

RUNNING HEAD: *DAANI GIGKENDAAN*: ONE WOMAN'S JOURNEY

Daani Gigkendaan: One Woman's Journey

By

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to develop and deploy an outdoor learning environment to support land-based learning to integrate Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing within a school system. This researcher's formative bush culture foundation supports the need for a transformative education model within the researcher's First Nation community. This First Nation, like many First Nations across Canada, are imposed with Western or Eurocentric systems of learning. The Indian residential school system practiced domination and subjugation to create docile, obedient bodies. Education, in the form of the Western school system, continues to be imposed and regulated by government policy. Educational practice and form, including spatial and temporal logics, perpetuates colonialism. Ideology, interpellation, societal apparatuses, and the commodification of education are explored drawing from critical theorists to support this study. Early and contemporary Indigenous scholarship countering colonial narratives is also explored. Indigenous political work and scholarly work created space for Indigenous theory and praxis to be included in knowledge and literary domains. This body of work examines and identifies the systemic obstacles in developing a land-based model within a school system. Research documents centers on journals. Journals, as an observant-participant researcher, are written for one school calendar year, using a seasonal round format to develop the land-based learning model within a school system. Researcher reflexivity, insider research, and insurgent research are approaches utilized to reflect Indigenous ways of being and doing. This researcher's ethical temperament, which is reflected in an extended and profound relationship with the land and the people where the research took place, is paramount to the study. The research study's findings and results are analyzed and presented to show the challenges of form, funding, policy, and resources are barriers to the development of a land-based learning model within a school system. The secondary question

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of the research centers on student autonomy and student self-esteem. The research shows increased levels of engagement and skills. This research study provides essential data for Indigenous communities and other governing bodies in Canada that are exploring Indigenous-specific land-based models for educational contexts.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research study to my father who lived bush culture.

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Chapter One: Pine Creek and Me: Mapping the Problem

I stood behind my mother in the bank line in 1984. We progressed toward the bank teller. My mother, as usual, became nervous every time she spoke to anyone who represented authority. She carefully took her welfare cheque out of the envelope. The blonde-haired bank teller asked my mother for a status card as a form of identification. As a young twelve-year-old girl, I took this opportunity to say in a squeaky voice, emphasizing the latter part of my response, "We aren't Indian, we are Metis." I stood up a little taller. I smiled and nodded, trying to convince her of the latter. I have carried and wrestled with this memory for decades. I reflect on that naïve girl trying to understand why she needed to speak up, especially since she usually did not. Why did she have to prove she was not Indian? Where did she learn this view of herself? Why was it essential that a stranger know she identified as Metis? Where did she learn (and practice) this normalized racial hierarchy?

Introduction

I recently met my friend for tea. We had not seen each other in a long time, so we both looked forward to our visit. As we caught up, I quickly explained the process of my research study. She looked me straight in the face and said, "*Oh, daani gigkendaan.*" I looked at her with a blank stare. We are such longtime friends that I knew if I waited, she would explain the phrase to me. She would often unpack Anishinabemowin phrases for me. She explained, "*It means I am beginning to know.*" I nodded back at her in agreement. This dissertation is my story of beginning to know.

This research study reflects my personal and professional experiences as a community member, a classroom teacher, and now, as a research student. In Indigenous communities, it is a customary practice to introduce not only yourself, but also your relatives. Often, the first question is, *who is your mom?* or *who is your dad?* or, depending on the context, quite possibly, *who is*

your koko? or *who is your shoom*¹? It is a purposeful, warm welcoming to consciously seek out a relative or concrete bond. I feel this reflects the principle of honouring “all your relatives” because it is a very common and significant practice among Indigenous people. I grew up in Camperville, Manitoba.

As I became an adult, I understood why Camperville became our family's home community. Camperville is immediately south of



Figure 1 Map of Camperville, Pine Creek, and Duck Bay

Pine Creek First Nation (see Figure 1). The provincial highway, the only geographical marker, separates these two Indigenous communities. My maternal grandmother, my koko, married a non-Indigenous man in 1929. According to the *Indian Act* policy, my koko lost her legal Indian status and had to leave the community. She had to leave the only community she knew and settled as close as possible to her family and her relatives in Camperville. My paternal grandmother had the same experience. She married my grandfather and had to leave her community because of this same policy. My paternal grandparents settled in Duck Bay, Manitoba, a northern neighbouring community adjacent to Pine Creek First Nation. Significant political divisions emerged from the Canadian nation-building process, and these divisions persist to this day. For a long time, my identifying statement sounded like this: a former Metis-identifying, non-Status, reinstated Bill C-31 (6)1 Status Indian.

¹ Koko in Anishinabemowin translates to grandmother, shoom is the shortened version of mishoomis meaning grandfather.

The first time I read *Red Skin, White Mask* by Glen Coulthard, I experienced a deep connection to the viewpoints in this work. The colonial politics of recognition is a concept I have personally wrestled with for a great portion of my life. For decades, my siblings and I identified as Metis. Identifying as Metis seems the only logical solution when asked about my identity and cultural background. In the passage at the start of this chapter, being twelve years old at the time, I tried to identify as Metis and separate myself from being Indian. What happened to this young girl to respond this way? While growing up, divisions between the two communities existed. I did not understand the historical and political contexts and the imposed policies that affected our family and our identity. It also affected how I viewed my own identity.

I connect my journey to a broader, global narrative centered around the colonial Canadian nation-building narrative. At age twelve, I had very limited awareness and understanding of the naturalized and normalized constitutive hierarchical structures around me. As I write, it took me to this moment to understand the greater forces that shaped my own narrative. It is through experiences and observations that I can unpack the naturalization and normalization processes of colonial narratives. These narratives are reflected in contemporary Canada's school systems where I a great deal of my formative years. When I reflect on this memory shared at the start of this chapter, I can now acknowledge and understand the images, stereotypes, and literature experienced in school and in mass media, which contributed to this misunderstanding. While growing up in Camperville, Catholic ideologies and practices influenced my identity. The school system affected my identity as well. School systems impose a single, dominant privileged worldview while marginalizing the perspectives of others.

School systems are sites of colonial propaganda. Educational institutions legitimize knowledge and advance the production of knowledge. Over the past several centuries, the school

system has perpetuated Western colonial ideologies and structures worldwide. In Canada, the education policies and processes continue to perpetuate colonial ideologies and practices. Examining imperial colonialism and the foundations of the school system, as well as Western research, is imperative for understanding school systems. Educational institutions continue to perpetuate racist ideologies of the dominant ruling class. As both a researcher and member of a First Nation community, it is imperative as the researcher, to highlight the power of relations perpetuated and produced in colonial relations and structures, including the school system.

Throughout this work, critical theory is utilized to examine the naturalization and normalization of settler-colonial narratives in Canada, especially in school systems. The development of Canada as a nation necessitates examining the powers of relations upon European settlement. Settler-colonists introduced ideologies, practices, and structures that differed significantly from those of the existing Indigenous communities. These violent ideologies and practices harmed my community, like many other communities across Canada. Western structures and systems reflect order and power. These ideologies, practices, and structures have affected my identity, perspective, and worldview. My earliest experiences with my family and my community also shaped my identity. Through my own consciousness process, I can articulate and identify the power relations that affected my perspective and worldview. Tester & Kulchyski (1994) discuss consciousness as the driving force in understanding historical processes:

In other words, history cannot be understood merely in terms of large or small events and structural change: if it can be understood at all, it must in some way be experienced, a feeling must be provoked, whether it be empathy or distaste, even at a moment distant from that in which the events under examination occurred. (p. 5).

This research draws on scholars who critique and examine the early economic, historical, political, and social movements that have shaped contemporary nations. I employ a critical theory lens to explore the theories, practices, and critiques surrounding colonialism, imperialism, and

postcolonialism. Critical theorists have shattered the notion that Eurocentric thought and literature are the sole sources of universal knowledge. This work contributes to the examination of the power relations that are produced and maintained in colonial contexts through the school system. These works affirm and support the view of how school systems perpetuate colonial pedagogy and praxis to commodify education.

In brief, the study proposes that it is not only the content of the curriculum that perpetuates colonialism, but the very form of educational practice – the spatial and temporal logics – that works to naturalize social hierarchies and perpetuate colonialism. Spatial logics in the school system encompass pedagogy, classroom layout, school architecture, and school location. Pedagogy often focuses on preparing students for specific jobs rather than fostering a broader understanding of critical thinking. Poulantzas (1980) argues that the theory of the state, as outlined in *State, Power, Socialism*, posits the capitalist temporal matrix as "segmented, serial and divided time," a concept that continues to be perpetuated in school systems today (p. 112). Thompson's (1967) monumental work on clock time reflects this principle of time discipline. School systems are time-centric, dividing the school day into subjects. Foucault (1977) asserts school systems take charge of an individual's existence (p. 157). Time is regulated. Schools fuel the capitalist machine through assimilation and homogenization, achieved through the manipulation of spatial and temporal logics. Education, through the Western school system, generated Indigenous erasure and the removal of land from Indigenous people. Western education promotes individualism, productivity, and property ownership. Values not reflected in Indigenous praxis and theory. Through this research study, alternative forms of educational practice are identified that reflect Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing as valid modes of education. It is non-hierarchical, non-hegemonic,

and relational. For this study, land is recognized in relationship to Indigenous knowledge, praxis, theory, and way of life.

Bush Culture

Land. My earliest childhood memories took place at the "blueberry patch." The name carries different meanings for people. The land represented home as a child. We spent our summers at the blueberry patch. At the end of June, we would trek to our family campsite and spend our entire summer break there. There are so many stories of being on the land. As a family, we would pick medicine, berries, and plants. There were no official or formal campsite designations; everyone found a place and settled in. Over time, family surnames became associated with locations in the patch. I was either three or four years old at the time of my earliest memory at the blueberry patch. I remember walking down the worn path between camps. I carried a dime to go to the "bush tent store" to buy something. I was so little, but I felt content. At night, families would gather and tell stories. This informal gathering of storytelling affirmed Indigenous theory and praxis as legitimate and valid. My two sisters and I would often go into the bush with our father as he scouted and hunted. We did not feel out of place, nor did we feel scared. My sisters and I would listen and observe movement or sound. When I get into the bush, especially in the blueberry picking areas, I breathe in the combination of pine and sand. This smell is like coming home; it feeds and welcomes back my spirit. Recently, I came across the word "psithurism," which refers to the sound of leaves rustling in the wind. This sound is part of my blood memory. Every summer, I make trips to the blueberry patch. A few years ago, I guided older women to our picking spot at the blueberry patch. After our first picking round, everyone tired so we all gathered in the shade. We sat and shared stories. As we visited, the women's knowledge and understanding of all the life forms that surrounded us felt incredible. The women shared so much knowledge about the medicinal benefits of plants and trees. They shared stories of their own kokos' and shooms' teaching and modeling ways of being and doing in the bush. As a young child, learning occurred experientially, holistically, and relationally. I observed and experienced teachings. I became part of the relational components: the land, the forest, the animal and plants relatives, the universe, the cosmos, the stories. Experiential and relational learning is foundational to bush culture.

Educational processes and policies implemented in school systems maintain the cultural, political, and social structures of Canada as a collective nation-state. The school system also contributed to the development of my identity and my worldview. As a young student, I gained a limited, harrowing perspectives on Canadian history. I learned about mainstream practices, values, and way of life. The Catholic order carried a lot of influence in our community as a child and youth. Their dominant presence significantly affected my community, my family, and me. I felt like I grew up with two very diverse ways of being, doing, and knowing. I experienced the school system during the day and with my parents, I experienced another form of learning. I did not hear the term *bush culture* until my first day of my Indigenous Studies and Critical Theory class three years ago. *Bush culture* - I finally had a term to describe the way I grew up, the way I live now, and the way I want to continue to live.

Both of my parents modelled the knowledge, skills, and values of bush culture. I spent my childhood in the bush under the guidance of my parents and older siblings. As a family, we would camp, check rabbit snares, pick berries, and do many other things. My father spent his entire life gaining experience, knowledge, and skills on the land. I always considered our house as his stopover because he returned to the bush as often as he could. My mother supported and fostered the same praxes. They imparted the knowledge they had gained from their ancestors about our history, culture, practices, and systems of knowledge. These teachings, rooted in the land, language, and practices, are foundational to our identity and worldview. These teachings from my parents embody Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

As a family, we followed the natural, rhythmical, and seasonal cycles of the land. Springtime meant fishing and gathering medicine, plants, and roots. As spring turned into summer, we waited for the berries. Summer and the blueberry patch became synonymous. We would spend

weeks at the blueberry patch picking berries, surrounded by other families. One of my earliest childhood memories is walking past several campsites to look for my mother or my father. I must have been four at the time. They were out picking berries, and my siblings and I were playing at our campsite. I knew I would eventually find one of them. I remember saying hello to our neighbors as I explored the patch, but what struck me the most about this memory is my feeling of contentment and safety. The saying, *'It takes a village to raise a child'* reminds me of my feelings of freedom and safety during the summers at the blueberry patch. The picking of berries took place during the day; laughter and stories filled the evening. There existed a great sense of community amongst all the families in the patch.

Hunting and trapping were my father's two passions. I recall my mother telling my sons, *'When you see tiger lilies, that is when you know the deer are ready to hunt.'* Our father would bring home the offering, and as a family, we all pitched in and helped. The winter season meant trapping. My dad would be away for many days, even weeks at a time. We would all look forward to his return. As a family, we would partake in the process by helping, observing, or practicing the art of skinning the furs. Everyone contributed.

The significance and understanding of the life we lived in the bush continues to develop within me today. These early childhood experiences significantly contributed to my identity. These experiences also contributed to foundational knowledge of bush culture. Active learning occurred regularly through experience, observation, and story. Throughout these experiences, the sharing and retelling of stories would occur. During the weekdays, attending public school consumed our lives. Our nights, weekends, and summer breaks were in the bush. Our parents ensured we embodied bush culture, which shaped our identity, perspective, and worldview. Relationality grew

through everyday experiences. We grew individually and collectively. My own autonomy and self-reliance grew. As children, the learning space to practice autonomy existed.

My father passed away when I was twenty-seven years old, half of my life ago. When I reflected on his way of life, he modelled his way of life on the land. At fourteen, my dad ran his own trapline. He would often tease my mother that he was more educated because he attended school to grade three. My dad had many stories of the



Figure 2 My dad with our horse, his trailer ready for camp

punishments he received as a form of discipline during his short stint at school. I share a short anecdote of one of my father's school experiences in chapter two of this dissertation. He modelled and practices bush culture with his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. This next photo is my father, ready to drive to the patch, around 1986 or 1987 (see Figure 2). We would all load up the wagon and head to the blueberry patch every summer. Growing up, we used the horse and trailer regularly. Every fall, my dad would take my sisters and I to the bush so he could scout. We would sit, talk, and walk around the parked trailer. As older women, my sisters, and I cherish these experiences. There are so many stories, so much laughter, and so much fundamental bush knowledge, skills, and values we have gained being on the land.

The next photo shows my parents, ready to skin a black wolf my father had trapped (see Figure 3). It was so common in the fall to see a deer or moose carcass hanging and drying in our basement. We converted a basement bedroom into a *skinning* room during the winter. You can see

the drying beaver hide in the background. This way of life became normalized for us. My understanding of my identity clashed with the knowledge and teachings I received in school and those I received at home.



Figure 3 My parents ready to skin the wolf

As I grew older, I no longer perpetuated the logic of recognition to endorse colonial legislation regarding my identity. I am no longer a former Metis-identifying, non-Status Indian who became a reinstated Status Indian 6(1) designation. My father's consistent response to this question, when I asked him as a young girl, remained "*Anishinabe*²." I wholly support his response to the identity question and the philosophy it contains. My father viewed everyone as people, not racially categorized. In recent times, I have had conversations with other family members and they too, value my father's consistent response. This is a significant value my father carried and honoured. Like Memmi articulates in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, my father practiced autonomy and a refusal to submit to dominant, colonial ideologies with his identity. I do, too.

Bush culture is a fundamental component of my identity. Throughout my journey, I have consistently sought to blend bush culture within school systems. I started teaching at Minegoziibe Anishinabe School immediately after graduating from university in 2005. As a classroom teacher, I implemented provincial curricula developed and mandated by Manitoba Education for the high

² In Anishinabemowin, the term "Anishinabe" translates to a person, a human.

school English Language Arts (ELA) courses assigned to me. In my ELA classes, students read and responded to texts, learned to be critical thinkers about the texts they read, and developed and generated their own texts. When I was completing my master's degree, I naturally gravitated toward Indigenous areas. I always strove to find a balance of perspectives from both Western and Indigenous ways of being and doing for my classroom learning experiences.

Seeing the Need

Through my years as a classroom teacher, I witnessed greater understanding of the need to create space for Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing. When I pursued my master's degree in education, I knew I wanted to advance Indigenous ways of being and doing within the school system. I implemented provincial government-mandated high school curricula in various subject areas, including ELA and math, for over ten years. I aspired to create learning experiences that reflected Indigenous theory and praxis.

I decided to experiment with a unit. I designed a rabbit snaring unit for my grade ten ELA class. I explained my unit and lesson plans to my administrator and received full support. I developed an experiential learning experience for the students. I purchased the equipment and surveyed the class on their bush skills. Fortunately, we had one rabbit hunter in the room.

Luckily, rabbits lived close to the school grounds. We would walk out to check our snares immediately in the morning. After morning announcements, we would walk to the wooded area behind the school. The boys always ran ahead. I knew we caught a rabbit when I heard shouts of excitement from a distance. One of the girls in the class had recently moved from Winnipeg, so not only was she thrilled to do this, but her parents were also. The other classes looked forward to our daily return, and teachers would ask, "How many today?" (see Figure 4 and Figure 5).



Figure 4 Grade 10 students with snared rabbit



Figure 5 Student preparing to skin rabbit

Parents supported the learning experiences. Several parents telephoned me and asked how they could help with this plan. Students shared stories about their parents and family experiences while on the land. Student engagement grew. Students developed skills and demonstrated them in various forms. One of the older students had extensive experience cleaning rabbits. She showed the students how to clean and gut the rabbits. We had most of the high school student body watching her demonstration! After the rabbit snaring sessions ended, students generated texts about their learning journey. This experience combined both Western and Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing.

Shortly after this unit, I advocated for more teaching opportunities to take students on the land. I taught an Environmental Science course in our high school. Every day, we would go out into the bush, make a fire, and share observations and stories (see Figure 6). I brought fire and tea supplies and explained we had to make a daily fire and get water boiling within the seventy-five minutes assigned for class. We could not afford to lose any time making the fire. It was a small class, so everyone had a role.



Figure 4 Tea and story time

I observed a significant phenomenon. I did not assign roles or duties to any of the students when we ventured outdoors. They formed their roles organically. One student announced, "I'll *be the fire keeper*." No one protested. Several other students agreed to go on a hunt for deadwood for the fire. Another student became in charge of collecting snow for the tea kettle. This new course came to an end during the COVID-19 pandemic. Classes became virtual for the remainder of the semester in our community.

Through my experiences as a classroom teacher and my master's degree journey, I understood the need for educational transformations, especially in our First Nation community. The next photo is from my third and fourth-grade classes at Pine Creek (see Figure 7). In this photo, we are picking sage within our community. The contrast between the church and the young person holding up the sage plant speaks volumes. The former Indian residential school sat beside the church for over 80 years. This student's great-grandfather resided at the school as a former student. This experience led me to decide to pursue my PhD degree in the fall of 2022.



Figure 5 Sage picking near the church

Often when I attend conferences, elders would speak about learning our language, honouring our skills, and enriching students' identities not only through standard schoolwork, but also by taking them outdoors and connecting them to the land. At one conference, a well-known, respected elder from our area, stated in Anishinabemowin, "*The land is our first teacher.*" I carried his words for decades. This profound statement resonated with me and has been a guiding principle in my pedagogy and positionality as an educator. Students enjoyed being on the land. The statement *the land is our first teacher* holds a profound ontological foundation that not only reflects Indigenous theory and praxis, but also informs this study.

Mapping the Problem

Pre-contact education systems existed in Indigenous communities, including the community of Pine Creek. Educational approaches included: empirical learning, observation, and storytelling. Through daily activities, children and youth would develop knowledge, skills, and values to contribute to the community. Observation, story, and experiential learning sustained knowledge production and transmission. Through observation and attunement to the land, young people developed interconnectedness and fostered relationality. Storytelling is fundamental to cognitive development in Indigenous communities. Storytelling, as a means of communication, promoted knowledge acquisition, retention, and transfer. Storytelling is a knowledge transfer praxis: knowledge of self, knowledge of community, knowledge of history, knowledge of worldview—the foundation that strengthens every person in a cultural group. Language carries the perspective, philosophy, and worldview of Indigenous families and communities. Elders and knowledge holders held sacred roles in the community, as they carried personal, family, and community knowledge passed through storytelling.

Western ideologies reflect and support capitalist knowledge production processes. European colonial rule, governed by an industrial economy, shaped social structures, and systems. Colonialism usurped the traditional education model. Settler colonialism's use of power and domination over Indigenous people actively damaged and destroyed these communities.

The cultural, political, and social structure of Canada, as a collective nation-state, is maintained through the educational policies and practices found in school systems. Several historical events, including the numbered treaties, the *Indian Act*, and the Indian residential school system, transformed existing Indigenous education models. The *Indian Act* granted the Minister the power to enter into agreements with provincial or religious organizations to operate schools in First Nation communities. Educational institutions imposed Eurocentric ideologies, knowledge, and practices. The school system attacked Indigenous culture, language, and worldview into complete obliteration. The current education model continues to reflect Western ideologies, knowledges, and practices.

Knowledge production and knowledge validation underwent drastic transformations during the colonization of Canada. Elders as knowledge keepers became undermined, along with the well-established knowledge transfer process or oral narrative or storytelling. Pine Creek Indian Residential School operated from 1891 to 1971 (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2007). For over eighty years, children have attended this school system. This school system adhered to Eurocentric design, encompassing Western ideologies, practices, and worldview. Indigenous communities across Canada, including Pine Creek First Nation, are still feeling the damaging effects of the Indian residential school experience. Presently, there is no established First Nation education system in Manitoba; most communities follow the mandated provincial school system curricula and pedagogical approaches.



Figure 6 Pine Creek Indian Residential School, Pine Creek, MB

The current education model, developed by the Department of Education under the Government of Manitoba, mandates that public schools implement curricula. Most, if not all, on-reserve school systems follow the provincial education model. This model promotes traditional Western educational philosophies. Current educational trends show a rise in educational initiatives grounded in Indigenous knowledge and teachings. The Department of Education, through the Manitoba Government, develops resources to increase Indigenous perspectives in curricula. The Department also encourages professional development for school educators to enhance their knowledge of Indigenous history, culture, and practices. Over the past few decades, schools and school districts have gradually worked to meet this goal. The delicate balance between Eurocentric and Indigenous-centric perspectives has produced challenges that remain unresolved.

This study challenges the widely accepted or standardized form of education. The form of education, which continues to be practiced today, is rooted in colonialism. Today's form of education reflects colonialism with a capitalist agenda. Heller and Kulchyski (2025) ascertain "...capitalism involves the attempt to reshape the whole world in its image, to impose its form of time, space, subjectivity, and knowledge on the other modes of production" (p. 129). The standard Western form of education is institution-based and chronologically ordered. In school systems, classes are structured by clock time and of set duration, classes are spatially inscribed in a hierarchy with the teacher at the front and students passively positioned as 'receivers' of knowledge. This research study moves beyond repetition and memorization practices. This research study alters the form of education to become holistic, empirical, and relational. Students will learn in a relational context with oneself, with one another, with elders, and with the land. By challenging this form of education, the land-based model within a school system offers learning experiences shaped by Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing. Land is central to this form of learning.

The land holds significant importance in Indigenous perspectives and worldviews. In recent years, the research literature on land-based experiential learning or land-based pedagogy experienced considerable growth (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Thompson, Thapa, & Whiteway, 2019). Land is another form of knowledge, from which knowledge, stories, and teachings originate (Hare, 2011; Restoule et al., 2013; Simpson, 2013; Styres, 2012). Emerging scholarship illuminates the significance of and changing the way we understand the "interconnectedness" of the land (Cajete, 1994; Coulthard, 2014; Kimmerer, 2015; Kulchyski, 2005; Moore, 2017; Styres, 2017). Land-based pedagogy remains a significant part of the growing body of research literature. Indigenous perspectives and teachings are gradually gaining prominence in educational contexts, particularly in the movement toward incorporating more land-based experiences and pedagogies.

Land-based learning reflects Indigenous praxis, theory, and worldview, commonly referred to as Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing. Land is foundational to Indigenous thought. With, by, and for the Minegoziibe Anishinaabe School and community, this research addresses the systemic obstacles that exist in developing a land-based model within a school system. It explores how land-based learning experiences affect student autonomy and self-esteem. This research examines the cultural, social, and political implications and issues concerning previous and current educational contexts. Pine Creek education models transformed through colonialism, including the Indian residential school, the Indian day school, the independent education authority model, and now, the educational agreement with the Frontier School Division. This research study examines the development of Indigenous education initiatives, themes, and models rooted in Indigenous philosophies and perspectives. This research study builds on the scholarship of Indigenous knowledge and practices of land-based pedagogy, informing and being an integral component of the everyday lives of Indigenous people. This research will also explore a rounded, everyday life approach to organizing and implementing land-based pedagogy, utilizing a journaling practice with an observant-participant researcher positionality to gather, reflect, and understand the systemic obstacles and rewards of engaging in this form of Indigenous-centered education.

Researcher Lens

As discussed early in this chapter on bush culture, my parents and extended family offered an alternative form of educational practice. The spatial and temporal logics contrasted the Western educational form. We, as a family, developed a way of life on the land. We lived relationally with the seasonal rhythms of the land. My teachers included my parents, grandparents, skilled hunters, trappers, fisher people, medicine pickers, and so on. Learning occurred through experience, observation, and story. My ideological and cultural orientation is founded in Indigenous ways of

being, doing, and knowing and reflects the researcher lens for this study. I bring both a bush culture and critical theory lens to the study. The intersectionality of critical theory and colonialism is employed to establish how Eurocentric knowledge and practices, capitalism, and power structures exist in school systems.

The development of Canada as a nation necessitates examining the powers of relations upon European settlement. Settler colonists introduced ideologies, practices, and structures that differed entirely from those of Indigenous peoples, not just in content but also in the forms in which these were articulated, expressed, and practiced. Educational institutions perpetuate racist ideologies in every subject and at every level. In Canada, the establishment of the residential schools contributed to the domination and exploitation of Eurocentric beliefs and systems on Indigenous communities. These schools perpetuate dominant racist ideologies of the ruling class. Canada's economic advancement is rooted in the establishment of Indian residential schools across Canada. The Indian Residential School (IRS) system, established by the Government of Canada, forcibly removed children from their communities and families for assimilation into mainstream culture and Western ideologies. The Canadian government, including its legislation and policy, supports colonial organizational structures to advance capitalism. Domination and exploitation are two key elements of subjugation initiatives founded in the ideological apparatus of the Indian residential school.

The *Indian Act* granted the Minister the power to enter into agreements with provincial or religious organizations to operate schools in First Nation communities. Educational institutions imposed Eurocentric ideologies, knowledge, processes, and teachings. This school system eradicated Indigenous culture, language, and worldview. The Indian Residential School (IRS) system, established by the Government of Canada and implemented by a variety of Christian

institutions, forcibly removed children from their communities and families for assimilation into mainstream culture and Western ideologies. The Indian residential school systems reinforced religious ideologies with a focus on conformity and docility. Schools promoted and advanced ideologies and processes until they became routine, naturalized, and normalized.

Milloy (2011), in his book *A National Crime*, describes the experience of Indigenous children forced into the Indian residential school system as "a sharp and traumatic reality in the life of each child who was separated from parents, community, and isolated in a threatening world hostile to identity, traditional ritual, and language" (p. 42). This change in educational practices—from an Indigenous model to a Western model—led to disastrous and continuing harmful effects on Indigenous languages, cultures, and worldviews. Marie Battiste (2013), in her book, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*, encapsulates historical and contemporary colonial Canada when she articulates "concepts of racial superiority, discrimination, and racialization have been an integral part of the tactical strategies and tools of colonialism, the defining ideology of Canadian education..." (p. 133). In our community of Pine Creek, the Indian Residential School was demolished and replaced with a modern building. Today, this school follows the provincially mandated curriculum. School systems, especially those on-reserve, continue to promote Western philosophies of education, ideologies, and practices in both form and content.

Chapter two contains an extensive examination of the school system and the commodification of education. Althusser's (1971) essay, "*Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus*," outlines and describes the ideology and apparatuses developed to reproduce the conditions of production. Althusser declares that these school systems are deliberately organized and reflect industrialism. This capitalist agenda focuses on creating workers who are docile and

have learned the rules of the dominant class. Colonial infrastructures facilitated the advancement of economic movement to perpetuate knowledge, skills, and values that homogenized domination and exploitation—economic exploitation involved displacing or removing Indigenous communities for settler migration. School systems today continue to perpetuate these conditions to produce docile bodies in a settler-colonial context.

In the second part of chapter two, the commodification of the education system is highlighted. Debord, Foucault, Gramsci, Horkheimer and Adorno, and Sartre describe how institutions maintain capitalism through ideology, praxis, and totalization approaches and structures, including the educational institutions. Debord, Gramsci, Horkheimer, and Adorno emphasize conformity as a process that creates a habituated collective centered on power relations. School systems develop commodity relationships for students to become docile, obedient workers. Sartre describes totality and the lateral totalization of seriality to produce social order based on the mode and the relations of production. Debord also pinpoints the materialization of the capitalist worldview through the dominant mode of production through cultural homogenization. Foucault outlines how discipline and punishment are complex social functions to control individuals, including students in school systems, to produce docility and subordination. This researcher lens establishes how school systems, particularly on-reserve school systems, serve as sites of assimilation, domination, and repression. As expressed in most school systems, dominant settler-colonial culture forms students into workers to feed into capitalist machines.

Research Design and Questions

When designing a research study, the research questions shape the research design and approach to the study. Smith (2012) uses the term "sharing knowledge" (pp. 15-16) to shape the research as part of the decolonization process. Smith also shares some of the barriers or challenges

to Indigenous community research, including research model flexibility (or rigidity, in some cases), measurement of data, and community interest (p. 141). This research study is designed as an observant-participant methodology to journal a ten-month school year land-based model development within a school system. Through the development of this model, the researcher journals include comments, discussions, observations, and reflections by the researcher. The journal entries reflect the researcher's observations, reflections, and understanding. With that in mind, the following questions offer insight and perspective into an Indigenous approach to the study. The specific questions addressed in this research will be the following:

Primary research question:

1. What are the systemic obstacles in developing a land-based model within a school system?

Secondary question:

2. How do land-based learning experiences affect student autonomy and self-esteem?

During my professional teaching practice, I desired to create a space where students could enhance their understanding of their culture, history, and practices. In previous school years, we would have lessons, activities, and camps to explore Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies. Student engagement and responsiveness to these learning experiences were both positive and significant. Land-based education is growing and as a community member, educator, and researcher, I sought to document my experience in the development of a land-based model within a school system. It is imperative to document and identify the systemic obstacles in developing this model to understand the barriers and challenges in developing land-based models in educational contexts.

As a young child, I learned experientially and relationally. As both a school pupil and as a teacher, I participated in another form of learning. Students listened, memorized, and repeated

curricula content. As a student, I listened, I memorized, and I repeated the content. As a classroom teacher, I saw the need for change. I observed how students positively responded to experiential learning, especially learning that reflected Indigenous praxis and theory. I posed the second question to document how this model could affect student autonomy and self-esteem. One of the major differences between the traditional school system and traditional Indigenous practices centers on autonomy. Schools create docile, obedient students. In my family and my community, autonomy is encouraged.

My parents would often use the term *giin aniish*³ to my siblings and me. I have come to the understanding that this term reflects Indigenous philosophy and worldview. This term also promotes autonomous action and thought. Autonomy or being autonomous, from an Indigenous perspective, is a fundamental aspect of an individual's development. In chapter three, I emphasize the term *inaendaugwut*⁴ which reflects the Ojibway concept of autonomy. This second question is in stark contrast to the design and structure of school systems to create docile bodies who are being commodified for capitalism.

The school system is highly structured and there is little to no room for self-exploration or self-directed learning. Through my professional practice as a classroom educator, I witnessed numerous times how student test scores or achievement levels negatively affected a student's self-esteem. By observing and journaling student responses to land-based practices and in the development of a land-based model, it would show how land-based learning affected student autonomy and self-esteem. As an observant-participant in this research study, I would observe and document student comments, engagement, and participation in land-based learning experiences as shown in the journal entries in chapter five.

³ *Giin aniish* translates to "the decision is mine to make"

⁴ *Inaendaugwut* translates to "he is permitted of himself"

To meet the needs of Western research criteria, the research 'data' consists of stories and knowledge stemming from journaling, storytelling, and experiential learning. This researcher, as an observant participant, journaled comments, experiences, observations, and stories throughout the development of the land-based learning model. The key themes and concepts from the researcher's journal, recorded as an observant-participant, are analyzed. Journals included insights, observations, and thoughts from the students' responses to the experiential learning, as well as the challenges and issues that arose throughout the school year. The obstacles in developing a land-based model within a school system are identified and discussed in chapter six.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, I recognized the need for a change in the form of educational practice. Earlier in my teaching career, I implemented curricula using traditional Western pedagogical practices. I "stood and delivered" curriculum content. Memorization and standardized forms of learning remain integral to teaching practices today. In my personal life, my parents modelled learning from the land. I received two types of teaching models, which clashed. My beliefs about education and learning have been affirmed and strengthened through both my master's degree and in pursuit of this degree.

Stories are sacred. Through my journal entries in chapter five, I share many stories. I share stories of celebration, conversations, experiences, sights, sounds, teachings, and uncertainty. I share my own stories and the stories shared with me during the land-based activities. Storytelling is fundamental to this research study, grounded in Indigenous philosophy and worldview. Orality is an Indigenous practice and is foundational to the development of Indigenous epistemology (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2005). The power of stories and the teachings, values, and knowledge they contain are essential to development (Archibald, 2008). These stories define who we are and who we are becoming; they provide a sense of purpose and identity, factors crucial to

our development. Wilson's (2005) text, *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives* discuss the impact of colonialism and Indigenous ways, noting that "many of these changes in our lives are better characterized as loss, with much of our cultural identity sacrificed along the way" (p. 8).

Story praxis is a fundamental practice in many Indigenous communities, and "...is one step in achieving a different version of the world" (Wilson, p. 13). Maines, Pierce & Laslett (2008) reiterate this same idea, "individual life stories are very much embedded in social relationships and structures, and they are expressed in culturally specific forms; read carefully, they provide unique insights into the connections between the individual life trajectories and collective forces and institutions beyond the individual" (p. 3). Storytelling is a significant element of this study. Through this research study design, I am honouring and sustaining an important praxis in my community: sharing my own story.

Indigenous people and the land are deeply connected. The concept of land is a foundational basis for Indigenous knowledge and practices. For this research study, experiential or embodied learning is a key component of land-based learning or land-based pedagogy. This model of learning represents a different form of learning. Learning took place on the land, on the water, and in the natural environment. Students learned about their community through experiences and stories. Students participated in traditional cultural practices, including arts and crafts, berry picking, fishing, hunting, gathering medicinal plants, outdoor fire activities, and sharing and discussing stories in talking and sharing circles. Students engaged in projects and experiential learning in the outdoor environment. They were also provided with opportunities, using observation, to demonstrate their knowledge and skills through these experiential learning activities. Through these teachings, students gained additional knowledge and understanding about

the relationship and sacredness of land to Indigenous people. Student bodies were engaged in ways that take them outside the walls of the school, so they encounter land-based temporal rhythms and more egalitarian student-teacher dynamics.

Conclusion

As a community member, as a classroom teacher, and as a research student, in Pine Creek First Nation, I have a unique position to advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous ways of life in an educational context. As such, this project builds upon my professional knowledge and delves deeply into more academically oriented questions, aiming to produce research that strengthens the relationship between the various groups within the community by creating transformative educational experiences and new opportunities for Indigenous students. Indigenous research needs to embody reciprocity (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012). Therefore, my research will provide community members with a research output that centers on our theory and praxis and is accessible outside of the academy.

As students learn about themselves through experiential learning, community engagement, and storytelling they will gain a deeper understanding of their own culture, history, and knowledge. Through this study, these learning experiences may contribute to students being more successful in navigating their way through educational institutions. Students who engage in holistic, experiential learning can anticipate development and growth and relate this learning to their academic experiences. It will strengthen the storytelling praxis as a method of knowledge transfer. Through experiences and stories, students will gain more understanding of the existing relationship between Indigenous people and the land. It will strengthen the community through collaboration and consultation with Elders, leaders, and community members, building positive and supportive relationships with students and the school community.

The relations between the school system and the community may improve. There would be an increase in awareness and knowledge of best practices of Indigenous education by, for, and with Indigenous people. Land-based learning may enhance students' cultural competency and identity through this research study. Students would learn about their culture, history, and language. This research advocates collaboration among teachers at the community level. This research is also significant in the design of involving Indigenous people in Indigenous research: my relationship developed over the span of two decades. This research study is a snapshot of my relationship-building process.

This research study bears significance because the stories and knowledge gathered will be valuable to essential stakeholders and policymakers in education. The Faculty of Education could utilize this research study to prepare better future teachers who will work with Indigenous students or land-based pedagogy. At the policy level, collaboration among all educational stakeholders could increase and promote Indigenous knowledge and praxis in other school systems. This research study could also be valuable to current educators, especially those working with Indigenous students or in Indigenous communities. Thus, in general, this research study will contribute to the overall benefits of transformative educational programming, incorporating valid and appropriate Indigenous praxis, in current educational contexts.

On a more personal note, I am a member of the Pine Creek First Nation, and the knowledge, skills, and values practiced in our community are significant. Relationality is a pillar of Indigenous praxis and theory. Our local elders, knowledge keepers, and land-based knowledge keepers are held in high regard. The relationships I have developed with colleagues, community members, leadership, including Chief and Council, elders, parents, and most specifically, our students are positive and supportive. Relationality is also rooted in the land, the water, and the cosmos.

Over the last decade, my pedagogical practices have evolved from a solely Western-based pedagogical approach to incorporating Indigenous pedagogical approach and practices. As an educator in a First Nation community, I create opportunities that enable students to develop, explore, and understand themselves (Chaput, 2012; Gresczyk, 2011). I am aware of the significance of Indigenous knowledge and praxis, and how they contribute to building student autonomy and self-esteem. Educational models have undergone transformation over the last few centuries and continue to undergo ongoing transformation. Like Nanabush, who can shapeshift, so can the education model.

Six chapters are in this research study. Chapter One describes this researcher's formative bush culture development and the need for educational transformation. In chapter two, ideology, societal apparatuses, and the commodification of education are examined. It looks at how the Indian Residential School system practiced domination and subjugation to create docile, obedient bodies. Chapter three provides a brief overview of the early and contemporary Indigenous scholarship countering the colonial narrative. Indigenous political work and scholarly work creates space for Indigenous theory and praxis to be included in knowledge and literary domains. Chapter four explores contemporary research approaches that include: researcher reflexivity, insider research, and insurgent research. It reviews ethical guidelines, describes this researcher's ethical temperament, and works to decolonize research from an Indigenous perspective. Chapter five presents the researcher's journaling process, detailing the experiences, observations, and reflections of the systemic obstacles in the development of a land-based model within a school system for one school calendar year. Finally, in the concluding chapter, the research study's findings and results are analyzed and presented. The recommendations and the significance of the study are presented in the closing chapter.

Chapter Two: Understanding Critical Theory: Knowledge is Power

The Indian residential school system is part of my family's story. My koko attended the school as a little girl and continued to work at the school as an adult. My mother attended for a very short while, only days. Her father, being French, carried enough influence (or privilege) with the residential school staff to say he did not want his daughter in the school system. My koko passed away when I was five years old. I have very few memories of her. My mother shared many stories about my koko with me. My koko's beliefs were steeped in Catholicism. Growing up in Camperville, the church and priest had a huge influence on the families. We attended church regularly; we took catechism classes. Our local priest would make his rounds in the community. When I think of my koko, I do not hold the same religious values or worldview as her. She carried strong, Catholic beliefs and practices. As a student, she was removed from her family and community. This experience completely reshaped her identity. She became a 'subject' and dominant ideology became naturalized for her.

Introduction

In Pine Creek First Nation, like many other Indigenous communities across this land, education systems existed in precolonial times. The contemporary institutions and systems of education grew from settler colonialism. These educational institutions perpetuate racist ideologies in every subject and at every level. Colonial propaganda seeps into the daily lessons, practices, and routines of school systems. Schools reflect the industrial revolution factory model: ringing bells, grouped by age, separate subjects, separate facilities, and so on. Critical theorists convey school systems deliberately organized and reflected industrialism: a capitalist agenda, focusing on creating workers who were docile and learning the rules of the dominant class. Colonial infrastructures advanced economic movements to perpetuate knowledge, skills, and values that homogenize domination and exploitation. Settler colonialism advanced power relations and through these techniques of power became totalitarian as totalizing.

As identified in the previous chapter, the form of education—spatial and temporal logics—work to naturalize social hierarchies, perpetuate colonialism, and produce docility and obedience. Today, students continue to stand in line formations, they continue to stand for the national anthem *O'Canada* each morning, they continue to 'sit down and shut up' in desks in row formation. Students are taught to follow orders, to respect the property, be punctual, and be trained as workers. School systems perpetuate practices and processes for students to see themselves as citizens of a settler colonial nation first, their nationhood, second.

This chapter draws heavily on critical theory in Western scholarship to explore how schools reproduce the conditions of production under the guise of "education." Although this chapter deals with theorists broadly operating within a Marxist paradigm (except Foucault), they have sharp disagreements with each other, particularly the differences with Althusserian structuralism and the dialectical materialism of Sartre. But at this level of abstraction, the level mode of production, key elements of the critiques of all these thinkers line up to point in some clear direction when we consider the form of Indigenous education in a settler-colonial context.

First, this chapter highlights Althusser's thesis *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus* and can be drawn on to highlight how the Canadian government and government legislation and policy support capitalism and colonial advancement. Social formation as it correlates to state apparatuses, ideology and interpellation is examined. Domination and exploitation are two key elements of subjugation initiatives founded in the ideological apparatus of the Indian residential school, as shown in Althusser's essay. Althusser posits the school as the ideological state apparatus which produces students as class subjects, as the reproductions of the relations of production for a capitalist society. The Indian residential school model followed a Eurocentric design. These schools severed the Indigenous family, the community(ies), and knowledge systems. The day

school design followed this same design. Contemporary school systems still maintain pedagogy and practices that reflect settler colonialism to support a capitalist society.

Second, this chapter subsequently focuses on the commodification of education through conformity, totality and totalization, and discipline and punishment in school systems. Education becomes a commodity, the knowledge a student receives, that is reflected as labour-power, to serve capitalism. These practices reflect contemporary colonial Canadian education system. This chapter draws on critical theorists to explore the dominant Western praxis on education. Debord, Foucault, Gramsci, Horkheimer and Adorno, and Sartre describe how institutions maintain capitalism through ideology, praxis, and totalization approaches and structures, including the educational institutions.

Debord, Gramsci, Horkheimer and Adorno emphasize conformity as a process to create a habituated collective that centers on power relations. School systems develop commodity relationships for students to become docile, obedient workers. Sartre describes totality and the lateral totalization of seriality to produce social order based on the mode and the relations of production. Debord also pinpoints the materialization of the capitalist worldview through the dominant mode of production through cultural homogenization. Foucault outlines how discipline and punishment are complex social functions to control individuals, including students in school systems, to produce docility and subordination. This analysis is critical to understanding how school systems, especially on-reserve school systems, continue to be sites of assimilation and domination. As expressed in most school systems, the dominant settler colonial culture forms students into workers to feed into the capitalist machine. These bodies of theories offer a critical analysis of colonial schooling and support this research study by offering alternative forms of learning by transforming the conventional spatial and temporal logics found in school systems.

Education Institutions: Ideology and Apparatuses

My father shared many stories about his life; he attended school until he reached grade three. He shared one notable story I remember vividly. My dad got into trouble at school, he was seven or eight, my age at the time of him sharing this story with me for the first time. He stood in front of the nun waiting for the nun to dole out her usual punishment. She asked him to put out his hand. When my dad told this story, he would perform the story events, waving his arms in the air and change his body positions several times. He shared that she would draw her arm as far back as she could go with a determined look on her face. She held a thick, leather strap in her hand and would use total effort when her arm came down. He as a little boy was expected to stand still and receive this punishment. This happened more than once to my dad. His favourite story was when he pulled his arm away just in time so that the belt hit the nun's body instead of his hand. My dad would say, I showed her that day.

Colonial Legacy

Contemporary colonial Canada materialized over several centuries. The doctrine of discovery and the concept of *terra nullius* justified land appropriation and exploitation. Settler land title and ownership led the way for economic advancement in Canada. European-settler migration and expansion into Canada occurred through exploitative land acquisition measures and practices that eventually led to the transformation of Indigenous education. As Canada expanded into its current colonial state, land became commodified through a series of historical events and government legislation and policy. Coulthard (2014) points out that “the history and experience of dispossession, not proletarianization, has been the dominant background structure shaping the character of the historical relationship between Indigenous people and Canada” (p. 13). Tobias’s (1991) article *Protection, Civilization, Assimilation* illustrates the imposed processes and policies legislated by the British government for land acquisition. Tobias highlights “European settlement and economic exploitation” as the principal factors in securing land ownership across Canada. The implementation of the residential school system in Canada originated through government

legislation such as the 1857 Gradual Civilization Act, the 1869 Gradual Enfranchisement Act, and the 1876 Indian Act. These policies outlined that Indians were wards of the state and assimilation into the body politic ensued.

Following the numbered treaties, the *Indian Act* granted colonial powers the most control over education on reservations. One of the prominent administrative features of the Indian Act “permits the Minister to enter into agreements with provinces or religious organizations to run First Nations schools but does not permit the Minister to enter into an agreement with a First Nations organization to run its own schools” (Mendelson, 2008). Through the *Indian Act*, the Canadian government consented to church groups operating residential schools (Neegan, 2005). This formal policy displaced Indians onto reserves to be educated and converted to both educational and religious ideologies.

The Indian Residential School (IRS) system became the dominant apparatus to cultivate capitalist products and processes. The IRS became a site for the perpetuation of capitalist values which indoctrinated knowledge bound in ideology through instruction and through materialism. The school represented an ideological mechanism for reproducing the relations of exploitation to reproduce the relations of production. The reproduction of skills, labour power, and the reproduction of subjugation into the dominant ruling class coalesced through the IRS system. Milloy's (2011) comprehensive work on the Canadian residential school system describes the methodological and ontological shifts experienced by students in this system:

“...from a world to be navigated by belief, dreams and spirit guidance to one of secular logic and reasoning, from the rhythms that came from the body and needs of the child to those in which the child was to respond to the corporate needs of the school and from leaning by living, observing and doing, to living and learning by discipline in preparation for a life governed by the dictates of an alien society” (pp. 136-137).

Canada's colonization process reflects Althusser's essay on *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. Ideology is imposed through public structures. The Indian residential school system contributed to the domination and exploitation of Indigenous communities.

Reproduction of the Conditions of Production

Capital accumulation affects human relations. Labour, in the form of wages, is the common social substance of all commodities. School systems are designed to condition students for the labour market. Althusser begins his essay *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* by analysing and investigating the material conditions of production for reproduction. Althusser identifies the *point of view of reproduction* to highlight how production is “integrated into our everyday ‘consciousness’” and “every social formation arises from a dominant mode of production” to illustrate the point that the reproduction of the conditions of production becomes naturalized (1971, p. 1). Societal structures must reproduce both the productive forces and the existing relations of production to maintain the hierarchies that exist. Althusser outlines Marx's theory of the reproduction of the means of production. Marx explained how the material conditions of production must be replaced, including raw material, machines, buildings, etc., and reproduced in the national or global market. The global circulation of capital exists based on this configuration: the means of production and the means of consumption as they relate to the realization of surplus value.

Althusser discusses how reproduction is ensured through labour power, identifying wages as the means to reproduction. This is the crux of Althusser's views on the reproduction of the conditions of production. The development of labour power, through ideological apparatuses that shape the products for reproduction, create and maintain a capitalist society. Wages provide the material means for labour-power to reproduce itself. Althusser identifies the capitalist education

system model as the apparatus that “produce the result that the labour power has to be (diversely) skills and therefore reproduced as such” (1971, p.3). Skills must be reproduced through the education system. Althusser discusses how children learn know-how and “learn the ‘rules’ of good behaviour” and most importantly, “the rules of the order established by class domination” (1971, p.4). Althusser emphasizes children also learn about the submission to the rules of the established order. He provides this example, “a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression....” (1971, p.4). This reproduction of labour power is created through ideological subjection to reproduce itself. In this essay, Althusser then switches to capitalist societal structure before discussing ideology in-depth.

Point of View of Reproduction

Althusser utilizes Marx's conception of society with an *infrastructure* or economic base and the *superstructure* which is comprised of two units: the politico-legal and ideology. Althusser uses a “spatial metaphor” (1971, p. 5) to represent capitalist societal structure. Althusser states the superstructure has a ‘relative autonomy’ from the base and acts with reciprocal action of the superstructure on the base. The colonization of Canada required the infrastructure to be established to advance the superstructures—to advance the ideology of the ruling class. Althusser identifies the base “determines the whole edifice” which capitalism is built on (1971, p. 5). The logic of production is the base, and the ideology is the superstructure. The capitalist class controls the superstructure through two identified state apparatuses: the repressive state apparatus and the ideological state apparatus. Althusser identifies the state as the repressive state apparatus (RSA). It includes the police, courts, prisons, the army, etc. Domination by physical violence or coercion is the key function of the repressive state apparatus. One key distinction Althusser makes in this

essay emphasizes the state power is different from the state apparatus. He stresses the state is more complex than in conventional Marxist theory. He identifies “the head of State, the government and the administration” to be key elements of state power which is distinctive from the state apparatus (1971, p. 6).

One important aspect of societal structure Althusser identifies is descriptive theory, in his description of the state, state apparatuses and ideology, Althusser utilized “descriptive conceptions or representations,” what he calls ‘descriptive theory.’ He uses this term to describe social formation and further elucidates this concept with the following explanation:

- (1) that the ‘descriptive theory’ really is, without a shadow of a doubt, the irreversible beginning of the theory; but (2) that the ‘descriptive’ form in which the theory is presented requires, precisely an effect of this ‘contradiction’, a development of the theory which goes beyond the form of ‘description’. (p.7)

Althusser asserts state power is different from the state apparatus. State power may shift between classes; however, there will be no changes in the state apparatus. Althusser applies the Marxist theory of the state to show that proletarians must extinguish the state to end state power, state apparatuses, and replace it with a different proletarian apparatus. Althusser considers the state to be more complex than outlined in previous Marxist theory.

Throughout this essay, Althusser illustrates distinctions between state power, state apparatus, and the ideological state apparatus. The ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) include those institutions, religious, educational, family, legal, etc., are included in the theory of the state. He notes the RSA is “public” and ISAs are “private” (1971, p. 10) while a distinction exists and the former functions by violence, the latter, by ideology. All existing ISAs are incorporated under the ruling ideology. It can then be assumed that ISAs are also the sites of class struggle. There are multiple ISAs that are distinct and autonomous in function but maintain the dominant ruling ideology.

As Althusser describes the RSA, the RSA acquires the political conditions of the reproduction of the relations of production by reproducing itself and securing political conditions for the ISAs to act. The colonization of Canada is framed by this reproduction. Land appropriation and exploitation produced these political infrastructures and superstructures. British rule and ideology link the RSA and ISAs. It became imperative to establish an education system to unify the ruling ideology of the state. Althusser builds on Gramsci's description of ideological state apparatuses; the public-private is a "distinction internal to bourgeois law, and valid in the (subordinate) domains in which bourgeois law exercises its 'authority'" (p. 10). The functioning means applied by the RSA and ISAs correspond with violence and ideology. Althusser emphasizes "not to confuse the Ideological State Apparatus with the (Repressive) State Apparatus." The RSA, according to Althusser, "functions massively and predominantly *by* repression (including physical repression), while functioning secondary by ideology" (1971, p. 10). Althusser also clarifies the ISAs function "massively and predominately by *ideology*, but they function secondarily by repression...." (1971, p. 10). Althusser also asserts the ISAs are unified "*beneath the ruling ideology*" of the ruling class (1971, p. 10). The ruling class cannot directly control the ISAs as easily as the RSAs according to Althusser. The essay shifts to the securement of the reproduction of the relations of production.

Althusser identifies three features to answer this securement issue: all state apparatuses function by repression and ideology, the ISAs are "multiple, distinct, 'relatively autonomous' and capable of providing an objective field to contradictions" and the RSA exists under a unified rule and the ISAs are secured by the "ideology of the ruling class" (1971, p. 12). Althusser identifies the political conditions of the reproduction of the relations of production through various means including physical force, repression, and exploitation. He theorizes the RSA acts as a "shield" for

the ISAs which holds state power (1971, p. 12). Althusser then provides a historical background of capitalist topography and affirms “*there was one dominant Ideological State Apparatus, the Church*” which served in educational functions as well (1971, p. 13). Althusser posits the ISA, the “*educational ideological apparatus*” produces the social formation that reflects a capitalist society, not the assumed political ISA (1971, p. 13). Althusser emphasizes the bourgeoisie class constructs the dominant ISA as the political ISA, not the educational ISA as the dominant ISA in capitalist social formation. This is key to understanding Althusser’s views in this essay on the educational ideological state apparatus. These apparatuses contribute to varying degrees the same outcome: the reproduction of the relations of production for production.

The dominant ISA, the school, is called to attention. The state utilizes the educational ISA to shape our subjectivity, our homogeneity, and our docility. According to Althusser, the educational ISA “drums into them [students], a certain amount of ‘know-how’ wrapped in the ruling ideology” and “a huge mass of children is ejected ‘into production’” (1971, p. 15). The educational ISA provides the roles to fulfill in a class society. Althusser views this intricate progression an “apprenticeship” in the “*relations of production*” sustained by the ruling class (1971, p. 15). Althusser further explains how the educational ISA is “covered up and “concealed” because the school is seen as a “neutral environment purged of ideology” (1971, p. 15). Althusser ends this section of his essay with the statement, “the Church has been replaced today *in its role as the dominant Ideological State Apparatus* by the school” (1971, p. 16). This is a profound statement. This statement indicates a parallelism between the colonization efforts to build Canada as a capitalist state and the Indian residential school system as an Ideological state apparatus to reproduce the relations of production in Indigenous communities.

Ideology

The concept of ideology, first from a Marxist perspective, according to Althusser is “a system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group” (1971, p. 16). However, no clear theory of ideology exists from Marx. Althusser states ideology as a sole concept has no history and depends on social formation and “always expresses *class positions*” (1971, p. 16). Althusser analyzes *The German Ideology* as a “pure dream” based on the “full and positive reality” therefore it has no history, and Althusser emphasizes “*ideology is eternal*” (1971, p. 17). In this essay, Althusser focuses on ideology expressed in class positions.

Althusser proceeds to discuss two theses: ideology represents the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence and ideology has a material existence. In this first thesis, Althusser explores how the concept of ideology “make allusion to reality” or are interpreted as such (1971, p. 19). Naturally, these diverse types of interpretations will produce different results. Althusser examines why “men represent their real conditions of existence in order to ‘represent to themselves’ their real condition of existence” (1971, p. 19). As stated in the previous section of this essay, the church advanced the dominant ideological state apparatus. Althusser highlights how one interpretation of ideology demonstrates how priests or despots created these false representations of the world in men’s minds for domination and exploitation. A second false interpretation of ideology is the “alienation in the imaginary of the representation of men’s condition of existence” (1971, p. 19). Althusser then shifts back to his first thesis: ideology represents not the real conditions of existence, but “their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there” (1971, p. 19). Ideology, therefore, represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to the relations of production. Althusser shows how the

priests or despots who author a distorted ideology of the “social relations which govern their conditions of existence and their collective and individual life” (1971, p. 20).

The second thesis on ideology centers on ideology having a material existence when analyzing the nature of ideology and its existence in an apparatus and its practices, or more specifically actions and habits, in social formation. Althusser explains the idea that an individual who lives in ideology associate “the imaginary relation to their conditions of existence” to “the relations of productions and to class relations” (1971, p. 20). Althusser depicts ideology through several phases; it begins with attitude and practices. The subject “adopts a practical attitude” and “participates in regular practices” which align themselves to the ideological apparatus (1971, p. 21). The ideology of ideology is formed through “practices” and “rituals” in an individual’s actions. Althusser states every subject “inscribe in his own ideas as a free subject in the actions of his material practice” (1971, p. 21).

Althusser presents Pascal’s dialectic, in inverted order, the rituals will establish the subject’s consciousness to believe. From a Marxist interpretation, Althusser emphasizes a subject’s ideas “are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject” (1971, p. 22). In a capitalist society, according to Althusser, “ideas” in ideology disappeared, “subject, consciousness, belief, actions” survived and “practices, rituals, ideological apparatus” appeared (1971, p. 22). Althusser finalizes his thoughts on the two theses of ideology with the following proposition: there is no practice except by and in an ideology and there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects. Ideology creates subject. Interpellation allows this to occur.

Interpellation

Ideology by and for subjects is the “constitutive category of all ideology” and “is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects” (1971, p. 23). Althusser explains that we “live ‘spontaneously’ or ‘naturally’ in ideology” (1971, p. 23). He goes on to explain the “obviousness” of the ideological effect as “obviousnesses of obviousnesses” (1971, p. 23). Althusser provides an example of knocking on the door and asking the question “who’s there?” and obviously answer with “it’s me.” The ideological recognition function is an important function of ideology, it affirms “you and I are always already subjects,” a ritual of ideological recognition (1971, p. 23). Althusser points out these practical rituals “in no sense does it give us the (scientific) knowledge of the mechanism of this recognition” (1971, p. 24). The “Hey, you there!” command illustrates the change that occurs for an individual. The individual is interpellated or hailed and “becomes a subject.” Althusser’s first formulation on ideology maintains “all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects” (1971, p. 24). Through interpellation individuals become subjects, Althusser asserts “individuals are always-already subjects” (1971, p. 25). The final part of Althusser’s essay shifts into an example in Christian religious ideology.

Althusser begins his example by stating the “formal structure of ideology is always the same” (1971, p. 25). He provides a fictional discourse on the Christian religious ideology’s practices and rituals. Religious ideology operates by God recognizing individuals by proper name and interpellating the individual “to make him a subject.” Althusser describes this procedure as a “strange phenomenon” of the “absolute condition” of *Other Subject*, i.e., God (1971, p. 26). The individual or subject emulates *Other Subject*, God. It is a synergetic phenomenon, as Althusser identifies “his *mirrors*, his *reflections*” (1971, p. 27). This phenomenon must be duplicated,

“*Subject into subjects and of the Subject itself into a subject-Subject*” (1971, p. 27). Althusser identifies this as the duplicate mirror-structure as the following:

1. the interpellation of ‘individuals’ as subjects;
2. their subjection to the Subject;
3. the mutual recognition of subjects and Subject, the subjects’ recognition of each other, and the subject’s recognition of himself.;
4. the absolute guarantee that everything really is so, and that on condition that the subjects recognize what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be all right: Amen – ‘*so be it.*’ (p. 27)

The Christian subject subjects oneself to God, reflecting the subjectivity of God using rituals, rituals of the ISAs. Althusser summarizes his view on subject and subjectivity to the Subject by defining subject as “free subjectivity, a center of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions” and “a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission” (1971, p. 28). Althusser ascertains ideology is indoctrinated in subjects. In society, the mechanisms of the processes of production and circulation actualize ideology not only through ideological state apparatuses, but through class struggle, the ruling class, and the exploited class to reproduce the relations of production.

Apparatuses, Ideology, and the Indian Residential School

The analysis and examination presented in Althusser’s essay clearly indicates educational institutions as the ideological state apparatus to impose the dominant class ideology on its students as subjects to the ruling ideologies. One of the clearest positions Althusser constructs in his essay is the ruling class can produce the kind of student desired for a capitalist society through ideology and ideological apparatuses. The Indian residential education school model followed a Eurocentric purpose. In Sherman’s (2012) book *The Curiosity of School*, the first section of chapter three, “Citizens and Solders”, is devoted to describing the historical development of the Indian Residential School and Egerton Ryerson’s significant role. Ryerson originally called them

industrial schools, “they are schools of more than manual labour; they are schools of learning and religion; and industry is the great element of efficiency in each of these” (p. 122). Prochner (2019) affirms Ryerson’s vision, calling them boarding schools “modeled on the family with the teacher as “parent” and would preserve class distinction by focusing on work as education” (p. 54). Indigenous language and culture became immaterial. Tobias (1991) expresses how the Indian residential school system contributed to “education of the Indian child was a keystone of the civilizing process the reserve system was to perform” (p.136). The ideological state apparatus, combining religion and education, fused in the Indian residential school system. The Indian Act, along with other government policies and legislation, and the Indian Residential schools contribute to the naturalization of colonialism and the extinction of Indigenous peoples’ indigeneity.

The process of knowledge acquisition and more importantly, ideology, in this education model knowledge clashed with existing Indigenous knowledge acquisition processes and Indigenous ideologies. Battiste (2013) illustrates:

The revised Indian Act laid the foundation for the removal of children from their homes and the massive forced migration of children to a large network of residential schools, leaving families and communities without children and continuing and enlarging the erosion of their core values and knowledge related to their children’s learning and their own sustenance. (p.55)

This change in educational practices—from an Indigenous to a Western model—had disastrous and continuing effects on Aboriginal language, culture, and worldview. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996) asserts, “...it was a precise pedagogy for re-socializing children in the schools.” The RCAP goes on to explain “...they [the children] would leave behind the ‘savage’ seasonal round of hunting and gathering for a life ordered by the hourly precision of clocks and bells.” As Althusser affirms in his essay, the government, the church, and the school operated together to promote a disparate ideology. The Truth and Reconciliation’s final

report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* (2015) begins with a discussion on “cultural genocide” as the principal objective of the establishment and operation of residential schools. The government and the IRS, as an ISA, promoted the dominant ideologies interpellating students into English or French-speaking subjects with colonial citizenship values. Althusser describes the repressive state apparatus to include the police which functions using physical violence. In Graybill's (2007) book, *Policing the Great Plains*, he describes the Northwest Mounted Police's (NWMP) role as a police force and more importantly, highlights how it acted as a repressive function. Graybill states, “...the Mounted Police played an indispensable role in the subjugation of Canada's Plain Indians” (p. 59). The Indian residential school represented the totalizing structure for children who became docile, exploited workers.

The Commodification of Education

Settler colonialist's use of power and domination over Indigenous people included educational institutions to actively destroy Indigenous way of life. Schools, especially the Indian Residential Schools and the Indian Day schools, became sites of assimilation and domination. Across Canada, the educational models in Indigenous communities experienced several transformations, specifically First Nation communities: the Indian Residential School model, the educational authority model, and most recently, the provincial educational model. Indigenous school communities often adhere to the current provincial educational model, steeped in Western ideologies and philosophies. European colonial rule, governed by capitalism, shape educational facilities, including school systems, to control and dominate students. School systems reinforce social hierarchy. Discussion is ongoing regarding the public school system and the commodification of education by many critical theorists. Conformity, totality, commodity relationship structures, discipline and punishment, are fundamental elements of the various forms

of current educational contexts across the globe. The current educational system we have come to know and understand became naturalized as the only or right way. The school system remains marked by Eurocentric values and perspectives to produce workers for a capitalist society.

This chapter section examines the cultural, social, and political issues in the development of the Western education model through a critical theory lens. It begins by looking at conformity to produce commodity relationships to support a capitalist society. Next, it explores Debord's concept of the *spectacle* and views it as a mechanism of power in relations of production. Gramsci also discusses how school systems use coercive techniques to build power relations between the state and society. Both Horkheimer and Adorno provide an extended analysis of the Enlightenment philosophy to demonstrate how science and logic, two pillars of freedom from religious or mythological rule, entrapped society deeper into hierarchical social orders. Sartre and Debord delve into the theories of totality and totalization, as the product and the process to achieve homogeneity and submission to the ruling class. Debord's concept of the spectacle corresponds to Sartre's concept of the series, a form of relationship that works to isolate and subjugate individuals. The next section of the chapter shifts to the concepts of discipline and punish by Foucault. These two methods guarantee submission to a capitalist economy through coercive measures. In this section, what is being taught, the actual curriculum, will be set aside to examine how the teaching is conducted, the form of education rather than the content, as a particular colonising and often overlooked aspect of settler colonial education.

Conformity

Conformity to ideologies, institutions, and our capitalist society is multidimensional and naturalized. Ideology is imposed through public structures, including school systems. While the impetus to participate in a school system is completely normalized today, the motive for this school

system transmits a capitalist society's requirements. Schools, through a variety of principles and practices, maintain social hierarchy by producing docile, obedient workers. Debord, Gramsci, Horkheimer and Adorno highlight the method of conformity as the foundational approach to produce commodity relationships. Individuals comply to societal concepts and positions through naturalized and normalized ideological and philosophical approaches, institutions, and routines.

In Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*, he explores how modernity and the commodity relationship evolved to support a capitalist society produced by the ruling class—the bourgeoisie. Everything, including socially specific forms, are represented by *spectacles*. Debord defines this concept as “an *affirmation* of appearances and an identification of all human social life with appearances” (p. 4). He describes this as a “social relation between people that is mediated by images” (p. 2). He connects this phenomenon to the dominant mode of production and describes how our “worldview that has been actually materialized” (p. 2). Debord links the relationship of the spectacle to the economy. Spectacles reinforce conformity. The teacher reinforces dominant, settler, colonial concepts and ideas through lecture and talking, students become passive spectators in this process. These images distort human rationality and people become consumed in the consumption of generated images. Debord discusses how conformity shapes collective values through the dominant mode of production. Debord asserts “human fulfillment was no longer equated with what one was, but with what one possessed” (p. 5). Totalization includes commodity relationships and the accumulation of capital endorsed by dominant state-produced ideologies.

Debord contributes the roots of this conception to the “specialization of *power*” (p. 7) or in other words, the foundation of a hierarchical society. Debord also discusses social separation and determines the spectacle as the “institutionalization of the social division of labor in the form of class divisions” (p. 8). Debord pinpoints how this “separation-based economic system

proletarianizes the whole world” (p. 9). We live and participate in a constructed capitalist organization through mass consumption of images and conformity to these images. This capitalist society sits in contrast to Indigenous societies, which were based on a different mode of production. Debord identifies how religious forms are hierarchical. It is important to be cognizant of Debord's statement because school systems, comparable to religious facilities, reinforce conformity and social hierarchy. The commodity relationship supports a spectacle society: spectacle logic pervades classrooms, often the very architecture of the spaces, as much as it does society overall.

Gramsci's chapter *On Education* in his book, *Prison Notebooks*, explores the dialectical character of education. According to Gramsci, the ruling class cultivates ideology established for a capitalist economy. He explicates the power relations and structures present in school systems. Gramsci's theory of hegemony is reflected in the public education system, one of power relations in state and society. Gramsci discusses the educational principle and describes the relationship between school and work. Gramsci asserts this principle as a “necessity recognised and proposed to themselves as freedom, and not simply the result of coercion” (p. 178). School became a naturalized order. Through the education system, specific ideologies, practices, and routines are implemented in forms that will suit students for work. Gramsci explores and discusses the common school and how it represented a more democratic structure, shifting from folklore. Gramsci avows, “the most paradoxical aspect of it all is that the new type of school appears and is advocated as being democratic, while in fact it is destined not merely to perpetuate social differences but to crystallize them in Chinese complexities” (p. 186). Education, as a naturalized order, is steeped in capitalist practices and values, grooming students for work.

Gramsci's ideas on the educational principle can be seen in contemporary classrooms. He discussed the educational principle as "the basis of the old primary school was the idea of work" (p. 178). This is an important statement. It reflects hegemony through conformity. He describes this process as a natural order—organic. He asserts, "it must be a necessity recognised and proposed to themselves as freedom, and not simply the result of coercion" (p. 178). The daily practices and routines applied in the school system "reflect the civil sector in which the child participates, and the social relations which are formed within his family, his neighbourhood, his village, etc." (p. 179). Gramsci's writing pinpoints "the world free from all magic and superstition" (p. 177) which leads this Horkheimer and Adorno's exploration of the concept of Enlightenment.

The exploration in the search for scientific truth is central to Horkheimer and Adorno's *The Concept of Enlightenment*. The Enlightenment describes the period in European history when the dominant philosophical idea advocated human reason—rational thought. This period in history challenged the rule of the Church. A shift occurred from myth, magic, superstition, and natural phenomena to logos, rationale, reason, and logic. The significance of superstitions and myths declined through industrialization and technology to build a work force using domination and subjugation as its two methods of implementation. The shift from abstract and utopian to empirical and functional dramatically changed thought and perspective, however, the reproduction of the conditions of production remained the same. Relations and forces of production are elements of a mode of production. Horkheimer and Adorno identify the concept of *number*, it "became enlightenment's canon" (p. 4). Number ruled the bourgeois, commodity exchange, and society. Value became assigned to material. Central to understanding Horkheimer and Adorno's work is the idea that the period of Enlightenment reproduced the same doctrine it rejected: conformity. Elements of the Enlightenment include these two important shifts: the nomadic lifestyle became

replaced by fixed property, myth is the past, labour and power are the future. The establishment of educational facilities allowed for this shift to materialize and become a naturalized progression. The bourgeois ruling class became the controllers of production and influenced a fixed order of time. The Enlightenment, considered to be a period of insight, freedom, and choice, became a period further steeped in imperialism which is reflected in educational institutions, still today.

Horkheimer and Adorno identify the ruling class's use of power to establish social order. They refer to this body of power as a collective and with the use of power relations "confers increased cohesion and strength on the social order whole in which it is established. The division of labour, through which power manifests itself socially, serves the self-preservation of the dominated whole" (p. 16). Social order is about obedience and work which is implemented and naturalized in school systems. Individuals become isolated in the work process. The ruling class-imposed ideologies and practices to support order. Horkheimer and Adorno emphasize the advancement of social order through the thought process of individuals. Individual thought and identity included the "relationships of individuals to themselves, have themselves been bewitched by objectification of mind" and individuals define themselves "now only as things, statistical elements, successes or failures" (p. 21). Identity becomes abstract.

In this work, a variety of examples are provided to demonstrate how the enjoyment of art as a form of pleasure shifted to manual, enforced work through domination and oppression. A tale is provided from Homer concerning how Odysseus sailed past the Sirens. This is critical to understanding the crux of this body of work. In the story of the Sirens, Odysseus instructs his rowers to plug their ears. The Sirens represent song deemed as pleasure, art and culture are also viewed as pleasure. The rowers ignore the pleasure of the hypnotic songs and continue rowing. As Horkheimer and Adorno state, "workers must look ahead with alert concentration and ignore

anything which lies to one side” (p. 26). Odysseus, the landowner, ties himself to the mast with the intention of enjoying the song, in other words, experiencing pleasure. The act of tying the landowner to the mast represents a fallacy; the fallacy of one losing all rational thought to enjoy pleasure. The landowner already partook in being chained or tied to the capitalist system. No person could escape obedience and labour, including the landowner, as Horkheimer and Adorno state, “he cannot step outside his social role” (p. 27). The rowers in this story, represent the workers, who are the oppressed members of a capitalist society. Horkheimer and Adorno discuss blindness as a power to deceive the masses. This shift induces blindness, in other words, a compulsively controlled collectivity, as Horkheimer and Adorno claim, “it is the concrete conditions of work in society which enforces conformism” (p. 29). Including this account of Odyssey with the Sirens is an example of how pleasure threatens the patriarchal order, a pleasurable act gives people back time. Horkheimer and Adorno’s analysis of the *Enlightenment* period, through science and logic, reveals the inversely cemented hierarchical social order, not liberation and choice.

Conformity is a process to prepare students to produce socially acceptable behaviours and to learn the practices and procedures of the dominant class. School systems continue to influence and shape commodity relationships for students to become workers in a capitalist economy. While the period of the Enlightenment meant the end of myth and superstition, the greatest myth, perpetuated even today, continues to be freedom. Docile, obedient workers continue to be created through participation in the public-school systems. Debord, Gramsci, and Horkheimer and Adorno declare conformity as an approach to domination and oppression. School experience becomes naturalized and normalized. School systems perpetuate certain ideologies to correspond to the

domination mode of production: commodity relations. Power is the principle in all commodity relationships, including the school systems.

Totality and Totalization

Schools are an important system and structure to modern political organizations, states, and nations. The school culture develops from ideologies and practices advanced and engineered by the dominant ruling class. Totality and totalization are two forces utilized to develop a collective, capitalist worldview to support the capitalist-driven economy. In Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre distinguishes between these two concepts of totality and totalization by defining totality "as a being which, while radically distinct from the sum of its parts, is present in its entirety, in one form or another" (p. 45). Sartre further explains human objects are "products." Sartre refers to these products as "practico-inert" (p. 46). Students, as products, are developed to be part of a capitalist society. Sartre explains that while totalization "has the same statute as the totality...it continues that synthetic labour which makes each part as expression of the whole and which relates the whole to itself through the mediation of its parts" (p. 46). In simpler language, totality is the overall product, totalization is the process in a capitalist economy. Sartre further describes totalization as "a particular way of living (conditioned by the developing totalization), in interiority and as reciprocity with the social" (p. 256). As members of this society, we assume labour in the building of commodity relations. We are one society living in isolation to support such a society.

Another central concept Sartre explores is "series: the queue." Sartre provides the example of someone standing at the bus stop waiting in line to board the bus to describe a capitalist society. Sartre describes this process as "the relation of isolation, or reciprocity and unification (and massifications) from outside" (p. 256). Individuals are standing in isolation, he coins the phrase,

“a plurality of isolations” to reinforce this concept (p. 256). Cities become alienated communities. There is individual integration into separate groups. There is no sense of interconnectedness or a community level of engagement. Sartre connects this example to material objects and the “generality conditioning” that occurs to create social order (p. 260). He describes waiting for the bus as a series of the “homogeneous medium of repetition” (p. 261). Object-relations govern relations, in other words, totality, to produce totalization. Sartre’s example of waiting in the line at the bus stop asserts “the series constitutes itself on the basis of the unity-object, and conversely, it is in the series milieu and through serial behaviour that the individual achieves practical and theoretical participation in common being” (p. 266). Totalisation is achieved.

Sartre defines a series as “a mode of being for individuals both in relation to one another and in relation to their common being and this mode of being transforms all their structures” (p. 266). Sartre also explores the concept of serial unities, a part of the totalization process, “it reveals itself in so far as men’s relations are governed by object-relations” (p. 246). Sartre describes this process as the “lateral totalization of seriality” (p. 275). Isolation is an organic, suffered, lived, mode of behaviour as a social statue. The exteriority of groups conditions the exteriority of isolating individuals as the reciprocity in a society which creates masses. This serial praxis lends to totalization.

Sartre’s series theory parallels the practices and process of the Indian Residential School system. Upon enrollment into an Indian residential school, all students received a number. This number replaced their name. It also replaced their family, their community, their identity, and part of their story. it became a formalized a form of recognition. The daily practices and processes perpetuated conformity to achieve totalization. Students in Indian residential school systems became a “plurality of isolations” to be assimilated into dominant mainstream society. Brothers

and sisters remained separated through their entire Indian residential school experiences. Students became products designed to be labour to reproduce the conditions of reproduction. This is also true of the day school though in more subtle ways.

Debord's spectacle model parallels the series model outlined by Sartre. A commodity relationship is naturalized and normalized which promotes a spectacle society. Debord asserts "development is everything" (p. 5) and describes "the social relations between people that is mediated by images" (p. 2). The commodification of objects and the relations between the objects and individuals create the capitalist economy. He asserts the "product of the social division of labor" (p. 8) and "the specialization of *power*" (p. 7) as the pillars of creating such a society. Debord, again, like Sartre, states "the true is a moment of the false" (p. 4) which is clearly conveyed in the story of Odysseus and the Sirens. Debord eloquently describes the philosophical approach as "the spectacle does not realize philosophy, it philosophizes reality" (p. 6). He describes the spectacle "as the material reconstruction of religious illusion" (p. 6). The spectacle theory signifies totalitarianism. "The reigning system is a *vicious circle of isolation*. Its technologies are based on isolation, and they contribute to that same isolation" (p. 10). Debord's spectacle logic examines this form of social construction as intrinsic to the dominant mode of production.

In Debord's second chapter, *The Commodity as Spectacle*, he describes how commodity and the accumulation of capital are components of totalization. He asserts, "this constant expansion of economic power in the form of commodities transformed human labor itself into a commodity, into *wage labor*" (p. 15). This process, as stated by Debord, "was exerted in a covert manner" and "was *colonizing* all social life" (p. 16), is totalizing. Society loses the sense of community. Debord asserts "the world we see is the world of the commodity" (p. 14). Domination stems from a society

built on commodity, or as Debord states spectacles, a socially specific form of relationality to produce or entrench hierarchy.

Schools are totalizing institutions; they prepare students for the workforce and a life of commodified material and relations. Both Sartre and Debord examine how the totalization process creates and maintains commodity relationships. Relations are governed by objects and/or images. Schools promote citizenship education and prepare students with the knowledge and skills for the workforce through ideologies and routines. The role of the teacher in the classroom is to monitor mastery of outcomes designed in preparation for a capitalist economy. Schools engineer ideologies and commodity exchange through spectacles and seriality. These techniques of a power, deployed across a settler, colonial boundary suppress conventional Indigenous social organizations in Indigenous communities.

Discipline and Punishment

Schools became normalized as a facility that houses bodies of knowledge. Educational institutions employ judgement to produce docile students through standardized education. A principle in teaching that still exists today is the coercive methods of teaching. Punishment is used to control and transform behavior. In *Discipline & Punish* by Foucault, he examines and evaluates the history and development of the prison system and the rise of the school system as a disciplinary technology, analogous to the prison system. Foucault explores how punishment is a complex social function which “this control and transformation of behavior were accompanied – both as a condition and as a consequence – by the development of a knowledge of the individuals” (p. 125). Punishment is a method for “forming obedient individuals” (p. 129). Foucault identifies three technologies of power used in punishment: firstly, “in monarchical law, punishment is a ceremonial of sovereignty,” secondly, “for requalifying individuals as subjects, as juridical

subjects” and thirdly, “a technique for the coercion of individuals” (pp. 130-131). Through the rationale of sovereign rule, subjugation, and coercion, these three elements give impetus for the current educational model. School systems took charge of the individual’s reality, including their time.

The school system resembles the prison system through time, mandatory attendance, and instruction. Foucault provides a historical overview of the school system in relation to time, “the development, in the classical period, of a new technique for taking charge of the time of individuals existences; for regulating the relations of time, bodies and forces” (p. 157). School participation and mandatory attendance continue to be a naturalized process. It is important to understand this development to understand how schools are a vehicle for the capitalist economy. The dominant class reorganized the school system. By measuring time, more profit could be realized. Pedagogical practices and training time shifted. Students became organized around various stages of learning. Foucault describes this movement as “the ‘seriation’ of successive activities makes possible a whole investment of duration by power ...” (p. 160). Schools became machines for learning (p. 165) and Foucault compares the school system a model “for the individual and collective coercion of bodies” (p. 168). The dominant, settler colonial culture of a school system prepares students to become workers.

School systems developed ranking and grading systems. Foucault also analyzes how judgement, an approach used in school systems, is normalized. He describes ranks and grades, punishments, and rewards as “subtle procedures” to normalize judgement (pp. 180-181). Subordination and docility are two major approaches of normalizing judgment. Foucault describes the process of standardized education and how the normalization of judgement in institutions are instruments of power and impose homogeneity, produce a homogenous social body, and is a result

of measurement (p. 184). Foucault also pinpoints the development of the examination and how it is a repeated ritual of power, “as effect and object of knowledge” (p. 192). The progression of individualization becomes clearer through Foucault’s interpretations on judgement. As Foucault ends this chapter, he encapsulates this chapter on normalizing judgement with the phrase “power produces reality” (p. 194). Educational institutions produce our reality.

Panopticism is a concept Foucault delves into based on Bentham’s architectural figure, *Panopticon* to be established during a plague. The panopticon structural design allowed a prisoner guard full surveillance to every prisoner, at any given time. Prisoners would not be able to see any other prisoner. Foucault describes this figure with a central tower, peripheric building with cages designed as “perfectly individualized, constantly visible” for constant surveillance (p. 200). This architectural figure is designed to guarantee order, as Foucault describes it as a “compact model of the disciplinary mechanism” (p. 200). The major effect of the Panopticon is “permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (p. 201). It is also designed for individualization. The Panopticon as an object becomes a source of information, guarantees order, and separates individuals. Foucault cites Bentham’s rationale in the design of the Panopticon that power should be “visible and unverifiable,” “automates and disindividualizes power,” and “produces homogenous effects of power” (pp. 201-202). Foucault determines the Panopticon, while designed for a plague, “it is a diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning” (p. 205) and associates this model to institutions of power, including educational institutions.

Foucault draws parallels to institutions, religious schools and state administrative structures, and the Panopticon. These institutional bodies each apply disciplinary mechanisms to increase the exercise of power. Discipline can be viewed as a type of power of surveillance like

the Panopticon (p. 215). With increased docility by its society members, there is an increase in utility and an increase in production. According to Foucault, mechanisms of power “are integrated into the productive efficiency of the apparatus from within, into the growth of this efficiency and into the use of what it produces” (p. 219). Discipline establishes conformity and docility. Indian residential schools notoriously used punishment to end Indigenous language, which includes worldview and thought, and establishes the principle that punishment is a ‘normal’ social form.

Discipline became the solution for the capitalist economy. As disciplinary power is increasingly exercised, it contributes to a capitalist economy. Like Horkheimer and Adorno’s thesis on the Enlightenment period, Foucault provides a historical overview of the development of the disciplines. Through discipline, there existed a guarantee of forces and bodies. While the Enlightenment period formed specific bodies of knowledge, sovereignty could not be realized because of the power of the relations that existed. Individuals became hierarchized. Through institutions, including factories, schools, hospital, the power of relations grew from normalizing judgement. Discipline and punishment became exploited in the Indian residential school system. Foucault’s theories on prison and discipline resonates with the repression of Indigenous knowledge and practices in the school systems founded in colonial Canada today. According to Foucault, school systems regulate the relations of time, bodies, and forces. School systems take charge of an individual’s existence. Time is the measurement of discipline and control. Time is power.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter focuses on two important concepts: ideology and apparatuses in educational institutions and the commodification of education. First, it explores the themes of state apparatuses, ideology, and interpellation. It then shifts to the commodification of education developed through conformity, totality, and totalization, and finally, discipline and punishment.

The colonization of Canada and the advancement of the current capitalist mode of production in Canada necessitated access to land. Land possession occurred through violence and repression mechanisms.

The school system, including the Indian residential school system, the day school, and contemporary school systems perpetuate dominant Western narratives and practices to marginalize Indigenous people. Compulsory education produced Indigenous erasure. Indigenous ways of knowing, epistemology, became obliterated through assimilative policies, curricula, and educational practices. Western educational practices, including the spatial and temporal logics, are designed to create docile, obedient bodies to serve a capitalist nation. Through this research study, developing a land-based model within a school system serves to counter naturalized hierarchies that reflect colonialism.

Althusser's analysis and examination of the reproduction of the means, conditions, and relations of production through state apparatuses and ideology reflects the state apparatuses, ideology, and interpellation demonstrates how educational systems are structured. Government policy and legislation and the establishment of Indian residential schools supported a capitalist system. The ruling class, the governments, and churches, interpellated Indigenous students as subjects by reproducing the means of production through labour power in this school system. Althusser's essay describes how social formation origins relate to state apparatuses, ideology, and interpellation. The Indian residential school system used domination and exploitation to subjugate subjects through ideology.

School systems develop commodity relationships for students to become docile, obedient workers. This chapter focuses on the themes in the commodification of education which focuses on conformity, totality and totalization, discipline and punish. The Western education model

employed across the nation reflects Eurocentric ideologies, philosophies, and structures. Social order, including hierarchy, is produced through school systems. These systems produce commodity relations designed for capitalism. Power, coercion, and historical understanding of capitalism are included to better understand the naturalization and normalization processes undertaken by the dominant ruling class. Totality and totalization achieve homogenous masses through commodified relations centering on isolating and subjugation of society at large. Discipline and punishment are also part of coercion techniques to produce submission to the ruling class. The current educational model desperately needs dramatic reform.

Critical theory examines dominant, settler-colonial culture. Power relations are also studied. This chapter focuses on the themes of colonization, focusing on the Canadian context, examining the educational shifts in the form of education practiced Indigenous communities. From the Indian residential school system to contemporary on-reserve school systems, settler-colonialism ideologies and practices are continuing to be perpetuated. Settler colonialism's use of power and domination over Indigenous people actively damaged and destroyed Indigenous communities. Knowledge and knowledge production are steeped in Western ideologies and philosophies.

European colonial rule, governed by a capitalist economy, shaped social structures, and systems. Relations are governed by images, representations, and literature. Critical theorists examined and challenged Eurocentrism's ideologies, practices, and systems. Heller & Kulchyski's (2025) *Mode of Production* examine spatial and temporal logics of different societies: capitalist, tributary, and bush mode. They describe the spatial and temporal logics of a capitalist mode of production which are "the ongoing process of reshaping social life to meet the changing requirements of capital" (p. 99) which are reflected in school systems. The following chapter discusses settler-colonialism, literary imperialism and Indigenous scholarly work to counter

hegemonic ideological production by decolonizing education and examining and transforming educational policies, practices, and institutions.

Chapter Three: Interrupting the Colonial Narrative

Learning is a lifelong praxis for me. When I reflect on my koko's (grandmother) Indian residential school experience, the loss of culture, identity, language, teachings, and worldview is still affecting her family. My grandmother's Indian status was revoked after marriage to my choom. My mother, fortunately (or unfortunately, depending on one's perspective) did not spend much time, if any, in any formal educational institution. My father's formal school-based education ended in grade three, and they enjoyed and exercised land-based practices throughout their entire lives. My siblings and I attended public school. Our nights, weekends, and summer breaks were in the bush. Our parents ensured we lived in bush culture which shaped our identity, perspective, and worldview. Growing up, I hold two significant memories of learning about Canadian nation-building. As an elementary school student, I remember the first time I learned about Louis Riel. The school textbook labelled him a "traitor" and a "rebel." While Riel spoke passionately about Metis rights and opposed the Canadian government, as students, we had to draft an essay on which label best defined Louis Riel. The second memory reflects my lack of understanding of my father's friend. Occasionally my father and my dad's friend, a former chief of the neighboring community, would gather and socialize. As the night wore on, my dad's friend's voice would rise and we would often hear him stating, "Do you hear me Canada?" I would wonder why he would ask this question so often in his talks with my father. As I have learned and reflected on these memories, I see how my perspective could have been negatively shaped around a prominent political leader through a school textbook and have since gained an understanding of my father's friend's rage with the Canadian government.

Introduction

The colonial narrative is steeped in Eurocentric knowledge and worldview. The universality of Eurocentric thought developed through ideology, state apparatuses, interpellation, and coercive measures as discussed in the previous chapter. There is a movement to counter hegemonic ideological production by decolonizing education and examining and transforming educational policies, practices, and institutions.

First this chapter presents concepts of *consciousness*, *decolonization*, *diffusionism*, and *otherness*. These four principles extend the understanding and structure of colonialism, including

its pervasiveness in school systems. Subjugation through colonialism is studied in Fanon's work. Memmi describes the processes and practices of both the colonized and the colonizer. The concept of orientalism is vastly explored in Said's work and parallels the phenomena of the Other and Otherness around the globe. The movement of Eurocentrism, diffusionism, centers Blaut's work. These four concepts are imperative to understanding and countering settler-colonialism.

Next, Indigenous scholars including Battiste, Coulthard, Kovach and Smith's work is introduced and intersect colonization and education. This section conveys how Battiste, Coulthard, Kovach, and Smith's research validates Althusser's underpinning principles of social formation, more specifically, the reproductions of the relations of production through the Indian residential school system, as discussed in detail in the previous chapter. Colonialism and colonial infrastructures advanced settler-migration through two economic movements: the reservation system and the Indian residential school system. Indigenous communities became relocated to reservations, controlled and managed by the *Indian Act*. The knowledge, skills, and values of the Indian residential school model centered on homogenization to reflect mainstream society. While the Indian residential school model implied 'education', it perpetuated colonialism to support capitalism. It also separated children from the land. This research study works to interrupt the colonial narrative with the development of a land-based model within a school system, which is the crux of this study.

This chapter shifts into the works of Indigenous scholars challenging literary imperialism. Deloria, LaRocque, Johnston, Maracle, Brant, Vizenor, Acoose, and Monture-Angus's work are presented. Deloria addresses the common myths about Indigenous people and refutes anthropologists' work in community and literature. LaRocque demonstrates how Canadian school systems use history books and other texts to marginalize and misrepresent Indigenous people.

Johnston's work carries Ojibway culture, thought, and worldview to center the ideological foundations of Ojibway people. Maracle explores issues of colonialism, racism, and sexism in her work, perpetuating settler ideology, and patriarchy. In Brant's essay, she looks at racism and religion in settler-colonial relations with Indigenous peoples and the imbalance of power from a woman's perspective. Vizenor's use of manifest manners describes the way colonial relations subjugate and misrepresent Indigenous people. Ideology and literature are central instruments for colonialism in Acoose's work. Finally, Monture-Angus explores the education and legal systems that uphold colonial thought. These scholars address challenges and counter literary imperialism.

This dissertation also reviews early Indigenous political activists and scholars Cardinal, Manuel & Posluns, and Adams. They respond to Canadian political movements and advocate and examine Indigenous peoples' realities. Cardinal's work attacks Canada's subjugation tactics on Indigenous people through government policies and legislation. Canadian government legislation shifts from protective to restrictive for Indigenous people in Canada, according to Manuel & Posluns. Like Cardinal, they advocate for self-determination and autonomy in governance. Adams challenges and explores the naturalization and normalization of colonial structures and ideologies in Canadian nation-building.

It will also explore Gramsci's creative school model and the philosophy and rationale in building creative schools while Spivak's discourse on *aesthetic education* calls for not only epistemological changes, but epistemic change as well. The movement toward educational initiatives grounded in Indigenous philosophies and perspectives is addressed. It also explores the cultural, historical, political, and social issues about understanding the need for transforming educational and research studies to reflect Indigenous knowledge and praxis for solutions to transforming educational contexts with a focus on the form of education.

Settler-Colonial Studies

Imperial colonialism, the dominant ruling class, imposed categories for race and identity to create a class system. Theories, practices, and critiques regarding colonialism, postcolonialism, and racism are examined through critical theorists. Fanon, Memmi, Blaut, and Said critique imperialism and colonialism. Each of these scholars highlights approaches, concepts, methods, and tactics used in settler-colonial contexts to advance imperial colonialism. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the reproduction of the conditions of production shaped our subjectivity, our homogeneity, and our docility. These elements are needed to advance colonialism.

Fanon explores how capitalist societies create submissive and inhibitive subjects through violence methodology in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*. Dominant ideologies to support colonialism are indoctrinated into colonized subjects. Countering colonialism includes the raising of awareness, and *consciousness*, to alter the conditions of the colonized. Fanon emphasizes that liberation requires objectives with a well-defined methodology and timetable (p.86) to decolonize. “We must innovate, we must be pioneers.” Fanon emphasizes the term of *decolonization* to challenge existing systems and structures.

Colonization, the colonizer, and the colonized are thoroughly analyzed in Memmi's work. Memmi's thorough description of the colonizer and the colonized reveals ambitions, behaviours, and thought processes. Memmi asserts, “To subdue and exploit, the colonizer pushed the colonized out of the historical, social, cultural and technical current” (p.114). Memmi reiterates Fanon's principles of colonization. In both Fanon and Memmi's work, they highlight the naturalization process of the colonized subject: deficient and submissive. Again, like Fanon, he identifies *consciousness* as a critical key to opposing the colonial context. Memmi identifies autonomy, new order, and refusal as solutions to colonialism.

The process of extending Eurocentrism across the globe is regarded as *diffusionism*. This theory is examined by Blaut (1993) in *The Colonizer's Model of the World; Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History*. According to Blaut, imperial global expansion is not uniquely a European event. Blaut's analysis of the superiority of Europe, eurocentrism, is a myth. Blaut refutes preceding scholarly literature on the superiority of Europe. Blaut challenges the notion "that our world-scale models, and many of our specific theories and factual truisms, are accepted mainly—and in some cases only—because of their conformity to the values of the European elite" (p.39). Disease and military technology are two elements related to the success of European geographical diffusionism, not cultural uniformitarianism upheld by Blaut. Blaut's work is significant because it counters the universality of Eurocentric thought and knowledge.

Said confronted the legacies of colonialism and racism in his paramount book *Orientalism*, critically examining the East-West dichotomy. Said highlights the West as this "social system of authority" that believes "they are to any view that divides the world into large general divisions, entities that coexist in a state of tension produced by what is believed to be radical difference" (p. 45). This dominant framework exists as normative attributes for Europe, the West, and "us" while nonnormative attributes are given for the Orient, East, and "them." Quite simply, the west represents strength, and the east represents weakness. A parallelism exists between the East and Indigenous peoples of Canada from a Western perspective. He explores how the concept of the *other*, including Indigenous peoples falls under this narrow, limiting category as subjects under settler-colonial rule.

There exists an extensive body of literature on settler colonial studies. Scholars including Fanon, Memmi, Blaut and Said shattered the notion that Eurocentric thought and literature are universal knowledge sources. This scholarly work contributes to the enlightenment of the power

of relations produced and maintained in colonial relations. They each highlight how settler colonialism becomes, over time, a normalized and naturalized constitutive hierarchy.

Althusser and Indigenous Position

Indigenous scholars have given considerable examination to the concept of subject in the settler-colonial context to uphold the reproduction of the relations of production (Battiste, 2013; Coulthard, 2014; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012). Althusser's essay holds great relevance for Indigenous people in the Canadian colonial context. This section presents the views and theories of Battiste, Coulthard, Kovach, and Smith on education and colonization. It is organized around Althusser's main postulations in his essay: apparatuses and ideology.

Althusser identifies the two apparatuses, repressive and ideological, which are necessary for domination and exploitation, discussed in-depth in the previous chapter. Battiste discusses colonization and class system as "the idea of absorption into the Canadian fabric was integration, although this was not equal participation, just equal to one's status at the bottom of the class system" (p. 54). Battiste provides a historical perspective to say, "From 1867 to 1945, the Government of Canada continued to root its policies in forced assimilation and relied on missionaries such as the Roman Catholic Oblates and the Anglican church to 'raise Indians to the level of whites'" (p. 53). Coulthard (2014) states the Canadian government's state power contained a "...set of hierarchical social relations that continue to facilitate the *dispossession* peoples of their lands and self-determining authority" (p. 7). Under the *Indian Act*, the government authorized different church authorities to operate residential schools. Kovach describes the reproduction of the relations of production "formalized through legislation such as the *Indian Act* and subsequent policy" (p. 158). She also asserts the policy and program of education "for status Indians flow

from the Indian Act” (pp. 158-159). Kovach further explains the reproduction of colonial relations in the following:

“From an Indigenous perspective, the reproduction of colonial relationships persists inside institutional centres. It manifests itself in a variety of ways, most noticeably through Western-based policies and practices that govern research, and less explicitly through the cultural capital necessary to survive there.” (p. 28).

Linda Smith’s (2012) book *Decolonizing Methodologies* explores how imperialism is embedded into research methodologies in academic research, especially in Indigenous studies. Smith addresses the reproduction of the conditions of production through imperialism by highlighting “...there was European control, which necessarily meant securing and subjugating the Indigenous populations” (p. 22). Smith describes this process “to obliterate collective identities and memories and to impose a new order” (p. 72).

Ideology, according to Althusser’s analysis, develops through the practices and the rituals of an individual’s actions. Religious staff in Indian residential schools create the conditions to exploit students as subjects to their Christian ideology. As Smith (2012) points out “Native children in Canada were sent to residential schools at an age designed to systematically destroy their language and memories of home” (p. 72). Battiste also describes this subjugation as “missionaries were primarily interested in maintaining Catholic liturgy and rituals” (p. 52). Battiste also asserts and reaffirms St. Denis’s (2007) concept of racialization and how it exemplifies subjection and interpellation when stating “the legislation of the *Indian Act* that shaped the ideas and practices of constructing an Indian...” (p. 135). In Kovach’s discussion on residential schools, she states residential schools “de-emphasized academic training, a transparent policy of maintaining the socioeconomic marginalization of Indigenous peoples” (p. 159). Coulthard supports the view that Indian residential schools “overly uproot and destroy the vitality and autonomy of Indigenous modes of life through institutions such as residential school” (p. 4).

Interpellation, as explained in Althusser's essay, is the ideological *recognition* function. In Althusser's essay, he provides two examples of ideological recognition rituals. As stated previously in this essay, *all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*, a widespread practice identified in the Indian residential school systems. Interpellation leads to social change, especially in subject formation. The interpellation practice became internalized and reproduced within the subjects, students. Students' identities became replaced with "numbers." There exists a wide range of literature that discusses and highlights racist, oppressive, violent practices which transpired in the Indian residential schools. These Indigenous scholars, among many others, are working to counter racist educational policies, practices, and institutions.

Challenging Literary Imperialism

Over the last few centuries, literary imperialism has spread around the globe. It is the literature of dominance. Literary imperialism refers to the depiction and analysis of Eurocentric theory and praxis to extend power and influence through colonialism. The school system, including its literature, became key to creating a space for domination and subjugation under the guise of education. Literary imperialism is challenged by scholars. In recent times, activists, politicians, and scholars alike addressed and confronted the misrepresentation of Indigenous people in literature, historical texts, and media. Indigenous scholars, including Deloria, LaRocque, Vizenor, Acoose, Maracle, and Monture-Angus address and challenge the dominant ideologies and misrepresentations of Indigenous people in discourse and literature.

Deloria addresses the common myths about Indigenous people and refutes anthropologists' work in community and literature. LaRocque demonstrates how Canadian school systems use history books and other texts to marginalize and misrepresent Indigenous people. Johnston's work

carries Ojibway culture, thought, and worldview to center the ideological foundations of Ojibway people. Maracle explores issues of colonialism, racism, and sexism in her work, perpetuating settler ideology, and patriarchy. In Brant's essay, she looks at racism and religion in settler-colonial relations with Indigenous peoples and the imbalance of power from a woman's perspective. Vizenor's use of *manifest manners* describes the way colonial relations subjugate and misrepresent Indigenous people. Ideology and literature are central instruments for colonialism in Acoose's work. Finally, Monture-Angus explores the education and legal systems that uphold colonial thought. These scholars address, challenge, and counter literary imperialism within their own research literature.

Anthropology as a discipline and field of study is part of the colonial project. According to Deloria (1969), paternalism dominates settler-Indian relations and scholarly work. In *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, Deloria discusses common myths about Native Americans, a significant section is dedicated to anthropologists, addressing literary imperialism and the internalization of those common myths by Indian people. Deloria scathingly criticizes anthropologists' work both in Indigenous communities and literature. He acknowledges anthropologists' theories as "authority" in the scholarly community on Indian people and "many ideas that pass for Indian thinking are in reality theories originally advanced by anthropologists and echoed by Indian people" (p. 82). Deloria addresses the colonial narrative and states, "White has been abstracted into a magical nebulous mythology that dominates all inhabitants of our country in their attitudes toward one another. We are, consequently, all prisoners of that mythology so far as we rebel against it" (p. 189). Literary imperialism and anthropologists' continuous perpetuation of common myths created detrimental effects not only for Indigenous communities but also for those who choose not to rebel against this mythology.

Colonialism includes educational institutions intended to advance literary imperialism, including the public-school systems. Literary imperialism succeeded in the public-school systems using material that perpetuates stereotypes about Indigenous peoples. In LaRocque's work (1975), *Defeathering the Indian*, she poignantly states "It was the Indian of the white man's imagination rather than the Indian of historical fact who finally became dominant in English-American literature" (p. 32). LaRocque blasts historians and history books for maintaining and perpetuating Eurocentric thought on civilization filtered into every classroom in North America. LaRocque ascertains that the public-school system is a substantial component of the hegemonic colonial project.

Deconstruction of literary imperialism by LaRocque (2010) transpires throughout her work, *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*. LaRocque critiques historical and literary texts that negate and distort Indigenous history and humanity. The civ/sav dichotomy is examined and how this dichotomous thinking and writing supports colonial thought, by portraying Indians as "wild, nomadic, warlike, uncultivating and uncultivated, aimless, superstitious, disorganized, illiterate, immoral, and technologically backwards" (p. 41). This body of work draws on early Indigenous authors including Cardinal, Adams, Campbell, Culleton, Mercredi, and Ahenakew "to address their dislocation as well as their marginalization" (p.76). LaRocque recommends using literature to humanize Indigenous representation and asserts "...we are moving to take our places in Canadian society as socially and culturally vibrant intellectuals and artists without the colonial burdens of misrepresentation and marginalization" (p. 169). According to LaRocque, the deconstruction of literary imperialism is ongoing.

One of the major aims of Johnston's work is to extend the axiological and epistemological underpinnings to center the ideological foundations of the Ojibway people. It did not exist in such

a written form previously. Writing is an act of resistance and an act of sharing gifts. Basil Johnston's (1976) exceptional work, *Ojibway Heritage*, portrays Ojibway experience and knowledge through examining ceremonies, rituals, songs, dances, prayers, and stories. He describes the creation of the universe and key elements of Ojibway culture including kitche manitou, Nanabush, totems, midewewin, and Ojibway cosmology. *Inaendaugwut* is central to understanding Johnston's vision of this work. Johnston translates *inaendaugwut* as "he is permitted of himself," in other words, autonomy, or as Johnston makes clear a mode of understanding or interpretation (p. 78). Johnston portrays Ojibway knowledge and autonomy as understood. In the preface, Johnston explains his vision for the book "It is a means of sharing that gift with those whose culture and heritage may be very different, but who wish to enlarge their understanding" (p.7). Johnston's work significantly contributed to understanding the ways of Ojibway culture and worldview. The presentation of the knowledge and resiliency of Ojibway culture is revealed through Johnston's work.

On a personal note, my mother, a fluent Ojibway speaker, would often say to me giin aniish. This approach conflicted with school practices. My teachers directed my daily decision-making processes. I became confused between the two stark differences in approaches. I reflect on my mother's approach, which centers on autonomy, reflecting Johnston's explanation of the term inaendaugwut.

Comparable to the quote regarding understanding at the beginning of this paper by Tester & Kulchyski, Maracle (1988), in *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism* affirms "Without a firm understanding of what our history was before settlers came to this land, I cannot understand how we are to regain our birthright as caretakers of this land and continue our history into the future" (p. 40) as a critical examination of settler colonialism. In this work, Maracle explores issues of colonialism, racism, and sexism, providing insight into Indigenous women's

experiences in Canada. A large section of her work focuses on education and ideological approaches. Maracle analyzes schools as “ideological processing plants” (p. 80) founded on settler Canadian culture and history. Maracle provides insight into the experience of Indigenous women in Canada.

Writing As Witness: Essay and Talk (1994) is a collection of essays on the violent history of colonization. Brant addresses and attacks the two pillars of colonialism: racism and religion. She describes racism as being “wrapped in the arms and legs of the institutions of state, church and media” (p. 29). Brant links truth-telling to settler-colonialism’s theft of our story, encapsulated as “*Our history, our way, our story*” (p. 36). Through Brant’s work, sharing Native women’s writing becomes a collective experience. This writing process is described as “good medicine” and “recovery writing,” recovering from the effects of colonization. She describes it as “the noise of dominance recedes and gives over to the music of my ancestors, my history” (p. 122).

In Vizenor’s (1994) work, *Manifest Manners* describes the authorizing of the “notions and misnomers that are read as authentic and sustained as representations of Native American Indians” (p. 6). Anthropologists and romanticizers are criticized for their reductionist approaches to the creation of the “invented savage” or “Indian” by the dominant ruling society. *Survivance* describes the process of survival and resistance by Indigenous people to settler colonialism in North America.

Canadian literature represented Indigenous women from a “white-eurocanadian-christian patriarchy” (wecp) ideology, the central argument in Acoose’s (1995) work *Iskewewak Kah’ Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses Nor Easy Squaws*. Acoose argues that “Canadian literature is an ideological instrument” and “promotes the cultures, philosophies, values, religion, politics, economics, and social organization of the white, European, Christian,

Canadian patriarchy, while at the same time, it fosters cultural attitudes about Indigenous peoples that are based on unrealistic, derogatory, and stereotypic images” (p. 34). Acoose condemns English-Canadian literature institutions for advancing settler ideology in literature and scholarship. She appreciates and distinguishes the work of Indigenous writers in this work and their ability to “create more knowledgeable and positive images of Indigenous peoples” by writing from a “woman-centered-harmonious way of life” (p. 113), a stark contrast from Canadian literature. Acoose’s work, like other Indigenous scholars, contributes to the foundational theories of Indigenous Studies possessing its disciplinary foundations.

In *Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks* by Monture-Angus (1995), this work addresses the Euro-Canadian perspectives in educational and legal institutions in Canada. She identifies the legal and educational systems as tools of colonialism. Euro-Canadian perspective is taught as rational and reasoned truth. Monture-Angus asserts the “goal is to develop legal and educational institutions which are inclusive as opposed to exclusive and hierarchical” (p. 27). Empowering our voices and experiences is a main argument in this work, “All that we can experience and share is ourselves. We can only experience the world through the prism of self. This is one of the basic differences between the two cultures, First Nations and Canadian, that I have experienced” (p. 45). Contrasted with “the instructions we received through institutionalized education indicate that we must locate truth and knowledge outside of ourselves” (p. 218). Throughout this work, education could be “a path to our freedom rather than a tool of oppression” (p. 96). Monture-Angus asserts collective vision and action are imperative for change.

These scholars advocated and composed literature on literary imperialism and attacked colonial ideologies, practices, and processes. This area of scholarly work continues to grow and counters the colonial narratives that dominates and marginalize Indigenous peoples.

Political Indigenous Scholarship

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Indigenous advocacy work gained momentum in Canada. Indigenous scholars advanced groundbreaking literature work as a response to settler colonialism. A series of events took place that led Indigenous activists and politicians to counter Canadian government rule through literature and activism. Indigenous people answered the 1969 document titled *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy*, known as the White Paper. This policy paper sought to dissolve the Indian Act and treaty entitlement, advancing Indigenous people toward assimilation.

Cardinal's work, *The Unjust Society* (1969), points out the Canadian government makes decisions in isolation from the Indigenous peoples in Canada. Cardinal highlights how the *Indian Act* subjugates Indians to colonial rule (pp. 37-39). Cardinal pinpoints several ways autonomy is non-existent for Indigenous people under colonial, Canadian rule. "It is the Indian leaders, Indian organizations, and the Indian people themselves who have the duty to explore new social and economic alternatives" (p. 78). In response to this, in 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood developed a report, "Indian Control of Indian Education" which advocated Indian control of Indian education (Pushor, 2010, pp. 29-30). The thrust of this transformative educational policy had been encapsulated as:

Unless a child learns about the forces which shape him: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being. Indian culture and values have a unique place in the history of mankind. The Indian child who learns about his heritage will be proud of it. The lessons he learns in school, his whole school experience, should reinforce and contribute to the image he has of himself as an Indian. (p.9)

Manuel & Posluns's (2019) work, *The Fourth World*, highlights how Canadian government legislation shifted from protective to restrictive. The 1966 *Hawthorn Report* entitled, *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and*

Policies, concluded Aboriginal people were the most disadvantaged and marginalized population in Canada. Indigenous nations within colonial-nation states, separate from third-world status occupy the fourth world. Manuel & Posluns examine the economic, political, and social realities of Indigenous people across Canada. Manuel & Posluns endorse the *Hawthorn Report* by asserting, “Real community development can never take place without economic development. But economic development without full local control is only another form of imperial conquest” (p. 151). A parallelism exists between Cardinal and Manuel & Posluns’s work concerning Indigenous-led autonomy.

Adams’s (1989) significant work, *Prison of Grass*, describes the colonial myth as an “organic thought process” highlighting the normalization of the colonization processes and structures. Adams describes racist ideology, as a product of economics (p. 11) and the systemic racism carried out in the colonization of Canada. Throughout Adams’s work, he delineates economic, educational, political, and social phenomena that shaped colonization and dehumanized Indigenous people. Through dominant racist ideologies and white power structure, the colonial mentality thrived. Adams provides a unique perspective on the Riel Rebellions and the Canadian government’s role in facilitating this uprising, this perspective is not seen in other texts. Adams provides an insider’s perspective on colonialism that did not exist previously in historical texts.

Many scholars, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, examine the naturalization and normalization of the beliefs, ideologies, policies, and practices in colonialism structures and systems. Colonialism is rooted in violence and social injustice, Andersen, Swift & Innes (2015) emphasize “colonization is an inherently violent ideology and practice” (p. 300). Borell’s article (2015) *Patriotic Games: Boundaries and Masculinity in New Zealand Sport* draws on Mandolo-Torres’s description of *coloniality* and demonstrates how “coloniality reflects recurring patterns

of power that have become established over time as a result of colonization” (p. 168). Colonialism perpetuates itself. Henderson (2008) draws on Blaut’s concept of *diffusionism* and highlights how “it represents the cognitive forces of European thought about humanity artificially detached from the environment. Europeans and their educational institutions have proclaimed this imaginative component to create a universal civilization” (p. 18). Eurocentrism is perpetuated through power relations between the settler-state and Indigenous peoples.

Transforming Education

School systems implement and employ ideologies, practices, and routines. There exists movement for reform in Canada, especially in recent decades. The structure and organization of school systems continue to resemble deep-rooted elements of the dominant ruling class. Conformity, totality and totalization, and discipline and punishment are fundamental components of this system. Gramsci evaluates the school system, the educational principle, and explores the possibilities in transforming education. Post-colonial theorist and feminist scholar, Gayatri Spivak examines the historical, economical, and political processes of capitalism grounded in education. Both Gramsci and Spivak envision education as a process to development of intellectuals through “creative schools and “aesthetic education.”

Gramsci’s analysis and recommendations for a transformative school system centered on creating intellectuals. Gramsci explores both classical and vocational schools, offering a solution to the educational crisis, “imparting a general, humanistic formative culture” (p. 166) which would provide the balance between intellectual and manual work. Gramsci supported “the transcendence of class divisions” (p. 187) within the education system. He supported creating intellectuals from the working class to transform the capitalist system. Gramsci clearly advocates “the beginning of new relations between intellectual and industrial work, not only in the school but in the whole of

social life” (p. 175). The transformative school system could be the solution to the entire social complex Gramsci addresses in this chapter.

Vocational schools “perpetuate social differences” (p. 186). Gramsci directly points out, “it gives the impression of being democratic in tendency” (p. 186) but Gramsci articulated the “coincidence of the rulers and the ruled” (p. 186) and describes this process as “we are really going back to a division into juridically fixed and crystallised estates” (p. 187) of continued class division. Gramsci states the creative school as the solution and describes it as “learning takes place especially through spontaneous and autonomous effort of the pupil” (p. 175). Gramsci argues that an educational institution should “aim [...] to create the fundamental values of “humanism,” the intellectual self-discipline and the moral independence” (pp. 173-174).

In Indigenous communities, numerous practices and routines reflect the dominant, settler culture. School systems have had detrimental effects on Indigenous communities. Gramsci discusses the significance of a teacher’s competence and role in public life as an educator:

“he must be aware of the contrast between the type of culture and society which he represents and the type of culture and society represented by his pupils, and conscious of his obligation to accelerate and regulate the child’s information in conforming with the former and in conflict with the latter” (p. 180).

Gramsci highlights the humanistic ideal “diffused through society” (p. 182) through the study of Latin and Greek grammar which could be transferred to Indigenous communities. He connects this learning process to “they learnt them [Latin. and Greek] in order to be themselves and know themselves consciously” (p. 182), this statement underpins issues in education, especially in Indigenous communities. Gramsci’s views of the humanism form of education would reflect Indigenous values.

Culture, epistemology, agency, and interruptive praxis are the themes in Spivak’s work in her essays in *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* on the requirement for aesthetic

education. Spivak defines culture as a “package of largely unacknowledged assumptions, loosely held by a loosely outlined group of people, mapping negotiations between the sacred and the profane, and the relationship between the sexes” (p. 120). Spivak discusses the complexities of the cultural differences of the term and the historical and linguistical relationship to the concept. She advocates for learning field languages “through instruction in reading verbal art in these languages and instruction in philosophizing through ethical systems in them” (p. 121). Spivak explains further “cultural continuity, made possible by cultural change, is assured by cultural expectations...” (p. 121). As Spivak situates feminism, first, she defines aesthetic education. Aesthetic education involves “training the imagination for epistemological performance through a rearrangement of desires” (p. 125). This type of education is frustrated by capitalism.

Spivak also parallels this same cultural, historical and linguistical process to understanding the term of feminism. She provides examples of how the term fits into the global landscape and reproductive heteronormativity is understood “as the chief recoding instrument of capitalism” (p. 130). Spivak highlights “freedom of choice” denied and suggests “we strive to build the best social and political infrastructures” (p. 130). Spivak points out “the slow and deep language learning that must accompany accessing cultural infrastructures so that real, long-term change might be envisaged is absent” (p. 131). Spivak speaks to engaging children to “destabilize internalized gender patterns of behaviour” (p. 131). Children can learn to be the same and be different. She advocates for “real change must be epistemic rather than merely epistemological, home, as well as school” (p. 132). Schools are avenues to promote epistemic change, utilizing non-Western knowledge and practices. Spivak credits democratic judgement to occur which is “quite different from justified self-interest against oppression from all sides” (p. 136). The cultural, historical, and linguistical understandings are critical for aesthetic education.

The emerging dominant, the teachers of culture and literature, is growing, according to Spivak. Spivak states the “relationship between knowing and learning is crucial as we move from the space of opposition to the menaced space of the emerging dominant” (p. 140). Spivak suggests unity as the answer to “global contemporaneity” (p. 141) and suggests to “re-think our agency” (p. 141). Spivak indicates unity and agency “all come with the hope of finding justice or welfare within a capitalist society” (p. 142). Spivak pinpoints the “agency of capitalism—re-coded as the rule of law within a democratic heritage” to be intervened (p. 142). Spivak cites and supports Gramsci’s understandings on “the push from democratic capitalism into democratic socialism” (p. 143). Spivak discusses “sublating internal colonization” in the context of African-Americans and First Nations (pp. 146-149) to convey global resistance and how feminism is absent. Spivak also suggests at the graduate level to an interruptive praxis “that may produce interruptions from capitalism within” (p. 152). Transnational literacy is paramount to an interruptive praxis. Spivak’s suggestions could work “to take up the pen in our own hands [...] and uneven globalization” (p. 157) to decolonize schools.

Conclusion

Countering the cultural, historical, political, and social issues of colonial narratives in scholarly work is growing. Historical policies and practices directed towards Indigenous peoples rooted assimilation into mainstream Western culture with the intentions to remove any traces of Indigenous peoples as distinct within Canadian society. Indigenous literature and scholarship affirm and extend Indigenous axiological and epistemological foundations to guide and shape research and understanding of Indigenous peoples and communities. This research focused on specific work and acknowledged other works being done in the academy and in the community. Both are necessary.

This chapter focuses on the themes of colonialism, Eurocentrism, literary imperialism, critical theory, political advocacy, and agency. Critical theory examines dominant, settler-colonial culture. Power relations are also studied. Settler colonialism's use of power and domination over Indigenous people actively damaged and destroyed Indigenous communities. Knowledge and knowledge production are steeped in Western ideologies and philosophies. European colonial rule, governed by a capitalist economy, shaped social structures, and systems. Relations are governed by images, representations, and literature. Literature, or more specifically, imperialist literature portrayed and validated Indigenous people as *Other*. Western literature marginalized and suppressed all aspects of Indigenous life and communities.

Critical theorists examined and challenged Eurocentrism's ideologies, practices, and systems. Activists, politicians, and writers challenged and confronted colonial policies and legislation. This initial work opened the door for scholars to counter colonial relations and rule. Scholarly work and research are avenues to promote epistemic change, employing Indigenous knowledge and praxis. Nickel & Fehr (2015) advocates "engage both in local and global debates and dialogues, in relation to Indigenous communities that are continuously trying to preserve and take back their culture while constantly changing, and individuals seeking ways to express themselves that incorporate both old and new elements and transform them into ways of being Indigenous" (p. 63). It also explores the cultural, historical, political, and social issues to transform educational contexts to reflect Indigenous knowledge and praxis.

Chapter Four: Relational Research

I have always enjoyed learning and I have always been curious about the world around me. I am thankful to those teachers who gave me the space, as a young girl, to explore my interests. This was mainly due to the fact that I completed my school work so quickly. I remember being given a research project, I was probably in grade five or six at the time, I had to ask my parents questions about “the olden days”. I followed my mother around for weeks. She probably felt annoyed at all the questions but answered them fully. My teacher kept my little research report and since then I have always wanted to capture or understand more about our ways of being, doing, and knowing. During my master’s degree, one of the elders during an interview shared how when we gather berries, it is not just to gather, it is to share. I carry those words, it is not to gather, it is to share. This is probably one of the most important teachings I have received in my life. Knowledge acquisition is a form of gathering, to share the knowledge is even more critical.

Introduction

I have been gathering the knowledge, skills, and values that reflect Indigenous praxis and theory my entire life. As I shared in the first chapter, I became immersed in bush culture immediately. My worldview stems from this way of life. As both a classroom teacher and a university researcher, the knowledge gathering process is a significant part of my way of life. I have gathered knowledge through my land-based teachings, through observations, through my stories, and through time with elders and fluent language speakers. My early childhood experiences shaped my perspective and worldview. Those early fundamental learning experiences developed my values of Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing. As I developed the research design for this study, I chose to honour an Indigenous practice: my story, *daani gigkendaan*, my coming to know. The stories contained in the yearlong journal entries in chapter five are my experiences, observations, thoughts, and understandings as I developed a land-based model within a school system.

As a community member and a researcher, I have responsibilities to both domains. Generating knowledge for research is observing, measuring, recording, analyzing, and presenting data in a standard academic research study. Research questions are designed to address the hypothesis of a study. The approach and methodology shape the design of the research study. For centuries, research on Indigenous peoples and communities occurred by non-Indigenous researchers. Universities contribute to the domination and exploitation of Eurocentric beliefs and systems in Indigenous communities. Western practices, processes, and theories measure and validate knowledge.

Research paradigms and methodological possibilities have evolved over the last few decades, especially with research involving Indigenous people and communities. Ethical issues have also arisen with the use of diverse methodological approaches. Common ethical issues in research are confidentiality, respect for individuals, informed consent, and cultural and personal boundaries. A researcher's positionality, methodological framework(s), and research methods are principal elements in the research design.

Colonialism, supported by dominant Eurocentric ideologies, founded the Canadian state. Economic development, through land exploitation, advanced the dispossession and removal of Indigenous bodies and communities across Canada using the doctrine of discovery and *terra nullius* as justification. Exploitative land acquisition coalesced with violent ideology and eventually led to the assimilation and subjugation of Indigenous communities across Canada. Economic exploitation, European settlement, and government legislation reinforced the state's assimilation efforts. Through public infrastructures, ideologies became imposed. Coloniality and diffusionism are discussed to highlight the naturalization and normalization of Eurocentric thought and theory. Imperialism imposed Eurocentric beliefs and values across the globe. Western

knowledge and practices became homogeneous. Research paradigms developed from Western theory. These research paradigms have dominated research studies. Colonial infrastructures advanced economic movement to perpetuate knowledge, skills, and values that homogenize domination and exploitation (Coulthard, 2014; Smith, 2012). Mays, an American scholar, parallels Indigenous and Black peoples' dispossession, drawing on Fanon's words, "Culture under colonial domination is a culture under interrogation whose destruction is sought systematically" (2002, p.8). This chapter advocates for researchers to practice reflexivity, shaped by beliefs and values, to examine one's research lens within scholarly research with Indigenous peoples and communities. Next, it discusses the significance of relationality as an Indigenous practice and research paradigm. Relationship-building is another issue discussed in this section.

Relationality is about coming to know, producing knowledge, and the multilayered relationships that reflect Indigenous cultural, political, and social contexts. It is also grounded in Indigenous philosophy and worldview. Relationality centers on reciprocity and relationships. It is imperative a researcher working with Indigenous peoples and communities to be aware of Indigenous worldviews and their profound connection to relationality. The research literature on relationality is continuing to experience growth. Ethical principles such as reciprocity, relationality, and sharing are elements of developing a positive, supportive relationship for research with Indigenous peoples and communities. In contrast, research studies often use words such as "objectivity," "bias," and "validity" to meet Western standards of research. Methodological and ethical issues may arise in research with Indigenous peoples and communities where a research study does not examine or understand relationality.

This chapter then shifts to issues to work by both Gaudry (2011) and Innes (2009). Gaudry describes extraction methodology, insurgent research, and liberatory praxis. Gaudry developed

four principles of insurgent research grounded in Indigenous resurgence ideology. Innes discusses issues with the insider/outsider debate in research. Indigenous researchers must address the advantages, criticisms, and challenges of insider researchers. For this research study, an observant-participant method is utilized for the journal process. Ethical guidelines are reviewed briefly and this researcher's relationship with the community bears great significance to the study.

Finally, Indigenous research methods are discussed to decolonize research and address methodological and ethical issues associated with Indigenous peoples and communities. Drawing on Indigenous theory, this section examines the role of Elders in Indigenous communities, the land-place connection as part of Indigenous worldviews, and how the story is a knowledge transfer praxis. The role of elders as knowledge keepers or sources of knowledge is reviewed. A brief discussion of the significance of land-place connection and land pedagogy is also reviewed. Orality or storytelling is preserved in Indigenous communities. Storytelling practices transmit knowledge and teachings and promote relationality. These research methods reflect Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing. These research methods are significant to Indigenous peoples and communities and researchers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and reflect Indigenous theory and praxis.

Critical Reflexivity

Reflexivity, shaped by beliefs and values, is the examination of one's research lens. In this study, as mentioned in chapter one, I bring both a bush culture lens and critical theory lens to the research. For this research, the methodological approach is non-hierarchical, non-hegemonic and applies reflexivity and relationality. Research with Indigenous peoples and communities involves critiquing, examining, and understanding the detrimental deep-seated roots of colonialism and oppression. Kovach (2009), Smith (2012), and Wilson (2008) analyze, challenge, and discuss

research over the last several centuries. Kovach asserts, “There is a fundamental epistemological difference between Western and Indigenous thought, and this difference causes philosophical, ideological, and methodological conflicts for Indigenous researchers” (p. 29). Smith (2012) critiques Western research and explains, “Method is important because it is regarded as the way in which knowledge is acquired or discovered and as a way in which we can ‘know’ what is real. Each academic discipline is attached not just to a set of ideas about knowledge, but also methodologies” (p. 166). Smith also demonstrates how imperialism connects to writing theory. Smith asserts, “Indigenous people have been, in many ways, oppressed by theory” (p. 39). Universities are grounded in Western research and protocols, perpetuating colonialism and oppression, Smith describes the challenges and barriers of research:

This domain is dominated by a history, by institutional practices and by paradigms and approaches to research held by communities of like-minded scholars. The spaces within the research domain through which Indigenous research can operate are small spaces on shifting ground. Negotiating and transforming institutional practices and research frameworks is as significant as the carrying out of actual research programmes. (p. 141)

In recent years, there is a movement for Indigenous scholars to “attempt to break into (and possibly disrupt) a dominantly controlled Euro-western paradigm,” (Wilson, 2008, p. 52) in academic research. “The globalization of knowledge and Western culture constantly reaffirms the West’s view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of ‘civilized’ knowledge” (Smith, 2012, p. 66). Nickel & Fehr (2015) echo this same outlook, “Rather than reproducing the dichotomies between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures, and the implicit hegemonic relationship between the “West” and the “inauthentic,” colonized “rest”, “we need to analyze Indigenous societies from their own point of view” (p. 63). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, examines the imperial context “relied for its justification on the sheer presumption of

taking a specific set of European beliefs and values and proclaiming them to be universal values that could be imposed upon the peoples of the world” (2015, p. 49). Analysis of the imperial context contributes to understanding the methodological and ethical issues associated with research with Indigenous peoples and communities.

Many Indigenous scholars and writers critique capitalism. “Our epistemologies, our cultures, represent ways of thinking about the world profoundly different from capitalism. These epistemologies *are* the cultures that everyone is always referring to—they are the ways of knowing...” (Million, 2013, p. 162.). Estes’s (2019) work centers on Indigenous resistance and emphasizes, “Ancestors of Indigenous resistance didn’t merely fight *against* settler colonialism; they fought *for* Indigenous life and just relations with human and nonhuman relatives, and with the earth” (p. 248). Walters and Andersen (2016) discuss social position and how it “continuously shapes how we do, live, and embody research practice” (p. 47). Nickel & Fehr (2015) assert “Any feminism that envisions the self-determination of Indigenous people, then, must counter the multiple and simultaneous systems of oppression that undermine the fullness and complexity of Indigenous identities and experiences” (p. 132). By taking on the role of observant-participant, critical reflexivity is a significant component for this study. The journals in the following chapter convey my experiences, my frustrations, my observations, my thoughts, and my understanding. This research work is an act of resistance to Western education which perpetuates colonialism.

Many scholars around the globe counter the exclusivity of Western knowledge. Wuttunee (2004) argues “Objectivity and rigorous documentation are the main tools for discerning meaning and comprehending with logic accurate and reliable answers to questions about how the world systems work. This approach has permeated the way research is conducted in many disciplines,” (p. 5). One must understand how Western thought shapes knowledge and research with Indigenous

peoples and communities. A researcher's critical reflexivity practices sustain Indigenous theory and praxis in a research study. Through this academic research study, I am sharing my story as an observant-participant while practicing an Indigenous way of doing.

Relationality and Relationship-Building

There is an increase in research studies developed and designed around an Indigenous research paradigm of *relationality*. Scholars have written extensively on relationality. Moreton-Robinson (2016) describes the concept of relationality as “relationality forms the conditions of possibility for coming to know and producing knowledge through research in a given time, place, and land” (p. 71). Wilson (2001) describes relationality as:

It is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos; it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge ... [hence] you are answerable to all your relations when you are doing research (p. 177).

Johnston's (1976) early work on Ojibway culture and heritage supports Wilson's description of relationality. Johnston describes the interactions between Nanabush and his father during a pipe-smoking ceremony. Nanabush's father, Epingishmook explains, “The Anishinabeg are to remember as they smoke their special relationship to and dependence upon the sun, earth, moon, and stars. Like the animal beings they depend ultimately upon the earth and moon,” (p. 21). Acoose (1995) draws on King's work in *All My Relations* to explain relationality “...reminds us about who we are, not only within ourselves but in connection to our family, relatives, all human beings, the animals, plants, animate and inanimate forms...” (pp. 59-60). Battiste & Henderson (2000) reiterate this concept of relationality by stating, “...relationships between the people, their ecosystems, and the other living beings and spirits that share their lands. These multilayered

relationships are the basis for maintaining social, economic and diplomatic relations—through sharing—with other people” (p. 42). Land is foundational to Indigenous knowledge and practices.

Relationality is foundational to Indigenous theory and praxis. Relationality as a research approach is growing in scholarly research studies. Historically, scholarly contributions analyzing and understanding relationality have experienced colossal growth. Lightfoot (2016) describes an *indigenist* approach to research and states the three elements of this approach as “reciprocal and respectful relationships”, “trustworthiness and integrity” and “accountable to the Indigenous communities being researched and engage in ‘culturally responsive research practices’” (p. 73). Innes (2013) highlights kinship and alliances in his work and emphasizes “Studies by historians and anthropologists, however, have not emphasized these interconnected relationships” (p. 43). Relationality centers on Indigenous peoples’ and communities’ ancestral, cultural, social, and traditional foundations. Asch, Borrows & Tully (2018) describe relationality as “the principles of interconnectedness inherent in many Indigenous legal and political orders” (p. 176). Moreton-Robinson (2021) advances the concept of relationality by explaining, “In Indigenous cultural domains, relationality means that one experiences the self as part of others and that others are part of the self; this is learnt through reciprocity, obligation, shared experiences, coexistence, cooperation and social memory” (p. 16). Relationality is the basis of all relationships from an Indigenous perspective.

Indigenous scholars Kovach, Simpson, Smith, and Wilson explore this concept in-depth. Smith’s (2012) work critiques Western research and highlights common struggles Indigenous researchers face. “Many Indigenous researchers have struggled individually to engage with the disconnections that are apparent between the demands of research, on one side, and the realities they encounter amongst their own and other Indigenous communities, with whom they share

lifelong relationships, on the other side” (Smith, 2012, p. 5). In Smith’s (2011) article *Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism* she asserts “positioning Native peoples as producers of theory and not simply as objects of analysis” (p. 45).

Wilson advises “We can get past having to justify ourselves as Indigenous to the dominant society and academia. We can develop our own criteria for judging usefulness, validity or worth of Indigenous research or writing. We can decide for ourselves what research we want and how that research will be conducted, analyzed and presented (2008, p.14).” In research with Indigenous peoples and communities, relationality is a significant research approach paradigm to apply in a research study to gather and understand Indigenous ways of knowing.

Relationships are central in Indigenous communities. Relationships are built on reciprocity, respect, and trust. Building positive, long-term relationships between the researcher and participant(s) is fundamental for a researcher. Relationships are an important way of knowing and understanding the broader context of the cosmos, land, and the interconnectedness of life for Indigenous people. Hart’s article (2010) *Indigenous Worldviews, Knowledge, and Research: The Development of an Indigenous Research Paradigm* discusses Indigenous knowledge and worldview and emphasizes that “...we as researchers need to thoroughly review our processes so that they can at least be consistent with our worldview” (p. 11). Methodology stems from a worldview. Miller’s (2010) work, *Ogimaag: Anishinabe Leadership 1760-1845*, examines Ojibwe leadership practices. Miller describes the Ojibwe worldview as:

“...the importance of reciprocal social relationships that extended the notion of kin far beyond biological relatives, the needs for gifts or blessings from manidoog beings outside oneself, the permeable line between animals and manidoog, the moral obligation of those with power to assist others, and the close relationship between Anishinaabeg and the natural world around them, which provided more than simple subsistence” (p. 29).

Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing are founded in knowledge, philosophy, teachings, and worldviews. It is important for researchers working with Indigenous peoples and communities to acknowledge and understand the significance of Indigenous worldviews. Wuttunee (2004) declares that Western worldviews are “heavily influenced by the Western science approach” (p. 4). Relationality and relationships are momentous to this research study. With my dual role, including being an observant-participant researcher, relationality is practiced with the cosmos, the land, the relatives, and the waters. These observant-participant journals contain this researcher’s experiences, observations, and thoughts on the development of the land-based model within a school system. One of the significant aspects of this research study is the extensive relationships developed among the researcher, the school body, and the broader community including elders, leaders, and parents over two decades.

Contemporary Indigenous Scholarly Work

Western research, in the production of knowledge, is a tool for colonialism. There is a movement to counter-hegemonic knowledge production by decolonizing education and research and examining and transforming educational policies, practices, and institutions. Contemporary Indigenous scholars advocate and validate Indigenous theory and praxis as forms of research methodologies and paradigms. Scholars draw on Indigenous knowledge and methods practiced and significant to Indigenous communities. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts* (2009) and *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2012) are the two most distinguished works in the study of Indigenous methodologies and are used in universities around the globe. Settler colonialism excluded Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous research methodology and methods. In recent years, Indigenous researchers have expressed their worldview using Indigenous research theories and methodologies. Indigenous

knowledge systems are legitimate ways of knowing. These prominent scholars, among many others, work resolutely to counter racist educational policies, practices, and institutions. In the last few decades, a surge of Indigenous scholars addressed, advocated, and answered the challenges and issues of our colonial realities.

Resurgence, according to Simpson in *Dancing on our Turtle's Back* (2011), “means significantly re-investing in our own ways of beings; regenerating our political and intellectual traditions; articulating and living out our legal systems; language learning; ceremonial and spiritual pursuits; creating and using our artistic and performance-based traditions (pp. 17-18). Simpson describes the cultural and political resurgence to support Nishnaabeg theory, “I am not so concerned with how we dismantle the master’s house, that is, which set of theories we used to critique colonialism; but I am concerned with how we (re)build our own house, or our own houses” (p. 32). Simpson affirms Nishnaabeg’s *Original Instructions* in the regeneration and resurgence of culture, governance, and language (p. 66). She describes the Nishnaabeg lifeway as being cyclical, fluid, and rhythmical. This lifeway disrupts the capitalist industrial complex (p. 87). Simpson reaffirms Monture’s ideas about autonomy and sovereignty “begins at home” (p. 144). Simpson advocates decolonizing work as a solution to colonialism that celebrates our ceremonies, dances, governance, languages, philosophies, spiritual practices, and stories.

The ontological foundation of Indigenous people is disparaged and dominated through racialized structure power relations stemming from capitalism and colonialism. Moreton-Robinson’s (2015) work, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* reveal that “the possessives of logics of patriarchal white sovereignty discursively disavow and dispossess the Indigenous subject of an ontology that exists outside the logic of capital, by always demanding our inclusion with modernity on terms that it defines” (p. 191). Moreton-Robinson

critiques how whiteness travelled culturally and physically through imperialism and global capitalism (p. 51). She identified Indigenous dispossession as the appropriation of land by patriarchal white sovereignty or the white possessive. Possession is tied to right and power. The legal and political institutions maintain and control this social structure linking race, sovereignty, and possession. Moreton-Robinson points out, “Indigenous people were the legal possessions of state and territory governments and were denied economic, civil, and political rights until the 1960s” (p. 120). This white possessive parallels First Nations’ struggles with land and governance in the Canadian context.

Grounded normativity is fundamental to Coulthard’s response to Indigenous alternatives to capitalism in his work *Red Skins White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (2014). Coulthard describes power relations arising from settler colonization in Canada. Coulthard draws on and explores the work of Fanon and Sartre on race and class struggle under colonial rule. During the 1930s, the negritude movement demonstrated how the colonized worked to remove the internalized effects of colonial racism and subjugation. Fanon asserts critical individual and collective self-recognition as essential to this movement (p. 131). Coulthard demonstrates that “Fanon clearly shared Sartre’s views that negritude’s emphasis on cultural self-affirmation constituted an important “means” but “not the ultimate end” of anticolonial struggle” (p. 133). Fanon and Sartre reach the same conclusion, although their methods contrast. Sartre, a French-anti-Semitist explores Hegel’s master/slave dialectic. According to Sartre, the slave is “stuck,” there is no means of evasion for a black person, “for the colonized black worker, capitalist exploitation and domination is mediated through the lens of race and through the lived experience of racism” (p. 137). Coulthard critiques Sartre’s view and demonstrates how Sartre’s ideas do not acknowledge the transformative role that revived Indigenous cultural practices may play in the

construction of alternatives to the colonial project of genocide and land dispossession. Grounded normativity blends theory and praxis as a place-based foundation (p.13) and is a movement of radical sustainability (pp. 172-173). This shift Coulthard describes fuses land praxis with an artistic, intellectual, political, and social movement (p. 156). Culture-based resurgence is depicted as shifting from a naturalizing process of oppression to naturalizing resistance. Coulthard calls for resurgent politics of recognition, and advocates for decolonial, gender-free, economically non-exploitative alternative structures of law and sovereign authority.

Indigenous critical theory is advanced by Byrd (2011) in *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. Byrd attacks U.S. settler colonialism and pinpoints how the concept of Indian or Indianness is used to spread colonialism through inclusive methods. She uses the word transit “as a concept suggests the multiple subjectivities and subjugations put into motion and made to move” as the U.S. “...deploys paradigmatic Indianness to facilitate its imperial desires” (p. xxi). Colonization relied on racialization for imperial expansion. Byrd ascertains the “cacophony” with these relations. Indigenous peoples’ relationships with the land are disrupted and subjugated to colonial rule.

Nishnaabeg thought is explored and extended in Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s book (2017), *As We Have Always Done*. Simpson links Elder’s knowledge, Nishnaabeg thought, with Nishnaabeg worldview, stating, “I got a strong sense from them that our intellectual systems are our responsibilities...” (p. 17). Betasamosake Simpson emphasizes the “how” or *biiskabiyang* to explain the process of returning to ourselves as Nishnaabeg people (p. 17). Kinetics, the act of doing, according to Betasamosake Simpson, produces more knowledge and exemplifies resurgence. Simpson draws on Coulthard’s usage of grounded normativity as a process-centred mode for resurgence methods (p. 23). Betasamosake Simpson addresses settler colonial structures

and describes and explores Nishnaabeg practices, principles, and theories to counter colonialism. Nanabush theory and methodology, relationality, and coming to know the land are included in her analysis of Nishnaabeg thought. Simpson frequently emphasizes the significance of revitalizing Nishnaabeg practices and honouring that relationship to the land. “Aki is the foundation of Nishnaabeg thought” (p. 213) according to Simpson. The land sustains Nishnaabeg thought.

Decolonizing Research

Indigenous knowledge systems and processes are valid in academic research. Kovach, a Nehiyaw and Saulteaux scholar, understands her work as “a contribution on Indigenous research frameworks would be useful to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers seeking to honour Indigenous knowledge systems” (p.11). The reproduction of colonial relations is examined by Kovach who asserts “The reproduction of colonial relationships persists inside institutional centres. It manifests itself in a variety of ways, most noticeably through Western-based policies and practices that govern research, and less explicitly through the cultural capital necessary to survive there.” (p. 28). Kovach extends this by asserting, “There is a fundamental epistemological difference between Western and Indigenous thought, and this difference causes philosophical, ideological, and methodological conflicts for Indigenous researchers” (p. 29). Kovach draws on Deloria’s views on ideological leverage and states “as Indigenous scholars, researchers, thinkers, and writers, we have an obligation to challenge the ideologies that shackle us. The purpose then, is to push the of the ideological certitude of what counts as knowledge and research in the academy” (p. 93). Throughout this work, Kovach emphasizes decolonizing theory, relational methodology and other essential Indigenous research methods to support academic research.

Imperialism is based on exploitation, power, and racism. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a Māori scholar, explores how imperialism is embedded into research methodologies in academic research,

especially in Indigenous studies. She affirms, “The word itself, ‘research’ is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (p. xi). In this work, Smith critiques imperialism and colonialism. Smith addresses knowledge production and knowledge validation through imperialism by highlighting that “...there was European control, which necessarily meant securing and subjugating the Indigenous populations” (p. 22). Smith describes imperialism and colonialism as a process “to obliterate collective identities and memories and to impose a new order” (p. 72). The dominant Western research paradigms are challenged in this work. Smith uses the concept of decolonization and frames it as “centring our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspective and for our own purposes” (p. 41). The second part of this work describes Indigenous peoples’ projects and frames Indigenous research “to think critically and address structural relations of power, to build upon cultural value and systems and contribute research back to communities that are transformative” (p. 214). Smith advances research to not only serve Indigenous communities, but the communities should also guide research as well.

Indigenous research methods are advancing in academic research. *Decolonization* is a term to describe and advance Indigenous theory and praxis. Smith (2012) uses the term “sharing knowledge” (pp. 15-16) to shape the research framework as part of the decolonization process. Decolonization includes decolonizing standardized research methods. Smith (2012) discusses decolonizing methodologies and states theory “can protect us because it contains within a way of putting reality into perspective” which reflects the principles of academic research (p. 42). This chapter focuses on three areas of Indigenous theory and praxis: elders, land, and story. In Indigenous communities, elders are honoured as holders of knowledge. Land, or place, is a

significant underpinning of Indigenous philosophy, perspective, and worldview. Storytelling or orality is a knowledge transfer praxis. Storytelling practices constitute literacy.

Elders convey knowledge, stories and teachings to the younger generation. In Indigenous communities, elders are *knowledge keepers*. They play a key role in the cognitive development of the young. Ball (2004) accentuated the elder's role in society, "Elders usually model ways of storytelling, listening, encouraging sharing, and facilitating the elaboration of ideas and action plans that are themselves expressions of Indigenous cultures" (p. 469). Anderson (2012) draws attention to the role of elders as knowledge holders by stating "As the knowledge keeper of our societies, Elders will point out that Indigenous teachings related to the life cycle are complex and can take many years to master. In order to learn and especially become a teacher of this knowledge, one must engage in multiple practices of Indigenous knowledge transfer" (p. 7). Cultural and language barriers arise with researchers who are not familiar with or do not practice relationality when elders are participants in a research study. University jargon from a researcher can be a barrier for Indigenous first-language speakers. Relationality and community practices and protocols are fundamental to minimizing methodological and ethical issues that arise in research with Indigenous peoples and communities.

From an Indigenous perspective, the land and the people have been deeply connected. Land is a form of text where knowledge, stories, and teachings stem from. Emerging scholarship is illuminating the significance of and changing the way we understand the "interconnectedness" of the land. Kinew (2011) in *Manitowapow: Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water* explains, "The essence of the language is the essence of what the land is all about. It is the essence of what the sky is all about and it is the essence of who we are as people. Our language relates the landscape, both in our spirit and in the land," (p.145) Land-based pedagogy continues to be a part

of a growing body of research literature to provide space for Indigenous research methodologies and methods. “Our place names are holders of story, history, teachings, events—our collective and individual intimate connections and interaction with place” (Simpson, 2014, p. 360). During presentations and conferences this writer attended, the phrase, “the land is our first teachers” is emphasized by community members, elders, and leaders. Experiential learning experiences on the land are sites of observing, documenting, and producing knowledge from an Indigenous perspective.

Indigenous societies continue to maintain storytelling as an approach to development. There is ample research to support the importance of storytelling or oral tradition. Storytelling has been an integral part of Indigenous groups in Canada both in historical and contemporary societies. Storytelling or orality is an Indigenous teaching practice and is foundational to the development of Indigenous epistemology (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2005). The power of stories and the teachings, values, and knowledge they contain are essential to development (Archibald, 2008). These stories define who we are and who we are becoming, they give a sense of purpose and identity, factors critical to development. Storytelling could be a major framework element of a research study for data gathering. Storytelling takes place both formally and informally in Indigenous communities, researchers who understand this methodology will gain a deeper insight or understanding into Indigenous thought and theory.

Ethical Temper

As a child, I would help our family gather berries, plants, and food. As an adult, I gather knowledge, medicine, and teachings. Through this gathering practice, my understanding and valuing Indigenous epistemological and ontological foundations are affirmed. Land-based practices are part of my everyday way of life, my methodology. The animals, berries, cosmos,

land, medicinal plants, water, and so on are related. The major principle that guides this research is relationality. This research study is developed around an Indigenous research paradigm of relationality as an observant-participant to frame the ethical temper. The act of gathering reflects a fundamental process to my researcher positionality and an Indigenous way of doing. The theory and praxis of relationality contribute to the study.

Mino-bimaadiziwin reflects an Indigenous construct and posits one's journey of walking through life in a good way. The research I completed during my master's thesis research included four elders who shared how mino-bimaadiziwin is an integral part of one's learning journey. Four elements emerged from the research: ceremony, land, language, and story. Elders shared knowledge and teachings regarding land-based experiences to support mino-bimaadiziwin in and out of the classroom setting. Through this study, I am building from my Master of Education degree to continue to connect and honour Indigenous knowledge and teachings that better support students in their acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values in educational contexts.

I have developed extensive, positive, and supportive relationships with all levels of the community during the twenty years spent as a classroom teacher. When I returned to the school as a full-time classroom teacher, I shared with my late principal that I would be journaling this first year of land-based development as a university student. I also shared with our community leaders and community organization department leaders about my dual role in the community. During our very first staff meeting, I introduced myself to my colleagues as both a classroom teacher and university student. They knew I would be gathering stories and knowledge during this school year. The research I completed during the first year of the land-based model development comprises of my ongoing journal records. I am challenging the institutional ethics process based on the community engagement work I completed over the span of two decades of community work. I

have built trusting relationships with all levels of the community. I am a community member first, a university student, second. Indigenous knowledge, methodologies, and worldviews are respectfully combined into this research study.

A researcher must understand one's role with Indigenous people and communities. Both scholars Gaudry and Innes's work are important critiques of methodological and ethical issues regarding research. Gaudry describes and explains the problems and practices of insurgent research methodology. Innes's article explores research led by insurgent researchers and the insider-outside debate. As discussed earlier in this chapter, I am drawing from both Gaudry and Innes's work on insider-outsider and insurgent research to frame my research positionality.

I am refusing the use of the term 'data,' which dehumanizes and quantifies the knowledge base produced. The validation of Indigenous worldviews is a key component of insurgent research. This statement reflects the ethical temper that this study is built on. The research study will draw from an insider-outsider/insurgent researcher position (Innes, 2009; Gaudry, 2011), the researcher must understand one's role in a research context in an Indigenous community. This research study aligns with Gaudry's concept of insurgent research. The four principles of Indigenous resurgence ideology are reflected in this research study.

My fundamental set of beliefs and philosophical assumptions are deeply rooted in bush culture that stems from my worldview. Growing up, I observed, practiced, and valued bush culture. Through this research study, the research output is geared toward the development of a land-based education models that reflects our community's way of being, doing, and knowing. The third principle of insurgent research is reflected in this study. I worked with both the school and the community to support students' development. Community leadership, elders, school staff, and students had opportunities to share their ideas and thoughts about the ongoing outdoor learning

space development. I ensured that all voices are heard. This research study reflects action-oriented research. Community members, elder, parents, and school staff are collaborators to this research. Local knowledge and practices are centered in this study. In this study, I am designing a land-based model for the local school.

As the research is directed and guided by the researcher with additional guidance from leaders, elders, and student participants, it is important to be cognizant of the effects of colonialism, including the Indian Residential school system's ideologies and practices that operated for over eighty years in this community as the normalized education model. "Colonialism has been a tremendous force in making us forget our own power to change the conditions that affect our lives, but the insurgent researcher has a significant responsibility to remind the people of their own power" (Gaudry, p. 134). The community itself may not be aware of what possibilities exist to enact their culturally based knowledge and values in the school as an institution, by default assuming education must take the forms they inherited from a colonial institution. Through this study, the researcher will honour and create space for the voices, experiences, teachings, and values of the elders, leaders, community resource people, and student participants.

I have been an active community member and classroom teacher for over twenty years in Pine Creek First Nation. I have worked with all levels of the community, both personally and professionally. At the school level, we work toward integrating Indigenous perspectives into classroom learning experiences. We provide opportunities for students to learn and experience traditional Indigenous land-based activities such as medicine and berry picking, land-practices, and ceremonial practices to name a few. Through this research, the knowledge, skills, and values will be advanced to contribute to student autonomy and self-esteem. This research will enhance

the community's capacity to maintain our culture, our language, our practices, and our worldview. I value the land-based and traditional teachings our culture, our language, and our practices hold.

Ethical complexities of being a teacher, community member, researcher, and advocate exist. However, my extensive relationship with the school and community at-large reduce these complexities. For this research study, I am not solely a university researcher or an "outsider". I have long-term, positive, reciprocal relationships with students, staff, parents, elders, leadership and so on. As an observant-participant researcher, I maintain respect and confidentiality in all aspects of the journal entries. As seen in chapter five, I have chosen not to use any names or descriptive information to identify any individuals. I gained consent from parents and individuals to use photographs. Because of the nature of this research study design, I did not seek permission from the Chief and Council to complete the research. Throughout this entire research study, I maintained respectful and ethical procedures in the development of a land-based model within a school system.

Conclusion

Indigenous and Western research methodologies and methods are integrated and utilized in scholarly research to draw on Indigenous theory and praxis. Innovative pedagogies founded in Indigenous knowledge and teachings provide greater insight into Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing. Research studies grounded in Indigenous cultural, political, and social perspectives contribute to an understanding of Indigenous philosophy, teachings, and worldview. Walia (2014) accentuates this concept that "Decolonization is a process whereby we create the conditions in which we want to live and the social relations we want to have. We have to commit ourselves to supplanting the colonial logic of the state itself" (p. 50). Indigenous research methodologies,

pedagogy, and praxis are continuing to shape research studies, shifting from colonialism and oppression to insurgent and liberation research.

A researcher's ethics, framework, methodology, and positionality emerge from a researcher's worldview. The Canadian nation is founded on Eurocentric and capitalistic ideologies. Not only did these two ideologies assimilate and subjugate Indigenous communities across Canada, but these ideologies are advanced and perpetuated through public infrastructures and systems, including universities. National social order is achieved through the naturalization and normalization of Eurocentric values through ideologies, processes, and systems. Western theory stems from Eurocentrism. A researcher's reflexivity practices throughout an entire research process contribute to the abatement of methodological and ethical issues associated with research with Indigenous peoples and communities.

Researchers who work with Indigenous peoples and communities require a sound understanding of the significance of relationality. Relationality fosters and improves researcher-participant(s) relationships and encourages personal and community accountability. In Indigenous communities, relationality outlines philosophy, and worldview. Relationality is about reciprocity. Reciprocal, trustworthy relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities are important for research studies. Relationality supports Indigenous philosophy on the interconnectedness of cultural and social contexts.

Research methods grounded in Indigenous theory and praxis are growing. This chapter explores how Elders, land, and stories reflect Indigenous knowledge, praxis, and worldview. Cultural and language barriers address ethical issues for a research study. Positionality and relationality are two principal elements to abate methodological and ethical issues associated with research on Indigenous people and communities. Incorporating Indigenous philosophy, praxis,

thought, and worldview into future research studies will enhance Indigenous communities' capacity to maintain the culture, language, identity, and worldview of Indigenous peoples and contribute to full participation in Canadian society.

Chapter Five: The Outdoor Learning Space

Recently, during my first orientation session of the Master-Apprentice Program with my fluent language mentor, a memory stands out. I chose her to be my language teacher because she grew up speaking the language. She spoke about time in the TB sanatorium. During that time, an elderly fluent speaker befriended her and increased her proficiency in Anishinabemowin. This elderly lady refused to speak English, so my mentor's skills improved immensely. I worked with her at Minegoziibe Anishinabe School, and she held the position of Native Language Teacher while working. Her language and insight into the language impressed me. I grew up in a home with two fluent Anishinabemowin speakers, but our language skills eroded as each child entered the school system and English became a dominant practice. I asked her, "How do you say good morning in Anishinabemowin?" My elder speaker rolled her eyes, took a sigh, and explained, "This is not something we would do in the language." It took me a short while to understand her statement. I reflected on her statement and this cultural faux pas affirmed that Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing are distinct practices.

Introduction

The first chapter of this study provides an overview of my advocacy work at Minegoziibe Anishinabe School in Pine Creek, Manitoba. As I shared in chapter one, I have worked in the community since 2005 as a classroom teacher. I have positive, supportive relationships with students, staff, elders, leaders, and the extended community at large. As a researcher, I chose to chronicle my insights, observations, and thoughts regularly through the development of our outdoor learning space and land-based learning experiences. The journal entries are organized around the rhythmic, seasonal round shown on the following page (see Figure 9). This seasonal round became my planning guide for the school year. It is offered by the Indigenous Way of Life Department in Frontier School Division. This department supports teachers across Frontier School Division to promote Indigenous way of life, including land-based education. During the month of September, I met with the resource person often and in retrospect, I met with this individual many times over the school year.

Before the school year started, I had conversations with various individuals in the school and in the community. My late principal and I met regarding my role. I received support from community leaders to be the teacher designated to coordinate the community Growcer project. I drove to Altario, Alberta in June 2024 to tour the Growcer operation at the Altario Agriculture Academy. A Growcer is a food modular unit designed to hydroponically grow fresh produce all year long. A Growcer unit was set to arrive in September 2024. One of my responsibilities would include the training, startup, and maintenance of this unit.

I chose to introduce the journal processing by drawing on Simpson's work on resurgence. This research study and journaling process is a resurgent act. Resurgence, according to Simpson (2011) "means significantly re-investing in our own ways of beings; regenerating our political and intellectual traditions; articulating and living out our legal systems; language learning; ceremonial and spiritual pursuits; creating and using our artistic and performance-based traditions (pp. 17-18). Simpson describes the cultural and political resurgence to support Nishnaabeg theory, "I am not so concerned with how we dismantle the master's house, that is, which set of theories we used to critique colonialism; but I am concerned with how we (re)build our own house, or our own houses" (p. 32). Simpson affirms Nishnaabeg's *Original Instructions* in the regeneration and resurgence of culture, governance, and language (p. 66). She describes the Nishnaabeg lifeway as being cyclical, fluid, and rhythmical. This lifeway disrupts the capitalist industrial complex (p. 87). Simpson reaffirms Monture's ideas about autonomy and sovereignty "begins at home" (p. 144). Simpson advocates decolonizing work as a solution to colonialism that celebrates our ceremonies, dances, governance, languages, philosophies, spiritual practices, and stories. The seasonal round template that follows demonstrates the people's way of life in our community.

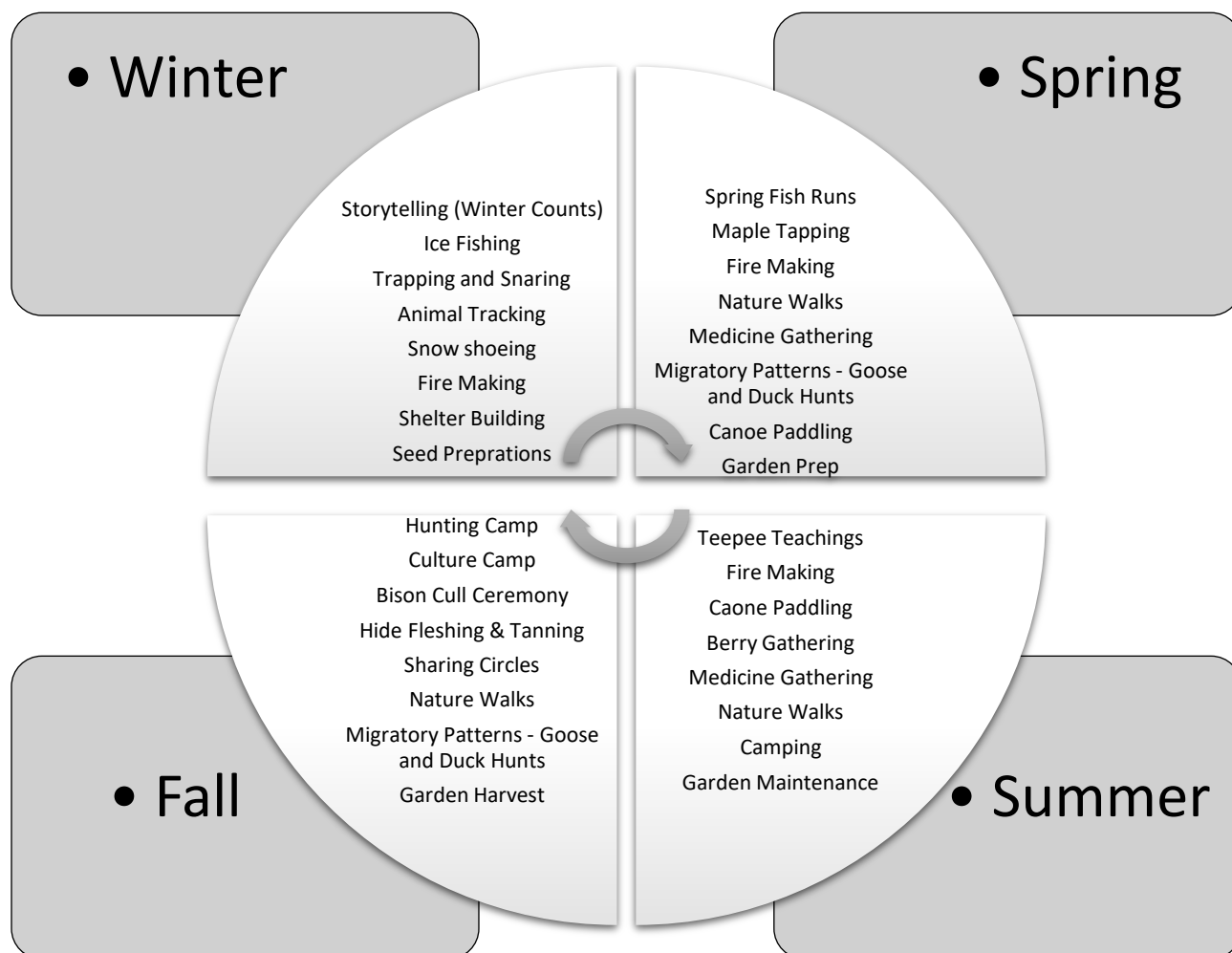


Figure 7 Seasonal Round of land-based activities

Researcher Journaling Process

The following research journal entries are part of the daily journaling process I maintained for the school year. It highlights students' comments, reactions, and responses to land-based activities. I share my challenges faced, my thoughts, and the rewards of the development of the land-based model in our school system.

Fall 2024

August 30, 2024

For the past several months, I had meetings with both the school principal and community leaders. It is an exciting time in our community. We have an education agreement with Frontier School Division from November 2005 until 2028. Frontier School Division developed an Indigenous Way of Life department. Staff from this department work with schools and community to advance and promote Indigenous knowledge, language, and teachings. Both Frontier School Division and the community collaborated to purchase a Growcer unit. The Growcer provides learning outside of the classroom that is experiential and skill building. We had several conversations before the start of the school year. I would devote half of my teaching day to learning how to operate this unit. I would also utilize the curriculum developed for this project.

September 2, 2024

I had been informed that the Growcer would be delivered September 4th and that I needed to attend the root camp training out of province. After several discussions with my administrators, it was decided that another teacher would also be involved in this project. She agreed and was willing to attend the root camp training. My class day begins with teaching a grade twelve English class. For this journal process, I will only write about

land-based activities and my daily reflections on land-based program development. I spent the rest of the morning meeting with teachers, connecting with community. The afternoons are devoted to land-based activities until the Growcer arrives. Our school principal for over two decades, supported my ideas throughout my teaching career. She looked forward to the coming year and the plans we made together.

September 9, 2024

We traveled to Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan by bus with twelve students from grades seven to ten. Upon our arrival, we set up our tents and met new people and other community members. One of my former students helped right away to set up our tents. We were situated in the valley and ready to camp for three nights. The students were excited and engaged in the camp setup process. The night grew cooler, and everyone settled in. I knew most of the students present and spent time getting to know the rest of the group. Our oldest elder in the community shared stories with the students. He attended the Pine Creek Indian Residential School, along with his wife. They laughed and talked with the students each day at the camp.

September 10, 2024

We spent the day at the site. It was set up with many teepees where students could participate and learn. Our students chose the activity they wanted to participate in. I met a lot of people as I walked around during the day to check on students. The students were involved in a wide variety of activities to choose from. The other supervisor and I would visit with the students and learn new skills. They had tanning, plant identification, and a wide variety of learning activities. During the day, many school buses came to the site and the visiting students would participate as well. We learned about the history of the Treaty

4 signatory process. The students did not realize that this would be such a huge turnout of people. One our second night, we built a campfire and shared stories with the elders. We had elders from our community who would sit and visit.

September 11, 2024

The day was spent learning about different activities. Our students had experience in tanning, so they naturally gravitated toward this learning experience. They were super helpful and engaged. The two activity leaders were incredibly happy that our students were so engaged and respectful. Because of their previous experience, they were able to do a lot of hide scraping. At the end of the camp day, we travelled to Indian Head and other little towns so students could learn about the area. They learned about the history and significance of the Fort Qu'Appelle treaty process. They asked questions and found out that we are part of Treaty Two territory, and we were an adhesion to Treaty Four.



Figure 8 Students are scraping hide

September 13, 2024

Today was our first sage picking experience. I had completed the educational trip forms which are mandatory for any trips offsite school grounds. It is a division-wide policy. The previous week, I met with the grade one teacher to ensure the trip coordination was in place. I am quickly learning the importance of coordination and planning. The teacher informed me that she read a book on plants and plant parts for the students. She wanted them to be informed and prepared for the land-based activity. I prepared the supplies and tools needed for this learning. I brought scissors, paper bags, ribbon, cloth, and tobacco.

We departed from the bus, and I explained to the students that we would offer tobacco for harvesting the sage. I explained that I would say prayer and place the tobacco near a tree. The students watched as I completed this act of gratitude. I explained that we must thank the plants for being able to harvest them. The students were excited and engaged. I sat them down on the blanket I brought and explained the importance of plants, as our relatives.

One of the boys said, “my koko said I am

Figure 9 Sage picking demonstration to the grade one class

picking medicine today and I want to bring her some because she gets sick sometimes.” I



told him his koko was right and that was a wonderful thing to do for his koko. I explained how to harvest the plant and collect one bundle each. As they completed their picking, they would bring the sage to one of the helpers, and she would tie it in a bundle. The students were excited to take these sage bundles back to the classroom to dry.

September 16, 2024

I took the second class, grade twos, and threes, to pick sage as well. We were on the edge of a town in a sage field. One of the girls needed a bathroom and I knew there were no public facilities we could access. I prepared for this. One of the girls needed the bathroom, so she and I walked away from the pickers, and she used it in the natural elements. Her teacher stood close by and supervised the students from a distance. What struck me the most was that students were so engaged in the sage picking process that they did not notice or make fun of the girl using the bathroom outside. I thought, wow, this is cool. They are too busy to notice! I took photos of the students and in the photos, the students are smiling and look completely engaged in harvesting sage. One of the girls commented, "I like this better than schoolwork!"

September 17, 2024

Today is my last scheduled day for sage picking. I took grades three and four. I followed the same process each day. I explained the same process to each group of students. I offered tobacco and demonstrated how to pick a sage plant. The students in this class knew from their teacher's sharing of information what to do immediately. After we picked up the sage, we sat in a circle and the students each shared what they enjoyed about this experience. Most of the boys shared they enjoyed being outside and they would give the sage to their kokos.

September 18, 2024

I have been meeting with the Bison Manager to discuss the upcoming Bison Cull ceremony taking place next week. We worked together to arrange the ceremony. This was the first community event that I would be part of the planning process. We had a meeting with various community organization leaders and developed an agenda for this ceremony. I genuinely believe that saying, it takes a community to raise a child. I am looking forward to this event. I found a few high school students to make tobacco ties to be offered in the sacred fire for this ceremony. The girls worked diligently and quickly! They made one hundred ties in less than an hour. I was impressed! During the first week of the start of school, I spent time introducing myself to community organization leaders so they would be aware of my new role in the community as the Land Based Teacher. A few days before, I received an offer from our students to help harvest the community garden. I am excited. I enjoy gardening and look forward to sharing my skills with the students. We took grades five to eight to the garden for the afternoon. For some of the students, it was their first time being in a garden! An issue arose where some students did not want to participate. The classroom teacher was planning to stay back in the classroom with some of the students. I spoke with the vice principal, and she stated that all students must attend. I followed her advice and informed the teacher. One of the most surprising observations about today was how engaged the students were being. The classroom teacher was so surprised by the level of engagement the student displayed. They were excited at the thought of digging into potatoes. The students ran around excitedly to learn how to harvest vegetables. Students were incredibly happy to be able to take fresh vegetables home to their families. The students being older understood the process very quickly and required little supervision.



Figure 10 Student holding a carrot from community garden harvest

September 19 – 23, 2024

One of the first professional development opportunities offered to FSD staff was Wilderness First Aid. We participated for three and a half days to be certified Wilderness First Aid Trainees. It was intense at times, completing the first aid responders' scenarios. One of the most striking thoughts about this course was the reality a Land-Based Teacher could face with students. This training affirmed and reminded me of the importance of preparation and training. I met other Land-Based teachers around the Frontier School Division. We shared our plans, and the more seasoned teachers shared their experiences.

September 24, 2024

Culture camp started at Minegoziibe Anishinabe School in response to the Native Studies course offered in Grade Eleven. Participation in this camp was part of the assessment process. FSD offered this course to students in the division, while not mandatory; students would receive a special Frontier School Division diploma to achieve this credit when graduating from a FSD high school. I arrived at the camp after my first class and was greeted by a few of the Indigenous Way of Life (IWOL) staff members. They were helping

with the camp activities. Students had already camped the day before and picked sweet grass. There was a community volunteer showing students how she tans hides. She was set up and shared her knowledge. During my first hour at the camp, I took note of the site. There was a camper for the elders, and there were tents set up. There was a campfire for cooking. There were also shade tents for seating. The camp took place at the powwow grounds. It is on a peninsula of Lake Winnipegosis. This site is well known as Gamblers Point. The Gambler family is known for using this location for their family. While sitting and enjoying a cup of tea and getting to know the IWOL staff members, two hunters pulled up with two moose hind quarters. I was impressed. They asked if the students would like to dress the moose and the camp leader agreed. This took place after lunch. After lunch, one of the boys had arranged for his mom to bring a basketball hoop to the camp site. They were unloading it and I, being new, asked what it was about. The camp leader said they wanted to play ball. The camp leader and the other ladies were preparing to dress the moose. I stopped the camp leader and asked if we could involve the boys in this process. I knew the boys a little and asked if they wanted to learn. They all looked at each other, unsure of how to respond. They finally agreed. As I talked and we all set them up, I learned that all three boys had no previous experience with meat processing, how to skin the moose hide or cut and debone a hind quarter leg. At first the boys looked skeptical. They did not really know who I was but were respectful and willing. As they understood, they gained some confidence. I asked them to switch so another student would have an opportunity to try. One student remarked, "no, this is fun." It was interesting to observe and hear their chatter and their discomfort at first. A school employee and elder arrived at the camp and

offered guidance as well to processing the moose legs. They boys laughed and joked and were very engaged.

September 25, 2024

Culture camp is in its third day. Today we had the bison cull ceremony and community gathering. We had a meeting two weeks ago to organize the event. It sure helps that I know everyone and that I have worked in the community to build relationality with the community staff and Chief and Council. The students were well behaved and respectful of the animals. It is interesting how well they behave in our outdoor learning classrooms. The grades 5/6 and 7/8 teacher also are enjoying these activities and are supportive of my plans. Today, we had our chief speak about the history and context of the bison herd and how the community is working to take itself in a good direction. We spoke later and he said the students seemed to be enjoying themselves. I had one important conversation with a staff member about the challenges and barriers to have access to elders at the culture camp and with school related activities due to the screening process and paperwork that is part of FSD policy. The systems and policies that are in place go against how community gatherings can be organic, fluid and not time bound to emerge. I shared with her how this school year, I may approach a circle of community elders to complete the screening process to work with the students, but it goes against community approaches and practices. Again, this is another example of the difference of Western and Indigenous ways of being and doing. I have noticed since I began this position that relationality is the construct supporting these land-based activities. I have long-term relationships with many members, and I taught many members and the next generation. This existing relationality aspect allows for community staff and members to trust my direction and support my activities.

As a researcher, I am fortunate to have established these positive, supportive relationships over the span of my years as a classroom teacher. I could not imagine having the success and support I have been having if I were only an “outsider-researcher,” I would have many barriers: trust, motive, etc. etc. etc. The one male student asked while I was sitting at the culture camp, “will we be having another camp this year,” to me this shows interest and enjoyment of the camp and the activities. Everyone has a desire to be engaged and involved, the camp activities made this happen for this student. Today, when I returned to the culture camp after the bison cull ceremony, the boys had set up their shade tent, they organized the tables liked we did yesterday, and they were standing there waiting with gloves on and with their knives in their hands. They all asked, “Where is the bison? We are ready.” It was inspiring to see three confident boys standing there waiting with the experience, knowledge, and skills they gained after one opportunity to be ready and more importantly purposeful in their coming task. Empowering! As I reflected on my day, I thought about my study and how I wanted to build a viable education model by the community, I need to rephrase this to build a viable community through education. The education system is steeped in Eurocentrism and to “indigenize” or incorporate Indigenous perspectives is one approach many schools and programs are attempting to do, but what we truly need to do is make space for Anishinabe theory and praxis.

Thursday, September 26, 2024

Today, I attended the “Learning is Everywhere” conference featuring two people I am familiar with: Willie Ermine and Kevin Lewis. The venue was outdoors; the weather was perfect; the energy was excellent. It is interesting how we were gifted with individual camping chairs (which we could all use!) and at the start of this conference, there was a

lone man, shaking hands with absolutely everyone, he was practicing the art of greeting and including everyone, honouring relationality. People of all ages and cultures gathered; when I shared, I was from Pine Creek, Manitoba, they were surprised and welcoming. The conference occurred in a powwow arbour, another space for Indigenous theory and praxis. It could not be a better-planned day, weather-wise! Willie Ermine spoke about “giftedness” and asked the question, one that I am currently trying to explain, “Why are we doing this, why are we going back to the land?” I know with certainty that the answer is in my spirit, through this PhD journey, I hope to have a clear and articulate answer. I know there are many others who are looking for this answer, not in a challenging way, but in a way to affirm their unspoken or inherent values and knowledge about land-based learning. Ermine spoke about becoming an elder and how we must have a “Chickadee Society” where we begin with young children to learn how to become an elder. I know this is so important. I think of my grandson and the values, as his grandmother, I would like to instill in him. He spoke about developing a community bundle filled with language, ceremony, and how energy is to be moved, children as our treasures, giftedness, and holism. These are significant components of a good life, I feel. He spoke about how high sensitivity is seen as anxiety and becomes a behaviour problem in schools, it was interesting information, but I needed more thought or explanations of this high sensitivity nature in some children. One of the teachings about how the curriculum should be about intuition, dreams, compassion, high sensitivity, the forest, the lakes, the weather, celestial beings, plants, and medicines affirmed for me, yes, this is where the curriculum should start. He spoke about relationships to all. “We are richer than we think.” Ermine connected this to learning as Indigenous people, we are richer than we think. He stressed

how we need to interact and talk with the elements: earth, wind, fire, water, and celestial beings. One of his statements hit home, “schools are prisons where our students are captured by European thoughts and ideas.” Wow.... that is so true! He connected this richness to our inherent gifts, we need to mobilize them through ceremonies, prayers, elders, and memory work.

October 1, 2024

I took the grade one class with their teacher to the community garden. I demonstrated how to harvest potatoes. One of the practices I have developed in arranging students in a circle while standing. I start each activity in this manner. It helps to explain and is inclusive for sharing. I explained that I would shovel the potato hill, they would remove the greenery and roots into a pile and then dig. I showed the students how I would use the shovel while they watched from the sideline of the garden. I told the students to watch what I do and you will do it too. I dug up the potato hill and asked the students to count with me.



Figure 11 Grade three student gathering potatoes

Some of the students were shocked by how many potatoes I dug up in my demonstration. Their facial expressions showed they could not believe what they were seeing. They yelled, "it's a potato, it's a potato" in excitement. Some of the students paired up and started harvesting potatoes immediately. Students smiled and joyfully yelled, "I got a big one!" or "Teacher, look at this one!" The students were excited and thrilled to be taking home potatoes. I took another class group in the afternoon and their response to the potato harvest mirrored the grade one class. Excitement and joy at digging up potatoes! I brought a shovel from home as I still do not have a clear budget or ordering system for supplies. I am sure this will get sorted out eventually.

October 3, 2024

We traveled to the moose camp. We were not completely sure if we would make it into the camp because it is a logging road, but the students sure enjoyed the ride. The road was hilly, and the students screamed with delight. I shared with our bus driver the road concerns from the hunters, but he said, "Well we will try." I shared with him after we arrived that I was not worried and if he felt confident that I was not going to worry. He said, "Yes, it's best not to worry until you have to worry." It is a good perspective on life. We arrived at the camp, and the hunters were setting up the moose quarters to hang. The students watched the hunters. After this, the students took photos with the moose's head. For some, it was their first time seeing a moose that close, and for a few, their first time seeing a moose that up close. We talked about the moose tongue and a few shared that they had eaten in. They said it was the best part of the moose. One girl was surprised that people ate the moose nose. The hunters were welcoming and explained how the camp worked. The students and I were told where the sage plants were nearby. I started a

circle and explained how and why we picked sage. I demonstrated to the students how we pick sage. We went into the field, and we all picked sage. The one student said she wanted to give it to her auntie. After we picked up the sage, we had a fire. The students picked firewood and explained that we did not use green wood. One student did not know about green wood, so I explained the difference. We sat around the fire, and some students explored the woods nearby. The boys looked like they were having fun. As we cleaned our area, one boy asked if we were coming back to the camp. I answered, "We were not." He looked disappointed. I asked him if he had gone hunting before and he said no. The students were well-behaved and very relaxed. The setting was calm and peaceful. We drove back and there was a calm east feeling on the bus ride back to school. A few of the students had rosy cheeks on the way back from the sun and fresh air. It was a momentous day. The students are interesting, happy, and well-behaved. They shared tidbits of information throughout the trip and enjoyed themselves.

October 4, 2024

After my first class, we were informed two moose hindquarters were being dropped off at 10:00 a.m. We arranged to process the moose with the high school students. Students had various levels of experience and skill with dressing an animal. Students dove right in and got to work. There was laughter and joking. One of the aspects of the community hunt is sharing. The meat is cut and grounded to be shared with all community members. This afternoon I travelled back to Sara Lake with students from grades five and six. The students are relaxed and happy at the camp. They visit with the hunters and helpers and enjoy being around the fire. As we packed up to leave, one of the grade six girls remarked, "I don't want to go back home, I wish I could stay." I responded, "Me, too!"

October 7th

I took nine grade sevens to the community garden. They were lighthearted, teasing and happy. They are highly involved and enjoy the process. A student asked if he could come back tomorrow. Of course, I agreed. One of the issues I am noticing is the need for better communication. My one administrator said I should provide my monthly trips to them, but I want to be sure that I am developing this plan with the staff and community, instead of me giving in full direction. There are many little things to consider when planning trips. Teacher time, substitutes, etc. I spoke to a high school teacher, and I realize I cannot take teachers out of the classroom for outside activities when they are responsible for other classes beyond outdoor activities. I still do not have a budget or any extended communication on my budget, so I find it hard. I feel like once the Growcer unit comes into function, then my schedule will be more exact. At present, I am struggling with creating opportunities for students to learn, over covering curriculum. I need to have meetings with teachers to see what they want to see as part of land-based learning. It is important to have everyone's input and contribution to the conversation.

October 8, 2024

Today I had the grade nine group with a few grade five students in the garden. It was interesting because the students who are quiet in the hall or have shown habits that are not always appropriate were quiet, engaged and appeared to be relaxed and calm in this setting. I find it really interesting how easily the students' cheeks light up when they spend time in the sun. Their cheeks get rosy right away and that shows how little outdoor air and sun they have in their life. One boy who is quiet in the halls was super talkative, fooling around and speaking to many others. They enjoyed their outdoor activity. When I return to

the school, there is always at least one student who asks, are we going out tomorrow? There appears to be a sense of enjoyment on these activities. I find it challenging to plan activities without a budget, without direct supervision and without immediate support from other staff members. I find that many of the elementary teachers are so focused on assessment and divisional demands that I am another hurdle to cross. I do not want the program to be a burden or for a teacher to have misgivings about the program, but it sure feels like the assessment and data gathering that is expected of teachers is overwhelming. Today, the teacher informed me that between the grades 5-8 classes there are sixty-four students. How is that number or size conducive to learning? I know how busy and fast the teaching day flies so I try to make sure that the teachers are on top of these land-based learning activities. Today there were two bus runs that were not active. The students in Duck Bay were missing. You could feel their absence in the hallways. It was picture day, so it was an inconvenient time for these bus drivers not to be present. I could see the difficulties that exist when managing adults. There is quite a bit of absences, and it would be hard to maintain the rhythm of an effective school.

October 9, 2024

I spent the afternoon at the community garden with a group of high school students. One of the observations is how willing the older students are to help me out. They immediately volunteered to shovel the potato hills and started harvesting. The students are getting to know me and vice versa. During these outings, I find the students more open to share and laugh more often than in the school. I shared with the students that if anyone needed the bathroom, that I had the supplies on hand. One girl came quickly up to me after that short announcement to the group. She said, I would like to use the bathroom. I said, okay. I dug

into my backpack and got her the toiletries needed. She said, "Could I talk to you in private?" I agreed. We walked away from everyone, and she stated that she did not know how to pee outside. I responded, with a gentle, "Oh, well I can show you." We walked casually away from the group, and the bus driver and educational assistant knew where I was going with this student. We walked and I explained how to find a location to pee. I said, go near the bush line, where no one will see you. and sometimes people use a tree to hold onto while squatting. I told her to position her legs far away enough so that she would not wet herself. We continued to walk to a spot close enough that I could still see the group in the distance. She asked, "Could you show me how?" I walked over to a nearby tree, squatted and held the tree for balance. She said, "Ohhh, I get it." I walked a few meters away from her, in the direction of the garden. She said, "Can you move further away?" I did. We returned to the group and continued harvesting the garden vegetables. The students sked if we could come back, I answered, "of course!"



Figure 12 Grade Nine student in the potato garden

October 10, 2024

I had planned a garden tour with a friend who lived in Camperville. I completed the administrative requirements, the educational trip form. The entire trip was one hour in duration. Because we were technically leaving the community, I had to complete the off-site educational trip form and go through the necessary steps for approval. The bus ride took ten minutes. We toured the pumpkin patch. One of the common observations I am noticing is how excited the students are to explore outside the classroom. They ask questions, they are curious, and they are very polite and respectful. For some of these young students, these gardening trips are their first-time gardening experiences.

October 11, 2024

There is a lot of coordinating and planning behind the scenes that takes place to ensure land-based activities are happening every day. Luckily, as I have said previously, while I carry the role of a university researcher and community employee, I have supportive relationships with both the school and community at large. I had previous conversations with Kristy Anderson about setting up fleshing and scraping the bison culled at the ceremony in September. We arranged for students for several students to flesh the hide. I invited the early years teachers to bring their students to come and observe. I made an outdoor fire nearby. I did this with purpose. It is important to normalize having a fire around land-based practices. Again, there were some students who had experience with hide work. There were students who were very reluctant to try so I encouraged them to stay and watch the process. Throughout the afternoon, two groups of classes came to the site behind the school and observed and asked questions. Kristy brought an array of furs and hide work she completed. Students asked questions and even donned her work. The young

girls enjoyed the process and did not want to go back to the classroom. When the session was ending, a few of them asked, "Can you pick me next time we scrape? This is fun."



Figure 13 Hide scraping the recently culled bison



Figure 14 Students fleshing the bison

October 17, 2024

Today I met with the local Jordan's Principle Case Manager. I shared the background information on my new role as the Land Based Teacher, and we discussed how we could work together in the future and plan for land-based activities. As both an educator and a researcher, it is imperative that one honours relationships with people who do community work.

October 21-25, 2024

Our school closed for one week due to our late principal's passing.

October 30, 2024

With the loss of our principal, our school staff, and students, including me, are grieving. We took two groups of students to the corn maze as a fall activity. One of my observations is how quickly the students faces become rosy. There is a noticeable change from pasty white to red cheeked in a matter of hours. This activity outside the classroom provided some form of normalcy and the students were more themselves.

November 7, 2024

Because of the late snowfall, I was able to mark the place for our firepit that would soon be returned to the school grounds. The firepit was stored at our late principal's residence and only used once a year during culture camp. I coordinated with one of the Council members to have gravel delivered and today I marked the spot for our new outdoor learning space. I was thrilled! I placed the four pegs in the ground and thought, this is finally happening. We would be able to be outside of the school, have a fire, share stories, and learn. Previously, I drew up a plan for the outdoor learning space. I envisioned garden boxes, teepees, a medicine walkway, and storage units.



Figure 15 Inserting the first markers for the outdoor learning space

November 8, 2024

The grade three and four class visited the bison ranch. Most of these students have not been here before. Luckily, the weather is still nice so we could do this comfortably in mild fall weather. I arranged to have a fire and sharing circle after observing the bison. The teacher led the students to the gates and the students watched inquisitively. They asked questions and one pointed out how beautiful the bison looked. We gathered the students into a circle around the fire. The students took turns sharing. It was an interesting experience. One of the students shared about the loss of his family member. When he was done sharing, one of the girls walked over to him and gave him a hug. They shared stories and laughed. After each person shared, one of the classmates would hug the student. One of the students remarked, "This is the best day ever". The teacher and I watched from a distance to give them the space to talk. It was a special experience.

November 13, 2024

I took a second class of students from grades two and three to the bison ranch. We departed from the bus, and I asked everyone to form a circle. I explained our purpose of our visit to the bison ranch. The students walked over to the gates and started noticing the bison who were coming near to the gate. I started the fire and the teacher and other supervisor walked over to the gates. The fire was made, and I walked over to the students. I pointed out the young bison for the students to look at. They were "oohing and ahing" at this point. One of the girls turns to me and say, "What the fuck are we doing here anyway?" I paused and told her we do not use this sort of language. She apologized. I was surprised by her use of the "f" word and tried to mask my surprise. I continued with the teachings and no one else said anything about her comment.

November 12 to 14, 2024

Local hunters share their game with the schools regularly. Our administrator informed me that a hunter was donating thirty birds he had gotten the previous day. We set up the tables outside of the school for students to pluck the ducks. We asked teachers to bring their students to the site. All teachers who were asked brought their students. They also pitched in to help. I coordinated with Conrad McKay, a local, skilled hunter. He guided students through the process. The students were enthralled by this process. We grouped them into



Figure 16 Duck cleaning by grade three students

threes, and they worked together to pluck the ducks. The students watched Conrad and another helper gut the ducks. They made positive comments about learning this process. I heard several times as I assisted students, "I have never plucked a duck before!" At the end of the school day, one of the custodians shared with me that a young girl was skipping through the halls saying, "I plucked a duck." That evening, I texted my niece because her daughter asked to take a duck home. She shared that as her daughter sat at the table; she was proud to be able to bring home a duck for the next day's supper. Before this learning experience was over, three students came up to me and said, "Please pick me next time we do something like this."

November 18-29, 2024

With the loss of our late principal, a shift in administration has happened. Land-based activities are slowing down. The newly appointed Acting Principal is organizing the budget for the land-based activities. There is also a budget deadline looming that I have been working on with the local community contact to plan for a maple syrup tapping operation through the school. I met with the contact several times to discuss our plans. As well, the Acting Principal and a few other teachers met with the local Chief and Council to share our school plans. During this time, I do not have a clear budget, nor do I have adequate equipment or supplies to run land-based activities. We are hoping that the stored items are delivered back to the school soon. We were able to access funding to order firewood. The school fire pit was returned.

December 3, 2024

I can have an off-site educational trip again. We planned to pick spruce boughs. This is a regular activity at Minegoziibe Anishinabe School every year. I traveled with several

students south of Cowan, Manitoba. We cut and gathered spruce boughs for the local Winter activity of making wreaths. One of the constant comments from one of the students is, "I will take this to my koko, or I will give [said family member]." Students show thoughtfulness to their family members.

December 5, 2024

Our budget still is not clear. I collaborated with the wood shop teacher, and he agreed to make a wood stacking unit for our outdoor learning space. Today he delivered it to our site. It felt like a big event even though it was a considered a small item for the space. He made it from existing scrap material. The students dragged it over to the fire pit and erected the wood storage unit. The outdoor learning space felt more real today. I paid a local logger fifty dollars to bring us a pile of wood so we could start having outdoor fires. I did have an axe and hatchet on hand to chop the firewood. Today is the first time we had an outdoor fire and prepared food by the fire. I invited several grades to come out in the afternoon to spend the afternoon outdoors and cook bannock on a stick. I explained to the students the process and that patience was important. The students enjoyed this process immensely. I also shared with them that I would sometimes offer a piece of my food into the fire for the loved ones who passed on. I demonstrated this. One by one, each of the students made an offering. One little boy said, "I want to feed our principal's spirit." It was a heartfelt moment by all gathered around the fire.

December 9, 2024

One of the consistent observations I have been making is how willing the classroom teachers are to have me pick up students, sometimes at a moment's notice, to participate in an outdoor activity. The classroom teacher usually selects a student who is done his or

her work and will, in the teacher's words, "not fool around." It has been a good approach so far. Today I had three boys chop the pile of wood and stack it. As we walked toward the fire pit, the snow had been hardened by the wind. The one student said, "Look, I'm Snow Jesus" as we talked onto of the snow without sinking in. The other two boys did not have much experience in chopping wood. I made a fire and one boy who is a skilled wood chopper chopped wood steadily. The other two boys stacked the wood. At first, the boys were carrying each piece in one hand each. I showed the boys how to position their arms so they could stack wood on one, making it more efficient. Because I only had three students, I asked the other two boys if they would be interested in learning how to chop wood. They both agreed. I stopped quickly with one boy because he was only wearing sneakers and not properly dressed for this type of activity. The other boy, reluctant at first, attempted to chop wood. I showed him several times, and he soon caught on to the process. He said at the end of the afternoon, "I can't wait to tell my papa I know how to chop wood now!" The three boys shared stories and laughed while we chopped wood and stacked it.



Figure 17 Grade seven students chopping and stacking wood

December 10, 2024

Today, I took a few students to the up-west road to gather diamond willow. I had inquired from high school students and local people if they knew where diamond willow was in the community. One of the high school boys shared that his father told him where it was. I coordinated with the boy, and his father met us to gather the diamond willow. He drove his skidoo to an area and drove repeatedly so we could have a walking trail into the bush. One of the younger boys started climbing on the snow-covered willows. He looked content. I borrowed some saws from the woodshop teacher, and we gathered the willow. I explained that we would be making walking sticks, a necessary piece of equipment for bush walks. One of boys in grade five enjoyed the sawing process. They are always eager and willing to learn something during one of these land-based activities. A grade five boy states, "I had no idea there were so many types of willows. I only knew my sister Willow." One of the requirements of outdoor activities is being prepared with appropriate winter clothing and boots. It is important to make this clear otherwise the student would not enjoy the outdoor activities as much.



Figure 18 Grade six student harvesting diamond willow

Winter 2024

December 20, 2024

When I first started this new role, I did not expect to experience the challenges and issues that have risen. There are some challenges with purchasing equipment and supplies. We live in central Manitoba, and some vendors are local and small operations. We have hit a road bump with the purchase of our teepee which will delay its delivery. Invoices are issues and the school division pay within the first 30 days. The teepee is a significant purchase (four thousand dollars), and the small vendor is hesitant to deliver the teepee without any form of payment. We have been having a merry-go-round of emails between the vendor and our finance office. As the Land-Based Teacher, I am excited to develop this outdoor learning space, and I must learn to be more patient. The Growcer is not yet onsite, so I have been using this time to facilitate and coordinate land-based activities. With the sudden loss of our principal, the shift is noticeable. We are moving forward as a school team, trying to ensure that we maintain the vision we had previously talked about for years. The role intended for me in September was Growcer Operator. Since then, I have been having so many land-based activities and the students have been enjoying it immensely. I borrowed snowshoes from our Phys. Ed. teacher to use as part of the land-based activities. There are few students who are experienced using snowshoes, but the interest is high! The weather has been extremely cold this past week to take students on the land. A few brave ones join me for a fire, and a quick snowshoe walk in the school yard. I am getting ready for the month of January. I have ice-fishing dates set, I have snowshoeing dates set, and we will have our first sweat for interested students.

January 7, 2025

It is a bitterly, chilly winter day. The sun is high in the sky when we decided to venture out snowshoeing. For many of these dozen students, it was first-time snowshoeing. Their faces showed smiles and their eyes shone with excitement. I showed them how to put their snowshoe indoors so they would not get too cold outside while attempting to try the snowshoe on. I showed them how to place their boot in the snowshoe and how each strap should be placed. A few of them caught on right away, a few others needed help. I told the students who figured it out first now they were helpers with the other students. One of the things that I have noticed is no one really complains when I assign them the role of helper. They willingly help others. One of the girls who snowshoed appeared shy and nervous. I assured her by the end of the day; she would be able to snowshoe. I made the students go through putting on the snowshoe two times before we ventured outside. I also made them walk around the large, multipurpose room. I did this so they would be better prepared when outside. We snowshoed around the school yard. We spotted other students in the windows, waving at us. I thought this is a great process for the younger students to see, the other students snowshoeing. At the end of the day, the once shy girl came up to me and said, "I cannot believe I can snowshoe. I did not think I could do stuff like this." She walked with a smile on her face back into the school. Tomorrow is the first sweat our students will participate through this Land-Based program. It is super exciting to me because we have sweats at the annual culture camp, but this is the first students we will have sweat lodge teachings regularly. A local community knowledge keeper is willing to work with our students and staff. He and I met several times in November and December. We have

planned for the sweat lodge teachings, making tobacco ties, making food for feasting, and notifying the parents of the off-site educational trip.



Figure 19 Snowshoeing with students behind the school

January 8, 2025

Today I witnessed the students learning and participating in the sweat lodge teachings. Like many other Indigenous communities, we are practicing our old ways. Today reminded me of the story I was told by a local elder. During the Indian residential school days in Pine Creek, a community member had a sweat lodge built inside his house. He built it in his house to hide it from the authorities. As you know, this was unlawful behaviour according to the Indian Act. I thought about this man while we were sitting around the sweat lodge. The sweat lodge keeper explained each step to the students. One of our discussions in our staff meetings is trauma. One of the responses to trauma is land-based

practices and ceremonies that support positive well-being. As a staff, we had all agreed that having sweat lodge ceremonies would be beneficial for our students. After the sweat finished, I could see the evidence. Students were beaming. They crawled out of the lodge smiling, sweaty and happy. The energy around the lodge was contagious. I felt as though I witnessed a sacred phenomenon. One of our high school students who has self-regulation challenges went into the sweat. She participated in the four rounds. When it was over, she said, "I cannot believe I did it." A few tears slid down her cheek.

January 16, 2025

Yesterday one of the middle years' teachers approached me and asked if she could bring her entire class out for tea and bannock on a stick. I willingly said, of course! I have been sharing with my colleagues that the outdoor learning space should be used by anyone! This teacher fully supports all land-based activities I plan. We sit down together, and she goes over the students' schedule to ensure there are no schedule conflicts. These groups of students have had some experience roasting bannock on a stick, so they were becoming more comfortable cooking around the fire. Light snow fell and the weather felt mild. It was a beautiful afternoon. The students always want to volunteer to start the fire. I have fire kindling and collect birch bark. I usually try to get a different student to start the fire while others observe. The fire draws in the students. One of the best things about today was the stories shared around the space. Students were singing, students were chatting, and students were sharing. It is an incredible way to build a community. At the end of the afternoon, the teacher remarked, "I just love my students, and I just love today." Many of them responded, "Me, too." I felt like it the outdoor learning space was becoming

established. It felt like a place for story, for fire, for food, and most importantly, for gathering.



Figure 20 Roasting bannock on a stick by the fire

January 21, 2025

Today I took the grade ones to the up-west road. We had a mission to complete. I coordinated with the teacher, and she wanted her students to collect sticks so they could use them to make their own bird feeders. I also brought two older students who are skilled snowshoe walkers to build us a walking trail into the bush. We blazed into the bush away from the wind. We gathered birch bark, pine, and all sizes of wood. I arranged the students to sit in a circle and demonstrated making a fire. I repeated several times, only make a fire when an adult is around you. Once the fire was lit and going, the students sat and shared

stories. Although it was a frigid day, they were dressed super comfortably and enjoyed the afternoon among the trees. I purposefully sent parents photos of their children during my learning activities. One of the parents messaged me that evening that her son was so impressed that I could make fire outside and in the winter!



Figure 21 Demonstration of fire making during the winter

January 27-29, 2025

We just spent the last three days ice fishing. The community is located along the shore of Lake Winnipegosis. There are a few commercial fishermen who access the area where we will be ice fishing. Again, because our inventory is not accessible, I had to coordinate having the ice holes drilled and the equipment borrowed. Luckily, we did have ice fishing sticks for our students to use. We travelled to our designated fishing area over the three days. We had community helpers who hauled the equipment to the fishing holes. They quickly drilled the holes so the students could see the process. I cleared the fishing holes and unsnagged fishing lines. The teachers would sit and visit with students for this activity. When a student spotted a swimming fish, everyone got excited. I mean everyone! The students would drop their fishing sticks and say, I want to see.



Figure 24 Grade one students ice fishing

February 5, 2025

The start of second semester created a shift in the land-based programming schedule. I am now teaching two courses in the mornings which means I do not have as much time for the coordination and planning of land-based activities. I started this month with a calendar with open slots for classroom teachers to schedule in land-based activities. I am teaching a school-initiated course (SIC) called Land Based Education with a class of grade eleven students. I will have these students for approximately seventy-five minutes each morning. We started the course with a sharing circle. Some of the students were reluctant to share in the circle. I am not sure if they are used to this form of sharing. It is the first day after all with a new teacher. Some of the students shared that they enjoy being outdoors and some shared that they did not like being outside. It will be interesting to see how this course unfolds. I shared with them that the next day we will be outside around the outdoor learning space and making bannock on a stick. I planned this activity to determine whether this is something they would enjoy, and the atmosphere will open itself to getting to know the students.

February 6, 2025

Some of the grade eleven students are not excited about being outdoors. They are not dressed for the cold temperatures. A few boys knew how to start a fire, so I gave them the supplies and soon the fire was lit. A few girls asked to go indoors because they were freezing. I agreed, I had arranged with the school librarian that some students may ask to go in, and he agreed to supervise the students.

February 12-16, 2025

The grade eleven class have begun working on a grub box project. This is a traditional box used when camping or out on the land. I collaborated with the wood shops teacher last week. Luckily, he has an open slot during the class time, so it worked out well. I brought my own grub box to show the teacher, and he made samples for the students to assemble and put together. We have been working every day on this project. Students have a wide variety of carpenter skills, so they project moved along slowly. Several students in the class decided to use their artistic skills to create hand-drawn symbols and images with the wood burning pen. As we work on this project, I am getting to know a little more each day about each student.

February 18, 2025

The Growcer unit arrived today! We have been waiting months for this to happen. The other teacher received training in the root camp on how to operate the Growcer.

February 19, 2025

Today is an incredibly special day at our school. We have been coordinating setting up an Elders Room. We cleaned, painted, and ordered furniture for this new room. One of our goals this school year is to have a stronger elder presence in the school. Collaborating with the Acting Principal, we had custodial staff paint the four in the four colours. We also ordered furniture, and it finally arrived. During the month of November, we sought out elders from the community to be part of the first ever MAS Elder Focus Group. As a staff we decided we would meet once a month and have the elders share stories, interact with students, and speak Anishinabemowin. During the time with the elders, the students asked many, many questions. We scheduled time slots for four separate classes to visit with the

elders. Originally, we canvassed ten elders in the community and four agreed to be a part of this group. The students asked questions about how they grew up, what they enjoyed doing. They shared stories and elders gave them advice and a listening ear. The students were very well behaved in each scheduled period.



Figure 25 The first elders cohort meeting

February 25, 2025

Our teepee finally arrived today for delivery and setup. We ordered from Cree Star Gifts, a local vendor in the area who custom make teepees. We organized the erecting of the teepee, following ceremonial protocols. We had a local knowledge keeper invited to welcome the teepee with food, prayers, songs, and a smudge. Today was so interesting to observe. First, the high school students pitched in with the two delivery men, without hesitation. It was empowering that our students contributed so naturally. After the teepee stood tall, the knowledge keeper said prayers and songs. The teepee was smudged, and a

food offering was placed into the fire. It was a beautiful ceremony and welcome. The knowledge keeper shared teepee teaching information. After the prayers and welcome song, we shared a feast of traditional foods. The fire was going throughout this entire process. Students placed food offerings into the fire as a form of prayer. We invited all the grades to witness this welcoming. The spirits were high, and the energy was positive and warm.



Figure 22 High school students setting up the teepee



Figure 23 Setting up the teepee (cont'd)

February 27-March 7, 2025

The days in this second semester have had the same routines. First regular class, next, the Grade 11 Land Based Education course where we are continuing to complete our grub boxes. We have not had any luck yet with the fish! At this point in time, it is not essential that our students catch fish. My goal for these ice fishing activities is getting the children and youth accustomed to being on the lake in the wintertime, experiencing all the elements: wind, cold, sun, and snow. It is important to make this a natural practice for them. Although a lot of these students live near the lake (most if not all, do), they do not have access to it. There are a variety of reasons and factors for this and through our land-based programming we can counter this with creating opportunities for these students. My heart was so full this week. I have been working hard to create these types of learning experiences for students. I do not do it alone. I do it because I see the excitement in the students faces, I have the support of the regular classroom teachers, and I know, value, and want to honour Indigenous ways of being. The fishing holes were spread out by our volunteer ice hole driller. I purposely placed the students with enough space to have quiet. By giving each of them space, the students had the space and the quiet to observe their fish relatives. Two high school student volunteers walked around the holes and cleaned the ice out as needed. I am so thankful when high school students pitch in to help the younger students. I am so thankful for all the help I can get. It was calm on the lake. It was quiet and the students were engaged. I did one final walk-about and as I was walking the students placed their finger to their lips to stop me. They silently waved their arms for me to leave each spot. One of the students finally said, "you're scaring the fish, be quiet." It was so wonderful to witness how engaged and focused they each were on the lake. The sun was

shining, the temperature was mild, and I think the students watching the fish was therapeutic. It was a different sort of energy when we walked off the lake. Everyone was happy and content.



Figure 24 Ice fishing on Lake Winnipegosis

March 11, 2025

The Land Based Education classes are wrapping up their grub box projects. Some of the boxes are expressions of art! The weather is finally warm enough for these students to be

able to go outside for our class time. This is one of the challenges of land-based programming, ensuring students have the appropriate clothing and footwear for land-based activities. There is a noticeably short window of time each day for this class, so the projects are completed at a much slower pace. We have been going outside, and some students are enjoying the snowshoe activity. There are still some students, and this is common at the high school level, where the interest or participation is not high.



Figure 25 A display of grub boxes made by the grade eleven Land-Based Education class

March 13, 2025

Today I experienced or accepted the idea that not all students, especially at the high school level, are willing to participate in land-based activities. For my grade eleven class and with such an abbreviated time limit, it is not conducive to being outdoors for an extended period. The clock is my enemy! A fire usually takes at least ten minutes to get going in the wintertime. I ask for one of the students to collect snow for our daily tea. I enjoy sitting with the students when we can around the fire and asking questions to learn more about them as individuals. Some students are very willing to share, and some participate by listening and nodding. I usually gather my students in the classroom after the first morning break and discuss the day's agenda. We usually have a vote, go for a walk or collect willow, or chop wood, or make tea or work on an indoor project. The day was mild, and some students wanted to have a fire and some students wanted to go snowshoeing. For the first time, I split my class into two groups. I notified the administrator that I would be taking some students to the trail in the back of the school to gather diamond willow. I have done this already a few times with this group of students. Four students walked with me to the back and the rest went to the fire pit to make a fire. We carried our snowshoes to the trail in the willow bush. We talked leisurely as we walked. We had a couple of hand saws to gather the diamond willow trees. We intended to gather enough diamond willow to make walking sticks with this group of students. It has snowed quite a bit the day before, so the snow was even higher. As I write this journal, I feel a moment of pride. One of the girls, who was a new snowshoe walker, showed her desire and determination to put on her snowshoes and trample around the little bush area. She did it! She sawed a few diamond willow trees for harvesting. After sawing her second willow down, she declared, "I am a

bush girl now.” It was a special moment. While several high school students were resistant to being outside in the cold, this one student affirmed the importance of land-based activities.

March 17-18, 2025

For the past two days we have been on the lake for most of the day. Monday was our annual school fishing derby. We have not caught a fish yet this season but that is not the goal of land-based programming. For this initial year, it is about a lot of firsts. First time fishing, first time roasting bannock on a stick, first time snowshoeing, first time gathering willow, and so on. My purpose and vision for these land-based activities are to have students accustomed to being on the land and on the water, in all seasons. I want students to naturalize this process through our land-based programming.

Spring 2025

March 24-28, 2025

One of the proponents of land-based programming is experiential learning. I really appreciate Howard Gardner’s work on the multiple intelligence. When I attended university for my teaching degree, there was a strong emphasis on lesson planning with the multiple intelligences in mind. For this past week, I coordinated with an artist friend who volunteered his week to offer art classes in the school. I booked the multipurpose room; it has both south and west lighting so there was natural light. The room is spacious, and we purposely placed the workspaces far apart to create an airy, inviting workspace. I collaborated with the classroom teachers to identify the budding artists in the school. I limited the class size to twenty so it would not be overcrowded. Students attended from grades five to grade twelve. This has been an amazing week! One boy who has a long

history of behaviour reports stated after our first art session, "I have been waiting for something like this my whole life." What a profound statement. It was so interesting to observe how the students responded to the classes. Students were extremely focused and engaged. The ambiance was quiet; I played instrumental music as background noise. An interesting observation was made. I knew two of the students and they were both quiet in the high school hallways. During the fourth day, we suggested students look at each other's work. I stood beside one girl watching for her reaction. Her and her paired partner loved the same genre. Their faces became lively and enthralled with each other's work. They talked to one another for the entire day and the next. It was so interesting how art connected these students, and their social sides came out!

April 7, 2025

We are hosting Frontier Games in a few days. This is a huge event for any school to host. As a staff, we have been meeting regularly these past few months to ensure all organization and planning is addressed. My responsibility will be the snowshoe convenor and fire keeper. As the snowshoe convenor, I am timing the snowshoe races. As the fire keeper, I am providing an outdoor space for students, staffs, and guests to enjoy tea by the fire. The prospector tents will be setup in the next two days, and everyone can use it as a warming shack. The grade eleven Land Based Education students have been assisting in setting up the prospect tent. We have over four hundred athletes coming; it will be an exciting couple of days!

April 10, 2025

Early this morning, a teacher from a visiting school came and sat at the fire with me. I oversaw the snowshoe competition, so I made a fire early in the morning for the snowshoe

racers. This teacher is the language and land-based teacher and recently returned home to his community in the north. He shared that he did not have a space like the one at our school but appreciated seeing it in person because it inspired him to create one at his school. We sat around the fire and shared our stories. We had an extended conversation. We both agreed that land-based activities are important and that students do not spend enough time on the land. The knowledge and skills are important to learn. It felt good to have a discussion with someone who shares similar philosophies and perspectives about land-based learning! We both shared how technology, in the form of personal devices have captured our students focus. We both agreed that land-based activities would contribute to better self-esteem and the importance of building life skills. I am so thankful for today's conversation. It affirms my beliefs and values.



Figure 26 The outdoor learning space

April 21, 2025

Today marked a professional development day. We did not have a regular school day, instead, as a school team, we agreed to participate in a sweat ceremony. It was arranged by our school administrators that a local ceremonial and sweat lodge keeper would conduct the ceremony for our school staff. I prepared a moose meat stew with garden vegetables from last fall's harvest. As I prepared this meal, I thought about our way of life and how important it was for our teachers to have an opportunity to learn and to practice one of our important ceremonies. My previous sweat lodge experience happened in Brokenhead First Nation, where my two oldest sons and I received our spirit names. I knew today was going to be a wonderful day based on my previous experience. There were administrators, teachers, and educational assistants who attended the ceremony. We all traveled to the site. We started the day with information from the local knowledge keeper about his way of life and teachings centered around the sweat lodge. He planned for us to take part in all the steps of the ceremony, from arranging the fires, the rocks, and the process. He shared valuable local and general knowledge about the ceremony. As a group, many participants attended the sweat lodge. I decided to support the participants around the fire. The people who did not enter the lodge chose to sit around the fire and share. It was probably one of the best professional development days in my teaching history. We sat around the fire and shared stories. We assisted as instructed. We listened to the words, songs, and prayers being led to the sweat lodge. After the ceremony, we shared the prepared foods for the ceremony. The local sweat lodge keeper provided valuable information and really promoted the message that as teachers, we must take care of our

own well-being because we have a significant role working with the children and youth of our community.

April 22, 2025

Next week is scheduled for spring fishing. Each spring the students participate in the creek and river spring fishing run. Students always look forward to this activity! For the past few weeks, I have been busy ordering fishing equipment. This year will be the first year we have fishing gear for thirty students. I am so excited! We used some of our budget to purchase rods, lines, lures, tackle boxes, filleting knives and so on. The ordering process took longer than expected, so I knew I had to get this done before I left on my trip to the north for a meeting. Sometimes the days feel so hurried and today was one of them! We had to complete thirty rods in one morning. We got it done! During my grade eleven LB class, we showed the students how to put the fishing line on the reels. It was a first-time experience for many of the students. I put up sign-up sheets for students from grade five to twelve. The elementary teachers told me the students were so excited and wanted to fish each day. I wanted to ensure that students who had not gone fishing before were on the list. For me, it is important that students who do not have access to fishing opportunities are able to access them through our school. I travelled to Baker's Narrows in northern Manitoba for a two-day professional workshop with the new FSD Indigenous Way of Life Learning Table. The Learning Table group consisted of two representatives from the five Areas of our division. We all have diverse experiences, perspectives, and skills in land-based programming in the division. During our first day, we sat around the fire to get to know one another. We had representatives from Cree and Ojibway communities. I met several of the Learning Table members from previous meetings. I was asked in the fall to

be a part of this important group and looked forward to hearing and learning from everyone present. I bunked with a person from Norway House, a northern Cree community. She and I talked long into the evening about a wide variety of issues. We both shared the importance of practicing relationality with our students.

April 23, 2025

Today was a full day. We tackled the off-site educational trip document that is used in the division. It is possibly going to be revised based on our feedback and comments about the document. The document is over thirty pages long and provides extensive knowledge and planning considerations for low-risk and high-risk educational trips. Throughout the day, we shared information and stories about our own experiences with land-based programming in our communities. We did have one representative from outside our division who shared his experiences and perspectives about land-based programming in his community.

April 25, 2025

As I have thought many times before, today was the best day ever. We traveled to Mink Creek to catch fish. For some of the students, it was their first time fishing. Along with two other co-workers, we helped the students as needed. Some students were expert casters, and some were brand new to fishing. Students were advised to bring a camping chair, snacks, and rubber boots. A grade five student caught the first fish and immediately stated, "I can't believe I caught a fish!" Right after the first fish was caught, the excitement rose! It was a beautiful, warm, spring day, perfect for fishing. We fished for over seven hours. One of the highlights for me that day was the bus ride home. The bus driver turned on the radio and students sang their hearts out. Everyone was in a jovial mood and felt good after

catching a fish. Everyone caught at least one fish that day. It was Friday night, and the students were returning home with bagged, cleaned fish after a day under the sun.

Sunday, April 27, 2025

Yesterday afternoon, I drove by the school and noticed that I could not spot the teepee like I usually could. I phoned the principal yesterday and shared this information with her. We agreed to find some volunteers to help put the teepee back up. We had a conversation, and both agreed that the teepee was in a very windy location and that we would place it further north where the bushes and trees could provide better wind resistance. The principal called local knowledge keepers for assistance. I asked my high school aged son to reach out to a few of the other high school boys who could provide some help. Although it was the weekend, we had about eight volunteers in total. It took a lot of effort for our young high school boys to set up the teepee. Two male school staff members were also onsite for this activity. We also had a few visitors watch the process. It was comforting to have kokos and their grandchildren who were both under the age of one present. After the volunteers set up the teepee upright, our local knowledge keeper did a welcoming ceremony and first fire.

April 30, 2025

Today we took our last group of students to the Turtle River to fish. Again, we had some first-time fishing students and others who did not require any assistance at all. I monitored the first-time students. Before we departed the bus, I explained how the day would unfold. The students were instructed to have a fishing partner, and they could only fish in spots where one of the supervisors could always see him or her. We were fishing by a bridge, so I instructed students to keep away from under the bridge. I also explained that the fish must be brought to the supervisor's truck who had all the cleaning equipment. I shared the

importance of not only casting but also learning how to fillet fish. I stressed the message that this skill is an important skill to have when fishing. I told them it was not mandatory to fillet each fish caught today but stressed it was important to be open to trying to learn how to fillet. Some of the students shared with me that they had never held a fishing rod before. I explained how the rod worked and showed her how to use the bait. I made the students practice on the land at least three or four times each before they cast them into the water. I watched and waited. I said, okay, now I will show you in the water. I tugged on my line, lifted the bail slightly so I could get my finger on the line for more tension and then cast it. I locked the bail in and explained each step to the students. As I reeled in my line, I caught a pickerel! The students were most impressed. I watched and waited to ensure they had the correct movements. When one student got the first fish, her entire face lit up! She could not stop saying, I can't believe I caught a fish! Her excitement was contagious! The students caught many fish and a few tried filleting. One of the students jumped right in and filleted at least ten fish. It was great to see her learn!

May 2, 2025

The students have been involved in a two-day community education planning workshop. It was arranged by a local organization to get the perspectives and views of the students about their current educational opportunities and plans. One of my coworkers from high school shared with me that many students in his group spoke about how much they enjoy the land-based activities the most out of all the learning activities they had this year in school. It was affirming to hear this feedback!

May 5–9, 2025

This week I coordinated for a volunteer artist to offer art classes for students. The high interest in the March art week demonstrated that students were extremely interested in developing their artistic abilities. Once again, the students were engaged and focused when learning. They were excited each morning and would ask me every day what time art class is, even though the posters were in the hallway and the morning announcement stated the daily times. May 5th marks the National Day of Awareness and Remembrance for the Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people (MMIWG2S). Our school and community honour this important day. Students made posters, made ribbon ties, and wore red. We planned a community walk on this day. One of our budding artists made beautiful banner for our walk. We invited community members to participate in the walk with us. One of the goals of our school is involve the community in our activities. We feel it is important to have a strong school-community relationship. Community leaders, parents, elders, and members joined our walk. We found out one of people in our walk had a family member who is missing, and she was very touched that our school had this walk.

May 12, 2025

Today was a moving day. We moved the prospector platforms near the new teepee site. Our outdoor learning space officially moved. We coordinated with the local construction crew. They had everything moved by morning. It was an emotional day for me. We had a teepee, tents, a wood storage unit, two storage units, and a fire pit. I had many talks with my former principal about this very outdoor learning space. I felt that she would have been incredibly happy to see this space become a reality. We also received more equipment that had been stored offsite. We now have five canoes, fishing nets, an auger, and other land-

based tools and supplies. I was already planning canoe trips with our students for June! I am envisioning the location of the garden beds to be built soon in this space. This site is a better location because we have been getting notified that students were playing in the prospector tents and hid from teachers during recess and lunch hour. So, it was a win-win situation. We moved out of the wind, and it would be easy to see spot students during the recess and lunch hour breaks. We are continuing to plan our second culture camp; we have had a few delays for this camp. Cross Lake community and students are planning to camp at our outdoor learning space for a bison cull ceremony. We need to be ready!

May 14, 2025

One of the observations I made in early spring was the need to have rubber boots onsite at school. We purchased three pairs through fundraising monies, and I donated three or four pairs of boots my sons no longer used. It was important to have these boots otherwise students would either not be able to participate in our activities or could ruin their footwear. I wanted to ensure everyone had the appropriate footwear, so I always had extra boots on hand. Today I took my grade eleven LB class on the up-west road. For the past two weeks we have been going on nature walks behind the school. I have been showing them the plants and identifying local medicinal plants. They are very curious. We spotted wild strawberries close to the schoolyard.



Figure 27 A bush walk with students "upwest"

One of the events that surprises me is how open the students are to examine and study the plants. I share the name of the plants and their uses. Students have tasted young stinging nettle, pine buds, wild rose petals, and mint. We tramped into the bush up west near the creek. Students appeared comfortable and engaged. We walked and talked as we explored. I did not have a set agenda; I just wanted students to be comfortable on the land and take notice of what was growing. They asked questions and a few of them knew plant names. We were on the hunt for wild mint to be used for tea. I shared with the students that it had a distinct scent and the stem felt triangular. We looked on one side of the riverbank but could not find any. One of the boys said, "Well, let's cross." I did not take his words seriously and kept walking with the students. Maybe two minutes later, he yells "we can cross the creek". He stood in the middle of the creek beckoning others to join. I told the other supervisor to stay with the students, and I joined him in the water. We both successfully crossed and scouted for mint. We found one right away. I snapped off a small piece to take back to the group. We walked back and he said, "I knew I could do it" with the biggest smile on this face. I have really grown to respect this young man. He is always willing to pitch in and help. He is always part of community activities, and I know that academics are not his strongest point. He is a helper, though! His mother was one of my first students, so I recognized his happy-go-lucky spirit gifted from her to him. Land-based activities and experiences call to him.

May 19–22, 2025

This week I have been chaperoning an educational trip to Toronto. I arranged for another staff member to tend to grow vegetables in the school foyer entrance.

May 27, 2025

While I was on our high school trip, I coordinated with a Council member to have our students work in the community garden. We started our own vegetables with seeds. They were placed in the school foyer for sunlight and watering. We also placed them in this location so students from all grades could watch their growth. It was a success. We had tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, peas, and herbs growing. I took a group of students from grade five to eight to the community garden. This year we would have our own garden section, and the students were enthusiastic! The councilor had seed potatoes on site for the students to plant as well. It is so surprising (and refreshing) to see students excited to plant vegetables. They listened intently and would ask, is this the way?



Figure 28 Students planting in the community garden

May 28, 2025

I took a second group of students to the community garden this afternoon. It is surely surprising how eager and willing students are to help with the garden responsibilities. They debate over who will get to water the plants. They debate over who gets to hold the seeds. When I returned to school, we received an important email. The email stated that due to the forest fire situation in the province, all land-based activities are postponed. The divisional youth gathering camp (the first of its kind) is postponed. Another teacher and I were taking four students to participate in the camp. This sure puts a damper on our land-based plans. I could not take students off site, which meant that we could no longer work in the community garden.

June 4, 2025

I had to switch gears quickly with the postponement of land-based activities. I had planned a culture camp, canoe paddling, and gardening. I reached out to a local hide tanner who began working on the bison hide earlier this school year. I explained our situation, and she was very willing to come into the school to resume our hide work on the bison. I was so thankful for her gift of teaching and time.

June 6, 2025

Today our local hide tanner spent time at the school teaching students how to stretch the bison hide onto a frame. The bison hide was kept frozen between each process. It has been thawing since Monday. Both my grade eleven LB class and grade seven and eight students were able to learn how to cut into the hide to make the slits for the framing process. It is always so interesting to notice how some of my high school students' initial response is immediate refusal. I sometimes must convince one of them to take a step in our activities.

Once this person has tried, the reaction is always the same, usually saying, “there I did it” with a smile on his or her face. Two of the qualities of this teacher are patience and positivity. She encourages all students to participate. Her gentle, warm manner is conducive to her connection with the students. She has worked with students in the previous school year on other tanning projects. Some of the students know her and have a good relationship with her. Originally, we were planning to hide scrape during the winter months, but the weather and dates did not coincide with frost scraping. Frost scraping is a process where the temperatures must be cold enough, below minus twenty, which produces a different effect on the hide. The younger students, in comparison to the grade eleven LB students, have more experience in tanning from previous projects. I can see the comfort level is higher for these younger students. For most of the grade eleven LB students, this was their first time learning to scrape hide. Our garden boxes have not been materialized yet. The original staff member who was willing to build them could not, so I had to make other arrangements. The growing vegetables in the containers were ready to be transplanted. This is something I am learning about land-based program development; things don’t always work out as planned!



Figure 29 Students learning to frame the bison hide

June 10, 2025

With the fire bans issued and the cancellation of all off-site activities, I have been fortunate to have other activities for the students to complete, especially for the grade eleven LB students. The garden boxes are finally finished! I was getting a little worried because the growing season is not that long and I wanted to ensure the vegetables had enough time for growth. We should have planted at least a week or two ago, but I am optimistic that we will have vegetables to harvest in the fall. Today, for the grade eleven LB class, we positioned the garden boxes near the outdoor learning space. Next, we layered and prepared the garden boxes for seeding and transplanting. Most of the students in this class do not have gardening experience but were willing to help. I had a few grades seven and eight student volunteers to help fill the boxes with the soil. They also offered to plant some of the garden boxes. I had assigned three of the garden boxes to each of the early years' classrooms previously. The students in these grades (one to four) started the seeds indoors in April. One of the early year's teachers is an avid gardener. She brought her students out this afternoon, and she guided them through the process of designing the vegetable garden box. I have noticed some of the students are more interested in being outside. We divided the class up, and I took most of the boys on a walk around the school yard while she guided the interested students on planting seeds and transplanting the vegetables.

It was another momentous day!

June 11, 2025

One of the main goals I had on the land-based program at our school was connecting the community with the school. I have been connecting and networking with various organizations in the community regularly throughout the school year. I also share some of

our land-based activities on our community social media page, so others know what the students are doing and learning. Yesterday, a community worker reached out to me to offer tobacco plants for our students and for our garden boxes. I was thrilled! Today, I arranged to have our grade eleven LB class pick up the tobacco plants and transplant them. The office is right across from the school yard, so it was a two-minute walk. I walked over with my students, and we toured the new facility and hauled the tobacco plants to the school. There must have been at least a thousand tobacco plants in the growing containers! I set up a transplanting station during the morning break in my regular classroom. We had tables set up and extra materials from the garden start up project to work with. The community worker also had all the supplies needed for this project. The grade eleven LB students were helpful during this project. Once they saw and learned how to transplant, they transplanted over two hundred plants in less than an hour. I was so impressed with their diligence. While we were busy transplanting, a few other high school students walked into the classroom. An older student asked how this activity was connected to science. Being a former grade nine and ten teacher myself, I responded, “Well, like the periodic table that



Figure 30 Students transplanting tobacco plants

is full of elements, dirt or soil is full of the same elements, just like in our bodies, we are composed of calcium, magnesium, phosphorus and so on. These plants will need sun and water to grow. We are all made from the very same elements you are learning about in science.” He responded with a “Woah, you could learn science from this class easy.” I nodded and smiled in agreement.

June 12, 2025

The garden boxes are officially planted! Originally, I had reserved three boxes for the early years' classrooms. One group planted an entire box. I had grade seven and eight students volunteered to help plant the other four boxes; the last box was reserved for the tobacco plants. Tomorrow is the last day of regular classes for high school, including my grade eleven LB class. It sure has been an interesting experience having a land-based class for seventy-five minutes each day. Time is very much a constraint for this type of learning. Projects must be broken down into much smaller steps. Overall, I am thankful for the opportunity to offer such a different form of teaching and learning for the students. Many students have often said they would rather be sitting around the fire or going into the bush. My land-based inventory of supplies is slowly growing, but it would have sure made planning easier if we had the supplies at the start of this class.

June 18, 2025

Today was our last Elders Focus Group meeting. Originally, we asked ten community members to join our group. We had a few hiccups in ensuring the regular meetings occurred. We were amidst scraping the bison hide, so our elders took part in this project. We sat semi-circled around the hide. The hide was propped up against the school exterior

wall. When a person drove by or entered the school yard, they would be greeted by the sight of a group of students scraping hide.

One of the positive aspects of the hide tanning project over the past few weeks was the little girl who joined the process. The expert hide tanner brought her six-month-old daughter to the school every time. Students would ask to carry her and play with her while they took scraping breaks. We all welcomed her presence



Figure 31 Students scraping the bison hide

warmly. Today, one of the elders met her and said, “This is how every baby should be learning.” I could not agree more. Hide tanning and other land-based activities are becoming a naturalized and normalized process for her. When students are scraping, I always hear comments, such as, “This is so much fun” or “I wish I could do this every day” which tells me that they certainly enjoy these activities. I invited the grade one class to come and participate in the process today. They were so excited and enjoyed the process.

There existed a limited amount of scraping tools, so they all rotated. They could not wait to have a second or third try scraping.

Summer 2025

June 24, 2025

Today we had an elder come to the school to help grind cedar. Almost every fall, we traveled north with high school students to Highway 60 to gather cedar. We had an accumulated frozen stock of cedar from multiple years of gathering the cedar. Our principal reached out to the elder, and she was willing to come and bring her equipment to help clean and grind the cedar. We spent the entire day on this activity. As we worked, stories were told. She is an exceptionally good storyteller. We worked in our staffroom for this activity. Most of the classrooms were being reassigned, and the other rooms were being used for graduation purposes. It made the most sense to work in the staffroom. We had a few volunteer students help clean the cedar for the grinder machine. Staff commented throughout the day how wonderful the smell of cedar filled the room. It was refreshing to take in! This afternoon is our last official land-based activity, hide scraping. We were able to scrape the extra layers and consulted with the wood shop teacher to store the framed hide in the workshop area. What an amazing year!



Figure 32 The outdoor learning space

Coming to Know

Daani gigkendaan translates to coming to know. Through this research study, this researcher articulates and describes her coming to know from foundational bush culture experiences in childhood to this scholarly research study. Fanon frames this concept as *consciousness*, to raise awareness. Through this research study, I experienced consciousness-raising to understand settler-colonialism and social and subject formation better, specifically on school systems. Concepts such as decolonization, diffusionism, and otherness contribute to my own understanding of the power relations that exist in places that appear as neutral, naturalized structures such as the school system.

As a community member, bush culture practitioner, land-based teacher, and university researcher, I wear many hats. Growing up in bush culture has founded the knowledge, skills, and values that reflect Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing. My decades of teaching experience in this community contributed to the profound, supportive relationships I have created with the extended community, including students, parents, teaching staff, elders, and leadership. Becoming a land-based teacher is truly rewarding and challenging. It is a newer teaching position in school systems and is still in its infancy stage. This relational practice I have maintained for over twenty years in the community of Pine Creek contributes greatly to the research. As a researcher, I aspired to develop an education model to create space for Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing. One of the significant systemic obstacles to developing a land-based model within a school system is the form of education—the spatial and temporal logics. These logics perpetuated in school systems today continue to reflect capitalism. As stated in chapter one, our community of Pine Creek First Nation experienced a severe disconnection of Indigenous praxis

and theory through Canada's nation-building narrative. The education system is one aspect of reproducing the conditions of production as examined in the second chapter of this dissertation.

The journal entries depict the development of an Indigenous-centric, land-based model. The journals in this chapter represent the researcher's observations, reflections, and widened understanding of the systemic obstacles of developing a land-based model within a school system. As an observant-participant researcher, I journaled my own insights, observations, and thoughts, as well as the students' comments and responses to land-based learning experiences. Throughout the journaling process, I would write both generalized and context-heavy, thick descriptions. Journals occurred throughout the 2024-2025 ten-month school calendar year. Photos throughout the journaling process are important to contextualize the development of the land-based model.

The major goal of this research study was to identify the systemic obstacles in the development of a land-based model within a Western school system to integrate Indigenous knowledge, praxis, and theory as land-based education. As previously stated in chapter one under the section *Mapping the Problem*, pre-contact education occurred through empirical learning, observation, and storytelling. Pine Creek, like many First Nations across Canada, became subjected to Western systems of education. For almost a century, the Pine Creek Indian residential school system imposed Eurocentric ideologies, practices, and systems for instruction and learning. This system destroyed a way of life. This research works to counter the Western school system by being community-based, empirical, holistic, and relational.

Althusser's (1971) essay, "*Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus*," discussed in chapter two, highlights the concept of ideology and state apparatuses as part of colonial society. Ideology is imposed through school systems as a colonial infrastructure to perpetuate Western ideologies, practices, and routines. This system is designed to reproduce the conditions of production to

maintain capitalism by creating docile bodies to be prepared to enter the workforce. Althusser discusses how through ideological processes, the reproduction of the conditions of production becomes naturalized. This is pivotal in understanding the underlying effect of school systems: creating workers to support capitalism. Indigenous values and their relationship to the land significantly decreased because of the imposed school system and *Indian Act* policies. This is evident in the journal entries. Journal entries show that for many students, it was their first time fishing, standing on the frozen lake, plucking a duck, going snowshoeing, or something as simple as chopping wood. There were many firsts for students during the development of this land-based model. It is also evident in the increase of elders' presence in the school system. Many activities had elders or knowledge keepers present and as the source of knowledge, as seen in journal entries (see September 9, January 8, February 19, April 25, June 18). Many stories would be shared about local and traditional knowledge by the elders. The sharing of Indigenous knowledge and theory, including ideology, by the elders and knowledge keepers became more common during this research study.

The typical classroom reflects Western spatial and temporal logics. Students are quite often situated in rows with the teacher at the front of the classroom as the authority figure. The clock reflects the temporal logic. Time is enforced in daily class schedules, assessment and measurement of student progress, and so forth. Students are age-segregated in a hierarchical system. Debord's work, emphasized in chapter two of this dissertation, *spectacle theory*, mediated by images and representations, not lived experiences, affirms students as passive learners: students are spectators. The focus is on standardized test scores based on pre-packaged curricular products. One of the goals of the school system is to create docile, obedient bodies to become trained as workers. Foucault, as discussed in chapter two of this dissertation, draws parallels between the school

system and the prison system; students are tracked in all aspects of their learning and their environment: classroom layout, hall monitoring, measured breaks, and tracking systems. The school bells regulate most aspects of an individual during the school day. Time is precise. Foucault asserts schools are machines for learning. Schools control students to produce docility and subordination.

Every morning, every weekday, mostly everywhere there is a public school operating, students start their day by standing and singing *O Canada*. While this is considered a very naturalized and normalized practice for school systems, it is important to be aware of its intent: to promote nationalism and Western ideologies, philosophies, and practices. It seems harmless. It does, in fact, set the perspective and tone for students daily. Students are trained to stand still, to sing, and to memorize the lyrics to this national anthem. In chapter two of this dissertation, Althusser's work demonstrates how the material conditions of production for reproduction are "integrated into our everyday consciousness," which includes everyday routines in school systems (1971, p. 1). Students conform to standardized practices throughout the school day.

In contrast, the journal entries demonstrate how the land-based model structures learning by the physical landscape and seasonal cycles. In chapter five of this thesis, the seasonal round (see Figure 9) highlights the series of learning experiences following the cycle of the natural world. *Land as teacher* is a statement becoming more common in usage, including in school systems. Students become more aware of the interconnectedness of water, forests, wildlife, plants, and so on, and that they rely on each other. The temporal logic becomes cyclical, organic, and seasonal. This is in sharp contrast to the form of regulated, standardized learning.

The school system, as discussed in chapter two, perpetuates Western philosophies of education including ideology, pedagogy, praxis, and structure. These journal entries and the theory

and praxis they are built on contrast Western philosophies of education. These journal entries convey the profound message of the land as teacher, elders as teachers, knowledge keepers, and land-resource people as teachers. There is no one authority figure in the land-based education “classroom” that reflects Indigenous epistemology and methodology. As one reads the journals, one will understand that many people contribute to this land-based education model; it is more community-based and participatory than the traditional classroom model.

A major systemic obstacle in the development of the land-based program involved time. Educational trip forms require specific activity dates, and administrators and this researcher often had different perspectives on time when completing these forms. Learning occurs when the land naturally provided specific teachings (maple tapping, spring fishing, for example). As the school year progressed, I would identify a range of dates (in succession) on the forms to ensure the trip approval occurred. Classroom teachers also felt the pressure of time to meet assessment deadlines. Throughout the learning experiences, local community members who are land-based knowledge keepers would become active as the teacher or guide. The hunters, the fisher people, the medicine pickers, and so on would share their knowledge with students. This significant practice challenges colonial or Western models of education by centering Indigenous epistemologies. The social dynamics of a land-based learning model reflect authentic community and active participation. Ideologies, practices, and structure starkly contrast between the standardized classroom environment and land-based learning environments.

Elements of a Land-Based Model

Through the journal reflection analysis process, recurring praxes emerged. The circle, experiences, fire, and story are significant elements of a land-based education model based on the journal entries. These four elements consistently reemerge as the land-based model develops. The

circle formation is an important symbol for Indigenous people. The circle represents autonomy, governance, and worldview. Traditional Indigenous governance models reflect circular frameworks rather than a hegemonic structure. Experiences are diverse and based on the seasonal cycle of nature. Unlike a stationary school classroom, the learning experienced required access to different areas in the community and surrounding area. The fire, a circle representation, draws people in. Story and storytelling are also significant as praxis and theory. Knowledge is transmitted and story is central to the development of the land-based model. These four elements are significant to a land-based model within a school system.

Throughout the ten-month journal entries, the use of the circle is evident as a pedagogical tool. During each activity, students formed circles to hear the teachings or instructions before an activity or to begin the learning experience. Opening and closing sharing circles became a natural process for the students. This practice supports autonomy; students are allowed to share regularly. Everyone is provided with an opportunity to share their insights, observations, and thoughts. This sharing circle framework started early in the school year with instructions regarding our seven teachings (bravery, honesty, humility, love, respect, truth, and wisdom) so students would become familiar with the process of sharing, being supportive as listeners, and building community with each other. It counters power-relation practices in school systems to affirm that every person in the circle is included; it attempts to reduce existing hierarchies.

While reviewing the journal entries, it became quite evident that there are a wide variety of learning experiences to support land-based education. The land is sacred and significant to Indigenous peoples' perspectives and worldviews. Million (2013) asserts, "The meaning of *Indigenous* as it is defined by all those cultures who identify themselves as such has always been in their relationship to a "land" that place they were in relationship to without anthropocentric

bias, relationships that disciplined action and cohered Indigenous persons and societies” (p. 116). In *Breathing Life into the Stone Fort Treaty: An Anishinabe Understanding of Treaty One*, by Craft (2013), Chapter Six, “*The Land Cannot Speak for Itself: Relationship to and about Land*” entails the significance of the relationship between Anishinabe people and the land. Anishinabe people are “made of the land”, “we speak for the land”, “the land was their book” to describe the sacredness of this relationship (pp. 94-100). Identity formation begins with the land. Knowledge gathering occurs through experiential, holistic learning. Interconnectedness is gained from these experiences that support the emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual aspects of an individual while on the land.

Land-based education offers a diversity of learning environments: the outdoor learning space, including the teepees and fire pit in the school yard, the snowshoe trails, the forests, the lake, the rivers, the medicine picking fields, and so on. The source of experience and knowledge is the land, not simply a textbook. As students became accustomed to being on the land, they started interacting differently with the land. Journal entry dated *October 11*, “can you pick me next time we scrape [the hide]?”, journal entry dated March 13, 2025, “*I am a bush girl now*”, journal entry dated May 14, 2025, “*...students are open to examine and study the plants. I share the name of the plants and their uses. Students have tasted very young stinging nettle, pine buds, wild rose petals and so on*” and another journal entry example dated June 18, 2025, “*When students are scraping [the hide], I always hear the comments, such as ‘This is so much fun’ or ‘I wish I could do this every day’*”. Real-world experiences are well-received and highly effective in the development of knowledge, skills, and values.

Throughout the entries, the use of fire is prominent and serves as the center where students share their ideas, perspectives, and stories. The journal entry dated November 8, 2024 is very

significant. By this month, students became familiar with the sharing circle process during land-based learning experiences. The students understood that everyone gets an opportunity to share, and they wait and listen while another person is sharing. During this entry, many private, personal stories were shared (and omitted to respect their confidentiality and privacy). The sharing circle took on a healing aspect as students connected on the land, away from their usual classroom environments, in chairs with desks, and seated in row formation. The following is an excerpt from that entry to illustrate the sharing circle's effect on the students:

We gathered the students into a circle around the fire. The students took turns sharing. It was an interesting experience. One of the students shared about the loss of his family member. When he was done sharing, one of the girls walked over to him and hugged him. They shared stories and laughed. After each person shared, one of the classmates would hug the student. One of the students remarked, "This is the best day ever." The teacher and I watched from a distance to give them the space to talk.

Story is another important element of land-based education. The oral tradition, or orality, is an important praxis for knowledge transmission in Indigenous communities. The act of story and story-sharing are highlighted regularly throughout the journal entry review process. During the journal entry review process, story is a common feature as both pedagogy and praxis. Story and storytelling techniques are effective for both learning and teaching. As Heller & Kulchyski (2025) describe this praxis, "In the bush, knowledge frequently takes narrative form, is personal (tied to individual embodied practice; that is experiential) and often empirical, based on observation. Knowledge is transmitted across many generations, and grows and deepens over long periods of time" (p. 117). Elders, knowledge keepers, and land-resource people share community, cultural, family, historical, political, and personal stories. In one of the first journal entries (September 9th), elders joined the students at the camp and each night would share stories.

Students would ask many questions around the fire. The journal entry (November 12-14) describes a local skilled hunter bringing in ducks for students to learn to pluck, singe, and dress.

Throughout this process, the local hunter shared many stories about how he learned, how he spent time on the land, and how he guided the students through the process. Another example of story sharing is the journal entry dated June 24th, "*As we worked, the elder told many stories*". Literary imperialism is discussed in chapter three as the literature of dominance. It perpetuates Eurocentric theory and praxis as universally accepted. It also marginalizes and misrepresents Indigenous people in literature, historical texts, and media. Through story and especially with the growing presence of elders, the students are enhancing and sustaining their culture, their language, their practices, and their worldview. These elements—circle, experience, fire, and story—are important features of a land-based education model.

Conclusion

This chapter presents the journal entries written while developing a land-based model within a school system for the First Nation community of Pine Creek, Manitoba. As the school year progressed, the researcher notated students' comments, responses, and stories during land-based practices. The journal entries also reflect the systemic challenges in developing such a model. In the previous section, important components (circle, fire, land, story) are highlighted to support Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing. It also reviews the critical theory concepts examined in chapter two to support this research. It focuses on ideology, apparatuses, and the commodification of education.

The journals illustrate how students are shifting from "docile, obedient bodies" sitting at desks in row formation to active, curious, engaged individuals who are learning land-based knowledge, skills, and values. Often through the review of the journaling process, there are many

instances of the researcher desiring to “normalize” land-based activities with the students. This is part of developing a relationship with the land that is not exploitative or extractive. The land encompasses culture, language, and worldview.

Transformative education models can replace existing education models. In chapter three, Gramsci and Spivak's discourses regarding humanistic education and aesthetic education are examined. Both scholars recommend paramount changes to the school system. Gramsci provides the creative school model as the solution, and Spivak asserts aesthetic education requires epistemic change. Gramsci describes a school where students are independent, autonomous, and critical thinkers. Spivak also describes education where students can look for alternative ways of knowing rather than being filled with facts and data. Spivak supports replacing colonial power structures with local and Indigenous epistemologies. The term *inaendaugwut* is emphasized in chapter three by drawing on Johnston's work, *Ojibway Heritage*. Johnston describes this term as “he is permitted of himself”. This term supports the *Mamahtawisiwin* Indigenous Education Policy Framework recently released (2022) by the Province of Manitoba. This framework assists Manitoba teachers to incorporate Indigenous pedagogy, language, and culture. *Mamahtawisiwin* translates from the Cree language to the wonder we are born with. Throughout the journal entries, students are given opportunities to learn from elders, fisher people, hunters, medicine pickers, leaders, and so on to develop and enhance their way of looking at the world critically and holistically.

In the following concluding chapter, I present the analysis of the findings of the journal process. In chapter six, I highlight the common themes and explain the review process of the journal entries, the identification of recurring ideas, theme development, and the selection of

particular examples for analysis. I close the chapter with a section on the significance of the study and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter Six: *Daani Gigkendaan*: Coming to Know

Introduction

As conveyed in the second chapter, school systems reproduce the conditions of production in the guise of education to support capitalism. The policies, structures, and systems subjugate Indigenous people to maintain power. I have experienced the school system from different viewpoints: as a young student, as an intergenerational Indian residential school survivor family member, as a classroom teacher, as a parent, and as a research student. The foundational educational experiences afforded by my parents are in stark contrast to Western educational practices or to the form of education, more specifically. This research study contends that the school system is a curtain to capitalism. The school system, including the form of education, needs drastic reform. While I have a wide variety of experiences in the school system, advocating and developing the land-based model within the school system carries the most significance. *Daani gigkendaan*, I am coming to know. My consciousness rose through both my family's fundamental way of life and my scholarly pursuit of advocating for change. I am indebted to my parents for always practicing our Indigenous way of life: bush culture.

This research draws on theorists to demonstrate how the Canadian government through legislation support capitalism and colonial advancement through education. State apparatuses, ideology, and interpellation are highlighted in chapter two to describe social formation and order. The Indian residential school system, the day school system, and today's contemporary school system are founded in the ideological apparatus as shown in Althusser's essay to reproduce the relations of production. The school system is part of the state's apparatuses, and through ideology and interpellation, students are trained to become docile, obedient workers.

The dominant, settler colonial culture is reflected in school systems. Through conformity, totality and totalization, discipline, and punishment, power relations are maintained. Capitalism is

sustained through educational institutions. By examining Debord, Foucault, Gramsci, Horkheimer and Adorno, and Sartre, it becomes clear that school systems commodify relations for the mode of production where students become a part of the capitalist machine. Debord, Gramsci, Horkheimer and Adorno highlight power relations to emphasize conformity. Social order and the mode and relations of production are described by using totality and the lateral totalization of seriality as discussed by Sartre. Debord also pinpoints the materialization of the capitalist worldview through the dominant mode of production through cultural homogenization. Punishment, as a complex social function, is outlined by Foucault to control individuals, including students in school systems, to produce docility and subjectivity.

Systemic obstacles exist in developing a land-based education model within a school system including form, funding, policy, resources, and time. As a researcher who developed deep and extensive relationships with many levels of relations in the community and on the land, relationality is significant to this research study. While I earned my Bachelor of Education degree, I often said, "One day, I will have a school in the bush." Through this PhD journey, this statement is becoming a reality. As an insider-insurgent researcher, my experiences, my perspective, my positionality, and my worldview profoundly shape this research. This chapter highlights the analyses and findings of the journaling process for the 2024-2025 school year at Minegoziibe Anishinabe School in Pine Creek, Manitoba as an observant-participant. As I reviewed the journaling process, there are several common themes that emerge around the primary research question including: form, funding, policy, resources, and time. With the secondary question on student autonomy and self-esteem, the common theme is engagement and modelling.

Systemic Obstacles

School systems hold economic, political, and social roots steeped in Eurocentrism under the umbrella of education. These systems exist to maintain capitalism for the nation-state called Canada. Relations of power are perpetuated in school systems and shape future social relations. As discussed in chapter one, as a student in a school system and as a member of an Indigenous family, there existed opposing learning systems. As discussed in chapter two, ideological domination is formulated through conformity, discipline, and totality practices and procedures. Ideology in school systems is steeped in Eurocentric thought. It subjugates its Indigenous students. Education is part of the commodification process to support capitalism. Schools produce docile, obedient workers. In the following section, there is a discussion of the systemic obstacles of form, funding, policy, resources, and time, common themes of the journaling process in the previous chapter.

Form

Settler colonists imposed ideologies, practices, and structures that differed entirely from existing Indigenous ideologies, practices, and structures into Indigenous communities. When reviewing the journals written and photos taken over the school year, the stark contrast form becomes obvious. The school system, along with other social structures, replicates a Western way of living as a naturalized process. Ideologies, practices, and routines forced on children in the Indian residential school are still being perpetuated in school systems. Fanon explores how capitalist societies create submissive and inhibitive subjects through violence methodology in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*. Dominant ideologies to support colonialism are naturalized into colonized subjects. Countering colonialism includes the raising of awareness, and *consciousness*, to alter the conditions of the colonized. Fanon eloquently and passionately ends this phenomenal

work with “Moreover, if we want to respond to the expectations of the Europeans we must not send them back a reflection, however ideal of their society and their thoughts...” (p. 239) which demonstrates the perpetual practices of school systems in Indigenous communities. This research study challenges the status quo of both the dominant society and the Indigenous community by developing a land-based model within a school system.

The traditional form of education is enclosed rooms with rows of desks. The teacher provides the curriculum content and students memorize and repeat this content. Learning is passive. Teachers are viewed as the authority figure. Traditional school systems rely heavily on verbal linguistics and logical-mathematical. In most school systems today, these two intelligences are framed as “literacy” and “numeracy” as key components of student development. A land-based learning model can support many of Gardner’s identified intelligences. In traditional school systems, the teacher is the “expert,” and the students are the “depositories” of knowledge as discussed in chapter four of this work. Form changes in this land-based model with having elders, knowledge keepers, and land-based experts.

The form of education—the spatial and temporal logics—is a systemic obstacle. Teaching is naturalized and normalized as an indoor space with students in desks, in row formation. Little Bear, Innes, and Briggs reflect Freire’s work in creating



Figure 34 Elders are present during a camp

critical, conscious thinkers. Freire's work on the *banking* concept of education is described as a process "in which the students are depositories and the teacher is the depositor...students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat (p. 72). Freire states this banking concept works with oppressed groups because "...the oppressors use the banking concept of education in conjunction with a paternalistic social action apparatus" to minimize conscientization, a critical awareness of one's reality. Little Bear, Innes, and Briggs demonstrate how Indigenous practices contribute to a deeper awareness of one's reality. This traditional form of education replicates a hierarchical structure of power relations.

In contrast, land-based learning experiences are dynamic and multidimensional. Indigenous knowledge, skills, and values are represented in a cultural, holistic method. The development of the outdoor learning space materializes and is documented in the journaling process. The circle, fire, land, and story are significant elements of a land-based model reflecting a shift in the spatial and temporal logics. The outdoor learning space becomes part of the form of education: outdoors, experiential, circular, and holistic.

Most, if not all, land-based learning occurs in the natural environment. There is usually a fire burning. During demonstrations or teachings, the shape of the student body is circular. There are no rows or teachers at the front as the authority figure. Students gather informally or during instruction; there is circular formation. There are many conversations that take place. Stories and storytelling are quite common practices in land-based education. Teaching practices and pedagogies shape each education model. The "how" of each model differs. Moore (2017) draws on Simpson's work "How you learn is as important or perhaps more important than what you learn, and Indigenous educational programs must use culturally inherent ways of teaching and learning" (p. 60). One of the crucial features of land-based learning that differs from traditional learning is

the emphasis on relationality. The *September 9, 10, and 11* journal entries in the previous chapter reflect this form of learning. We camped, we made fires and stories were shared around the fire. Students shared more personal and family stories around the fire throughout the evening. The relaxed atmosphere allowed students to “let down their guard” and share stories about their own experiences and how it felt to be on the land. They described their sleeping experiences, the natural elements, and demonstrated joy with being with their peers for an extended amount of time, “they were excited and engaged in the camp setup process” (p. 108.). Students enjoy the shift in spatial logics as shown in the journal entry from *September 17, 2024*, “most of the boys shared they enjoyed being outside” (p. 112). The *October 1, 2024* journal highlights using the sharing circle to start each activity. It is a very different structural form from the classroom learning environment. Often in the journal entries, an outdoor fire is a common practice. The *October 11, 2024* journal emphasizes the use of fire as part of the form of learning, “I feel it is important to normalize having a fire around land-based practices” (p. 128).

Drawing on Indigenous praxis and theory, this research study affirms the role of elders and leaders in Indigenous communities, the land-place connection as part of Indigenous worldviews, and how story is a knowledge transfer praxis. The role of elders as knowledge keepers or sources of knowledge is highlighted in this section. Throughout the school year, elders’ presence is growing significantly. There is a strong emphasis on elders’ knowledge as a knowledge source. Elders guide students, much like in traditional society: they encourage, they nurture, they praise, and they trust students to become more autonomous. Land-based learning is not only about being on the land, but also about learning from our teachers: our elders, our knowledge keepers, our relatives, our cosmos. Creating opportunities and space for elders to share their knowledge and teachings counters hegemonic knowledge production and validation. It challenges the normalized

power relations of capitalist society. It is vital to reproduce the conditions of production of Indigenous knowledge, skills, and values in school systems.



Figure 33 Elders guiding the students on how to dress wild game.

Funding

When I began this research study, previously, there occurred several major events to support the new role that I would fulfill. As I stated in the previous chapter, I had visited the Growcer operation at the Agricultural Academy in Altario, Alberta. I had several conversations with community leaders to inform me of the developments. Negotiations regarding costs of the

Growcer took place prior to my arrival as the Land-Based Teacher. I learned there existed funding for land-based activities. During the first several months of my new role, often, I would not have access a specific, detailed budget to fund the learning activities. I will address this issue in depth under the section of policy. There were times when I paid out of pocket for inexpensive items (water, snacks, gloves, etc.) especially for offsite learning activities. As the school year went on, the school canteen fund provided support for the purchase of minor items. My position as the Land-Based Teacher while innovative, did not have a detailed, outline plan.

I learned in October that a grant application would soon be due. I met with the organizational representative regularly and our support team from the school division to complete the application. During my conversations with the representative, we both shared similar views on education, and I also learned this individual could be a resource as a skilled hide tanner. At this time, the Growcer delivery date became delayed, so I focused on land-based learning activities grouped by classes, at first.

We met the deadline for the grant application. We received approval in February. One of the key purchases for this grant included a skidoo, sleds, and maple tapping equipment. Because of administrative challenges, we could not purchase our skidoo until April 2025. This meant that the maple tapping season occurred without our school being ready for the short season of maple tapping.

The outdoor learning space grew through the ongoing access of funds. Our local leadership provided the gravel for our fire pit area. We received a small amount of money for the firewood. A grant from the previous school year existed and with those grant monies, we purchased a teepee, lumber for prospector tent platforms and various small equipment items and supplies. I worked closely with our local wood shop teacher; he built a wood stack storage unit for our learning space.

In November, the firepit and seating structure became permanent. This outdoor learning space is new to the school and the community.

Although it is not evident from the journals, funds continued to be an issue. Our school administrators worked to develop both a full breakfast and lunch program. The breakfast program grant came from the Child Nutrition Grant. Through advocacy, the new administrator received local support for the lunch program funds. When students would attend off-site learning experiences, for example, spring fishing, the experience ran beyond the regular school day. I would access funds for these learning experiences through local organizations and the school canteen funds. Students received instructions to bring a bagged lunch, snacks, and drinks, however, sometimes the experiences ran until the evening.

During the month of June when all land-based activities cancelled due to the fire conditions around the province, I spent a great deal of time accessing and reviewing our funding with our administrator. She guided me in the process to ensure that I would have equipment and supplies for the next year. As I have stated previously, I have worked in the community for almost two decades. I have created positive, supportive relationship with the extended community, including the local organizational personnel. Because of this extensive work in the community, I could access funds for a variety of learning experiences easier, than being solely a researcher without a connection or relationship within the community.

This research study represents the development of a transformative learning model. To achieve success, it necessitates a long-term commitment and vision by the stakeholders: educators, administrators, parents, Elders, community leaders, and other stakeholders. As discussed in chapter three, Spivak advocates for “real change must be epistemic rather than merely epistemological, home, as well as school” (p. 132). She identified unity and agency as two

elements of change. The infamous Lorde's quote, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" parallels Fanon's quote, "we must innovate, we must be pioneers" to counter traditional forms of education.

Policy

The word *policy* is a Middle English word, from Old French *policie* meaning 'art of government, government, civil administration.' Policy is significant to school systems. School policy encompasses the guidelines, rules, and practices established by authorities to govern school systems. These policies focus on curriculum, inclusion, and safety. Two significant systemic obstacles surrounding policy included: the administrative documentation processes and teacher instructional time demands. Pine Creek First Nation holds an education agreement with Frontier School Division. Frontier School Division created and mandates policy for its students and employees, like many other school divisions across the province and across the nation. Administrative documentation processes included: volunteer screening process and the offsite educational trip form process. Manitoba Education designs the subject area instructional time which teachers adhere to.

In the Frontier School Division, academics are one of the three pillars of the school division's mission statement and vision. Literacy and numeracy encompass the academic pillar. As the year unfolded, I worked diligently with teachers to ensure their literacy and numeracy time slots would not be affected by land-based learning activities. There were instances when teachers would decline learning experiences because of curricular and assessment demands. At times, a teacher would allow me to take a student or a couple of students based on current academic performance. The school instructional day is extremely time-limited per subject area. Time is divided into percentages for specific subjects. For example, the Indigenous language as a subject

is marked at nine percent of the instructional time slot. Teachers face a lot of pressure to *cover curriculum* in the respective subject areas and gather data for assessment practices. This is the crux of teaching.

Student safety is the highest priority for any school system. One of the issues that arose during the school year was the constant completion of the offsite educational trip form. Because this land-based model experienced some challenges at the start, there existed issues around policies. For example, when a trip occurs off school grounds, or is categorized as high risk, there is documentation to be completed. This documentation, while helpful in organizing safe, engaging educational trips, is time-consuming. The document is thirty-three pages in length and requires approval from various schools and divisional personnel before it is approved. At times, students could not participate in events due to the timing of the documentation process. As the school year went on, we managed to create more flexibility with off-site educational trips. The spring fish season follows its own seasonal rhythm so when completing these required documents, I would select multiple days and at times, even weeks for the activity to take place.

Another issue regarding policy is the volunteer screening process. Community members, elders, and parents are open to volunteering in the school system and as chaperones for educational trips. However, an issue arises in the accessibility of completing forms; even the volunteer screening documentation fee can be an issue. The steps in this volunteer screening process can be problematic for being volunteers or chaperones. While policies are important to ensure safety and outline liability, they are often barriers to accessibility for some community members.

Resources

There are two resource issues when developing this land-based model for learning. Inadequate equipment and supplies and clothing, and footwear. As I discussed in the journals in

the previous chapter and under the form section of this chapter, the shift in administrators affected the overall planning of the land-based education model. My role in this teaching assignment evolved throughout the school year. My late administrator and I spoke about creating the outdoor learning space, and we both supported it wholeheartedly. As time passed, I realized that while we shared a similar vision, we did not discuss the planning or budget for the outdoor learning space sufficiently. There existed an assortment of equipment and supplies purchased in previous years but with no person designated to develop a space.

I began the outdoor learning space with little to no exact information on the monies allocated for this project. With the change in administrators, we worked together to find the money for the learning space. With the installation of a fire pit and firewood, I learned very quickly that I would need more time to order the appropriate equipment and supplies, as per policy. As my November 18-29, 2024 journal entry states, “I do not have a clear budget, nor do I have equipment or supplies to run land-based activities.” I brought my shovel and other tools from home to maintain the outdoor learning space. The exact inventory of land-based equipment and supplies remained murky. They were stored off-site, and it took several months to be returned. When I identify lack of supplies and equipment, there are times during the school year, I would purchase bags, water, tea bags, etc. to ensure a simple activity would take place smoothly. As the year progresses, other staff members will donate items for activities.

I worked with both the teachers and administrators on the outdoor learning space vision. During the biweekly teacher-staff meetings, I would regularly update all staff in attendance on land-based activities and goals. I received support from teachers as stated in the journal from December 9, 2024, “...the classroom teachers are willing to have me pick up students, sometimes at a moment’s notice to participate in an outdoor activity”. I have always promoted the saying, “it

takes a community to raise a child” and this is evident in this school environment. Because of my years of service in this community, the teaching staff are consistently supporting the development of a land-based model within a school system.

Often when planning outdoor learning experiences, especially when working with students from grades one to eight, the classroom teachers and I would remind students to bring their appropriate outdoor clothing and footwear for the activities. Most, if not, all students would comply. As the temperatures dropped, I always carried extra mitts or gloves for students.

In the second semester of the school year, my teaching course assignment changed suddenly and unforeseeably. Due to the lunch program being offered my course changed from an Indigenous culinary arts course to a SIC (school-initiated course) called Grade 11 Indigenous Land Based Education. Through this course, I would implement curriculum on the topic of land-based education. I developed learning experiences for twenty students every day for seventy-five minutes. Most, if not, all these students ranged from ages sixteen to seventeen.

The month of February had extremely freezing weather. On the second day of class I informed students that we would be outside of the school quite a bit during this class. On the third day of class, I took the students to the outdoor learning space, and we made a fire. We sat in a circular arrangement around the fire and shared individual stories about how we spent time on the land. There were quite a few students who were not prepared for the wintry weather. They dressed in thin hoodies and sweatpants. Some of the students felt very cold so they returned to the school library. I surveyed the group of students to find out which ones had appropriate outdoor clothing. Few did. I worked with the wood shop teacher, and we used February to make individual grub boxes. As seen in the photo, they turned out beautiful! Some students chose traditional designs and expressed their artistic abilities. Community members, elders, and parents shared positive

feedback when they learned about this project. As the semester passed and the temperatures rose, I continued to encourage my students to bring appropriate clothing and footwear.

The students appeared more comfortable going outdoors. I had one student ask me every day if we could make a fire and share stories. We had a very brief time together as a class group, so I would often agree. In the month of April, I found six or seven pairs of rubber boots ranging in size for the students to wear. This was one method to maximize the number of students being able to participate in outdoor activities. During the fishing season, these extra pairs of boots came in handy. I always had extra mitts, toques, and neck warmers for any students who needed these items.

As the weather warmed up, appropriate clothing and footwear no longer appeared as an issue. During the month of May, I would take the grade 11 Land Based students on nature walks around the school. I wanted to normalize being on the land, being outdoors, and making observations of natural elements.

At the beginning of June, all land-based activities were cancelled due to the forest fire conditions around the province. Activities took place on the school grounds. During the last two weeks of the school year, because of the high school exam schedule, I had time to work closely with the administrators to discuss moving forward in the next school year. I ordered equipment and supplies to support the outdoor learning space. The next school year would be a completely different start to the land-based model within a school system.

Student Autonomy and Student Self-Esteem

In the previous section, the primary question identifies the systemic obstacles in developing a land-based model within a school system that include form, funding, policy, resources, and time. The secondary question analyzes how land-based learning experiences affect student autonomy

and self-esteem. For this study, I chose to honour Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing for all aspects of this research. *Daani gigkendaan* represents how I came to know about the school system and its connection to capitalism. School systems are sites to reproduce the conditions of production. In chapter two, I highlight how the policies, structures, and systems subjugate Indigenous people to maintain power. In the first chapter, I share how I became subjugated by the school system. I also share in the first chapter my childhood foundational learning experiences on the land with my family. Autonomy and self-esteem are important components in the development of young children to contribute to society. Through my journaling and research work, I consciously choose to advocate and create space for learning experiences that reflect Indigenous theory and praxis. I chose not to “measure” data or analyze it with objectivity. Doing so would place a limit on this work. I am centering on the two concepts of the secondary question of autonomy and self-esteem around the journals, observations, and stories experienced. Two common themes that emerged from the journaling process include engagement and demonstrations of skills. Students became highly engaged in learning experiences increasingly as the school year advanced. Through this research study, I had dual roles: teacher and researcher. The knowledge, skills, and values I have as a community member and a teacher contribute to the effectiveness or success of the learning experiences. I have decades long teaching experience and have maintained excellent relationships with both the students and staff members in my community. I have worked diligently to maintain positive, supportive relationships with the extended community. I value bush culture and promote it positively to students. I also believe in teaching with an integrated approach. This duality supported my research work significantly.

Engagement

Historically, Canadian education models imposed Eurocentric beliefs, practices, and values into Indigenous communities, specifically, through the Indian residential school model. This educational institution steeped in dominant, Western ideologies contributed to the loss of culture, language, identity, and worldview of Indigenous theory and praxis. The recent incorporation and integration of Indigenous perspectives shifted in the field of education. The literature, pedagogy, and praxis are growing to support Indigenous land-based education in various contexts. Indigenous land-based education includes culture, elders, experiences, land practices, language, stories, and teachings to support Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing.

One common theme reflected in the journals in the previous chapter is engagement. There are various levels of engagement. Students are engaging with one another in a different setting. They are engaging with elders and community knowledge keepers; they are engaging with the land. Often, in the journals and in my observations, students would display curiosity and enthusiasm to participate in and during land-based learning activities. Often, I would hear, “this is the best day ever” when students were amid a land-based learning experience. Students participated in sharing circles regularly. They are regularly observing the land and identifying the seasonal changes. Learning is relational. Land is the center of knowledge developed through relationality. Styres (2017) asserts,

“Many national and international Indigenous scholars agree that learning is a relational act and that the process of coming to know is grounded in the principles of self-in-relationship. It follows then that teaching and learning are relational, reciprocal, and culturally located actions. Further, the understanding of Iethi’nihsténha Ohwentsia’kékha (Land) and self-in-relationship are foundational to Indigenous thought – Land is our primary relationship – it is first, above all else (p. 61).

At times, land-based activities only require several students in attendance, for example, chopping and stacking firewood. I would have a conference with the classroom teacher before the start of the school day, and we would agree to allow the possible students to help with the activity. A group of grades seven and eight students enjoyed these activities. They would also be the first to raise their hand to offer help. When I met them in the school hallway, they would always inquire if I needed help with anything. It came to the point where these students would help me with the younger students. One student shared “I only come to school because of this kind of stuff; I like doing this rather than sitting at a desk.” Land-based education contributes to transformative education founded on relationality. Scholarship is illuminating the significance of and changing the way we understand the relationship between Indigenous people and the land. Simpson’s statement about land-based practices concludes this chapter:

“We always *feel* good after being out in the bush, or after ceremony. I thought of this that day as I walked. I thought of the word e-yaa’oyaanh, which means who I am, the way I am living or becoming, my identity. In order to have a positive identity we have to be living in ways that illuminate that identity, and that propel us towards mino bimaadiziwin, the good life” (p. 13).

Engagement also increased at a parental and community level. This is important for systemic change. I would obtain permission from parents to post regular updates on the learning activities on our social media page. Parent support remained positive throughout the school year. Students would often come up to me and say “You posted my photo. My mom (or dad or koko) was happy to see me doing that” (referring to the specific activity). As a researcher and Land-Based teacher, I receive engagement and support from colleagues, elders, community members, leadership, and parents to develop a land-based model within a school system.

One noteworthy phenomenon occurred on the lake in February. During the month of February, we spent a great deal of time on the lake, ice fishing. The students became comfortable

with the process after several experiences. I asked a former commercial fisherman to drill holes in the shape of a semi-circle. Previously, holes were drilled in a grid-like fashion, I found having them in a semi-circle allowed me to observe all the students at once and give them comfortable space from the next person. This arrangement worked perfectly. The grade five and six classes scattered along the fishing holes. I asked two high school students to volunteer (after checking with their classroom teachers) to walk around and clear the holes. They both agreed. It was a sunny day. The students' faces conveyed happiness and contentment. They laid still and whispered to me, "I see one." They observed the minnows and fish under the ice. They forgot about their fishing rods and lay quietly observing the waters underneath the ice. The students observed their fish relatives. This experience affirmed that students benefited from experiences on the land and the water. Starblanket (2017) asserts "As Indigenous peoples, our traditional relationship with places, stories, values, principles and teachings represent a form of cultural memory that can be distinguished from other forms of knowledge of the past as they are integral to our individual and collective identities" (p. 25). One the way back to the school bus at the lake shore, their smiles were telling, cultural memory surfaced.

Demonstration of Skills

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the form of education needs drastic reform. *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education* by Cajete (1994) critiques the Eurocentric educational orientation toward political, social, and economic order. The school system design subjugates Indigenous people through its policies and structures. Through the development of a land-based model within a school system, changes occur, including increased student autonomy. Land-based education shifts learning. "Land education puts Indigenous epistemological and ontological accounts of land as the center, including Indigenous understandings of land,

Indigenous languages in relation to land, and Indigenous critiques of settler colonialism” (Tuck, McKenzie & McCoy, 2017, p. 13). Indigenous teaching methods include experiential learning, modelling, observations, and stories. These teaching methods support Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing. Elder presence is significant to this land-based model within a school system. Again, my extensive community work as a classroom teacher lends itself to positive, supportive relationships with various levels of the community, especially with elders. Elders are knowledge keepers and play a key role in an Indigenous land-based education model. Medicine (1987) asserts that “Elders are repositories of cultural and philosophical knowledge and are the transmitters of such information” (p. 142). Throughout the ten-month journaling process, these Indigenous teaching methods of experiential learning, modelling, observations, and stories prevailed.

Student autonomy and self-esteem positively increased from land-based learning experiences. There are many instances where modeling the learning became effectual. During the first, sage picking with grade one students, I clearly demonstrated or modelled how, when, where, and why we picked sage. Students observed my demonstration and the children and youth learned quickly. During this activity, students commented on who would receive the sage. Students spoke about caring for others. Both the classroom teacher and educational assistant onsite provided encouragement and support. When we returned to the school, students expressed their own satisfaction at being able to pick sage to every adult they encountered on their way back to their classroom.

When we plucked ducks, one of our skilled hunters provided step by step instructions on how to pluck a duck. Laughter and stories filled the instructional phase of the learning experience. I would often hear, “I did it!” throughout the learning experiences. The demonstration of skills is immediate, and students would be smiling and exhibiting positive dispositions as they gained

knowledge and skills. Basso observes, "Knowledge of places is therefore closely linked to knowledge of the self, to grasping one's position in the larger scheme of things, including one's own community, and to securing a confident sense of who one is as a person" (p. 34). These experiences contributed to many students' self-esteem.

During my grade eleven land-based education course, we would often have fireside chats and story sharing sessions. Often, I would chop kindling for the fire. During one of those cold mornings, a student remarked, "Look at Shirley, she does not need a man. She can do it all by herself." Her comment stuck with me, and it is an example of modelling autonomy. There are many examples of students' autonomy and self-esteem increasing. In one of the journal entries, one of the grade eleven girls announced, "I am a bush girl, now." She announced this loudly and wore a grin on her face.

During our spring fishing, I observed students catching fish for the first time. Two girls' reactions to the learning experience stand out. Both girls came to me after their first catch and said quietly, almost whisper-like close to my ear, "I can't believe I just did that." During the month of May journals, there are many examples of student autonomy and self-esteem. Students are active; they see themselves more than students at a desk, completing paper and pencil tasks. They are hunters, snowshoe walkers, medicine pickers, berry pickers, fisher people, gardeners, land-protectors, most importantly, they are from the land. Learning is holistic and multidisciplinary. Land-based learning experiences impact student autonomy and self-esteem positively as seen in the daily journaling process during the development of a land-based model within a school system.

Significance of the Study and Recommendations for Further Studies

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it examines the policies, structures, and systems that subjugate Indigenous people to maintain power. School systems are designed to maintain the reproduction of the conditions of production to fuel a capitalist society. In the first chapter, this researcher shares her family and school domains. The distinction between the two ways of being, doing, and knowing is clear. The formative bush culture development as a young person is significant. Advocacy and need for transformational learning are also explored in chapter one. This research study draws on concepts and principles of critical theory. It explores how Althusser's thesis *Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses* subjugate Indigenous people through the Indian residential school system. Within chapter two, conformity, totality and totalization, discipline and punishment are also examined in the commodification of education. These methods, policies, structures, and systems subjugated Indigenous people to maintain power. Chapter three outlines Indigenous scholarship countering colonial narratives. Knowledge and literature domain are critiqued by both critical theorists and Indigenous scholars in this chapter. In chapter four, the research design and scholarly contributed to research with, by, and for Indigenous peoples and communities is presented. It highlights *resurgence* and *decolonization* as fundamental to research. It also describes this researcher's ethical temperament and research structure. Chapter five presents the researcher's journaling process, detailing the experiences, observations, and thoughts for a ten-month school year as this research developed a land-based model within a school system.

Through this study, students significantly connected to the land and developed the knowledge, skills, and values that reflect Indigenous theory and praxis. This research study provided space for students to explore who they are as an individual, as a family member, and as

a community member. This learning model can create students who have a stronger foundation of who they are and become critical thinkers prepared for their life aspirations. It helps to shape their knowledge, skills, and values of their community practices and teachings. The journals also provide an up-close and detailed account of the challenges, obstacles, and rewards when developing a land-based model within a school system. It can inform other stakeholders who are working in land-based pedagogy and educational contexts.

This study is also significant because it highlights the systemic obstacles in developing a land-based model within a school system. Indigenous scholars counter the hegemony of educational institutions by decolonizing education and examining and transforming educational policies, practices, and institutions to advance Indigenous land-based education. It identifies the form, funding, policy, resources, and time as systemic obstacles faced. Through the journaling process, the researcher, as an observant-participant captures both the researcher and those involved at the local level comments, reactions, thoughts, and understanding of a land-based model within a school system. Land-based education reflects the epistemological and ontological foundations of Indigenous peoples' philosophy, praxis, and worldview. The movement toward integrating Indigenous perspectives and practices across educational institutions is an ongoing course of action. Educational institutions can build more culturally responsive environments to support all students to become creative, critical thinkers who are aware of and respect cultural and linguistic diversity, not only in an educational context but across this nation.

Recommendations for Further Studies

In Canada, the movement toward integrating Indigenous perspectives across all grades and curricula has been an ongoing course of action for the past several decades. The current education model developed by the Department of Education, under the Government of Manitoba, mandated

public schools to implement curricula. At present, there is no First Nation or Indigenous education model for on-reserve school systems. The importance of understanding how school systems reflect economic, political, and social Western constructs is significant. Education models, especially in First Nation communities, promoted Western ideologies and pedagogies without incorporating Indigenous perspectives. The article “Indigenous Resistance and Renewal” discussed how youth resisted the Western education model (Dehyle et al., 2008, pp. 334-336). The clash of worldviews, assimilation policies, and educational practices contributed to this resistance. This researcher witnessed repeatedly this same resistance both in the classroom and in the community. Educators, in general, faced a myriad of challenges in incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices in the classroom model. In more recent years, the creation of Indigenous-centric curricula resources grew due to political and social influences across the nation.

Children resided at Indian Residential Schools to receive academic and religious training. The policies, structures, and systems subjugated students to maintain power. In the community where this researcher completed this study, this institution operated for seventy years; colonization and assimilation emphasized this movement (Deyhle et al. 2008, p. 333). Evaluation, research, and political pressure created opportunities for transformation. Educators, government policymakers, other stakeholders, and university are encouraged to create partnerships with Indigenous leaders, elders, and community members to integrate Indigenous-centric knowledge and teaching practices in school classrooms and more importantly, on the land.

The form of education needs drastic reform. It is recommended that educational institutions build more culturally responsive learning environments to support all students to become creative, critical thinkers who are aware of and respect cultural and linguistic diversity, not only in an educational context but across this nation.

Final Reflections

As a final thought to this research journey, I think about the children and youth in the school system. I think about the ongoing subjugation occurring through the policies, structures, and systems that maintain settler-colonial powers. These systems produce commodity relations to perpetuate capitalism. In the September 26, 2024 journal entry, Willie Ermine asked, “Why are we doing this? why are we going back to the land?” As a child, I became immersed into bush culture. I developed a meaningful relationship with the land. I carry the knowledge, skills, and values of bush culture. My worldview stems from these foundational experiences. Critical theory critiques the universality of Eurocentric thought and conveys how school system practices and policies maintain the dominant narrative. I share my coming to know story through this research study. Land-based education is critical, more than ever. It is evident based on the journal entries. We need to instill the knowledge, skills, and values of bush culture into the next generation. We need to have babies, children, and youth on the land. We need to practice relationality and honour our spirits in a meaningful way. Land sustains our lives. It’s always been about the land.

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