

Re-Planting the Ode'imín Miinikaanan:
Embodied Anishinaabekwewag Governance

by

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Abstract

This dissertation responds to the urgent need for Anishinaabe Nation place-based knowledges by articulating *ode'imín* (strawberry) governance as a relational framework of governance and leadership that exists outside of the settler state. It demonstrates that patriarchy remains implicitly embedded within contemporary Anishinaabe governance structures, continuing to facilitate the violent, gendered dispossession and disappearance of Anishinaabe women. In particular, Indian Act Band Council governments have reinforced hierarchal, colonial and patriarchal structures within the Anishinaabe Nation. These dispossessive structures are often concealed by the prevalent use of gender-neutral language to normalize patriarchal behaviour through the pervasive omission of women's political authority.

In response, this research advances a living, relational and embodied framework of governance that centers Anishinaabe women and the *ode'imín*. Through relational engagement - visiting with the *ode'imín*, Elders and Knowledge Keepers - a framework of Anishinaabe leadership and governance is developed by centering and re-remembering Anishinaabe women, teachings, stories, knowledges and ceremonies shared through reciprocal relationality. *Ode'imín* governance is dependent on restoring relationality with the more-than-human kin and remaining accountable to collective roles and responsibilities.

This framework demonstrates that governance and leadership can be embodied practices cyclically created in everyday life through body sovereignty. As *ode'imín* governance is created, sustained and embodied, it renders colonial and patriarchal structure increasingly untenable. *Ode'imín* governance functions as a relational pedagogy that can nurture and support healthy leaders for the well-being of the Anishinaabe Nation. Moreover, re-planting the *ode'imín miinikaanan* (seeds) disrupts colonial and patriarchal temporalities. It accentuates the capacity to create and experience Anishinaabe futures within the present. Ultimately, this research prioritizes the well-being and health of the Nation by centering love, care, and belonging.

Dedication

For my past, present and future ancestors

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Chapter 1

Biboon: Boozhoo My Relatives

*Women sing / and /spirit light travels / back to ancient / peoples / and / forward /
to all the /future generations.*

Marcie R. Rendon¹

This dissertation was written across Treaty One and Treaty Two territories, as I travelled along the waters of *nibi*² and on *aki*³ to visit, learn, laugh, and grow throughout this multiyear process. I began writing this chapter during *biboon*⁴ a season that has shaped both the rhythm of this work and my relationships with the lands and waters around me. During *biboon*, I have seen the *migizii*⁵ make their last visit before *ziigwan*.⁶ I have seen the ice form its insulating layer over *nibi*,⁷ heard the whistling *biboon* winds singing across Lake Winnipeg and seen blizzards so dense they obscured the lights on nearby houses. Now, as I finish this chapter in February, I look out and see the blue *giizhig*⁸ and the bright *giizis*⁹ stretch wide enough to reveal the far shore of Sturgeon Bay. I notice the tracks of more-than-human kin who have followed the fishers onto the ice, who share their catch so that all our relations' bellies and *odes*¹⁰ may be full. I watch the *gabo-waukawauh*¹¹ gather and dream of visiting with them again in the spring. After this great *biboon* rest, I am honoured to invite readers to share the gifts, teaching and responsibilities shared with me throughout the writing of this work.

Positionality

My positionality and relation to this work have shaped every part of the research process. Through my paternal family, I am an Anishinaabekwe and a citizen of M'Chigeeng First Nation

¹ Marcie R. Rendon, *Anishinaabe Songs for a New Millennium* (University of Minnesota Press, 2024), 17.

² Water

³ Land.

⁴ Winter.

⁵ Eagle

⁶ Spring.

⁷ Water.

⁸ Sky.

⁹ Sun.

¹⁰ Heart.

¹¹ A thickly wooded forest.

on Manitoulin Island. Through my mother's side, I am also a settler. I carry responsibilities as an Anishinaabekwe, and I recognize the privilege encoded within my body because of my proximity to whiteness. I grew up off-reserve and, as a result of colonialism, I did not grow up with my language or access to ceremony. Reclaiming language and ceremony are now central commitments in my life as I strive to walk in a good way in accordance with my Anishinaabe teachings, roles, and responsibilities.

In 2019, I moved to Wînipêk to begin a Master of Arts degree in Indigenous Studies at the University of Manitoba, after having graduated from Carleton University in Ottawa. The meaning of "Wînipêk" is understood as "a gestur[e] to the creation of delicate and intricate collaborations between all things ... a culmination of the connection between earth, water, air, and people and a reminder of how each must be in balance to survive."¹² I fell in love with Wînipêk as soon as I stepped into the cool August air outside of the airport. Although I had never visited these territories and knew very few people, I felt compelled to come here and begin to introduce myself to this place.

An early defining moment of coming to know *aki* here was looking up on a clear evening and seeing the blanket of stars that seemed to hold me in love, belonging, and possibility. I carry deep gratitude for Manitowapow or Manito-bau, the "voice of the Great Spirit,"¹³ and for those who have lived and cared for these lands long before my arrival. Over the past seven years, I have come to know this place intimately – travelling across *aki* and along *nibi*, building relationships in all directions of Manitowapow. I am honoured to have formed roots and relations that embraced me throughout this journey as I found and created a new home.

Currently I live on the shores of Sturgeon Bay on Lake Winnipeg in Dauphin River First Nation. This is my partner's community, and I am grateful to Dauphin River for welcoming me over the last six years. Most of my unlearning of colonial rhetoric around the non-agency of *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human has taken place around Dauphin River. I carry these teachings with me and centre these relations. I thank them for allowing me to reignite our relationships. In 2024, I attended ceremony and was gifted a new name. Within Anishinaabe teachings, names may change as people grow into new responsibilities, continue along their paths, or complete the

¹² Niigaan Sinclair, *Wînipêk: Visions of Canada from an Indigenous Centre* (McClelland & Stewart, 2024), 17.

¹³ Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair and Warren Cariou, Introduction to *Manitowapow: Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water*, ed. Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair and Warren Cariou (Highwater Press, 2011), 4.

work connected to an earlier name.¹⁴ I was gifted the name of *Mashkikiiwikwe*, Sturgeon Medicine Woman. Accompanied with my name, were the responsibilities I now hold. I was told I have a responsibility to remove the harmful influences that make our people sick. Once those harmful influences have been removed, I was taught I must replace it with good medicine, things that will make our people healthy. I am honoured to carry the teachings that come with this name. In the teachings shared with me, Anishinaabe names help keep us safe, and provide protection. I carry those responsibility and teaching throughout this work and beyond.

Being in relation with and embodying Anishinaabe teachings transformed my vision for this project. This research was informed by fishing and swimming in Lake Winnipeg, travelling through Manitowapow, visiting with friends and family across Turtle Island, and both laughing and crying with my co-lab *Iapi Debwewin Aanssamb*. I was given strength to continue this work by attending ceremony with strong *kwe*, driving back home from Wînipêk, picking berries on the side of the road, helping my partner with his land-based trainings, and taking part in a pottery class taught by KC Adams, taken with my dear friend Ashley Daniels. I felt supported in this work when I picnicked with my dad, brother, and our partners beside the ocean and when climbing a mountain with my mum. While these memories informed this project, they happened as I was learning to be a good auntie, friend, sister, cousin, daughter, mentor, and *kwe*. In each moment I picked up my responsibilities. This work was not developed without my relations and lived experiences. I extend my deepest gratitude to Creator for guiding me on this journey.

It was important to me that I could approach this work in a good way to honour the gifts I would receive and share. Prior to visiting and writing, I attended a Cedar Bath ceremony conducted by *kwewag* to support my healing, provide me strength, and help remove self-doubt, trauma, and negative thoughts. I again extend my gratitude to the grandmothers who came to pray and help me during this time. This was an important step to embody *ode'imîn* governance and honour my roles and responsibilities. I share this to position myself in relation to this work and to demonstrate how this dissertation recognizes the agency of *kwewag* who have come before me. They undoubtedly have taught me to do this work in a good way, as *Mashkikiiwikwe*. This dissertation is a culmination of my experiences, of tears shed, laughter shared, and

¹⁴ Sam Laskaris, "Anishinaabe Elder Shares Teachings on Naming Ceremonies," Anishinabek News, January 16, 2024, <https://anishinabeknews.ca/2024/01/anishinaabe-elder-shares-teachings-on-naming-ceremonies/#:~:text=His%20spirit%20name%20was%20announced.some%20point%2C%E2%80%9D%20he%20said.>

encouragement received in order to share the gift of *ode'imin* governance.

***Ode'imin* Governance**

Rooted in stories, teachings, ceremony and relational accountability, this dissertation examines how governance can be restored through embodied practices that honour balance, reciprocity, care and collective responsibility. At the same time, this work recognizes that the restoration of Anishinaabe governance cannot occur without critically examining colonial and patriarchal disruption that displaces these relational systems and reshaped understandings of leadership, authority, and governance within Anishinaabe communities. This critique of patriarchy reflects my perspectives and responsibilities to my relations. It is written in recognition of the ways colonialism and patriarchy continue to shape our governance structures and community relationships. I gather strength for this work from the matriarchs, grandmothers, aunties, and cousins who have come before me and confronted colonial gender violence within Indigenous communities. This is not a call out directed at any one individual, nor is it an argument that all men take part in gendered violence or dispossession. Rather it is an analysis of how patriarchy is now embedded within Anishinaabe governance systems. This critique is not just about whether Anishinaabe men honour women, but about how structures and systems are organized to privilege patriarchy. Healing requires acknowledging and addressing the ways gendered violence is perpetuated within these systems.

This dissertation demonstrates the ways in which patriarchy has been embedded within contemporary Anishinaabe systems of governance and leadership through ongoing processes of colonialism, assimilation and heteropatriarchal state intervention. While Anishinaabe governance systems were historically grounded in relationality, balance and reciprocity and responsibilities to one another, colonial policies and institutions disrupted these governance structures by imposing a patriarchal and hierarchical model of leadership. These layered colonial processes displaced *kwewag* from governance roles and altered how leadership, authority and decision making came to be understood within the Anishinaabe Nation. I therefore examine how implicit patriarchal norms continue to disrupt balance and contribute to the dispossessions of *kwewag* within governance systems today.¹⁵ In response I developed a governance framework grounded

¹⁵ Throughout this dissertation, I use the Anishinaabemowin word for women (*kwewag*) and girl (*kwe*) when the context is explicitly Anishinaabe. When speaking more broadly, I use women.

in *ode'imín* teachings that centres *kwewag* voices, ceremonies, relationships and responsibilities. *Ode'imín* governance rejects colonials and patriarchal approaches to governance by refusing hierarchy, heteronormativity and domination as organizing principles. Instead, it is rooted in relationality accountability, care, reciprocity, and collective responsibilities. Informed by stories, teachings, ceremonies, and visiting, seven governing principles establish the framework of *ode'imín* governance. These principles are embodied practices that guide Anishinaabeg decision-making and governance responsibilities. The framework emphasizes relationality, accountability, trust, knowledge transmission and production, care, belonging, and body sovereignty. *Ode'imín* governance demonstrates how Anishinaabe futurities are not only imagined futures but can be enacted in the present when we actively uphold our roles and responsibilities to another and to the Anishinaabe Nation.

Throughout this dissertation, I use Nation to refer specifically to the Anishinaabe Nation encompassing communities across and beyond the Great Lakes in what is now central Canada and the northern United States as well as the collective, political relational, spiritual and territorial responsibilities that connect Anishinaabeg across communities. I draw on the language of Nation as articulated by Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford Lytle who explain that Nationhood implies “a process of decision making that is free and uninhabited within the community, a community in fact that is almost completely insulated from external factors as it considers its possible options.”¹⁶ In this sense, Nation reflects Anishinaabe sovereignty, the right to be who we are through our relationships, teachings and ceremonies. Additionally, I use the language of kin to recognize my responsibilities to relations beyond my immediate family. Kinship encompasses my responsibilities within my family, community and Nation and has shaped who I am through ceremony and teachings.

I also include Band governments or Band Councils which are distinct First Nations under the Indian Act and granted authority to govern and administer their registered members. As a result of colonial policies and government structures imposed through the Indian Act, the Anishinaabe Nation is now largely organized through Band governments that operate within this federally legislated framework. Yet, despite these imposed systems, Anishinaabe governance continues to be sustained through relational teachings, responsibilities, and practices that extend

¹⁶ Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford Lytle, *The Nations within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty*, (Pantheon Books, 1984), 13.

beyond colonial administrative structures. It is within this broader understanding of relational governance that I situate *ode'imín* governance.

Ode'mín governance emerges not only as a governance framework but also as a living teaching grounded in truth, honesty, and *ode* knowledge. The word itself presents as an Anishinaabe teaching about speaking honestly and kindly from our *ode* and leading by deep relational care. The teachings of the *ode'imín* have long been shared across Turtle Island, reminding us of our responsibilities to care for one another and to nurture systems rooted in balance and belonging. In this sense, *ode'imín* governance reflects a way of relating that rejects colonial hierarchies and instead centres interdependence, accessibility, and collective well-being.

I am honoured to contribute what the *ode'imín* has taught me through this work. While writing, I came across the work of Kanien'kehá:ka artist Alisha Parks, who painted the “Gifts of the Heart Berry.” Parks describes their work by explaining that, “we can understand the heart berry plant as the collective community of Indigenous students with disability, allies, support, and accessibility tools.”¹⁷ She further details how each component of “Gifts of the Heart Berry” can “collaborate on decolonizing accessibility at Camosun College.”¹⁸ My first concept drawing of *ode'imín* governance was created in 2024, though I did not encounter Parks’s work until 2025. I am grateful to be learning alongside like-minded Indigenous scholars through the teachings of the *ode'imín*, or heart berry. I give thanks to the *ode'imín* for continuing to be a teacher to us all.

Significance

Indigenous women have always participated in political life and have long been central to governance practices.¹⁹ In my own life, I am fortunate to witness this governance and leadership in beading circles, through *Iapi Debwewin Aanssamb*, in conversations with my cousins, and gathering with my friends. By transforming how we understand leadership and governance, we

¹⁷ Alicia Parks, “Gifts of the Heart Berry,” 2022, The image “Gifts of the Heart Berry,” (<https://heartberrymethodology.opened.ca/the-painting/>) was painted by Alisha Parks (<https://heartberrymethodology.opened.ca/artists-bio/>) to visually represent her “Heart Berry Methodology” (<https://heartberrymethodology.opened.ca/methodology-of-the-heart-berry/>); it is used here under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license.

¹⁸ Parks, “Gifts of the Heart Berry.”

¹⁹ Cora Voyageur, *Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century: First Nations Women Chiefs*, 1st ed, (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008); Kim Anderson, “Leading By Action: Female Chiefs and the Political Landscape,” in *Restoring the Balance First Nations Women, Community, and Culture*, ed. by Éric Guimond, Madeleine Dion Stout, Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, and Inc Gibson Library Connections, (University of Manitoba Press, 2009).

can recognize leadership as something continually produced and reproduced through collective life. Governance, then, is actively created and re-created through individual and collective consensus-based decision-making. However, at present, many Indigenous governance forums recognize leadership only within Band Council structures, which ruptures relationships, accountability, trust, connection and body sovereignty. *Ode'imín* governance offers an alternative approach that is grounded in Anishinaabe ontologies and epistemologies outside the structures of the settler state of Canada, hereinafter referred to as the settler state. It functions as an accountability framework, a mechanism for healing and rebalancing our Nation, and a scholarly contribution to alternative forms of Indigenous governance.

The Gap

Over the last few decades, scholars in the fields of Indigenous feminism²⁰ and Indigenous politics²¹ have demonstrated that patriarchy, colonialism, and settler-state modes of governance are violent and harmful. Yet there has been limited Nation-specific analyses of the internalization of patriarchy. Emily Snyder (settler), John Borrows (Anishinaabe), and Val Napoleon (Cree) note that Indigenous law often fails to meaningfully consider the experiences and realities of women, addressing them only in limited ways.²² Similarly, in a co-authored report, from former chief of Hupacasath Nation and scholar Judith F. Sayers and settler scholar Kelly A. MacDonald observe that while extensive literature exists on self-government, most studies contain little to no gender analysis and instead present governance as gender-neutral, and thus remain unable to address the

²⁰ Emma LaRocque, *When the Other is Me*, (University of Manitoba Press, 2010); Cora Voyageur, “Female First Nations Chiefs and the Colonial Legacy in Canada,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 3 (2011); Robyn Bourgeois, “Perpetual State of Violence: An Indigenous Feminist Anti-Oppression Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls,” in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 2nd ed, ed. by Joyce Green, (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2017); Mary Eberts, Shelagh Day and Sharon McIvor, “Settler Colonialism in Canada: Making “Indian” Women Disappear,” in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*. 3rd ed, ed. by Gina Starblanket, (Fernwood Publishing, 2024).

²¹ Joyce Green, “Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship: Indian Women in Canada,” *Canadian journal of political science* 34, no. 4 (2001); John Borrows, *Drawing out Law: A Spirit’s Guide*, (University of Toronto Press, 2010); Emily Snyder, “Indigenous Feminist Legal Theory,” *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 26, no. 2 (2014); Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinpinesiiik Stark, “Towards a Relational Paradigm – Four Points for Consideration: Knowledge, Gender, Land, and Modernity,” in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, ed. by Micheal Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully, (University of Toronto Press, 2018).

²² Emily Snyder, John Borrows, and Val Napoleon, “Gender and Violence: Drawing on Indigenous Legal Resources,” *University of British Columbia Law Review* 48, no. 2 (2015): 602, <https://commons.allard.ubc.ca/ubclawreview/vol48/iss2/9>.

issues experienced by First Nations women.²³ This dissertation therefore examines both patriarchy within the Anishinabek Nation and the use of gender-neutral language as a dispossessive tool.

While developing the concept of *ode'imín* governance, I deeply committed to self-reflexivity and unlearning to ground myself within Anishinaabe pedagogies. *Ode'imín* governance offers a new understanding of leadership and governance that centres *kwewag* and the more-than-human through the practice of visiting and unlearning. Unlearning is necessary to remove ourselves from colonial narratives and governance structures that de-animate teachings, knowledges, relations, and lives. Cree scholar Jessica Kolopenuk describes this practice as an embodied process of “train[ing] the body/to remember how to think relationally, to know relationally, to speak relationally: *to be in relation*.”²⁴ These practices have allowed me to intentionally return to my relations and live relationally. Contextualizing this research alongside my positionality and connection to Anishinaabe ontologies grounds *ode'imín* governance within Anishinaabe *ode* knowledge. This knowledge comes from teachings, ways of being and doing, and formative experiences that instruct how we move through the world. Working from this active place of relationality and *ode* knowledge, I generated Anishinaabe theory through visiting and listening to my teachers, including the more-than-human. Through this process, I was able to dream, create, and share *ode'imín* governance.

Additionally, I engage with Indigenous scholarship and the academy to further strengthen resurgence-based practices among Indigenous thinkers. *Ode'imín* governance exists within an ecological network of “grounded normativity.”²⁵ Dene scholar Glen Coulthard and Michi Saagiig Nishinaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson define grounded normativity as knowledge, generated by these place-based practices and associated knowledge ... it is the base of our political systems, economy, and nationhood, and it creates process-centered modes of living that generate profoundly different conceptualizations of nationhood and governmentality – ones that aren't based on enclosure, authoritarian power, and hierarchy.²⁶

²³ Judith F. Sayers et al. *First Nations Women, Governance and the Indian Act: A Collection of Policy Research Reports* (Status of Women Canada, 2001), 9.

²⁴ Jessica Kolopenuk, “Miskâsowin: Indigenous Science, Technology, and Society,” *Genealogy* 4, no. 1:21 (2020): 7, <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy401002>.

²⁵ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resurgence* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 22.

²⁶ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 22.

Ode'imín governance contributes to this ethical framework of grounded normativity and invites possibilities for governance learnt from *kwewag* and the *ode'imín*. These teachings seek to restructure our Nations in support of body sovereignty and healthy spirits. This dissertation refuses to look at the settler state for answers about Anishinaabe governance and leadership, instead prioritizing trusting, generating, and reclaiming Anishinaabe knowledges and ceremonies. Leadership and governance are inherent within the Anishinaabe Nation because we are raised to know that we have the capacity to make decisions, and to generate knowledge and theory. As Simpson explains, “one has to be fully present and engaged in Nishinaabeg ways of living in order to generate knowledge, in order to generate theory ... theory is generated from the ground up.”²⁷ In this sense, each of us holds a responsibility to generate knowledge and “develop our intimate meaning” of what we witness and learn.²⁸ These experiences shape knowledge production and the transmission of knowledge.

Re-Remembering

The praxis of *ode'imín* governance invokes re-remembering teachings and ceremonies as a way of learning from the past while creating Anishinaabe futurities. We have always had and carried teachings about leadership and governance. They have instructed us to govern in a healthy way and teach us how to be strong leaders. Colonialism has made us forget these teachings and as a result they were stored away. Some of our ancestors and relatives have kept these teachings and cared for them, knowing we would return to them. Yet, these teachings have always been embodied, and we carry ancestral connections to them within our spirits. We know these teachings; we just have to re-remember them.²⁹ In the chapter, “Being Indigenous Feminists,” Gina Starblanket (Cree and Saulteaux) argues that remembering is the starting point in which “regenerating” or “revitalizing”³⁰ can begin. Starblanket explains that remembering

²⁷ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 28.

²⁸ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 28.

²⁹ While evoking this process of re-remembering, I make clear the nuance around romanticising tradition that Gina Starblanket addresses in the text, “Complex Accountabilities: Deconstructing ‘the Community’ and Engaging Indigenous Feminist Research Methods,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 42, no. 4 (2018). I instead engage with re-remembering as a way to engage and dismantle power relations that obscure Anishinaabe governance and leadership.

³⁰ Gina Starblanket, “Being Indigenous Feminists: Resurgences Against Contemporary Patriarchy,” in *Making*

informs cultural memory which moves the process of remembering beyond recalling, and instead identifies “what knowledge is relevant to the identity of a cultural group and what can be forgotten.”³¹ Thus, cultural memory demonstrates that we have the ability to determine what will contribute to our resurgence and what will be to our detriment.³² I move through this process with careful consideration of the active power dynamics and gendered violence that shape our engagement with our knowledges and teachings in order to not replicate gender binaries or hierarchal power.

Multiple scholars have discussed this process using related terminology; however, the foundation of the method remains remembering. Using both re-remembering and re-member, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou scholar, explains that the process of remembering and re-remembering can “connec[t] bodies and place and experience.”³³ Gail Baikie (Inuk) in “Indigenist and Decolonizing Memory Work Research Method” writes that “experiences are re-remembered from a decolonized and Indigenous-centred perspective. Indigenous, critical, decolonizing, anticolonial, post-colonial, and experiential knowledge theories are used in the process of interpretation.”³⁴ In “Re-Membering Our Own Power: Occaneechi Activism, Feminism, and Political Action Theories,” Marshall Jeffries³⁵ further defines re-membering as a process that “re-member[s] power rather simply making/building it ... taking the form of restoring cultural and historical knowledge, tradition, and language, as well as addressing the impacts of racism.”³⁶ Similarly, Krista Maxwell (settler), uses re-membering “to convey how the resurrection of suppressed Indigenous knowledge and practice enables social repair, reconstituting collective social bodies – families, communities, nations – by restoring connections among their members.”³⁷ Together, re-remembering and re-membering bridge

Space for Indigenous Feminism, 2nd ed, ed. Joyce Green, (Fernwood Publishing, 2017), 25.

³¹ Starblanket, “Being Indigenous Feminists,” 25.

³² Starblanket, “Being Indigenous Feminists,” 25.

³³ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. (Zed Books, 1999), 147.

³⁴ Gail Baikie, “Indigenist and Decolonizing Memory Work Research Method,” *Journal of Indigenous Social Development* 9, no. 1 (2020): 50.

³⁵ Identity unknown.

³⁶ Marshall Jeffries, “Re-Membering Our Own Power: Occaneechi Activism, Feminism, and Political Action Theories,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 36, no. 1 (2015): 163, <https://doi.org/10.5250/fronjwomestud.36.1.0160>.

³⁷ Krista Maxwell, *Indigenous Healing as Paradox: Re-Membering and Biopolitics in the Settler Colony* (University of Alberta Press, 2025), 3.

knowledges across time in ways that actively create new futures. Informed by these scholars, I use the terms interchangeably throughout the following chapters to describe learning from the past in order to create our futures in the present.

Additionally, I learn from Mvskoke scholar Laura Harjo that memory can call forth different teachings and responsibilities. She explains that the “time-space-kin envelope³⁸ can be a memory, but not solely in the sense of recalling a scene or vignette; it also provides instruction for how to be in the world, or it evokes a sense of responsibility in the person recalling the memory.”³⁹ Harjo therefore positions re-remembering as a way of recalling the personal and collective responsibilities. I draw on this understanding to give presence to responsibilities, teachings, and ceremonies that colonialism attempted to hide, yet which have nonetheless been preserved, cared for, and loved. To move this work to a place of resurgence and re-building, my chosen methods of visiting, storytelling, land-based learning, and self-reflexivity appear as embodied methodological practices through which my commitments are enacted.

The purpose of this work is to demonstrate how these teachings may help reverse the violence of colonialism and continued and ongoing gender dispossession. At the same time, re-remembering facilitates rooted, relational, and embodied forms of Anishinaabe governance and leadership. I hope readers feel included in my deliberate use of “we” and “our.” I write to give back to my relations as we collectively dream of healthy futures and recognize our entangled responsibilities to one another.⁴⁰

The More-Than-Human

Within this dissertation, I use the language of “the more-than-human” to speak about all my relations, including the cosmos, rocks, shells, rainbows, plants, trees, the four- and two-legged, the finned, the winged, and all other animate beings. *Nibi, aki*, and the more-than-human are alive and have spirit. As an Anishinaabekwe, I am deeply connected to them. They are integral and cannot be dissected from our ways of life, teachings, or ceremonies. The term more-than-human is commonly known in Indigenous academia and used by thinkers, dreamers, and

³⁸ This concept will be further defined in Chapter 3.

³⁹ Laura Harjo, *Spiral to the Stars: Mvskoke Tools of Futurity* (University of Arizona Press, 2019), 28.

⁴⁰ Lindsay Borrows and Jessica Eisen, in “Our More-Than-Human Constitutions,” *Review of Constitutional Studies* 29, no. 2 (2025), include a section which details the use of “our” in terms of relationality and non-possession.

theorists. The first recorded use of the term was in 1996 by David Abram, a settler ecologist who defines the term and explains why he used it,

[to] articulate the broad commonwealth of earthly life as a realm that manifestly includes human culture, with all our creativity, our arts, and our technology, but which also (necessarily) exceeds human culture. The phrase was intended, first and foremost, to indicate that the realm of humankind (with our culture and technology) is a subset within a larger set – that the human world is necessarily embedded within, permeated by, and indeed dependent upon the more-than-human world that exceeds it. Yet by this new phrase I also meant to encourage a new humility on the part of humankind, since the “more” could be taken not just in a quantitative but also in a qualitative sense.⁴¹

This term is now widely used, as noted by Anishinaabe scholar Lindsay Borrows and settler scholar Jessica Eisen. They explain the reason for this is due to a lack of adequate terms to describe our relations and responsibilities with whom we share a “duty of care” to.⁴² They use the term because it “effectively direct[s] readers to the set of Earthly relations we hope to invoke.”⁴³ Further, John Borrows explains

The power of more-than-humans as life-givers and teachers provides a key insight into Anishinaabe legal commitments, and this knowledge can motivate how we act. Since more-than-human beings are regarded as ancestors, they should be given respect and deference as teachers, professors, and guides. Since they precede us, and we flow from their lineage, we should regard them as our elders, grandfathers, grandmothers, and leaders.⁴⁴

Similarly to how Abram, Borrows and Eisen, and John Borrows express their regard for the more-than human, I use the term to actively be in relation with *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human. It is with the upmost respect, care, and gratitude that I bring my relations into this work. It would be impossible to consider Anishinaabe worlds without the teachers who have shown us how to live and organize ourselves.

Further, in “Learning Law from Plants,” Lindsay Borrows explains the practice and

⁴¹ David Abram, “On the Origin of the Phrase “More-than-Human,” in *More Than Human Rights: An Ecology of Law, Thought, and Narrative for Earthly Flourishing*, ed. César Rodríguez-Garavito (NYU Law, 2024), 342.

⁴² Borrows and Eisen, “Our More-Than-Human Constitutions,” 194.

⁴³ Borrows and Eisen, “Our More-Than-Human Constitutions,” 194.

⁴⁴ John Borrows, “Learning Anishinaabe Law from the Earth,” *Review of Constitutional Studies* 29, no. 2 (2025): 217.

protocol of *akinomaage*,⁴⁵ which they describe as “teachings from the earth.”⁴⁶ Borrows contextualizes this for the practice of generating law; however, I find it useful to explain my methodology. My methods center learning how to structure governance and leadership through witnessing the *ode’imin*.⁴⁷ I look forward to sharing future discussions on the importance of learning from *aki, nibi*, and the more-than-human as this discourse continues to emerge.

A Note on Traditions

This dissertation discusses the important practice of learning Anishinaabe teachings and ceremonies from the past to support our present and futures. Simpson highlights the necessity of re-creating the cultural and political flourishing of the past to support the well-being of our contemporary citizens. It means reclaiming the fluidity around our traditions, not the rigidity of colonialism; it means encouraging the self-determination of individuals within our national and community-based contexts.⁴⁸

For Simpson, this work involves continually partaking in world building practices despite colonialism and its violent structures and means our futures are defined by our sovereignty. *Ode’imin* governance takes up this call and contributes to resurgence efforts by creating and sustaining a relational approach to rebuilding leadership and governance systems grounded in Anishinaabe teachings, stories, ceremonies, and knowledges. At the same time, I want to make clear that relying on certain knowledges or practices because they are framed as “traditional” can reproduce harm. Stó:lō writer Lee Maracle shares that tradition can be used to operationalize oppressive behaviour from Indigenous men.⁴⁹ Similarly, in “Skirting the Issues: Indigenous Myths, Misses, and Misogyny,” Cree scholar Alex Wilson explains that teachings about gender are often presented in rigid and exclusionary ways. Wilson notes that some traditional teachings taught to youth can normalize and reinforce patriarchal power dynamics such as women not being able to touch the drum, it is only men who hold that privilege.⁵⁰ Such teachings regulate and

⁴⁵ Lindsay Borrows, “Learning Law from Plants,” *Review of Constitutional Studies* 29, no. 2 (2025): 445.

⁴⁶ L. Borrows, “Learning Law from Plants.”

⁴⁷ L. Borrows, “Learning Law from Plants,” 446.

⁴⁸ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (ARP Books, 2011), 51.

⁴⁹ Lee Maracle, *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism* (Press Gang, 1996), 21.

⁵⁰ Alex Wilson, “Skirting the Issues: Indigenous Myths, Misses, and Misogyny,” in *Keetsahnak: Our Missing and*

police the bodies of women, Two Spirit, transgender and gender-diverse people while privileging men under the guise of traditions. Wilson further cautions that “binary construction of gender, risks further marginalization of Two-Spirit, transgender, and other LGBTQ Indigenous people, and generates confusion about what constitutes tradition.”⁵¹

In my use of *kwewag*, I do not intend to exclude Two-Spirit, gender-diverse, or transgender kin. Instead, I approach *kwewag* through a fluid understanding that refuses rigid colonial binaries of gender. My use of “tradition” and “traditional” aligns with the hopes of Kim Anderson (Métis) who describes tradition as a way of “creat[ing] a new world out of the best of the old”⁵² while also “protect[ing] our own teachings, lest they reappear as patriarchy with an Indigenous face.”⁵³ I therefore attempt⁵⁴ not to reproduce harm by invoking tradition uncritically, but rather to engage teachings and stories as supportive lessons and guiding principles for healthy futures.

Important Explanations

This dissertation focuses on Anishinaabe *kwewag* because of my relationality and positionality. I do not represent all *kwewag*, nor wish to speak on behalf of others. The theories and reflections offered here are my own. Throughout the following chapters I speak more broadly about the position of First Nations women under the Indian Act and Band Council governance systems. I also use the term “Indigenous” to reflect the ways in which the settler state continues to enact genocide against all Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit kin, and gender-diverse kin.⁵⁵ I stand in solidarity with all Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender-diverse kin across Turtle Island and beyond, whose body sovereignty continues to be infringed upon by settler-colonial states. May our collective futures allow our spirits to live free from colonial, heteronormative, and patriarchal violence. I thank those who have come before

Murdered Indigenous Sisters, ed. Kim Anderson et al. (University of Alberta Press, 2018), 162.

⁵¹ Wilson, “Skirting the Issues,” 162.

⁵² Kim Anderson, “Affirmations of an Indigenous Feminist,” in *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*, ed. Cheryl Suzack et al. (UBC Press, 2010), 89.

⁵³ Anderson, “Affirmations of an Indigenous Feminist.”

⁵⁴ I am not perfect and will make mistakes on my journey but am committed to learning, listening, and growing.

⁵⁵ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (Canada, 2019), <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>.

me and made it possible for me to continue this work toward safer futures for our relations.

Many Anishinaabe have been told the Seven Fires Prophecy. Long ago, seven prophets came to the Anishinaabeg and shared with them seven predictions. Each one carried instructions about how the people should respond to what was to come.⁵⁶ One of the prophecies informed the Anishinaabeg that a sickness, namely, colonialism, would come and upset the balance. As a result, ceremonies and teachings were hidden from sight but protected in memory.⁵⁷ As each fire was lit, its prophecy came true. We are now in the Seventh Fire, known as a time, when a new people emerge. According to the prophecy, this time will bring “a rebirth of the Anishinaabe nation and a rekindling of old flames.”⁵⁸ Simpson explains that the role of the new people is to “revi[ve] our language, philosophies, political and economic traditions, our ways of knowing, and our culture.”⁵⁹ But during this fire there is a choice. There are two paths that emerge: one path leads to destruction and hardship, and the other leads to lighting the eighth fire, the eternal fire of peace.⁶⁰ A decision must also be made by the settler state to decolonize and restore nation-to-nation relationships.⁶¹ The work we do now, as the new people, can lead us to the lighting of the eighth fire. Knowing this, I take up the necessary work and follow the instructions given to honour my responsibilities and re-remember and embody *ode’imin* governance. In addition to addressing colonial settler-state violence, I also examine the ways in which our own Nation have been complicit in gendered dispossession and disappearance. I approach this work during a tender time where our Nation must choose a path to follow and awaken from the sleep induced by colonialism.⁶² Yet I also hold that our teachings and ceremonies have never been fully forgotten or dispossessed. Because they have been cared for, and loved, they have remained with us, resting. What is now required is the active revitalizing and re-remembering of these

⁵⁶ Edward Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 89.

⁵⁷ Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book* 91.

⁵⁸ Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book*, 93.

⁵⁹ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Oshkimaadiziig, the New People,” in *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations*, ed. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (ARP Books, 2008), 14.

⁶⁰ Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book*, 93.

⁶¹ Indigenous feminist scholars have engaged with decolonization and the extent in which the settler state can take part while they continuing to perpetuate contemporary colonial harm and gendered violence and focusing instead of historical violence. For more reading see: Sherry Pictou, “Decolonizing Decolonization: An Indigenous Feminist Perspective on the Recognition and Rights Framework,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 119, no. 2 (2020): 371-91; Robyn Bourgeois, “Perpetual State of Violence: An Indigenous Feminist Anti-Oppression Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls,” in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 3rd ed, ed. by Gina Starblanket, (Fernwood Publishing, 2024).

⁶² Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book*, 93.

knowledges so that we may continue to support and care for our relations.

Structure

While this dissertation is written in academic prose, the research I conducted is a relational engagement with primary and secondary sources, including visiting with the more-than-human, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, and practising self-reflexivity. It is an experience and process of unlearning and learning to think, theorize, dream, love, and exist within Anishinaabe worlds. These relational engagements are rooted within a deep love and care for *aki, nibi*, the more-than-human, ancestors past, present, and, future, and all my relations. These relations will forever exist off the pages of this work and be with me as I try to walk on a good path.

The questions that guided this relational engagement are as follows:

1. What were the roles of Anishinaabe women in their Nation prior to colonialism?
What relationships did they hold to leadership and governance?
2. Are Anishinaabe women still being excluded from Anishinaabe law and governance outside of settler-state frameworks, and if so, why?
3. To what extent are the challenges facing Anishinaabe Nations today connected to the assumption that governance is, or should be, gender-neutral?
4. Finally, what might Anishinaabe governance look like in the future? And does a viable Anishinaabe model of governance need to replicate the settler-state model in order for both Anishinaabeg Nations and the settler state to co-exist?

I seek to respond to these questions as I walk through the following five seasons and embody their lessons to centre my relations and learn from them.⁶³

Ziigwan, chapter 2, is written in two distinct sections. The first, “The Not-So-Strange Disappearance of *Kwe*,” demonstrates how settler-state legislation and policies seek to disappear Indigenous women because of their inherent connection to land and their political orders.⁶⁴ This

⁶³ While visiting with my cousins, we discussed how to start writing and organizing chapters. They suggested I consider writing each chapter as a season. *Chi-miigwech* my cousins – you mean the world to me (see forthcoming article: Hope Ace, Ashley Wacanta Daniels, Sarah Hourie, and Payton Whitehead, “A Cohort of Cousin Care: Building Radical Indigenous Graduate Student Networks Beyond Institutional Worlds,” *Wicazo Sa Review*).

⁶⁴ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resurgence* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Robyn Bourgeois, “Generations of Genocide: The Historical and Sociological Context of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls,” in *Keetsahnak: Out Missing and*

analysis shows why there is a need to center *kwewag* in leadership and governance.⁶⁵ The second portion of the chapter is a literature review which draws upon the work of scholars from political studies, law, Indigenous feminism and Indigenous studies to walk through four key frameworks: Indigeneity and political orders, sovereignty, gender, and horizontal power. This season becomes a stepping stone to the next chapters, rooting the need for *ode'imín* governance.

Welcoming *niibin*,⁶⁶ I share my third chapter, “The Reawakening.” It is an analysis of eighty-one resolution reports from the Anishinabek Nation and a submission to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. I demonstrate how patriarchy can conceal itself as gender-neutral, which fosters the exclusion and disappearance of *kwewag* in the Nation. I argue that patriarchy is an unmistakable factor in the unhealthy decisions our Nations are making because of colonialism. The reawakening of this violent reality allows us to re-remember our teachings and ceremonies to transform our leadership and governance.

*Dagwaagi*⁶⁷ calls upon us to do hard work before a time of rest in preparation for *biboon*. Chapter 4, “Planting Patches to Restore Our Relationships,” details Indigenous methodologies I used to engage, learn, listen, and grow. I emphasize the importance of visiting, storytelling, and learning from the land. I experienced this project through interacting with a myriad of relations and was entrusted with the gifts of stories and teachings from the *ode'imín*, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers. I detail my experience of visiting and spending time with the *ode'imín* and engaging in a reciprocal relationship with them through the gift economy.⁶⁸ “Planting Patches to Restore Our Relationships” demonstrates my commitment to being accountable and repairing relations that have been dismantled as a result of colonialism.

Entering *biboon*, I share “*Ode'imín* Governance” in chapter 5 and detail how it was shaped from the teachings and stories learnt through visiting. The story and theorization of *ode'imín* governance is told in four parts. The first section shares various *ode'imín* teachings to

Murdered Indigenous Sisters, ed. by Kim Anderson et al., (The University of Alberta Press, 2018).

⁶⁵ This dissertation does not include an in-depth gendered analysis of the Indian Act, legal jurisprudence (e.g., *McIvor v Canada* 2009), or discuss MMIWG2S+ at length. There are many rich community and academic contributions published that I invite you to read. I honour those texts, and the advocacy of Indigenous women who have created space for this dissertation to emerge. This dissertation adds a Nation-based analysis to the literature that recognizes the enduring colonial structures of violence and heteropatriarchy that harm Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people.

⁶⁶ Summer.

⁶⁷ Fall.

⁶⁸ Robin Wall Kimmerer, *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* (Scribner, 2024), 53.

accentuate the importance of learning from the more-than-human. Included in the second section are the stories and teachings gifted to me throughout my visits with Elders and Knowledge Keepers. In the third portion of the chapter, I engage with academic discourse regarding coming-of-age ceremonies, Anishinaabe governance, and relationality. In the final section, I offer my contribution of a new, contemporary framework of governance. I describe the seven components that holistically and cyclically create *ode'imín* governance, demonstrating how the roots, vines, stem, flower, seeds, heart, and leaf are each a distinctive piece of embodied Anishinaabe leadership and governance.

After spending thirteen moons engaging in Anishinaabe thought, *ziigwan* returns. I summarize my hopes, and dreams for *ode'imín* governance in chapter 6, “Anishinaabe Futurities.” *Ziigwan* details my practice of unlearning as I share the truth of how I imagined this dissertation. Chapter 6 includes a discussion of how we ended up in an unhealthy way as a result of colonialism. Additionally, it includes my vision of healthy Anishinaabe futures as I describe the application and use of *ode'imín* governance.

In my concluding chapter 7 “Re-Planting the *Ode'imín Miinikaanan*,” I offer my final reflections. I do so to facilitate dreams of hope, care, and love for our ancestors past, present, and-future, so that we know a deep sense of belonging. *Ode'imín* governance is a tool to re-remember and maintain the balance that was lost with colonialism.

Before You Begin

As you engage with the words, stories, teachings, and findings throughout this dissertation, I invite you to join me in envisioning a Nation place-based world, grounded in relationality, responsibility and collective care. Within this world, we actively nurture and support leaders who are healthy and accountable, and capable of making grounded decisions that protect the well-being of our kin and communities. I close this introductory chapter as I began it, with a song from Ojibwe writer Marcie R. Rendon’s *Anishinaabe Songs for a New Millennium*. Together, may we continue to work on replanting the *ode'imín miinikaanan*.⁶⁹

*Dropping seeds / for next year’s beauty / water flows / flower grows / pain erased
with nature’s healing.*⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Strawberry seeds.

⁷⁰ Rendon, *Anishinaabe Songs for a New Millennium*, 34.

Chapter 2:

Ziigwan: The Not-So-Strange Disappearance of Kwe

While writing this commentary on the history of Indigenous women, I was surrounded by other Anishinaabe *kwewag* who had gathered to work on their respective graduate school projects. In those moments, we shared food, laughter, and stories of navigating graduate school as Anishinaabe *kwewag*. We reflected on what it meant to be on the University of Manitoba's Fort Garry Campus, figuratively and physically. We exchanged family stories and history, and we even talked about taking a vacation together. This sense of unity, created through conversation, memory, and laughter, generated a strength that continues to sustain me. For that strength, I am thankful. That feeling of collective renewal reminds me of *ziigwan*.

When I was little, every *ziigwan* my family would go to the *iskigamizigan*⁷¹ to visit with the *mitig*.⁷² We would eat pancakes smothered in maple syrup, share stories, play, and laugh – it was a time when we were all brought together. Now in *ziigwan*, during this time of re-emergence, I travel more frequently to see friends and family who I had not visited over *biboon*. I watch as the ice breaks up on the shores of Lake Winnipeg and the bush unveils itself after a snowy rest. *Ziigwan* carries with her the promise of new possibilities. Yet that renewal is never effortless: to arrive at *ziigwan*, you have to make it through *biboon*. Seasonal movement, then, is not only environmental, but also pedagogical. It teaches us about endurance, responsibility, and return.

One of my favourite stories that captures this teaching comes from *The Gift Is in the Making: Anishinaabe Stories*, by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. In this story, Nanabush arrives to visit with the Nishinaabeg during *ziigwan*. But when he arrives, he cannot find them. He searches for a long time before finally discovering them lying beneath the *ninaatigoog*⁷³ with their mouths wide open, allowing the sap to flow into them.⁷⁴

What unsettles Nanabush is not only their stillness, but what it represents. As retold by Simpson, he worries that “[t]hey’re getting soft in the mind, not thinking ahead, not looking ahead.”⁷⁵ The concern is not about rest, it is about the abandonment of responsibility. Nanabush

⁷¹ Sugar bush.

⁷² Trees.

⁷³ Maple trees.

⁷⁴ L. Simpson, *The Gift Is in the Making*, 85–87.

⁷⁵ L. Simpson, *The Gift Is in the Making*, 88.

seeks out Nokomis,⁷⁶ who teaches him how to make sugar water. He then returns to wake the Nishinaabeg and shares what he has learned. He reminds them that they are loved that they carry responsibilities, and that they are cared for. He offers what Simpson calls his “heart knowledge.”⁷⁷ This story teaches that the sweetness of *ziigwan* is not meant to be consumed passively. It must be made. And in that making, relationships are renewed. The labour of transforming sap into sugar water is more than a technical task; it is a relational practice that requires attentiveness, reciprocity, and collective responsibility. The gift *ninaatigoog* is not meaningful through extraction alone, its gift requires care, established through relationships. In this sense, making is a form of governance. It is the process through which obligations are remembered, knowledge is shared across generations, and through which communities enact their responsibilities to one another and to the more-than-human world. *Ziigwan* therefore teaches that renewal is not something that simply arrives with the season. It emerges through the ongoing work of sustaining relationships, fulfilling responsibilities, and participating in the collective practices that allow life to flourish.

When I first heard this story, I began to wonder whether we, too, have been positioned beneath those *ninaatigoog*. Colonial patriarchal systems have cultivated forms of dependency that distance us from our responsibilities to ourselves, our families, our clans, or communities, and the more-than-human relations that sustain us. These systems often encourage consumption without reciprocity, severing the connections between gifts and the obligations that accompany them. If, as Simpson writes, “They [Nishinaabeg] know that the real gift was in the making, and that, without love, making just wasn’t possible,”⁷⁸ then what happens when colonial systems interrupt that making? What happens when the practices through which responsibilities are learned, enacted, and renewed are interrupted? It is within this space of interruption and the ongoing efforts to restore relational forms of making and governance that this chapter is situated.

This literature review travels across disciplines and connects diverse ideologies, theories, and voices to identify persistent gaps in the scholarship regarding Anishinaabeg governance and gender – gaps that *ode’imin* governance can help illuminate. By tracing how Indigenous women have been rendered absent in law, policy, and academic discourse, I argue that absence is not an

⁷⁶ Grandmother.

⁷⁷ L. Simpson, *The Gift Is in the Making*, 88–93.

⁷⁸ L. Simpson, *The Gift Is in the Making*, 93.

anomaly but a constitutive feature of colonial governance. It is for this reason that I have titled this chapter “The Not-So-Strange Disappearance of *Kwe*.”

Over the past decade I immersed myself in policy documents, scholarly literature, and legal decisions while also listening to stories, bearing witness to violence, and observing repeated obstructions of justice. Through this work, it has become increasingly clear that the disappearances and dispossession of Indigenous women are neither random nor isolated incidents. Rather, they are produced through ongoing stems of power structures that rely upon the erasure of Indigenous women to reproduce themselves.

Ziigwan teaches us that renewal requires work. It requires us to awaken, to remember our responsibilities and to engage in the work of making. This chapter begins that work by refusing disappearance as natural, inevitable or accidental. Instead, it exposes the colonial conditions that produce the disappearance as natural, inevitable, or accidental. It insists that current governance structures are neither neutral nor permanent: colonial governance has been made through practices, logics, relations, thus, it can be unmade and remade through others.

In *A Recognition of Being*, Kim Anderson draws important connections between *aki* and women. She notes that early settler men described Indigenous women as bountiful, using language that mirrored how they spoke about Turtle Island, and *aki*.⁷⁹ However, as colonial expansions and extractive logics impulses tied to capital accumulation intensified, these depictions shifted. Indigenous women came to be viewed not as life givers or caretakers of the land, but as “accessible, less powerful, and within the grasp of the white man.”⁸⁰ Anderson argues that the colonial desires to possess and control lands was deeply intertwined with the desire to possess and control Indigenous women. As she writes, “Indigenous woman with virgin land, [were] open for consumption.”⁸¹ Through this colonial imaginary, both land and women were transformed into objects to be claimed, managed, and exploited. The exploitation of *aki* and the subjugation of Indigenous women are therefore not parallel processes but mutually constitutive ones, each reinforcing and legitimizing the other within the broader project of settler colonialism.

⁷⁹ Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* (Women’s Press, 2016), 80–81.

⁸⁰ Anderson, *A Recognition of Being*, 80.

⁸¹ Anderson, *A Recognition of Being*, 81.

This ideological pairing was not coincidental; it is foundational to colonialism. In this pivotal moment of colonization, we can trace the roots of gendered violence to the colonial belief that settlers were entitled to consume and claim both *aki* and Indigenous women. This ideology is not merely a relic of the past; it is embedded within colonialism and patriarchal power structures and shapes contemporary gendered realities.⁸² I understand the nuance surrounding this statement, while colonialism and patriarchy have intensified gendered violence, it has always existed.⁸³ Starblanket cautions attributing patriarchy exclusively to colonialism limits gender analysis within Indigenous Nations.⁸⁴ I seek to mitigate this by recognizing existing power relations⁸⁵ in my analysis and governance framework.

Audra Simpson (Kahnawà:ke), in her groundbreaking 2016 article “The State Is a Man: Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders, and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty,” extends this analysis by exposing how the settler state seeks to exploit, control, and extract from both the land and Indigenous women’s bodies.⁸⁶ Colonial institutions do not merely fail Indigenous women; they maintain their power through the normalization of gendered violence and dispossession. Together, the works of Anderson and Simpson demonstrate that settler-colonial logics are inseparable from gendered and territorial domination. The disappearance of *kwe*, therefore, is not anomalous but structurally expected within a system built on possession and erasure.

The normalization of this exploitation, dispossession, and erasure of women’s voices aligns with state-made stereotypes that reinforce oppression through racism and sexism.⁸⁷

⁸² Indigenous feminist scholars have demonstrated that patriarchy must be engaged with as a structure in which gendered violence is operationalized through. This analytic transforms engagement with colonialism and patriarchy towards theorizing it as a structural problem that permeates through legal orders, governance and resurgent efforts. For closer engagement with patriarchy as a structure see: Cheryl Suzack, “Indigenous Feminisms in Canada,” *NORA: Nordic Journal of Women’s Studies* 23, no. 4 (2015): 261-74; Emily Synder, Val Napoleon, and John Borrows, “Gender and Violence: Drawing on Indigenous Legal Resources,” *University of British Columbia Law Review* 48, no.2 (2015): 592-654; Gina Starblanket, “Being Indigenous Feminists: Resurgences Against Contemporary Patriarchy,” in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 2nd ed, ed. Joyce Green, (Fernwood Publishing, 2017); Emily Snyder, *Gender, Power, and Representations of Cree Law* (UBC Press, 2018).

⁸³ Emily Synder, Val Napoleon, and John Borrows, “Gender and Violence: Drawing on Indigenous Legal Resources,” *University of British Columbia Law Review* 48, no.2 (2015): 592-654; Christine Waaseyaa’sin Sy, “Considering Wenonah, Considering Us,” in *Keetsahnak: Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters*, ed. by Kim Anderson, Maria Campbell, Christi Belcourt, (The University of Alberta Press, 2018).

⁸⁴ Starblanket, “Being Indigenous Feminists,” 27.

⁸⁵ Starblanket, “Being Indigenous Feminists,” 27.

⁸⁶ Audra Simpson, “The State Is a Man: Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty,” *Theory and Event* 19, no. 4 (2016): 6, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/633280>.

⁸⁷ Robyn Bourgeois, “Perpetual State of Violence: An Indigenous Feminist Anti-Oppression Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls,” in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 2nd ed, ed. Joyce Green

Stereotypes such as the “Indian” princess” and the “easy sq**w,”⁸⁸ were deliberately constructed to undermine the sovereignty, authority and humanity of First Nations women while legitimizing colonial violence and control. These representations worked to diminish First Nations women’s political and social influence by restructuring families and Nations according to Euro-Western patriarchal norms and values. In doing so, colonial systems artificially elevated First Nations men within imposed hierarchies while simultaneously devaluing First Nations women. Yet First Nations men were also subjected to colonial violence and discrimination, as colonialism disrupted governance systems, kinship relations, and responsibilities for all members of the Nation. This systemic shift is explicitly reflected within colonial legislation such as the Indian Act, which legally removed women’s political voices while imposing patriarchal Band Council systems.⁸⁹ The consequences of this systemic erasure were far-reaching. It dismantled long-standing sacred political, familial, and social structures while disrupting ways of relating to one another, to the more-than-human, to *aki* and to *nibi*.

In “Victoria’s Secret: How to Make a Population of Prey,” Mary Eberts (settler) describes this erasure: “[W]omen subject to the Indian Act are doubly diminished. If they fit within its Victorian confines, they have few or no rights. If they do not become (or seem to be) docile Victorian wives, as dictated by the Act, they are branded as deviants (often prostitutes) and considered fair game for mistreatment.”⁹⁰ Eberts affirms that First Nations women are subject to multiple forms of discrimination that perpetuate their exposure to violence. She goes on to argue that “embedding that stereotype into legislation gives it the legitimacy of government approval, and in turn gives Canada an interest in its continued survival.”⁹¹ These stereotypes, reinforced through legislation, became a keystone in the colonial system.⁹² This “lock[ed] into place”⁹³ the dispossession of First Nations women and gave systemic bias force of law. However, thanks to the leadership and advocacy of First Nations women, whose efforts also advanced the legal

(Fernwood Publishing, 2017), 255.

⁸⁸ Janice Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe, *Iskwewak: Neither Indian Princesses nor Easy Squaws*, (Women’s Press, 1995), 56.

⁸⁹ Anderson, *A Recognition of Being*, 35.

⁹⁰ Mary Eberts, “Victoria’s Secret: How to Make a Population of Prey,” in *Indivisible: Indigenous Human Rights*, ed. Joyce Green (Fernwood Publishing, 2014), 144.

⁹¹ Eberts, “Victoria’s Secret,” 145.

⁹² Ryan Crosschild et al., “Awakening Buffalo Consciousness: Lessons, Theory, and Practice from the Buffalo Treaty,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 36, no. 1 (2021): 6, <https://doi.org/10.2307/48746293>.

⁹³ Crosschild et al., “Awakening Buffalo Consciousness,” 6.

rights of all women,⁹⁴ colonial legislators amended the Indian Act in 1985 to address gender-based discrimination.

Yet in “Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship: Indian Women in Canada,” Joyce Green (Ktunaxa and Métis) argues that these amendments did not require First Nations Band Councils to dismantle decades of patriarchal governance. In fact, Green reveals, certain Band governments continued to uphold pre-1985 Indian Act provisions.⁹⁵ This restricted women’s involvement in governance, reinforcing colonial narratives and policies.⁹⁶ Green raises a crucial point, perhaps the most significant one: some Band Councils chose *not* to dismantle discriminatory rules that excluded women from council. To further examine the inequality embedded in these systems, I draw from Patricia Monture-Angus (Mohawk), who demonstrates that most of the rules introduced to “protect” First Nations people following Indian Act revisions have become tools of oppression against First Nations women. She identifies this process as lateral violence, a result of internalized colonization.⁹⁷

This brief synopsis introduces how colonialism has reshaped First Nations women’s roles and responsibilities. It provides essential context for the following literature review, which explores the intersections of gender, law, and sovereignty.

Scope

This dissertation is grounded in the active refusal of dispossession and erasure of Anishinaabe political orders, along with the marginalization of *kwewag*’s roles and responsibilities within these systems. It resists the ongoing attempts to sever the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and relationality between Anishinaabe *aki* and bodies. *Ode’imin* governance as a framework is intended to reveal the true nature of *kwewag* roles and responsibilities in leadership, beyond the distortions imposed by colonial structures, such as patriarchy, by centring Anishinaabe intellectual traditions and ceremonies.

This literature review provides the intellectual foundation for this work. It draws on both Indigenous and settler scholars across multiple disciplines, including political studies, law,

⁹⁴ Patrica Monture-Angus, *Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks* (Fernwood, 1995), 137.

⁹⁵ Joyce Green, “Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship: Indian Women in Canada,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 34, no. 4 (2001): 723, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423901778067>.

⁹⁶ Green, “Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship,” 723.

⁹⁷ Monture-Angus, *Thunder in My Soul*, 135.

Indigenous feminism, and Indigenous studies. A range of historical and contemporary texts have guided my thinking, offering critical insights, grounding concepts, and creating pathways for further exploration. These texts are not only academic references but intellectual companions, shaping how I understand the intersections of colonialism, gender, and governance.

This dissertation is anchored in four main schools of thought - Indigeneity and political orders, sovereignty, gender and horizontal power. Each of these have served as core pedagogies, collectively informing my analysis of how colonialism and patriarchy intersect to erode Anishinaabe political structures. They highlight the need for a framework that recenters Anishinaabe intelligence and responsibilities.

As I noted in chapter 1, much of this work was written in a fishing community near Lake Winnipeg. While nets were set, lifted, and cleaned, I reflected on the intellectual labour behind this dissertation. I envision this literature review as one of those nets: capturing the ideas and scholarship that circulate through this field of inquiry. Yet as with any net, some things slip through. My contribution, *ode'imín* governance, speaks to what has thus far eluded the net – the knowledges, relationships, and forms of governance that remain insufficiently gathered into this body of scholarship and that must now be carried forward.

My responsibilities have been guided by the definition of sovereignty offered by Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe). In “Changing the Treaty Question: Remediating the Right(s) Relationship,” Stark grounds the word “sovereignty” in the term *ezhi-ogimaawaadizid*, which translates as “[to] act in a way that recognizes those who I am responsible for.”⁹⁸ Stark defines sovereignty as something innate to Anishinaabe people. The meaning of “Anishinaabe” is an expression of sovereignty. She explains this when she states, “[Anishinaabe is] who we are as a people, how we see ourselves in the very essence of our sovereignty.”⁹⁹ Sovereignty, then, is not something conferred externally by the settler state; it is embedded within Anishinaabe existence. It is expressed through relational responsibility, body sovereignty, and one’s obligation to Nation. This dissertation takes up that understanding. It is both an exercise of sovereignty and a responsibility I hold to my Nation.

⁹⁸ Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, “Changing the Treaty Question: Remediating the Right(s) Relationship,” in *The Right Relationship: Reimagining the Implementation of Historical Treaties*, ed. John Borrows and Michael Coyle (University of Toronto Press, 2017), 265.

⁹⁹ Stark, “Changing the Treaty Question,” 265.

Together, my research questions guide this literature review and orient the intellectual and relational labour of nurturing *ode'imín* governance. The rest of this chapter unfolds in four sections following the themes identified above: (1) Indigeneity and Political Orders, (2) Sovereignty, (3) Gender, and (4) Horizontal Power. Moving through these themes, I draw explicit connections to *ode'imín* governance as both an analytic framework and a praxis. By weaving together theoretical insights, critical discussions, and interdisciplinary scholarship, this chapter establishes the intellectual terrain from which *ode'imín* governance emerges, not as abstraction but as necessary intervention shaped by lived, legal, and relational realities.

Indigeneity and Political Orders

This literature begins by examining how the settler-state has constructed and maintained particular understandings of Indigeneity. Within this dissertation, I distinguish between lived Indigenous selfhood and the settler state's construction of Indigeneity. My use of Indigeneity refers specifically to the version produced by the settler state as politicized, racialized, and often dangerous or violent body marred through colonial stereotypes and governance structures. Before engaging the literature review on sovereignty, gender, and horizontal power, it is necessary to first understand the structures through which settler colonialism operates and sustains itself.

Colonial Constructions of Indigeneity

Central to my analysis of patriarchy within Anishinaabe governance systems, I must first identify the ways in which Indigenous bodies have been made and unmade through colonial structures, norms, and values. In *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* Goenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson demonstrates how possessive logics function as a theoretical framework that reiterates and normalizes “the nation-state’s ownership, control, and domination.”¹⁰⁰ These logics depend on the permanence of settler narratives that define and regulate Indigenous existence. Within this framework, Indigenous bodies are represented primarily as political threats to the security of settler structures. Possessive logics therefore establish not only a dominant/subordinate relationship but also normalizes the settler

¹⁰⁰ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), xii.

states assumed right to control and possess Indigenous land and bodies, which it positions as subordinate. Moreton-Robinson clarifies this, stating, “possession can mean control over one’s being, ideas, one’s mind, one’s feelings, and one’s body.”¹⁰¹ Through hierarchical power relations maintained by settler colonialism, Indigenous bodies are continuously produced through performative norms that determine who can be recognized as Indigenous and under what conditions. In the text *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw) engages with Indigeneity as a “transit” in which movement is required¹⁰² that distorts settler narratives of legitimacy. Indigeneity as a disruptive indicator to the settler state is reaffirmed in Maile Arvin’s (Kanaka Maoli) text “Analytics of Indigeneity.” Arvin engages with Indigeneity as its “historical and contemporary effects of colonial and anticolonial demands and desires related to a certain land or territory and the various displacements of that place’s original or longtime inhabitants.”¹⁰³ Further expanding on this definition, Arvin explains that Indigeneity can be an analytic to understand settler narratives that disappear Indigenous people from their settler narratives and futures.¹⁰⁴ As an analytic is challenges predominant constraints on Indigenous ways of being to acknowledge “power relations that continue to write indigenous peoples as always vanishing.”¹⁰⁵ Coming to understand Indigeneity through a myriad of power relations provides conceptual space to unpack how colonial power works not only through the regulation of land and governance but also through the governance of Indigenous identity itself as a constant procedure of regulating such orders.

Consequently, we must reclaim our own desires and identities and ways of being outside of the state classificatory frameworks in order to resist the ongoing processes through which Indigenous life is defined, managed and erased. I see this most visibly within Anishinaabe governance models under the Indian Act. We must recognize the rhetoric of our bodies and the ways settler colonial narratives construct reductive and distorting representations of Indigenous peoples and political life.

¹⁰¹ Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 49.

¹⁰² Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xv.

¹⁰³ Maile Arvin, “Analytics of Indigeneity,” in *Native Studies Keywords*, ed. Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle H. Raheja (University of Arizona Press, 2015), 121.

¹⁰⁴ Arvin, “Analytics of Indigeneity,” 126

¹⁰⁵ Arvin, “Analytics of Indigeneity,” 126.

Indigeneity, recognized by the settler state, is a non-consensual political construction. Its political character is established through the assumed sovereignty of the settler state and its authority to define, regulate and recognize Indigenous peoples. Scholars such as Audra Simpson, Leanne Simpson, Aaron Mills (Anishinaabe), and Monture-Angus demonstrate that the settler state's sovereignty depends on the political construction and subsequent marginalization of Indigenous peoples and their governing orders.¹⁰⁶ Mills explains that settler state constrains how Indigenous peoples can act politically and how others are permitted to relate to them.¹⁰⁷ He argues that this narrative imposition constitutes the first violence enacted by the settler state against Indigenous Peoples. This violence targets individuals' bodies, minds, hearts, and spirits.¹⁰⁸ The state's construction of Indigenous identity have been produced and regulated through settler colonial frameworks that seek to normalize state authority while displacing Indigenous governance, law and nationhood.¹⁰⁹ However, as Leanne Simpson explains, "Indigenous bodies, Indigenous sovereignties and Indigenous political orders prevail within and apart from settler governance."¹¹⁰ Refusing state imposed definitions and enacting Indigenous political orders, sovereignty, and body autonomy challenges the violence of settler-state governance. This dissertation is an active refusal by centering Anishinaabe governance beyond the conceptual and political limits of the settler-state and contributing to the resurgence of Anishinaabe political orders. Indigenous Peoples have not been confined to their constructed political identities; we continue to assert our sovereignty, governance, and laws as the foundation of our political identity.

¹⁰⁶ Patricia Monture-Angus, *Thunder in my Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks*, (Fernwood Publishing, 1995); Audra Simpson, "The State is a Man" Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty," *Theory & Event* 19 no. 4 (2016); Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resurgence*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Aaron Mills, "Miinigowiziwin: All That Has Been Given for Living Well Together One Vision of Anishinaabe Constitutionalism," (PhD diss. University of Victoria, 2019).

¹⁰⁷ Aaron Mills, "What Is a Treaty? On Contract and Mutual Aid," in *The Right Relationship: Reimagining the Implementation of Historical Treaties*, ed. John Borrows and Michael Coyle (University of Toronto Press, 2017), 220.

¹⁰⁸ Aaron Mills, "Miinigowiziwin: All That Has Been Given for Living Well Together – One Vision of Anishinaabe Constitutionalism," PhD diss. (University of Victoria, 2019), 4, <https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/fe7103a4-e065-4427-b8bd-042c46e40d07/content>.

¹⁰⁹ Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiiik Stark, "Transforming the Trickster: Federal Indian Law Encounters Anishinaabe Diplomacy," in *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories*, ed. Jill Doerfler et al. (Michigan State University Press, 2013), 269.

¹¹⁰ Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Duke University Press, 2014), 11.

By contrast, the political nature of white settler subjectivity often remains concealed. In “Decolonization is not a Metaphor,” Eve Tuck (Unangax̂), and K. Wayne Yang (settler) emphasize that the settler assumes a position of neutrality in opposition to Indigenous people who are “unnatural, even supernatural.”¹¹¹ This assumption that the settler is inherently natural to this place, and its structures further entrenches constructed power relations within the settler state. Moreover, Moreton-Robinson argues that the state purposefully does not recognize the polity of white bodies because of the continuous naturalization of their identities within the settler subconscious.¹¹² As a result, settler political identity appears universal, neutral and unmarked, while Indigenous peoples are rendered perpetually political and subject to state scrutiny. The normative narrative of settler colonialism positions Indigenous peoples as political alternatives that threatens settler futurity. Consequently, the possessive logics of patriarchal white sovereignty require Indigenous peoples to be continuously categorized, measured and validated through regulatory mechanisms and disciplinary knowledges.¹¹³ Moreton-Robinson encourages challenging the possessive logics of settler colonialism, as it “disavow[s] and dispossess[es] the Indigenous subject of an ontology that exists outside the logic of capital, by always demanding our inclusion within modernity on terms that it defines.”¹¹⁴ Indigenous bodies are juxtaposed with the invisible norm of whiteness,¹¹⁵ which permeates societal and structural power relations. Exposing the political nature of all bodies is therefore essential to understanding both the violence of settler colonialism and the ongoing threats that settler political authority poses to Indigenous bodies, lands, and governance.

Settler Colonial Narratives

The settler state has long relied on legitimizing narratives to justify its occupation of Indigenous lands while silencing Indigenous voices and political authority. These narratives sustain settler-colonial structures of privilege, power, and capital accumulation by naturalizing the state’s claims to land and sovereignty. More than mere stories, they operate as ideological

¹¹¹ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang. “Decolonization is not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 6.

¹¹² Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin’ Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism*, 3rd ed. (University of Minnesota Press, 2021), 33.

¹¹³ Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 191.

¹¹⁴ Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 191.

¹¹⁵ Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin’ Up to the White Woman*, xxv.

and political instruments that reproduce colonial sovereignty while disrupting and reshaping Indigenous political orders.¹¹⁶ Through the construction and regulation of Indigenous identities, these narratives facilitate the erosion of Indigenous governance and normalize colonial institutions as the dominant frameworks of governance. As Kim Anderson, Audra Simpson, Leanne Simpson, and Robyn Bourgeois (Cree) demonstrate, settler sovereignty is inseparable from the dispossession of Indigenous lands and the ongoing suppression of Indigenous jurisdiction and self-determination.¹¹⁷

Further elaborating on these legitimizing strategic narratives Dale Turner (Anishinaabe) and Chris Andersen (Métis) emphasize the central role that narratives of discovery, conquest, and settler-state nationhood play within the Canadian political imagination.¹¹⁸ Monture-Angus, Mills, and John Borrows extend this critique by demonstrating how these narratives are institutionalized through colonial law and reproduced through mechanisms of state recognition and regulation.¹¹⁹ Kevin Bruyneel (settler) further argues that Indigenous nationhood continually unsettles settler claims to belonging, sovereignty and political legitimacy.¹²⁰ Collectively, this scholarship demonstrates that the settler state relies on ongoing processes of self-legitimization to justify its occupation of Indigenous lands and its assertion of political authority. In turn, state sanctioned constructions of Indigenous identity are continually reproduced to define Indigenous peoples and Nations according to colonial categories, logics and institutions, thereby constraining Indigenous people's political existence within the terms established by the settler state.

¹¹⁶ Kiera L. Ladner et al., "Oh Canada, Your Home's on Native Land: Narratives of the Missing in a Multicultural Home," in *Assessing Multiculturalism in Global Comparative Perspective*, ed. Yasmeen Abu-Laban et al (Routledge, 2022), 205–6, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003197485-17>.

¹¹⁷ Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, (Women's Press: 2016); Audra Simpson, "The State is a Man" Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty," *Theory & Event* 19 no. 4 (2016); Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resurgence*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Robyn Bourgeois, "Generations of Genocide: The Historical and Sociological Context of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls," in *Keetsahnak: Out Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters*, ed. by Kim Anderson et al., (The University of Alberta Press, 2018).

¹¹⁸ Dale A. Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy*. (University of Toronto Press, 2006); Chris Andersen, "Métis:" *Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood*, (UBC Press, 2014).

¹¹⁹ Patricia Monture-Angus, *Thunder in my Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks*, (Fernwood Publishing, 1995); John Borrows, *Recovering Canada: The Resurgence of Indigenous Law* (University of Toronto Press, 2002); Aaron Mills, "Miinigowiziwin: All That Has Been Given for Living Well Together One Vision of Anishinaabe Constitutionalism," (PhD diss. University of Victoria, 2019).

¹²⁰ Kevin Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xii.

Normalization of Violence and Disappearance

Building the literature on colonial narratives and their role in legitimizing settler sovereignty, Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt (Cree), in their book *Storying Violence: Unravelling Colonial Narratives in the Stanley Trial*, demonstrate how settler-state narratives facilitate Indigenous dispossession while normalizing and neutralizing Indigenous deaths.¹²¹ Their work extends Audra Simpson's analysis in "The State Is a Man." Simpson makes a vital contribution to the literature when she observes, "States do not always have to kill; its citizens can do that for it."¹²² This connection between the state and the body politic is necessary because it reveals how colonial power operates not only through institutions and laws but also through actions of citizens who enact and reproduce settler authority. Expanding on this insight, Starblanket and Hunt argue that the settler state's construction and regulation of Indigenous political identity contribute to a broader societal logic in which Indigenous disappearance becomes normalized. Through this process, a dangerous assumption emerges: that Indigenous Peoples can be subjected to violence with limited accountability.¹²³ The persistent absence of meaningful punitive responses often signals that violence against Indigenous people is tolerated, enabled, or rendered unremarkable within settler colonial society.

Sharing this concern, Kēhaulani Kauanui (Kanaka Maoli) explains that biopolitics "illuminates the governing of Indigenous life, death, reproduction, gender, sexuality, relation to land and property, and other sites of state power over both the physical and political bodies."¹²⁴ Kauanui's analysis exposes the expansive reach of biopolitical power and its capacity to regulate Indigenous existence across multiple dimensions of life. Such forms of governance contribute to the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples by positioning Indigenous lives as objects of management rather than expressions of sovereign political communities. Embedded within these colonial logics is the presumption that Indigenous peoples are destined for disappearance and that Indigenous humanity can be rendered invisible to settler state. Similarly, Audra Simpson

¹²¹ Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt, *Storying Violence: Unravelling Colonial Narratives in the Stanley Trial* (Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2020), 22.

¹²² A. Simpson, "The State Is a Man," 4.

¹²³ Starblanket and Hunt, *Storying Violence*, 75.

¹²⁴ Kēhaulani Kauanui, *Paradoxes of Hawaiian Sovereignty: Land, Sex, and the Colonial Politics of State Nationalism* (Duke University Press, 2018), 23.

identifies Indigenous peoples as constituting Canada's enduring "Indian Problem," framing historically justified policies of dispossession, elimination, and political containment.¹²⁵ Collectively, this scholarship demonstrates that violence is not an aberration within settler colonialism, but a structural feature sustained through colonial legal frameworks, myths, and the settler-state's body politic. These contributions reveal the breadth of systemic violence directed at Indigenous peoples and emphasizes the necessity of our own Nations to turn inwards to determine our own laws, governance systems and intellectual traditions to determine futures beyond the constraints colonial ideologies of us.

Land and Bodies

Understanding the intersection of colonial violence requires tracing the relationships among state produced Indigenous identity, *aki*, and Indigenous bodies. Similarly to Byrd and Arvin, in *Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks* Monture-Angus argues that the settler state's ongoing desire to acquire and control *aki* demonstrates the states assumed political nature of Indigeneity.¹²⁶ Leanne Simpson echoes this connection, demonstrating that Indigenous bodies and Nations are still regulated and under constant surveillance because they embody distinct political orders.¹²⁷ Simpson argues that the state's fear of Indigenous bodies stems from their representation of "alternative Indigenous political systems ... They are the embodied representation in the eyes of the colonizers of land, reproduction, Indigenous governance and political systems."¹²⁸ The settler state's usurpation of *aki* is therefore inseparable from its attempt to define, regulate and contain Indigenous peoples. This connection emphasizes the importance of Starblanket and Hunt's theory of neutralization, which demonstrates how Indigenous disappearance is believed to be warranted and, as Audra Simpson asserts, permissible. Reading through a gendered lens, these frameworks reveal the need for world-building practices that protect and sustain Indigenous political orders beyond the identities imposed by the settler state.

Building on these analyses, "Indigenous Existentialism and the Body," Hokowhitu's work on Indigenous externalism, and the body further illuminates the relationship between bodies and colonial power. Drawing on Foucault, Hokowhitu argues that the Indigenous body

¹²⁵ A. Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 156–57.

¹²⁶ Monture-Angus, *Thunder in My Soul*, 163.

¹²⁷ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 114–15.

¹²⁸ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 41.

becomes a site upon which the states attempt to impose meaning, discipline and control. This emerges as a visible reminder of the contradictions and illegitimacy embedded within settler state narratives. Hokowhitu theorizes that the body becomes something the state attempts to puppeteer.¹²⁹ Efforts to regulate Indigenous bodies reveal the states ongoing need to secure and reproduces its claims to sovereignty over *aki*. Alongside Monture-Angus, Simpson, and Hokowhitu, Starblanket reframes this dialectic through the lens of Nation-to-Nation relationships. She demonstrates how the erosion of political relationship between Indigenous Nations and the settler state is linked to the racialization and regulation of Indigenous bodies.¹³⁰ The state's claim to sovereignty relies on both the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from *aki* and the production of colonial categories through which Indigenous people are governed. Violence against Indigenous bodies is therefore not incidental but foundational to the maintenance of settler authority. As Audra Simpson argues, the settler states often rely on citizens to enact forms of violence that sustain colonial power.¹³¹ These dynamics reveal how systemic violence is justified through colonial narratives and structures that seek to normalize Indigenous dispossession. Yet the continued presence of Indigenous Nations, laws, and governance systems exposes the incompleteness of the colonial project and challenges the legitimacy of settler claims to sovereignty.

Indigenous Political Structures

State-produced Indigenous identity is operationalized through state structures such as reserves, Indian agents, and the Indian Act. These structures control and regulate Indigenous bodies and communities in ways that disrupt Indigenous political orders, law, and governance. Audra Simpson explains that such regulation is necessary for the “colonial dream” in which “fixity, control, visibility, productivity and most importantly, docility”¹³² are imposed on Indigenous bodies. Recognizing the intrusive nature of colonial aspirations, I recognize the limitations to envisioning Anishinaabe futures through frameworks that remain dependent upon

¹²⁹ Brendan Hokowhitu, “Indigenous Existentialism and the Body,” *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2, (2009): 112, <https://doi.org/10.5130/csr.v15i2.2040>.

¹³⁰ Gina Starblanket, “The Numbered Treaties and the Politics of Incoherency,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 3 (2019): 454, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423919000027>.

¹³¹ A. Simpson, “The State Is a Man, 4.

¹³² A. Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 127.

relationships with the settler-state. Scholarship on Indigenous political theory informs the place-based Nation specific approach adopted throughout this dissertation, one that rejects colonial constructions and centres Anishinaabe governance on its own terms. Further elaborating on the constraint's colonialism places upon Indigenous sovereignty, Chickasaw and Cheyenne academic Sakej James Henderson identifies the creation and subsequent regulation of Indigeneity in settler colonial states as productions. These productions prevent the application of Indigenous diplomatic laws and customs within state institutions, thus undermining Indigenous jurisdiction over *aki*, Nations, and selves.¹³³ Building from this foundation, Leanne Simpson argues that Indigenous bodies themselves constitute political orders, embodying ways of knowing and governing that actively disrupt settlement.¹³⁴ The continued presence of Indigenous peoples signifies a refusal to disappear and challenges the colonial assumptions that Indigenous Nations are destined for elimination. Glen Coulthard and Leanne Simpson advance this analysis in "Grounded Normativity / Place-Based Solidarity," where they explain that

[a]s a settler colonial power, Canada has structured its relationship to Indigenous peoples primarily through the dispossession of Indigenous bodies from Indigenous lands and by impeding and systemically regulating the generative relationships and practices that create and maintain Indigenous nationhoods, political practices, sovereignties, and solidarities.¹³⁵

For Coulthard and Simpson, the central objective of settler colonialism is the severing of relationships between peoples, lands, laws, and governance systems. Their analysis exposes the often-subtle pervasive ways colonial structures operate to dispossess Indigenous Nations and undermine political authority over *aki*.¹³⁶ This insight directs my attention inward, toward examining how colonial logics and state produced Indigenous identities may continue to operate within Indigenous governance systems. From this perspective, Indigenous identity as defined by the settler state emerges as a byproduct of colonialism. Colonialism obstructs Indigenous political orders, law, and governance while positioning the state as the primary sources of

¹³³ Sakej James Henderson, *Indigenous Diplomacy and the Rights of Peoples: Achieving UN Recognition* (Purich Publishing, 2008), 14–15.

¹³⁴ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 41.

¹³⁵ Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Grounded Normativity / Place-Based Solidarity," *American Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2016): 254, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26359594>.

¹³⁶ Coulthard, and Simpson, "Grounded Normativity / Place-Based Solidarity," 250.

political legitimacy. Recognizing this, I argue that this dissertation must contribute to the resurgence of Anishinaabe governance in ways that reflect who we are as a Nation through the embodiment of our sovereignty, responsibilities and teachings.

Achieving this resurgence requires critical engagement with our own systems and examination of their interactions with colonial structures. In *Canada's Indigenous Constitution*, John Borrows urges us to critically examine our own legal traditions rather than adhere to them uncritically,¹³⁷ arguing that such reflection is necessary to ensure that our laws continue to protect and strengthen our relations within our legal systems.¹³⁸ Similarly, in his dissertation, "Miinigowiziwin: All That Has Been Given for Living Well Together: One Vision of Anishinaabe Constitutionalism," Aaron Mills cautions against adopting Indigenous law within the conditions the settler state prescribes.¹³⁹ Both Borrows and Mills raise important concerns regarding the possible reproduction of colonial violence within Anishinaabe leadership and governing structures if these dynamics remain. Mills extends this concern through his discussion of what he terms a "Third Kind of Violence."¹⁴⁰ He describes the attributes of this violence, "can accomplish Indigenous erasure even if we recognize ourselves and are recognized by others as unique peoples. We might achieve recognition as peoples, but in a sense that is not our own; we might retain all the substantive trappings of peoplehood but lose something much more profound."¹⁴¹ Both Borrows and Mills therefore caution against pursuing the resurgence of Indigenous legal orders without considering how colonial norms may continue to shape them.¹⁴² This dissertation builds upon their scholarship by extending these concerns beyond legal systems to Indigenous governance structures themselves. Similarly, I examine how patriarchy, the Indian Act and Band Council governance have become intertwined and how Indigenous participation in these systems can unintentionally reproduce colonial logics of dispossession and political containment.

At the same time, Indigenous scholars have developed resurgence frameworks that move beyond state recognition toward the enactment of Indigenous intelligences, responsibilities, and

¹³⁷ For purposes of this context, these legal traditions are Anishinaabe law. John Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution* (University of Toronto Press, 2010), 9.

¹³⁸ J. Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution*, 9.

¹³⁹ Mills, "Miinigowiziwin," 1–17.

¹⁴⁰ Mills, "Miinigowiziwin," 5.

¹⁴¹ Mills, "Miinigowiziwin," 5.

¹⁴² J. Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution*; Mills, "Miinigowiziwin."

governing practices outside the authority of the settler state.¹⁴³ These approaches provide essential foundations for imagining Indigenous futurities grounded within Indigenous knowledge frameworks. Linda Tuhiwai Smith in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, argues that decolonization requires confronting and moving beyond the “racialized discourse and racist practices of modernity.”¹⁴⁴ Likewise Emma LaRocque (Métis) identifies an enduring civilized/savage binary that structures colonial understandings of Indigenous peoples. While LaRocque demonstrates the persistence of this binary,¹⁴⁵ Jessica Kolopenuk’s work on Indigenous sciences, technology and science offer pathways beyond it. In “Miskâsowin: Indigenous Science, Technology, and Society,” Kolopenuk explains that Indigenous futurities require an escape from colonial knowledge production, because colonial regulation of knowledge obscures Indigenous autonomy and privileges Western science and observations, which continue to inform the regulation of Indigenous bodies.¹⁴⁶ Kolopenuk’s work provides grounded possibilities for imagining futures that are accountable to Indigenous governance, knowledge systems, and relationships rather than colonial institutions.

Ultimately, the colonial construction of Indigeneity is dehumanizing. Seeking recognition within a system that legitimizes itself through Indigenous dispossession reinforces the biopolitical structures designed to manage Indigenous bodies, lands and political orders. What is required instead is a paradigmatic shift that understand Indigenous bodies not as objects of colonial governance, but as sovereign, relational, and political expressions of Indigenous nationhood. By rejecting colonial narratives and reasserting Indigenous governance on Indigenous terms, Indigenous Nations reclaim agency and refuse the frameworks that attempt to define and contain us.

Sovereignty

This section on sovereignty is divided into two subsections: (1) Colonial Claims and Indigenous Legal Critiques, and (2) Sovereignty Theories. Together, these bodies of scholarship

¹⁴³ Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, “Generating a Critical Resurgence Together,” in *Indigenous Resurgence in an Age of Reconciliation*, ed. Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark et al. (University of Toronto Press, 2023), 6.

¹⁴⁴ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 47.

¹⁴⁵ Emma LaRocque, *When the Other Is Me* (University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 47.

¹⁴⁶ Kolopenuk, “Miskâsowin,” 3.

challenge the legitimacy of settler-state sovereignty while advancing Indigenous theories of jurisdiction, governance and relational authority.

Colonial Claims and Indigenous Legal Critiques

As we move through discourses foundational to this inquiry, it is necessary to engage sovereignty more directly. Dale Turner explains that Indigenous Nations' enduring connection and title to land fundamentally challenges the legitimacy of unilateral state sovereignty.¹⁴⁷ Building from Turner's foundation, Borrows offers a sustained analysis of how the settler state constructs and defends its claim to sovereignty over Indigenous lands. He argues that the usurpation of Indigenous *aki*, governance, and jurisdiction has never been conclusively justified within Canadian law. The doctrines most often invoked to justify dispossession – *terra nullius*, the doctrine of discovery, and conquest – have never been coherently adopted within Canadian jurisprudence as sufficient legal foundations for the extinguishment of Indigenous sovereignty.¹⁴⁸ In this sense, Borrows contends with Turner that the colonial legal structures rest not on settled truth but on unresolved assertions.

Indigenous peoples have long maintained that prevailing treaty interpretations fail to reflect relational and shared stewardship obligations embedded in those agreements. From this perspective, land was never surrendered or ceded in the absolute manner the settler presumes. Settler political anthropologist Michael Asch affirms Borrows's position, emphasizing that many Indigenous Nations maintain that their sovereignty and jurisdiction was never extinguished.¹⁴⁹ Rather than constituting instruments of surrender, treaties were understood as nation-to-nation agreements meant to structure coexistence.

Expanding this discourse, Gina Starblanket interrogates the state's reliance on treaties to affirm its own legitimacy, sovereignty, and jurisdiction. While the settler state invokes treaties to affirm its lawful authority, it simultaneously requires the "ongoing subordination of Indigenous political orders" to maintain effective control.¹⁵⁰ The marginalization of Indigenous governance

¹⁴⁷ Dale A. Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* (University of Toronto Press, 2006), 32.

¹⁴⁸ Borrows, *Recovering Canada*, 117.

¹⁴⁹ Michael Asch, *On Being Here to Stay: Treaties and Aboriginal Rights in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2014), 111.

¹⁵⁰ Starblanket, "The Numbered Treaties and the Politics of Incoherency," 454.

systems thus becomes necessary for the preservation of settler sovereignty. Turner, Asch, Borrows, and Starblanket collectively challenge the legitimacy of settler sovereignty by demonstrating that Indigenous jurisdiction, law, and relations to land persist. If Indigenous political orders persist and if land was never lawfully ceded, then the moral and legal foundations of settler authority remain unsettled. Together, these scholars reveal that settler state sovereignty is not absolute nor justifiable.

Sovereignty Theories

Contributing to the analysis above, which determines that settler sovereignty is unsettled and is unconstitutional,¹⁵¹ Audra Simpson introduces the concept of “fragile sovereignty.”¹⁵² As a theoretical frame, fragile sovereignty demonstrates the delicate and unstable nature of settler sovereignty, which is predicated on consent from Indigenous Nations.¹⁵³ The settler state has deep relational obligations to Indigenous Nations yet without this consent, the settler state’s sovereignty dissipates.¹⁵⁴ Knowing this transforms the ways in which the settler state must approach its relationships with Indigenous Nations.

In addition, Simpson contributes to sovereignty discourses by developing nested sovereignty as a theoretical concept. Nested sovereignty is “possessing a consciousness of itself as a nation in spite of its location in the place and space of the reserve and as a nation within the place, space, and present time of Canada – as a sovereignty within multiple sovereignties.”¹⁵⁵ Nested sovereignty describes the political reality of multiple Nations existing within overlapping territorial, legal and relational spaces.¹⁵⁶ In doing so, it rejects hierarchal understandings of sovereignty and challenges assumptions that Indigenous political orders must be subordinate to the state. Similar to the intended relational purpose of treaties, nested sovereignty demonstrates that distinct nations can coexist with one another and dismantles notions of hierarchical sovereignty and subordination. Thus, it provides a theoretical foundation of Indigenous futurities grounded in non-interference, co-existence and mutual recognition rather than settler supremacy.

¹⁵¹ J. Borrows, *Recovering Canada*, 118.

¹⁵² A. Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 129.

¹⁵³ A. Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 129.

¹⁵⁴ A. Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 129.

¹⁵⁵ A. Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 187.

¹⁵⁶ A. Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 11.

For the purposes of this dissertation, nested sovereignty validates the existence of *ode'imín* governance beyond the authority of the settler state. *Ode'imín* governance does not derive its legitimacy from state recognition or negotiation; rather, it emerges from Anishinaabe sovereignty, teachings, and responsibilities.

Building upon Simpson's work, Kevin Bruyneel argues for the creation of a "third space of sovereignty." This conceptual space offers a means of moving beyond the temporal and spatial limitations imposed by colonial power.¹⁵⁷ Bruyneel affirms that such possibilities are often ignored because they disrupt colonial binaries and realities of "assimilation or secession, inside or outside, modern or traditional."¹⁵⁸ His intervention opens up conceptual space for Indigenous governance and leadership that exist neither wholly within nor wholly outside settler political structures. For this dissertation, Bruyneel's framework further demonstrates the validity of Indigenous governance and leadership existing according to Indigenous laws and relationships rather than within state-defined political categories.

Additional insights which emerge from "Nenabozho Goes Fishing: A Sovereignty Story," disrupt colonial assumptions of jurisdiction and authority. Neneabozho's (Nanabush) recollection of his experiences fishing and navigating *nibi*, demonstrates that sovereignty is relational. They state that

the porous nature of state borders ... exposed the fallacy of sovereignty as supreme and absolute. It is nearly impossible today to envision a nation whose sovereignty is not limited by its relationships and responsibilities, both internally to its own citizens and externally to its diplomatic allies.¹⁵⁹

The teachings shared through Nenabozho (Nanabush) in this article reveal that sovereignty is exercised through responsibilities to human and the more-than-human. We become responsible caretakers of our relations by honouring the responsibilities and roles we were taught. Borders and jurisdictions appear not as natural realities but as colonial constructions designed to serve the interests of the settler state. Through these teachings, the possibilities articulated by nested sovereignty and third space emerge not merely as theoretical abstraction but as lived realities. Within this framework, *ode'imín* governance is derived from the sovereignty of Anishinaabe

¹⁵⁷ Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty*, 121.

¹⁵⁸ Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty*, 217.

¹⁵⁹ Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark and Kekek Jason Stark, "Nenabozho Goes Fishing: A Sovereignty Story," *Daedalus* 147, no. 2 (2018): 21.

ceremonies, stories, and teachings and exists within Anishinaabe worlds outside of the settler state. Collectively, the scholarship of Audra Simpson, Bruyneel, and Heidi Stark and Kekek Stark creates space for understanding multiple sovereigns that co-exist, overlap, and interact without hierarchical subordination. These frameworks challenge the assumption that sovereignty must be singular, fixed, or exclusively vested in the state. From these perspectives, *ode'imín* governance disrupts the narrative of singular sovereignty and instead demonstrates alternative world-building practices that continually regenerate Anishinaabe knowledge, relationships and responsibilities. Indigenous governance exceeds colonial binaries of dominant and subordinate jurisdiction and instead reflects the exercise of inherent rights, obligations, and relational authority grounded in Indigenous law.

Gender

The literature on Indigenous feminism demonstrates patriarchy is not an Indigenous tradition, but a colonial structure imposed through settlement, dispossession, and the reorganization of Indigenous governance systems. Scholars including, Janice Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe (Anishinaabe and Métis), Monture-Angus, Kiera L. Ladner (Cree), and Kim Anderson illustrate how patriarchal norms have permeated Indigenous communities and actively contributes to ongoing gender discrimination within Indigenous Nations.¹⁶⁰ Indigenous scholars,¹⁶¹ activists, and community advocates further argue that gendered violence is a deliberate consequence of colonialism and land acquisition governance, restructuring, and the disruption of Indigenous relational orders.¹⁶² As a result, racialized and gendered violence has

¹⁶⁰ Janice Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe, *Iskwewak: Neither Indian Princesses nor Easy Squaws*, (Women's Press, 1995); Patricia Monture-Angus, *Thunder in my Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks*, (Fernwood Publishing, 1995); Kiera L. Ladner, "Gendering Decolonisation, Decolonising Gender," *Australian Indigenous Law Review* 13, no. 1 (2009); Kim Anderson, "Affirmations of an Indigenous Feminist," in *indigenous women and feminism: politics, activism, culture*, ed. by Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault and Jean Barman, (UBC Press, 2010).

¹⁶¹ Many non-Indigenous feminist thinkers such as Val Plumwood, Maria Lugones, and Silvia Federici have taken up this work as well. Their work in addition to the Indigenous feminist scholars cited demonstrate the breadth of critical feminist genealogies that establish the intersections in which the import of colonialism and patriarchy have been engaged with. For more see: Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 1st ed., (Routledge, 1993); Maria Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," *Hypatia* 25, no. 4 (2010): 742-59; Silvia Federici, *Patriarchy of the Wage: Notes on Marx, Gender, and Feminism*, (PM Press, 2021).

¹⁶² Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, (Women's Press, 2016); Audra Simpson, "The State is a Man" Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty," *Theory & Event* 19 no. 4 (2016); Alex Wilson, "Skirting the Issues: Indigenous Myths, Misses, and Misogyny," in *Keetsahnak: Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters*, ed. by Kim Anderson, Maria Campbell, Christi Belcourt, (The University of Alberta Press, 2018); Robyn Bourgeois, "Generations of Genocide: The Historical and Sociological Context of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls," in *Keetsahnak: Out Missing and*

become normalized withing colonial society, particularly in relation to Indigenous women's, girls', and Two-Spirit people's existence.¹⁶³ This body of scholarship demonstrates that colonialism transformed not only Indigenous relationships to land and governance but also relationships among Indigenous peoples themselves. The imposition of patriarchal norms displaced women from positions of authority, altered responsibilities within communities, and reconfigured governance structures in ways that privileged masculinist forms of power. Building upon this literature, I examine how colonial patriarchy continues to shape Indigenous governance systems and political relationships. In doing so, I argue that resurgence requires more than the revitalization of Indigenous governance; it also requires a critical examination of how colonial gender hierarchies continue to operate within Indigenous institutions and leadership structures. To explore these questions, this section focusses on five interconnected areas: (1) Colonial Masculinities and the Displacement of Women, (2) The Internalization of Patriarchy Within Indigenous Nations, (3) Law, Policy, and Gendered Governance, (4) Masculinity as a Norm, and (5) Inward and Futures.

Colonial Masculinities and Displacement of Women

To facilitate settlement and colonization, the settler state imported patriarchy and constructed colonial masculinities as tools to restructure Indigenous Nations. This process also enabled the disappearance and dispossession of Indigenous women. In his article "Cutting to the Roots of Colonial Masculinity," settler scholar Scott Morgensen asserts that masculinities were invented through colonial patriarchal values.¹⁶⁴ Building upon this discourse, Leanne Simpson connects the contemporary gender violence to alliances formed and sustained between settler men and cisgendered First Nations men. Simpson describes these alliances as offering:

clear rewards for those who come into white masculinity imbued with heteropatriarchy and violence, in order to infiltrate our communities and nations

Murdered Indigenous Sisters, ed. by Kim Anderson et al., (The University of Alberta Press, 2018).

¹⁶³ Christine Waaseyaa'sin Sy, "Considering Wenonah, Considering Us," in *Keetsahnak: Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters*, ed. by Kim Anderson, Maria Campbell, Christi Belcourt, (The University of Alberta Press, 2018); Alex Wilson. "Skirting the Issues: Indigenous Myths, Misses, and Misogyny," in *Keetsahnak: Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters*, ed. by Kim Anderson, Maria Campbell, Christi Belcourt, (The University of Alberta Press, 2018).

¹⁶⁴ Scott L. Morgensen, "Cutting to the Roots of Colonial Masculinity," in *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*, ed. Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson (University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 39.

with heteropatriarchy and then to replicate it through the generations with the purpose of destroying our nations and gaining easy access to our land.¹⁶⁵

The relationship between settler men and cisgendered First Nations men was shaped through the efforts to reorganize Indigenous political structures and remove women from positions of authority. Morgensen and Simpson understand these displays of power as manifestations of patriarchal relations. Unequal power structures remain embedded within many Indigenous communities and have been normalized, with some First Nations men upholding systems from which they derive authority. Yet these structures continue to reinform settler state power at the expense of First Nations woman. In “Who’s Walking with Our Brothers?,” Robert Alexander Innes, a member of the Cowessess First Nation, and Kim Anderson state, “[H]egemonic masculinity has acted to subordinate Indigenous men [and] encourages them to similarly assert power and control by subordinating Indigenous women.”¹⁶⁶ Their analysis demonstrates how colonial hierarchies reproduce themselves through gendered relations of power. Bob Antone, a citizen of the Oneida Nation, contributes to the discourse by insisting colonial racial hierarchies remain intact and that equality remains elusive. Antone explains that First Nations men continue to occupy a subordinate position within structures of white male privilege. This dynamic can foster a desire for control, prompting some First Nations men to derive authority from those who experience greater forms of oppression, particularly First Nations women.¹⁶⁷ Antone explains that First Nations men may continue to occupy a subordinate position within structures of settler male privilege.¹⁶⁸ This dynamic can foster a desire for control, prompting some First Nations men to derive authority from those who experience greater forms of oppression, particularly First Nations women. In these instances, authority is asserted in ways that seek recognition from the settler states and its political order. In doing so, responsibilities and relational obligations become obscured. Taken together, these scholars demonstrate that colonial masculinities function as mechanisms of governance that restructure Indigenous political relationships and

¹⁶⁵ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 52.

¹⁶⁶ Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson, “Introduction: Who’s Walking with Our Brothers?” in *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*, ed. Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson. (University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 11.

¹⁶⁷ Innes and Anderson, “Introduction: Who’s Walking with Our Brothers?” 11.

¹⁶⁸ Bob Antone, “Reconstructing Indigenous Masculine Thought,” in *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*, ed. Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson (University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 31.

displace women from positions of leadership. Recognizing the operation of patriarchy within Indigenous communities is therefore necessary. *Ode'imin* governance must not only challenge colonial power externally but also ensure that it does not reproduce this violence within its own framework, thus, it requires an analysis of gendered power structures.

Internalization and Patriarchy Within Nations

In “Taxonomies of Indigeneity: Indigenous Heterosexual Patriarchal Masculinity” Hokowhitu argues that colonial masculinities were deliberately constructed to redesign First Nations governance structures according to Eurocentric political norms.¹⁶⁹ As First Nations governance increasingly mirrored settler-state governments, women were displaced from leadership positions and decision-making processes. Subsequently, those who adopted colonial masculinities, whether implicitly or explicitly, often acquired a vested interest in maintaining patriarchal structures because their authority became tied to the marginalization of women.¹⁷⁰ In “Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship: Indian Women in Canada,” Green refers to Canada as a “masculinist” country that relies upon the subordination of women and the dominance of men. As Green explains, “The oppression of masculinism lies in the normativeness and coerciveness of political, legal, social and economic systems.”¹⁷¹ This analysis is further extended by Allison Piché (settler) in “Imprisonment and Indigenous Masculinities” where hyper-masculinity and toxic masculinity are examined as gendered constructions rather than inherent identities. Piché describes these performances as forms of “misguided masculinity”¹⁷² while acknowledging that “[t]oxic articulation of Indigenous masculinities can be one way to respond to the powerlessness experienced by some Indigenous men.”¹⁷³ Such performances reveal the enduring influences of colonial masculinities and the ways they distort First Nations roles and responsibilities. Further elaborating on this point, Sam McKegey (settler) argues that the Indian Act institutionalized

¹⁶⁹ Brendan Hokowhitu, “Taxonomies of Indigeneity: Indigenous Heterosexual Patriarchal Masculinity,” in *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*, ed. Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson, (University of Manitoba Press, 2015) 84.

¹⁷⁰ Green, “Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship,” 725.

¹⁷¹ Green, “Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship,” 725.

¹⁷² Allison Piché, “Imprisonment and Indigenous Masculinity: Contesting Hegemonic Masculinity in a Toxic Environment,” in *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*, ed. Kim Anderson and Robert Alexander Innes (University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 202

¹⁷³ Piché, “Imprisonment and Indigenous Masculinity,” 205.

patriarchal and colonial attitudes that fundamentally altered relationships and responsibility within Nations.¹⁷⁴ Leah Sneider (settler) similarly demonstrates how colonial masculinities transformed men's relationships with their community and Nation while simultaneously undermining women's leadership roles and reinforcing hegemonic patriarchy.¹⁷⁵ Together Sneider and McKegney argue that heteropatriarchy disrupted the relational balance within Indigenous Nations by affirming white male dominance over Indigenous men and women.¹⁷⁶ Their analysis reveal an imposed hierarchy that has been used to sustain colonial patriarchal dominance. Martin Cannon (Oneida) extends this scholarship by connecting patriarchy and colonialism. He argues that the intersections of these systems disempower Indigenous women and disrupt the balance of power within Indigenous Nations.¹⁷⁷

Collectively, Simpson, Innes, Anderson, Hokowhitu, Cannon, and others demonstrate that colonial masculinity was imposed as a strategy to restructure Indigenous governance and removed women from positions of power. Their work exposes how colonial systems continue to regulate Indigeneity through gendered hierarchies and how Indigenous communities can become implicated in reproducing those structures. These critical engagements create space for difficult but necessary discussions about patriarchy within Indigenous Nations. Such discussions are often viewed as divisive because Indigenous communities continue to confront ongoing settler state encroachments. However, avoiding these conversations does not eliminate the violence. Rather, patriarchal structures continue to take root in our own governance systems and community relations. This dissertation builds upon this work and further demonstrates a Nation specific analysis to understand how our systems at present mirror these gendered power structures and by refusing the pursuit of power.

Law, Policy, and Gendered Governance

¹⁷⁴ Sam McKegney, "Warriors, Healers, Lovers, and Leaders: Colonial Impositions on Indigenous Male Roles and Responsibilities," in *Canadian Perspectives on Men and Masculinities: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, ed. Jason A. Laker (Oxford University Press, 2012), 252.

¹⁷⁵ Leah Sneider, "Complementary Relationships: A Review of Indigenous Gender Studies," in *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*, ed. Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson (University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 73.

¹⁷⁶ Sneider, "Complementary Relationships," 70.

¹⁷⁷ Martin J. Cannon, *Men, Masculinity and the Indian Act* (UBC Press, 2019), 14–19.

Acknowledging that First Nations structures, systems, and individuals have internalized patriarchy is an important component of Indigenous feminist scholarship and broader resurgence literature. Historic and contemporary analyses of both settler-state and First Nations actions are necessary to understand how colonial systems continue to operationalize the dispossession of First Nations women. In her 1995 book *Thunder in My Soul*, Monture-Angus directly challenges notions of equality by exposing how law is written by and for the interests of men, thereby “entrench[ing] inequality.”¹⁷⁸ Nearly two decades later, settler scholar Emily Snyder extends this critique in *Gender, Power, and Representations of Cree Law*, by arguing that masculinity has become normalized within society. Building upon Monture-Angus’s analysis, Snyder writes that, “[M]en and boys can be read first as Cree people/as not gendered. Femininity is visible as it is not masculine/not the norm.”¹⁷⁹ Snyder demonstrates that masculinity and maleness function as assumed norms against which all other identities are measured. The assumption that gender-neutrality exists within patriarchal structures presents a significant danger. Claims of neutrality can further marginalize and dispossess women because the structures themselves remain organized around the privileges afforded to men. When institutions are presumed to be gender-neutral they are no longer required to transform in ways that address systemic inequalities. Consequently, women who are navigating patriarchal systems often encounter fewer protections, resources, and opportunities for meaningful inclusion. Monture-Angus and Snyder therefore provide a framework for recognizing patriarchy in practice and policy. Their analysis reminds us that governance systems should not be presumed neutral; rather they must be understood as gendered formations shaped by colonial power.

Reading Monture-Angus and Snyder together reveals how patriarchal colonial structures become normalized within Indigenous governance systems. Their work demonstrates the necessity of critically examining governance practices that appear neutral while continuing to privilege masculine authority. Consequently, *ode’imin* governance seeks to recenter relational accountability, embodied knowledge, and Anishinaabe intelligence within its world-building practices. By grounding governance in Anishinaabe *kwewag* teachings, *ode’imin* governance challenges the patriarchal assumptions embedded within colonial political structures.

¹⁷⁸ Monture-Angus, *Thunder in My Soul*, 144.

¹⁷⁹ Emily Snyder, *Gender, Power, and Representations of Cree Law* (UBC Press, 2018), 78.

My analysis is further informed by Mary Eberts, Sharon McIvor (Nl̓e ʔkepmxc), and Shelagh Day (settler) in “Settler Colonialism in Canada: Making ‘Indian’ Women Disappear.” These scholars examine how Bill C-31 was introduced to address gender discrimination in the Indian Act; however, it introduced new forms of discrimination through section 6. Because the provision applied to both men and women, the Government of Canada characterized it as gender neutral.¹⁸⁰ However, the historical and intergenerational impacts of gender discrimination within the Indian Act meant that section 6 ultimately reproduced patriarchal privilege rather than eliminating it.¹⁸¹ The 1985 Indian Act amendments were widely presented as a solution to ending gender discrimination. Yet the persistence of inequality demonstrates that these reforms were incomplete. The amendments still perpetuated male privilege as the father of the child continued to hold legal power and could deny being identified thus, “a man could prevent the child from being registered with two status parents.”¹⁸² As Eberts, McIvor, and Day note the appearance of gender neutrality concealed the continuation of male privilege within the legislation.

Applying Snyder’s framework reveals how patriarchal norms can persist even within policies designed to remedy gender inequality. *Ode’imin* governance analyzes how governance and legal reforms that appear neutral may continue to reproduce colonial gender hierarchies if they fail to account for the historical realities of discrimination. This insight is central to *ode’imin* governance. By grounding governance in Anishinaabe *kwewag* teachings and relational responsibilities, *ode’imin* governance seeks not merely to include women within existing structures but to challenge and decentre the gendered assumptions upon which those structures are built.

Masculinity as Norm

Building from Snyder’s contribution that masculinity is now a common unseen norm within society, Hunt goes further to expand and demonstrates an “explicit tethering of “(hyper) masculinity” to Indigeneity.”¹⁸³ Analogous to Snyder’s interrogation of maleness being the norm

¹⁸⁰ Mary Eberts et al., “Settler Colonialism in Canada: Making ‘Indian’ Women Disappear,” in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 3rd ed, ed. Gina Starblanket (Fernwood Publishing, 2024), 79–80.

¹⁸¹ Eberts et al., “Settler Colonialism in Canada,” 79.

¹⁸² Eberts et al., “Settler Colonialism in Canada,” 80.

¹⁸³ Dallas Hunt, “(Ad)Dressing Wounds: Expansive Kinship Inside and Out,” in *Indigenous Resurgence in an Age of Reconciliation*, ed. Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark et al. (University of Toronto Press, 2023), 71.

and standard, Hunt exposes how an Indigenous man connects his Indigeneity *as* masculine.¹⁸⁴ Thus, questioning the constructions of both Indigeneity and masculinities becomes inevitable. In the following passage, Hunt amplifies the breadth of masculinity within our Nations: “[M]asculinity constructs and/or orients Indigenous politics and how it might configure imaginaries that direct us away from our relational obligations in the contemporary moment and thus foreclose on the possibility of liberatory futures premised on an ethics of care for all our relations.”¹⁸⁵ This discussion about masculinity is integral within the literature due to the insidious ways it continues to operate. Building from this, Hunt’s analysis determines that there is insufficient work being done within Indigenous Nations to understand how masculinity can infiltrate our own communities, as we assume it is a settler-state problem.¹⁸⁶ *Ode’imin* governance as a framework expands this discourse to fill the current gap in the literature on internal analysis of patriarchy and identifies it as an Anishinaabe problem as well. This analysis informs my reading of Anishinaabe governance documents that circumvent possibilities of relationality and instead echo gendered power dynamics.

Similarly, Robert Henry (Métis) connects the hypermasculinity of Indigenous men to the construction of Indigeneity that stereotypes Indigenous bodies as “savages.”¹⁸⁷ Henry’s analysis determines that hypermasculinity is a mechanism the state uses to make Indigenous bodies seem dangerous and violent.¹⁸⁸ Adding to this, Morgensen argues that hyper-masculinity is a form of colonialism, so it is “not natural, necessary, or permanent, any more than is colonization itself.”¹⁸⁹ In an effort to provide hope for our futures, Morgensen insists that colonial masculinities can be undone in the same fashion as they were constructed, through “challenging political realities of settler colonialism.”¹⁹⁰ Whereas, challenging Morgensen’s impermanence theory, Henry acknowledges the creation of patriarchal normativity is now an irreversible fixture within society.¹⁹¹ The work of Hunt, Henry, and Morgensen can be brought in conversation

¹⁸⁴ Hunt, “(Ad)Dressing Wounds,” 72.

¹⁸⁵ Hunt, “(Ad)Dressing Wounds,” 65.

¹⁸⁶ Hunt, “(Ad)Dressing Wounds,” 69.

¹⁸⁷ Robert Henry, “Social Spaces of Maleness: The Role of Street Gangs in Practising Indigenous Masculinities,” in *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*, ed. Kim Anderson and Robert Alexander Innes (University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 189.

¹⁸⁸ Henry, “Social Spaces of Maleness,” 189.

¹⁸⁹ Morgensen, “Cutting to the Roots of Colonial Masculinity,” 39.

¹⁹⁰ Morgensen, “Cutting to the Roots of Colonial Masculinity,” 57.

¹⁹¹ Henry, “Social Spaces of Maleness,” 184.

together to reveal how colonial masculinity disrupts Indigenous political relationships and responsibilities. Thus, it further supports my central argument that Anishinaabe governance must exist beyond colonial power structures.

Supporting the literary contributions of Hunt and Henry that demonstrate the immediacy of patriarchy, and the body, Cree poet and theorist Billy-Ray Belcourt provides a lens to process the breadth of invisible patriarchal power through the body. They state, “To be in the world is to be fleshy and to be fleshy is to be susceptible to a form of social power that occurs at a level the naked eye cannot apprehend.”¹⁹² Belcourt’s contribution to this discourse is foundational to addressing what we cannot see but the ways in which we are forced to interact with colonial structures. This dissertation requires decolonial commitments, by which I mean, “...the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted; that is, all of the land, and not just symbolically.”¹⁹³ This framing of decolonizing given by Tuck and Yang asserts that decolonization is “accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity.”¹⁹⁴ Understanding this distinct and necessary requirement, *ode’imin* governance relies on this transformative decolonization process in order to embody relational governance practices such as accountability and care. *Ode’imin* governance actively and fluidly responds to structures of harm that are unseen within colonial system but commonly experienced by *kwewag*.

Futures

Colonialism and patriarchy within our Nations require us, as Ladner states, to “decolonise gender and [work towards] gender decolonisation.”¹⁹⁵ The goal of Indigenous feminism may not necessarily be to recover pre-contact practices of gender and non-gender,¹⁹⁶ but to create new ways of relating together. Monture-Angus spoke to this in her early texts and de-emphasized a “traditional versus modern approach” and instead encouraged scholars to focus on the need for

¹⁹² Billy-Ray Belcourt, “Red Utopia,” in *Indigenous Resurgence in an Age of Reconciliation*, ed. Heidi Kiiwetinewapiesiik Stark et al. (University of Toronto Press, 2023), 235.

¹⁹³ Tuck and K. Wayne Yang. “Decolonization is not a Metaphor,” 7.

¹⁹⁴ Tuck and K. Wayne Yang. “Decolonization is not a Metaphor,” 35.

¹⁹⁵ Kiera L. Ladner, “Gendering Decolonisation, Decolonising Gender,” *Australian Indigenous Law Review* 13, no. 1 (2009): 72, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26423117>.

¹⁹⁶ Snyder et al., “Gendered Violence: Resources from Indigenous Legal Orders,” 614.

Indigenous men and women to heal their relationships with one another.¹⁹⁷ *Ode'imín* governance contributes to this healing through its transparent governance principles of truth and respect, acknowledging relationality forms Anishinaabe governance in the everyday. As explained in chapter 1, romanticizing the past and tradition can lead to harm. To reduce the potential of this harm, we must be careful to not replicate colonial violence when we re-remember our teachings and ceremonies.

Horizontal Power

Settler-state structures of power are sustained by hierarchical domination and control. In this section I will demonstrate the importance of anti-hierarchical power and the adoption of this power into Anishinaabe Nations. With much of the literature critiquing hierarchy and domination, scholars like Ladner remind us that historically, many Indigenous Nations grounded their governance in horizontal power. In “When Buffalo Speaks: Creating an Alternative Understanding of Traditional Blackfoot Governance,” Ladner describes this power as follows: “collective power or horizontal authority is both the decision-making process itself and the resulting decision, for there was no authority greater than the autonomous individual and leaders had no ability to forge or implement decisions.”¹⁹⁸ This conceptualization of power is contrary to Eurocentric definitions.

Ladner goes on to explain, “There was no authority greater than the *responsible*, autonomous individual and horizontal authority and collective power were maintained as there was no hierarchically defined or centralized vehicle through which coercive power and authority could be legitimately operationalized.”¹⁹⁹ More so, horizontal power or collective power, is gifted by Creator and Creation. As Ladner explains, “[G]iven the fact that the power of Creation was manifested in individuals and structures, the predominant conceptualization of individuals as autonomous entities, and the fact that authority was typically vested in the collective as a whole, the people themselves were part of the political system.”²⁰⁰ This is an important consideration: First Nations' conceptualizations of power are incompatible with the settler state. *Ode'imín*

¹⁹⁷ Monture-Angus, *Thunder in My Soul*, 224.

¹⁹⁸ Kiera L. Ladner, “When Buffalo Speaks: Creating an Alternative Understanding of Traditional Blackfoot Governance” (PhD diss., Carleton University, 2001), 293, [10.22215/etd/2001-04998](https://etd/2001-04998).

¹⁹⁹ Ladner, “When Buffalo Speaks,” 294.

²⁰⁰ Ladner, “When Buffalo Speaks,” 299.

governance reflects this, because of the absence of hierarchy or domination. Instead, it is oriented around collective embodied responsibility and accountability. I concur with Ladner's analysis that "the powerlessness of Indigenous leaders and Indigenous structures of governance was a deliberate attempt to maintain and emphasize the teachings of Creation."²⁰¹ Further, this type of power was never a "permanent transference of power from the individual to an abstraction called 'government' and [that] individuals are autonomous and self-governing."²⁰² Balance of power becomes necessary to centre new frameworks of governance beyond the settler state. There is no transference of power from one leader to the other, but instead decision-making rooted in Anishinaabe teachings. Undoubtedly, power is a derivative of the self and of body sovereignty.

Contributions to *Ode'imín* Governance

This literature review has identified gaps that *ode'imín* governance addresses through its engagement with scholarship on Indigenous political orders, sovereignty, gender and horizontal power. This dissertation builds upon Hokowhitu's theory of body logic, which can be described as "an insurrection of knowledge, a movement beyond colonial capture, the colonizer/colonized binary, and encumbering 'Indigenous' ontologies, and toward post-Indigeneity."²⁰³ Through this framework, I examined how constructions of Indigeneity and colonial masculinities shape contemporary understandings of Anishinaabe leadership and governance. It contributes to scholarship on colonial masculinity by extending analyses beyond the settler state and into Indigenous governance systems themselves. As the literature shows, Nation-specific analysis into the internal reproduction of colonial systems remain limited. Drawing upon pedagogical insights of Monture-Angus and Snyder, I adopt a critical lens attentive to the ways colonialism and patriarchy operate through claims of neutrality. *Ode'imín* governance moves beyond critique by offering a framework through which patriarchal governance structures can be identified, challenged and transformed.

²⁰¹ Ladner, "When Buffalo Speaks," 296.

²⁰² Ladner, "When Buffalo Speaks," 295.

²⁰³ Brendan Hokowhitu, "Monster: Post-Indigenous Studies," in *Critical Indigenous Studies*, ed. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (University of Arizona, 2016), 100.

The analysis undertaken in this dissertation examines the ways Anishinaabe leadership and governance have been shaped by colonial heteropatriarchy. From this foundation, I will use Indigenous methodologies of visiting and storytelling to develop a framework of governance that is rooted in teachings and voices from Elders, Knowledge Keepers, the more-than-human and *kwewag*. *Ode'im* governance emerges not from colonial institutions but from Anishinaabe knowledges, teachings, ceremonies, stories, and embodied relational experiences. It is rooted in Anishinaabe sovereignty and relational responsibilities rather than colonial categories, narratives, or political assumptions.

Central to this framework is respect for the sovereignty of the more-than-human, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members whose teachings informed this work. *Ode'im* governance therefore demonstrates the sovereignty of the Anishinaabe Nation, and the sovereignty exercised by those entrusted with governance responsibilities. Equally important is its rejection of hierarchy and absolute authority. Through its commitment to horizontal power, *ode'im* governance challenges systems that organize bodies according to racialized and gendered hierarchies.

Gaps

This literature review reveals a clear connection between colonial heteropatriarchy and the ongoing exclusion of Anishinaabe *kwewag* from political leadership and governance. Scholars such as Innes, Anderson, Cannon, and Morgensen have explored the construction of colonial masculinities and the transfer of power in ways that mirror settler-state governance systems. However, few have conducted a Nation-specific analysis of how these dynamics operate within Anishinaabe governance system. Likewise, scholarship examining the intersections of gender, law, and politics offer critiques of how the settler state removed First Nations women from positions of authority. Yet considerably less attention has been paid to whether or how *our own Nations* may reproduce these exclusions. Indigenous governance often remains tethered to state recognition frameworks and Indian Act governance systems. This literature review demonstrates the necessity of governance models rooted in Indigenous theories, stories, ceremonies, and teachings rather than colonial institutions. The historical and contemporary scholarship on Indigeneity, sovereignty, and gender is both vast and essential to healthy Indigenous futures. I

could not have written the chapters that follow without this foundation or remembering how and why we arrived at this moment.

There is a clear thread that can link colonial heteropatriarchy within Anishinaabe governance systems to the ongoing exclusion of Anishinaabe *kwewag*. Current discussions of First Nations governance and leadership frequently stay tethered to settler-state recognition frameworks, often paying homage to Indian Act Band Council structures. This literature review shows that Indigenous Nations must restructure governance and leadership. This can only be done if Nations are rooted in their own theories, stories, ceremonies, and teachings, which *ode'imín* governance is.

Another gap in the literature concerns the question of why Indigenous political spaces have historically been harmful or exclusionary by many First Nations women.²⁰⁴ Green, in “Canaries of the Mind,” raises this important consideration, and other scholars such as Starblanket have begun to take up this work as well,²⁰⁵ but there has not been a sustained analysis focused specifically on Anishinaabe systems of governance and their internalization of patriarchal norms. By developing a framework of *ode'imín* governance, this dissertation offers a grounded framework through which Anishinaabe leadership and governance can be understood according to Anishinaabe knowledge systems, roles, responsibilities, relationalities, and lived experiences. In doing so, it provides a critical lens for identifying and challenging the ways in which patriarchy continues to permeate Anishinaabe governance systems.²⁰⁶

Ode'imín Governance

This dissertation argues that colonial heteropatriarchy has tried to displace Anishinaabe *kwewag* from their political orders and governance responsibilities. In response, it advances a vision of Anishinaabe futurities. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith reminds us, Indigenous women’s analyses often emerge at the axis of “political engagements with Western feminism and their own Indigenous communities.”²⁰⁷ It is from within this space of responsibility that this work is

²⁰⁴ Green, “Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship,” 725–37.

²⁰⁵ Gina Starblanket, “Red Ticket Women: Revisiting the Political Contributions of the Indian Rights for Indian Women’s Movement,” in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 3rd ed, ed. Gina Starblanket (Fernwood Publishing, 2024).

²⁰⁶ Mylène Yannick Gamache et al., “A Guide to Inter-Indigenous Co-Labbing,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 48, no. 2 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.17953/A3.20289>.

²⁰⁷ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 130.

undertaken. I begin from the understanding that Anishinaabe bodies, teachings, relationships, and our *ode* knowledge are active expressions of sovereignty. The Anishinabek Nation possess the capacity to flourish beyond colonial dispossessive systems. *Ode'imin* governance is offered as a framework that challenges colonial heteropatriarchy while creating possibilities for Anishinaabe futures in the present.

As I write the chapters that follow, I do so with gratitude for the scholars, Knowledge Keepers, and community members whose teaching made this work possible. Their contributions challenge colonialism and patriarchy while opening pathways toward renewed Indigenous governance. Through engagement with this scholarship, I have been provided pathways forward grounded in knowledge sharing and relational accountability. It is through this process that I am being guided home - a milestone in my journey to understand my responsibilities, care for the knowledge I hold, and to honour my Nation.

Through self-interrogation of our bodies, we can access our embodied intelligence and love that is echoed in our veins. This knowledge flourishes in our spirits, connected through webs of relation, power, and pleasure that extend beyond colonial structures. I draw upon the voices of Corey Snelgrove (settler) and Matthew Wildcat (Cree), who speak to a reconciliation era that opens space for new worlds to emerge or perhaps for the ancestral world to re-emerge through our resistance to the state. As they explain,

Colonial power is constantly in need of new strategies to reproduce itself, and the reconciliation project represents a vulnerability that signals openings within colonial power structures. It is in this moment of vulnerability that we should emphasize the power and potential of political action that works against colonial domination.²⁰⁸

I argue that we can remove the boundaries imposed upon our present realities in order to “reactivate” the transformative possibilities within our Nation. The goal for this dissertation, and my own commitment to this work, is to understand Anishinaabe leadership and governance taught by the *ode'imin*.

The analysis in the following chapter asks whether, and in what ways, our Nations may have internalized and perpetuated colonial and patriarchal power dynamics. These dynamics

²⁰⁸ Corey Snelgrove and Matthew Wildcat, “Political Action in the Time of Reconciliation,” in *Indigenous Resurgence in an Age of Reconciliation*, ed. Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark et al. (University of Toronto Press, 2023), 161.

have contributed to the marginalization and erasure of women from leadership and political spheres. I argue that by uncovering the implicit biases of patriarchy and the colonial norms embedded within governance systems, we can begin to re-create Anishinaabe governance through the framework of *ode'imín* governance. In doing so, the colonial and patriarchal structures that shape current governance practices can be challenged and ultimately dismantled.

Chapter 3

Niibin: The Reawakening

I am writing this chapter under the *Ode'imin* Moon. This year, our *niibin* has been marked by a thick haze, the result of the blistering wildfires raging throughout northern Manitoba, as *noodin*²⁰⁹ carries the cries of *aki*. The smoke drifting across the province reminds us that our present realities must change. *Niibin* teaches us about the balance: a time when the berries bud and new growth emerges from *aki*. Yet the haze from the wildfires is a reminder of our responsibilities to protect and care for the more-than-human. Writing under the *Ode'imin* moon situates me within my relation to the *ode'imin*, as I am required to learn, listen, and engage with them as my teacher in order to honour these responsibilities. In addition, the more-than-human and *ode'imin* moon compel me to connect with my ancestors of the past, present, and future and to ground my work through the deep care I have for my relations.

This chapter examines how patriarchy has operated as an imported colonial structure within Anishinabek Nation leadership and governance. The Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) was established in 1949 and is a political advocate for thirty-nine First Nations. It is now known as the Anishinabek Nation. At present, the leadership structure consists of the Grand Council, four regional Chiefs (Lake Huron, Northern Superior, Southeast, and Southwest), as well as a *dodemaag*²¹⁰ system of governance for the Leadership Council. Specifically, this chapter analyzes whether patriarchal norms have been embedded within Anishinaabe governance systems in ways that replicate colonial structures to facilitate the disappearance of *kwewag*.

I begin with a short introduction to the analytical framework of Indigenous feminist legal theory discussed in the works of Patricia Monture-Angus and Emily Snyder. I demonstrate the myriad forms of sexist and colonial oppressions imposed upon First Nations status women facilitated through the patriarchal Indian Act. Much of this chapter centers an analysis of eighty-one resolution reports from the Anishinabek Nation from 1974 to 2025, as well as an analysis of the 1993 submission to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) on Anishinabek governance. I conclude with an overview and analysis of contemporary leadership exemplified in treaty gatherings, women's summits, and Anishinabek governance final reports. I approach this work with care and critique.

²⁰⁹ Wind.

²¹⁰ Clan.

Building on this analysis, the following chapters will demonstrate how governance and leadership in the Anishinabek Nation can be transformed by centering the *ode'imin* and *kwewag*. This transformation is not symbolic; it is a rooted and active practice grounded in Anishinaabe teachings, knowledges, and ceremonies that must be enacted. The previous chapter identified a critical gap in the literature: existing scholarship does not sufficiently examine how Nation-specific policies and laws themselves may implicitly reproduce patriarchal and colonial exclusion of *kwewag*. This chapter responds to that gap. By looking inward to Nation-specific governance structures, norms, and policies, it contributes to the fields of Indigenous law and politics, Indigenous feminism, and Indigenous studies. In doing so, it reveals subtle ways in which colonialism embeds itself within Indigenous governance. Thus, this chapter exposes how patriarchy can be cyclically normalized within our own systems though gender-neutral language that excludes *kwewag*.

I write this chapter with a deep love, care, and admiration for the Anishinabek Nation, and its past, present, and future leaders. This work means no ill intent; I recognize the hardships and limited choices that leaders and members of Band Councils have historically faced because of the impact of colonial masculinities. I acknowledge that there are limitations to how Band Council leaders and governance can operate. This chapter can serve as a mechanism to begin conversations on how colonialism can disguise itself and how gendered violence continues to affect our Nation.

At present, the Anishinabek Nation is dedicated to the active restoration of traditional governance and has brought ceremony back into decision-making processes.²¹¹ The recently adopted Anishinaabe Chi-Naaknigewin is guided by the Seven Sacred Teachings of love, truth, respect, wisdom, humility, honesty and bravery.²¹² The revitalization of Anishinabek legal and governance traditions is ongoing.

Additionally, I commend the work of the Anishinabek Nation on the 2022 Anishinabek Nation Governance Agreement,²¹³ the work the councils are doing, and the future laws and governance structures that will be implemented beyond the Indian Act. I respect the election of

²¹¹ Anishinabek Nation, "Anishinaabe Chi-Naaknigewin," September 5, 2025, <https://anishinabek.ca/governance/anishinaabe-chi-naaknigewin/>.

²¹² Anishinabek Nation, "Anishinaabe Chi-Naaknigewin."

²¹³ *Anishinabek Nation Governance Agreement*, S.C. 2022, c.9, s.1, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/A-11.31/FullText.html>.

Grand Chief Linda Debagassie and the work the Nation continues to do. However, I know there is plenty of work to be done to circumvent continued acts of misogyny and gender violence. I take up the warning and call to action from Leanne Simpson in her blog post “Not Murdered and Not Missing,” where she states, “We cannot create movements, like Idle No More, where women are in leadership positions and where we also have no plan in place to deal with gender violence in an effective manner.”²¹⁴ While having *kwewag* in leadership positions is vital, we understand there must be a systemic shift so that all *kwe* are protected, heard, and valued.

As a Nation, we must address the violence that continues to stem from colonialism and patriarchy and consider the possibility that our own structures continue to facilitate it. With great admiration, I reflect on our past to learn how we can prevent patriarchy and colonialism in our futures. This analysis of eighty-one resolutions reveals new insights into repeated patterns of gender exclusion that ultimately rupture relationality and distorts Anishinaabe governance.

Indigenous Feminist Legal Theory

Monture-Angus grounds my reading of historical documents through a critical analysis of the law’s misconception of “sameness” under the law of equality, specifically the rule of law.²¹⁵ She explains that equality as sameness causes great injustices and that equality is merely a perspective.²¹⁶ To this extent, Monture-Angus points out that “the rule of law means that both kings and beggars cannot sleep under bridges and cannot steal bread ... Where are the queens? This is an example of how male specific Canadian law is (and note how invisible the male preference is).”²¹⁷ Monture-Angus explicitly demonstrates that the rule of law is created to include or exclude citizens based on arbitrary means. As a result, colonial hierarchies privilege settlers over Indigenous peoples, which contradicts legal notions of equality.²¹⁸

The law appears to be equally applied to all to keep the presumption of equality to soothe the settler state’s populace. I follow in the steps of Monture-Angus who explains, “There can be no full solution to the “problems” of “Indians” if the role that law has played in our

²¹⁴ Leanne Simpson, “Not Murdered and Not Missing,” Canada, NB Media Co-Op, March 18, 2014, <https://nbmediacoop.org/2014/03/17/not-murdered-and-not-missing/>.

²¹⁵ Monture-Angus, *Thunder in My Soul*, 49.

²¹⁶ Monture-Angus, *Thunder in My Soul*, 49.

²¹⁷ Monture-Angus *Thunder in My Soul*, 144.

²¹⁸ Patricia Monture-Angus, *Journeying Forward: Dreaming First Nations Independence*, (Fernwood Publishing, 1999), 31-32.

oppression and colonization is immune from scrutiny and remedy...judicial decision making as an objective practice is a mere myth of the western cultural variety”²¹⁹ This reveals that implicitly, law is made for and by settler men, which ultimately sets the standard everyone is measured against.

Building upon Monture-Angus’s analysis of sameness decades later, Snyder affirms the necessity of this critical inquiry. She writes, “in a legal system that exists in a patriarchal society and is premised on a liberal male subject and his experiences, males are the intended beneficiaries of law. Law should be understood as a site of gendered struggle.”²²⁰ This framing challenges the assumption that authority and governance are neutral. Instead, it reveals, neutrality often masks gendered power and obscures the absence of non-patriarchal perspectives.

From this point, governance structures must be examined as shaped by settler male experiences. Leadership frameworks, legal standards, and institutional norms are not universal; they are historically produced and gendered. It is important to include this discussion because the assumed equality approach fosters inequality. It is imperative to read governing documents as both gendered *and* colonial. This analysis is guided by Monture-Angus’s reminder: “We must take care to think with decolonized minds no matter how difficult the task may be.”²²¹

Continuing with this analytical foundation of gender neutrality, I turn to Snyder’s two texts, “Indigenous Feminist Legal Theory” and *Gender, Power and Representations of Cree Law*. Approaching this analysis through this analytic, I detect gender-neutral language within the Anishinabek Nation’s resolution reports from 1974 to 2024 and the 1993 RCAP submission. Snyder explains this importance in the following passage: “Gender ‘neutral’ can translate into an assumed and invisible norm of maleness (as whiteness also exists as an invisible norm in Western societies). Accordingly, concerns exist that Indigenous politics work to reinforce male privilege (intentionally or not) and exclude the context of Indigenous women’s lives.”²²² Snyder’s argument demonstrates the connection between colonialism, sexism and racism that is attributed to the Indian Act and the persistent stereotypes of First Nations women. This framework illuminates how the absence of gender analysis dissolves the specificities of gendered

²¹⁹ Monture-Angus, *Journeying Forward*, 31.

²²⁰ Emily Snyder, “Indigenous Feminist Legal Theory,” *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 26, no. 2 (2014): 369, <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjwl.26.2.07>.

²²¹ Monture-Angus, *Thunder in My Soul*, 147.

²²² Snyder, “Indigenous Feminist Legal Theory,” 377.

experiences. She explicitly recognizes the harm that this denial facilitates, as it undermines a recognition of the gendered and colonial realities of Indigenous women. There is a need for critical Indigenous feminist legal theory due to the current lack of engagement in the field of Indigenous feminism with Indigenous laws and governing structures beyond settler-state analysis.²²³

Further, Snyder attests that Indigenous men and women can continue to benefit from the systemic introduction of patriarchy sustained through colonialism. She writes, “[Men] can more easily control and access resources and be elected to leadership positions in communities and in national Aboriginal organizations. Women can also internalize and take up gender norms in ways that are oppressive.”²²⁴ It is uncomfortable to acknowledge the ways in which our kin may choose to practice patriarchal colonial norms to their benefit at the expense of others. Snyder’s contribution breaks open the space to discuss how Indigenous women can also take up patriarchal practices. It is necessary for this analysis to be done in order to adopt a framework of governance that emphasizes healthy leaders and Nations, regardless of how uncomfortable this confrontation is.

While written with kindness, this research seeks to confront the continuation of gender-neutral approaches and to combat notions that First Nations women in politics lead to rifts in community, as these approaches focus on individual rights (e.g. gender equality) opposed to the collective (e.g., land back).²²⁵ First Nations men have not been perceived as divisive when they continue to practise women’s exclusion and echo patriarchal discourses of misogyny. Thus, this neutral positioning of men and patriarchal privilege allows the normative stance that men speaking for the Nation is traditional. Anishinaabe male leaders are viewed as Anishinaabe leaders first, whereas *kwewag* leaders are viewed as feminine first. This is because *kwewag* are seen as exceptions to the norm by community members, the settler-state and within colonial structures including Band Councils. Colonial conditions and norms have maintained assumptions that Anishinaabe leaders have always been male.

Additionally, according to standards that have been set, the mere mention and inclusion

²²³ Snyder, “Indigenous Feminist Legal Theory,” 368.

²²⁴ Snyder, “Indigenous Feminist Legal Theory,” 377.

²²⁵ Emily Snyder, *Gender, power, and representations of Cree law*, (UBC Press, 2018); Gina Starblanket, “Red Ticket Women: Revisiting the Political Contributions of the Indian Rights for Indian Women’s Movement,” in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 3rd ed, ed. by Gina Starblanket, (Fernwood Publishing, 2024).

of women suggest that the physical space and written materials are inclusive.²²⁶ Utilizing critical Indigenous feminist legal theory, we know that a brief recognition or inclusion of *kwewag* where they are otherwise overwhelmingly absent does not mean systemic transformative change has been realized. It becomes clear that patriarchy is an assumed norm against which standards are measured. Experiences have become gendered through colonial impositions of norms and standards maintained through violent gendered stereotypes. The struggles of Anishinaabe *kwewag* often go unheard or unnoticed, with no plans for formative action that would radically alter lived realities.

Clearly, gender neutrality and sameness maintain the power and privilege associated to those who have been molded to fit the colonial standard. This allows them to continue to benefit from settler-state privileges.²²⁷ This analysis seeks to decenter patriarchy and the perceived gender neutrality which operates within it. In the following chapters, I demonstrate how governance need not uphold patriarchal norms. *Ode'imín* governance centres the experiences, teachings, and knowledges of *kwewag* to demonstrate how alternative governance and leadership are possible.

Why This Chapter?

It is well known that the Indian Act has shaped and limited First Nations governance since it was first passed in 1876.²²⁸ Many scholars have examined gender discrimination within the Act and the limited reforms meant to address it.²²⁹ While this chapter does not focus in depth on that history, it provides a brief context on Chiefs and Anishinaabe leadership to explain why

²²⁶ Snyder, *Gender, Power and Representations of Cree Law*, 78.

²²⁷Emily Snyder, *Gender, power, and representations of Cree law*, (UBC Press, 2018); Cora Voyageur, "Female First Nations Chiefs and the Colonial Legacy in Canada," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 3 (2011).

²²⁸ John Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution*, (University of Toronto Press 2010); Cora Voyageur, "Female First Nations Chiefs and the Colonial Legacy in Canada," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 3 (2011); Mary Eberts, "Victoria's Secret: How to Make a Population of Prey," *Indigenous Human Rights*, ed. by Joyce Green, (Fernwood Publishing, 2014).

²²⁹ Mary Eberts, "Victoria's Secret: How to Make a Population of Prey," *Indigenous Human Rights*, ed. by Joyce Green, (Fernwood Publishing, 2014); Kim Anderson, "Leading By Action: Female Chiefs and the Political Landscape," in *Restoring the Balance First Nations Women, Community, and Culture*, ed. by Éric Guimond, Madeleine Dion Stout, Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, and Inc Gibson Library Connections, (University of Manitoba Press, 2009); Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, (Women's Press, 2016); Pamela Palmater, *Warrior Life: Indigenous Resistance and Resurgence*, (Fernwood Publishing, 2021).

this analysis matters.

For this chapter, I use the term *Ogimaakaanag*, which means leader or Chief.²³⁰ I learnt this term through a webinar titled “Implementing Anishinaabe Laws Forum – Session #2 Anishinaabe Nation in Grand Council Treaty #3.” In Treaty Three, Chiefs and Elders use the word *Ogimaakaanag* to distinguish the Indian Act Chief from the traditional *Ogimaa Kwe* or *Ogimaa*.²³¹ The role of Chief was created under the Indian Act and designed to reflect colonial systems of governance.²³² Band Council governance, therefore, differs significantly from traditional Anishinaabe governance and leadership.

Anishinaabe historian Cary Miller explains that the English definition of “Chief” suggests “solitary decision-making power, coercive authority, and obligatory obedience that is entirely absent from Anishinaabeg conceptions of leadership.”²³³ Basil Johnston (Anishinaabe) defines *ogimauk/ogimauh* as “a chief; a leader; a person who counts many followers, supporter(s).”²³⁴ Alan Corbiere (Anishinaabe) further explains that Anishinaabe governance is grounded in consensus. Leadership flowed from the people, and decision-making involved multiple roles, including “the aanike-ogimaa (sub-chief/deputy chief), netaa-giigidod (orator), giigidowinini (speaker/counsellor), noodaagan (messenger), oshkaabewis (ceremonial attendant), mizhinawe (chief’s attendant/steward), gichi-anishinabeg (elders), and kwewag (Women).”²³⁵ Councils operated at both local and broader levels, and clan systems were central to governance and territory. This history shows that Anishinaabe leadership was shared, relational, and community based. In contrast with the Indian Act, it centralized the authority role of *Ogimaakaanag*. For this reason, this chapter focuses on the colonially created position of Chief rather than on traditional leadership roles.

Miller, in *Ogimaag: Anishinaabeg Leadership, 1760–1845*, notes that historical records often present men as hereditary leaders while omitting the role of First Nations women in

²³⁰ Anishinabek Nation, “Implementing Anishinaabe Laws Forum – Session #2: Anishinaabe Nation in Grand Council Treaty #3,” January 25, 2024, YouTube video, posted February 5, 2024, 01:41:34, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEISxEp6ZG0>.

²³¹ Anishinabek Nation, “,” 40–41:00.

²³² Cora Voyageur, “Female First Nations Chiefs and the Colonial Legacy in Canada,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 3 (2011): 60, doi:10.17953/aicr.35.3. tx7pth12527049p7.

²³³ Cary Miller, *Ogimaag: Anishinaabeg Leadership, 1760–1845* (University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 74.

²³⁴ Basil Johnston, *Anishinaabe Thesaurus* (Michigan State University Press, 2007), 22.

²³⁵ Alan Corbiere, “Anishinaabe Treaty-Making in the 18th-and-19th-Century Northern Great Lakes: From Shared Meanings to Epistemological Chasms” (PhD diss., York University, 2020), 330–31.

leadership positions.²³⁶ Miller and the scholars from *Iapi Debwewin Aansaamb* remind us that records reflect the priorities of those who created them.²³⁷ Reading records critically, with attention to gender neutrality in the context of governance, makes visible what has been obscured.²³⁸ In this chapter, I proceed with the understanding that First Nations women's voices have been erased from the written record.

Women Can Run in Band Elections – Post-1951

In 1951, amendments were made to the Indian Act that permitted First Nations women to run in band elections and hold Chief and Council positions. Elsie Marie Knott, from Curve Lake First Nation, a member of the Anishinabek Nation, was the first female Chief elected in 1952 who held the position of *Ogimaakaanag* for sixteen years.²³⁹ Cora Voyageur (Dene), in “Female First Nations Chiefs and the Colonial Legacy of Canada,” shares that almost two decades after the 1951 amendment, twenty-one First Nations women were elected to their Band Councils.²⁴⁰ However, neither the amendment nor the election of women altered the narrative that governance is “men’s business.”²⁴¹ The exclusion of women from Band elections for almost a century continues to rupture relationalities and responsibilities within the Nation.

In the 2001 report “First Nations Women, Governance and the Indian Act: A Collection of Policy Research Reports,” Judith Sayers identified that the legacy of section 62 of the 1876 Indian Act had entrenched the norm that leadership is exclusively male. Thus, women who ran for leadership positions post-1951 were considered deviations from the norm,²⁴² echoing effects of women not belonging, and the continual undermining of their rich contributions to governance and leadership as a result of stereotypes and gendered assumptions. Similar to Snyder, Voyageur further emphasizes that men are perceived as “natural” leaders for the Nation.²⁴³ The normalcy of male *Ogimaakaanag* set the standard for leadership, which continues to be reinforced through

²³⁶ Miller, *Ogimaag: Anishinaabeg Leadership*, 66–67.

²³⁷ Gamache et al., “A Guide to Inter-Indigenous Co-Labbing,” 71.

²³⁸ Gamache et al., “A Guide to Inter-Indigenous Co-Labbing,” 71-2.

²³⁹ Cora Voyageur, *Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century: First Nations Women Chiefs*, (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), 27.

²⁴⁰ Voyageur, “Female First Nations Chiefs and the Colonial Legacy in Canada,” 60.

²⁴¹ Kim Anderson, “Leading by Action: Female Chiefs and the Political Landscape,” in *Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community, and Culture*, ed. by Éric Guimond et al. (University of Manitoba Press, 2009), 99.

²⁴² Sayers et al., *First Nations Women, Governance and the Indian Act*, 12.

²⁴³ Voyageur, “Female First Nations Chiefs and the Colonial Legacy in Canada,” 69.

patriarchy. This, as Sayers explains,

validates the voices of men by handing them exclusive authority over the governance of First Nations. What is clear in reviewing the literature from a gendered perspective is that First Nations decision-making bodies “have come to be associated with the protection of male privilege and the domination of Aboriginal women” (Dion Stout and Kipling 1998: 21). This is as a result of the internalized patriarchy and devaluation of First Nations women.²⁴⁴

It becomes clear that the implementation of gendered colonial policies and the legal exclusion of women in political positions as facilitated through the Indian Act has marginalized First Nations women. The internalization of these systems, and the resulting devaluation of First Nations women cannot be understated. Our Nations are not only dealing with racism, colonialism, extractivism, and capitalism. We are experiencing persistent gender inequality within our own governance and leadership structures.

Voyageur demonstrates how First Nations women are now subjected to a state-sponsored patriarchal system that is upheld by male *Ogimaakaanag* and their councils. After speaking with leaders, she notes that “many First Nations women are discouraged from seeking decision-making roles outside the home by those who still believe that a woman’s place is in the home.”²⁴⁵ Accordingly, “[t]he women felt that members of their community adopted colonial notions of gender-based tasks and male superiority.”²⁴⁶ As well, she writes that “The women also feel that they require more skills and effort than men in order to be elected. Charismatic men who dominate by sheer force of personality govern some bands ... None of the women interviewed felt that they were charismatic leaders.”²⁴⁷ The truths and stories Voyageur discusses are important. They critically expose the legacy of colonialism and gendered systems of power within our own Nations. Since these institutional structures have been built to keep perpetuating themselves, we must consider why, as Nations, we are choosing to continue to empower these dispossessive patriarchal systems of leadership.

Moreover, not only are women leaders viewed as abnormal or not fit for the position, but there are also no protections to ensure their rights are prioritized. The 2003 report “First Nations

²⁴⁴ Sayers et al., *First Nations Women, Governance and the Indian Act*, 12.

²⁴⁵ Voyageur, “Female First Nations Chiefs and the Colonial Legacy in Canada,” 64.

²⁴⁶ Voyageur, “Female First Nations Chiefs and the Colonial Legacy in Canada,” 70.

²⁴⁷ Voyageur, “Female First Nations Chiefs and the Colonial Legacy in Canada,” 64.

Women, Governance and the Indian Act: A Collection of Policy Research Reports” concluded that governance structures lacked accountability and oversight. These principles are required to ensure women’s rights are both advanced and included.²⁴⁸ The report echoed John Borrows’s 1994 analysis which affirmed and illuminated the need for radical transformation,²⁴⁹ and put the onus on First Nations men to take “responsibility for the continued exclusion of First Nations women.”²⁵⁰ Within the context of this analysis, Indigenous men need to be included to collectively eradicate patriarchal structures from our Nations. It is important to include men who benefit from the exclusion of women and who can ignore the gendered violent realities of women in order to create lasting change. Addressing systemic discrimination within our own Nations is a decolonial requirement for our futures. The work of naming gendered exclusion creates space to ensure it does not repeat itself in the next seven generations. It is a responsibility we all must take up.

Analysis

Gendered Power and the Illusion of Neutrality

To complete this analysis, I reviewed eighty-one resolution documents to determine if and how *kwewag* were included and represented within the Nation. Out of eighty-one resolution reports, the main areas of focus were housing, funding, self-government, policing, social services, health and environment, fishing and hunting, election codes, child welfare, language, education, treaty research programs, and economic development. In summarizing the reflections shared in the opening section of this chapter, the following analysis is written from a place of care that recognizes the sustained efforts to uphold the Nation since time immemorial, while acknowledging that engagement with the settler state constitutes only a recent chapter in our history.

The earliest available report located was from the 1976 All Chiefs’ meeting in Toronto.

²⁴⁸ Sayers et al., *First Nations Women, Governance and the Indian Act*, 21.

²⁴⁹ I adopt Leanne Simpson’s definition of “radical” for the purposes of thinking and actively participating in transformative Anishinaabe resurgence rooted within our own intelligence network systems, epistemologies, and ontologies. “[R]adical means a thorough and comprehensive reform, and I use the term to mean root, to channel the vitality of my Ancestors to create a present that is recognizable to them because it is fundamentally different from the one settler colonialism creates.” “Leanne Betasamosake Simpson: I Am Not Afraid to Be Radical,” YES! Magazine, 17 July 2018, <https://indianz.com/News/2018/07/17/leanne-betasamosake-simpson-i-am-not-afr.asp>.

²⁵⁰ Sayers et al., *First Nations Women, Governance and the Indian Act*, 12.

Immediately, the presence of patriarchy and normalization of maleness become evident. Consider, for instance, how the following resolution regarding government funding is worded:

AND WHEREAS, by reason of identification of race, man sometimes mistakenly considers himself to have superior qualities of such men as Einstein, Bell, Churchill, Tecumseh, Newton, Morse, Edison, and other famous men;

AND WHEREAS, the Great Spirit has endowed man with latent qualities as made manifest in such great persons as these.²⁵¹

The language of this motion highlights how “man” functions as both the subject and the standard. By referencing only famous men and positioning “man” as a baseline of human potential, the resolution implicitly places women against the male norm. The absence of women is not neutral; it signals exclusion. In this instance, the erasure of women capable of achieving similar recognition is both explicit and normalized.

In 1980 the UOI Chiefs’ meeting was held in Sault Ste. Marie. The report confirms that the then-upcoming 1985 Indian Act revisions were a “high priority” for the council.²⁵² Nothing further was written into the record indicating which specific proposed changes were of particular concern. From later that same year, at a November Special General Assembly, motion 5 stated,

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED THAT the following amendment be accepted and incorporated into the Union of Ontario Indians’ Constitutional By-law Handbook as By-law #1, Section 31: In order to be eligible for election to the Office of President; a person must an Indian, must be 21 years of age or older and must be ... a member of a Band having official membership in the Union of Ontario Indians.²⁵³

While this bylaw may appear procedurally neutral, it operates within the confines of the Indian Act’s framework. Given that First Nations historically had limited control over band membership under the Indian Act, this bylaw further entrenches the colonial definition of citizenship and

²⁵¹ Anishinabek Nation, "Union of Ontario Indians All Chiefs' Meeting," King Edward Hotel, Toronto, June 23–26, 1976, 19, https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/1976_June_Toronto-All-Chiefs-Meeting.pdf, accessed August 2, 2025.

²⁵² Anishinabek Nation, “Special General Assembly of the Anishinaabe Nations of the Union of Ontario Indians,” Ramada Inn, Sault Ste. Marie, November 25–27, 1980, 16, https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/1980_November_Sault-Ste.-Marie-Special-General-Assembly.pdf, accessed August 2, 2025.

²⁵³ Anishinabek Nation, “Special General Assembly of the Anishinaabe Nations,” 4.

enrollment for First Nations. The UOI is not a subsidiary of the settler-state Indian Act; it is an independent sovereign legal entity derived from the sovereignty of thirty-nine First Nations. As a result, it exists outside of the Indian Act and is an independent political and legal structure. This bylaw adopts the customs of Indian Act membership despite the UOI existing beyond its jurisdiction. The adoption of Indian Act membership criteria entrenches colonial governance structures. In doing so, it limits the Nation's sovereign authority to determine its own citizenship and to ensure the inclusion of *kwewag* independent of the settler state.

Attention to so-called gender-neutral language is also necessary, especially when the explicit inclusion reveals its limitations. For example, the 1977 assembly records show consideration for a non-male Chief, stating, “[I]f a Chief was to Chair the meeting, he/she would not be able to participate as freely as the other Chiefs do.”²⁵⁴ The deliberate insertion of he/she signals that default language otherwise presumes maleness. The absence of equivalent male identifiers reveals that what is often presented as gender-neutral language is in practice, male-centered. In this context, neutrality functions as concealment – another way systems of gendered power are normalized and obscured.

Assemblies in the years 1977–1980 included further references to the 1985 Indian Act revisions. However, proposed amendments to settler-state law during this period focused on patriation of the 1982 Constitution Act rather than on substantive changes to the Indian Act itself. Many resolutions expressed concern over the lack of constitutional protections for the Anishinabek Nation and its inherent rights. The lack of codified recognition was described as “endanger[ing] the survival of the Anishinabek.”²⁵⁵

While these discussions demonstrate an acute awareness of constitutional vulnerability in relation to settler-state governance, there were no statements regarding the ongoing exclusion of First Nations women under the Indian Act. At the time, the act continued to regulate and restrict women's status and band membership, yet an acknowledgment of this gendered harm is absent from the resolutions. Both the Indian Act and the Constitution Act of 1982 function as instruments of settler-state authority, each carrying the capacity to produce structural harm. However, within these records, only one is identified as threatening the Nation's survival. The

²⁵⁴ Anishinabek Nation, “Union of Ontario Indians All Chiefs Meeting,” Batchewana Indian Reserve, August 16–18, 1977, 4, https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/1977_August_Batchewana-All-Chiefs-Meeting_2.pdf, accessed August 2, 2025.

²⁵⁵ Anishinabek Nation, “Special General Assembly of the Anishinaabe Nations,” 6.

gendered violence embedded within the Indian Act remains unacknowledged, rendered invisible within broader constitutional issues.

At the 1980 November gathering, motion 19 proposed the formation of a “First Nations Confederacy.” This would align with the historical political purpose of “joining with the other Nations for peace, strength and unity of purpose.”²⁵⁶ The recognition of the absence of Aboriginal rights within the Constitution Act of 1982 prompted action and enforced traditional practices of mobilizing with other Nations to protect interests against intruders. However, it demonstrates for the purposes of this analysis that the Anishinabek Nation was willing to form a new confederacy to protect the rights and interests for the Nation’s future. There was no urgency for Nations to stand together to protect First Nations women who were being disenfranchised, dispossessed, and disappeared. This distinction confirms that patriarchal power is upheld by colonial laws and band governance. First Nations women’s rights and liberties were omitted and legally nullified through the Indian Act. This dispossession is where First Nations men’s patriarchal power and privilege is derived from.

Indigenous women were fighting against the gendered and racist oppression facilitated through the Indian Act long before the 1985 amendments. Research findings conclude that in 1983, the Anishinabek Nation expressed concern regarding the “perils of the past” and acknowledged the 1951 Indian Act revisions.²⁵⁷ However, no specifics are provided. It can only infer that this refers to the 1951 amendments that formally permitted First Nations women to participate in Band Council governance. But as Snyder suggests, we must remain critical of the interpretations that default to masculine centered readings. This is poignant when the latter portion of the motion highlights the efforts to address oppression resulting from the “perils of the past,” while offering no reflections on the eradication of gender discrimination.²⁵⁸

In 1985, concerns were raised about Bill C-31, which was the proposed amendment to end gender discrimination in the Indian Act. The relevant motion reads as follows:

WHEREAS Bill C-31 does not meet the needs of First Nations Government in that the First Nations Governments would not have sole jurisdiction on decisions concerning Band membership; and, THAT members recognized by First Nations

²⁵⁶ Anishinabek Nation, “Special General Assembly of the Anishinaabe Nations,” 9.

²⁵⁷ Anishinabek Nation, “Resolutions: Anishinabek Grand Council,” Birch Island, Ontario, August 2–5, 1983, 7, https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/1983_August_Birch-Island-Grand-Council.pdf, accessed August 3, 2025.

²⁵⁸ Anishinabek Nation, “Resolutions: Anishinabek Grand Council.”

would not necessarily be included on the status list of the Federal Government;

and, THAT the Federal Government does not guarantee adequate, or any, resources to cover the burden of returning or new Band members.²⁵⁹

The first part of this resolution makes space to recognize that member Nations are welcoming non-status members on their membership list. The second part of the resolution makes visible the monetary concerns of returning or new band members who would regain status under the Constitution Act's 1985 amendments. The financial stress was a large concern for many First Nations when Bill-31 was introduced.²⁶⁰ Bill C-31 attempted to reverse gender discrimination and make First Nations women equal to men. While widely celebrated as a transformative step, the records of the Anishinabek Nation show that only concerns were raised about Bill C-31. There is no recognition that it could bring positive change to the Nation or to those who were wrongfully disenfranchised based on discriminatory policies. These proposed changes were seen only as a "burden" on record.

Later in the same report, the following statement is made:

WHEREAS the provisions in the Bill are unfair and discriminatory and arbitrarily exclude the Band Membership those Indian people who voluntary enfranchised with the encouragement of the Federal Government; and, WHEREAS the process for reinstatement of First Generation Indian children is arbitrary and reflects the Federal Government's concern about costs; and,

THAT concerns about funding the reinstatement of Indian people who were wrongfully excluded from their communities is not a legitimate reason for not recognizing the sole jurisdiction of First Nations Governments on decisions concerning Band Membership.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Chiefs of the Anishinabek Nation direct the Union of Ontario Indians' Executive to obtain a legal opinion concerning the feasibility of making a constitutional challenge to the validity of Bill C-31.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Anishinabek Nation, "Resolutions: Anishinabek Grand Council, Union of Ontario Indians," Skyline, Toronto: May 21–23, 1985, 6, https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/1985_May_Toronto-Grand-Council.pdf, accessed August 3, 2025.

²⁶⁰ Green, "Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship."

²⁶¹ Anishinabek Nation, "Resolutions: Anishinabek Grand Council, Union of Ontario Indians," 9.

The Nation confirms that a legal opinion must be made to challenge the bill's validity regarding voluntary disenfranchisement and first-generation youth. There are no conditions written into the record to ensure the reversal of gender discrimination. The concerns focus on voluntary enfranchisement and the Anishinabek Nation's jurisdiction. The Nation does not explicitly state the importance of the inclusion of women by repealing legalized gender discrimination within the Indian Act. Bill C-31 is not raised again in the 1986 Grand Council Report.

In October 1989, the Special Chiefs' Assembly in Spanish River makes reference to family violence. They commit to starting training programs to begin comprehensive discussions on interventions into family violence.²⁶² While family violence is referenced, there is zero acknowledgement of gendered violence and the multiple forms of oppression experienced by First Nations women. Therefore, this analysis on reports from the 1980s has shown that there were small interventions made toward the inclusion of the legal rights of Anishinaabe *kwewag*, but that specific protections for *kwewag* against the matrix of colonialism and patriarchy were absent.

1990s

In July 1991, the assembly passed motion 17, which initiated efforts to re-establish traditional forms of governance and restore relationships within the Anishinabek Nation.²⁶³ During this period, and in subsequent special assemblies, there were no specific references to *kwewag*, *kwewag* in leadership, or the formation of specific *kwewag* councils. In the absence of inclusion, the framework of this restored "traditional" governance can be read as implicitly male and patriarchal.

No mentions of *kwewag* are recorded until 1998, at the Grand Council meeting in Pic River. In this assembly, the creation of an Anishinabek Women's Advisory Council is moved by Chief Leona Nawegahbow from Whitefish River First Nation. The motion states:

WHEREAS the challenges facing women include a lack of service support, duplication of representation, lack of employment and training, justice, health, bill

²⁶² Anishinabek Nation, "Resolutions: Union of Ontario Indians' Special Chiefs' Assembly," Spanish River First Nation, October 18–19, 1989, 11, https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/1989_October_Spanish-River-Special-Chiefs_-_Assembly.pdf, accessed August 2, 2025.

²⁶³ Anishinabek Nation, "Resolutions: Anishinabek Grand Council," Algonquins of Golden Lake, Makwa Community Centre, July 23–25, 1991, 16, https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/1991_July_Golden-Lake-Grand-Council.pdf, accessed August 3, 2025.

C-31, aboriginal and treaty rights and government cutbacks;

and, WHEREAS there is a need to create a process to increase local awareness and increase support and advocacy on women's issues by the Anishinabek leadership.²⁶⁴

The motion explains that in 1992, a steering committee consisting of *Ogimaa Kwe* had been instructed to address gender violence. I was unable to locate the 1992 steering committee document. This was the first recorded step to address the realities experienced by *kwewag*. This resolution recognizes the responsibilities of Anishinabek leadership to advocate for safer, more inclusive Nations. It does not solely place the onus for this discrimination on the settler state but takes responsibility to change these gendered realities.

In 1999, the assembly agenda included the item “Mnaa-Gegaazwat Kweok – Celebration of Women 1998.” The report recorded celebrating the work of the Anishinabek Women's Advisory Council the prior year and indicated that a conference be established for *kwewag* to address specific concerns.²⁶⁵ At that same gathering, resolution 99/19 adopted significant milestones to ensure the inclusion of *kwewag* in political decision-making. The Grand Council officially accepted the principles and committed to implementing the Restoration of Jurisdiction Strategy.²⁶⁶ This strategy had been introduced in 1996 and did not specifically include women. However, in 1997, a separate meeting with members of the UOI confirmed that *kwewag* could be included in the “political decision making of the Nation.”²⁶⁷ The motion states:

WHEREAS the Anishinabekweok felt quite strongly that the women must support the Leaders of the Nation and must have meaningful participation within the Anishinabek Nation; and ...

WHEREAS the Anishinabekweok's recommendation again is for meaningful participation within the Anishinabek Nation; and WHEREAS as the Anishinabek Nation we believe Our Creator has given us roles and responsibilities as men,

²⁶⁴ Anishinabek Nation, “Anishinabek Grand Council Resolutions,” Ojibways of Pic River First Nation, May 26–28, 1998, 4, https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/1998_May_Pic-River-Grand-Council.pdf, accessed August 4, 2025.

²⁶⁵ Anishinabek Nation, “Anishinabek Grand Council,” Curve Lake First Nation, June 1–3, 1999, 22, https://anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/1999_June_Curve-Lake-Grand-Council.pdf, accessed August 4, 2025.

²⁶⁶ Anishinabek Nation, “Anishinabek Grand Council,” 2.

²⁶⁷ Anishinabek Nation, “Anishinabek Grand Council,” 22.

women and children to our Nation.²⁶⁸

This resolution puts the advocacy, roles, and responsibilities of *kwewag* on the record for the first time since the organization's inception in 1949. Three years after the political inclusion of *kwewag*, in 1999 *kwewag* were to officially nominate representatives to join the UOI Board of Directors.²⁶⁹ After more than half a century of being erased from the written record as a result of colonialism and patriarchy, *kwewag* decision-making authority was acknowledged by the Anishinabek Nation.

2000s

There is no mention of *kwewag*'s rights from 1999 until the resolution of 2002/05. This resolution confirms the establishment of an Anishinaabe Kwe Wuk Council. The motion records that "the goal of the Anishinaabe Kwe Wuk Council [is] to work towards the holistic well-being of Anishinaabe Kwe Wuk at the First Nations level and to support community education to strengthen and promote healthy family life, Anishinabek culture and language."²⁷⁰ The work of the council is necessary and well-respected by members of the Anishinabek Nation. Yet the resolution relegates the work of the council to the social sector of the Nation. Its role as a body of political decision-makers that was affirmed in 1999 is absent. Indigenous feminist scholars such as Kim Anderson, Gina Starblanket, and Voyageur have written that First Nations women who enter politics are often only seen as leaders with decision-making capacities in social spheres. Scholars emphasize that women leaders are perceived as helpers of family and are relegated to roles regarding health and well-being, with no place in making political decisions on matters such as land, jurisdiction, self-government, and law.²⁷¹ The concept that women belong in

²⁶⁸ Anishinabek Nation, "Anishinabek Grand Council," 27.

²⁶⁹ Anishinabek Nation, "Anishinabek Grand Council," 22.

²⁷⁰ Anishinabek Nation, "Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Assembly," Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek, June 4–6, 2002, 5, https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2002_June_Biinjitiwaabik-Zaaging-Anishinaabek.pdf, accessed August 5, 2025.

²⁷¹ Kim Anderson, "Leading By Action: Female Chiefs and the Political Landscape," In *Restoring the Balance First Nations Women, Community, and Culture*, ed. by Éric Guimond, Madeleine Dion Stout, Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, and Inc Gibson Library Connections, (University of Manitoba Press, 2009); Cora Voyageur, "Female First Nations Chiefs and the Colonial Legacy in Canada," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 3 (2011); Gina Starblanket, "Red Ticket Women: Revisiting the Political Contributions of the Indian Rights for Indian Women's Movement," in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 3rd ed, ed. by Gina Starblanket, (Fernwood Publishing, 2024).

politics only to support social spheres demonstrates the ways in which patriarchy restructured the Nation. This contemporary example of the limited nature of *kwewag* councils is different than their historic purpose. Traditionally, *kwewag* councils directed leaders. These leaders were known to be vessels who reiterated the decisions and instructions of *kwewag* councils.²⁷² The 2002 motion confirming the Anishinaabe Kwe Wuk Council ignores the roles *kwewag* held in the past, defying traditional forms of Anishinaabe governance and leadership.

In her study “Leading by Action: Female Chiefs and the Political Landscape,” Anderson details women’s governance councils. I want to make clear that this critique does not include all women’s councils. Those who Anderson interviewed remained anonymous. I am including this study to share a different perspective to broaden my analysis. Anderson explains that the *Ogimaakaanag* interviewed revealed that when sitting on women’s councils, they had to fight for their authority to be recognized.²⁷³ She recounts that some *Ogimaakaanag* are concerned about the power of women’s councils. In Anderson’s study it became clear that negative assumptions about women in leadership positions have male leaders concerned that women’s councils can overtake and overshadow the work of Chief and Council and eventually detract from resources available to the Nation.²⁷⁴ These concerns reveal that fear remains cemented in patriarchy. There is a fear that women will diminish First Nations’ self-determination. Thus, First Nations women are viewed as having no place in leadership or governance.

Today, the Anishinabek Nation Kwe-Wuk Advisory Council continues its important mandate as a strong pillar in Anishinabek governance and leadership. The council’s responsibilities and roles are noted as follows:

The Anishinabek Nation Kwe-Wuk Advisory Council supports the restoration of Anishinabek Nation governance and jurisdiction through advocacy and coordination. They advise, represent, encourage, and offer strength in building safe and healthy families and communities.

The Anishinabek Nation Kwe-Wuk Advisory Council represents the women’s voice and issues at the leadership level, and advocates on their behalf. They are the collective voice of the Anishinabek Nation Kwe-Wuk to the overall

²⁷² Cary Miller, “Maajiishkaatoon Anishinaabe Naaknigewinan Maawnjidwin: Implementing Anishinaabe Laws Forum,” November 20, 2023, dir. Anishinabek Nation, YouTube video, posted January 24, 2024, 01:07:33, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xD3IZ0zjWs>. 38:24; and Barb Cameron, personal communication.

²⁷³ Anderson, “Leading by Action,” 118.

²⁷⁴ Anderson, “Leading by Action,” 118.

development and implementation of the Nation Building/Wedokdodwin (the Anishinabek Nation's strategic plan for political action).²⁷⁵

I trust the advisory council and say *chi-miigwech* for the work its members are doing for Anishinaabe *kwewag* and their persistence in addressing colonialism.

Moving through the 2000s records, we find little mention of *kwe*-specific initiatives or references from 2002 until 2007. At the Garden River Grand Council Assembly, the Anishinabek Nation Special Assembly declared their support for the McIvor decision.²⁷⁶ The McIvor case determined that the Indian Act can unequally discriminate against First Nations women and violate their charter rights. In 2007, in the same resolution, the council affirmed the rights of First Nations as self-determining Nations, meaning they have the exclusive right to determine citizenship and reject the Indian Act and section 6 "status Indian" classifications.²⁷⁷ There is no elaboration of the efforts of Sharon McIvor, the ground-breaking case, and the work done to advance the equality for First Nations women who are discriminated against.

2010s

Following years of non-specific gender references in the written records, in 2010, at the Fort William Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Assembly, the Anishinabek Nation raised awareness of Bill C-3, Gender Equality in the Indian Registration Act. The resolution affirms and stipulates the Anishinabek Nation's jurisdiction over citizenship. The Anishinabek Nation aligned with the court's decision in *McIvor v. Canada*, and agreed that Bill C-3 did not go far enough to atone for and remedy the gender discrimination written into the Indian Act.²⁷⁸ The motions and resolutions clearly address the concerns about the legislated disenfranchisement of status women and their children for marrying "out" of their Nation or having a child with a non-

²⁷⁵ Anishinabek Nation, "Nation Council," accessed August 9, 2025, <https://anishinabek.ca/governance/nation-council/>.

²⁷⁶ Anishinabek Nation, "Anishinabek Nation Special Assembly," Ojibways of Garden River, November 26–27, 2007, 4, https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2007_November_Ojibways-of-Garden-River.pdf, accessed August 6, 2025.

²⁷⁷ Anishinabek Nation, "Anishinabek Nation Special Assembly," 4.

²⁷⁸ Anishinabek Nation, "Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Assembly," Fort William First Nation, June 8–10, 2010, 8, https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2010_June_Fort-William-Grand-Council-Assembly.pdf, accessed August 7, 2025.

status man.²⁷⁹ The proposed solution from the Anishinabek Nation remained focused on First Nations being responsible for citizenship codes.

The assembly in 2014 at Long Lake 58 brought a monumental shift in the inclusion of *kwewag* within the written record. The resolution states, “Our mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunties, cousins are the backbone and life blood of our Nations.”²⁸⁰ It is important to see the importance of *kwewag* recognized within the resolution reports, which demonstrates a transformative shift is occurring. The assembly further called for more support to end the violence against First Nations women and urged the launch of a national inquiry into the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people. The Nation also committed to ending violence in its communities and in urban centres to foster a peaceful and safe society.²⁸¹

Four years later, in 2018, the councils acknowledged and requested funding for research to support the efforts of “Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls, Men and Boys Mandate and to Address Human Trafficking.”²⁸² The subsequent year, there was a public recommendation for the Anishinabek Nation to strengthen relationships with the Ontario Native Women’s Association to support the ongoing work on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), and to collaborate on implementing the Calls to Justice.²⁸³

A specific inclusion of *kwewag* appears in the resolutions of the Anishinabek Nation assembly in 2020. The assembly concluded that the “Anishinabek Nation Kwe-Wuk Council [is] to ensure the full implementation of recommendations made by the National Inquiry into MMIWG – as specifically highlighted in the Anishinabek Nation’s MMIWG Strategic Action

²⁷⁹ Anishinabek Nation, “Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Assembly,” Fort William First Nation, 8.

²⁸⁰ Anishinabek Nation, “Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Assembly,” Long Lake #58 First Nation, June 3–5, 2014, 3, <https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2014-June-Long-Lac-58-GCA.pdf>, accessed August 6, 2025.

²⁸¹ Anishinabek Nation, “Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Assembly,” Long Lake #58 First Nation, 4.

²⁸² Anishinabek Nation, “Resolution Package,” Whitefish River First Nation, November 14–15, 2018, 13, <https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2018-November-Whitefish-River-SCA.pdf>, accessed August 7, 2025.

²⁸³ Anishinabek Nation, “Anishinabek Nation Fall Assembly 2019,” Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, November 5–6, 2019, 6, <https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2019-November-Chippewas-of-the-Thames-GCA.pdf>, accessed August 7, 2025.

Plan.”²⁸⁴ It is reassuring that the Nation committed to the full implementation of transformative changes required to protect the sovereignty of Anishinaabe *kwewag* and Two-Spirit people.

In the resolutions of the 2022 Red Rock assembly, we see a significant shift regarding Anishinaabe *kwewag* and the recognition of gender fluidity. This motion is specific; it addresses an issue and then provides an immediate solution for the Anishinabek Nation to enact. The motion “Evolving Gender-Based Policy to Include Anishinabek Principles and Values” reads as follows:

MAANOO-DA-KIDOOMGAD - LET IT BE SAID:

1. Anishinabek values and principles are wholistic and encompass our way of life that includes promoting inclusiveness and equity, particularly around gender-based roles, responsibilities, and identities;
2. Ceremony and tradition are a way of Anishinabek life, including rites of passage and protocols that ensured wholistic community and individual self-care embracing spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental approaches and response;
3. The evolution of policy at community and organizational level(s) must have a foundation of Anishinabek values in its development and creation towards progressive standards, procedures, and protocols that center the health and wellbeing of one another;
4. Prevalent modern policy neglects to acknowledge sacred and ceremonious protocols that existed within our models of nationhood, in particular teachings and practices around Moon Time, which acknowledges this time as more than a physiological function experienced by those who menstruate; and
5. The lack of inclusion of Moon Time within leave policies is still widespread, despite that it promotes wholistic wellbeing, removing stigma around menstruation (and related physiological experiences), increases morale, and promotes prioritizing the health of our citizens over procedural conventions.

BIGIDNAMONG DASH GIINWI ANISHINABE-GIMAAG-
MAAWNJIDIWAAD: LET IT BE ACTED UPON, THAT WE, THE
ANISHINABEK CHIEFS-IN-ASSEMBLY:

1. Direct the Anishinabek Nation to implement an Anishinabek values system in the development and evolution of policy and procedures;

²⁸⁴ Anishinabek Nation, “Anishinabek Nation, Grand Council Assembly Resolutions Kit,” Dokis First Nation, November 3–4, 2020, 34, <https://anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2020-November-Dokis-GCA.pdf>, accessed August 7, 2025.

2. Direct that implementation not be limited to pre-existing sick leave policies such as defining moon time as an illness that needs to be addressed through existing sick day allotment;
3. Direct the Anishinabek Nation to ensure flexibility and equity within the development, eliminating barriers to leave requests such as requiring supportive documentation from healthcare provider; and
4. Direct that development be centered in gender-based neutrality such as narrowing policy to a feministic approach and the acknowledgement of gender-fluidity.²⁸⁵

Significantly, we see acknowledgements of gender fluidity, inclusivity, gender-based roles, and the importance of rites of passage (discussed in the next chapter). This motion demonstrates that an internal analysis had been done to determine if Anishinabek Nation policies favoured men at the expense of *kwewag*. This is confirmed by the phrases “[p]revalent modern policy neglects” and “[t]he lack of inclusion of Moon Time within leave policies.”²⁸⁶ Following these statements is a recognition of the ways in which the Anishinabek Nation can refuse prevalent colonial stereotypes about menstruation and be more inclusive by requiring policies to legally include leave for those who may be on their moon time. Additionally, the wording directs leadership to reflect an anti-patriarchal approach in this change. This is a momentous shift in the previous exclusion of gendered existences, realities, and experiences.

The eighty-one resolution reports that were reviewed reveal the complicated gendered history of the Anishinabek Nation. While there was evidence of patriarchal norms and colonial legacies throughout the late 2000s into 2020, we also witness how change is occurring. More space is being created for the distinctive needs, authority, and responsibilities to and for *kwewag*. I dream that this work will continue, and that within the next generations there will be no place where *kwewag* and Two-Spirit people are excluded. Their voices must be heard and their realities captured through resolutions, councils, and political decisions.

1993 RCAP Submission

Turning back to 1993, I analyze one further document, the report "Anishinabek

²⁸⁵ Anishinabek Nation, “Grand Council Assembly 2022, Resolution Package,” Red Rock Indian Band, 2022, 9, <https://anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022-Red-Rock-Indian-Band-Hybrid-GCA.pdf>, accessed August 8, 2025.

²⁸⁶ Anishinabek Nation, “Grand Council Assembly 2022, Resolution Package,” 9.

Traditional Governing: A New Era for the Anishinabek: Understanding the Past for the Challenges of Tomorrow,” submitted by the UOI to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP).²⁸⁷ The report offers a rich contribution to the discourse of Anishinabek self-government and traditional government. It no doubt had an influence on the current *Anishinaabe Chi-Naaknigewin*, the written constitution of the Anishinaabeg, and the *Ngo Dwe Waanggizid*, the Great Law of the Anishinabek Nation. In this section of the chapter, I will examine three sections of the report using the same Indigenous feminist legal analysis applied to the resolutions discussed above. Through this analysis, I assess whether patriarchy has been imported into Anishinabek leadership and governance.

Brock Pitawanakwat’s (Anishinaabe) dissertation “Anishinaabemodaa Pane Oodenang – A Qualitative Study of Anishinaabe Language Revitalization as Self-Determination in Manitoba and Ontario,” explains that Anishinaabemowin is structurally distinct from English and does not rely on the rigid separations imposed through pronouns such as he/she/it/we/them.²⁸⁸ The prevalence of gendered and individualizing pronouns in English, contrast with Anishinaabemowin makes the deliberate exclusion of *kwewag* particularly apparent. Inclusive pronouns therefore reveal how language can therefore expose how supposedly gender neutral terminology often remains male-centered, especially when juxtaposed with the explicit absences of references to *kwewag*:

The RCAP submission document solely references and identifies men as leaders of the Nation yet is inclusive in its terminology for people. An example of this is in Part One of the report, “Pre-Contact”:

The Anishinabek lived their lives in accordance with the laws of the Creator, which meant they became the caretakers of the earth and of each other. Their approach to life and life’s situations was formulated upon a collective vision that would require the consensus of the entire group. No single member would be left unsatisfied or denied their right to be considered. The conduct or protocol that was a part of the Anishinabek philosophy was their acknowledgment of the

²⁸⁷ The documents in the previous section were internal; however, the RCAP submission was an external facing document and submission to the settler-state on the future of self-government. The inclusion of this document demonstrates how Anishinaabe self-government was meant to be understood and practiced in the future.

²⁸⁸ Brock Pitawanakwat, “Anishinaabemodaa Pane Oodenang – A Qualitative Study of Anishinaabe Language Revitalization as Self-Determination in Manitoba and Ontario” (PhD diss., University of Victoria, 2009), 226, <https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/2c0db77c-41a8-4963-b787-0936c0a5398d/content>.

universal order of things. Man had a role within nature which required him to act within the principles of equality and freedom.²⁸⁹

The wording of the quote remains inclusive and non-gendered until the last sentence. Given that other sections of the report employ inclusive language such as “people,” the deliberate shift to referencing men’s roles within nature effectively erases *kwewag*. The omission of *kwewag*’s roles and leadership positions within the Nation reinforces the notion that men historically occupied dominant and superior positions. This narrative sustains male centered privilege while presenting it as natural and neutral.

The section entitled “Justice” within Part One begins with a quote from George Copwat, an Ojibwa Chief. He states, “The more a man is treated as a brother, the less the demand for law.”²⁹⁰ Exclusively using the male perspective continues to disappear *kwewag* within the record. It does not have to be this way. The report includes the following quote from Peter Jones: “They are taught by their Chiefs and wise men to observe a certain line of conduct as to be good and hospitable.”²⁹¹ While the report details the importance of good leadership, responsibilities, and teachings, what is written into the record is that only “wise men” are responsible for bringing up future leaders.

“The Grand Council” section of the report details that this governance body comprises of “Chiefs, Elders, Principal Men and Attendants.”²⁹² These individuals would present various important issues to the Nation and make decisions. While the authority of leaders was derived by the people of the community, the report makes clear that only men are envisioned to be in leadership positions. This stance devalues the Nation’s core principles of consensus-based governance with checks and balances when *kwewag* are missing.

Additionally, the report does not mention historic *kwewag* councils. One can assume this is a deliberate exclusion to further cement patriarchy and protect its associated privilege. For example, the report states that

²⁸⁹ Union of Ontario Indians, “Anishinabek Traditional Governing: A New Era for the Anishinabek: Understanding the Past for the Challenges of Tomorrow,” Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Intervenor Program, July 1993, 9.

²⁹⁰ Union of Ontario Indians, “Anishinabek Traditional Governing,” 11.

²⁹¹ Union of Ontario Indians, “Anishinabek Traditional Governing,” 13.

²⁹² Union of Ontario Indians, “Anishinabek Traditional Governing,” 13.

Authority was vested in the people, who, if they felt their leader misrepresented them or his actions were questionable, would “quietly withdraw their support” and he would concede. The issue of authority was not set in a system of hierarchy, it was diffused and dispersed amongst the Anishinabek.²⁹³

Ironically, written into the submission is the absence of hierarchy. However, the use of certain words and tone indicate that a gendered hierarchy is prevalent within the Nation.

Further, the report submits that “the whole underlying concept behind the Anishinabek view of resources was based on man’s role within the environment. Man was equal to the earth and played a role that would benefit his surroundings. Man was not to dominate the environment and attempt to control it at his will, but cherish it and respect it for the gifts it had to contribute.”²⁹⁴ This passage unilaterally affirms that the Anishinabek Nation is organized around men and their relations to *aki* and the more-than-human. It fails to reference the specific relationships *kwewag* have with *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human that organize teachings and rooted perspectives.

There was a choice made by leaders to use the commanding tone of “man,” which appeals to the settler state’s preference for patriarchy. This is an overt display of colonial masculinities. While promoting the well-being of every Anishinaabe without “divisions of gender, age or other issues,”²⁹⁵ the document submitted to the settler state is dense with patriarchal language and affirmations of gendered discrimination. Throughout the report, pronouns of he/she is referenced, indicating again the deliberate assumption of he/him/man throughout to the detriment of other inclusive language. We know this is not our way.

In the second part of the report, “Governance Under the Indian Act,” details the totalitarian effects of Indian Act leadership, the lack of actual representation of the citizens of the Nation, and elitist decision-makers. The report confirms that Indian Act governance is based on assumed and imported conflict opposed to trusting, relational Nations.²⁹⁶ There is no reference to how the Indian Act implemented legal restrictions on the active participation of women in Band Councils.

This report submitted to the RCAP on traditional governance obscures the truth of

²⁹³ Union of Ontario Indians, “Anishinabek Traditional Governing,” 14.

²⁹⁴ Union of Ontario Indians, “Anishinabek Traditional Governing,” 18.

²⁹⁵ Union of Ontario Indians, “Anishinabek Traditional Governing,” 18.

²⁹⁶ Union of Ontario Indians, “Anishinabek Traditional Governing,” 20–22.

leadership. There is an apparent desire for the Nation to be recognized by the hierarchical patriarchal settler state. The language caters to the patriarchal values that the settler state is accustomed to. The contents of the report demonstrate an absence of *kwewag*. This absence confirms the ways in which patriarchal power is protected and reproduced in Anishinaabe governance and leadership.

Leaders

Prior to the ratification of the Anishinabek Nation Governance Agreement in 2022, the Anishinabek Nation held community meetings to hear from and talk with citizens. It is not clear if there were any *kwewag*-specific meetings. However, because of the work that was done, a report was published in 2018 titled “The Revitalization of Anishinabek Legal Traditions.” This document details aspects of traditional legal customs. Of particular note, the report emphasizes the importance of *kwewag* for the health of the Nation. As the report states, “Anishinaabe law recognized that life could not be sustained without women. It was important to our peoples to respect this law regarding our women to ensure continued balance and sustained health of our nations.”²⁹⁷ This powerful statement on legal traditions emulates pre-colonial teachings of *kwewag* that were muted because of the import of colonialism and patriarchy. The distinct respect for *kwewag* in this report resembles the resolutions in the 2020s Grand Assembly reports. It confirms that radically alternative realities can exist while demonstrating the significance of codified inclusions of Anishinaabe *kwewag*. It asserts the importance of balance in the absence of hierarchy for a healthy safe future.

As we near the conclusion of this chapter’s analysis, I turn toward the changes that have been made and those still to come. In 2018, the Chiefs of Ontario hosted a “First Nations Women’s Leadership Summit” for First Nations women to come together to address and share concerns. There was overwhelming support to have an annual summit; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the summit was paused while Nations focused on the safety and health of their citizens. In 2023, the second summit was held, titled “Sharing Our Strengths.” At this summit, the attendees were asked three questions, and responses were shared through an

²⁹⁷ Anishinabek Nation, *Revitalization of Anishinabek Legal Traditions: Regional Sessions, Final Summary Report*, (Anishinabek Nation Legal Department and Law Foundation of Ontario, 2018), 13, <https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Revitalization-of-Anishinabek-Legal-Traditions-Final-Report.pdf>, accessed August 9, 2025).

infographic in the published findings.

The first question that was asked to one hundred participants was, “What three words describe First Nations women’s leadership?” The one-word responses were “strong,” “powerful,” “resilient,” “empowering,” “compassionate,” “uplifting,” “heart-centred,” “transformative,” “proud,” “strength,” “smart,” “kind,” and “beautiful.”²⁹⁸ These responses demonstrate the ways in which First Nations women leaders view themselves. The answers show not only the powerful tenacity of women but the ways in which they choose to lead beyond male-dominant leadership values that center their sovereignty and relational approach to decision-making.

Second, attendees were asked to provide two words to respond to the question, “What contributes to women’s power?” The most common descriptors were “support,” “ancestors,” “teachings,” “strengths,” “confidence,” “unity,” “humility,” “honesty,” “our voice,” “sacredness of women,” and “love for community.”²⁹⁹ Based on these responses, working collectively to ensure that future leaders are aware of the importance of these teachings is paramount. This is where we must invest our time: in protecting our relations, teaching respect, honouring the Seven Sacred Grandparent Teachings, and encouraging women to be proud of their leadership.

The third question the participants were asked was, “What challenges/barriers do First Nations women leaders face?” The challenges they identified were “lateral violence,” “misogyny,” “patriarchy,” “paternalism,” “racism,” “unrecognized,” “discrimination,” “colonialism,” “marginalization,” “no support,” “governments,” “restrictive gender norms,” “policies and legislation,” “poverty,” “bias,” “resistance to change,” “oppression by some males,” “Western systems,” “being heard,” “jealously,” “seen as equal,” and “sexism.”³⁰⁰ The experiences of First Nations women and the barriers they face within leadership are daunting. The legacy of patriarchy and colonialism is evident in each of these responses. Despite having women in leadership positions, the structures themselves have not changed.

The attendees at the 2023 summit proposed solutions to circumvent the persistence of patriarchy. The attendees at the summit brought attention to the importance of supporting women

²⁹⁸ Chiefs of Ontario, *First Nations Women’s Leadership Summit 2023: Sharing Our Strengths – Summary Report*, (Chiefs of Ontario, 2023), 12, <https://chiefs-of-ontario.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/COO-Womens-Summary-Report.pdf>, accessed August 9, 2025.

²⁹⁹ Chiefs of Ontario, *First Nations Women’s Leadership Summit 2023*, 13.

³⁰⁰ Chiefs of Ontario, *First Nations Women’s Leadership Summit 2023*, 17.

through “reclaiming the matriarchal role in communities whereas now it is dominated by male leaders.” The solution is “the inclusion and participation of women and youth councils at assemblies and in community governance.”³⁰¹ Systemic transformation of leadership and governance includes re-centering voices that have been disappeared.

The importance of including these questions and responses asked by the Chiefs of Ontario is to explicitly share the encouragement of women leaders and the important work they are doing. Their governance and leadership must be honoured and revered. The responses also indicate the work that still needs to be done. It has been seventy-four years since women were legally allowed to be a part of Indian Act Band governance, yet patriarchal power remains. The Chiefs of Ontario summit uncovers the active practice of building alternate realities to male-dominated governance.

Another contemporary example of the prevalence of patriarchy comes from a 2024 online event, “Implementing Anishinaabe Laws Forum – Session #2 Anishinaabe Nation in Grand Council.” The presenter shared that the role of the Grand Council was to invite the member Nations of the Anishinabek Nation to gather and be heard by elected leadership. However, in the invitation to gather, the presenter said it would be an opportunity to share “what are the issues facing men, what are the issues facing the elders, what are the issues facing the youth.”³⁰² Using Monture-Angus’s and Snyder’s analyses, this shows how the silent yet powerful omission of women’s issues continues to sustain patriarchy. Also, it dismisses gendered realities of women and sets the tone that their experiences are not valued or worthy to address. It demonstrates the subtle yet dispossessive force at the intersection between colonialism and patriarchy.

These responses show that this historical legacy is not isolated. Instead, it is active, present, and pervasive. It continues to harm Anishinaabe leadership and governance. The 2023 “First Nations Women’s Leadership Summit” attendees were unmistakable in their guidance, a systemic shift from a patriarchal society toward traditional governance that begins with the youth and re-teaching traditional knowledge that exists in temporalities beyond colonialism.³⁰³ From the work of dedicated leaders, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, aunties, cousins, mothers, and grandmothers, we have the solutions to the persistent ache of patriarchy. We can demand new

³⁰¹ Chiefs of Ontario, *First Nations Women’s Leadership Summit 2023*, 12.

³⁰² Anishinabek Nation, “Implementing Anishinaabe Laws Forum,” 37:00–38:38.

³⁰³ Chiefs of Ontario, *First Nations Women’s Leadership Summit 2023*, 12.

realities to our current experiences by exposing harmful structures and re-remembering Anishinaabe leadership informed by ceremony and teachings.

Strengths and Relevance

Many scholars have demonstrated that Anishinabek governance continues to be shaped by colonialism.³⁰⁴ This analysis makes it possible to see the depths of this problem within our governance structures and leadership practices. It also confirms that the Anishinabek Nation is taking steps to decolonize governance and leadership, even as patriarchy and colonialism persist. Contradictions can exist when doing this important work of building Anishinabek worlds and futures. Randi Ray (Anishinaabe), in their dissertation “Building Our Inner Fires: Gikino’amaadiwin (Gaining Knowledge) with First Nations Leadership,” reflects on the work of the First Nation Health Authority and the call to move into First Nations futurities with “lateral kindness.” This concept emphasizes the relationality, kinship, and accountability to one another.³⁰⁵ Such teachings are critical when considering the contributions of this dissertation, not only to academic discourse but to individuals and Nations seeking pathways beyond patriarchy and colonialism.

Change, adaption, and evolution are not departures from tradition; they are necessary for the health of the citizens and Nations. This analysis serves as a stepping stone, encouraging Nations to pivot inward rather than focusing solely on the settler state. Addressing patriarchy within our own governance structures is essential if we are to interrupt colonial trajectories that have been internalized over generations.

³⁰⁴ John Borrows, *Recovering Canada: The Resurgence of Indigenous Law*, (U of Toronto Press, 2002); Vanessa Watts, “Towards Anishinaabe Governance and Accountability: Reawakening our Relationships and Sacred Bimaadiziwin,” (MA Thesis, Trent University, 2004); Brock Pitawanakwat, “Anishinaabemodaa Pane Oodenang – A Qualitative Study of Anishinaabe Language Revitalization as Self-Determination in Manitoba and Ontario,” (PhD Diss., University of Victoria, 2009); Alan Corbiere, “Anishinaabe Treaty-Making in the 18th-and-19th-Century Northern Great Lakes: From Shared Meanings to Epistemological Chasms,” (PhD diss., York University, 2020); Randi Ray, “BUILDING OUR INNER FIRES: GIKINOO’AMAADIWIN (GAINING KNOWLEDGE) WITH FIRST NATION LEADERSHIP,” (PhD Diss., Nipissing University, 2023).

³⁰⁵ Randi Ray, “Building Our Inner Fires: Gikino’amaadiwin (Gaining Knowledge) with First Nation Leadership” (PhD diss., Nipissing University, 2023), 157.

<https://libfiles.nipissingu.ca/HDI/Theses%20&%20Dissertations/doctor%20of%20philosophy/2023/building%20our%20inner%20fires.pdf>.

Limitations and Considerations

This chapter is not without limitations. First, many of the Anishinabek Nation records are housed in multiple locations across Ontario, and not all meeting records are publicly accessible. While this limited the scope of material, I also recognize the importance of keeping some of these records private for the security and safety of the Nation. Additionally, an analysis of patriarchy within the Anishinabek Nation must be approached through heart work. This critique must be accompanied by acknowledgement of the significant efforts toward revitalizing traditional Anishinabek governance systems and re-remembering the sacred roles of *kwewag*. This work reflects my own reading and interpretation of the documents reviewed, undertaken with the intention of contributing to healthier futures grounded in honest reflection.

Decolonization requires both external critique of settler state structures and internal analysis of colonialism's influence. I am aware that these conversations have been occurring, and this is my contribution to the discussion. There is much work ahead. As shared at the Women's Leadership Summit, revitalization begins with restoring teachings for our youth. If this analysis sparks further dialogue, reflection, or action, it will have served its purpose. Resistance may arise from entrenched systems and ideologies. Nevertheless, destabilizing norms and amplifying voices marginalized by colonialism, heteronormativity, and patriarchy remains necessary work.

Conclusion

The analysis presented in this chapter is grounded in Indigenous feminist legal theory, particularly the work of Monture-Angus and Snyder. Reading governance documents that appear gender-neutral through masculine-first lens reveals how gendered colonial norms remain entrenched in Euro-centric structures of power. Within eighty-one resolutions, there were fifteen mentions of *kwewag* (18.5 percent). If we do not include the efforts and reflections on the 1951 amendments or Bill C-31, we see *kwewag* in eleven reports (13.5 percent). These numbers are revealing. The 1993 RCAP submission is even more striking in its explicit centring of men and masculinity as the basis for traditional governance throughout the report. Together, these findings trace patterns of exclusion and demonstrate there is a story to be told here, one that traces the entrenchments of inequity and the disappearance of *kwewag*. Yet the analysis also reveals important shifts in the past decade, including movements toward restoring the roles, responsibilities, and sacred recognition *kwewag*.

While these efforts should not go unnoticed, and meaningful change takes time, secondary research on the Chiefs of Ontario 2023 Women's Summit demonstrates the continued valuing of women's leadership and the recognition of its importance of within governance. Yet the enduring impacts of colonialism, racism, and gendered exclusions persist regardless of the presence of women in leadership positions. The work of radically transforming the lived realities and gendered experiences of Anishinaabe *kwewag* must therefore continue, even when it requires difficult conversations and confronting the internalization of colonial ideologies.

This chapter demonstrates how Nation specific, place-based analysis can move beyond pan-Indigenous critiques of the Indian Act to reveal localized manifestations of colonial power. It also lays the groundwork for the next chapters by asserting that governance rooted in Anishinaabe teachings, epistemologies, and ontologies remains possible and necessary. By remembering teachings such as the Berry Fast and the *ode'imín*, leadership can be reconnected to principles of relational accountability. This analysis therefore serves as a stepping stone toward understanding these teachings as essential to nurturing healthy Nations for the next seven generations.

Chapter 4

Dagwaagi: Planting Patches to Restore Our Relationships

After a busy *niibin*, *dagwaagi* arrives as a season that is centered on relationships to our kin. As the leaves fall and coat *aki* with a blanket of colour and *giizis* travels south, we are reminded to be thankful for our relations. For us, as spiritually interconnected beings, *dagwaagi* is a time of harvest and transformation, preparing us for a *biboon* of rest and healing. *Dagwaagi* deepens our connections with our relations and the more-than-human so that we can learn from one another, share our gifts, and strengthen our Nations. *Dagwaagi* calls us to visit, reflect, and extend our deepest gratitude for all that our relations provide and teach us.

It is within this seasonal grounding that I situate the methodological heart of this chapter. My methodological choices emerge from possibilities of world-building and new forms of leadership that arise through listening and learning with more-than-human relatives. *Dagwaagi* teaches that transformation happens through relationship. Accordingly, this chapter considers how research itself can function as site of relational repair.

Grounded in this awareness, I turn toward visiting as method to center relational learning from Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Through these visits, I re-remember teachings disrupted by colonialism and dispossession – disruptions that extend far beyond academic practices of data collection and extraction. Visiting is not a method of gathering information but a process of renewing responsibility. By centering relationality, grounded Indigenous methodologies require a deliberate turning away from colonialism and patriarchy. This re-centers intelligence networks,³⁰⁶ place-based relationalities, and the transformation called forth by the Seventh Fire.

This chapter details the methodological approaches that shape this research – approaches vested in a resurgence and in reclaiming knowledge through reconnection with our diverse relations. This world building I contribute to, through the *ode'imín* governance framework, is embedded in resurgence. As Leanne Simpson writes, “Indigenous worlds aren’t institutions or states, they are relationships, movement, processes – life itself.”³⁰⁷ Understanding worlds as activated through deliberate decisions, the fostering of relations, and continual motion requires recognition of their animacy and necessitates centering the more-than-human.

³⁰⁶ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*.

³⁰⁷ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Indigenous Resurgence and Co-Resistance,” *Critical Ethnic Studies* 2, no. 2 (2016): 28, <https://doi.org/10.5749/jcritethnstud.2.2.0019>.

In what follows, I explain the rationale for how I have written this dissertation – why it intentionally diverges from traditional academic conventions – and describe the methodological frameworks that guided me. Rather than positioning methods as a neutral technique, I understand it as relational practice, as accountability, and as world-making. *Dagwaagi*, then, is not only a season but also the methodological orientation of this chapter as time of gathering, gratitude, and careful restoration of relationships.

I also recall and share stories of visiting with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and the *ode'imín*. The work is informed through self-reflexivity, accountability, and responsibility. My chosen research methods offer new ways of thinking, engaging, and relating to governance while actively making Anishinaabe worlds through embodied practice.

My perspectives, beliefs, experiences, and worldview deeply shaped how I approached this research. The dissertation has been written from my *ode* and with deep care. Embedded in this work are responsibilities to act kindly, thoughtfully, respectfully, and courageously to my kin. I trusted the knowledge shared during my visits with Elders and Knowledge Keepers, and I trusted in the knowledge I was learning and generating. In contrast to the settler state's perception of the more-than-human as inanimate, I chose to spend time learning with the *ode'imín* despite colonial assumptions about these relationships. I know *aki*, *nibi*, and the *ode'imín* as teachers, as I understand stories shared with me are more than myths – they are truths that have shaped Nations.

I remained open to possibility that the teachings that I was receiving would change me and could radically alter my perspectives. With the deep trust instilled in me as an Anishinaabekwe, I immersed myself in the gifts. I have been theorizing, writing, and nourishing my spirit on Anishinaabe *aki* and by *nibi*. This work involved getting lost in the land and finding myself through the embodied practice of relearning and living Anishinaabe epistemologies and ontologies.

This process required confronting shame and the underlying guilt that has accompanied years of my not living within Anishinaabe intelligences and being disconnected from the more-than-human. It had to move beyond the shame of not knowing the teachings for which I was offering tobacco, the ceremonies I might have participated in while growing up, and the language I was meant to know and think within. Inevitably, this work brought me face to face with colonialism's legacy, which directly shaped how I was raised, disconnected from ceremony, the

land, and language. It made me angry. It made me cry. It also brought me healing, as I grieved the life I might have known had colonialism not intervened.

I approached this research through Anishinaabe place-based ontologies and teachings. As I moved through this graduate program, I re-committed and renewed my relationship with *nibi*, *aki*, and the more-than-human. This experience provided me time to ask more questions of my family and to learn intimately from *aki* and my kin. It has healed a deep place in my *ode*.

The teachings I received and the conversations and land-based visits with the *ode'im* challenged preconceived notions of governance, transforming how I began to witness the persistent leadership of *kwewag*. This leadership and governance exist outside of settler-state structures and institutions. They are evident in everyday moments: in gathering and in transmitting knowledge, in conversations with the more-than-human, in renewing and fostering relations with kin, and in nourishing each person's sovereignty. Anishinaabe leadership and governance cannot be found within desolate hierarchical systems, in the privileging of patriarchal voices, or in the stagnation of teachings and knowledges.

Research Design and Rationale

In embedding an Anishinaabe worldview and methodology in this work, I knew from the outset that I wanted to center the voices and teachings shared with me through visiting with an Elder and two Knowledge Keepers. Janice Cindy Gaudet (Métis) explains the goals of Indigenous methodologies when they state that “Indigenous research methodologies aim to revitalize our ways of living and being well in relation, and help us to remember what is important and for whom, as a way to reclaim teachings, songs, stories, values, dignity, and land.”³⁰⁸ Embracing this process grounded in reclamation and resurgence, I approached my visits as opportunities to reclaim knowledge that was dispossessed from me as a result of colonialism. Maria Campbell (Métis) states, “[S]ometimes we make the journey away, but there are always times in our lives to come back for our survival. We need to reconnect.”³⁰⁹ At this pivotal juncture, when Indigenous Nations continue to resist the colonial project, coming back to our knowledges is both a personal and collective act of resurgence. Reclaiming these teachings is

³⁰⁸ Cindy Janice Gaudet, “Keeoukaywin: The Visiting Way – Fostering an Indigenous Research Methodology,” *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 7, no. 2, (2019): 47, <https://doi.org/10.5663/aps.v7i2.29336>.

³⁰⁹ Maria Campbell, as quoted in Gaudet, “Keeoukaywin: The Visiting Way,” 50.

necessary for creating and securing healthy futures. As a result of my relational approach that centers coming back to Anishinaabe knowledges, not all teachings and stories shared with me are included in the chapters that follow. Some were offered with the understanding that they were for me alone. The teachings that are shared here are incorporated with careful attention to honouring the voices, trust, and care with which they were given.

Visiting

Visiting is where stories are told, connections are emboldened, and memories are made; it is foundational to knowledge transmission. In “Visiting as an Indigenous Feminist Practice,” Eve Tuck, Haliehana Stepetin (Unangax̂), Rebecca Beaulne-Stuebing (Métis), and Jo Billows (Homalco) emphasize that visiting “implies being in a relation that is by design impermanent; it is a passing-through of space and time.”³¹⁰ They further explain that “[v]isiting is a practice based upon consent, allowing to know and unknow, considering a willingness to receive visits as gifts, and eventually a responsibility to continue the perpetuation of stories facilitated through visiting.”³¹¹ Guided by this awareness of visiting, I come to know this practice as both a teaching of relationality and responsibility, as well as a method in which knowledge is shared and generated.

Through non-structured visits and personal communications, visiting was the basis of knowledge transfer for this research. Relational visiting challenges colonial academic norms that position such practices as informal, apolitical, or methodologically insufficient. Through resurgence practices such as learning Anishinaabemowin and my embodiment of Anishinaabe knowledges, I refuse this framing. In “Keeoukaywin: The Visiting Way – Fostering an Indigenous Research Methodology,” Gaudet articulates the significance of visiting, writing that “visiting may seem on the surface to be a passive and apolitical activity, but it is, in fact, political, re-centring authority in a way of relating that is itself rooted in a cultural, spiritual, and social context.”³¹² Just as governance and leadership can be redressed through Indigenous frameworks, so too can the political work of First Nations women be enacted through centering

³¹⁰ Eve Tuck et al., “Visiting as an Indigenous Feminist Practice,” *Gender and Education* 35, no. 2 (2023): 144, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2022.2078796>.

³¹¹ Tuck et al., “Visiting as an Indigenous Feminist Practice,” 145.

³¹² Gaudet, “Keeoukaywin: The Visiting Way,” 53.

visiting and traditional knowledge transmission.³¹³ My deliberate evocation of Anishinaabe *kwewag* modes of governance, cyclical knowledge transmission, relationality, and leadership positions visiting neither as neutral or passive but as both a learning practice and an act of governance in itself.

Self-reflexivity following each visit is a responsibility I have prioritized. This practice holds me accountable to respond, respect, and enact the teachings and stories shared. It requires me to root myself in the place-based pedagogies I encounter and to locate myself in relation to my responsibilities to kin and the more-than-human. Reawakening my intimate relationship with the more-than-human, specifically the *ode'imín*, requires daily choices of listening, learning, and communicating. These practices reconfigure relationships and invigorate all senses. Gaudet emphasizes that “[v]isiting leads to self-recognition, and the irrefutable knowledge that internal self-recognition is not a duty; it is a skill, a living practice that is strengthened over and over again through the way of visiting and being visited. It ensures that we develop a consciousness whereby we once again learn from and with the land.”³¹⁴

Over the last decade, I have intentionally deepened my relationship with *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human, and in recent years, this relationship has become ever more central to my life and scholarship. I teach others that *aki* is alive and animate. I offer my tobacco to *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human. I say hello to my relations when I encounter them and speak to *aki* and *nibi* as living beings. I trust in my capacity to continue building these relationships and to learn with and from the land, and to carry these teachings forward for the next seven generations.

As I travelled to new places and revisited familiar ones across Anishinaabe *aki*, listening to stories, humour, and teachings shared by my kin and by the *ode'imín*, I witnessed the agency of those who entrusted me with their knowledge. Through these moments of connection, bound together by visiting, leadership and governance were not abstract concepts but living, felt, activated practices. This research could not have been undertaken without visiting with my graduate colleagues, academic mentors, family, friends, and Elders and Knowledge Keepers who guided me on this journey.

³¹³ Gaudet, “Keeoukaywin: The Visiting Way,” 53.

³¹⁴ Gaudet, “Keeoukaywin: The Visiting Way,” 56.

Storytelling

My second chosen method that guides this dissertation is storytelling. Storytelling centers relationality and embeds protocols of accountability. The dissertation theorizes Anishinaabe leadership and governance through both story and academic work.³¹⁵ I followed these relational principles throughout this dissertation, guided by Cree scholar Shawn Wilson, who presents his findings in his book *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Wilson does this through the dialectic of a storyteller versus a “researcher/author.”³¹⁶ This pedagogical shift of building a relationship throughout the journey of engaging with participants opposes the hierarchical relationship implicitly inserted through a researcher lens.³¹⁷ Storytelling allowed Elders and Knowledge Keepers to share what they chose with autonomy, thus my teachers partook in this method and resurgence practice as well. I trusted that each story was shared with intention. My teachers knew what I must listen to and the teachings I needed, and as a result, my research outcomes were entirely shaped by the stories they chose to share.

The importance of storytelling as a method bound by relationality is further emphasized by Wilson. He writes that “it is important for storytellers to impart their own life and experience into the telling. They also recognize that listeners will filter the story being told through their own experience and thus adapt the information to make it relevant and specific to their life.”³¹⁸ Storytelling is animate. Thus, storytelling as method is a living practice that cyclically informs my relations and my accountabilities to honour the stories shared.

Storytelling is an essential component of Indigenous methodologies because of the innate personal connections one can draw from hearing a story. It personifies the experience of learning. Lee Maracle emphasizes the beauty and intimacy of a story as she eloquently states,

But some of our storytellers were artists, working with the original story. We would begin to tell an old story, and then, as we moved through the story, we would update, modernize, and create a story about today. In this way, we are constantly telling back the old story, different but the same, and we are continuing to learn from it. We continue to glean guidance from our original stories, and by telling them back different but the same, we are adding to our historical continuum, creating new mythology from the old. In this way, we become

³¹⁵ Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 8.

³¹⁶ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 32.

³¹⁷ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 3.

³¹⁸ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 32.

different but the same as our ancestors.³¹⁹

As Maracle explains, stories build relationships through the internalization of knowledge that occurs from hearing and learning from them. As the listener digests the information, they accept an ethos of care for that knowledge as it becomes a part of their knowledge bundle. The practice of storytelling is part of broader network of world-building practices. Tethering knowledge to relationships informs the way we live. In addition, implanted within stories are teachings of governance and leadership. Through stories, principles of leadership are taught, developed, and enacted. This includes raising children as leaders who walk in a good way because of knowledge transmission and production through stories. Storytelling is the method used to pass on teachings and principles of leadership and governance.

Stories require the imagination of individuals who can make valid and legitimate conclusions based on their interpretation of the story.³²⁰ In “Gender and Violence: Drawing on Indigenous Legal Resources,” Emily Snyder, Val Napoleon, and John Borrows explain that “[S]tories also open up space for various interpretations and for deliberation that is essential to understanding Indigenous legal traditions and engaging in its practice. Stories are tools for thinking and problem solving.”³²¹ Stories permit space for debate and interpretation. This space allows individuals and Nations to adapt to support lived realities. As leaders, we can change our positions to reflect new information or circumstances. Leadership and governance are in flux. They are not stagnant and should not be entrenched in principles that no longer sustain healthy Nations. We carry responsibilities to consider the next seven generations and make decisions based on knowledge we receive. Stories allow each leader to engage in debate and make decisions that are reflective of the Nation. In this way, stories allow listeners to become the storytellers who actively participate in creating and sustaining Indigenous futures.

In *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts*, Margaret Kovach (Sakewew p'sim iskwew) explains that Indigenous writing, which uses storytelling or narrative, has been perceived as “indulgent rather than being recognized as a methodological

³¹⁹ Lee Maracle, “Scent of Burning Cedar,” *The Walrus*, November 25, 2021, <https://thewalrus.ca/scent-of-burning-cedar/>.

³²⁰ Maracle, “Scent of Burning Cedar.”

³²¹ Snyder, Napoleon, and Borrows, “Gender and Violence: Drawing on Indigenous Legal Resources,” 629.

necessity flowing from a tribal epistemology.”³²² Speaking back to this colonial assumption, centering storytelling develops relations which disrupts tension fostered by the academy. This tension works to separate Indigenous academics from relationality. I choose to be held accountable and remember my responsibilities and relationalities throughout this project. Storytelling as method stands against traditional academic norms.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies* shares the importance, power, and beauty of storytelling.³²³ Smith emphasizes that stories “contribute to a collective story in which everyone has a place ... the story and story teller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story.”³²⁴ Stories illustrate contextualized knowledge and the incorporation of women’s voices. This knowledge is housed in the collective memory of the Nation.³²⁵ According to Robina Thomas (Snuy’ney’muxq and Sto:lo), storytelling is impactful in resisting colonialism because they defy dominant methods in which researchers narrate the conversation. Instead, storytellers hold the power in the relationship and choose what they would like to share.³²⁶ This dissertation includes stories from three *kwewag* Elders and Knowledge Keepers who guided this research. During each visit, I allowed those who were sharing to control the narrative and honoured their sovereignty to choose how the visit went. In this way, *ode’imin* governance emerged from storytelling.

Kovach advises storytellers and academics to acknowledge and respect the responsibility toward the relationship and the accompanied story.³²⁷ Guided by Kovach, I deeply honour each story that was shared with me throughout this process. As she states, “The use of narrative in inquiry means that the researcher must accept the guardianship of bringing oral story into academia.”³²⁸ Bringing story into academic spaces must therefore be undertaken with great care and respect. I have taken precautions not to fragment stories or teachings in ways that would compromise the intentions of the storyteller or diminish the gift of that knowledge.

³²² Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts* (University of Toronto Press, 200), 84.

³²³ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 145–46.

³²⁴ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 146.

³²⁵ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 96–97.

³²⁶ Robina A. Thomas, “Honouring the Oral Traditions of My Ancestors Through Storytelling,” in *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches*, ed. Leslie Brown and Susan Strega (Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2005), 170.

³²⁷ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 97.

³²⁸ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 103.

This dissertation could not have been written without stories. Upon reflecting on my journey of how I entered academic spaces, I realized that it was through stories that I came to this place. Embedded within each story were teachings of strength, trust, care, love, support, accountability, and responsibilities my family gifted to me. These stories inspired me and allowed me to trust myself to try new things and follow my passions and inquiries. Throughout this process I realized that I had innately been taught Anishinaabe principles of leadership and governance my entire life. However, the time spent learning wasn't explicitly "governance 101" and "how to be a leader." I was taught through the process of storytelling, sharing memories, and lessons learned. I absorbed the stories, and as a result, make decisions of how I choose to walk in this world.

Learning from the Land and Relationality

As We Have Always Done by Leanne Simpson details an embodied method called *kwe* as method.³²⁹ In this work, I have embodied *kwe* as method, which means learning and thinking through my body, in my homeland, according to Anishinaabe knowledge systems.³³⁰ Simpson explains that *kwe* as method is about generating theory within Anishinaabe ontologies, insofar as "[theory] necessarily then has to be accessible to all Nishinaabeg so we each have the opportunity to develop our intimate meaning."³³¹ This allows me to theorize and conceptualize the framework of *ode'imín* governance within Anishinaabe thought, in Anishinaabe worlds, without colonial interference. Thus, my framework of *ode'imín* governance includes certain principles of Anishinaabe leadership and governance that have been practised and renewed since time immemorial.

I have centered the voices and experiences of *kwewag* to re-center leadership and governance. This acknowledges the roles and responsibilities *kwewag* hold in the Nation, taught through the Berry Fast and the *ode'imín* teaching. It reasserts respect, protection, and honour, and innately rejects gendered violence, and disappearance. *Ode'imín* governance centers remembering of Anishinaabe teachings and knowledges to embody, practice, and awaken Anishinaabe governance and leadership. It is a framework of living and thinking within

³²⁹ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 27.

³³⁰ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 28–31.

³³¹ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 28.

Anishinaabe knowledge systems.

Additionally, I use *kwe* as method for refusing colonial domination and heteropatriarchy.³³² As a sovereign Anishinaabekwe, I am actively immersed in Anishinaabe worlds. I practice thinking and speaking the language and learn Anishinaabe knowledges while embodying them. I simultaneously un-learn colonial attitudes and perspectives as a deliberate refusal to perpetuate colonialism.³³³ Thus, this research is grounded in three core commitments: refusing colonial frameworks, centering Anishinaabe knowledges, and restoring relational responsibilities.

In *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage*, James (Sa'ke'j) Youngblood Henderson (Chickasaw and Cheyenne) and Marie Battiste (Mi'kmaq) require researchers to live in relation *with* Creation and the knowledge that is provided to us *through* Creation.³³⁴ This type of dialogical relationship enforces holistic connections between all aspects of Anishinaabe life and experiences, including the spiritual, cultural, legal, political, and environmental.³³⁵ Embodying knowledge, relationality, and responsibility is at the center of my research ethics and practices. This reflects the intimate connections between teachings, principles, and protocols that link our daily choices and how we choose to walk in a good way. These are guiding principles of leadership and governance. In this way, I am also embodying leadership and governance in the everyday; I am cyclically creating *ode'imín* governance.

Moreover, relationality guides this work.³³⁶ I have read, learned, visited, and written this project while caring for and sustaining relations to my Nation and *aki*. The rationale for doing so inspires what Dian Million (Tanana Athabaskan) identifies as “felt knowledge.”³³⁷ Quoted in Laura Harjo's *Spiral to the Stars*, Million explains that felt knowledge asks, “what it feels to be

³³² L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 33.

³³³ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 33.

³³⁴ Marie Battiste and James (Sa'ke'j) Youngblood Henderson, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage* (Purich, 2000), 94, <https://doi.org/10.59962/9781895830439>.

³³⁵ Deborah McGregor, “Towards an Anishinaabe Research Paradigm: Theory and Practice,” in *Indigenous Research: Theories, Practices, and Relationships*, ed. by Deborah McGregor, Jean-Paul Restoule, and Rochelle Johnston, (Canadian Scholars Press, 2018), 2.

³³⁶ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed, (Zed Books, 1999); Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts*, (University of Toronto Press, 2010); Kim TallBear, “Standing with and Speaking as Faith: A Feminist-Indigenous Approach to Inquiry,” *Journal of Research Practice* 10, no. 2 (2014).

³³⁷ Harjo, *Spiral to the Stars*, 56.

[Indigenous], to live in [your community] and to have a range of human experiences.”³³⁸ Felt knowledge requires the responsibility and re-centering of ecologies of connection and purposefully disengages from Eurocentric knowledge production. I bring in Harjo’s embodied theory of the “time-space-kin” continuum.³³⁹ This is defined as “a memory, but not solely in the sense of recalling a scene or a vignette, as it also provides instruction for how to be in the world, or it invokes a sense of responsibility in the person recalling the memory.”³⁴⁰ The time-space-kin continuum encourages agency and action which transcends the present state of being to reflect on past practices that can be brought into both present and future imaginaries. I use this theory and embody it alongside *kwe* as method to explore the temporality and embodiment of knowledge. While these scholars come from distinct place-based Nations, I learn from them the importance of visits, embodied knowledge, and relational ways of understanding that can also resonate within Anishinaabe contexts. Ultimately, these teachings ground my understanding of the layered responsibilities embedded within leadership, law and relationality. These reaffirm obligations to ancestors and hold us accountable to re-remember our teachings and to restore them within the present.

In Anishinaabe scholar Deborah McGregor’s article “Towards an Anishinaabe Research Paradigm: Theory and Practice,” she describes how Anishinaabe researchers are participating in research and seeking pre-existing knowledge.³⁴¹ She explains that there is an inherent intimacy in Anishinaabe research practices because of the inclusion of ancestral knowledges, the spirit world, and the more-than-human.³⁴² McGregor calls this practice *biskaabiiyang*, or “returning to ourselves,”³⁴³ to describe the process of reclaiming knowledge that has always existed within Anishinaabe worlds. The framework of *ode’imin* governance is derived from Anishinaabe ontologies and epistemologies. This practice allows us to have a present-day understanding of leadership grounded in *biskaabiiyang*, and results in returning to roles and responsibilities, grounded in knowledge that has existed and will always exist within Anishinaabe worlds. This is a critical component of the resurgence of Anishinaabe leadership and governance, because

³³⁸ Harjo, *Spiral to the Stars*, 56.

³³⁹ Harjo, *Spiral to the Stars*, 28.

³⁴⁰ Harjo *Spiral to the Stars*, 28

³⁴¹ McGregor, “Towards an Anishinaabe Research Paradigm,” 2.

³⁴² McGregor, “Towards an Anishinaabe Research Paradigm,” 9.

³⁴³ McGregor, “Towards an Anishinaabe Research Paradigm,” 9.

biskaabiinyang compels us to remember outside of settler-state systems.

Building upon the work of McGregor, Kovach echoes the importance of embodied place-based learning. She writes that “what we know flows through us from the ‘echo of generations,’ and our knowledges cannot be universalized because they arise from our experience with our places.”³⁴⁴ Kovach informs researchers that writing in place immediately seals the space between the past, present, and future while bringing an immediate connection to research.³⁴⁵ Through place-based writing, I prioritize Anishinaabe law and governance over any settler-state system. I learn from the past, remain attentive to the present, and dream of futures while actively participating in creating a framework for relearning Anishinaabe leadership.

The Indigenous methodologies discussed above have guided me through this work. I incorporate and center Anishinaabe epistemologies and teachings in my research practice. Asking to meet with Elders and Knowledge Keepers is a requirement for learning how to fulfill my roles and responsibilities to re-remember teachings and stories so that I can share them with future generations. Visiting and storytelling as method means that Anishinaabe relationality can no longer be undermined or forgotten in world-making processes. Thomas explains that this is Indigenous survivance.³⁴⁶ Stories are “cultural, traditional, educational, spiritual, and political.”³⁴⁷ This governance framework and theorization of Anishinaabe leadership resist colonial temporalities and their assumed permanence by the active remembrance of the past into our present to create Anishinaabe futures.

Visits Over *Biboon*

When imagining this dissertation, I knew I needed to learn from Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Visiting and listening to stories and teachings inevitably would inform the development of the *ode'imín* governance framework. In order to visit with Elders and Knowledge Keepers for the purpose of a research project, researchers must receive ethics approval from the university to carry out interviews with selected participants. The ethics process at the university raised new challenges. Following my submission, the ethics board informed me I would have to keep my

³⁴⁴ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 61.

³⁴⁵ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 61.

³⁴⁶ Thomas, “Honouring the Oral Traditions of My Ancestors,” 163.

³⁴⁷ Thomas, “Honouring the Oral Traditions of My Ancestors,” 168.

visits with Elders and Knowledge Keepers anonymous. However, it was important to me that those who were invited to participate would have the choice to determine if they would like to have their name shared, be known through a coded identifier (such as their clan),³⁴⁸ or be fully anonymous. At times, the process prompted me to consider if this was the right path for me. Moreover, I was asked questions that challenged my need for this knowledge. I was able to respond by stating that colonialism had dispossessed me from these knowledges and if not for colonialism, I would have grown up immersed in such knowledge. Fortunately, after a few rounds of revisions, I received approval from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba to begin the interview process.

I visited with three Elders and Knowledge Keepers and attended a Midewiwin Lodge during *biboon*. In addition, I also visited with the *ode'im* in *niibin*. While visiting I was gifted teachings and stories about coming-of-age ceremonies, the *ode'im* teaching, leadership, roles and responsibilities, and sovereignty. Through these teachings and stories, I conceptualized and theorized a framework of governance.

I was able to invite Elders and Knowledge Keepers to visit during *biboon* based on personal kinship connections and relationality. As this project reimagines Anishinaabe leadership and governance without influences of colonialism and patriarchy, I invited Anishinaabe *kwewag* to visit. I did not limit who I would be visiting based on colonial provincial boundaries. I visited with one Elder and two Knowledge Keepers on Anishinaabe territory, both visits occurred more than two thousand kilometres apart, demonstrating distinct place-based knowledges and the expansiveness of the Anishinaabe Nation.

I approached these interviews guided by the advice shared by Henderson and Battiste about the use of knowledge that arises from interviews. They address how even if the participant gives consent, it must be continually generated. Henderson and Battiste state, “[T]he givers retain the authority to ensure that knowledge is used properly, and the receivers continue to recognize and repay the gift.”³⁴⁹ I carry the responsibilities of nurturing and honouring the relationships, stories, and knowledge shared.

Prior to the start of each audio-recorded visit, I shared questions that could help start our conversations. I encouraged those with whom I was visiting to discuss what they would like so

³⁴⁸ This idea was shared with me by my dear friend Ashley Wacanta-Daniels.

³⁴⁹ Battiste and Henderson, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage*, 72.

they had full control of the direction of the visit and what they would like to share with me. The questions were divided into two main themes: the first were about the Strawberry Teaching and Berry Fast; and the second concerned Anishinaabe law, sovereignty and governance. The questions are included below.

Questions: Strawberry and Berry Fast

1. Can you tell me about the importance of the strawberry/*ode'im* in our community?
2. How are strawberries important to women? Why?
3. Can you talk about the Berry Fast? Why is it known as a coming-of-age ceremony for young girls?
4. Are there concepts in Anishinaabemowin that can help me understand the *ode'im* teaching and Berry Fast?
5. Is there a connection between the Berry Fast, women's responsibilities, and governance? What is the importance of this connection?

Questions: Law, Sovereignty, Governance

1. How do you define *minigoziwin*³⁵⁰ or *tipêyimisowin*?³⁵¹ Why is it important for us to know this?
2. What is the connection between *dodems* and leadership?
3. What were women's roles in leadership?
4. Could you discuss how women's roles and responsibilities are different from men's?
5. How has leadership changed because of colonialism?
6. What is the importance of leadership and sovereignty? How does it inform our Nation?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share about women and leadership?

Again, these questions were suggestions of topics that could be discussed. The values with which I approached this work are codified in Indigenous research principles as well as Anishinaabe leadership and governance values. I listened and did not control the dialogue.

The first visit took place over Zoom. I was in Winnipeg in Treaty One territory, and Elder

³⁵⁰ "Sovereignty" in Anishinaabemowin.

³⁵¹ "Sovereignty" in Cree.

Dot Beaucage-Kennedy was at home in Nipissing First Nation. While I am a citizen of M'Chigeeng First Nation, my grandfather was born into Nipissing First Nation. He was then adopted into a family from M'Chigeeng First Nation. My father grew up knowing his family in Nipissing and travelling between the two Nations. I am thankful to my families in both Nipissing and M'Chigeeng and for the opportunity to learn from Elder Dot Beaucage-Kennedy. Both Nations are signatories to the Robinson-Huron Treaty and reside along *nibi*.

In the weeks leading up to the interview, Elder Dot gave me instructions on how to prepare for our visit. I was willing to visit Nipissing First Nation where Elder Dot resides. However, she shared with me that we could instead use Zoom and embrace technological advances that could save people from travelling during *biboon*. As a result, following my instructions to mail tobacco and cloth, I went to Teekas by Polo Park shopping centre in Winnipeg and purchased my tobacco. I carefully selected my cloth and spent a significant amount of time looking at all the beaded jewellery, clothes, and blankets. My eyes widened at the sight of an *ode'imín* adorned on everything. I ended up selecting an *ode'imín* beaded wristlet in addition to tobacco and cloth and headed home to package, wrap, and write a note before dropping off the package in the mail. It felt odd to mail tobacco, but it reminded me that traditions are fluid and can change.

When Elder Dot received the package, we arranged a date to meet in February. When the time came, I was jittery with nerves, but when I logged onto Zoom, I was met with a huge, bright grandmother smile from Elder Dot. I instantly felt at ease as she welcomed me to our visit. After our opening prayer and lighting our smudges, Elder Dot began to share stories with me and teachings about *kwewag*, roles and responsibilities, and the importance of balance. I was reminded of the importance of always being ready to attend ceremony and to put my tobacco down every day. We ended our time together with a closing prayer, and I logged off. I felt a wave of comfort slip over me; I went to put down my tobacco and thanked Creator. I walk with the teachings Elder gave to me during our time together,³⁵² and still think back to our conversation often. Even now, when I put my tobacco out with intention and imagine Anishinaabe futures, I think of my kin and work toward honouring my responsibilities and gifts.

The second interview took place in Fisher River Cree Nation, with two sisters from

³⁵² Some of these teachings will be shared in the coming chapter.

Peguis First Nation, Katina Cochrane and Shayna Spence. I met Knowledge Keeper Shayna through my partner many moons ago and met Knowledge Keeper Katina through this relation. This provided an important moment to reflect on the relations I have built, and my responsibilities to *aki, nibi*, the more-than-human, and my kin in Treaty territories One, Two, and Five.

I currently live in Treaty Two territory, which encompasses the *aki* and *nibi* that both Peguis and Fisher River Cree Nation rest within, but throughout 2019–2025 I lived in Treaty One territory, which is the treaty to which Peguis is also a signatory. I also honour my responsibilities to Treaty Five territory as Fisher River is a signatory, as well as the deep love I have for my kin who have grown up and live in Treaty Five territory. I am deeply reminded of the importance of upholding my responsibilities and treaties to *aki, nibi*, the more-than-human, and my relations as a guest within these territories. I say *chi-miigwech* for all that I have been taught, what has been shared with me, and offered to me. I respond by engaging and renewing a reciprocal relationship vested in Anishinaabe principles of leadership and governance to act accordingly and support my relations.

Following my visit with Elder Dot, after a quick stop at Tim Hortons for a honey cruller and double-double, along with an apple for good measure, I began the drive to meet with Anishinaabe Knowledge Keepers Katina Cochrane and Shayna Spence, who work in Fisher River. I listened to the “Academic Aunties” podcast on my drive,³⁵³ and kept my eye out for the hoof clan members I would surely see on a cold February morning.³⁵⁴ I deeply reflected on my experience of living in a new territory and growing relational roots over the last few years. This experienced reminded me of Borrows’s book *Drawing Out Law: A Spirit’s Guide*. Borrows recognizes that Anishinaabe peoples continue to practise the tradition of taking care of themselves when they are travelling to new places. He explains that Anishinaabe people have “learned to survive and thrive beyond their traditional borders.”³⁵⁵ I reflected on how I too have extended myself beyond the traditional borders of where I grew up and have been able to build and sustain relations with my kin in these territories. I am so lucky to have been welcomed. It was a drive filled with laughter, sadness, gratitude, and hope. It reminded me of the importance

³⁵³ Ethel Tungohan, “Academic Aunties,” <https://www.academicaunties.com/>.

³⁵⁴ The hoof clan in Anishinaabe culture consists of deer, moose, and elk.

³⁵⁵ John Borrows, *Drawing Out Law: A Spirit’s Guide* (University of Toronto Press, 2010), 150.

of embodied knowledge and connection.

When I arrived at my destination, I was welcomed with hugs and smiles from Knowledge Keepers Katina Cochrane and Shayna Spence as we sat down for our visit. I passed tobacco, an *ode'imín* art print from a local artist, and some *ode'imín* jewellery, and sage was lit. Our visit flew by as I was immersed in their stories, reflections, and teachings.³⁵⁶ In those moments, I could see deep relational love and care between Cochrane and Spence and was honoured to be included in these moments. I continue to walk with the teachings and stories shared with me during our time together, as they have greatly shaped my *ode*. After the first part of our visit ended, Shayna and I travelled to share a meal in Fisher Branch. As I drove home with a belly full of poutine and deeper laugh lines, I imagined a world that was centered solely on relationships and felt grateful for my life that is inherently emboldened by friendship, family, and my connections with the more-than-human.

During my visits, I received consent to audio record them on my secure iPhone and later transcribe what they said. A few notes were taken during the process, to ensure my full engagement and intent; however, I journalled about the experiences afterward. I was gifted over sixty pages of valuable stories and teachings. As a result of my relational approach to this work, not every story or teaching is included in this dissertation out of deep respect for what was shared for me only. I have taken the transcripts of these interviews and followed Kovach's advice to adopt an interpretative meaning-making and thematic approach to understand the knowledge shared.³⁵⁷ This practice is meant to protect against "fragment[ing] or decontextualize[ing] the knowledge."³⁵⁸ Guided by Kovach, I have let the teachings and stories exist as stand-alone knowledges,³⁵⁹ and they are included as they were shared with me.

As the data consists of teachings and stories, I have not coded or managed the interviews in a typical way. Some things I have deliberately chosen not to share. However, the words and voices of Elder Beaucage-Kennedy and Knowledge Keepers Cochrane and Spence have been encapsulated within Chapter 5: "*Biboon*," through paraphrasing and direct quotes. I have arranged these in flexible themes such as the Berry Fast, *ode'imín* teachings, and men's roles. The scope of the stories and teachings I received goes much further than the original questions

³⁵⁶ Some of these teachings and stories will be shared in the coming chapter.

³⁵⁷ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 131.

³⁵⁸ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 131.

³⁵⁹ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 132.

posed. They include teachings of the medicine wheel, coming-of-age ceremonies, new roles and responsibilities for Anishinaabe people, as well as additional teachings about respecting women.

Each person who I visited consented and chose to have their names published and included in this work. I honour their trust in me to treat these teachings and stories with care. Their voices have been the roots and foundation for the framework of *ode'imín* governance. My teachings and understanding of Anishinaabe ways of being aided in the interpretation of knowledge, teachings, and stories. This allowed me to imagine a framework of governance rooted and centred relationships bound through the gathering and sharing of stories, laughter, and of hard lessons to learn both gifted and accepted with care.

During my two visits, I was privileged to have many stories and teachings shared with me. To honour each one, I decided to pause my formal visits at two, to give the space and respect to the knowledge that was shared. I did, however, continue to visit and have personal communications with aunties and grandmothers who supported me on this journey. As I reflect on these visits, I realized we played with colonial temporality and transported ourselves to Anishinaabe worlds. We were immersed in dreams, reflections, language, stories, teachings, and conversations. In this world, there was love radiating from the storyteller's words and I latched on to every syllable. I knew after these visits, I wanted to stay in this Anishinaabe world, and so not even a full moon later, I accepted the invitation to attend the *biboon* gathering at a Midewiwin Lodge.

In mid-February, I loaded up my car with my feast bundle, moccasins, a coffee, and took off south, this time to the lodge. I had come to learn that my great-grandparents and dad had attended the Mide Lodge on Manitoulin Island. My dad came to tell me stories of his time there. I gave him a call as I drove, and he reminded me to walk in there with a warm heart and open mind. After watching the sunrise over the prairies, I arrived at my destination. Well, I drove past and did not quite have the nerve to go in yet, so I pulled in across the street to settle myself and build up some courage. Once I was able to organize my thoughts, I walked toward the steps. Even as my hand was on the door, I had to push myself to turn it. Butterflies in my stomach, anxiety rising in my bones, I twisted the door handle with every ounce of courage I could find and I walked in.

Within seconds I was greeted with hellos as I slipped off my shoes, put my sunflower moccasins on, wiggled my toes to ground myself, and took the first steps in. Immediately, I saw

a mutual friend who gave me a welcoming hug, then made some introductions. I was met with more warm inviting hugs, letting me know that I was welcome and that they were glad I was there. The day was wonderful beyond words; months later I can replay the moments I was learning, dreaming, and living in Anishinaabe worlds. While there, I focused on visiting, building relationships in the present moment, and centering my responsibilities as *kwe* as opposed to a researcher.

The kindness, care, respect, and community I felt is held in my spirit. I loved my time so much that the entire way home, I planned what I needed to organize and bring so that I could go back the next morning. And I did. This time, I sat beside a lovely grandmother, who after seeing I came alone, called me “a brave girl.” That is one of my proudest accomplishments, pushing through the shyness that I have called home and to embrace relearning. Through visiting new places, and with Elders and Knowledge Keepers, I came to know leadership and governance in everyday actions. These decisions are made in accordance with teachings and stories. The knowledge I was gifted continues to affect my life and their teachings echo as I walk in this world. I could not be more grateful for the time and the gifts they have shared with me.

Relational Accountability

In fulfilling my responsibilities as *kwe*, I wanted to ensure I was accountable and transparent throughout the entire dissertation process. Following our visits, I provided the transcriptions to Elder Dot, and Knowledge Keepers Katina and Shayna. In addition, upon completion of Chapter 5, I sent it for their review and ensured anything they would like redacted or altered would be done. Their voices live within these pages and are embodied within the *ode’imin* governance framework. It is my responsibility that they are cared for with respect and love. In addition, this work has resulted in self-reflexivity to ensure I am upholding my responsibilities. This project has been enriched through conversations with my colleagues and professors at the University of Manitoba, voices echoed through journals, books, videos, visits with family and friends, as well as with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and with *aki*, *nibi*, and more-than-human beings. I trust I am writing in a good way.

My relationship to Creator has carried me through and provided me strength during this time. Attending ceremonies throughout this research and writing process continues to be a source of strength and empowerment. As mentioned before, this process has involved my commitment

to renewing my relations with *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human, which is a consistent, deliberate process of re-centering these relations. I have shared with others the importance of *ode'imín* and of recognizing the animacy of *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human. I welcome questions on what it may look like to listen and learn from the land. I hope in doing this work and living in accordance with these principles I may continue to walk in a good way. Again, I cannot emphasize enough the gratitude I have for the teachers who have impacted my world.

Resurgence

In 2019, Leanne Simpson gave a lecture on “Political Concepts: Resurgence” at Brown University, describing her journey from her home community in Michi Saagiig Nishinaabeg territory to the East Coast by canoe. She practiced international diplomacy across Nations, giving tobacco to ask for help with her canoe and to navigate and travel through the waterway.³⁶⁰ She was imagining a world outside of colonialism and reactivating Anishinaabe intelligence networks. Reflecting on her approach, I began to consider how I could embody resurgence through learning directly from *aki* and from *ode'imín*.

To do this, I planned a visit with my partner to Willow Beach, about eight kilometres across Anama Bay on Lake Winnipeg and only accessible by watercraft. I had dreamed of canoeing there, but this *niibin* taught me about listening to *noodin* which was strong and kept shifting the currents. As a result, my partner, my cousin, and nephew decided to take a boat. We brought our tobacco and a bowl to collect the berries. We also packed a lunch. We travelled through a small rainstorm and walked in the shallow *nibi* to the beach area. After we settled in, my cousin and I walked out to the berry patches while my partner and nephew began work on finding the perfect wood for a fire. We walked along the beach and saw *nika*,³⁶¹ *waawaashkeshi*,³⁶² *ma'iingan*,³⁶³ and *makwa*³⁶⁴ tracks before we descended to the marsh area behind the treeline. Wearing our ribbon skirts (mine gifted to me for my birthday from one of my friends), we put our tobacco down and began to pick the berries (figure 4.1). With the sun

³⁶⁰ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Political Concepts: Leanne Betasamosake Simpson – Resurgence,” Brown University, April 24, 2020, 1:00–15:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xV1_IDtQZsc.

³⁶¹ Goose.

³⁶² Deer.

³⁶³ Wolf.

³⁶⁴ Bear.

beating down on us and the buzz of insects flying around, we laughed, ate berries, and shared stories of the importance of *ode'imín*.



Figure 4.1: *Ode'imín* picked at Willow Beach, Hope Ace, 2025

After our bellies and hearts were full, we returned to the beach to share the berries. After a quick break, I walked in the opposite direction to another patch, mindful of the hoof clan who are known to be in the area. As I picked berries in my ribbon skirt now with *ode'imín* stains, I spoke to the *ode'imín* and spent time with them (figure 4.2). I reflected on their wider kinship networks and imagined returning to these same berry patches year after year, harvesting them with gratitude and honouring their gift. Throughout this time, I followed the teachings of Robin Wall Kimmerer (Potawatomi) on the Honorable Harvest, which guide how we take with respect and reciprocity:

Know the ways of the ones who take care of you, so that you can take care of them.
Introduce yourself. Be accountable as the one who comes asking for life.
Ask permission before taking. Abide by the answer.
Never take the first. Never take the last.
Take only what you need.
Take only that which is given.
Never take more than half. Leave some for others.
Harvest in a way that minimizes harm.
Use it respectfully. Never waste what you have taken.

Share.

Give thanks for what you have been given.

Give a gift in reciprocity for what you have taken.

Sustain the ones who sustain you and the Earth will last forever.³⁶⁵

After following these protocols and gathering berries, we washed them in *nibi* off Willow Beach and brought them home. We shared them with our nieces and nephews and spent time learning how to make jam to offer our visitors in the coming week (figure 4.3). What unfolded was a full immersion of kin into the gift economy as discussed in Kimmerer's book *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World*. The gift economy highlights the importance of sharing within reciprocally balanced relationships in community life.³⁶⁶ Kimmerer also writes about the serviceberries, explaining that "berry picking is the first step in a lifelong companionship with the living world."³⁶⁷ It is fitting, then, that a significant part of my methods involved visiting with the *ode'imín* and centering the roles and responsibilities that arise and flow through my relationship with them. *Chi-miigwech ode'imín* for letting me visit and learn from you.

³⁶⁵ Robin Wall Kimmerer, *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* (Scribner, 2024), 65–66.

³⁶⁶ Kimmerer, *The Serviceberry*.

³⁶⁷ Kimmerer, *The Serviceberry*, 104.



Figure 4.2: *Ode'im*in Picking, Hope Ace 2025



Figure 4.3: *Ode'im*in Jam, Hope Ace 2025

In Anishinaabe culture, there is something called the Midewiwin Lodge. The lodge is a place for ceremony, healing, teaching, and taking care of the Anishinaabeg. It instructs relationships and passes along important knowledge for the Anishinaabeg. While attending the Midewiwin Lodge, I met Elder Barb Cameron, a teacher and grandmother at the lodge. While we were getting to know one another, Elder Cameron invited me to continue to develop our relationship and said she would be happy to share with me teachings I must know. While I was there, I passed her tobacco, and she said she would call me in a few days. As mentioned previously, this dissertation involves my healing so that I can create healthy leadership and governance. It begins with me. To heal and write this dissertation in a good way, Elder Cameron taught me I needed to nourish my spirit.

Elder Cameron and I spoke the following week. She shared with me that my spirit has always protected me and that now it was my turn to nourish it and say thank you. She taught me to feast my spirit with love, care, excitement, and joy through cooking and pouring those thoughts into a dish of my choosing. My teaching instructed me to be kind to myself and give thanks to my spirit which has continuously cared for me, even if I didn't realize it. As a result, I do this often. When I was visiting with the *ode'im*in, I prayed for my spirit and nourished myself with the heart medicine from the berry. I poured love and care into the jam that was made from the berries and then shared that love with others. Learning from *ode'im*in and following the

teachings of Elder Barb Cameron has intimately changed my relationship with and understanding of my responsibilities to the *ode'imín* and other more-than-human kin, which will be shared with my relations as I walk through life. Nourishing my spirit has allowed me to deeply engage with my methodologies and carry the teachings and stories I received as heart knowledge. This reciprocal relationality is the root of the framework of *ode'imín* governance.

Conclusion

Visiting, storytelling, learning from the land, relationality, and resurgence all work together and inform how I walk through this research project. These Indigenous methodologies resist toxic colonial assumptions about research protocols and allow stories and teachings to exist as they are told. My relational accountabilities and ethical responsibility inform me to care for teachings and stories as animate. They deserve to be revered with respect and not decontextualized to suit research aims. In fact, stories are the guiding pillars from which the research stems. As a scholarly contribution, I demonstrate alternative approaches to research. Generating theory through visiting and storytelling is an embodied Anishinaabe method. Knowledge is shared, produced, and received through relationality and accountability. It embraces acknowledging place-based practices and *aki, nibi*, and the more-than-human as our teachers to whom we also have responsibilities.

These methods advance governance research through embodying Nation place-based teachings to create leadership and governance principles rooted in these teachings. The scope of this work has been defined by my place-based learning. This work and the aforementioned Indigenous methodologies center *kwewag* and *ode'imín*, allowing me to practice and enact core principles of my *ode'imín* governance framework of trust, relationality, and responsibility. In conclusion, Indigenous methodologies have allowed me to envision and be immersed within Anishinaabe worlds as I honour the teachings and stories shared. *Ode'imín* governance is derived from visits, stories, and learning from the more-than-human. Its ethos is rooted in Anishinaabe worlds that can only exist through the generation and transmission of knowledge.

Chapter 5

Biboon: Ode'imín Governance

Some stories are only told in *biboon*. Elder Edna Manitowabi shares that *biboon* is a time when everything rests and becomes quiet, creating what she describes as “a time of introspection.”³⁶⁸ Under the *Manidoo Giisoonhs*³⁶⁹ during the depth of *biboon*, we are given time to begin healing and restoring our relationships with one another as well as with our governance systems. This is what I take up in this chapter, offering a path by which we can heal, revitalize *kwewag* ceremonies, and re-remember Anishinaabe governance and leadership.

In Elder Edna Manitowabi’s telling of “Nanabush and the Spirit of Winter,” the more-than-human world is suffering in the cold of *biboon*.³⁷⁰ Nanabush travels to Biboon, builds *ishkode*,³⁷¹ and prepares a meal to share with Biboon. Elder Edna Manitowabi explains that because Nanabush travelled to Biboon and cared for the winter spirit, a foundation for a relationship was established. After listening to Nanabush and hearing about the cold the more-than-human was experiencing, Biboon decided to speak to *giizis*, asking them to come out and warm up the more-than-human world and *aki*.³⁷²

The teaching about Nanabush and Biboon emphasizes introspection, relational accountability, and the animacy of the more-than-human.³⁷³ It provides us tools to nourish our relationship with the *ode'imín*, and it shows the importance of investing and caring for our relations. Elder Manitowabi’s teaching opens the central discussion of this chapter: *ode'imín* governance embodies heart-centered governance, which is rooted in relationality, trust, and Anishinaabe knowledges and teachings. The body is synonymous with governance, as Anishinaabe governance is an embodied everyday act. Anishinaabe people are spiritual beings, and as a result of this bond between self, governance, and leadership, Anishinaabe governance and leadership are inherently spiritual. Centering our teachings, relationships, and spirituality roots our actions, governance, and leadership in our hearts, informing our heart knowledge. The

³⁶⁸ Edna Manitowabi, “Nanabush and the Spirit of Winter,” Wabano Centre, March 7, 2022, educational video, 0:25, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWmoGpD9SQs>.

³⁶⁹ Little Spirit Moon.

³⁷⁰ Manitowabi, “Nanabush and the Spirit of Winter,” 1–1:55.

³⁷¹ Fire.

³⁷² Manitowabi, “Nanabush and the Spirit of Winter,” 1–1:55.

³⁷³ Manitowabi, “Nanabush and the Spirit of Winter,” 1:56–4:32.

ode'im teaching shows to Anishinaabeg that our hearts intimately connect us to all of Creation, knowledges, and life. Our leadership and governance flow out of interconnected relationships and from our hearts, the center of our Anishinaabe worlds. *Ode'im* governance places *kwewag* in the heart of governance and leadership in order to honour and support *kwewag* as our first teachers who nourish and sustain healthy Anishinaabe worlds.

Purpose

Chapter 3, “*Niibin*: The Reawakening,” described how patriarchy was embedded within Anishinaabe governance as a result of colonial intervention. This chapter introduces a new framework of governance derived from the *ode'im* teaching. I call this framework *ode'im* governance. It can function as both an academic contribution and Nation-based tool to help remember accountable, relational, and healthy leadership and governance practices. *Ode'im* governance offers an alternative pathway toward healthy and safe Anishinaabe futures by rejecting heteropatriarchy within governance systems. It resists hierarchy and power-driven structures of the settler state and can also serve as an accountability measure to ensure elected leadership reflects Nation values and responsibilities.

The knowledge in this chapter reflects Anishinaabe teachings and customs and governing principles. The chapter is organized into three sections. The first shares the voices, teachings, and knowledges offered to me during my visits with an Elder and two Knowledge Keepers over the course of *biboon*. The second section brings in academic contributions from Indigenous scholars who write on governance through Anishinaabe ontologies, epistemologies, Indigenous feminism, and resurgence. The third section is a reflective synthesis of my own unlearning and learning, where I describe the development and significance of the components that form the *ode'im* governance framework. This chapter is therefore grounded in teachings shared during visits, secondary research, and self-reflexivity.

This chapter serves a dual purpose: it contributes to scholarly conversations and directly supports the Anishinabek Nation and its citizens. Within the academy, it demonstrates how rooted traditional knowledge can confront colonial legacies through relational, place-based Nation approaches that challenge the foundations of settler-state governance institutions. At the same time, it is important to me that this dissertation be of direct use to Anishinaabe Nations. *Ode'im* governance carries important teachings especially for *kwewag*, about belonging,

responsibility, care, and love. Readers can see the essential leadership roles they hold every day, including caring for soul, spirit, and body sovereignty, and fulfilling leadership responsibilities to their family, community, and Nation. This framework reshapes dominant understandings of leadership by asserting that leadership is an everyday practice accessible to all.

Building this framework required returning to knowledges that had been suppressed by colonialism. Through relearning and offering *sema*³⁷⁴ to Elders and Knowledge Keepers, this work became part of ongoing resurgence and resistance. *Ode'imín* governance engages with the temporality of leadership and knowledge, proposing a framework of governance that exists simultaneously in the past, present, and future. *Ode'imín* governance affirms a reciprocal obligation on the part of the Nation.

Throughout this chapter, the majority of the voices highlighted are those of Anishinaabe *kwewag*. This is an intentional choice based on my positionality and my goal of addressing gendered violence and injustice. This work must also extend to Two-Spirit people across the Anishinaabe Nation and across Turtle Island, as they too face violence rooted in colonialism and heteronormativity. By centering *kwewag*, the chapter displaces heteropatriarchy and insists on the rightful inclusion of *kwewag* in all forms of leadership.

Our Teacher, the Ode'imín

A few years ago, while driving from Winnipeg to Dauphin River First Nation in *niibin*, I asked my auntie, Diane Stagg, about the *ode'imín*. She explained that in Anishinaabemowin, there is a relationship between the words *ode-nanew*,³⁷⁵ *debwewin*,³⁷⁶ and *ode*. These words teach us that the heart guides us to speak honestly, and that the language itself prevents us from being unkind.³⁷⁷ This is necessary, as our governance and leadership is built and sustained by adhering to our teachings and honouring the body sovereignty of each citizen of the Nation. Our language encapsulates those teachings of respect, relationality, truth, care, love, honesty, and trust. There is no way to speak ill of *kwewag* or be unkind to our kin because we are guided by the protocol of always speaking from the heart and speaking honestly.³⁷⁸ This is an important

³⁷⁴ Tobacco.

³⁷⁵ Tongue.

³⁷⁶ Truth.

³⁷⁷ Diane Stagg, personal communication, summer 2023.

³⁷⁸ I acknowledge that this work engages with patriarchy and how it has been imposed into Anishinaabe

component of governance and leadership because it is the core principle of how we choose to act and make decisions for ourselves, family, community, and Nation. *Ode-nanew*, *debwewin*, and *ode* inform how Anishinaabe governance and leadership prohibit uneven distributions of power and inequality within the Nation. Instead, speaking from the heart and speaking honestly guides our understanding and responsibilities of respect, relationality, truth, care, love, honesty, and trust. As leaders we cannot dismiss the sovereignty of individuals. Anishinaabe governance and the world which we actively build in the everyday involves following our teachings. I am grateful to my Auntie Diane for her teachings, care, and love. Reflecting on these words helped me understand that speaking from the heart requires reflection on our teachings, knowledge, and responsibilities to the Nation. The principle of carrying heart knowledge has shaped how I approach this work and how I write this dissertation.

As I continued reflecting on the *ode'imín*, I came across a teaching from Kenny Neganigwane Pheasant (Anishinaabe) from Wiikwemikoong First Nation. He shares a story of how Nanabush named the *ode'imín*. While walking and naming Creation, Nanabush stumbled upon a berry growing close to Mother Earth.³⁷⁹ Its short lifespan and its closeness to the ground reminded him of the Anishinaabe who also live short lives and remain closely connected to Mother Earth. Nanabush instructed the Anishinaabe to follow the growing pattern of the berry and to respect her as we live and work on Mother Earth.³⁸⁰ This berry became known as the *ode'imín*, the heart berry.

As *biboon* and *ziigwan* rest and *niibin* emerges, the *Ode'imín* Moon rises, signalling the first *min*³⁸¹ of the season.³⁸² Edward Benton-Banai (Ojibway) teaches that the berry ripens early because of its tenacity in enduring the harsh elements and its strong root system.³⁸³ We are reminded that the *ode'imín* are the first *min* ready to awaken after the birds return from the south. After visiting and offering *sema*, we take the *ode'imín* carefully from the vine, and when we eat

governance systems. I am speaking this truth in hopes that our communities and relatives will continue to work towards creating healthy futures. I approach this with love and care.

³⁷⁹ Kenny Neganigwane Pheasant, “Ademin Heart Berry, Strawberry,” Anishinaabemdaa, September 25, 2022, educational video, 0:45–4:25, <https://anishinaabemdaa.com/videos/teachings-and-ceremonies/ademin-heart-berry-strawberry>.

³⁸⁰ Kenny Neganigwane Pheasant, “Ademin Heart Berry, Strawberry,” 0:45–4:25.

³⁸¹ Berry.

³⁸² Basil Johnston, *Honour Earth Mother*, (University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 44.

³⁸³ Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book*, 57.

them, we begin with the leafy green calyx at the top of the *min*. This reminds us that life requires balance: after hard times, we are rewarded with the sweetness of life. The *ode'im* supports our heart health,³⁸⁴ and reflects our deep connection to Creation. These *min* remind us of the similarities between the colour of our blood and the berry, the shared heart shape, and the ways everything flows from and returns to the heart. Benton-Banai reminds us that this similarly reflects the “harmony that exists within the heartbeat of Creation.”³⁸⁵ Thus the *ode'im* teaches balance and harmony within the more-than-human world and within the Anishinaabe Nation. These stories show us the significance of *ode'im* and the inseparable connection between the Anishinaabeg and the more-than-human world.

The Gift of Visiting

I begin by offering my deep gratitude to Elder Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, Knowledge Keeper Katina Cochrane, and Knowledge Keeper Shayna Spence for their time, trust, and generosity. Elder Dot Beaucage-Kennedy is a citizen of Nipissing First Nation located on the shores of Lake Nipissing in present-day Ontario. Knowledge Keepers Katina Cochrane and Shayna Spence are both citizens of Peguis First Nation, located in the Interlake region of what is known as Manitoba. Katina and Shayna presently live in Fisher River Cree Nation which curves around the bay of Fisher River.

During my visits with these three *kwewag*, my life was profoundly changed by the knowledge and teachings they shared with me. In this section, you will hear their voices echo through their stories and reflections from our time spent together. Their care flows through their words, alongside the giggles and laughter we shared, and embeds a deep hope for Anishinaabe futures that honour and uplift *kwewag*.

The Berry Fast and Ode'im Teachings

When I first began conceptualizing this work, I thought of the *ode'im* teaching and the Berry Fast, which is a coming-of-age ceremony for young *kwe* who experience their first moon time. I did not participate in the Berry Fast, though I hope one day to take part or support my future family members as they walk through this sacred ceremony. In reflecting on what the

³⁸⁴ Johnston, *Honour Earth Mother*, 44.

³⁸⁵ Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book*, 57.

Berry Fast entails, Knowledge Keeper Katina Cochrane offers an important teaching about the immense sacrifice our ancestors undertook when they started their Berry Fast. She explains,

[Y]ou're saying you're not going to eat that, but that's your sweet, that's your treat, that's part of your everyday food that you're [not] going to be eating ... especially when we used to make pemmican, [berries] were put into a lot of the other meats that we used to store. That's a huge sacrifice for someone to make, you know, and at that time, imagine what these young women were like, how scary that decision must have been for them, and everyone in the community would know too because then you can't mix it in with foods or anything like that or they would literally come and put it like on your head to let people know she's fasting.³⁸⁶

Reminding ourselves of the sacrifices of young *kwe* calls attention to the importance, dedication, and perseverance of our grandmothers and aunts who have always thought of us and carried on these ceremonies to support all *kwewag*.

The Berry Fast is important to this work because of what it teaches young *kwe* and is intimately connected to the *ode'imín* teaching. The *ode'imín* is known as *kwewag* medicine, often because of the similarities between the shape of the *ode'imín* and the heart, and the resemblances to *kwe*'s uterus that brings new life to the world. Cochrane recalls that her family encouraged her to share when she first got her moon time and knew it was not something to be embarrassed by. She shares that her mother had a responsibility to talk with her daughter and her family about the importance of *kwe*'s moon time as a sign of respect for what her daughter would be experiencing soon, so that the family knew their responsibilities to care for their daughter or sister during this time. When the time came, Cochrane's mother knew exactly what to do, she recalls her mother saying, "I have to phone the Elder. I have to phone the grandmothers," and called a women's meeting to support her during this transitional time.³⁸⁷

Kwe's ability to bring new life is taught with deep respect during the Berry Fast. Katina Cochrane shares that when she first began her Berry Fast, an Elder came to sit with her and shared with her what this ceremony was about. She recalls,

My mom got the Elder to come and talk to me about the Berry Fast and what that was, and why these berries are important. The very first teaching she gave me was, these berries have seeds on them. And she was holding up that strawberry

³⁸⁶ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, transcript, Fisher River, MB, February 2025.

³⁸⁷ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

and pointing at it, and then she's like, "You see those seeds?" And I said, "yeah." And she's like, "that is like you now. You have those seeds in your belly, and ... you're gonna be able to grow a baby with that seed..." Then she just talked about how powerful that strawberry is, like, how it's comes from Mother Earth, and it's, really nourishing. Everything in that one little berry can give you so much to your body. And how is it that Mother Earth can create such a beautiful nourishment and be such a precious treat.³⁸⁸

Coming-of-age ceremonies demonstrate the dedication of community to support *kwewag* who are entering a new season of their life, so they know they are treasured, loved, cared for, and trusted.

The Berry Fast is a ceremonial practice and teaching that honours *kwe* after her first moon time, and it lasts for one year. Older *kwewag*, whether they be friends, aunties, grandmothers, and cousins, visit with the young *kwe* to share teachings and to support her through this transition into adulthood. During this period, *kwe* abstains from eating *ode'imín* or any *min* as part of the Berry Fast.³⁸⁹ As *kwe* receives teachings and respects her fast, she embodies Anishinaabe governance and leadership principles of trust, care, belonging, respect, and love. This practice situates women's roles as first teachers who transmit knowledge from generation to generation and support new leaders in the Nation. Elder Dot Beaucage-Kennedy describes the Berry Fast as a time where young *kwewag* prepare their bodies to enter the next stage of life. Beaucage-Kennedy explains that it is a time of celebration, where *kwewag* provide support to the young ones to stay strong during year.³⁹⁰ She states,

Because women are the strongest when they are on their time. And that's why sometimes you'll see, if you travel around a lot that the women or the people will sit in the middle, and the one that's on their time will have to sit there in the back row, because they are so powerful. And most teachings say that at this time, the young women should not be going into a sweat lodge. And so, every area and every Knowledge Keeper have different teachings, but I'm going by what I was taught. Somebody walks with these young girls, and they hang out with a grandmother, and they do their best to follow her, if there's a full moon ceremony or anything like that, or sharing circles, because they are now starting to move

³⁸⁸ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

³⁸⁹ Akeesha Footman, "My Berry Fast," *Muskrat Magazine*, July 22, 2016, <https://muskratmagazine.com/my-berry-fast/>.

³⁹⁰ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, transcript, Winnipeg, MB, February 2025.

forward as young women.³⁹¹

Additionally, Cochrane explains the significance of the power that *kwewag* possess when on their moon time. She states,

[W]oman shouldn't be doing anything during their time and especially any heavy lifting or anything like that, or anything too hard on their bodies, because ... it's a time where you're having a ceremony in yourself, and you're letting go all that stuff you carried for twenty-eight days, or however long it was from the previous month. You're letting all that come out and letting it go, and you're going to start fresh again after your time. That was our way of letting things go and releasing stuff, whereas men had to go to sweat to do that, and they should go sweat and go do that themselves. So, we're not to go anywhere on your ceremony time because you're already [in] moon time. Because, like, ceremonies, or even just like visiting and going out, you should be kind of keeping to yourself and not letting anyone touch you because you're very powerful at that time. It could rub off on someone in a wrong way or you could pick up energy on someone, and you're very sensitive. It's a sensitive time, so you got to be very sensitive with yourself at that time.³⁹²

Throughout the year, the teachings shared from a place of love by other *kwewag* will foster self-love and care, which will root *kwe*'s decisions and perspectives as they walk through the world, thinking and living within Anishinaabe thought. By allowing *kwewag* to understand their roles in the Nation and the love they should have for themselves, the Berry Fast creates and nurtures healthy communities starting at the individual level.

In "Keepers of the Water: Nishnaabe-Kwewag Speaking for the Water," Renée Elizabeth Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard (Anishinaabe) details the importance of *nibi* to the Anishinaabe, specifically to *kwewag*. *Nibi* is life: it sustains all of Creation and is a powerful medicine and known as our relative.³⁹³ In this way, *nibi* is a teacher and animate creator of governance. While the scope of this dissertation does not allow a detailed inclusion of the roles and responsibilities of *kwe* to *nibi*, the teachings shared by Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard describe the importance of *kwe*'s moon time for her body sovereignty. Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard explains that *kwe*'s moon

³⁹¹ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

³⁹² Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

³⁹³ Renée Elizabeth Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard, "Keepers of the Water: Nishnaabe-kwewag Speaking for the Water," in *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations*, ed. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (ARP Books, 2008), 96.

times are important and powerful because it is medicine that is housed within *kwe*.³⁹⁴ As quoted by Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard, Elder Josephine Mandamin shares, “I remember when my grandmother used to say when someone was on her moon-time. That very first time she would say ... now she is medicine! A woman is carrying medicine in her body, that is that powerful medicine – is her blood.”³⁹⁵ Completing coming-of-age ceremonies such as the Berry Fast restores the relationship between *kwe* and Mother Earth and asserts *kwe*’s responsibilities.³⁹⁶ It also informs how Anishinaabe governance understands *kwe*’s medicine and the ways in which she is sacred, powerful, and valued in the Nation.

Throughout the year of *kwe*’s Berry Fast, Winona Elliot (Potawatomi and Ojibway) says, “life slows down ... and [*kwewag* are] encouraged to be with themselves and reflect.”³⁹⁷ Elder Beaucage-Kennedy explains that the women in young *kwe*’s life continue to check in with her throughout the entire year.³⁹⁸ During this time, *kwe* often picks *min* and gathers gifts to give away at her Coming Out ceremony. Elliot explains that picking the *min* teaches us to always consider others.³⁹⁹

Leanne Simpson’s *Dancing on Our Turtles Back* includes a section called “Grandmother Teachings” by Elder Edna Manitowabi. Elder Manitowabi passes on the knowledge of supporting young *kwe* to understand and learn Mother Earth as herself. She explains that when *kwewag* understand themselves as Mother Earth, not only will *kwe* learn the cycles, seasons, how to take care of herself but the young *kwewag* will “learn they are sacred and beautiful.”⁴⁰⁰ Learning and acknowledging this, they understand they “will be guided by our Mother’s wisdom and so they will model themselves after this Earth.”⁴⁰¹ The intimate connection between *kwewag*, *ode’imin* and Mother Earth signals the importance of their roles in the Nation, the respect they deserve, and the love they should feel as sacred sovereign beings.

Leading up to the closing ceremony of the Berry Fast, preparations are made for

³⁹⁴ Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard, “Keepers of the Water,” 99–100.

³⁹⁵ Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard, “Keepers of the Water,” 100.

³⁹⁶ Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard, “Keepers of the Water,” 100.

³⁹⁷ Winona Elliot, “Introduction to Berry Fast Teachings,” The Kwek Society: End Period Poverty, n.d., <https://kweksociety.org/traditional-teachings-2/>.

³⁹⁸ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

³⁹⁹ Elliot, “Introduction to Berry Fast Teachings.”

⁴⁰⁰ L. Simpson, *Dancing on our Turtle’s Back*, 37.

⁴⁰¹ L. Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 37.

kwe's Coming Out ceremony where she is reintroduced as a woman. Cochrane recalls the moments of creativity and joy that go into inviting members of the community who have supported you to your Coming Out ceremony:

I made little strawberry invitations, cut out strawberries, handmade them, glued little sprinkles. And I wish we kept one. [They had] little sprinkles on them, and I did vines and flowers really pretty too. And it was all layered, and then you open it up, and I had little fringe around, and we used a hot glue gun, and it was like, "You're invited to my Berry Fast ceremony, my Coming Out ceremony" and it was like, what time, date, where, and then a little sentence on the bottom [of] what to expect. And then I handed them out to all my friends.⁴⁰²

Creating the invitations symbolizes the care of this experience and the excitement *kwe* feels after completing her fast for the year, where she was adorned with teachings, care, and love. At the Coming Out ceremony, it is custom that *kwe*, who is now introduced as an adult, receives gifts from those who attend. Cochrane explains that the gifts you receive are "special things that are part of your bundle that you're going to carry later on in life and carry you down a good path."⁴⁰³ The teachings and gifts nurture *kwe*'s spirits and prepare her as she welcomes this new phase knowing she is cared for, supported, and celebrated.

Cochrane shares how during the Coming Out ceremony, those in attendance share and express their love, joy, pride and admiration. She recalls,

[They said] "I'm so proud of you." And really nice things like, "I can't believe you did this," "[went] without berries and holding babies," and "you're such a beautiful girl." And saying all these nice things, and then they passed the mic, and then next person would say something, basically saying something similar reiterating as they went around. [S]ome people were like, "I want my children, I want my girls to learn how to do this you know." And "they need to bring this back." And "we're really proud of you, Katina, for doing this." And "no one's done this in a long time, you know." And they acknowledged it quite a bit in the circle. And then a guy that's my age [who] was really shy, and he's a really quiet guy, I remember he said, "I'm proud of you, Katina, keep it up."⁴⁰⁴

Shayna Spence, a citizen of Peguis First Nation, says that she knew the Berry Fast was special,

⁴⁰² Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴⁰³ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴⁰⁴ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

as she felt “celebrated, cared for, [and] supported.” For her, the Berry Fast was an empowering ceremony.⁴⁰⁵ Further, Cochrane explains how these messages and reminders shaped future decision-making. Recalling moments in her life where she relied on her Berry Fast teachings, she states,

I better be good now, because they’re watching me now, you know, these people are all watching out for me, and ... I want to be good, and I want to be good for them.... I want them to be proud of me. And so that, I think that got really instilled.... [T]his one guy and his daughter were there, and I was surprised that they were there. And he talked to me and he’s like, “I have three girls, and I wanted them to come today, because I wanted them to do this too.” And then, “I want them to look up to you.” So, when I see those little girls growing up, I remember, always remember that they were at my Fast and so I see them around at the powwow ground, or in the community, I’d wave at them, or they’d come hug me or say hi. And there was one guy that used to pump gas at Mi-Ki-Nak. He was there [at my Fast] ... and he would keep the store open for me after that, when I got dropped off for basketball and I always remember that he was at my Berry Fast and like, that’s probably why he lets me stay late or stays late to watch out for me. And like, the guy at the arena, he was there, he was my dad’s friend, and he just was helping around the house and stuff at the ceremony and then, but I mean, like, just it allowed me to see men in a different way, like that cared about me, you know. And that they have a responsibility too to me.⁴⁰⁶

The teaching received through the Berry Fast are important because they indicate that the young *kwe* can be entrusted with these knowledges to make rich contributions to the community as her voice is valuable. The Berry Fast also teaches men how to respect *kwewag*. Ultimately, the Berry Fast sets expectations for *kwe* on how to treat herself, how others should treat her, informs roles and responsibilities, and teaches her she is sacred.

Cochrane shares that a part of the Berry Fast teaching is that you do not need to know everything right away, that the teaching and knowledges will come through experience.⁴⁰⁷ One of the things she learned that was informed by the Berry Fast was how to practice self-discipline to live in a good way.

I taught myself how to discipline myself and think ahead ... because [I have] to keep myself safe, I think that’s a big thing. What I learned from that experience

⁴⁰⁵ Shayna Spence, visit with Hope Ace, transcript, Fisher River, MB, February 2025.

⁴⁰⁶ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴⁰⁷ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

was ... Who am I? Who am I allowing in my circle? Who am I allowing time with myself? What am I putting myself in? What am I setting myself up for? And respecting my body, because during your time, like my auntie said, “You got to take care of yourself, you got to stay clean, you got to do all these things. You got to be very responsible.” Everything’s more heightened during that time of your month, and you need to be in a good state of mind to take care of yourself.⁴⁰⁸

Spence shared that her experience of the Berry Fast involved tests to continue following her commitment when met with temptation.⁴⁰⁹ This mentality of commitment and dedication to constantly remember your responsibilities to yourself and the fast evokes the importance of what Spence calls “checking and remembering” to honour your commitment.⁴¹⁰ It is the residual reminder to be present in your body and to demonstrate your respect for Elders, Knowledge Keepers, yourself, and the teachings you have been given throughout your journey.

Cochrane shares that in the years following her Berry Fast, she understood the depth of influence those teachings continued to have on her life and in her decision-making. When explaining why it is a coming-of-age ceremony, she says,

I know why my parents made me do that, because they know that I’m going to take this seriously, take my body seriously, and ... make goals for myself and strive for things that I want and to be responsible to all these things ... but that rite of passage, that’s connected too ... you don’t need to know everything at that moment. It comes with the life experience, and so I think that’s why they have that rite of passage for that coming of age.⁴¹¹

The Berry Fast, the teachings shared, and the community’s commitment to *kwe* during this time continues to affect *kwe* for many moons after. This ceremony empowers young *kwewag* to trust in their decisions and respect their body while coming to know it as sacred and powerful. It also informs how they choose to enact their body sovereignty which is exercised during practices of self-discipline, love, and care for the self. In this way, governance is taught and practiced through the exercise of body sovereignty and by being entrusted to make decisions for the self, for family, the community, and the Nation.

⁴⁰⁸ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴⁰⁹ Shayna Spence, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴¹⁰ Shayna Spence, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴¹¹ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

When sharing aspects of the *ode'imín* teaching, Elder Beaucage-Kennedy explains the important role that *kwewag* take up and how it can be taught through the seeds of the *ode'imín*.

[L]ook at that strawberry, because on the outside it has seeds, and that's when you're young, and that's when you're becoming a young woman, and ... you're on your time, and [when] you open the [strawberry] of course, it's shaped like a heart. And then as you open the strawberry as you age, the inside of the strawberry, [has] no more seeds, because now you know we are Elders. We are grown women, and the inside of the strawberry does not have any seeds.... You know, when you're a young person, like a teenager or a young girl, you have a lot to give ... in time you will have your babies. In time you will be a young woman and ... you have all the seeds on that strawberry that's going to carry you through that time of maybe, you know, getting to have children as you go around the Medicine Wheel.... As you age, like [me] now, I'm not on my time anymore. I'm a senior, I'm an Elder, I'm a Knowledge Keeper. So, I went through all that, you know. So, the inside of my strawberry, there's no seeds. But when you're a young girl and you're just starting out, you're full of seeds.⁴¹²

Elder Beaucage-Kennedy explains when we go through the cycles of the medicine wheel as we age, we give those seeds away to the youth who need that knowledge and rely on those teachings to support them through their lives. As *kwe* becomes older, she begins to give these teachings back to the young *kwewag* in a cyclical manner, and she passes those seeds from her bundle to the next generation as she no longer requires them.⁴¹³ The seeds represent those teachings, stories, and perspectives we rely on to inform our decisions and fulfill our responsibilities as leaders in our community. Thus, the seeds become the foundation for Anishinaabe governance.

Knowledge Keepers Cochrane and Spence explain that knowledge is shared between *kwewag* when they gather and come together to share teachings, stories, develop new ideas, and laugh. They explain that this practice of coming together to share is the way that knowledge is passed on to young *kwe* who is preparing to enter into adulthood. She knows she is not alone and is surrounded by the love of other *kwewag*.⁴¹⁴ That knowledge then flows into *kwe*'s leadership, decision-making, knowledge transmission. *Kwe* is taught that leadership and governance are generated in everyday actions and are formed by deliberate decisions. Knowing the impacts of

⁴¹² Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴¹³ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴¹⁴ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

making decisions, *kwe* also is taught to be accountable for those decisions.

When sharing about the celebration to conclude her Berry Fast, Cochrane explained that leadership was inherent in those who were in attendance.⁴¹⁵ She shares with me her realization on the generational transmission of knowledge that came with the Berry Fast:

[T]his ceremony really helped me in my life, and did so many things for me, and I want this for my daughters ... we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for my mom making me do what I did.... I want to thank my mom for that.... I also want to acknowledge my grandmother because, how unfair it is for her to not experience this, it was taken from her. And that's so unfair ... when I was telling my girl, I said, "I really want you to do this for your daughters, you're gonna have to do it." ... You're structuring what your next generation is learning and how it's creating these people that are gonna be able to contribute to the community ... in some way, right?⁴¹⁶

Cochrane can trace the importance of a matriarchal family in her life to how she has shaped her actions and made decisions with considerations of the past, present, and the future. During my time learning from Cochrane, she said "There's a lot of matriarch women that were in our family that just everyone went to for guidance or to be fed or taken care of or nurtured."⁴¹⁷

Cochrane also shares the importance of transmitting knowledge intergenerationally and the responsibilities of body sovereignty that are shared by kin. She states:

[Y]ou're laying on those expectations of who has to do what, and who has to initiate or initiate the act to activate this rite of passage ... and then the steps on what is to follow, and what each person is supposed to do throughout that year or throughout that time with this person. Those generations to follow, it's passed on and shared with other women in your family, and then they know to do it when the time comes, right? And it's passed down, passed down, and yes, tweaks difference here and there. I guess what works best, you know. They went by that, what was the best approach to her feast, or best approach to doing this. Ideas and sharing them with the other woman in different families.⁴¹⁸

Throughout the year of Spence's Berry Fast, she explains, she realized who respected her and her

⁴¹⁵ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴¹⁶ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴¹⁷ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴¹⁸ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

sacrifice, and it showed her who her core supports were.⁴¹⁹ The moments where *kwe* feels support and knows who she can trust is profound and further empowers *kwe*'s decision-making. Cochrane further details that during her Berry Fast, she realized that all members of her community were dedicated to taking care of her. This is because each individual, including men, has specific roles to ensure the well-being of the Nation.

She recalls that many of the young men in the community told her, "I'm not gonna let anyone mess around with you," and "when I see you around I am going to take care of you," or said, "I'll protect you" and "I'll make sure to watch out for you."⁴²⁰ She states the significance of this:

[N]ow reflecting back and you hear that ... imagine what that does to someone, a young person. No wonder why they did this for young women... to make them feel important and special, acknowledged, lifted and have others acknowledge this is your role this is your space, this is where you're safe and ... we trust in you that you're gonna carry yourself in such a good way.⁴²¹

Cochrane understood the importance of having everyone in the community, not just *kwewag*, there to support her. There is a substantial impact on youth when they know they are cared for by their entire community. Youth learn to be empowered decision-makers and begin to take on new roles they have been taught in order to continue to nurture the Nation. In addition, they are aware that they are protected. Being protected is synonymous with being cared for, respected, and loved, all essential components of a healthy Nation. Our kin deserve to know they are safe.

Men's Roles

Just as *kwewag* have coming-of-age ceremonies that are significant for governance, so do young men. When a young boy shoots his first animal while hunting, he too must prepare for his own coming-of-age ceremony, a vision quest. When the young boy walks out after he has completed his fast, he is welcomed by his family and friends are there to support him.⁴²² It becomes clear, that to know you are cared for is important for all members of the community.

When asked about *kwewag*'s roles, the Berry Fast, and leadership, Elder Dot Beaucage-

⁴¹⁹ Shayna Spence, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴²⁰ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴²¹ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴²² Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

Kennedy naturally raised the importance of the roles and responsibilities of men. She states,

We have our women teachings, and we have our men's teachings. Women look after the water, and the men look after the fire. And there's that balance. There's always male and female, even in a blade of grass. So we always have to look after that balance, so that we make sure that everybody is walking where they're supposed to be and carrying that responsibility, no matter what age you are on that medicine wheel, because you have that responsibility as you journey on Mother Earth, and you go right around the medicine wheel, by that time, if you get to the northern directions, you should have learned a few things on your road.⁴²³

Elder Beaucage-Kennedy shares that balance was always maintained, including in Anishinaabe governance. Each individual is responsible for maintaining this balance as a sovereign decision-maker; it is one of our roles.⁴²⁴ Thus, if there is imbalance within us, the family, community, or Nation, then our relational, accountable, adaptable structures of governance can collapse.

Additionally, as a result of imported colonial powers and norms, including patriarchy, hierarchy, and centralized settler-state governance systems, the balance in our Nations has been disrupted. It is critical that our efforts of restoring governance through Anishinaabe teachings and knowledges includes a dedicated approach to rebalancing our Nations through the embodiment of governance and leadership.

As a result of this imbalance, our Nations no longer respect *kwewag* as they did prior to colonization.⁴²⁵ According to Knowledge Keeper Spence, one of the reasons *kwewag* are no

⁴²³ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴²⁴ The way in which I assert gender complementarity is guided by Leah Sneider. I do not discuss balance in a way that reinforces strict binaries of gender as we have come to know them today and the contemporary exclusionary and violent realities experienced because of such binaries. Rather, I recognize the responsibility and relationality an individual carries. Starblanket in "Becoming Indigenous Feminists" emphasizes the importance of choice that transforms balance based on gender beyond essentialized roles, gendered power hierarchies or traditionalism. The purpose of such work is to ensure the safety, protection and flourishing of each individual with the absence of gendered violence and hierarchal power relations. For further reading, please see: Leah Sneider, "Complementary Relationships: A Review of Indigenous Gender Studies," in *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*, ed. Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson (University of Manitoba Press, 2015); Gina Starblanket, "Being Indigenous Feminists: Resurgences Against Contemporary Patriarchy," in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 2nd ed., ed. Joyce Green, (Fernwood Publishing, 2017); Gina Starblanket, "Making Space for Inward and Outward Critique: Indigenous Feminism and the Reproduction of Relational Worlds," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 57 no. 3 (2025): 9-26.

⁴²⁵ It is importance to articulate and invite a deeper reading and engagement with Indigenous feminist, and legal scholars who have grappled with the existence of gendered violence prior to colonialism while acknowledging it has been exasperated colonial and patriarchal systems. For further reading see Christine Waaseyaa'sin Sy, "Considering

longer respected is because of colonial stereotypes and gender violence. She explains that colonial rhetoric about First Nations women has been internalized by First Nations men, who now disrespect *kwewag* because they have been taught by the settler state that they can. She states, “You’re objectified, you’re sexualized. And that’s how it is, a women’s purpose or our purpose [now], is to serve the man.”⁴²⁶ During this conversation, Cochrane provided the teaching of the White Buffalo Woman that explains the importance of teaching men what can happen when they do not respect women:

The people started getting sick, everyone started getting really, really sick. And there was no sharing, there was greed. All these bad things were happening to the people. A message came to the people and said, “You need to go on a journey. Someone needs to go find out what’s going on, you guys go to get some help, because you guys lost your ways.” ... And so, this boy says, “I’m going to go. I’ll go and figure out what our people need.” And his buddy said, “I’ll come with you. We’ll go on a journey.” And so, they go out, and they’re walking, walking, and certain messages were coming at different times of the days [they were walking]. And then finally, after a really long journey, they noticed something coming really far, and it looked like a buffalo, and it was like walking really weird. And then they were squinting, and they were like “What is that? What is that?” And then it switched to a woman. And then they were approaching the spirit, and they were carrying something. So anyways, there was a beautiful, beautiful woman. And she was carrying what looked like a baby. And then she said, “This is what you need,” and she looked at the boy who initiated the journey and said, “You need to take this.” And she gave him that bundle. And said, “this is what’s going to help your people.” And that’s how they were gifted that pipe. And they were gifted a lot of the rules on how they were supposed to take care of this pipe, and some of the teachings behind the woman and man and carrying that pipe. And then just as they were about to turn around and walk away with that pipe, his friend thought in his head, and he turned around and said, “Oh, that woman’s beautiful” and was looking at her. Then he turned into ash.... he turned to ash because he thought she was beautiful, and he wanted her. He was thinking bad thoughts about her, and that’s not right. Yes, people are human, and they have, you know, these little things that pop in their head, but you need to discipline the way you think about

Wenonah, Considering Us,” in *Keetsahnak: Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters*, edited by Kim Anderson, Maria Cambell, and Christi Belcourt (University of Alberta Press, 2018). However, Indigenous legal orders can mitigate this violence. For further reading, see Emily Synder, Val Napoleon, and John Borrows, “Gender and Violence: Drawing on Indigenous Legal Resources,” *University of British Columbia Law Review* 48, no.2 (2015): 592-654, <https://commons.allard.ubc.ca/ubclawreview/vol48/iss2/9>.

⁴²⁶ Shayna Spence, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

people and the way you treat people and can't do that. That's not good. That's not how you look at women.⁴²⁷

This teaching shares how the Anishinaabe received the Peace Pipe but also demonstrates the importance of honouring, caring for, and respecting *kwewag*. Violence against *kwewag* was not tolerated. The Anishinaabe were taught that *kwewag* should not be coveted, sexualized, or commodified. However, as a result of colonialism this teaching has been forgotten and *kwewag* experience gender violence daily from the settler state and their kin. Naturally in my visits with Elder Beaucage-Kennedy and Knowledge Keepers Cochrane and Spence, the violence against Anishinaabe *kwewag* was raised and the importance of men's healing and teachings became necessary to the conversation.

Elder Beaucage-Kennedy explains that First Nations men have not healed yet and continue to be affected by patriarchal systems and values.

[O]ur men are slowly getting healed. We've been leaving our men behind. You know we're not looking after them properly. Our men are shyer, harder to get to a ceremony more because ... they haven't opened yet. You know, they're kind of like, still shut down, unless there's another man there that's like oh, come on. We're going over there. We're going to do this and, you know, we're going to sit beside the sacred fire and just share it. Sometimes, if another man asks them that walks in a good way, they will participate more, as opposed to, you know.⁴²⁸

Elder Beaucage-Kennedy explains that "we've been leaving our men behind, but they're slowly catching up with us. You must bring them to a circle."⁴²⁹ Men have similar responsibilities to *kwewag* when it comes to governance, law, and leadership. But they also have distinct roles to play – they are firekeepers, which is an essential role in all of Anishinaabe life. Their responsibilities include maintaining balance and harmony, protecting their families, and taking an important role in raising their children.⁴³⁰ Men's connections to fire are directly correlated to governance, because often fire is associated with Creation and "lights the way home."⁴³¹ If we

⁴²⁷ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴²⁸ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴²⁹ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴³⁰ Koognaasewiin: Raising Children, "Anishinaabe Niniwag – Anishinaabe Men," September 26, <https://www.koognaasewin.com/blog/anishinaabe-niniwag-anishinaabe-men>

⁴³¹ Koognaasewiin: Raising Children, "Anishinaabe Niniwag – Anishinaabe Men,"

are to revitalize Anishinaabe governance, men must reignite their roles as leaders and return to maintain balance and protect the Nation. In addition, men must renew their responsibilities and relationality with *kwewag* to protect and honour them. This means no more gendered violence, dispossession, or exclusion. They must take up the responsibility to unlearn patriarchal behaviours. The work of restoring governance, law, and leadership cannot be completed without the inclusion of men and the work they must do to ensure safe healthy Nations.

This transformation and relearning have already begun. Cochrane shares that when preparations were underway for her Berry Fast Coming Out celebration, with many male community members coming to support her, she remembers thinking “Why are these guys doing all this stuff for me?”⁴³² The men in attendance at Cochrane’s ceremony were there out of their responsibilities to her. Spence shares that some of the men who attended a women’s gathering in 2024 “carr[ied] really good teachings, you could tell they were taught [to] respect women. It’s just so nice to see how it comes out naturally in the way they help us, they don’t even realize the simplest thing.”⁴³³ The importance of men’s healing and the restoration of responsibilities extends to all individuals and citizens of the Nation.

Futures

While our visits were conversation-based and unstructured, components of *kwewag* leadership were described, including primary concerns, challenges, and hopes for the future. Discussing how colonialism has affected Anishinaabe leadership and teachings, Elder Beaucage-Kennedy explained that

we’re so colonized ... we forget about that little tree that sits outside. We’re forgetting about the grass we walk on. We forget about the full moon. You know, we’re so busy in colonization, we forget to stop and say, oh my god, did I put my tobacco down today? Oh my god, I forgot to say, miigwech. We have to check on ourselves.⁴³⁴

Elder Beaucage-Kennedy then shared the following about Anishinaabe *kwewag*’s roles in leadership:

[W]e [*kwe*] are the leaders of our partners, our children, our grandchildren, and

⁴³² Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴³³ Shayna Spence, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴³⁴ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

we're the ones that hold the family together. We're the backbone of a family. So, we have a lot of responsibility in doing that in a good way, to be a good teacher of our youth, you know, and also to never forget where our men are, because that's the balance. We were always the backbone ... we were the center of everything. Yeah, we were always there, and we still are, you know, that has not changed. If you look at a healthy family, you'll always see that ... the woman is highly regarded, the grandmother is highly regarded.⁴³⁵

Elder Beaucage-Kennedy acknowledged that we are in a transitional period where *kwe* are coming to re-remember our roles in the Nation and our responsibilities as leaders within our families as we continue to pick up our teachings.⁴³⁶ She also explained the roles of Chief and Council governance, stating,

[W]hen I was involved on council, I always felt that the people were the leaders, and I was the worker. What they shared with me, is what I would share with my council. And this is how we should be working. We work for the membership. We don't work ... for the Chief and Council. We work for whatever the membership, what their feelings are, what they want for their community. And that's where you put your skills to use to get those members satisfied. Get them on that good road. No judgement. You know, we can't be judging anybody, and that's a disease. And so is jealousy. There's some of us that are still sick with that ..., sick with jealousy. They think they move up the ladder and they're better.⁴³⁷

Leaders in the community are to be responsible for ensuring a healthy and strong Nation. When we are entrusted to make decisions that can affect the lives of our kin, we must ensure we are being truthful to our teachings and knowledges and that we do not carry harmful attitudes into our choices. That is a responsibly we take on as we embody governance and leadership.

Furthermore, Anishinaabe governance and leadership do not include settler-state systems of elections. Currently, the elections process across our Anishinaabe Nations echoes the conclave system of voting, which has been masked as traditional. This conclave system negates relationships and responsibilities that are developed and gifted to citizens in the Nation. Elder Barb Cameron shared with me that traditionally, it is the grandmothers in the Nation who choose

⁴³⁵ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴³⁶ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴³⁷ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

leaders, and who will encourage, teach, and lift those who have been chosen.⁴³⁸ When I visited the Midewiwin Lodge south of Winnipeg in February 2025, the grandmothers gathered, listened, shared, and selected sovereign leaders who they trusted, loved and cared for. The grandmothers' process centered relationships. During this time, the grandmothers made a commitment to support, nurture, and teach the newly selected leaders. This commitment demonstrates that *kwewag* are our first teachers and the heart of the Nation.

Similarly, Cochrane explained that decentralized governance is inherent.⁴³⁹ Cochrane shared the following decision that led to her conducting Berry Fast ceremonies for members of her community:

I reached out to [my Elder], about my daughter's fast, my daughter's Berry Fast ... There's medicine women and medicine men and only them are allowed to do ceremonies, only them are allowed to conduct them ... But at what point does it come time when it's okay for me to do it right? And do I have to be told, okay, now you can do this? And so, it was like I was waiting for someone to say that it's okay for me to do this ... when I went to her and I asked her and I said, I have my daughter's Berry Fast ... And then so she's like, "Oh, my God, I have a conference that weekend." And then I was, she's like, "I won't be able to make it." And then I was like, "Oh, that's too bad." And then I was like, "But can I do it?" "Oh, Katina yes, of course, you can do it, you're the one that did this [helped with the Berry Fast], you were my first girl that ever did that." She was just shocked that ... I didn't think that I could do it. And then she's like, "Well, do you remember everything?" And I said, I think I remember everything. And I said, "I'm missing, only one thing in the protocol, when she's breaking her fast, who she's feeding, I can't remember." And then she's like, it will come. It's gonna come. And then she's like, just go with what you remember. And then I said, can I write it out and I'll send it to you? ... I wrote it all out and sent it to her, kind of like an agenda, kind of, you know, points. And then this is when I would do the fire... I integrated fire into my ceremony, for our ceremony for my girl. And it's so weird. It didn't send ... it wasn't until the night before the ceremony when I noticed it, it didn't even go through. And so, I messaged her again, and then I was like, this is so weird, this didn't even send. And she reread it. Then she's like, "Oh, Katina ... you know what you're doing," and validated it, and then, and then I was able to do my daughter's [Berry Fast Coming Out ceremony] and it was just beautiful.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁸ Barb Cameron, personal phone call with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴³⁹ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴⁴⁰ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

Cochrane was empowered to conduct the Berry Fast for her daughter and was trusted to rely on the teachings she had. Following this experience, Cochrane began receiving messages from other *kwewag* asking about the Berry Fast and indicating they wanted to take part in the ceremony even if they were passed their first moon time. Cochrane shared that she consulted with her sister, teachers, and friends to seek guidance on whether she should invite people to pledge at the upcoming gathering that both Cochrane and Spence were organizing for women and Two-Spirit people in the community.

When thinking through if she should do it, Cochrane was outside with her son and saw *ode'imín* in her yard for the first time. She decided then she would conduct the Berry Fast ceremony. Thirteen *kwewag* pledged to participate in the Berry Fast ceremony at the end of the gathering. The *kwewag* who pledged together, kept care of one another, and supported each other through the year.⁴⁴¹ Cochrane stated, “as an Indigenous person, we’re in this era right now where we’re reclaiming things and we’re reviving our language and our ceremonies, and I’m not going to be scared to talk about it anymore.”⁴⁴² She further explained that she felt empowered to make the decision based on the message she received from the *ode'imín*:

As an Indigenous woman, I’m not doubting myself anymore. I’m making a decision. I’m gonna be decisive about what I want and what we’re gonna do, and, like, not gonna let anyone try tell me that I am not allowed to do something, you know, unless I’m going to an Elder or someone and saying, like, “I’m scared that this is not right,” you know, unless it’s coming from me and I’m getting that feeling. But no, I’m not gonna apologize or say, “Oh, we shouldn’t be allowed to do this,” because I feel, that’s the colonial thing that comes and bites me whenever I try do something. It’s like, you’re not good enough, or you’re not, that’s not a good idea. That’s not right, you know, so you shouldn’t be doing that like. And I always had that voice.⁴⁴³

Cochrane demonstrates the importance of Anishinaabe *kwewag* being leaders and trusting in themselves and the messages they receive. She says, “We’re just getting together as women and lifting each other up, sharing our struggles and empowering each other. And we used to do that

⁴⁴¹ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴⁴² Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴⁴³ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

every month, full moon.”⁴⁴⁴ *Kwewag* have always been centered in governance and leadership. *Kwewag*’s roles and responsibilities as first teachers and leaders remain an essential component of Anishinaabe worlds. Patriarchy and colonialism dispossessed *kwewag* from governance and leadership because they demonstrated alternative political orders to those of the settler state.⁴⁴⁵ This dispossession and disappearance of *kwewag* and Anishinaabe governance has disordered the balance needed within the Anishinaabe Nation, which has resulted in gender violence. Not receiving the *ode’imin* teaching or commitments from relatives in the Nation to care, respect, and support young *kwewag* breaks down healthy Nations and further entrenches patriarchy. Re-remembering the *ode’imin* teaching and revitalizing *kwewag*’s ceremonies such as the Berry Fast are necessary to rebuild Anishinaabe governance. Ultimately this will ensure *kwewag* are protected, safe, and respected as they are our first teachers and the heart of the Nation.

When Cochrane and Spence were looking to host their women’s gathering, the men in the community did not understand if they were allowed to participate, but when told this was a women’s gathering and space, they offered to help. In total, thirteen men came to the gathering to help removing the garbage, tending to the sacred fires for four nights and four days, bringing in *nibi* and food, and with the set-up of the tipis. One man went to collect and pick flowers to hang them over the treaty grounds where the gathering was taking place. Cochrane explains that the men who helped devised their own internal leadership structure and worked together to support the gathering where they could.⁴⁴⁶ It has become clear that governance and leadership are best defined as results from healthy individuals, families, communities and Nations. The goal of leaders is to ensure the well-being of the Nation.

Reflecting on this current time of resurgence and reclamation of governance, Elder Beaucage-Kennedy explains the importance of our present realities:

Everything is coming to us now. It’s up to us to grab it and to look after it, and someday, I think not in my time, but maybe yours, that will be the way we’re going to be governing ourselves. It’s going to be better, it’s going to be clearer, and we will have that responsibility. Whatever the bear has to do, he will do it. And whatever in the tooth clan, the hoof clan, and the eagle clan, we all have big responsibilities. You know, the Eagles are the messengers. We bring the messages right to the Creator. I always tell young people my messages to the Creator are

⁴⁴⁴ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴⁴⁵ A. Simpson, “The State Is a Man,” 1.

⁴⁴⁶ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

faster than the text.⁴⁴⁷

Following the guidance from Elder Beaucage-Kennedy, this flow and adaptation of knowledge and leadership can be invigorated by restoring our relationships with the land, demonstrating cyclical renewal. In my visit with Elder Beaucage-Kennedy, she explained this intimate and kin connection must be re-established: “[W]e are just walking on Mother Earth here, visiting this place. And I really believe that with sovereignty, we have to learn how to move ahead in a good way to be a good role model[s] ... for the trail that we’re making, for the ones behind us.... We have to get healthy first. We will never work unless we’re healthy.”⁴⁴⁸ Failing to establish and sustain the relationship with the more-than-human, or to uphold our responsibilities to one another within our kinship relations and to the greater Nation continues will lead to depleting the agency and process of Anishinaabe world-making. One way to restore a relationship with the more-than-human is by walking on *aki* in your ribbon skirt adorned with your sacred colours and being proud to be an Anishinaabekwe. Elder Beaucage-Kennedy explains that walking with *aki* in a ribbon skirt cleanses the ground as you make connection with *aki*.⁴⁴⁹

Inherently, coming-of-age ceremonies such as the Berry Fast disrupt patriarchy by centering *kwewag* and honouring their transition into a new season of their lives. Additionally, *kwewag* teaching younger *kwewag* how to care and nourish themselves, respect their body sovereignty, and practice self-discipline. One of the most important teachings that comes during this time is that *kwe* are taught how to be treated by their kin and relatives in the community and the Nation. During the year, they are honoured and cared for and learn the importance of maintaining and nurturing the balance within the Nation and ensuring there is the absence of patriarchy and the subordination of *kwewag*. My visits and conversations with Elders and Knowledge Keepers have deeply informed and developed my understanding of Anishinaabe body sovereignty, leadership, governance, relationality, and responsibilities. *Chi-miigwech* for our visits.

Academic Discourse

Singing songs ahead to future generations creating visions of the world we want

⁴⁴⁷ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴⁴⁸ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁴⁴⁹ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

to see, so that on their day of hearing they will know we sat, and in the quiet of our minds sang a song of beauty forward and dreamt of a loving day.

Marcie R. Rendon⁴⁵⁰

Indigenous academics have long occupied colonial academic spaces, taking up the responsibility of creating room for Indigenous voices, knowledges, and governance systems. Their strength has been unwavering in challenging colonial narratives about Indigenous Peoples, Nations, governance, and histories. In recent years there has been a paradigm shift from Indigenous scholars' commitment to engaging with the settler state to now focusing on their own Nations instead. I have chosen to carefully include Anishinaabe teachings and academic scholarship to inform the *ode'imín* governance framework in order to honour where this knowledge has been generated from. As an Indigenous academic, I work in both worlds to create a framework of governance that is both an academic contribution and an offering to the Anishinaabe Nation. I remain accountable to myself, my family, community, and Nation in my decision-making process of including dialectics. Heidi Kiiwetinpinesiik Stark notes that Indigenous academics are now "drawing on grounded Indigenous lifeways and a decolonial praxis that confront[s] and challenge[s] the heteronormative patriarchy that has too often entangled our communities to try to imagine a new future for our nations."⁴⁵¹ In the following section, I engage with Indigenous scholars whose contributions to Indigenous feminisms, Indigenous law, and Indigenous politics and governance have advanced the discourse on sovereignty by turning inward toward their own Nations, teachings, and responsibilities to imagine Indigenous futures. Their scholarly contributions have grounded and informed the theoretical praxis I have taken to develop the framework of *ode'imín* governance.

Coming-of-Age Ceremonies

Scholars have begun raising awareness of the importance of coming-of-age and rite of passage ceremonies that are essential in raising youth. Considering the importance of coming-of-age ceremonies for this work is essential because of the passing on of knowledge that occurs throughout this season of a young person's life. As Cutcha Risling Baldy (Hupa, Karuk, and Yurok) explains in *We Are Dancing for You: Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Women's*

⁴⁵⁰ Rendon, *Anishinaabe Songs for a New Millennium*, 9.

⁴⁵¹ Stark, "Generating a Critical Resurgence Together," 6.

Coming-of-Age Ceremonies, for the Hupa Nation coming-of-age ceremonies “center empowerment of young women but also the community, which builds a foundation for how Indigenous peoples enact their sovereignty and self-determination by clearly including gender equality and the empowerment and autonomy of women as part of the very foundation of culture and society.”⁴⁵² Risling Baldy further explains that a young woman’s coming-of-age ceremony demonstrates body sovereignty by “helping her to understand her most intimate self,”⁴⁵³ and that it is deeply rooted in power and responsibility.⁴⁵⁴ The sentiments Risling Baldy has discussed in the Hupa context, are also evident in the stories shared by Knowledge Keepers Katina Cochrane and Shayna Spence. Knowing the direct importance these ceremonies can have in coming to learn oneself has also been discussed by Kim Anderson in “Honouring the Blood of the People: Berry Fasting in the Twenty-First Century.” Anderson states that the Berry Fast teaches youth about the importance of the new responsibilities that come with entering adulthood, and honouring yourself, and self-discipline.⁴⁵⁵

In *Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings and Story Medicine*, Anderson explains that “self-discipline and self-reliance were fostered through practices of non-interference.”⁴⁵⁶ Allowing youth to practice self-discipline, binding trust between the people supporting the youth and teaching youth to trust their own decisions, is a powerful intervention. As a result, youth envision their roles and responsibilities for the future of their Nation knowing they belong.⁴⁵⁷ This approach to young women’s coming of age is contrary to Western understandings of menstruation, which is often viewed as a “curse”⁴⁵⁸ which serves to reinforce the man/woman binary, which is created and sustained through heteropatriarchy to “mak[e] women and their bodies ‘taboo.’”⁴⁵⁹ Risling Baldy emphasizes that

Indigenous women’s coming-of-age ceremonies that celebrated a woman’s first menstruation aggrieved settlers, who saw these practices of celebration as

⁴⁵² Cutcha Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You: Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Women’s Coming-of-Age Ceremonies* (University of Washington Press, 2018), 9.

⁴⁵³ Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You*, 10.

⁴⁵⁴ Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You*, 11.

⁴⁵⁵ Kim Anderson, “Honouring the Blood of my People: Berry Fasting in the Twenty First Century,” in *Expressions in Canadian Native Studies*, ed. Ron Laliberte (University Extension Press, 2000), 388.

⁴⁵⁶ Kim Anderson, *Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine* (University of Manitoba Press, 2011), 79.

⁴⁵⁷ Anderson, “Honouring the Blood of My People,” 390.

⁴⁵⁸ Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You*, 12.

⁴⁵⁹ Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You*, 6.

particularly detrimental to the settler colonial project because they demonstrated the power to resist settler ideals of domesticity and assimilation.... These ceremonies were clear demonstrations of “gendered and sexual possibility” that challenged the very fabric of settler colonial culture and society.⁴⁶⁰

The continuing practice of coming-of-age ceremonies such as the Berry Fast defies the state’s need to disappear such ceremonies. In this refusal,⁴⁶¹ Indigenous governance and leadership is activated, maintained, and gifted to youth who are experiencing the Berry Fast. The refusal is itself a demonstration of Indigenous governance because the decision ultimately leads to a healthy Nation. As a result, coming-of-age ceremonies persist and the knowledge of Anishinaabe teachings, stories, ceremonies, and their associated values of belonging, trust, respect, sovereignty are passed down to younger generations thus, continuing the cycle of knowledge production and the nurturing of a healthy Nation. Conceptions of governance and leadership cannot be imagined or activated without re-remembering *kwewag*, our relational responsibilities, and the more-than-human. Understanding the connectivity between resistance, responsibilities, and relationality is taught through coming-of-ceremonies, which then co-constitute Anishinaabe governance and leadership.

Learning from the Ode’imin

Mother Earth informs us how we are to see relation and understand our intimate connection with our more-than-human relatives. Mother Earth teaches us to listen, learn, and live amongst our kin. As a result of colonialism, this knowledge and relationship between the Anishinaabe and the more-than-human has grown dormant. Elders and Knowledge Keepers have fought to keep this relationship intact. They guide us to pick our responsibilities back up and remedy the relationships that we have with the more-than-human for the health of our collective future. Academics have begun to produce scholarly contributions to the settler state’s conception of animacy and learning from and with the land.⁴⁶² By listening to Elders and Knowledge Keepers and considering the scholarly contributions of Indigenous academics, we can begin to conceptualize how learning from the more-than-human can teach us about governance and

⁴⁶⁰ Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You*, 12.

⁴⁶¹ A. Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 22.

⁴⁶² L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 150.

leadership.

In *Drawing Out Law: A Spirit's Guide*, John Borrows explains that Anishinaabemowin instructs the speaker and listener to understand that “earth is alive, and that it has agency.”⁴⁶³ He asserts that Anishinaabe political systems must reflect this core principle.⁴⁶⁴ Borrows also shares a story in *Canada's Indigenous Constitution* about a man named Odaemin who dies from a great plague and travels to the land of the dead. Here he is taught how to bridge the two worlds of living and the dead, using a large tree.⁴⁶⁵ As a result, the *ode'imín* is named after him. Borrows explains the significance of this honour for Odaemin, stating, “[E]very time a person sees this fruit, the name is intended to help them remember Odaemin's acts and to remind them of their own preparation for their future journey to the land of the dead.... Like Odaemin, if people live by principles that respect and facilitate stewardship, such as loyalty, patience, and bravery, they should receive the approbation of their community.”⁴⁶⁶ Odaemin teaches the Anishinaabe how to live a good life and walk in a good way, adhering to the roles and responsibilities they have been taught. In addition, they demonstrate and actively live in relation with the more-than-human, the tree which becomes the bridge between both worlds. We learn from Odaemin how to establish and maintain balance within relationships. This teaching is an important reflection of Anishinaabe governance and leadership that demonstrates that all beings have valuable complementary contributions to make to governance.

This relationship between all Anishinaabeg and the more-than-human is intrinsic to how we organize ourselves and understand belonging. Recognizing our more-than-human relations as teachers instructs and continuously reminds us how to live in respectful and reciprocal relation with all beings. Robin Wall Kimmerer emphasizes a similar sentiment when she states that “the practice of observing the living world and taking inspiration for human ways of living from its model is an essential element of Indigenous science. It embraces the reality that there are intelligences other than our own, from whom we might learn.”⁴⁶⁷ Understanding *ode'imín* as animate, as Borrows suggests, and reflecting on my relationship with the *ode'imín*, as illuminated by the observation Kimmerer offers, I continue to learn from the *ode'imín* as my

⁴⁶³ Borrows, *Drawing Out Law*, 204.

⁴⁶⁴ Borrows, *Drawing Out Law*, 204.

⁴⁶⁵ Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution*, 80.

⁴⁶⁶ Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution*, 81.

⁴⁶⁷ Kimmerer, *The Serviceberry*, 67.

teacher.

Thinking about the structure of the *ode'imín*, I turn to Jillian Kerr (Wabanaki) and Leanne Simpson. Kerr explains that the vital root system of the *ode'imín* demonstrates the connection between the *ode'imín* and other *ode'imín* within the patch. This is very similar to how the veins that run within the human body connect the heart to all parts of our being.⁴⁶⁸ The *ode'imín* root system also directly teaches us how to practice and embody relational governance. Building on this, Elder Albert Dumont (Algonquin) shares that it is extremely important to “honour your bloodline.”⁴⁶⁹ Elder Dumont explains that our blood and DNA carries the memories from our heart throughout our veins as it travels through our bodies and connects us to our ancestors.⁴⁷⁰ Kim TallBear writes in her text, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*. TallBear explains how blood “retain[s] symbolic meanings rooted in Indigenous thought, and blood rules require the counting of one’s tribal relations and ancestors.”⁴⁷¹ Thus, the *ode'imín* serves as a reminder that once we have passed from this life and journey through the western door to the spirit world,⁴⁷² the unconditional love and support does not end.⁴⁷³ Rather, our ancestors continue to walk with us, offering support and teachings that shape how we live in the present. In this way, *ode'imín* reminds us that our actions are never only about ourselves or the current moment; they must also honour those that came before us, care for those living alongside us, and protect the well-being of future generation yet to come.

In *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, Leanne Simpson also discusses the root system of the *ode'imín*. She explains that the root systems can teach us how to come to know our relationship and the Nation itself as an “inter-connected web of hearts.” The *ode'imín* and heart knowledge is illustrative of “our emotional intelligence, an intelligence that traditionally was balanced with physical, intellectual and spiritual intelligence to create a fully embodied way of being in the world.”⁴⁷⁴ The *ode'imín* and our connection to them through our hearts, our veins, and our

⁴⁶⁸ Jillian Kerr, “Rites of Passage: The Strawberry Ceremony,” Wabanaki REACH, May 1, 2025, https://www.wabanakireach.org/rites_of_passage_the_strawberry_ceremony.

⁴⁶⁹ Albert Dumont, “Strawberry Teachings with Albert Dumont,” Indigenous Culture and Media Innovations, August 2, 2018, educational video, 0:00–1:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6p9J4CEdLE>.

⁴⁷⁰ Dumont, “Strawberry Teachings with Albert Dumont,” 1:00.

⁴⁷¹ Kim TallBear, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 64.

⁴⁷² Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, “Medicine Wheel Teaching,” email to Hope Ace, February 4, 2025.

⁴⁷³ Dumont, “Strawberry Teachings with Albert Dumont,” 7:00.

⁴⁷⁴ L. Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 94.

knowledge grounds us and subsequently our responsibilities to one another.

Both Lorena Sekwan Fontaine (Anishinaabe and Cree)⁴⁷⁵ and Vanessa Watts (Mohawk and Anishinaabe) have described the importance of holistic healthy Nations that begin within healthy individuals. Watts's figure of "Four Levels of Anishinaabe Governance" shows the interrelationships between the self, family/clan, community, and Nation (figure 5.1). Each relationship relies on the health and sustainability of the relationship that came before it, each associated with specific roles and responsibilities that the self must first uphold.⁴⁷⁶ It becomes clear that leadership is responsive and intimately connected to the health of the individual and to body sovereignty. This relationship then expands outward to ensure both healthy Nations and healthy leaders. This is the foundation for Anishinaabe governance that is derived from our innate connection to one another and to the more-than-human.

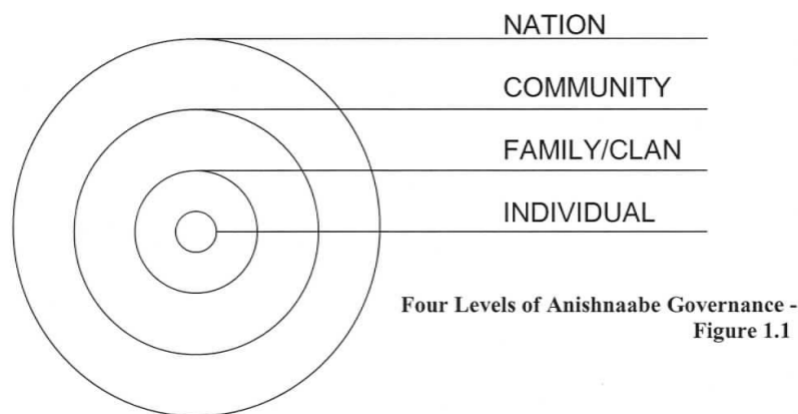


Figure 5.1: Four Levels of Anishinaabe Governance, Vanessa Watts⁴⁷⁷

Relationality

Anishinaabe governance has always been rooted in relationality, which means that governance is derived and generated through the actions and decisions of the Anishinaabe. These actions and decisions, however, have been informed by kin, as we respect and acknowledge our relations as our teachers. This mode of governance is inherently anti-hierarchical and instead

⁴⁷⁵ Lorena Sekwan Fontaine, personal communication with Hope Ace, Winnipeg, February 2025.

⁴⁷⁶ Vanessa Watts, "Towards Anishinaabe Governance and Accountability: Reawakening Our Relationships and Sacred Bimaadiziwin (MA thesis, Trent University, 2004), 24, <http://hdl.handle.net/1828/2222>.

⁴⁷⁷ Watts, "Towards Anishinaabe Governance and Accountability," 28.

centers relationality. In addition, Anishinaabe governance and leadership have always transformed and changed in order to protect the well-being and health of those whom the Nation supports. Because of this, relationality, fluidity, and adaptability are core governing principles.

In her MA thesis, “Towards Anishinaabe Governance and Accountability: Reawakening Our Relationships and Sacred Bimaadiziwin,” Watts defines what Anishinaabe governance means to her. She states, “[G]overnance is, not merely a system of government which objectively oversees and manages the operations of society. Rather, “governance” is intimately connected to even the individual spiritual growth of Anishinaabeg as demonstrated through community leadership and clan roles/responsibilities that one upholds.”⁴⁷⁸ Later, she further details this inclusion of growth and the fluidity of governance. She explains,

Anishnaabe governance systems are centred on this notion of renewal as they are intended to exist in harmony with the laws of nature. Leadership and other positions held by people within the community were constantly shifting and changing as new generations of Anishnaabeg were endowed with special gifts that contributed to the overall governance of community. Thus, these roles exist in a fluid context which are dependent on the needs, abilities and desires of the community. This prevented the governance of community from becoming stagnant despite ever-changing conditions.⁴⁷⁹

Watts clearly identifies three key components of governance: responsibilities that stem from heart knowledge, relationality, and adaptability. Understanding Anishinaabe governance and leadership as fluid, spiritual, and animate requires us to reflect on our responsibilities and honour our ancestral kin. It is critical to acknowledge this deeply connected relationship between the health and heart knowledge of an individual who deeply knows their responsibilities. When an individual holds heart knowledge they innately become responsible for generating, transforming, and creating governance through relationality.

In work done on the Anishinaabe *nibi inaaakonigewin*⁴⁸⁰ Aimée Craft (Anishinaabe-Métis) discerns that “responsibilities are at the heart of the Anishinaabe legal structure.”⁴⁸¹ In the same report, Elder Allan White insists that “The law is the responsibility we have as

⁴⁷⁸ Watts, “Towards Anishinaabe Governance and Accountability,” 2.

⁴⁷⁹ Watts, “Towards Anishinaabe Governance and Accountability,” 64.

⁴⁸⁰ Water law.

⁴⁸¹ Aimée Craft, “Anishinaabe Nibi Inaaakonigewin Report” (2014), 12, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3433235>.

Anishinaabe. This idea needs to be embedded into what we write about the law, rather than trying to capture the law as an idea.”⁴⁸² When we position our responsibilities within a framework of leadership, we actively choose to live in accordance with Anishinaabe laws and intelligence networks while we actively build worlds.⁴⁸³ Like the approach taken in writing the Anishinaabe *nibi inakonigewnin*, embodying governance and leadership must also include centering and embodying our responsibilities. It becomes clear that responsibilities are the ethos, the “rules, clauses and regulations” of governance and leadership that is felt, experienced, taught, lived, and embodied. This is our guide to healthy, sustainable Nations.

Watts emphasizes this argument and explains that “the more responsible an individual is to him/herself, the more he/she can actively participate in the governance of the nation as he/she is represented in the family, the clan and community.”⁴⁸⁴ The health and balance of the individual is critical in order for their responsibilities to the Nation to be fulfilled.⁴⁸⁵

Adding to the discourse on interconnected responsibilities, Leanne Simpson explains that “governance [pre-contact] was localized within an individual’s self-determination, the self-determination of families, clans and communities.”⁴⁸⁶ Moreover, in the chapter “Nogojiwanong: The Place at the Foot of the Rapids,” she further states that leadership and governance must begin with *kwe*. She argues that governance begins with *kwe* and with mothers within the community. Following that, governance then flows outward “from the centre of the family to clans, communities, and nation and lastly to our relationship with other nations.... [O]ur political systems begins with how we mother.”⁴⁸⁷ Parenting and the moments of knowledge transfer between adult and child are the first moments in which children are taught governance while simultaneously rejecting colonialism and heteropatriarchy, based on the parents’ teachings of their grounded Anishinaabe responsibilities in a world beyond colonialism. Recognizing the leadership and self-determination that is absent of hierarchical structures enforces the autonomy and trust of sovereign individuals who all come together to form the Nation.

⁴⁸² Craft, “Anishinaabe Nibi Inakonigewin Report,” 12.

⁴⁸³ L. Simpson, “Political Concepts,” 15:00–27:00.

⁴⁸⁴ Watts, “Towards Anishinaabe Governance and Accountability,” 43.

⁴⁸⁵ Watts, “Towards Anishinaabe Governance and Accountability,” 47.

⁴⁸⁶ L. Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 85.

⁴⁸⁷ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Nogojiwanong: The Place at the Foot of the Rapids,” in *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations*, ed. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (ARP Books, 2008), 208.

Basil Johnston, in *Ojibway Heritage*, explains that leaders prior to colonialism represented the people of the Nation; they were not bestowed with power or authority but with the trust of the people who allowed them to be in such a position, and they are not to be hierarchical.⁴⁸⁸ Further, Brock Pitawanakwat explains that the absence of defined hierarchical structures and processes indicates that Anishinaabe Nations lived liberated, free lives, and knew to act in a good way.⁴⁸⁹ Pitawanakwat quotes Elder Naokwegijig-Corbiere who explains that Anishinaabeg always governed regardless of whether the terms were understood by the settler state. As Naokwegijig-Corbiere affirms, “We had a way of ensuring the well-being of all. We just did it. We didn’t need to explain how we did it. Maybe that’s why a lot of these terms haven’t emerged. Many things we didn’t need to explain, we just did them.”⁴⁹⁰ Undoubtedly, governance has always been rooted within our teachings and the active everyday decisions to respect and uphold our responsibilities.

As discussed in previous chapters, colonial masculinities continue to distort and disrupt First Nations relationships and men's responsibilities in the Nation. This disruption is not limited to men’s responsibilities alone; colonialism has also distorted women’s roles, responsibilities, and relationships through the imposition of heteropatriarchal gender norms and colonial governance structures. According to Simpson, for the state to continue its colonial project of dispossession and disappearance, First Nations youth, specifically boys, are taught to mirror settler-state values “through social conditioning.”⁴⁹¹ She states,

[E]ven when they are just babies, even when they are just kids, patriarchy becomes entrenched in them, and it continues as they grow. Boy culture does not permit boys to express a full and normal range of human emotions ... this is a danger, because it sets the conditions up for our men to behave in a way that is not responsible to the whole family or to the whole community.⁴⁹²

This is not a suggestion that this is the case for every First Nations man, but a recognition of the system itself and the conditioning of youth to model behaviours and norms that implicitly benefit the state structure. Anderson speaks to this when she explains that, traditionally, there was a

⁴⁸⁸ Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage* (McClelland & Stewart, 2008), 63–64.

⁴⁸⁹ Pitawanakwat, “Anishinaabemodaa Pane Oodenang,” 219.

⁴⁹⁰ Pitawanakwat, “Anishinaabemodaa Pane Oodenang,” 219.

⁴⁹¹ L. Simpson, “Nogojiwanong,” 210.

⁴⁹² L. Simpson, “Nogojiwanong,” 210.

balance between women and men that included a level of flexibility to ensure the health and well-being of the Nation.⁴⁹³

In “Learning to Lead Kokum Style: An Intergenerational Study of Eight First Nation Women,” Yvonne G. McLeod (Saulteaux Cree) emphasizes that women’s leadership must be grounded in everyday affirmative action within the family and “positive communication experiences.”⁴⁹⁴ To continue to push for sovereign moves away from patriarchy, Leanne Simpson suggests a community-based solution of “redefin[ing] masculinity.”⁴⁹⁵ This new masculinity would “create communities in which we value the contributions of individuals, in which we have once again a fluidity around gender roles and responsibilities, and in which we respect all the forms of diversity that our societies used to foster so beautifully.”⁴⁹⁶ Simpson makes it explicit that masculinities must be transformed in order for responsibilities to be re-remembered and our governance systems revitalized.

Anishinaabe governance is a relational and embodied practice that is created and sustained through body sovereignty. Ashlea Gillon (Ngāti Awa) in “Fat Indigenous Bodies and Body Sovereignty: An Exploration of Re-presentations,” defines body sovereignty as “inherently political, and [as] centr[ing] informed consent and agency.”⁴⁹⁷ Gillon further expands their definition of body sovereignty to understand it as “a decolonial and restorative practice ... a method of re-claiming agency.”⁴⁹⁸ As an embodied practice that actively restores sovereignty, it is also resistance, refusal, and resurgence. Re-remembering governance is inherently associated with a reclamation of body sovereignty.

Moreover, Alex Wilson emphasizes that sovereignty is inherently connected to land sovereignty but also to “sovereignty over our bodies, sexuality and gender self-expression.”⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹³ Anderson, *Life Stages*, 99.

⁴⁹⁴ Yvonne G. McLeod, “Learning to Lead Kokum Style: An Intergenerational Study of Eight First Nations Women,” in *Living Indigenous Leadership: Native Narratives on Building Strong Communities*, ed. Carolyn Kenny and Tina Ngaroimata Fraser (UBC Press, 2012), 20.

⁴⁹⁵ L. Simpson, “Nogojiwanong,” 210.

⁴⁹⁶ L. Simpson, “Nogojiwanong,” 211.

⁴⁹⁷ Ashlea Gillon, “Fat Indigenous Bodies and Body Sovereignty: An Exploration of Re-Presentations,” *Journal of Sociology* 56, no. 2 (2020): 224, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783319893506>.

⁴⁹⁸ Ashlea Gillon, “What Does Body Sovereignty Mean to You? Decolonising the Body: Pūrākau as Method(ology),” in *Research Handbook on the Sociology of Gender*, ed. Gayle Kaufman et al. (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2024), 109.

⁴⁹⁹ Alex Wilson, “Our Coming In Stories: Cree Identity, Body Sovereignty and Gender Self-Determination,” *Journal of Global Indigeneity* 1, no. 1 (2015): 4, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48717629>.

Wilson demonstrates that sovereignty is deeply relational and interconnected. Further establishing connections between land and body sovereignty in "Centring Resurgence," Leanne Simpson explains that "The land has presence in the bush, on our reserves, in the cities that sit within our traditional territories and within our bodies and is fully integrated with the spiritual realm."⁵⁰⁰ When we begin to understand our sovereignty and bodies in relation to land, they no longer can be dispossessed from one another. They are both informed by the other and feel the reverberation of decisions and actions made. Moreover, in *As We Have Always Done*, Simpson describes the importance of body sovereignty not only as a "birthright"⁵⁰¹ but also as a threat to settler power.⁵⁰² She clarifies that body sovereignty can be embodied in the following ways:

[T]he decisions about how I use my body, my mind, my sexuality, my spirituality, and the relationship I'm embedded in are my decision and no one else's. The regulation of my body, my brain, and my sexuality are attacks on my body as a political order, my nationhood, and my freedom, regardless of intent.⁵⁰³

Body sovereignty has become a violent space through the rupture of decision-making capacity and connection to the Nation because of colonialism.⁵⁰⁴ However, as Simpson describes, body sovereignty endures these structures. Respecting body sovereignty as a world-building practice is a transformative shift that circumvents the violent oppression and dispossession of Anishinaabe bodies.

In the early 2020s, I spent a considerable time theorizing body sovereignty for my Master's thesis. I was able to define it as

[t]he pleasure of the full determination of control, and authority over one's body without ambiguity... It is the capacity to engage with kin, and all our relations, the ability to advocate and participate in experiences that fulfil desires and responsibilities you are called to. To have body sovereignty, is to express and contribute to your nation, family, world, ecology, and self ... it [i]s the capacity to be free from ... the structures that continue to perpetuate violence against Indigenous bodies.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁰ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Centring Resurgence: Taking on Colonial Gender Violence in Indigenous Nation Building," in *Keetsahnak: Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters*, ed. Kim Anderson et al. (University of Alberta Press, 2018), 216.

⁵⁰¹ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 110.

⁵⁰² L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 107.

⁵⁰³ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 114.

⁵⁰⁴ L. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 117.

⁵⁰⁵ Hope-Ann Ace, "Treaties: The Symbiotic Connection Between Land and Body Sovereignty an Exploration into

Body sovereignty dismisses colonial oppression, disappearance, and devastation. It embraces and welcomes pleasures and desires of the sovereign while centering relational, responsible decision-making. Additionally, I iterated the importance of body sovereignty as the authority with which we can “exercise and act on our responsibilities and inform our internal ways of organizing and governing upon the land.”⁵⁰⁶ Thus, body sovereignty roots the framework of *ode’imin* governance because of its innate relational and embodied practice.

The scholars I have referenced have made pivotal contributions to understanding the significance of coming-of-age ceremonies, learning from the more-than-human, and redefining governance and sovereignty. By bringing these foundational discourses together, I am able to further conceptualize a framework of governance through *ode’imin*. Their work has created space within academia for these conversations and challenged mainstream settler-state assumptions that distort and diminish long-standing governance systems of First Nations. Recognizing the gaps that remain in the literature, I have theorized how knowledge from the past can be carried forward to inform a contemporary model of leadership that honours the sovereignty of the Anishinabek Nation. By grounding governance in principles of relationality, teachings, belonging, and trust, I assert leadership practices that create limitless possibilities for our futures.

***Ode’imin* Governance**

Process of Development

Ode’imin governance is a work of love, trust, kindness, and care. Its development required me to trust myself and my voice as I learned, reflected on, and communicated the incredible gifts shared with me in the form of teachings throughout this journey. I encourage others to similarly expand their thinking to include learning from the more-than-human and re-remember their roles and responsibilities as leaders. *Ode’imin* governance has been nurtured through the generosity of voices and teachings. This work required deep self-reflexivity, deep love to create with and deeply honouring the relations one is responsible to.

Re-Presencing Indigenous Epistemologies to Re-story Sovereignty” (MA thesis., University of Manitoba, 2021), 11–12, <https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/items/9466dcc4-116e-412c-bfa1-010ebb5e0ff3>.

⁵⁰⁶ Ace, “Treaties,” 26.

The culmination of these teachings – stories, visits with the *ode'imín*, academic dialogue, and ongoing self-reflexivity – allowed me to begin imagining what this governance framework might look like. These teachings have allowed me to understand *ode'imín* as medicine, as animate, and as sovereign which shaped my relationship with them. In addition, it centered the importance of coming-of-age ceremonies like the Berry Fast where governance is taught and embodied. I began to understand governance as an everyday action informed by relationality, trust, respect and support. From this process of learning from academics, the *ode'imín*, and Elders and Knowledge Keepers, I was able to identify components of *ode'imín* governance.

The Framework

Theorizing a new contemporary framework of governance required returning to our teachings to create a model of roles, responsibilities, accountabilities, and relational obligations. It is unique because it supports Anishinaabe assertion of body and Nation sovereignty by grounding governance in Anishinaabe principles and teachings and is informed by the more-than-human. In doing so, it simultaneously rejects colonial heteropatriarchy, settler-state supremacy, and the violences embedded in those systems. *Ode'imín* governance positions Anishinaabe teachings as knowledge and theory that we can learn from in order to regain balance in our Nations and protect our *kwewag*. Emerging from these teachings is a restored sense of self and belonging that flows from our heart knowledge. This framework and the analysis that follows would not exist without the knowledge shared by Elders and Knowledge Keepers, nor without the contributions of Indigenous scholars whose work in Indigenous feminisms and Indigenous politics provided critical guidance.

The primary purpose of this governance framework is to revitalize Anishinaabe governance outside of the violent structures of colonialism and the Indian Act. *Ode'imín* governance advances the process around Nation place-based theories of governance and knowledge production. It demonstrates ways in which we can embody these theories and choose to actively create governance in our everyday actions. The immediacy with which *ode'imín* governance can begin to transform the self into thinking, acting, and making decisions in a relational way centralizes Anishinaabe world-building.

Ode'mín governance comprises seven interconnected elements of the *ode'imín* itself: the roots, vines, the stem and flower, the seeds, flesh, and green leaf. These elements establish a new

framework of governance that centers Anishinaabe epistemologies and ontologies beyond the settler state. Removing Indigenous governance theory from colonial prose reinforces a resurgence-based approach to regenerating knowledges and futures through Nation placed-based ontologies. Additionally, trusting each individual as a sovereign leader allows for the greater embodiment of *ode'imín* governance and a healthy Nation. This allows individuals' gifts to be honoured as they can support the Nation in their own ways. Each of the components are sovereign, yet they rely on one another through ongoing reciprocity by coming together to nourish and sustain the whole of *ode'imín* governance.



Figure 5.2: *Ode'imín* Governance, Hope Ace, 2025



Figure 5.3: *Ode'imín*, Hope Ace, 2025

Roots and Vines

In the illustration “*Ode'imín Governance*” (figure 5.2), you can see seven roots flowing from the stem of the *ode'imín* which supports it entirely; the vines represent body sovereignty. These vines are visible in the two photographs of the *ode'imín* patch located by Anama Bay, Manitoba (figures 5.4 and 5.5). In each photograph, you can see the *ode'imín*'s leaves, bright red berries, and the vines that travel across the sandy beach while interacting with the old trees as they connect themselves to their kin. The *ode'imín* teach us that through the exercise of body sovereignty, each individual is a leader. This leadership system requires collective responsibility in decision-making. The *ode'imín*'s engagement with the sand and old trees reflects their intimate kinship connections with those beings with whom they share responsibilities to. This network of relationality establishes a community and Nationhood. Kerr's and Simpson's description of the *ode'imín* root system, as discussed in the second section of this chapter, points to the embedded relationality of the Nation and its citizens. It becomes evident that these vines that the sovereign *ode'imín* sends out connect and willingly enters into relation with one another to transmit notions of care, belonging, consensus, and support to ensure the health of the Nation.



Figure 5.4: *Ode'im* Leaders, Hope Ace, 2025



Figure 5.5: Visiting the *Ode'im*, Hope Ace, 2025

Additionally, the roots that are depicted in the illustration of *ode'im* governance represent the Seven Generations Teaching that connects the present to past and future ancestors (figure 5.6). We acknowledge the three generations behind us, our roles in the center, and the

three generations ahead of us.⁵⁰⁷ It reminds us of the harmony and balance of all of Creation that is reflected in the *ode'imín*.⁵⁰⁸ Both the vines and the roots demonstrate and teach us that we all have decision-making capacities when we come together to reach community consensus; we create, teach and share knowledge. Embodied daily leadership and governance distinguish Anishinaabe governance from settler-state governance. Our leadership is expansive, and we have a responsibility to be accountable decision-makers.

To explicitly include seven generations in the framework of *ode'imín* governance is to embed not only heart knowledge into our decisions but also heart memory. This reminds us of the sacrifices, tenacity, teachings, and love that our ancestors have for us. Heart memory instructs us to actively create and make Anishinaabe worlds in the present,⁵⁰⁹ so that future generations are welcomed into a safe environment. It requires rooted Seven Generation principles of decision-making which instructs leaders to consider how their choice honours and affects ancestor's past, future, and present.

As well, the roots in this governance framework innately center our relationship with the more-than-human. This relationship no longer becomes an afterthought or an abstract idea. It is the ethos – we know we are intertwined and in relation with the more-than-human. By living in accordance with this relationship, our decisions to protect and care for *aki, nibi*, and the more-than-human are no longer forgotten. Moreover, our responsibilities with the more-than-human are practiced and cared for intrinsically. Our futures depend on reawakening and re-entering into relationships with the more-than-human to learn again from them as our teachers.

⁵⁰⁷ The Seven Generations teaching can vary. I have included three generations behind and ahead of us because I believe we are currently in the eighth fire.

⁵⁰⁸ Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book*, 57.

⁵⁰⁹ L. Simpson, "Political Concepts," 3:00–27:00.



Figure 5.6: The Roots and Vines, Hope Ace, 2026

The Stem and Flower

A second component of this framework consists of the stem and the flower of the *ode'imín*, which work together in tandem. The strong unwavering stem of the *ode'imín* is a site of authority, ethics, and decision-making, taught to us by our families as they are our first teachers. As children, our families recognize us as sovereign spiritual beings. They acknowledge the animacy of each child and respect them, because children have recently journeyed down from the Star World, and are considered gifts from Creator. Children are revered and honoured for this knowledge and the gifts they bring their families that they received from the Star World because of their unique perspectives and recent time with Creator. As we age, our families respect us and offer unwavering support while testing us along our journeys. We are encouraged by our kin to explore our interests and to trust in ourselves as they trust in us. Just as the roots interact and engage with the stem, our responsibilities to the seven generations are prioritized. Recognizing the Seven Generations teaching, acknowledging and caring for three generations behind and ahead while the self is in the center informs our embodied decision-making. These relations are our support system, as we come to know the importance of centring relationality, the power of trust, and the respect for ourselves and others as sovereign beings.

As spiritual beings our governance and leadership flow from our hearts and our families can help shape our understanding of self through ceremony. Informed by teachings from

Knowledge Keeper Katina Cochrane, she explains how she was empowered by her family when she began her Berry Fast. She emphasizes that our families can be the first people who bring us to ceremony.⁵¹⁰ The Berry Fast and embodiment of body sovereignty generates *and* builds Anishinaabe governance from the *ode* and *ode'imín*. The stem is formalized through this embodiment and by the teachings received as we enter adulthood. As the Berry Fast requires the abstinence from *min* over four seasons, self-discipline is taught and practised while *kwewag* refrain from *min*. These teachings require the activation of governance and leadership which are nourished through the love, encouragement, and support of family.

Our families also teach us how to put our *sema* down and give *sema* to our teachers, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers. When we are growing up, we are taught to ask for guidance, teachings, advice, and support by asking trusted Elders and Knowledge Keepers. When we are meeting with an Elder or Knowledge Keeper, we are taught to clearly state our asks and place the *sema* down. It is important to not hand the *sema* directly to the Elder or Knowledge Keeper as it takes away the agency of choice. Once the request has been shared, if they choose to accept, they will accept your *sema*. These lessons teach us respect and to honour the teachings we are to receive. Coming to know our spiritual selves shape how we make our decisions and act upon our responsibilities.

As we climb up the stem, we reach the white flower that cyclically blooms when the *ode'imín* is ripe. This flower signifies intergenerational knowledge transmission and the gift of learning our responsibilities. The cyclical nature of the blooming flower is reminiscent of the fluidity of the Anishinaabe Nation, which is constantly generating knowledge, reviving ceremonies, extending kinship networks and renewing relationships with the more-than-human.

Recognizing this intergenerational knowledge transfer, the cyclical appearance of the flower requires the continual renewal of these relationships. It teaches us that we cannot abdicate or neglect our responsibilities as leaders but provides forgiveness for us to re-enter into those sacred relationships if we do negate them. Additionally, this cyclical process signifies the constant renewal of *ode'imín* governance, which is attributed to its animacy and the respect for the body sovereignty of leaders. Under this framework, governance is continually renewed to ensure it meets the needs and expectations of the Nation.

⁵¹⁰ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

Each new moon and season, we have opportunities to learn from ourselves, our families, our community, the Nation, and more-than-human kin because the flower facilitates knowledge production. We take these newly received teachings and enter into the next season prepared to make responsible decisions. The stem demonstrates how our families nurture our gifts by encouraging us to explore what engages us, build relations with the more-than-human, and ultimately trust our findings and decisions. When the flower emerges again at the beginning of *niibin*, it signals a time to reflect on our learning and transmit knowledge to our kin. By sharing this new knowledge, we are actively participating in knowledge transmission and demonstrating the agency of the stories, teachings, and experiences learnt and shared, which then generate governance.

The stem and flower in *ode'imín* governance signify the journey of embodied governance and leadership informed through teachings, stories, and ceremony (figures 5.7 and 5.8). We come to learn our responsibilities through our families and kin who nourish our inquiries, gifts, and spirits. The cyclical nature of Anishinaabe worlds ensures the continual commitment to grow, share, and adapt to ensure a balanced, healthy Nation. As sovereign beings we are taught to use our gifts from Creator to live, think, and dream within Anishinaabe worlds.



Figure 5.7: The Flower, Hope Ace, 2026 Figure 5.8: The Stem, Hope Ace, 2026

The Seeds

Embedded in the fleshy body of the *ode'imín*, the heart of the Nation, are the seeds (figure 5.9). Elder Dot Beaucage-Kennedys gifted me the teaching of the importance of *kwewag* as first teachers and the gifting of knowledge and story seeds.⁵¹¹ Her teaching centers the importance of *kwewag* as life givers to the Anishinaabe Nation and our first teachers as grandmothers, mothers, aunties, sisters, and cousins. The seeds in the *ode'imín* governance framework are unique to each sovereign being. Each seed that appears on the flesh of the *ode'imín* is reflective of teachings, stories, perspectives, and life experiences. These can come during many phases of our lives, such as the first moon time, new relationships, pregnancy, parenthood,⁵¹² new careers, friendships, and navigating family life. We are taught to trust that we are not alone as we encounter these new periods in our lives.

Seeds shared and gifted to *kwe* by *kwewag* help our decision-making and can provide perspective on how we navigate our path as individuals and members of a family, community, and Nation. For example, Baldy and Anderson observe that coming-of-age ceremonies empower *kwe* who are experiencing new changes to their sovereign self.⁵¹³

As we age, more seeds develop because we have been on *aki* longer. These seeds are knowledge bundles that carry us through certain stages of our lives. As we get older, we give these seeds, or knowledge to the younger generation because we have already walked through those seasons of life.⁵¹⁴ We know that they need those seeds as we once did to carry them through.⁵¹⁵ The seeds remind us of the importance of relationships where we can ask for guidance and be safe to do so. Within the practice of being gifted seeds, we know we belong to a community who wants us to be healthy.

Another imperative aspect to the seeds of the *ode'imín* is the way we are taught the importance of balance between all of our relatives in the community. Knowledge Keeper Katina

⁵¹¹ Elder Beaucage-Kennedy's teaching of the *ode'imín* seeds has fundamentally altered my understanding of gifting and receiving knowledge and the importance of honouring *kwewag*. *Chi-miigwech*.

⁵¹² Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁵¹³ Kim Anderson, "Honouring the Blood of my People: Berry Fasting in the Twenty First Century," in *Expressions in Canadian Native Studies*, ed. by Ron Laliberte, (University Extension Press, 2000); Cutcha Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Women's Coming-of-Age Ceremonies*, 1st ed., (University of Washington Press, 2018).

⁵¹⁴ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

⁵¹⁵ Dot Beaucage-Kennedy, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

Cochrane shared the importance of having boys and men in her community attend her Coming Out ceremony and committed to take care of and protect her.⁵¹⁶ This was a demonstration of their enacted responsibility further reinforced that Cochrane belonged and would be protected as she exercised her body sovereignty. The seeds do not pass on gender violence, heteropatriarchal hierarchies, or the silencing and disappearance of Anishinaabe *kwewag*. The absence of violence and hierarchy are structural features of *ode'imín* governance and not just moral values. Instead, the seeds instruct our actions and decisions to maintain balance within the Nation where violence is incomprehensible.

Undoubtedly, we deeply depend on *ode'imín* seeds because they are portable governance principles. They define and consist of laws as well as of responsibilities. They are our ethical guides that exist within relationships, not institutions. Thus, Anishinaabe governance and leadership are organized upon these seeds.



Figure 5.9: The Seeds, Hope Ace, 2026

The Heart

The next component of the framework is the intense red of the flesh of the *ode'imín*, which represents our hearts. Informed by the seeds embedded in the flesh of the *ode'imín*, this

⁵¹⁶ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

component is where decisions are embodied and authority enacted (figure 5.10).

Building from the roots, vines, and stem, we are all sovereign leaders who sustain and embody governance to nourish healthy Nations. The heart of the *ode'imín* is reflective of our individual body sovereignty, which grants us the authority to make our own choices. Knowledge Keeper Katina Cochrane shared that her Berry Fast made her ask the following questions: “Who am I? Who am I allowing in my circle? Who am I allowing time with myself? What am I putting myself in? What am I setting myself up for?”⁵¹⁷ During this sacred time in her life, Cochrane was in a space to explore and engage with her body sovereignty. Coming-of-age ceremonies teach Anishinaabe youth to take care and know themselves through their sovereignty and spiritual connection.

Embodied governance requires us to practice disciplined leadership to maintain balance through our decisions. In addition, we are taught humility and respect for our teachers. Receiving corrections and new perspectives is an important aspect of growth. As a result of body sovereignty and the maintenance of balance, governance flows through relationships and endures through time and space. This inclusive principle of embodied, relational leadership structurally decentralizes power. We refuse disappearance and ego in order to defend and care for the well-being of the Nation. *Ode'imín* governance strives to empower its kin to exercise their sovereignty and make unequivocal decisions they are proud of that are the result of our hearts.

⁵¹⁷ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.



Figure 5.10: The Heart, Hope Ace, 2026

The Leaf

Lastly, atop of the flesh of the *min* is the green leaf. This represents accountability in practice, where teachings, seeds, and embodied sovereignty are enacted and made visible to others (figure 5.11). Connected through the vines of each *ode'imín* in a patch, the green leaves atop each sovereign *ode'imín* visually symbolize each leader. These individual accountabilities to teachings and relationships together compose a central part of Anishinaabe governance, collectivity, and consensus.

Knowledge Keepers Katina Cochrane and Shayna Spence addressed the importance of self-discipline and the importance of making choices to honour your spirit, knowing you can trust yourself, your family, your community, and the Nation.⁵¹⁸ Self-discipline and trust enable ethical action. Each sovereign being bestows agency and teachings to act as leaders. We remain accountable to our teachings through these decisions.

Without a doubt the principles of *ode'imín* governance are kinship, relationality, belonging, trust, care, intergenerational knowledge, and consensus-based decision-making. This framework exists entirely within Anishinaabe epistemologies. *Ode'imín* governance is the

⁵¹⁸ Katina Cochrane, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025; and Shayna Spence, visit with Hope Ace, February 2025.

animate embodiment of experiences, teachings, gifts, and sovereign decisions.



Figure 5.11: The Leaf, Hope Ace, 2026

Strengths and Relevance

This chapter has introduced *ode'imín* governance as both a critique of patriarchal governance structures and a reclamation of relational Anishinaabe Nationhood grounded in love, accountability, and sacred sovereignty. Whereas Chapter 3 examined how patriarchy has been historically and contemporarily embedded within Anishinaabe governance, this chapter offers a generative alternative rooted in Anishinaabe teachings. *Ode'imín* governance re-centers relational authority and reciprocal responsibility.

As an academic intervention, this framework theorizes governance from within Anishinaabe worlds rather than through colonial institutions or frameworks. It contributes to Indigenous governance scholarship by articulating a model that is place-based, embodied, and spiritually grounded, yet capable of travelling beyond colonial constraints. In doing so, it challenges dominant governance paradigms that separate politics from spirituality, leadership from relationality, and sovereignty from everyday practice.

Ode'imín governance circumvents attacks on Anishinaabe body sovereignty, governance,

and leadership by re-remembering governance teachings carried by the more-than-human world and *kwewag*. Colonialism's violent structures have disordered governance, leadership, and community life while enabling the disappearance of Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and gendered authority. In response, *ode'imín* governance advances a conscious, embodied approach to leadership rooted in Anishinaabe knowledge systems. In this way, *ode'imín* governance does not merely reject settler-state supremacy; it requires the revitalization of place-based knowledge through the reassertion of body sovereignty.

Ode'imín governance also functions as an accountability tool. It provides criteria through which leadership can be assessed according to Anishinaabe governance principles, helping to prevent the replication of colonial harms as Nations reorganize and rebuild relationships with one another and with the more-than-human. Because heart knowledge, body sovereignty, and governance are inseparable, this framework affirms governance as inherently spiritual and guided by our responsibilities to Creation. Its relevance extends beyond theory, offering practical and ethical guidance for Nation rebuilding grounded in Anishinaabe law and responsibility.

Limitations and Considerations

While *ode'imín* governance offers a transformative framework, it is not exhaustive. This chapter centers *kwewag* voices and teachings, reflecting both my positionality and the urgent need to address gendered colonial violence. The Anishinabek Nation spans vast territories of *aki* and multiple sites of *nibi*, and as such, the knowledges related to coming-of-age ceremonies, the *ode'imín* teachings, leadership, and governance are diverse and place-specific. Not all are included here. Teachings may also differ depending on the Elder or Knowledge Keeper and places in which they are received.

Grounded in place-based ontologies, *ode'imín* governance must remain attentive to relational specificity. Future work should involve continued visiting across *aki* and *nibi* with *kwewag* and Knowledge Keepers to further explore, refine, and expand the possibilities of this framework. *Ode'imín* governance is not intended to account for every dimension or contingency of governance; rather, it is a guiding model rooted in Anishinaabe principles. It must remain responsive and adaptable to the needs of the Nation as seasons, relationships, and responsibilities shift over time.

This work also does not fully engage the gendered realities and governance of Two-Spirit

kin. Future research must intentionally build relationships with Two-Spirit community members to ensure that reimagining of Anishinaabe governance meaningfully account for their experiences, responsibilities, and sovereignty. While this research centers *kwewag* to interrupt heteropatriarchal governance structures that have privileged men, this focus does not diminish the importance of restoring balance across all gendered roles and responsibilities. There remains significant work to be done regarding boys' coming-of-age ceremonies and the re-remembering of men's teachings as part of the Nation's broader healing. I invite others to carry that work forward and look toward future conversations that may collectively contribute to more comprehensive, relational governance frameworks informed by the more-than-human world.

The *ode'imín* governance framework emerges from the teachings of the Berry Fast, and the *ode'imín*, and is informed by visits with the Elders and Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous academics. The roots refuse hierarchical and heteropatriarchal power structure and instead embody relational governance and center Seven Generations thinking. The stem and flower of the *ode'imín* represent sites of authority, ethical consideration, knowledge production and regenerative renewal which informs Anishinaabe decision-making. The seeds demonstrate transferrable governance principles that flow through relationships instead of institutions. From the seeds, the heart of the *ode'imín* emerges as embodied authority and decision-making grounded in responsibility. The final component of the framework is accountability. Together, these animate elements of the *ode'imín* engage with one another to express embodied Anishinaabe governance and leadership.

Conclusion

Ode'imín governance (figure 5.12) was developed through teachings generously shared by Anishinaabe *kwewag* during visits in *biboon*. Their guidance has been a profound gift, and these teachings will be carried with deep respect and care as part of ongoing relational responsibilities. This framework advances methods for eliminating hierarchical, patriarchal, and exclusionary forms of leadership and governance that reproduce and enforce colonial attitudes. It invites a transformation in how we understand and enact world-making responsibilities and practices. Through this transformation, leadership centers, supports, honours, and trusts *kwewag* while restoring governance as relational and embodied practice.

Returning to rooted teachings that have endured despite colonial disruptions creates

alternative pathways toward Anishinaabe futures. *Ode'imín* governance contributes to Indigenous governance scholarship, Indigenous studies, and Indigenous feminist resurgences by articulating a model grounded in Anishinaabe epistemologies and ontologies. At the same time, it serves as a practical tool for individuals, families and communities, and the Nation to re-remember governance and leadership in ways consistent with Anishinaabe law and responsibilities. The next chapter turns toward Anishinaabe futurities as they are being enacted in the present. Chapter 6 further reflects on the theoretical contributions of *ode'imín* governance and its transformative capacities to mobilize body sovereignty within Anishinaabe governance and leadership. Ultimately, *ode'imín* governance is both a process of re-remembering and a practice of generating heart knowledge.

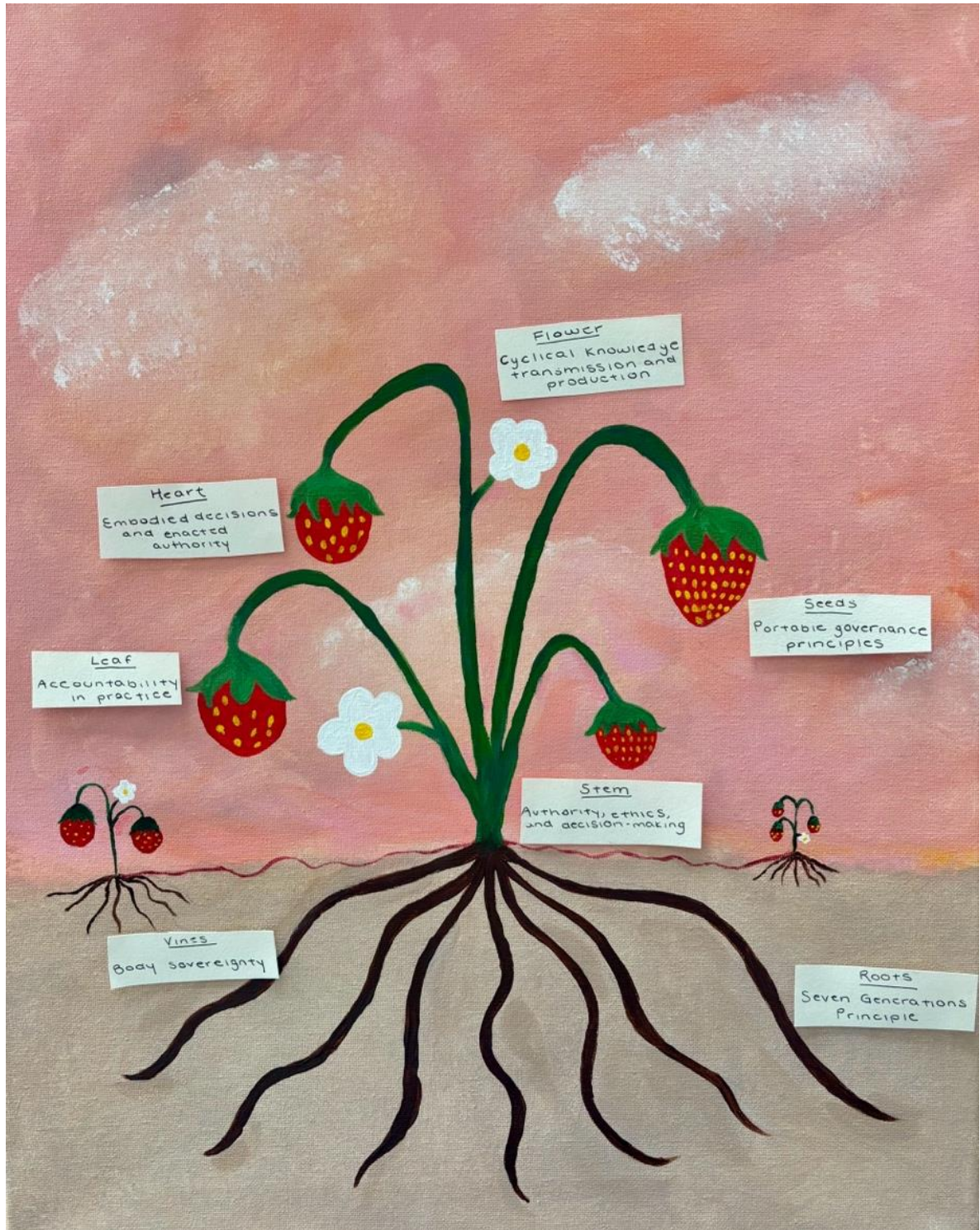


Figure 5.12: Embodied *Ode'imín* Governance, Hope Ace, 2026

Chapter 6

Ziigwan: Anishinaabe Futurities

I begin this chapter visited by the glow of *biidaaban*.⁵¹⁹ Each time *giizis* rises and *dibiki-giizis*⁵²⁰ sets, we experience renewal and awakening. Within these rhythms of Creation and through our relationships, we remain intrinsically connected to our ancestors and to those yet to come. As *biboon* recedes and prepares for rest, we welcome *ziigwan*. *Ziigwan* carries teachings of renewal, rebirth, and resurgence. It is a time when *aki* awakens and life begins again. In these teachings, *ziigwan* also reminds us that the futures are not distant possibilities but responsibilities we nurture in the present. Through renewal, healing, transformation, and celebration, *ziigwan* calls us to imagine and enact Anishinaabe futurities.

This chapter returns to the practice of replanting the *ode'imín miinikaanan*⁵²¹ at a reflective and generative site for considering the teachings offered by the *ode'imín* itself, as well as those of the Elders and Knowledge Keepers who have guided this work. This chapter demonstrates how *ode'imín* governance is a relational framework that builds Anishinaabe futurities through embodiment. This final chapter includes summaries of my learning outcomes and details governance principles that were revealed in through the research process. *Ode'imín* governance is a practical and relational governance framework capable of restoring balance. In doing so, this chapter emphasizes turning inward toward our own Nations, legal orders, and knowledge systems. *Ode'imín* governance can be lived through ceremony, Anishinaabemowin, *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human, and through education and leadership.

Anishinaabe Futurities

Anishinaabe teachings on futurity are reflected in the Seven Fires Prophecy and in the Seven Generations Teaching. Our ontologies have always oriented us to consider our future worlds and relations. I pull inspiration from Laura Harjo's book *Spiral to the Stars: Mvskoke Tools of Futurity*, where she writes,

[F]uturity consists of living out the futures of our ancestor relatives. Maintaining continuity in practices and values and renovating them as necessary, creating

⁵¹⁹ New day.

⁵²⁰ Moon.

⁵²¹ Seeds

community we wish to live in the present moment, and considering future relatives are ways of enacting futurity right now, and everyday people can perform and are performing this in a range of spatialities.⁵²²

Harjo's work reminds us that the futurity matrix is not an abstract or distant concept, but an everyday practice grounded in relationships, responsibilities, and lived experiences. In this way, Anishinaabe futurities are not imagined worlds detached from the present; rather, they are enacted through relational governance practices that sustain balance between past, present, and future relations.

Ode'imín governance exists within what can be understood as a relational futurity matrix. This matrix is made up of relationships, it is informed by our ancestors and is continually made and reshaped through lived experience. Harjo explains futurity as an active practice to "live out the futurity architecture of our ancestor relatives and frame a futurity for our future relatives."⁵²³ Similar to the processes Harjo describes, Anishinaabe futurities inherently operate through this relational futurity matrix by following the Seven Generations Teaching. *Ode'imín* governance is one expression of this relational futurity practice. Our futurities can never be forgotten if we know who we are. Thus, futures are embodied through active choices we each make in the present.

This relational orientation is particularly significant within the context of the Seventh Fire Prophecy. According to Anishinaabe teachings, we are currently living in the time of the Seventh Fire, a time when the resurgence of Anishinaabe knowledge systems is necessary for survival. Elders are passing, knowledge is being lost, and our people need support. Many Indian Act leaders have not been brought up with the teachings or ceremonies they need to guide their Nations. As a result, many people no longer know who they are or what an Anishinaabe leader is, nor do they have the relational foundations of Anishinaabe governance necessary to lead in a good way.

In the time of the Seventh Fire, the resurgence of relational Anishinaabe leadership and governance is necessary. Ceremony is one of the ways these teachings are carried, practiced, and remembered. *Ode'imín* governance represents a healthy system rooted in Anishinaabe teachings and principles of relational leadership. It offers a framework through which communities can re-

⁵²² Harjo, *Spiral to the Stars*, 26.

⁵²³ Harjo, *Spiral to the Stars*, 34.

center responsibilities to *aki, nibi*, language, and kinship relations. By turning back to these teachings, we re-remember how to govern and begin to restore the relational foundation necessary to protect our futures.

The resilience and resistance of *kwewag* remain pillars of our Nations and continue to guide this resurgence. The role of *kwewag* as first teachers lives within everyday practices of care, responsibility, and relational accountability. Our teachings and ceremonies such as the Berry Fast are coming back, and the health of our Nations will follow. As discussed in Chapter 5, I witnessed Anishinaabe governance and leadership in practice as grandmothers committed themselves to supporting and teaching leaders on how make healthy decisions grounded in relational responsibility.

Anishinaabe-led futures are possible. Our futures are actualized when we embody teachings, experience ceremonies, and learn the language. These practices inform each person's identity and relationship to community. Teaching leadership to youth demonstrates to them that they belong to a collective and strengthens their responsibility within it. Youth grounded in teachings learn to trust themselves, their relations, and the guidance of their ancestors. Centering Seven Generations thinking ensures a thriving, safe, and healthy environment where youth can nourish their gifts and spirits. Anishinaabe resistance and resurgence have always endured through the dedication of *kwewag* and the more-than-human, and through these relations, our futures continue to unfold.

Following the teachings of *ziigwan* in this time of renewal and reawakening, I listen to the *ode'imín*. They show us a pathway forward to renew our relations and center *kwewag* in the creation of our futures. In the foreword to *Beyond the Glittering World: An Anthology of Indigenous Feminisms and Futurisms*, Mojave scholar Natalie Diaz describes the glittering world she dreams of for Mojave futures:

Across our many different Native stories, the glittering world is, among many worlds, one of land, water, and origin, an origin which is/was connected to all the elements and worlds and beings that existed before us. It is also the world into which we had to learn to walk, to stumble, to run, to plane, to fish, to eat ... to listen, pray and story ... to war and love, to recognize our wounds and heal them, to play and make. In this glittering world we are also taught to dream. We have become those dreams. And we have yet to become those dreams.⁵²⁴

⁵²⁴ Natalie Diaz, Foreword to *Beyond the Glittering World: An Anthology of Indigenous Feminisms and Futurisms*,

Reflecting on the glittering worlds that Diaz speaks of, I understand *ode'imín* governance as one of these dreams. Yet it is not a simple dream; it is also a responsibility. It is a responsibility I carry to nurture and activate. Through this research, I have come to recognize that the teachings I have received guide the creation of healthy leadership and governance. Honouring these teachings also means honouring my role in building and sharing *ode'imín* governance.

***Ode'imín* Governance Futurities**

Colonialism created a deep divide within Anishinaabe Nations by implementing hierarchal, patriarchal, and Christian governance structures. Our people became fearful of prosecution and practiced ceremony in secret. The banishment of ceremony resulted in the internalization of colonial stereotypes. Our medicine people were considered dangerous and otherworldly.⁵²⁵ As a result, the implementation of colonial values made our Nations reluctant to engage with Anishinaabe ceremonies, knowledge systems, legal orders, teachings, and ceremonies. As seasons have passed, many of our leaders no longer hold teachings received through coming-of-age ceremonies that raise strong healthy leaders. Without teachings and ceremony, you cannot be taught how to be a relational and accountable leader. Indian Act leaders' have been impacted by colonialism and the foreign system they operate within. This imported system is designed to control, divide, and break down Anishinaabe governance and relationality.

Ode'imín governance is rooted in traditional knowledge which we re-remember when we embody Anishinaabe teachings. It is a network of responsibilities that flow, flex, and retract from one another. Anishinaabe leadership and governance are collaboration, sacrifice, teaching, relationality, care, respect, patience, and discipline. At the same time, this framework requires the generation of new Anishinaabe knowledges, a resistance against romanticizing our Nations as static or fixed in a pre-contact past.⁵²⁶ As shared with me throughout my visits with Elders and Knowledge Keepers, our relationships with one another inform our decisions and leadership. These relationships inform our futures. *Ode'imín* governance disrupts current temporalities to

ed. Stacie Shannon Denetsosie et al. (Torrey House Press, 2025), ii.

⁵²⁵ Lorena Sekwan Fontaine, personal communication with Hope Ace, Winnipeg, February 2025.

⁵²⁶ Starblanket and Stark, "Towards a Relational Paradigm," 191.

reclaim ceremony, language, land, and education to embody teachings and uphold responsibilities. Through generative practices of relationality, we already hold the knowledge and capabilities to create our futures.⁵²⁷ The principles of relationality, accountability, and trust embedded in *ode'imín* governance can therefore be embodied immediately.

Understanding that actions inform and create governance, the *ode'imín* teaches the importance of “maintaining heartfelt relationships in our families and communities.”⁵²⁸ Learning from *ode'imín* to re-center relationships supports healthy Nations, beginning with *kwewag*. When visiting the *ode'imín*, I saw a relational network. An *ode'imín* patch is a visual representation of leadership and governance that informs the self, family, community, and Nation.⁵²⁹ Connected to one another through a vine system, an *ode'imín*'s relationality informs their actions and contributes to the well-being of the Nation. Each *ode'imín* carries the responsibilities and roles of a leader while resisting hierarchy. Their leadership is grounded agency, with each member choosing to be an active participant in the community. From the *ode'imín*, we learn the importance of relationality and consent in embodying leadership and governance. Anishinaabe leaders can choose to be in relation and embody *ode'imín* governance principles.

Through a reflexive process of unlearning and relearning, I came to recognize the extent to which my ways of sensing, knowing, and relating had been shaped and constrained by settler-state structures. It became a core component of this research work as unlearning therefore became a necessary condition for this dissertation to emerge in a meaningful and accountable way. The development of *ode'imín* governance had to be conceptualized, theorized, and enacted within Anishinaabe knowledge systems rather than through externally imposed frameworks. Through this process, I sought to fulfill my responsibilities to honour my relations and to inhabit more fully the Anishinaabe worlds that *ode'imín* governance makes possible. As a result, this dissertation became not only an analytical project but also a relational and generative space that carries dreams, connection, belonging, practices of care, and the cultivation of hope.

When I began this dissertation, I wanted to answer the question “What is Anishinaabe

⁵²⁷ Harjo, *Spiral to the Stars*, 140.

⁵²⁸ Wabano, “Strawberry Teachings,” Wabano Centre, <https://wabano.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Strawberry-Teachings--ENG--FR.pdf>.

⁵²⁹ Watts, “Towards Anishinaabe Governance and Accountability: Reawakening Our Relationships and Sacred Bimaadiziwin,” 24.

governance?” I initially assumed the answer to this was written, recorded, and fixed. Over time, however, my understanding shifted. Governance was no longer something that resembled written, settler-state-like structures. Instead, through my unlearning I came to understand governance as relational, embodied, and enacted through everyday practices that exist beyond colonial forms of governance. This occurred because I was generating theory with my relations and in place-based capacities. Refusing colonial governance models becomes an important act of supporting Anishinaabe Nationhood and collective well-being.

To move beyond settler-state governance models, I needed to learn Anishinaabe teachings, ceremonies, and Anishinaabemowin. I renewed my relations and place-based knowledges. These two generative processes permitted me to live, think, and build Anishinaabe worlds. I visited with the more-than-human, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers, received land-based teachings, and started to learn the language. In speaking with Elders and Knowledge Keepers, I learned about the ongoing work to share teachings and ceremonies to heal our relations. Leadership and governance revealed themselves not as abstract institutions but as embodied practices expressed through everyday interactions within the self, family, community, and Nation.

I began reflecting on moments of connection with my family, friends, and community with a renewed understanding of leadership and governance. Governance existed when I shared a pot of tea, gathered *min*, or harvested a *waawaashkeshi*. During these moments of connection, teachings and stories were shared, new skills were developed, and knowledge was generated. In the summer of 2025, I visited with my good friend and fellow graduate student, Anishinaabe-Dakota theorist Ashley Daniels. We met to discuss a book we had decided to collaboratively read on Anishinaabe law. We kept asking, “Are we are living as Anishinaabe beings in accordance with our own laws?” We determined that we had been practicing leadership and governance daily because they are embedded within our relationships.

In each of these moments, futures were created because we cared for our kin and actively engaged our *ode* knowledge while I unlearned settler colonial norms and relearned Anishinaabe ways of being. Relational leadership and governance mean nurturing spirits and sharing portable governance seeds. Undoubtedly, teachings, stories, and *ode'im* governance are embodied in the moments we create, share, and experience. Like Aaron Mills, I too have determined that leadership and governance is an everyday practice, as he states in his dissertation: “Anishinaabe

law is the practice of everyday living.”⁵³⁰ Anishinaabe thinkers and dreamers are cyclically activating Anishinaabe futures.

Ode’imin governance teaches discipline, self-love, trust, and respect. It inherently recognizes the body sovereignty of each being. Taking care of ourselves and honouring our spirit is directly correlated to the well-being of the Nation. It shapes who we are and how we live in relation to one another. Maintaining balance between the self, community, and our more-than-human relations therefore becomes essential for sustaining healthy Nations.

Living Futurities

Ode’imin governance was born from dreams about our futures and the hope we have always carried for seven generations. I share the following story to encapsulate the hope and dreams I have for Anishinaabe futures. It is told through the lens of *Mashkikiiwike* to demonstrate how *ode’imin* governance can work as a practical governing structure fifty years after *ode’imin* governance is embodied by the Anishinaabe. *Mashkikiiwikwe* visits the Anishinaabeg and tells us what she sees.

* * *

One *dagwaagi*, a ceremony was held on Truth and Reconciliation Day. *Kwe* and her friends went to ceremony together, as they often did. They visited and shared stories, laughed, feasted, and honoured one another. On this day, *kwe* was given a spirit name. Many Anishinaabe receive names as they take on new responsibilities and roles in their communities.

In the spirit world and among the ancestors, *kwe* is known as *Mashkikiiwikwe*, Sturgeon Medicine Woman. Sturgeons are sacred relatives who share ancient knowledges. They have lived in *nibi* for time immemorial. *Kwe* was told her responsibility is to take away bad medicine. Bad medicine is what harms and keeps people sick, it’s the violence, imbalance, and disruption that troubles our relations. *Kwe* was told she must replace it with good medicine. Good medicine is Anishinaabe teachings and ceremonies that support the well-being and health of the Anishinaabe. It is her ancient knowledge.

⁵³⁰ Mills, “Miinigowiziwin,” 133.

She gets to work, knowing she carries the strength of *name*,⁵³¹ and knowing that her ancestors trust and support her.

In *niibin*, *giizis* shares its warmth with *nibi* in Sturgeon Bay. *Mashkikiiwikwe* loves this time of year, because she gets to visit with her relations while she travels throughout *nibi*. As she swims toward the shore, she hears the Anishinaabeg. Moving closer, she sees good medicine enveloping each person, family, community, and the entire Nation. *Mashkikiiwikwe* is relieved, because she spent many years teaching the Anishinaabeg how to remove bad medicine that kept them unhealthy.

Mashkikiiwikwe wonders what else she will see today. She keeps swimming and sees everyone gathered in a circle. She is in time to see *kwe*'s Coming Out Ceremony to celebrate her Berry Fast. *Kwe* is adorned in beaded *ode'imín* that complement her red dress. Everyone is smiling and celebrating her as she walks out. *Mashkikiiwikwe* listens carefully and hears everyone in the community tell *kwe* she is loved, protected, and that she belongs. They tell her she is smart and an important leader. People in the community commit to protecting her, and *Mashkikiiwikwe* sees that *kwe* trusts them to uphold their responsibilities to her. *Mashkikiiwikwe* sings and dances and watches everyone surround *kwe* with love. *Mashkikiiwikwe* will continue to provide guidance, strength and love for *kwe* as she leads and supports her community.

Next, *Mashkikiiwikwe* sees new parents passing tobacco to Elders to receive teachings on how to be good parents. *Mashkikiiwikwe* tells the parents to honour the gifts the little one has been given. They are encouraged to let the little one dream, listen, share, and learn. They must love and care for their little one always. The Elders explain to the new parents how to teach the little one to communicate with *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human. They say that this is how the little one will generate knowledge. The little one will always be in relation. The Elders tell the new parents that listening to our relations is how we must organize ourselves because they are the teachers. *Mashkikiiwikwe* is pleased to know the Anishinaabeg are listening to *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human. *Mashkikiiwikwe* hears the Elders tell the new parents that these relations are embedded in who the Anishinaabeg are. If they know who they are, they will never be lost or sick, the Elders emphasize. The little one should be taught to be proud of who they are. Before *Mashkikiiwikwe* continues swimming, she hears the Elders say that living in accordance with

⁵³¹ Sturgeon.

their teachings creates balance – not only in the Nation but at the individual, family, and community level, too. That certainly sounds right to *Mashkikiiwikwe*. The Anishinaabeg have always needed balance to walk in a good way and stay healthy.

She sees other parents with their children. The children ask to hear stories and sit patiently, attentively listening. The parents are so gentle while they teach them important lessons on how to care for themselves and others. *Mashkikiiwikwe* sees that the children are trusted and know their responsibilities. They help their parents and grandparents. They respect what they say and instruct. The children gather and harvest with their families, preparing for *dagwaagi* and *biboon*. They are taught to respect their relations, *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human, and always maintain balance. *Mashkikiiwikwe* watches the children play with their cousins and explore the *aki* around them. They talk about how excited they are to go to school this week, where they are learning about Anishinaabe clan systems and star stories. All the children begin to share their clans with one another and what their responsibilities are. The children's laughter reverberates toward her. *Mashkikiiwikwe* smiles, knowing these young leaders will generate knowledge, theory, and take care of their teachings as they pass them on. They will always be in relation.

As she swims along, she hears Anishinaabemowin. She recognizes the teachings, obligations, and values that are being exchanged. Teachings she has been hearing the Anishinaabeg pass down for centuries. She is so proud they remember good medicine. This makes her dance and sing.

She stops when she hears discussions about a community gathering to make decisions about renewing a treaty. She swims to watch the gathering. The Anishinaabeg are drinking tea, eating bannock with fresh jam, and taking turns sharing their positions. The conversation is long and Elders explain they must take the time to listen because each person's ideas are valued and honoured. The children eagerly participate. The Anishinaabe speak of consensus, accountability, and how each person deserves respect. Every idea will be discussed and deliberated with everyone.

Mashkikiiwikwe hears a disagreement. She is not worried, the Anishinaabe do not yell, fight or speak badly towards one another – it is not in their teachings. They listen to each other, and Elders give them strength and teachings on seeing other perspectives. A story is told of how disagreements have been remedied in the past. They are reminded of the value of listening and continue to speak and share their perspectives. Respecting one another, they come to a middle

ground. No person is excluded. The Anishinaabe continue with their deliberations. After long conversations, consensus is reached. The Anishinaabe celebrate, knowing their ancestors are proud of their decision.

The children will tell their relations this story one day when they are Elders. They have witnessed how Anishinaabe governance works – through discussion, deliberation, consensus, care, and responsibility. They will be prepared when it is time to discuss treaty again.

Mashkikiiwikwe sees that the Anishinaabe were patient with one another and grounded this discussion in ceremony. The community came to this decision because they know who they are. The children understand it is important to know who you are, attend ceremony, hold your teachings and language, and care for *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human. This is what generates healthy leadership and governance. *Mashkikiiwikwe* is proud that they know how to be relational leaders.

As the celebration continues, she hears the grandmothers discuss ceremonies happening in the big lodge this week. All the Elders join in to discuss preparation plans for coming-of-age ceremonies. They determine who will be the firekeepers and who will lead the *nibi* ceremony. The Elders are so proud of the young ones for coming to ceremony. *Mashkikiiwikwe* is happy that the Anishinaabe are proud of who they are.

Mashkikiiwikwe keeps swimming and sees people visiting with *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human. She hears the voices of *noodin* and *waabigwan*⁵³² speak back to the Anishinaabe. She sees their smiles when they hear them, too.

She swims further down the shore and sees *migizii*, *ma'iingan*, *makwa*, *mooz*,⁵³³ *ojiig*,⁵³⁴ *nigig*,⁵³⁵ *amik*,⁵³⁶ and *wazhask*⁵³⁷ visiting. They are expressing their joy – the Anishinaabeg are visiting and communicating with them again. They say *aki* and *nibi* are healthy too, and the more-than-human who left are also coming back. The Anishinaabeg will care for their relations under the Everlasting Fire of Peace. She listens for a little while longer and the more-than-human begins to give thanks to *ode'imin*. They thank *ode'imin* for teaching the Anishinaabe how to be

⁵³² Flower.

⁵³³ Moose.

⁵³⁴ Fisher.

⁵³⁵ Otter.

⁵³⁶ Beaver.

⁵³⁷ Muskrat.

leaders and for helping the Anishinaabe to remember who they are. The *ode'imín* has always been *ode* medicine.

Mashkikiiwikwe is relieved and happy. Good medicine always works. Her relations are healthy; their spirits are nourished as they embody *ode'imín* governance. She dances and sings home.

When she returns, she shares with her Fish Clan, including *Mizanii Giighik Iban*, that the message of education has worked, that it has healed the Anishinaabe. She tells the story of her visit. She shares that Anishinaabe joy is shaped by relationality, inquiry, and trust.

Mashkikiiwikwe knows the Anishinaabeg will be okay – they have remembered their teachings and embody them every day. Anishinaabe leaders think, speak, and dream in Anishinaabe knowledge systems. They walk with *ode* knowledge guiding them. Most importantly, they are proud of who they are.

* * *

Ode'imín governance honours *kwewag* and respects body sovereignty. This is why I have dreamt of Anishinaabe futurity. *Mashkikiiwikwe*'s teachings ground my work in relationality and re-remembering our knowledges to create Anishinaabe futurities. My responsibility of learning my teachings, attending ceremony, restoring relations with *aki, nibi*, and the more-than-human through visiting has made *ode'imín* governance possible. This governance framework arises in the Seventh Fire, when our Nations must choose to heal from the sickness of colonialism and return to our knowledge systems. To light the Everlasting Fire of Peace, we must turn toward ceremony, language, *aki, nibi*, the more-than-human, and education to heal. *Ode'imín* governance is a contribution toward lighting of the Fire of Peace by rebuilding relational Anishinaabe leadership and governance that centres *kwewag*.

Living *Ode'imín* Governance

The heart berry helps us understand the connection between the mind, body, spirit, and emotions. We need our heart to guide us in order to maintain personal balance.

Ode'im governance is a relational governance framework. This final section details how ceremony, Anishinaabemowin, *aki, nibi*, and the more-than-human, education, and leadership, infuse life into *ode'im* governance. Much of the content in the following sections is comprised of my research findings and learning outcomes.

Ceremony

Ceremonies teach us who we are as individuals, families, communities, and Nations. They carry us forward because they pedagogically inform us, nourish our spirits, and guide our lives. We are called to center ceremonies as living practices to raise children and teach them belonging. Centering coming-of-age ceremonies gives children confidence and pride in who they are. Youth are taught that their voices and knowledges are trusted and respected, which ultimately informs their positions and decision-making capacities. These spaces encourage children to dream, explore, and nurture their gifts in a healthy environment. Ceremonies also teach the value of collaboration through learning with others and caring for all our relations. These practices provide healing, strength, connection, and belonging. These values are embedded in *ode'im* governance.

As ceremony, The Berry Fast teaches *kwe* who she is and how to care for herself over the year as she abstains from *min* through teachings received from her family, Knowledge Keepers, and Elders. She learns that her community centers *kwewag* in their decision-making practices and understands her role as a decision-maker. *Kwe* is supported throughout the entirety of this transition into adulthood.

During *kwe*'s ceremony, it becomes clear that governance is embedded in every aspect of Anishinaabe life. She reflects on how she was raised with her teachings, how she was taught through the language, and how she is deeply connected to *aki, nibi*, and the more-than-human. Through these experiences, she comes to know who she is. The Berry Fast is a celebration of *kwe*'s identity and responsibilities. *Kwe* is reminded that she is seen, cared for, loved, and supported by the community. This ceremony, and the relations interwoven between community members because of the Berry Fast enacts governance. Through ceremony, individuals come to

⁵³⁸ Quoted in Wabano, "Strawberry Teachings."

know themselves, their roles, and their responsibilities. Knowing who you are and trusting in your teachings and knowledges is the foundation of embodied leadership.

Language

Language shapes our understanding of the world and defines who we are. Anishinaabe futurities will be experienced in the language of Anishinaabemowin, and our histories will be shared in the language. Through *ode'imín* governance, children will learn who they are and their teachings in the language. Knowledge will be shared and generated in the language. Teachings promote inquiry and prompt questions. *Ode'imín* governance creates space for people to feel safe to ask for help and clarity. Our teachings and knowledges can never fully be understood and practiced once separated from Anishinaabemowin. Lorena Fontaine spoke during a Conference honouring the legacy of the late Honourable Murray Sinclair's teachings on language and writing: "Language is foundational because it encodes obligations, authority, accountability, and collective responsibility."⁵³⁹ Understanding teachings, ceremony, songs, and theory in the language engages responsibilities. There are spirit and animacy encoded into the knowledge shared within Anishinaabemowin.

Anishinaabemowin is alive, and thus all that is learned, thought, and dreamed of in the language is living. The Anishinaabe will know their words are full of spirit, which connects them with the world and creates futures. Each person will know they belong and are sacred. This will not just be spoken about, but enacted, embodied, and felt.

Aki, Nibi, and the More-Than-Human

Creating grounded futurities requires renewing relations with *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human. These relations have been integral to my healing. Organizing governance and leadership structures based on principles taught by *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human means they are balanced, reciprocal, portable, and cyclically generative. *Aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human sustain our lives; thus, *ode'imín* governance is grounded in these teachings.

In my time spent with *aki*, under each moon and in each season, I am reminded of the importance of reciprocal relationships. Roles and responsibilities between the more-than-human

⁵³⁹ Lorena Fontaine, "The Future of Indigenous Self-Government" (panel, Murray Sinclair Legacy Conference, Toronto, ON, January 9, 2026).

flow from one another. *Ziigwan* brings the rain, and the rain helps the plants return after *biboon*. Because of the rain, the *min* wake, become plump, and bud (because we did not take more than was needed the prior *niibin*). The *min* feed the four-legged. *Aki, nibi* and the more-than-human always provide for one another, and for us. Centring our relationships with them we learn to be leaders, live in harmony, maintain balance, and care for one another. This communication informs worldviews and ways of being because of the ability to listen, see, smell, taste, and touch *aki, nibi*, and the more-than-human. This sensorial learning draws intimate connections with all of Creation because everything is constantly in relation.

Governance is continuously created, renewed, and sustained by our relational networks. Knowing boundaries and protocols of how much to take from *aki, nibi*, and the more-than-human will require us to always practise balance. In turn, our Nations will be balanced. Children will grow up knowing they must take care and listen to *aki, nibi*, and the more-than-human.

Education

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People,⁵⁴⁰ the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC),⁵⁴¹ and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls⁵⁴² looked to the past in order to understand how to move forward. The TRC revealed that more than a century of harm will take generations to repair.⁵⁴³ To begin this healing journey, I call upon the teaching from the late Honourable Murray Sinclair, who stated that “Education is what got us into this mess and education is key to getting us out of it.”⁵⁴⁴ Creating a restored Anishinaabe education system would celebrate Anishinaabe identities, ceremonies, and Anishinaabemowin. In doing so, people would be supported in developing pride in who they are and where they come from.

⁵⁴⁰ Canada, Privy Council Office, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, vol. 1, *Looking Forward, Looking Back* (Ottawa, 1993), <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.819007/publication.html>.

⁵⁴¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), https://nctr.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf.

⁵⁴² National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (Canada, 2019), <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>.

⁵⁴³ TRC, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, 6.

⁵⁴⁴ National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, “Reconciliation Through Education,” National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, University of Manitoba, 2026, <https://nctr.ca/education/>.

A community-grounded education system is a world-building practice. In it, children will learn who they are through engaging within Anishinaabe knowledge systems. Knowledges exist alongside one another and inform each other. Anishinaabe schools will prioritize storytelling and visiting. Learning will be experienced everywhere – in *aki* and *nibi*, around kitchen tables, under the *anang*,⁵⁴⁵ in the classroom or around *ishkode*, in a beading circle, picking *min*, or harvesting a *waawaashkeshi*. Education is therefore not confined to a classroom but lived and practised every day. Anishinaabe education is embodied and felt because it is *ode* knowledge. Space for mistakes is honoured, and corrective teaching comes from a place of care.

Anishinaabe education is not extractive but experienced and generated. Following from this, there is not just one teacher in the Anishinaabe classroom. Teachers, Elders, family members, and community members all share stories, gifts, and theory with students of all ages. Time is spent with each student to ensure they are supported and not left behind, reinforcing teachings of belonging and responsibility. Anishinaabe education is patient, supportive, and transparent. Exploration and inquiry are encouraged; all senses are engaged through active knowledge transmission. Through this education system, roles, and responsibilities are continuously practised. Confidence is developed through the strong foundations of self, identity, and teachings. As a result, each person, family, community, and Nation remains healthy because we honour one another through our teachings. These relations enact networks of care that sustain collective well-being. Each component of a healthy Nation is strong and in good relationship with the other ones. Education therefore becomes foundational to *ode'imín* governance. It supports people in making good decisions, caring for themselves and their families, and building healthy communities and Nations. These healthy foundations are essential for nurturing strong leaders and sustaining relational governance.

Leadership

Ceremony, Anishinaabemowin, *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human, and Anishinaabe education raise brave leaders who know who they are. Anishinaabe leaders are proud of their identity. They trust in themselves and are trusted by their relations. They speak honestly from their *ode*. Embodied leadership is rooted in teachings and relational care. Because of the strong

⁵⁴⁵ Stars.

ties between self, family, community, and Nation, leaders experience hope, joy and happiness. Embedded between each layer of governance is love, belonging, and care. These principles sustain a perpetually healthy Nation whose members generate Anishinaabe futurities together.

Each person leads with respect for *aki, nibi*, the more-than-human, their family, community, and Nation. Leaders are rooted by their relationality to those who they are responsible for. Through teachings and ceremony, they learn to enact their responsibilities in the everyday which ultimately becomes integral to their decision-making processes. A relational approach encourages respectful dialogue and careful deliberation. These practices do not romanticize *ode'imín* governance but demonstrate balance, responsibility, and accountability embedded within the governance principle of relationality. Leaders draw strength from their ancestors and relations in order to make good decisions. They take pride in these decisions because they align with the teachings through which they were raised. In making thoughtful and responsible choices, leaders honour the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Anishinaabe futurities are constantly created and recreated through everyday acts of leadership.

Relational consensus-based decision-making emerges from this foundation of respect. All community members are provided opportunities to speak, share, deliberate, and state their positions. Anishinaabe decision-making processes are inherently oriented toward the well-being and health of the Nation. Anishinaabe governance can only be achieved through relational leadership. Because collective well-being is always the goal, there are no individual gains, only the strengthening of the Nation. Decision-making takes time. Feasts nourish spirits and provide opportunities to care for one another. Deliberations may unfold over many rounds and across several days. Yet these processes ensure the final decisions reflect the collective goals and responsibilities of the community. Decisions are grounded in teachings, ceremony, relationships, and consensus. Such governance can only flourish when the self, family, community, and Nation remain healthy and in good relation with one another.

Conclusion

Anishinaabe futurities are created in everyday practices that center relationality, care, and responsibility. This chapter has demonstrated that *ode'imín* governance offers a relational framework through which Anishinaabe leadership and governance can be understood and enacted. Guided by the teaching of the *ode'imín* and the leadership of *kwewag*, this framework

emphasizes balance, accountability, and the responsibilities we hold to our ancestors, our communities, and those yet to come. *Ode'imín* governance is not a fixed system but a living framework, one that must be embodied through ceremony, language, education, relationships with *aki* and *nibi*, and the guidance of the more-than-human. Through these practices Anishinaabe leaders learn to act with care, humility, and responsibility, ensuring that governance remains grounded in relational accountability. Ultimately, the futures of our Nations depend on our willingness to remember and enact these teachings. *Ode'imín* governance reminds us that the knowledge required to sustain healthy Nations already exists within our relationships, our ceremonies, and our languages. By trusting in these teachings and living them in our everyday life, we nurture the conditions necessary for thriving Anishinaabe futures. Our relatives yet to come are relying on us to carry this knowledge and to continue sharing the good medicine of *ode'imín* governance.

Chapter 7

Niibin: Replanting the Ode'imín Miinikaanan

I am grateful to welcome *niibin* once more for this closing chapter. *Niibin* is a time of connection, ceremony, harvest, and celebration. As we visit with the abundant *min* who have come back again, they remind us of the sweetness of life and the goodness that we are met with through hardship. I am grateful to have walked this journey with the *ode'imín* as my teacher. I have shared from the heart throughout this dissertation. The strength of the *ode'imín*'s rootedness and harmony have shown me that we can trust ourselves to root leadership and governance within its teachings. The teachings I have received facilitated a deep shift in my spirit, allowing me to un-learn and relearn across these areas.

The development of the *ode'imín* governance framework required this process of un-learning. As discussed in Chapter 6, I initially attempted to shape Anishinaabe leadership and governance into a quasi-colonial version to imagine collective futures. What occurred instead was a profound shift in my ethics, beliefs, and confidence. I came to recognize how internalized colonialism has shaped my thinking. Through this research, I began disentangling myself from these extractive structures. *Ode'imín* governance stands firmly rooted within Anishinaabe teachings, ceremonies, story, and ontology, refusing settler-state supremacy and heteronormative patriarchy.

The gifts shared with me live beyond these pages. While this dissertation fulfills an academic requirement, it has renewed my commitment to living, thinking, dreaming, and creating Anishinaabe worlds. This research contributes to place-based, Nation-specific epistemologies and ontologies within academia. It examines how patriarchy operates within leadership and governance systems and offers an alternative framework rooted in teachings and ceremony shared by *kwewag* and the *ode'imín*. Centering the more-than-human as teacher is necessary to restore our relations and reorganize ourselves in accordance with those relationships.

Through this work, I conclude that patriarchy is embedded within our Nation as a result of colonialism. Gender dispossession and disappearance continue through colonial governance structures and through the privileging of gender-neutral language that obscures accountability. When individuals are not well and when members experience dispossession, that Nation cannot

make healthy decisions. Prioritizing a balanced Nation, where the roles and responsibilities of each member are respected, establishes healthy Nations.

Learning from Elders and Knowledge Keepers about the roles of *kwewag* transformed my understanding. *Kwewag* are our first teachers. They nurture our gifts and support the growth of strong, healthy leaders. These principles are embedded within *ode'imín* governance, emphasizing balance, care, truth, and belonging. Teachings about the Berry Fast further illuminated how embodied leadership and governance function. The ceremony teaches relationality, discipline, body sovereignty, and the creation of networks of care. It demonstrates that *kwe* is seen, supported, and never alone. In a community structured around care, patriarchy cannot easily displace or dispossess *kwe* through violence or policy. The ceremony models governance grounded in love, accountability, and reciprocity.

From the interconnected roots, vines, stem, flower, seeds, heart, and leaf of the *ode'imín* emerge the guiding principles of this framework: embodied relational governance; Seven Generations thinking; ethical authority; knowledge production and renewal; portable governance principles embedded in relationships; authority, embodied decision-making; and accountability. *Ode'imín* governance offers both a framework and a relational pedagogy for cultivating leadership. Within academia, it contributes to Indigenous studies, Indigenous law and politics, political studies, and Indigenous feminism by centering Nation-specific knowledges, centering *kwewag* and the more-than-human, and building separate governance and leadership structures outside of the settler state.

To answer the question, must Anishinaabe model of governance replicate the settler-state model to coexist? No. These systems are fundamentally incompatible. Our work must focus on revitalizing our language, philosophies, law, coming-of-age ceremonies, teachings, governance, and leadership. We must embody *ode'imín* governance within ourselves, families, and communities before turning outward. This begins with raising children and speaking to one another with kindness. Sharing words in the language, teaching medicines, being encouraged to make decisions, and vocalizing ideas and theories are some examples of creating *ode'imín* governance. In doing so, we immerse ourselves in Anishinaabe worlds by un-learning colonial norms and re-remembering our own. *Ode'imín* governance can be enacted now because it can rely on the body sovereignty of individuals who consent to participate in relational governance in everyday life.

Conclusion

There are limitations to this work. First, language. Although my father spoke fluent Anishinaabemowin in his childhood, colonial violence disrupted its transmission. As a result, I grew up with only fragments of the language. Language is life; many teachings cannot be translated in English. This rupture has shaped my relationship with *nibi*, *aki*, and the more-than-human. The possibilities of language reclamation as an embodied practice of creating futurities requires re-remembering leadership and governance. I remain committed to continuing to learn and reclaim the language so that I may deepen this work.

Second, I did not complete a Berry Fast ceremony in my youth. While I am grateful for the teachings shared with me, I recognize that lived ceremonial experience carries distinct knowledge. I remain open to reclaiming this ceremony and supporting and honouring young kin who choose to do their Berry Fast in the future for collective ceremonial continuity.

Third, this framework is specific to the Anishinaabe Nations, particularly in the regions of Lake Winnipeg and Lake Huron. Teachings vary depending on place and by Elder. I invite continued dialogue about how governance can be organized under the guidance of the more-than-human in diverse territories. I also welcome collaboration with Indigenous women and Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse kin to deepen our solidarity and support the eradication of patriarchy. Men must also take up this work by examining how patriarchy has been absorbed into Indigenous governance and by revitalizing coming of coming-of-age ceremonies that root boys in their responsibilities. Balance within the Nation depends on this shared commitment.

I offer the *ode'imín* governance framework as a living gift. It this work encourages you to learn from *aki*, *nibi*, and the more-than-human, to walk in balance, to trust your knowledge, and to know you belong and are cared for, then the intentions of this project have been met. *Ode'imín* governance makes relational, embodied governance and leadership possible. Governance is cyclically generated in the everyday because of trust and accountability in decision-making capacities, as an active world-making process. Anishinaabe futurities exist as a result of healthy leaders whose gifts are nourished through ceremony, teachings, and story, resulting in healthy decisions for the well-being of the Nation.

Chi-miigwech, my relatives, for accompanying me on this journey.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Annex A



Indigenous Studies
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Participant Informed Consent Form

Study Title: Re-Planting the Ode'imín Mīnikaanān: Embodied Anishinaabekwewag Governance

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Hope-Ann Ace does not have any conflicts of interest in this study/research.

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you or a copy of which you can download or print, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, feel free to ask any of the people named above. Please take the time to read this document and any accompanying information carefully. It is very important that you understand:

- what is being asked of you,
- what the risks and benefits of participation are, and
- how the information you provide will be used and stored.

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation centers the Anishinaabe ode'imín¹ teaching and constructs a framework of strawberry governance, incorporating principles within the ode'imín teaching, the berry fast, and the Anishinaabe Nation. Strawberry governance encompasses kinship, truth, responsibility, and care, offering a lens to understand Anishinaabe governance, particularly women's responsibilities. This study critically examines whether colonialism and patriarchy have disrupted Anishinaabe governance systems through the exclusion of women. It assesses if these gendered disruptions persist within the Anishinabek Nation due to patriarchal impositions and provides

¹Strawberry

recommendations to support the future of Anishinaabe governance grounded in strawberry governance principles.

This dissertation balances, traditional knowledge, stories, and teachings with critical Indigenous literature. This unique governance analysis highlights the implicit effects of patriarchy and colonialism on Anishinaabe governance and the distinct impacts on Anishinaabek women. It offers a new way to understand, discuss and examine governance, incorporating all the connections that live within Anishinaabe ways of knowing. The goal of this contribution is to hold systems accountable and nurture healthy Nations.

Hope Ace is doing this research as a part of my PhD dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Lorena Sekwan Fontaine. Hope is a registered member of M'Chigeeng First Nation, and is an Anishinaabekwe, as such she is taking this opportunity to reclaim traditional teachings and knowledges to learn her responsibilities to her Nation. This strawberry governance builds strong foundations of understanding, supports, the health and well-being of Anishinaabe communities, reconciles the impact of colonialism, transmits knowledge through stories, and recognizes the strength of Anishinaabe women in the face of gender discrimination to support a healthy government, and Nation for time immemorial. Hope Ace is hoping to learn about the strawberry teaching, the berry fast, as well as law, governance, and sovereignty to build the framework of strawberry governance.

Study Procedures:

If you decide to participate in this research project, you will be asked to participate in a **audio-recorded one-hour** interview with the Principal Investigator (Hope Ace). The interview will be recorded using the voice recorder app on Hope Ace's iPhone and transcripts will be emailed to you within **three weeks** for your review. You will be able to add, change, or delete any information you choose from the provided transcript as you will have **two weeks** to let the PI know if any changes are necessary. You will be able to contact the Hope Ace at any time to ask questions about the research process, how your research is to be included, what is happening with your data and research, seeking updates, or offering alternative approaches, etc. Hope Ace will be happy to answer any questions you have during this review process. If Hope Ace does not hear from you after those two weeks, another email will be sent to confirm you have no changes to make and Hope Ace will proceed using the information.

In addition to seeing the transcripts soon after the interview, you will receive the full draft of the chapter(s) where your knowledge has been incorporated into Hope Ace's dissertation will be shared in **May 2025**. You will have the opportunity to review and provide feedback to Hope Ace during this time. If Hope Ace does not hear from you within 1 month of sharing, the assumption will be no changes are to be made and continue to finalize the dissertation. You can provide any changes or edits to the sections of the dissertation that include your knowledge up until **1 August 2025**. The total time for your participation in this research project will be a maximum of 2.5 hours (including the interview). The interview can take place via telephone, University of Manitoba's Zoom or Teams video conferencing, or in-person at your home, I would be honoured to travel to you.

Study Risks:

The risks associated with this research project are minimal. At times during the interview, you may feel uncomfortable responding to some of the questions. As such you may choose to opt out of responding to any question at any time during the interview. The interviews will be conducted privately to ensure your safety and comfort.

As a result of the perceived permanence of colonialism and patriarchy, there is a risk that the participants in this research study who choose to have their name referenced, may be perceived negatively and experience negative reactions in community. Community members who actively discuss alternative ways of thinking about gender, governance, and sovereignty may face negative commentary and be excluded from future opportunities by those who oppose these views or who may be challenged by the research projects that aims to expose the influence and danger of patriarchal power. There is a risk that the community or Nation may not agree with the transmission of knowledge and the topics being discussed.

If you wish for your identity to remain confidential throughout the entirety of this research proposal, only Hope Ace and her advisor will have access to documents with your name. If you choose to have your name remain confidential, Hope Ace suggests that your coded identifier be your clan name (ex., turtle, bear, etc.). As there are more than seven clans in the Anishinaabe Nation, it would not be possible to identify you. However, this is fully your choice and you have the ultimate say in how your coded identifier.

Study Benefits:

You may benefit from this research through the opportunity to share and pass along knowledge, responsibilities, and teachings related to the Anishinaabe Nation. This research is about creating space to look inward to our own Anishinaabe laws, governance structures, and current teachings, to support a healthy and safe Nation for the next seven generations. It would be an opportunity to re-story and reawaken understandings of key concepts, teachings, ceremonies, and responsibilities to our kin, and ourselves.

Compensation:

You will be provided with a \$200 honorarium (e-transfer or cash) at the beginning of the interview.

Storage and Use of Data:

All audio recordings, transcripts, and other virtual documents will be directly uploaded to the University of Manitoba's OneDrive with Multi-Factor Authentication enabled. All physical documents will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in PI's locked office on the University of Manitoba campus.

Once the audio recordings have been uploaded to the secure UM OneDrive, they will be deleted from Hope Ace's iPhone. The audio recordings will remain on the UM OneDrive with the secure Multi-Factor Authenticator activated once transcribed. All data will be stored

throughout the dissertation writing and defence process which is estimated to be 12 months from the time of interviews. Once the defence is completed, all physical copies will be shredded and all virtual documents will be deleted. The final version of the dissertation will be uploaded to UM Space for public access.

Direct quotations from your interviews will be used in the dissertation.

Withdrawing:

Your participation in this project is based on a consensual process, and at any time you may choose not to respond to certain questions, provide other knowledge you see fit, or withdraw from this research project altogether.

You can withdraw from the research study at any point up until July 2025, as by then Hope Ace will be close to completing the full dissertation draft. If you would like to withdraw or have any questions, please notify Hope Ace via email at student@myumanitoba.ca, or by phone at #000-123-456. Should you withdraw, you will not be expected to return the honorarium, and all data will be deleted and destroyed. No explanation would be necessary. Hope Ace would be happy to meet with you if you would like to maintain the relationship built.

Questions or Concerns: A designated University of Manitoba auditor may check that this study is being done safely and properly. To do this, they may visit the study site or review the research records. We will tell you if someone outside the research team will be there while you are participating. If this makes you uncomfortable, please tell the Principal Investigator, who will ask the auditor to return at another time.

This study has been reviewed and approved by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. However, this does not mean that participation is risk-free. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Human Research Ethics at humanethics@umanitoba.ca or (204) 474-7122.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this study, you may contact any members of the research team listed on the first page or the Office of Human Research Ethics.

Consent

By signing this document, I agree that:

- I have read the above information or had it read to me.
- I have had the opportunity to ask and have answered all of my questions.
- I understand what is being asked of me.
- I will be taking part in a research study.
- I may freely stop or leave the research study activities at any time.
- My information may be shared outside the University of Manitoba.
- I do not waive my legal rights by participating in the study.

I agree to participate in this study.

☐ YES ☐ NO



Indigenous Studies
215 Isbister Bldg. 183 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
T: 204-474-9266
Indigenous.Studies@umanitoba.ca

I agree to be audio-recorded in this study. ☐ YES ☐ NO

I agree to have (check one):

- ☐ a general descriptor used instead of my name when results are shared for this study.
- ☐ my first name used when the results are shared for this study.
- ☐ my full name used when the results are shared for this study.
- ☐ a pseudonym (fake name) used when the results are shared for this study.

I would like my pseudonym (identifier code) to be _____

Name of Participant

Participant's Signature

Date

Oral Consent:

I read and explained all of the information in this consent form to the participant before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it.

Name of Participant

Researcher's Signature

Date

Notice Regarding Collection, Use, and Disclosure of Personal Information

Your personal information is being collected under the authority of *The University of Manitoba Act*. The University of Manitoba is committed to preserving your right to privacy. The information you provide will be used by the University to support our research. Your personal information will not be used or disclosed for other purposes, unless permitted by *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* or *The Personal Health Information Act*. If you have any questions about the collection of personal information: Ph: 204-474-9462 or Email: fippa@umanitoba.ca

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