reflect the views of elders of the land. In 2010, she wrote: "The center shkode (fire) is where the fire exists and where all four doorways intersect and interrelate. The center

is where balance and harmony exist when all aspects are living in harmony and balance. The center fire could also represent Self in relation to all else. It is the essence of self and the manifestation of the whole.” (p. 85). Namegosibii Anishinaabeg had a taboo against human cremation but also taught that one should set aside and burn certain types of food, including meat, in recognition of the presence of one’s deceased human relatives (S. Olsen personal communication, 18 May 2019). For Dedibaayaanimanook’s family this meant putting a portion of their dinner meal into the fire from time to time as a way of remembering *Nookomiban* (my deceased grandmother) as the matriarch of the Trout Lake community. Putting food into the fire was a physical act that symbolized one’s desire to acknowledge the individual’s role in the community by presenting s/he with a gift of food. Her acceptance of the gift was symbolized in its consumption by fire. This is another example of Trout Lake Anishinaabeg ceremony that took place periodically to maintain relationships with a deceased community member.

From an early age, children were directed in these and other behaviours that demonstrated *oganawendaan/oganawenimaan* (s/he takes care of, respects, and has a responsibility for) humans, animals, and relationships. It was specifically the role of gichi Anishinaabeg to continually reinforce these standards of behaviour though it is notable that this was possible only because at the time of the Dedibaayaanimanook’s upbringing, a community still resided in Trout Lake. A rationale for acting in certain ways was rarely if ever explained to the child at the time because it was expected that this knowledge would be revealed later in life. Agger (personal communication, 23

May 2019) noted that the word oganawendaan not only implies caring for something or someone, it implies a responsibility to care for. Namegosibii Anishinaabe pedagogy was based on the idea of learning what to do first, then gaining insights into why something was done over the course of time. The implication of this teaching philosophy is that “as you grow as an individual, you grow your culture within yourself” (H. Agger, personal communication, 18 May 2019). These and other activities were routinely carried out to oganawendaan/oganawenimaan and ogoopaadenimaan human and animal life. They were not considered symbolic, but rather, they were seen as necessary aspects of daily living and a necessary part of mino bimaadiziwin. Based on the concepts of oganawendaan/oganawenimaan and ogoopaadenimaan, a special role for care-giving was warranted in certain circumstances, such as when someone was near death. Dedibaayaanimanook’s elder sister Gweyesh was tasked with caring for Giizhik at the end of his life.

Mino Bimaadiziwin

Mino bimaadiziwin is a foundational concept in the Anishinaabe worldview. Namegosibii Anishinaabe scholar Helen Agger (2008), whose understanding of the term was informed by her mother Dedibaayaanimanook, has defined minobimaadiziwin as “the practice of living a meritorious life” (p. 304). According to Dedibaayaanimanook, mino bimaadiziwin is directly concerned with the nature of appropriate relationships. It informs how a person should interact with people, land, animals, and the entire spiritual realm (S. Olsen personal communication, 25 May 2019). It is rooted in such concepts as zhawenjigem and ogoopaadenimaan and with

such internal human qualities as zhawenindizo and gzhewaadiziwin, which constitute ideal ways of thinking, acting, and living, according to the gichi Namegosib Anishinaabeg (S. Olsen personal communication, 18 May 2019). Although many authors have noted that it is much more complex than its literal translation implies, few if any have equated mino bimaadiziwin with the moral character of a person or with its acquisition with the exception of Baraga (1853). Because this work emphasizes precisely this aspect, it represents a departure from most, if not all, contemporary literary descriptions of mino bimaadiziwin to date. For example, Adelson's 2000 study that identified such things as good quality Cree food as well as fire and warmth as essential aspects of miyupimaatisiun.

Namegosib Anishinaabeg strongly associate gzhewaadiziwin, the internal characteristics of a person that makes her or him act with kindness, with mino bimaadiziwin (S. Olsen, personal communication, 9 June 2019). Though Dedibaayaanimanook considered gzhewaadiziwin as an ideal state of being (S. Olsen; personal communication, 11 June 2019), there are many others that this thesis does not discuss in any great detail, and require further investigation. In 2019, Dedibaayaanimanook identified her paternal grandfather, Giizhik (circa 1830 – 1929), with gzhewaadiziwin, due in part to his gentle and patient nature (S. Olsen, personal communication, 25 May 2019). Neither bombastic nor domineering, he was recognized as a leader of the Trout Lake people due not only to his gift of oratory but to his moral character. Agger (personal communication, 23 May 2019) noted that even small children were taught the kinds of qualities that Giizhik exemplified. For

example, they were encouraged to speak quietly and thoughtfully with the intent that they learn the appropriate ways of interacting with elders as well as the tradition of oratory, which emphasized using language and logic as its primary means of persuasion. Loudness was not considered to be a persuasive, much less respectful, manner of interacting with others. The narrative of Giizhik's gizhewaadiziwin has persisted over time, passed down through each of his seven genealogical lineages. Today, his descendants consider him the patriarch of the Trout Lake Anishinaabeg.

Gizhewaadiziwin implies a mindset that is focused on the wellbeing of others rather than self. This, however, includes caring for others without putting one's self at risk of harm or being taken advantage of. If one is gizhewaadizi, by extension, one also exercises oganawendaan/ogawanenimaan because gizhewaadiziwin is a way of being that includes taking care of land, animals, things, people, and self. Gichi Namegosib Anishinaabeg emphasized oganawendaan/ogawanenimaan as one of the main tenets of children's education, beginning early on in life. In a personal conversation, Agger (23 May 2019) recalled that learning to snare animals included a lesson on treating one's prey with the oganawendaan/ogawanenimaan principle. She and others thus had the responsibility for knowing precisely where their snares were laid as well as for placing them in locations where they could be checked frequently in order to avoid killing carelessly or wastefully should a snare location be lost or forgotten. Care for animals was also shown by setting only enough snares to meet daily needs. These examples illustrate that care is intended to be extended in all directions.

A person with mino bimaadiziwin is considered a person who has acquired gizhewaadiziwin. She or he is seen as blessed. Examples of blessings include learning how to self-calm and how to avoid becoming overwhelmed by or highly anxious about undesirable circumstances. The ability to generate peace of mind even in the direst of circumstances exemplifies another blessing. Dedibaayaanimanook considered Giizhik to be blessed because he continued to foster his own gizhewaadiziwin despite his prediction that his people would soon lose their “Indian” ways of life as a consequence of signing the Adhesion to Treaty 3 and despite the fact that these impending events concerned him greatly (S. Olsen, personal communication, 25 May 2019).

Blessings may not originate only from spirit beings such as one’s bawaagan (dream mentor), but may also come from other people. When a person receives kindness from a person who is gizhewaadiz, they, too, have received a blessing (Agger, personal communication, 10 June 2019). As it were, blessings can proliferate person-to-person. Even more important is the ability to recognize and acknowledge that one has been blessed, which indicates an individual’s emotional maturity and readiness to undertake spiritual journeys. The ability to appreciate a blessing fortifies one’s own commitment to mino bimaadiziwin (H. Agger, personal communication, 16 June 2019).

Mino bimaadiziwin could easily be mistaken for only what is seen, possessed, or experienced physically, for example, Anishinaabe foods, warmth, and an unspoiled environment. While these things are important, Namegosib Anishinaabeg primarily

view this concept as something that lies beyond one's material reality, as actualized by cultivating the appropriate internal qualities and states of being such as zhawenjigem (Agger; personal communication; 11 June 2019). This view of mino bimaadiziwin implies that one's peace of mind is not permanently altered if one's physical environment or personal circumstances change. It implies psychological resiliency and the ability to recover from traumatic experiences when they occur.

States of Mind Antithetical to Mino Bimaadiziwin

Goopaadenindiz, feeling sorry for oneself, is considered antithetical to mino bimaadiziwin. In 2019, Dedibaayaanimanook recounted a phrase that senior Anishinaabeg used when they observed a younger person who was goopaadenindiz: “*Gidoombiigi!*” stop talking that way, you are not speaking well (S. Olsen, personal communication, 24 May 2019). Their intent was to place emphasis on more appropriate states of mind by shifting children's focus away from themselves and onto others. Senior Anishinaabeg had the particular role of teaching young people to transform self-pity into a mindset more in line with mino bimaadiziwin (S. Olsen, personal communication, 11 June 2019), which was possible only because children and elders lived together as part of the Trout Lake community. Agger noted that goopaadenindiz is problematic not only because it prevents one from noticing when someone else is in need of help but also it hinders one's urge to help when it is noticed (personal communication, 10 June 2019). A focus on others rather than self is considered to be of benefit to both the individual and the community as a means of precipitating close relationships.

Nishkaadizi (s/he feels anger) relates to another state of mind that is may be considered antithetical to *mino bimaadiziwin* in certain circumstances (S. Olsen; personal communication; 9 June 2019). This is not to suggest that anger is necessarily problematic or that a person who is *gizhewaadizi* does not experience *nishkaadizi*. Rather, there are many circumstances in which indulging in one's anger is harmful, both to the individual and to others. *Majibimaadizi* (short tempered or easily angered) refers to a trait that does not lend itself to peace of mind (S. Olsen, personal communication, 10 June 2019). Resentment, embitterment, and being emotionally attached to anger are viewed as impeding one's ability to recognize opportunities for acquiring *mino bimaadiziwin*. Agger (personal communication, 10 June 2019) noted that *nishkaadizi* is quite different from embitterment, the former of which may occur when people experience trauma or are faced with difficult circumstances, especially if caused by external factors. However, it is much more likely that a person who is *majibimaadizi* will clutch onto his/her *nishkaadizi* (being angry) and for longer periods relative to someone who is *gizhewaadizi*. Agger (personal communication, 18 June 2019) noted that the prefixes *mino* and *maji* transform *minobimaadizi* and *majibimaadizi* into opposite concepts. Similar English opposites include positive/negative, helpful/harmful, and good/bad.

In 2019, Dedibaayaanimanook emphasized that generating an appropriate mindset is not an easy undertaking but it is necessary to overcome trauma and preserve one's peace of mind, an important aspect of *mino bimaadiziwin* (S. Olsen; personal communication; 15 June 2019). She shared a story in which she was required

to undertake the very difficult challenge of generating compassion for someone who had hurt her deeply, physically and emotionally. Dedibaayaanimanook emphasized that it would have been inappropriate and ultimately more harmful to herself and to her children had she become bitter. Her choice to avoid embitterment did not suggest that she condoned violence. Rather, the desire to preserve her peace of mind was a process that prevented her from entering into a perpetual cycle of anger. As a means for encouraging herself, she evoked the memory and teachings of her grandfather who had warned her against becoming an angry person (S. Olsen; personal communication; 11 June 2019). Although it is possible that the individual who had hurt Dedibaayaanimanook's recognized her compassion and was moved by it, this was not the intended moral of the story. Rather, Dedibaayaanimanook recounted this incident to communicate her belief that anger and resentment, even if understandable, are not justifiable because they are themselves a source of great misery (S. Olsen; personal communication; 11 June 2019). For Dedibaayaanimanook, the over-indulgence of anger eclipses one's ability to achieve *mino bimaadiziwin* as one's mental energies are overly focused on injustice. This perspective suggests that *gichi Anishinaabeg* viewed the quest for and preservation of peace of mind as a sacred endeavor. The memory of *gichi Anishinaabeg* like *Giizhig*, whom Dedibaayaanimanook described as kind and able to manage his emotions appropriately especially anger (S. Olsen, personal communication, 25 May 2019), continues to serve as an example for today's generations concerning the most appropriate means for dealing with trauma. Though such internal qualities as

exemplified by Giizhig required tremendous effort to acquire and maintain, the belief that they constituted ideal ways of living and were therefore worthy of pursuit was salient. However, Dedibaayaanimanook was cautious not to conflate age with having the qualities of someone who is gizhewaadizi, stating that all gichi Anishinaabeg (even Giizhig) have flaws. In 2019, she noted that her own maternal grandmother was majibimaadizi, causing great suffering to others, especially to her children including Dedibaayaanimanook's own mother (S. Olsen, personal communication, 25 May 2019). And yet, how the community treated those who were considered majibimaadizi was with compassion. For example, Agger (personal communication, 11 September 2019) recalled an aunt who was episodically violent throughout her life. Though the community recognized her destructive behaviours and did not condone them, she was not ostracized and her other positive qualities juxtaposed. It was understood that profound suffering was at the root of her destructive behaviours and that she and her family required more help rather than less. Another example was Dedibaayaanimanook's uncle (Agger, personal communication, 11 September 2019). Although not majibimaadizi, he was considered indolent, as exemplified by his unwillingness to hunt. This put him and his family at a great disadvantage and required others to support the family with food. A consequence of his freeloading was that his family was considered poor relative to other families, as it was not always possible for community members to gift him enough food and sundry items to meet his needs. And yet, the community accepted this undesirable quality and measured it against such finer qualities that included oratory. For example, when the community

elders sat together in council, he was able to inspire and encourage his audience (H. Agger, personal communication, 29 November 2019). A conclusion to be drawn from these examples involves the community's recognition of the positive qualities that even the most problematic individuals had, and the desire to assist them in ways that would benefit all members of the community.

To further illustrate behaviours antithetical to *mino bimaadiziwin*, Dedibaayaanimanook discussed the logging industry which has been in operation near and around Trout Lake since at least the 1940's. She viewed these activities as highly destructive not only to the land, water, and trees but also to relationships between local Anishinaabeg and Red Lake settlers. Dedibaayaanimanook identified the continuous quest for money as the root cause of conflict, with the emotions of greed and anger fueling the belief that industrial development takes precedence over human and other relationships. If settler society and Anishinaabeg could live alongside each other peacefully without destroying the environment, then this, too, would be considered an aspect of *mino bimaadiziwin* (S. Olsen; personal communication; 9 June 2019). Similarly, Dedibaayaanimanook took the view, also held by her peers, that sport hunting was inappropriate because animals were put under duress and killed merely for pleasure. For many generations, sport hunting was taboo as it focused on an individual's own personal gratification at the expense of others.

This section has touched upon the kinds of internal emotional states and behaviours that lend themselves to having good moral character, which is at the heart of

living well. One important implication of gichi Namegosib Anishinaabeg's perspective of mino bimaadiziwin is that one's internal and spiritual wellbeing is not permanently jeopardized when one's external environment changes. One can experience profound change, often beyond one's control, but still experience peace of mind. True resilience is derived from the ability to generate peace of mind, even in the face of hardship and misfortune.

The Cultivation of Zhawenjigem

In 2019, Dedibaayaanimanook emphasized that internal qualities such as gizhewaadiziwin do not necessarily come naturally or easily but require cultivation throughout one's lifetime (S. Olsen, personal communication, 9 June 2019). There is no shortcut, no way to circumvent this process, as it is one of personal and spiritual development. Because gizhewaadiziwin is not an inherent personality trait, it requires continual cultivation throughout one's lifetime, specifically as a personal endeavor but reinforced within the community. The outcome is the acquisition of attitudes and behaviours that are most associated with gizhewaadiziwin, and ultimately with mino bimaadiziwin (Agger, personal communication, 9 June 2019). It is generally understood that to be perceived as kind is one of the highest compliments, which is evocative of the spiritual journey that one takes on to become gizhewaadizi.

Namegosib Anishinaabeg cultivated these internal qualities in many ways but none was more emblematic than the fasting ceremonial *ando bawaajigem* (going to dream). Namegosib Anishinaabeg consider *ando bawaajigem* as a life altering rite-of-passage that opened the door to acquiring gizhewaadiziwin, and ultimately mino

bimaadiziwin (Olsen; personal communication; 14 June 2019). It was during ando bawaaajigem that a person contacted what was referred to as one's *mishoomis* (grandfather), noting that for Namegosib Anishinaabeg, mishoomis could be either actual or metaphorical. It was mishoomis from whom you requested gizhewaadiziwin because it was mishoomis who gifted you with the potential to acquire gizhewaadiziwin and live mino bimaadiziwin by means of his compassion for you (S. Olsen, personal communication, 18 May 2019). The dream fast offered numerous other opportunities for learning including patience, endurance, and self-denial. Agger (personal communication, 10 June 2019) drew a parallel between the Anishinaabe fasting ceremonial and the New Testament narrative of Jesus fasting in the “wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights”. By fasting in isolation, he was able to rid himself of physical distractions in order to focus on his spiritual endeavor. It is notable that isolated fasting is practiced across many cultures, often as part of a spiritual quest for higher knowledge and personal development. Importantly, the dream fast was also a vehicle for developing the potential to become spiritually powerful, mamaandaawizi. It also revealed one's life path including whether one would receive the gift of becoming mamaandaawizi, as this was not known prior to ando bawaaajigem. However, along with power came responsibility, and the expectation is that one would use one's power in appropriate ways (S. Olsen, 15 July 2019).

For Trout Lake Anishinaabeg, the dream fast involved both boys and girls of prepubescent age (S. Olsen, personal communication, 14 June 2019). It involved a

period of up to a week in which children abstained from food and water and lived in isolation with the express purpose of making contact with their mishoomis. Although children endured this time alone, there was a long period of mentorship leading up to the event in which parents, grandparents, and other members of the community prepared them with the emotional and physical skills to survive and live successfully during this time. Though abstaining from water was considered the most difficult physical aspect of this ceremonial (especially given that the venue for ando bawaaigem was a small island where water was visible from every vista), by far the most challenging component was the mental endurance it took to complete one's dream fast.

Namegosibi Anishinaabeg dedicated a particular place to the dream fast: a small island in Trout Lake known as *Manidoo Minis*, spirit island. As consecrated space, one tried to avoid even looking at Manidoo Minis when in its proximity, and respected the 20th century taboo against taking photographs. In 2019, Dedibaayaanimanook described some of the preparations that were taken to ready the site at Manidoo Minis including the use of spruce roots to bind together the physical structures of one's sleeping platform (S. Olsen, personal communication, 14 June 2019). Dedibaayaanimanook emphasized the use of tree roots as binding materials over nails and other store purchased items, which represented the people's close connection to the land. Avoiding such short cuts signified the effort that was involved in preparing for and partaking in a dream fast, which was why it was important for children to perform many of these tasks themselves under the

supervision of their elders. The time and care one took to make preparations was one of the many ways to demonstrate one's commitment to the ceremonial and one's commitment to cultivate *mino bimaadiziwin*. It was also referential of a land-person-spiritual relationship (H. Agger, personal communication, 18 May 2019).

It is apparent by the age of the children who undertook this ceremonial that Namegosib Anishinaabeg viewed the capacity and maturity potential of children much differently relative to today's western standards. (For example, Canada prohibits children under the age of 11 to be left alone without the supervision of an adult or child aged 12 years old and above). Dedibaayaanimanook's grandfather Giizhik was only seven years old when he went to dream, which was considered entirely age-appropriate as well as a necessary part of his upbringing. Determining if and when a child went to dream was a carefully considered decision that rested with parents and grandparents, noting that there were circumstances that warranted a child foregoing the ceremonial. Some of these reasons included if a child had not been adequately prepared or was considered too constitutionally weak prior to puberty (S. Olsen, personal communication, 18 May 2019). As Dedibaayaanimanook was sickly in her infancy and childhood, her grandfather recommended that she forfeit, and thus she did not *ando bawaajige*. Dedibaayaanimanook's other siblings did complete their dream fasts but they were among the last generation of Namegosibi Anishinaabeg to do so at Manidoo Minis – likely a syncretistic response to European settlement as well as the fact that the subsequent generation attended residential school. Giizhik's decision has had lifelong implications for Dedibaayaanimanook: notably that she does

not consider herself *gichi Anishinaabe* (despite others viewing her as such) and that she would never become *mamaandaawizi*. As a consequence she declines invitations to officiate in ceremonials, for example, in naming infants – *ogwiimenz* (the custom of naming).

That she did not go to dream required *Dedibaayaanimanook* to cultivate *gizhewaadiziwin* in other ways. One of these ways has been through regular contact with *nimisboomis*, who helps *Dedibaayaanimanook* especially if she is going through a difficult time. *Minonaagozi nimisboomis*, “my grandfather looks well today”, is a metaphor she evokes when it is a beautiful morning by way of remembering and acknowledging *Giizhik*’s constant presence in her life, where *giizhik* translates into English as day or sky (Agger; personal communication; 14 June 2019). The sun is her reminder about keeping an appropriate frame of mind and spirit, as her grandfather had instructed (S. Olsen, personal communication, 14 June 2019).

Until very recently, *Dedibaayaanimanook* sewed and was an accomplished quilter and beader. This not only kept her mind, hands, and body active, she experienced extreme joy in making things for others, which became particularly important after the death of her son. Such seemingly routine activities constituted opportunities for cultivating *gizhewaadiziwin* and, historically, were available in everyday *Namegosib Anishinaabe* life. Giving and receiving gifts was but one of the many ways in which *Anishinaabeg* generally aspired to live well, consistent with the ideal of *mino bimaadiziwin*.

Dedibaayaanimanook cautioned that one could easily mistake *mino*

bimaadiziwin for what is seen and experienced physically, for example, having a nice tent, fine tools, or caribou to eat (S. Olsen, personal communication, 15 June 2019). In fact, mino bimaadiziwin lies beyond one's materiality, noting, at the same time, that having a nice tent does not preclude the possibility of living mino bimaadiziwin. Although gzhewaadiziwin was institutionalized in Namegosibi Anishinaabe society through social reinforcement, it was equally important for individuals to cultivate these qualities independently. Becoming gzhewaadiziwin was an important quest for every member of society. For people of Dedibaayaanimook's generation, as well as her ancestors, the dream fast was one of the most important vehicles for acquiring gzhewaadiziwin and other qualities that are associated with mino bimaadiziwin.

Perhaps the most important finding of this thesis is the association between gzhewaadiziwin and mino bimaadiziwin, which the literature has seemingly not identified to date. Ironically, this idea is well accepted by elder Namegosib Anishinaabeg. They stress the importance of cultivating one's own gzhewaadiziwin as part of everyday spiritual life, as part of living a good life, and as antidote to suffering. Gzhewaadiziwin/compassion is embedded in the legends and oral histories of gichi-Anishinaabeg and, to a lesser extent, in the historical and anthropological records, if one looks carefully enough.

Conclusion

Compassion is a universal concept that is and has been cultivated in many different ways throughout time and across cultures, from the stoics to the Buddhists and including Namegosib Anishinaabeg. Most traditions recognize that individuals must cultivate their own compassion, as it is not necessarily an inherent human trait. The cultivation of compassion is therefore considered part of one's personal journey towards enlightenment, however this is constructed. This thesis explored Namegosib Anishinaabeg's understanding of compassion and their own unique ways of cultivating compassion, historically. As compassion is all but absent from contemporary scholarship including the Indigenous canon, there is an important aspect of Anishinaabe worldview that has not been fully acknowledged and appreciated. And yet, it is well understood by gichi Anishinaabeg unveiling a disconnect that exists between grassroots and the academy. This disconnect, too, exists in contemporary Indigenous health, social justice, and legal discourses (to name a few), which overwhelmingly focus on pathology, with the consequence that gichi Anishinaabeg's historical/traditional philosophies and healing strategies are further eclipsed.

The science of compassion reflects a recent convergence of a number of disciplines including philosophy, sociology, psychology, and neuroscience, all predicated on a shared understanding of compassion which is the acknowledgement that suffering exists accompanied by a desire to end this suffering without the expectation to experience that suffering through empathy. Neuroscience has shown

that compassion is fundamentally different from empathy, which involves the vicarious suffering of the empathizer and potentially leads to a state of empathetic distress. Empathetic distress is characterized by a range of adverse psychological states from burnout to depression, with corresponding potential impacts on physical health. Empathetic distress is common among helping professionals with a consequence that helpers are less motivated to and effective at helping. The science of compassion has suggested that compassion can transform vicarious suffering associated with empathy and empathetic distress into more long-term sustainable pro-social actions. Although compassion research is oriented towards the “helping” professions, it has a much broader application. A key aspect of Indigenous health and resilience may rest in the application of traditional compassion cultivation techniques within, but not limited to, clinical settings and Indigenous health programs.

A basic question this thesis has sought to answer is how gichi Namegosib Anishinaabeg constructed and cultivated compassion, primarily in historical contexts. Community interviews have identified the concept of zhawenjigem (kindness), which most closely parallels compassion, as well as gizhewaadiziwin (being a kind person), which is a trait that one asks for and is given during a dream fast, noting that other cultivation methods exist. One of the most important findings of this thesis is the connection between becoming gizhewaadiziwin and mino bimaadiziwin (living well). Gichi Namegosib Anishinaabeg’s view of mino bimaadiziwin is that it is aspirational, and therefore it is necessary to develop one’s own emotional, moral, and spiritual qualities over one’s lifetime. To cultivate such qualities results in social responsibility,

resilience, and ultimately peace of mind. Namegosib Anishinaabeg also identified concepts that are impediments to living well including bitterness, resentment, and perpetual anger and perceptions of injustice. These induce a state of suffering that is difficult to overcome and prevents individuals from fulfilling his/her own potential. Interviews have identified the historic role of community as a primary structure for socially reinforcing values and behaviours in its members that reflected Namegosib Anishinaabe moral thinking and for correcting inappropriate ways of thinking and acting. This poses multiple problems for today's generations if such community structures no longer exist, as is the case of the Trout Lake community due to its diaspora. Other means for learning about and applying traditional forms of compassion must be developed so that they can become institutionalized as discourse and practice. Ironically, contemporary pan-Indian health strategies that emphasize trauma and injustice have the effect of re-traumatizing and potentially perpetuating suffering.

This thesis suggests that following in the footsteps of nimishoomis largely concerns a reorientation from trauma to compassion-centred paradigms, which, in turn, lessens suffering and encourages resiliency. The construct of compassion, and how it is cultivated, likely varies according to community and region, and therefore there is a great opportunity to identify community-specific perspectives. For those who are interested in applying compassion to their work and personal life, there is no better place to start than with his/her own grandparent(s) or other knowledgeable gichi Anishinaabe(g). Though there is a tendency to look to outsiders such as

governments to respond to crises, there are likely resources within the community that can direct the use of ancient wisdom in much more meaningful ways.

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Appendix A

Glossary of Namegosib Anishinaabeg Terms

Ando bawaajigem: “Going to dream”; a metaphor for the fasting ceremonial carried out by pre-pubescent children with the expectation that one’s bawaagan would be contacted and one’s life trajectory revealed.

Anishinabemowin: The language spoken by Anishinaabeg.

Bawaagan: One’s dream mentor who is contacted during the dream fast ceremonial, ando bawaajigem, with whom one develops a lifelong relationship.

Biiwidedg: The practice of extending kindness to strangers.

Dedibaayaanimanook:

Gizhewaadiziwin: The internal state of being kind (as it relates to yourself).

Goopaadenindiz: To feel sorry for yourself. It is considered antithetical to mino bimaadiziwin.

Majibimaadizi: A person who is short tempered or easily angered.

Mamaandaawizi: S/he has power to do extra ordinary things.

Mino bimaadiziwin: A good life, which, at its core concerns the kinds of moral qualities that a person develops over his/her lifetime such as being kind and compassionate. Mino bimaadiziwin concerns ideal ways of thinking, acting, and living with other people, land, animals, and the entire spiritual realm.

Namegosib: Trout Lake.

Namegosib Anishinaabeg: Trout Lake people.

Oganawendaan/ogawanenimaan: S/he takes care of, respects, and has a responsibility for.

Ogoopaadenimaan: S/he feels compassion for someone, out of which there is an intention to help. It is a motivator of kindness. (Erroneously translated as pitying someone).

Zhawenjige: He/she shows kindness.

Zhawenjigem: Kindness.

Zhawenindizom: To show yourself kindness.

Appendix B

Sample Consent Form Used in Participant Interviews

PROJECT TITLE: The Compassionate Indian: Zhawenjige in Namegosibii

Anishinaabe life and practice

PRINCIPLE RESEARCHER: Leslie Agger, University of Manitoba Graduate

Student in Native Studies

Email: aggerlo@mymanitoba.ca

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr. Cary Miller, Department of Native Studies,

University of Manitoba

Tel: (204) 474-9266

What I am about to read to you explains what my project is about and what your participation will involve. It is important that you understand what your role in this project is, and how the information you share will be used.

At any time, please let me know if you have any questions and I will be happy to stop reading and discuss your questions further.

I am a student at the University of Manitoba and I would like your assistance to better understand what it means to be kind and compassionate, how kindness and compassion are understood by the Anishinaabeg and in Anishinaabemowin to write a thesis so that I may achieve a Master's Degree.

The information you share will play a vital role in preserving a piece of Trout Lake Anishinaabe history. Your participation in this project is another way to contribute to the education of current and future generations who are interested in

learning about their rich culture and heritage, and directly in the words of gitchi Anishinaabeg.

I will be carrying out interviews for my university project between May and December 2019. Interviews will be carried out by me, Leslie Agger, with the assistance of a translator, HELEN AGGER, who is fluent Anishinaabemowin, given that it is your preference to do so. Knowing that there are concepts or words in Anishinaabemowin that do not translate well into English, you will have the opportunity to participate either in Anishinaabemowin or English or both. IF YOU AGREE, I MAY WISH TO SCHEDULE ADDITIONAL INTERVIEWS SO THAT WE CAN DISCUSS THINGS IN GREATER DETAIL.

Based on what I have learned from you and other Anishinaabeg, I will write a paper called a thesis which I am required to write to complete my degree. This thesis will be available online via a database called Dissertation Abstracts International which few people read. You can choose whether to have your name appear in the thesis so that you are credited for your knowledge and input into this project or if you would prefer to remain anonymous.

You may have a copy of the entire thesis upon its publication by the University of Manitoba if you wish. I will review all of the parts of the thesis that refer to or directly quote you. I may also publish parts of my thesis in academic journals or books and present this research at a conference. I will not be financially compensated for any of the scholarly work published using any of the interviews for this study.

I will take handwritten notes of our conversations. Our discussion will take between 40 minutes to one hour. You can stop our discussion at any time. At a later date, I will wish to review my notes with you for accuracy. At this time, you may add, clarify, or take away anything that you wish. I will also wish to review the results of my thesis with you.

After the completion of this thesis, I will give you my handwritten notes of our conversations. They will belong to you, and you can decide what you would like to do with them.

(If applicable): Our future relationship will not be harmed if you do not wish to participate or if you wish to withdraw, which you can do at any time.

Verbal Permission

Before we begin our discussion, I would like to clarify that you have understood everything I have just read to you, that you agree to our discussion.

Do you have any additional questions?

You are not losing any rights in talking to me, and you do not have to answer question(s) that you do not feel comfortable with.

I give my verbal permission to be interviewed by Leslie Agger and for her to use what I have shared in her project. I understand that Leslie Agger, will provide her signature below as an indication of my willingness to participate.

Signature of Principle

Researcher_____

Date of

interview _____

Anonymity

Your name will be checked off below if you DO NOT WISH TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS in this research project. That is, if you WOULD LIKE TO BE CREDITED FOR THE INFORMATION YOU SHARE, your name will be checked off in the appropriate box below.⁴

⁴ This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Any additional questions may be addressed to the University of Manitoba's Human Ethics Coordinator. Contact information is as follows:

telephone number: (204) 474-7122

email address: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

mailing address: 208-194 Dafoe Road

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2

Otherwise, your name will never appear in any published materials (to be checked off below).

Yes, I wish to have my name used in this and possibly other publications and to be credited for the information I share: { }

No, I do not wish to have my name used in this or any other publication or to be credited for the information I share: { }