

Passing Things Down: The Meaning of Traditional Foods for Resurgence and
Resilience in Wabaseemoong Independent Nations

by

Hannah Muhajarine

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Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth, and Resources

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

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Abstract

Indigenous communities face on-going disruptions from colonization and global environmental change, including disruptions to their traditional food systems. Despite this, they continue to find ways both new and old to harvest, share, prepare, and consume traditional foods.

This study focused on understanding the role traditional foods play in community members' lives in Wabaseemoong Independent Nation in northwestern Ontario. I used an ethnographic approach that included participant observation, unstructured interviews (n=26), and focus groups (n=2) to explore what traditional food practices looked like within living memory, what they look like today, and the meanings they hold.

I found that in Wabaseemoong, traditional food activities are shaped by a value for *passing things down*, which centers on practicing relationships with parents, ancestors, and land. It is through the practice of these relationships that skills, knowledge, and values are shared throughout the community and passed on to the next generation.

Community members continue to *pass things down* and practice these important relationships despite colonial disruption and social, economic, and ecological change. They are continually finding new and creative ways to practice relationships in ways that maintain the value of reciprocity.

The role of traditional foods for Indigenous communities today is often framed as nutritional or as strengthening cultural identity. This study suggests that the practice of relationship should be explored further as a framework for projects and programmes aimed at strengthening Indigenous traditional food systems.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Indigenous communities face on-going disruptions from colonization and global environmental change. Food systems are an important domain that have been disrupted and, as a result, are an active area of change and response. Before European contact, Indigenous peoples across Canada subsisted on various fish, game, plants, and berries, acquired through hunting, gathering and cultivation (Dickason, 1997). Food systems were important for physical survival, but also played a role in social, political, economic, and spiritual relationships. Through the treaty process and later the reserve system, as state sanctioned systems of dispossession, Indigenous peoples lost access to much of their traditional territory, which changed the relationship with their food systems (Dickason, 1997). Under the Indian Act, the Canadian government enacted policies of relocation and forced permanent settlement, integration into the wage economy, and the residential school system—all aimed at assimilating Indigenous nations into Canadian society (Dickason, 1997). Integration into the wage economy has resulted in integration, as with other Canadian communities, into the global economy, further decreasing autonomy and control over food systems. Contamination and global climate change are environmental factors, driven by colonial and capitalist policies, that further negatively impact the ability to practice traditional food activities. Together, these factors have resulted in environmental, political, economic, and knowledge barriers between Indigenous peoples and their traditional food systems.

In the Anishinaabe community of Wabaseemoong in northwestern Ontario, older generations remember their childhoods, or the stories of their parents, being based on the seasonal round. Families would live in small groups, spending the winter in their cabins on the trap line trapping muskrat, beaver, otter, mink, and fox for their furs and sometimes their meat, then commercial fishing and guiding in the summer, fishing for walleye and whitefish. They would congregate in larger camps to pick blueberries in August, and in larger camps to harvest wild rice in late August and September. They also tended gardens of potatoes, onions, cabbage, beets, corn, squash, and beans. Men also hunted geese in the spring, and partridge, deer, and moose throughout the summer but especially in the fall. Meat and fish were smoked to preserve them.

The practices and economy described above were subject to different forms of colonial disruption beginning more intensely from the 1950s onward. Although families resisted and

found creative ways to continue the seasonal round, some children were removed and sent to Cecilia Jeffery or St. Mary's Indian Residential School, both located near Kenora, Ontario. Later, families were forced to settle due to mandated schooling. Throughout the 50s, flooding from hydroelectric development destroyed traditional territories and forced families to relocate. In the 1980s, mercury dumping forced the closure of the commercial fishery. At the same time, the trapping and wild rice economies were shrinking, with buyers disappearing, and some families were forced to go on welfare or look for other opportunities for wage labour.

All together these factors have resulted in a difference in values and decrease in knowledge around traditional food within younger generations in Wabaseemoong (Kuzivanova, 2017).

1.2 Research Purpose and Research Objectives

In the summer of 2014, Valeria Kuzivanova, then a Master's student of my supervisor Dr. Davidson-Hunt, conducted a *manomin* (wild rice) ecocultural restoration project in partnership with Traditional Land Use Area (TLUA) Resources Information Officer Marvin McDonald. Through this research project, Kuzivanova worked with community members to document knowledge around *manomin*, reseed several *manomin* sites, and hold a harvesting camp at the end of August 2014 (Kuzivanova, 2016).

Kuzivanova's project generated a renewal of interest and excitement around *manomin* in the community, which inspired community members to seek ways to increase harvesting, processing, and consumption of *manomin* and other traditional foods. As part of a continuation of the *manomin* restoration project, during the year leading up to my fieldwork I participated with Elders, the language teacher, and school cooks from Wabaseemoong in workshops organized by Kuzivanova and Davidson-Hunt to develop a recipe for wild rice breakfast bars and wild rice granola, to be used in the community's Mizhakiwetung Memorial School breakfast program.

As community members considered how the wild rice activities should further develop, as well as what kinds of other activities or development the TLUA should be used for, project partners expressed an interest in obtaining support to help them document ways in which community members understand the role of traditional food in their lives. Given this interest, and through discussions with project partners, we decided that the purpose of my project would be to

document the meanings around traditional foods in the community and their res-(dis)onance with other contemporary frameworks on food and Indigenous development, such as social-ecological resilience and resurgence. This will support community members in thinking about future food related projects and provide documentation and opportunities for community discussion through workshops.

My specific research objective was:

1. To document meanings of traditional foods—why and how are these foods still important to community members today?
 - a) What did relationships with traditional foods look like in the past (within living memory)?
 - b) What are the important activities of the traditional food system today?
 - c) What meanings do community members ascribe to traditional foods today?

1.3 Study Area

The Anishinaabe community of Wabasemoong Independent Nations of One Man Lake, Swan Lake, and Whitedog is located in Northwestern Ontario, 120 kilometres northwest of the town of Kenora (see Figure 1). Formerly called Islington Band #29, it sits along the Winnipeg River. The community is accessed by following Highway #596 past Minaki where it turns into the #525 and goes over the Whitedog Dam. When entering the community, one first passes Goshawk Lake, where a few community members live. Another few kilometres and one enters the community proper, coming to a juncture with a sign denoting the East and West sides of the community. On the East side are the band office, the school, the resource centre, and a small convenience store, and on the West side are Abinoonji Family Services, the daycare, and the larger of the two convenience stores. While I was living in the community in spring 2018, a new Youth and Elders' Centre also opened near the school.

As of 2016, the community had a population of 827 (Statistics Canada, 2017). I observed that most community members older than 40 would speak to each other in Anishinaabemowin regularly, while many of those who were younger did not speak Anishinaabemowin. Most Elders spoke English, and I communicated with them without the aid of a translator. Based on my observations, most people make a living through employment at the school, band office, or one

of the other services mentioned above, and some also work in Kenora. A few men I met also make an income through trapping, guiding, and commercial fishing.

Wabaseemoong belongs to the Bimose Tribal Council, which in turn belongs to Grand Council Treaty 3. It is governed by a Chief and a three-person band council. Wabaseemoong territory is within Treaty #3, which was made between the Anishinaabe people of the area and the Crown in 1873 (Roberts, 2005). The community sits within the 6720 km² Wabaseemoong Traditional Land Use Area (WTLUA). The WTLUA was established in 1991, when the province and the community signed an MOU over co-management of the area (Wabaseemoong Independent Nations, n.d.).

The families who reside in Wabaseemoong today are descended from three different communities: One Man Lake, Swan Lake, and Whitedog (“Wabaseemoong” in Anishinaabe and the community’s former name). As mentioned previously, in the 1950s, dams were erected at Whitedog and at nearby Caribou Falls. They flooded significant parts of One Man Lake and Swan Lake, forcing residents of those communities to move to Whitedog, where the three communities were officially amalgamated into one Band (Smith, 1995; Wabaseemoong Independent Nations, n.d.). In 1976, Wabaseemoong erected a roadblock that blocked access to Whitedog hydro dam, in protest against the effects of hydroelectric flooding on their community. In 1983, the community signed the Islington Agreement with the province of Ontario, which offered opportunities for forestry and resource development in exchange for the flooding of the English River (Wabaseemoong Independent Nations, n.d.).

During the 1950s, a pulp and paper mill in Dryden, Ontario dumped mercury waste into the Wabigoon river system, where it flowed into the English River, poisoning Wabaseemoong along with another Anishinaabe community, Asubpeeschoseewagong (Grassy Narrows). Though the impacts in Wabaseemoong have not been systematically studied since the 1970s (Harada et al., 1977), when I was in the community, I heard people talk about health problems they attributed to the mercury. Despite an out-of-court settlement with the federal government, provincial government, and two paper companies (Reed Incorporated and Great Lakes Forest Products Limited) in 1985 (Wabaseemoong Independent Nations, n.d.), it was not until 2020 that the federal government committed funds for a treatment centre, which is expected to be built by 2022 (Aiken, 2020).

Hydroelectric flooding and mercury poisoning have had significant negative impacts on Wabaseemoong's collective livelihoods, health, and identity. In the case of hydro, this development was made without consultation and compensation was offered only after much protest by Wabaseemoong. In the case of the mercury dumping, the problem has been ignored and compensation has also been late in coming. It is probably not even possible to talk about compensation for the loss of land and livelihoods that were the source of memories, spiritual significance, and an entire way of life.

Despite these disruptions, Wabaseemoong community members continue to find old and new ways to hunt, fish, trap, pick wild rice and blueberries, as well as prepare, share, and eat these traditional foods. They pass on memories, stories, and knowledge. They have not let these colonial disruptions make them forget their relationship with the land.

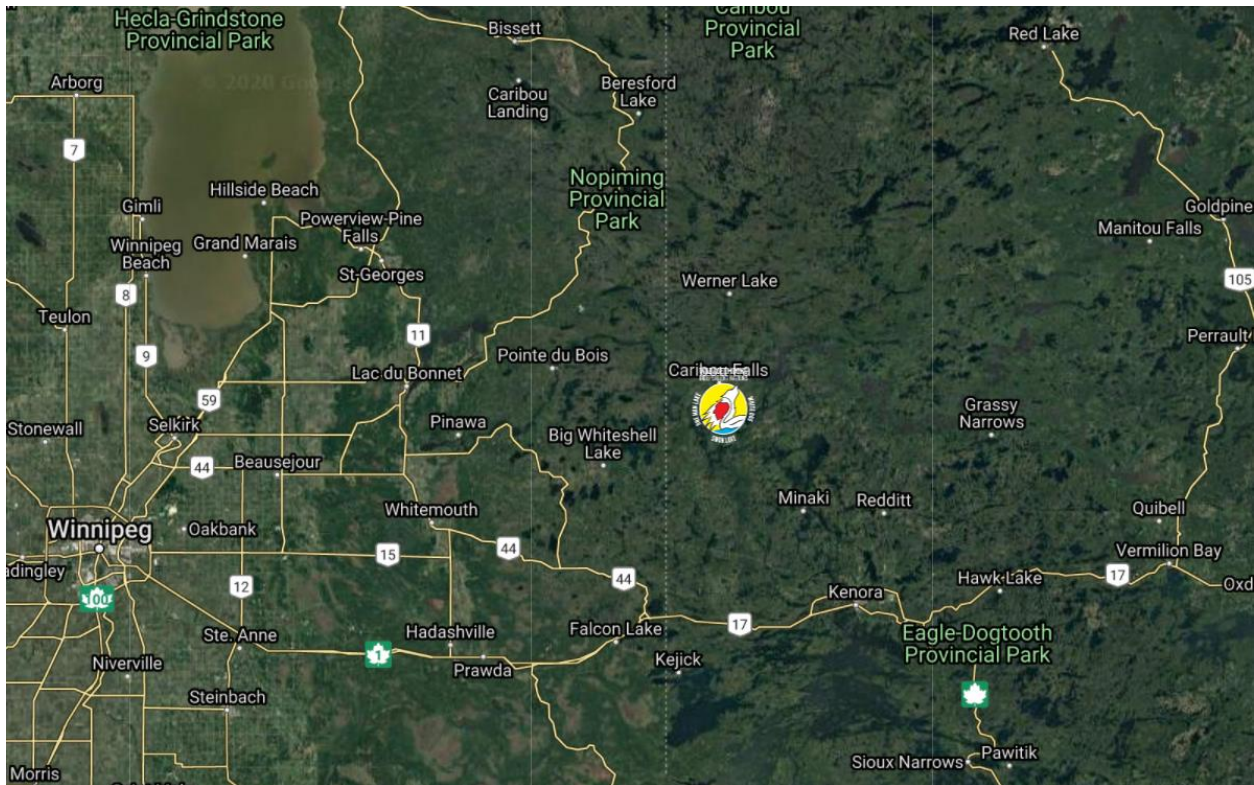


Figure 1: Map showing location of Wabaseemoong Independent Nations

1.4 Methodology and Methods

My methodological approach was ethnographic, which helped me view traditional foods within the context of culture and cultural change. I employed participant observation, unstructured interviews, and focus groups to fulfill my objectives. I also spent time getting to know community members before my fieldwork began, through the recipe workshops mentioned above as well as harvesting blueberries and wild rice. These activities, while not directly involved with producing data for my research, helped to build relationships important for doing research in a First Nations community and can be considered part of my methodology.

1.5 Conceptual Framing

I drew on two conceptual framings for this project: social-ecological resilience and Indigenous resurgence. Social-ecological resilience is an important vein of thinking within the field of natural resource management and development. However, more work needs to be done to understand how place-based communities understand resilience in the context of their cultural values, worldviews, and histories. In addition, resilience thinking does not yet adequately capture the role of power in social and ecological disruption and response. This means that resilience thinking has not paid much attention to colonialism as a driver of social and ecological disruption, but this is important for understanding resilience in Indigenous contexts.

To attempt to fill some of these theoretical gaps in resilience thinking, I also drew on the Indigenous resurgence literature. Resurgence is a theory of decolonization being developed by Indigenous scholars. While these two literatures represent different projects with different goals, I thought that it was important to see what resurgence could offer for thinking about resilience in the context of Indigenous worldviews and experiences of colonialism. I explore these two literatures and how am I using them further in the following chapter.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This project contributes to the literature on social-ecological resilience, an important vein of thinking within the field of natural resource management and development. Many scholars have been working on deepening the engagement with social theory within social-ecological resilience. Following them, this study sketches a framework for resilience in relation to the traditional food system of one Anishinaabe community, using ethnographic methods. It is an example of how we can develop resilience frameworks that are rooted in the cultures, histories,

and stories of local communities, so that communities are not just objects but partners in development.

Gathering data on what traditional foods mean and what drives traditional food activities today can be useful for the community to build momentum and think about the direction of future traditional food projects. As mentioned above, my choice to take an ethnographic approach has the potential to draw attention to the discrepancies between resilience frameworks for development and this community's own value-system. This can support Wabaseemoong, and other Indigenous communities, in their work of negotiating with government and NGOs over the cultural values and visions behind development. Ultimately, I hope this study can be one example of a decolonial development framework that takes as its goal the promotion of the good life, or living as Indigenous.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

Following this introductory chapter, I discuss my theoretical framing in more detail, reviewing the literature from social-ecological resilience and resurgence. I then discuss my methodology, ethnography, in the next chapter. The following two chapters are dedicated to the data I collected on traditional food activities and their significance in the past and in the community today. In the final chapter, I return to the resilience and resurgence literatures to frame my findings and discuss the implications my findings have for thinking about how social-ecological resilience is experienced in Wabaseemoong. I also offer some reflections on methodology and my findings and offer some recommendations for building social-ecological resilience in Wabaseemoong and for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Indigenous peoples in Canada desiring to maintain traditional food practices are faced with a complex web of interacting challenges, including but not limited to ecological scarcity, mercury contamination, provincial hunting and fishing regulations, the dominance of the market-based food system, and loss of knowledge due to residential school (Council of Canadian Academies, 2014; Power 2008). These can be understood as disruptions, which people in Wabaseemoong are responding to by finding new (and old) ways of continuing to harvest, prepare, and eat traditional foods, thereby exhibiting resilience.

I was interested in understanding why community members believe it is important to maintain these practices, and the role they see these foods playing in their lives today.

To contextualize this question, I looked at two bodies of literature. First, I looked at social-ecological resilience, particularly the strand of social-ecological resilience thinking that has been working on the role of agency in building adaptive capacity. I also examined the literature on Indigenous resurgence, which fills some of the gaps left by social-ecological resilience thinking about colonial contexts.

2.2 Resilience

In the 1970s, ecologists such as C.S. Holling (1973) began to recognize that ecosystems are not static, but move through cycles of consolidation, disturbance, release, and renewal. They referred to the ability of a system to renew itself while maintaining its functional identity as *resilience* (Brown, 2016). In the early 2000s, scholars of natural resource management began to think more about the linkages and feedbacks between social and ecological systems (Berkes et al., 2012). A combination of these two ideas, social-ecological resilience is a way of looking at patterns of disturbance and response within the social-ecological system.

Social-ecological resilience is a systems approach that uses concepts of scale, feedback, nonlinearity, unpredictability, renewal cycles, drivers, system memory, disturbance events, and windows of opportunity to understand social-ecological processes (Berkes & Ross, 2013). ‘Disturbances’ are usually ecological events such as natural disasters or more subtle environment changes which interact with economic markets, political decisions, or shifts in social

relationships to impact land-based livelihoods. There has not been much examination of how colonialism might be understood as a disturbance event. The response of a system to a disturbance is usually categorized as resistance, adaptation, or transformation, with the potential resilience of the system measured as adaptive capacity (Bene et al., 2014).

While useful for tracing factors across multiple scales of both social and ecological systems in order to understand complex processes of change, social-ecological resilience thinking has limitations.

There has been inadequate attention paid to the role power relationships play in shaping both stressors and responses (exceptions include Fabinyi et al., 2014; Pelling & Manuel-Navarrete, 2011). And because of its focus on systems, resilience is weak in its theory of agency. There is an inadequate understanding of how humans (and non-humans), individually or collectively, build adaptive capacity through deliberation and action (Brown 2016; Davidson 2013; Westley et al., 2013; Wilson 2018).

Resilience thinking's lack of power analysis and roots in ecological systems-thinking mean it may not be meaningful to the communities that are the 'objects' of resilience development. When resilience-building is translated into programs or interventions, it is often applied in a top-down, one-size-fits-all manner by governments, with little attention to the worldviews, values, or aspirations of communities.

Scholars within the social sciences are working on developing frameworks for social-ecological resilience based on more robust theories of agency, power, and place. These questions around resilience complement the turn within natural resource management towards increasing community-led management and valuing local and Indigenous knowledges (Crane, 2010). I use this body of work, specifically the discussion on agency and its relationship to cultural identity, to contextualize my understanding of the resilience of traditional foods in Wabaseemoong.

2.2.1 Agency in Resilience

One key difference between social and ecological systems is the existence of agency: the ability of individuals to think and act independently within the social-ecological systems they are a part of (Davidson, 2010). 'Agency' is usually only ascribed to individuals—when agency is exercised collectively, it is described as collective action (Davidson 2010).

There is growing recognition that agency and collective action are central to building adaptive capacity because they enable innovation. Identifying and creating more opportunities for people and communities to exercise agency and collective action lead to the emergence of a diversity of material, institutional, and ideological resources to draw on for adaptation. As well as creating more options, the *choice* between different adaptive trajectories is also an example of agency at work, combined with the specific power relationships and values at play (Davidson, 2010). Resilience is not determined only by material resources, but also the degree of agency within a given social system (Davidson, 2010).

The agency question in social-ecological resilience is part of an enduring debate among social theorists over the relationship between actors and structures (Coulthard, 2012). People may have the capacity to act autonomously, but those actions are always shaped and limited by their social, cultural, and ecological environments. These structures exhibit both a positive and negative relationship to agency—they can prevent certain options from being possible or even thinkable, but decision-making is also always guided by values and preferences informed by the decision maker's context.

In her examination of resilience, wellbeing, and the role of agency in adaptive decision-making among fisher families, Coulthard (2012) combined a model of everyday, strategic, personal, and political agency with a resilience framework. She demonstrated the trade-offs involved in building a resilient system by showing how adaptive decisions that build resilience at the system level can negatively affect the wellbeing of individuals or households—her study shows the mental and emotional sacrifices fishermen and fisher-wives make to continue fishing as their livelihood. Fisher families justify these sacrifices in part because of the value they place on fishing as an identity. This demonstrates that people's preferences for different adaptation strategies are shaped not just by material factors, but also social-cultural norms and values. Wellbeing and adaptive preferences are factors that may be not captured by social-ecological resilience frameworks. Understanding these values is important for understanding adaptive decision-making processes at the individual and household level.

Pelling and Manuel-Navarrete (2011) applied resilience's adaptive cycle framework to social adaptation to climate change in two Mexican cities. Their analysis highlights the role that power, discourse, and values play in these adaptive processes. In both cities, the discourse of profit-

based development and the centralized power of corporations and municipal governments serve to create a rigid social system stuck at the consolidation phase of the adaptive cycle. Participants often expressed their agency in ways that reinforced these established institutional structures. More innovative and diverse individual and collective responses towards building climate resilience were only found in marginalized or temporary spaces.

The resilient responses that were identified in these marginalized spaces were grounded in values such as pride in shared identity and a commitment to place. Pelling and Manuel-Navarrate's (2011) analysis shows that any examination of resilience must not overlook the values at play within the social-ecological system. Moreover, their findings point to how building adaptive capacity for resilience is a value-laden undertaking, which implies that resilience itself is a subjective quality.

Examining the role of agency for social-ecological resilience leads scholars to pay more attention to how adaptive decision-making is guided by values such as wellbeing and identity. Thinking about these values, in turn, suggests that resilience is not a pre-determined or objective quality. Which adaptive pathway will lead towards resilience is determined by place-specific value systems.

Lyon and Parkins (2013) looked at how two communities have adapted to the loss of forest livelihoods and argue that culture can be an important source of resilience. They employ a theory of cultural morphogenesis, which looks at cultural change and persistence, in combination with resilience's adaptive cycle.

Lyon and Parkins (2013) locate agency in the realm of social interaction, in distinction to the cultural system. Actions that take place in the social realm may result in long-term cultural changes over time. In Youbou, one of the forest communities under study, the existing activist culture helped mobilize a collective response to the closure of their local mill, which enabled a process of innovative adaptation. Youbou's mill closure was a disturbance to the social system, while the cultural system proved a stable resource to draw upon in responding.

A stable cultural system is an important aspect of resilience that has been less recognized in the literature amid the focus on adaptation and transformation (Lyon & Parkins, 2013).

Lyon and Parkins (2013)'s findings in Youbou show that a stable cultural system can be a source of adaptive capacity by providing a foundation for innovative social responses. Their findings contribute to the idea that cultural values, beliefs, and other structural factors are not necessarily at odds with agency but can be a resource to draw on for adaptive response.

Crane (2010) demonstrates that more attention needs to be paid to the non-material aspects of the social-ecological system. His study looked at the Fulani and Marka peoples of Mali as both groups shifted away from cattle herding as a livelihood. This transition was experienced as a resilient transformation by the Marka but a loss by the Fulani, whose identity is tightly linked with cattle farming. Crane's (2010) work is a reminder that cultural values are the lens through which material changes are experienced. He demonstrates the need for social-ecological resilience frameworks that include 'cultural resilience'—the ability to maintain livelihoods that satisfy *both* material and moral needs. While Lyon and Parkins (2013) show a case of a positive adaptation driven by cultural identity, Crane (2010) shows that adaptations that prevent people from living in ways that are culturally valued cannot be considered examples of resilience. The case of the Fulani shows how the meaning of different responses vary across cultural spaces, and why everyday perspectives of resilience matter within the discussion on agency. Crane (2010)'s findings also support Pelling and Manuel-Navarrete's (2011) argument that resilience is a subjective quality, dependent on one's position within the social-ecological (and cultural) system.

In their introduction to a collection of articles that bring social theory deeper into social-ecological resilience thinking, Walsh-Dilley and Wolford (2015) also argue that resilience is lacking in fixed meaning. They put forward a new research project: to approach resilience as an object of examination in itself and explore how subjective meanings of resilience arise in diverse contexts. Resilience should not be treated as a tool with which to homogenize diverse contexts under one framework, but an idea whose meaning is continually being woven in specific places from both local and global factors. The multiple cases they discuss in this introduction explore subjective understandings of resilience, "taking seriously what would happen if the 'objects of development' were asked....to explain what resilience might mean in their own lives and locations" (Walsh-Dilley & Wolford, 2015). From studies in Bolivia, Peru, Mexico, Ethiopia, and China, across farmers, pastoralists, and fishermen, several themes emerge. The first is a

temporal tension. Several studies identify trade-offs in between preparing for future shocks and building a more equitable world now (Boke, 2015; Thiede, 2015). Another theme is ambiguity over who is resilient—whether resilience is an individual or collective trait, and the potential trade-offs between individual economic gain and community wellbeing (Walsh-Dilley, 2015).

Paying attention to how change and responses are experienced at the everyday level results in the identification of multiple place-specific meanings of resilience. These place-specific meanings in turn form the context in which individual agency and collective action is exercised.

Brown (2016) summarizes some of the gaps related to agency in social-ecological resilience and identifies several paths for future scholarship. She notes that resilience is not a value-free concept—as also described by Walsh-Dilley and Wolford (2015), who say, “(f)or many development organisations, the key to resilience is the self-actualising individual or community with access to market opportunities” (Walsh-Dilley & Wolford, 2015, p. 175). Resilience is a discourse that is employed within specific value-laden contexts with contingent results. Looking at the process of resilience building itself, including the actions people undertake as agents to build resilience in their day to day lives, can help shed light on other potential meanings.

Brown (2016) examined several studies of how people in places like Orkney, Mozambique, and Cameroon experience different types of social-ecological stressors, to ask what they believe makes them resilient, and what factors support or hinder their ability to adapt. Her political-ecology approach draws attention to how power asymmetries mean that decisions made at higher institutional scales may negatively impact the resilience of communities, households, and individuals (for example, farmers in Mozambique who were negatively impacted by upstream water management which prioritized commercial agriculture (Bunce et al., 2010a & b in Brown, 2016). Brown also shows how adaptive capacity may vary across the same scale (for example, Lapuyade (2001) identified differences between men and women of the same household in terms of capacity to respond to economic crisis in Cameroon (in Brown, 2016)). These findings show it is important to pay attention to social and political differences within and across different scales, as these differences affect how stressors are experienced and managed.

Brown (2016) pays particular attention to how in Indigenous communities, resilience is linked to processes of building and maintaining identity. Indigenous strategies in the face of change are

not just strategies to secure individual biological-material persistence, but also to protect collective identity.

Drawing on this collection of studies, Brown (2016) identifies three new guiding concepts for thinking about resilience in a way that incorporates agency and pays attention to everyday definitions of resilience: resistance, resourcefulness, and rootedness (p. 185). Resistance refers to the ability of people to challenge power structures that drive the cycles of stressors and response they experience, while resourcefulness draws attention to the different strategies and resources people draw on to adapt.

Rootedness, the third concept, captures some of Brown's thinking on the resilience of Indigenous communities, as discussed above. Rootedness refers to the role of place, belonging, and identity in building adaptive capacity. In discussing rootedness, Brown refers to literatures on place-attachment, as well as locally based economic development. Rootedness has multiple dimensions: it can refer to relationships with community and family, as well as the built and natural environment. Brown notes that to the extent rootedness is about the persistence of tradition, it may sometimes function to stifle innovative adaptive responses.

Brown's three suggestions for incorporating agency into resilience, particular rootedness and its link to identity, offer a path forward for thinking about social-ecological resilience in the context of Indigenous communities.

Rotarangi and Russell (2009) claim "to be indigenous is to be resilient." They offer reflections on the first meeting of the Resilience Alliance Working Group on Indigenous Peoples and Social-Ecological Resilience, which took place in 2009 and was composed of academic resilience scholars from ecology and the social sciences and Indigenous thinkers. The authors identified two challenges the field faces: first, ensuring social-ecological resilience thinking coheres with cultural knowledge systems, and second, ensuring the decision-making processes for implementing resilience are inclusive of Indigenous and community leadership. To overcome the first challenge, there is a need for research that employs "culturally oriented methodologies" to explore the more holistic understandings of resilience that may be utilized in Indigenous communities (Rotarangi & Russell, 2009). In particular, resilience's 'social-ecological system,' while an attempt to think more holistically than Western thought systems traditionally have, is not holistic when compared to Indigenous conceptions of 'land.' The land is comprised of

human, non-human, and spiritual actors, all in reciprocal relationship with each other. It starts with ‘relationship’ as a framework, rather than a system (Little Bear, 2000; Simpson, 2011).

This attention to different characterizations of the ‘social-ecological system’ is a useful addition to thinking about place-specific definitions of resilience and has the potential to be useful for Indigenous processes of building social-ecological resilience in colonial contexts.

2.2.2 Resilience summary

Social-ecological resilience must grapple more with the role of cultural identity and agency for building adaptive capacity. Scholars have found that in order to think about the role of agency, one must recognize that resilience is a value-laden concept which is defined in different ways by different communities within the social-ecological system. It is important to look at how resilience is constructed in everyday contexts. Cultural identity and other values play an important role in determining what sorts of livelihoods, practices, or other institutions are seen as key to maintaining the identity of a social-ecological system. Brown and others suggest looking at the processes through which adaptive capacity is built in specific households, communities, and contexts using qualitative methods like ethnography to understand how people define resilience for themselves; what Brown refers to as everyday resilience.

Social-ecological resilience and adaptive capacity building look different in Indigenous communities than in other places. Many of the ecological and social disruptions Indigenous communities are responding to are policies and practices aimed at destroying or assimilating Indigenous nations, identity, and ways of life. Maintaining shared identity by maintaining collective control over political and economic institutions and social practices is key to protecting Indigenous adaptive capacity and this may require more than just ‘adaptation.’ Some resilience scholars have suggested that raising up ‘transformative’ responses to change might better capture how protecting the status quo—including colonial structures—is not desirable for many people and communities (O’Brien, 2012; Pelling & Manuel-Navarette, 2011). However, Indigenous academics tend to use the language of resurgence—the idea of returning to, of revitalization—rather than transformation to think about decolonization (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Simpson, 2011).

As Rotarangi and Russell (2009) point out, looking at the specific process of resilience-building in Indigenous communities may mean rethinking the entire social-ecological system framework

in favour of a more relational understanding. In the next section, I expand upon this idea by exploring some theories of Indigenous resurgence.

2.3 Resurgence

Resurgence is a theory of decolonization coming out of the work of Indigenous academics such as Jeff Corntassel (Bryce & Corntassel, 2012; Corntassel, 2008), Taiaike Alfred (2005; Alfred & Corntassel, 2005) and Leanne Simpson (2011, 2014, 2017). The term was coined by Anishinaabe legal scholar John Borrows (Borrows, 2002). In contrast to previous decolonial thinking, resurgence theory decentres negotiation with the colonial State in favour of grounding decolonizing movements in Indigenous practices, ways of life, and worldviews. Many resurgence scholars are directly involved in resurgence activism in their home communities and strive to ensure their work is meaningful and useful to Indigenous peoples outside academia.

As mentioned previously, resilience thinking has for the most part not wrestled with the role of colonialism as a social-ecological stressor. Resurgence, on the other hand, identifies settler colonialism (the form colonialism takes in Canada), as a structure and not an event (Wolfe, 2006) and its diverse structures of dispossession as the root cause of most social and ecological challenges faced by Indigenous communities. Resurgence's roots in postcolonial theory contribute an understanding of how colonial power structures shape how knowledge is constructed and legitimized, while Indigenous philosophy bestows a theory of ecological relationships as social relationships between agents. These two ideas, a more extensive theory of power, and a different ontological understanding of the social-ecological system, are key contributions of resurgence to social-ecological resilience thinking.

Movements to restore Indigenous food systems are a key part of Indigenous resurgence on the ground. While resilience thinking positions farming, fishing, and other land-based activities as important culturally aligned livelihoods, resurgence recognizes that having collective control over food production can be a step towards decolonization and self-determination for Indigenous peoples. Resurgence theorists argue that Indigenous cultural identities will be able to develop in a more meaningful way in a context of economic and political autonomy. Strengthening traditional food systems is a way to achieve this autonomy while remaining grounded in Indigenous worldviews.

As mentioned, resurgence contributes to social-ecological resilience a deeper awareness of power and an alternate view of social-ecological systems. Resurgence scholars suggest that governance of natural resources comes through relationship, and that knowledge of how to practice relationship is built through experience and is deeply personal and subjective. I touch on the role of Indigenous food sovereignty in resurgence theory, and I explore Leanne Simpson's ideas on renewal (Simpson, 2011) and emergence (Simpson, 2011, p. 91). These ideas—relational ontology, expanded agency, subjective knowledge, emergence, and renewal—can be used to refine the role of agency and cultural identity within social-ecological resilience thinking. Resurgence theory can help make social-ecological resilience a discourse that can be employed by and with Indigenous communities to respond to disasters of all kinds, including the multifaceted disaster of colonialism.

2.3.1 Relationships and Governance in Resurgence

Somewhat like resilience, Indigenous thought looks at the interactions between social and ecological phenomena. But rather than looking at these interactions through the lens of a 'social-ecological system,' Indigenous thinking looks at these interactions as a holistic network of relationships (Little Bear, 2000).

Interactions with the natural world are understood as relationships, rather than actions of human subjects upon inert objects, because within Indigenous worldviews all things are animated and imbued with agency (Little Bear, 2000).

Indigenous values and social customs are based on constantly renewing these relationships with the rest of creation by practicing the role reserved for humans in the cycles of the Earth. This is the meaning of Indigenous stories, ceremonies, and practices, including practices around food. Similar to how Brown and others note the need to understand what resilience means from the perspective of those under study, Little Bear notes that anthropologists have devoted much time to documenting these customary practices without paying attention to the meanings behind them (2000).

Relationships must be continually renewed through practice. They are not static. Like resilience thinking, Anishinaabe and other Indigenous cultures start from the assumption that change is an ontological given—as Little Bear (2000) puts it, everything is in motion. But Indigenous relational ontology has a much broader understanding of agency, one in which every being is

inherently an agent. The direction to maintain relationships of reciprocity rests on the assumption that every being has the agency required to practice reciprocity.

Corntassel (2008) suggests that the goal of Indigenous resurgence is “sustainable self-determination,” a concept which ties environmental sustainability to the passing on of Indigenous cultural knowledge and practices (Corntassel, 2008). Corntassel (2008) argues that self-determination expands beyond self-government agreements, which are often a vehicle for integration into the capitalist economy, and that self-determination must include the right to practice sustainable relationships with the land in accordance with Indigenous worldviews. Self-determination is impossible without the ability to practice material, social, and spiritual relationships with the land. Political self-determination cannot be bestowed by a colonial government, as it was granted to Indigenous peoples by the Creator and has always been practiced through relationship to the land (Corntassel, 2008).

Corntassel (2008) criticizes the discourses of “rights, reconciliation, and resource extraction” offered by the Canadian federal government and offers “responsibilities, resurgence, and relationships” instead. Thinking in terms of responsibilities to the community and the land is more coherent with Indigenous ontology than the concept of rights and can be realized through practice at the community level rather than requiring the recognition of global and national political institutions. Rather than engagement with the State, it is engagement with the land, including maintaining food systems, that is important (Corntassel & Bryce, 2012). Corntassel and Bryce (2012) describes a *kwetlal* (camas) restoration project in Victoria, British Columbia as an example of sustainable self-determination. While the ‘governance’ aspects of harvesting *kwetlal* may not be recognized within a non-Indigenous worldview, it is a resurgent act of sustainable self-determination. Harvesting *kwetlal*—like fishing, hunting, or blueberry gathering—is a way of renewing relationships with the land (Corntassel, 2008).

Sustainable self-determination is an idea that grounds resurgence theory. Instead of theorizing decolonial self-determination as political self-governance won through negotiation with the colonial state, Corntassel (2008) refocuses the idea of resurgent self-determination on practices of renewing relationships with the land by fulfilling responsibilities related to harvesting and (in European terms) land management.

In her article “Gii-kaapizigemin manoomin Neyaashing” (“We roasted wild rice at the point”), Yerxa (2014) names the titular act a practice of governance. Building off Cornntassel but also her Anishinaabe roots, Yerxa (2014) argues for an expanded definition of governance that is about being accountable to one’s relationships by fulfilling one’s responsibilities to them. Gathering to roast wild rice at the point is an example of fulfilling a responsibility and renewing a relationship with *manomin*.

Yerxa (2014) uses the language of “treaty” to describe the reciprocal relationship of the Anishinaabe with *manomin*—noting that it is a living treaty relationship that requires constant reworking and adaptation to maintain (Yerxa, 2014). While the relationship with *manomin* is ever changing, it also represents a connection to ancestors and their precolonial traditions. Renewing the relationship with *manomin* by roasting wild rice at the point is therefore a contemporary decolonial practice—an idea that will be echoed, as described below, by Leanne Simpson (2011).

This act of decolonization is driven by the agency of Anishinaabe individuals and communities to imagine decolonized spaces and act to create them. It is important to recognize how these small yet autonomous acts, such as gathering to roast *manomin*, exemplify resurgence, even if they are not ‘scaled up’ into a wider social movement. This was also picked up by Leanne Simpson through her use of ‘emergence’ (2011).

“Gii-kaapizigemin manoomin Neyaashing” embodies many of the themes of resurgence theory, including grounding decolonization in Indigenous land-based practices and redefining governance. To these themes, Yerxa (2014) adds an analysis of the roles of change, renewal, and agency in resurgence. Yerxa (2014)’s work on the latter is useful for resilience scholars thinking about how to incorporate agency into social-ecological resilience building, by showing how moments of agency may only be visible at more local scales of the social-ecological system.

2.3.2 Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Much of the discussion around food within Indigenous resurgence scholarship engages the concept of Indigenous Food Sovereignty. The idea of “food sovereignty” was put forth by the international peasant movement La Via Campesina in the mid 1990s, to describe the ability of local and cultural communities to have political control over their own food systems (Wittman, Desmarais, & Wiebe, 2010).

Dawn Morrison, a Secwepemc woman from British Columbia, then adapted the concept to create Indigenous Food Sovereignty as a unifying strategic concept for Indigenous peoples in Turtle Island fighting to improve access to traditional foods as well as broader self-determination within their territories (Morrison, 2011).

It is widely agreed that the idea of sovereignty, like the language of rights (Corntassel, 2008), does not fit with Indigenous conceptualizations of governance. In her exploration of food sovereignty in Treaty 3, Daigle (2017) quotes Sherri Kabatay from Seine River First Nation: “when I think of food and sovereignty, they are not connected. Because food comes through relationships to plants and animals, and we are not sovereign over them.” With this critique in mind, Daigle undertakes a grounded exploration of the rice camps, the re-establishment of the clan system, Trapper’s Committee, and fall harvests of Treaty 3 and the Indigenous political and legal orders in which these actions are grounded. Using a resurgence framework to draw attention to everyday scales, as Yerxa does, Daigle identifies these food sovereignty actions as “everyday resurgence” (Daigle, 2017). This idea echoes Brown (2016)’s concept of everyday resilience, and also draws attention to multiple, place-specific meanings of concepts like resilience and sovereignty. In the context of Indigenous communities, sovereignty, resurgence, and resilience are grounded in relationships between kin and with the land that are practiced on an everyday scale.

2.3.3 Renewal and Emergence for Resurgence

Leanne Simpson (2011, 2014, 2017) provides some of the most extensive theoretical grounding of resurgence, using concepts from her Anishinaabe traditions.

Simpson connects resurgence theory to the concept of renewal. In resilience thinking, social-ecological systems move through the adaptive-renewal cycle of consolidation, disturbance, release, and renewal. Scholars of resilience have been examining the role agency plays in adaptation, but Simpson argues that agency also drives processes of renewal (2011).

Simpson thinks about renewal in terms of the Anishinaabe word *Biskaabiiyang*: to look back (2011). *Biskaabiiyang* does not mean a rigid adherence to past tradition, but rather drawing on the knowledge and values that have been handed down as one moves forward into the future.

Biskaabiiyang can also mean “new emergence.” *Biskaabiiyang*, though a process of looking back, is a creative process of generating new phenomena and new ideas. Simpson points to Scott Lyons’s translation of *Nitaa*, or culture, as doing things in a skillful way to bring about more life, and Winona LaDuke’s translation of *mino bimaadiziwin* as “continuous rebirth,” to capture the idea of renewal as a process that is creative and generative (2011, p. 142). Following in the footsteps of ancestors through *Biskaabiiyang* within a constantly changing social-ecological context results in new iterations of traditional practices.

Resurgence is about practices of making, rather than consuming. Simpson suggests that making was and is the basis of *Nishnaabeg* life—every day, *Nishnaabeg* engage in processes of creation—making food, clothing, stories, and relationships—to sustain themselves. As has already been noted by Little Bear (2000), traditional Indigenous practices are important daily acts of renewal through which people maintain their relationships with creation. Simpson emphasizes the agency inherent in these acts of renewal (2011).

Agency is about having plans and strategies that align with the flux of creation. Maintaining Anishinaabe identity through traditional practices like hunting, fishing, and ceremony, and teaching one’s kids to do the same, is an important expression of individual agency and collective action in the midst of a colonial system. A story about *Gezhizhwazh*, a woman who was kidnapped, shows that it is possible to have strategies even at the same time as one is embedded in a complex network of relationships characterized by flux and emergence (Simpson, 2011).

Simpson is working on decolonization rather than resilience, but the idea that resurgence manifests particularly at the local individual and community level is an important complement to resilience thinking about the everyday. Resilience pays attention to cascading effects and feedbacks between levels but tends to overlook phenomena that occur *only* at local levels (an exception is the work being developed around community resilience, for example Berkes & Ross, 2013). Resurgence scholars, on the other hand, argue that ‘everyday’ moments of resurgence are significant. Simpson writes, “living in a good way is an incredible disruption of the colonial meta-narrative in and of itself” (2011, p. 42).

Simpson (2011) expands on this value for ‘everyday’ action with a discussion of emergence, another key idea for agency and resurgence. Emergence describes phenomena that arise at a

larger scale of a system, that are not just a “scaling up” of phenomena at the lower level but are qualitatively new.

Emergence is found in the natural world, in phenomena like mass migration (Simpson, 2011). In thought and in practice, *Nishnaabeg* seek to align themselves with the patterns of flux they see at the individual and community level. Emergence embodies the idea of uncertainty and unpredictability—the end-result, or the larger-scale phenomena, is not controllable by managing individual units. The imperative is to think about the processes and contexts rather than the content or outcome of one’s actions. Thinking about context means thinking about relationships and maintaining good relationships through reciprocity.

Emergence is also key to understanding agency within resurgence theory. Resurgence theory emphasizes the agency that exists at the individual and community level and considers how agency may be understood in non-linear ways. Emergent resurgence is not a passive phenomenon, Simpson clarifies in her most recent work, *As We Have Always Done* (2018)—it is driven by agency and strategy at the local level. Simpson uses emergence to draw attention to how actions on an individual or community level can lead to tangible, meaningful change at larger scales.

Recognizing emergence can be important for practicing renewal. Sometimes renewal is an emergent phenomena—it may not be recognizable at certain levels. When one takes a wider or longer-term perspective of change or flux however, one can see patterns or cycles—“the law of circular inaction” (Youngblood Henderson in Simpson, 2011). Emergent renewal is a framework for thinking about how change and renewal can be present at the same time in the same system.

In her most recent work, Simpson introduces the *Nishnaabeg* word *kobade*, a “link in a chain” (2018). *Kobade* describes the connection between generations across time, and between different beings and communities across space. While resilience looks at institutions, households, individuals, and more as scalable, hierarchical units within the social-ecological system, Simpson thinks in terms of “networked relationships” (2018). With the ontological and epistemological decision to assume relationships as the foundation and renewal as the motor of the ‘social ecological system,’ Simpson captures a social-ecological world that is imbued with agency from the very start.

2.3.4 Learning and Knowledge for Resurgence

To understand the relationships between things, and to understand how this continuous motion is organized into patterns, one must take a holistic attitude towards knowledge. This holistic knowledge does not separate the ‘objective’ outer world from the ‘subjective’ inner world of psychology and spirituality. Indigenous knowledge is therefore ecological knowledge of the relationships of a particular place, and at the same time represents human beings *in* relationship with a particular place (Little Bear, 2000).

In Indigenous ontology, all knowledge is subjective (Simpson, 2014). Learning comes from experiencing and doing, which includes engaging in food practices (Simpson, 2014). Yerxa describes *kaapizigemin manomin neyaashing* (roasting wild rice at the point) as a “land-based pedagogy” (Yerxa, 2014). This process is personal—there is no standard curriculum. Rather than existing as an objective body, knowledge is created within and through relationship. Learning also occurs through story-telling and metaphor, meaning each person must engage with the story to create their own interpretation. Engaging with this metaphorical and experiential learning, in relationship with others and with the land, is how each individual generates meaning within their own lives. In Simpson’s example, a story about the origins of maple syrup both teaches one the process of maple syrup making (the more literal meaning) and also reveals key aspects of Indigenous worldview and values (each being has agency, for example, and is shown as being in relationship—the central problem of the story is solved through cooperation) (Simpson, 2014). In contrast to Western models, meaning and knowledge in Indigenous learning are always contextualized. One learns knowledge of the land through being on the land or stories of the land. Engaging in food practices is therefore a central activity of Indigenous land-based, relational, experiential learning.

Practice-based epistemology means that knowledge is subjective, which in turn opens the way for multiple, place-specific and personal meanings of traditional foods for resurgence and resilience. Yerxa (2014) notes that making *manomin* is an assertion of governance, while at the same time a way of maintaining cultural identity, while also simply a way of feeding oneself. These multiple meanings of *manomin*—practical, ceremonial, political—are all strands of Anishinaabe people’s relationship with this food (Yerxa, 2014)). People may draw upon one or another in different circumstances, but it would be incorrect to think that any meaning is more

important than the others. Indigenous worldviews are comfortable with subjectivity and plurality when it comes to knowledge, since all knowledge comes from lived experience. Resilience scholars are working hard to expand the role of the symbolic meaning of environmental management and livelihood-related practices within resilience frameworks (Brown, 2016; Crane 2010). Indigenous approaches to knowledge may be useful for resilience scholars seeking to understand how people experience resilience in different and multi-faceted ways.

2.3.5 Resurgence Summary

Resurgence theory is grounded within Indigenous philosophy. While the social-ecological resilience literature tends to treat food as a means of nourishment or livelihood, resurgence scholars recognize it as a means of practicing social and spiritual relationships that are key to political and economic self-determination.

Resurgence builds a framework in which governance centers on relationships with the land and with ancestors, rather than the State. Sovereignty, including food sovereignty, is a matter of practicing reciprocity with the land. By defining Indigenous modes of governance, resurgence scholars open up the idea of decolonization to include actions like roasting wild rice or teaching a young person to hunt. Resurgence focuses on the everyday scale, the scale at which relationship is practiced, and recognizes agency from the very start through the concept of reciprocity. Simpson provides perhaps the most in-depth account of resurgence, based on *Biskaabiiyang* and emergence—her resurgence is an agency-filled process of drawing on practices and knowledge of the past to keep the cycles of life going, while always being open and responsive to change and flux. Resurgence theories provide an important guide to thinking about what decolonization looks like, how social-ecological resilience can be more decolonial, and the role of traditional foods in those processes.

2.4 Chapter Summary

Social-ecological resilience provides a framework for thinking about how social and ecological factors interact throughout processes of change. However, resilience's social-ecological system framework means that the role of agency in processes of adaptation is not well understood. Resilience's origins in ecology also mean that certain social elements, especially power relationships and cultural identities and values, are sometimes overlooked.

When looking at the role of traditional foods for resilience in Wabaseemoong, social and ecological change must be understood in the context of colonialism. Adaptive responses can not include accommodating colonial disturbances aimed at erasing Indigenous collective identities and ways of life. Responses must be grounded in supporting resurgence instead. Resurgence theory can help expand the decolonial potential of social-ecological resilience thinking. It presents a way of thinking about social-ecological systems, or land, that is based on relationships of reciprocity practiced on an everyday scale, through harvesting, cooking, and eating traditional foods. This complements Brown's notion of everyday resilience and rootedness. Thinking in terms of relationships rather than simply systems helps provide a lens for recognizing the moments of everyday agency that drive decolonial resilience.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

According to Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), methodology is “regarded as the way in which knowledge is acquired or discovered, and as the way in which we can know what is real” (p. 164). I understand methodology to be a system of shared procedures for gathering knowledge that is continually being expanded upon and changed by individual researchers as they employ it. The choice of methodology is a combination of one’s epistemological beliefs, the research question, and the research context (Creswell, 2014). Ethnography provides a theoretical and methodological framework to both conceptualize my approach to questions of traditional food within an Indigenous community, as well as identify a set of practical methods for gathering and organizing the answers to those questions.

3.2 Ethnography

My choice of qualitative methods reflects the types of questions I am interested in asking in this project around individual and collective meanings and values. This in turn is linked to my philosophical assumptions about what knowledge is and what kind of knowledge is useful.

I find the assumptions of social-constructivism useful in thinking my philosophical approach through. Social constructivism, which Creswell (2014) names as one philosophical worldview among others, holds that knowledge is not available simply through empirical observation. Researchers must also pay attention to the meanings constructed by people, in social, political, and cultural relationship with others, and mediated through historical processes. Understanding how people interpret their experiences themselves is an important foundation of knowledge (Creswell, 2014).

Social constructivism points me towards looking at how people construct meaning for themselves—however, it is not enough for fully understanding the meanings people in Wabaseemoong attribute to traditional foods. In my literature review, I described how Indigenous worldviews are founded on a relational ontology and I wish to take that seriously. I expand upon the social constructivist approach by assuming that ‘socially constructed’ meaning is not just an additional realm of knowledge to explore, but that these meanings (including meanings informed by a relational worldview) are enacted, and therefore inform empirical realities.

Ethnography is the study of everyday life (Fetterman, 1998). It arises out of anthropology and sociology, and rests upon fieldwork (Rabinow & Marcus, 2008), during which the ethnographer immerses themselves in their chosen particular setting. Through immersion and close observation, ethnographers attempt to construct an understanding of the ‘culture’ of a particular group of people, as revealed through their social practices.

Ethnography combines a concern for the emic or insider’s perspective with the etic perspective of the social scientist (Fetterman, 1998). Despite its name, social ‘science’ is not the same as natural science. It is concerned with ideas—as noted above, ‘concepts’ rather than ‘objects’ (Gobo 2008). It is important to recognize key ethnographic ideas such as ‘culture’ as concepts that which can be constructed and re-constructed.

According to Gobo (2008), a methodology contains both a way of ‘seeing’ (a set of assumptions about how the world works) and a way of ‘doing’ (a set of investigative strategies based upon those assumptions). Marcus and Fischer (1986), and more recently Rabinow and Marcus (2008), have engaged in re-examining the ontological assumptions and epistemological strategies of ethnography. In the case of the former, ethnography has been criticized for its colonial portrait of native societies as both ‘pre-modern’ and ‘Other,’ bound up in a binary with ‘modern’ Western society (Rabinow & Marcus, 2008). The challenges to this view have been philosophical and ethical, and, through cultural and economic globalization, increasingly tangible. The demand for a more critical ethnography that is attuned to the current world requires a rethinking of how ethnographers conceive of the ‘cultures’ they study, ‘traditional,’ ‘native,’ or otherwise (Marcus & Fischer, 1986).

This question of the ontological status of ‘native cultures’ requires reconceiving of assumptions about how these cultures are situated in time and space. Traditionally, native cultures have been conceived of by anthropologists as timeless and pre-modern. Ethnography now must recognize how these cultures are historically situated, with their own stories of change over time (Marcus & Fischer, 1986). Colonial encounters are part of these native histories, not outside them. Marcus and Fischer (1986) argue for a more complex understanding of cultural change than ‘contamination’ or ‘erasure,’ one which recognizes how cultures are always changing and adapting within historical contexts (Marcus & Fischer, 1986).

Rabinow and Marcus (2008) take this argument deeper. Acknowledging ‘cultural change’ requires a reconceptualization of the concept of ‘culture.’ Traditionally, ‘culture’ has been key to ethnography’s holistic orientation. Ethnographers examine ‘culture’ as a totality, which reveals how aspects, such as psychology, religion, social life, economics, and politics, are organized and connected (Fetterman, 1998). Rabinow and Marcus (2008) acknowledge the continuing relevance of holism for ethnography in terms of looking for relationships and hidden connections. Yet ‘culture’ to them is an overly static concept, inadequate to describe a dynamic and emergent world. They suggest ‘assemblage’ as a new possibility, a concept which describes how different elements (human and non-human actors, policies and ideas, etc.) on different temporal trajectories encounter each other, forming relationships from which new properties emerge, and which together form a dynamic ‘whole,’ yet a whole on which no entity is essentially dependent (Rabinow, 2011). In this framework, the subsuming concept of culture gives way to looking for the ‘cultural’ instead (Rabinow & Marcus, 2008).

Marcus and Fischer trace a shift in the historical development of ethnography, in which the discourse shifted from questions of theory towards more fundamental methodological concerns over description and representation in the 1960s (Marcus & Fischer, 1986). Clifford Geertz’s “interpretive anthropology” used the metaphor of culture as a text, which is interpreted by cultural actors (Marcus & Fischer, 1986). Rather than constructing a realist account of the structure and functions of a society, ethnographers became more interested in ‘inner meaning,’ how their participants constructed the world themselves (Marcus & Fischer, 1986). Ethnography is thus understood as the researcher’s interpretation of these interpretations.

These concerns around how ethnographic knowledge does not arise from observation simply, but construction, are still relevant today (Gobo, 2008; Rabinow, 2011). It is important that ethnographers acknowledge their own influence on the environment they are studying and the texts they produce. Rabinow and Marcus (2008) suggest ‘collaboration’ as a metaphor for the work of ethnography, and Ingold (2011) describes ethnography as “joining with people” in a collaborative search for meaning.

The challenges of doing ethnography today require an understanding of the complexity, nuance, and multi-dimensionality of the cultural world. This requires dissolving duality-thinking of Western/Native and modern/traditional, in order to recognize how all cultures operate within the

contemporary, encountering each other along political, economic, and cultural paths, at local, regional, and global scales. The new ontological framework of ethnography incorporates historicity and change as well as global political-economic relationships into the cultural. This new framework helps ethnography to locate the ‘traditional cultural’ within the contemporary world, and to examine its current trajectories and assemblages. This ontological re-setting has bearing on the epistemology of anthropology and ethnography as its main methodology. The concepts of reflexivity, writing, and translation provide a direction for reconceiving of the place of the researcher. They frame ethnography as a process of exchange and dialogue resting on a foundation of self-awareness. By undertaking an ethnography, I hoped to be able to pay attention to the role of the cultural in Wabaseemoong, as embodied in the field of a traditional food system, understanding that ‘culture’ is a complex concept. The understanding I gained through the ethnographic literature helped me be attuned to processes of time and change, to how cultural processes found in Wabaseemoong may span many scales, and to ethnography as a constructed dialogue.

3.3 Research Process and Participant Recruitment

I lived in Wabaseemoong for four months, from January to the end of April 2018. During that time, I conducted 26 unstructured interviews and two focus groups and participated in many traditional food-related activities in the community.

For the first month and-a-half that I was engaged within the community, I lived in the nearby town of Minaki. I commuted to Wabaseemoong every weekday and some weekends. During the mornings I volunteered with the school breakfast program. Along with the three school cooks, I would help prepare the breakfast for the students, who came to the kitchen to pick up the breakfast for their classrooms every morning. The school is one of the main buildings and main employers in the community. I found that spending my mornings there helped me establish relationships with the teachers and other staff there, some of whom I ended up interviewing.

In this first month and-a-half, I was also working on running a series of creative recipe workshops for students. While these workshops did not contribute to my data collection, I found that they provided an avenue towards building relationships and establishing myself in the community. They provided a purpose and something to work on while I was in the ‘building

relationships' stage of my fieldwork. And perhaps most importantly, they represented something I could offer the community in return for their hospitality and participation in my research.

For participant recruitment, I initially asked one of the school cooks, who was my main friend coming into the community, for suggestions of who to talk to. From there, I worked partially from this list, and partially with the people whom I encountered myself who were involved in traditional food activities. I found that a challenge in identifying and recruiting participants was finding a balance between speaking to people with whom I had an established relationship and people who were particularly involved in traditional food activities. I wondered whether people had to be doing these things in order to speak about them—since my goal was not to catalogue existing activities or strategies, but talk about the values and stories related to them in the community, something that people might have opinions and knowledge about despite no longer or never being much involved in harvesting themselves.

While I strived for gender parity in my participants, I decided not to look for a full range of ages. The majority of my participants were over 40, as this reflected people who were still involved in traditional food activities and were most interested in speaking to me about them. I did speak to two people in their teens. One was heavily involved in trapping, commercial fishing, and hunting and well known in the community as a young person doing those things. The other was a participant in a recipe workshop with whom I had developed a relationship, whom I spoke to about the workshop and about her perception as a young person of traditional foods.

3.4 Methods

Here are my objectives and the methods used to achieve them:

OBJECTIVES:

To document meanings of traditional foods—why and how are they important to community members today?

- a) What did relationships with traditional foods look like in the past (within living memory)?
- b) What are the important activities of the traditional food system today?
- c) What meanings do community members ascribe to traditional foods today?

METHODS

- Participant observation of community activities, focusing on traditional food activities
- 26 unstructured interviews (F=11, M=15)
- Two focus groups (Na = 12, Nb = 4)

3.4.1 Participant Observation

The centrality of participant observation is what characterizes ethnography (Gobo, 2008). In participant observation, data is captured through fieldnotes, which aim to capture as literal (from the ethnographer’s point of view, of course) a representation of events as possible (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). The ethnographer should pay attention to context as well as behaviour, noting the connections between the two (Fetterman, 1998).

I used participant observation to understand the context of traditional food activities in the community, and to note questions to follow up on. My findings on traditional food activities in the community today are heavily informed by participant observation—that section is built from my observations while participating in those activities, as well as the informal conversations I had with people during those times. Participant observation was useful for capturing dimensions of traditional foods that were better expressed through practices or demonstration than description (Gobo, 2008). My own hands-on experience also represents another dimension of knowledge that informed my findings. Bearing in mind the critiques of ethnography above, I note that perhaps “participant collaboration and conversation” might be a better word than observation—the knowledge these activities produced for me was less a description of behaviour

I ‘observed,’ and more about insights that were produced through everyday interactions with the people around me.

I attended many activities both public (offered for the whole community), and private (with individual community members). As well as assisting with the breakfast program daily, activities included: ice-fishing and ice-fishing derbies, a commercial ice-fishing course, bannock classes, the Fall Harvest in September, multiple community feasts, a spring feast at a private residence in a nearby community with someone from Wabaseemoong, a sweat lodge, and a shaking tent ceremony.

3.4.2 Interviewing

Interviews were useful for revealing the frameworks which people use to ascribe meaning to traditional foods more consciously (Gobo, 2008).

Usually after encountering someone through participant observation or being referred to them by another community member or participant, I asked the person to sit down for a one-time interview. I interviewed about half my participants at their homes, and half at the school or Youth and Elders’ Centre. Participants were given the choice about what location worked best for them.

The interview was organized into three parts: past experiences with traditional foods, traditional food activities today, and overall meaning of traditional foods. Interviews were fairly informal and conversational. See Appendix A for a copy of the interview schedule. I changed the schedule slightly over the course of my fieldwork, as new thoughts and questions arose.

Interviews lasted from half an hour to (in one case) two hours, with the average interview being an hour. I audio-recorded almost all my interviews, with permission, and converted them to written transcripts within a few days of the interview. Interview participants were given the option to be identified by their real names in the final thesis or choose a pseudonym.

3.4.3 Focus groups

Near the end of my fieldwork, in March, I held two focus groups. These were meant to generate data on the activities that take place around traditional foods in the community today, and the meanings ascribed to them (see Appendix B).

Both focus groups were held in the Youth and Elders' Centre on a weekday after work hours and lasted an hour and-a-half. In both cases, I invited all interview participants to attend, as well as putting up posters in two public spaces in the community, and on Facebook. In both focus groups, participants were therefore a mix of interview participants and new participants. I recorded both focus groups, and in the first focus group, I also had an assistant from the Youth and Elders' Centre taking notes.

In the first focus group, I asked participants to use sticky notes to collectively generate a map of traditional food activities in the community today and then sort that by which actors in the community make those activities happen. For the second focus group, I wanted to generate a timeline of traditional food activities, but the discussion ended up revolving again around current traditional food activities.

3.5 Analysis

In ethnography, data collection and data analysis go hand in hand (Fetterman, 1998; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). As I transcribed my interviews and read through my field notes every day, I was thinking about what themes were emerging that I should be paying attention to as I continued my fieldwork. I was continually thinking about who to speak to, what activities to attend next, and what questions to ask.

I had gone into my fieldwork with a rough framework in mind constructed from what I had read in the resilience, health and healing, and resurgence literatures on traditional foods, and the different ways each literature positioned traditional foods today (which I had roughly typified as nutritional, economic, social, spiritual, and ecological). I had the idea that my task would be to align how community members talked about traditional foods with one or a combination of these meanings found within these different literatures.

About mid-way during my fieldwork, I coded the data I had collected so far. That was when I started to notice what would become a central theme, *Passing things down*, and I began to ask people more specifically about this meaning of traditional foods.

After I returned from my fieldwork, I coded my entire set of data manually for themes that arose inductively. At first, I focused in on two themes in the latter section—*health* and *passing things down*. Then, I narrowed down to just the data relating to *passing things down*. I found that the

theme of *passing things down* was present in the stories people told about traditional food activities growing up.

In writing up my findings on *passing things down* as a meaning of resilience in relationship to traditional foods in the community of Wabaseemoong, I tried to write in a narrative way that did not decontextualize the stories people told and that I experienced from their context. My aim was to create a rich, non-extractive document which communicates my interpretation of the meanings gathered while not obscuring them as meaning-making pieces of knowledge in their own right.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

Since my questions were focused on subjective meaning, the validity of my data concerns how accurately the data reflects these individual and collective viewpoints. I did not aim to construct generalizable findings—my findings belong in the context of Wabaseemoong and my group of participants.

By using both participant observation and interviews I was able to use each to triangulate the other. I also returned to the community in October, five months after completing my fieldwork, to observe the Fall Harvest and to do some member-checking. I delivered a printed copy of each participant's interview transcript to them and invited them to talk to me in person or contact me via phone or email if they had concerns. I also used the opportunity to talk again to three key participants—I summarized the analytical points I wanted to make (*passing things down*—its importance as a meaning of traditional foods in the community and the main values and activities associated with it) and confirmed that this interpretation was meaningful to them.

3.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have outlined my ethnographic methodological approach. Ethnography allows me to examine the meanings that structure traditional food activities at the scale of the community. I used participant observation, unstructured interviews, and focus groups. With these data, I built an inductive framework that describes the role of traditional foods for resilience. The validity and reliability of my data come from triangulation through multiple methods and through member-checking.

CHAPTER 4: PASSING THINGS DOWN, THROUGH RELATIONSHIP (PARENTS)

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter and the following chapter on the meaning of traditional foods in Wabaseemoong I argue that traditional food activities are underlaid by a value for *passing things down*. *Passing things down* is a strategy for changing and responding to change while maintaining continuity. It is more than maintaining tradition—rather, it is about maintaining a certain set of relationships, in a way that requires ongoing practice and responsiveness.

I found that passing down traditional food knowledge and practices centers on three relationships in particular: relationships with parents, with ancestors, and with land. Traditional food practices are both maintained *through* these relationships as well as being how these relationships themselves are maintained.

In this chapter, I discuss the parent relationship—the values associated with this relationship, and how it is practiced through traditional foods today. In the next chapter, I do the same with the remaining two relationships of ancestors and land. *Passing things down* through these three relationships is my framework for how social-ecological resilience is built in Wabaseemoong. *Passing things down* is a framework for resilience that is grounded in the local meaning frameworks of Wabaseemoong and includes rooms for agency. In my final chapter, I elaborate on these implications of *passing things down* for social-ecological resilience thinking.

4.2 *Passing Things Down Through Relationship: Parents*

Passing things down is about the material, practical concern of teaching younger generations how to make a living and survive. At the same time, *passing things down* is also value-laden. Among other things, it gives meaning to the identity of a parent and the relationship between generations. Participants talked about *passing things down* through teaching and providing as a duty of a parent. *Passing things down* also imbues knowledge received from parents with legitimacy and normative weight.

This relationship has changed as the main institutional structure responsible for education has shifted from the family to the government, with the pressure to send children to school, and then the establishment of a school in the community. At the same time, many other colonial factors have interfered with parents' ability to pass on knowledge—in an example of intergenerational

impacts, parents who did not receive teachings from their own parents now feel unequipped to provide those teachings to their own children.

In this context, programs are seen both as the cause of the problem and a possible tool that can be harnessed for reclaiming processes of *passing things down*. To this end, I discuss the bannock classes that are taught at the school and funded through the band council as an example of how the parent relationship aspect of *passing things down* is practiced through traditional food teaching in the community today.

4.2.1 Teaching as Parental Responsibility

Participants spoke about how passing on knowledge is a duty a parent has to their children. George Land is raising his grandson, Thomas, now 18. Thomas began learning how to hunt, trap, and fish from his uncles when he was 11 and continued learning from George, who would take him out to hunt in the mornings before school. Thomas dropped out of school when he was 16 and now earns a livelihood trapping, commercial fishing, and guiding, as well as hunting and fishing for game that his family consumes and that they share with or sell to the community. Thomas's father was a hunter, and George saw it as his duty, as Thomas's guardian and grandfather (Thomas calls him 'Dad'), to teach him those skills.

I had the opportunity to raise him, as a grandfather. And these are the responsibilities any grandparent has. Not to withhold any knowledge from their grandchildren, but to share whatever they have.

The language of "sharing," as in "sharing teachings" is often used to talk about *passing things down*. Sharing one's teachings with a child is fulfilling the identity of a parent. Sharing teachings is part of the responsibility or moral duty of a parent—part of what being a parent is.

Linda Cameron teaches a bannock class with support from the Band Office. I made bannock with her on multiple occasions—the first time we met, she was teaching a class of Grade 8 students how to make and fry bannock. She spoke about the pride she takes in passing on this skill, which her mother taught her:

So I guess today, I just want to teach people what I know. I don't want it to be lost, where I know I could do it, and not being able to teach. The more that I teach, the better I feel, that I had passed it on. The bannock classes, the cooking that I do. The feasts, the community

dinners that I help with. All those, I take pride in doing. It was something my mum had passed on to us, 'cause she catered, she cooked for the community.

Linda spoke of how she took pride in providing for her children, not just materially, but emotionally. Cooking and feeding her children was a way to do both:

I wanted to show them that they weren't going to go through what I went through. Nobody would hurt them and take them away from me. So that's where we started. With very little means that we had... Food. I learned to cook real well. At a very young age to try to feed my kids. And I taught my kids how to cook.

Now Linda takes pride in helping others be able to fulfill the role of provider and teacher for their own children.

It makes me feel proud that I'm able to help families with the traditional teaching of making bannock, and that was something we grew up with, and the kids had received bannock from their grandparents or their mothers, their aunts and their uncles, and how they really enjoyed it and they haven't been able to learn that.

She went on to tell me a story of a man she had taught to cook bannock. One day she gave him a ride:

He gets in the vehicle, he says, "Hello, Linda, thanks for picking me up! I really needed a ride, it's getting cold out there. But I've been meaning to talk to you about this, and to tell you thank you...I have to tell you that I'm thankful that you taught me that and I can make bannock for my grandkids. And it makes me feel good that I can cook for them, and it's something that I've always wanted to teach the kids, to be able to cook for them. Just to have that connection with the grandkids."

For this man, teaching and cooking for his grandchildren was an avenue for building a relationship with them. Linda had given him the ability to do that by teaching him skills and knowledge to pass down in turn.

While not food related, the desire to teach also appeared in this story Georgina Scott told me about her partner Marvin McDonald watching his father make *tikanagans* (cradleboards) when he was a child:

When he thinks about it now, ‘I should have paid attention. I should have stayed longer instead of taking off with my buddies,’ he says, ‘so I can teach it. I would have taught it to George or... pass on, so it won’t be lost.

Linda spoke of this responsibility existing not just for parents and grandparents, but older siblings as well:

And my sisters and my brothers, they all have their own gifts. We taught each other. And the things that they had learned from our parents. My father had taught the boys certain things. And my mother had taught the older ones how to cook, and how they watched and how they passed it on to us. How my sisters have passed it on to the younger ones. I had that responsibility, for the ones on down. To teach them, and to help each other. Keep ourselves safe, all that stuff.

Although it is a parent or older relation’s responsibility to teach, it is also important not to force teachings upon others. Randy Land recounted how an elder (a non-relation) who he learned from told him, “If I can just get only one person to listen and to learn from me, then I’ve done my job.” Randy continued, “So that’s what I try to do with my sons, and to anybody else that’s interested. But I don’t go out and put out invitations or calls or make an announcement. If they wanna learn, they’ll come to me.”

While it would be interfering and disrespectful of another person’s autonomy to force teachings upon someone, teaching is an important responsibility. It is meaningful and a source of pride to *pass things down*.

Part of the meaning of traditional foods—whether hunting, making bannock, cooking, or more—is that they represent a practice of *passing things down*. *Passing things down* is seen as a duty a parent has to their children and forms an important part of parental identity. As a value system, *passing things down* catalyzes practices related to traditional foods that also maintain relationships—in this case, between generations.

4.2.2 Providing as Parental Responsibility

One word I often heard to describe what parents teach was how to ‘provide.’

‘Providing’ is providing material necessities, as well as less tangible skills and knowledge, for one’s family. It is the duty of a parent to provide, and it is also the duty of a parent to teach their children how to provide for their families in turn. Roland (Rollie) Fisher connected this imperative to the food insecurity experienced in Wabaseemoong:

When I get old, or you know, in a wheelchair in my older days, I hope my grandchildren know how to fend for themselves, if the time comes. The cost of living here in the north, like in northern communities, is high. Compared to other areas, urban centres. It’s not too easy to just go to a grocery store. Here, you’ll have that skill of how to provide for your family.

Being able to provide is a duty to one’s family. It is what being a parent means. This includes not just food skills, but emotional, inter-personal, and psychological skills as well.

I speak to my kids in the language. And I teach them what it means. I consistently speak with my kids about respecting themselves, taking time for themselves to be able to love their children and be able to be good parents to their children. You have to provide.

(Linda Cameron)

Young people learn how to provide through the practice of *passing things down*. It is important that children learn how to hunt and fish, prepare and cook wild foods, Myrna McDonald said,

So that they can be providers when they’re older. Because it’s not just about themselves, it’s about teaching them to be in control and be able to provide for their future families. That’s how this goes, like you pass on your teachings.

The language of providing shows that to provide for one’s family with food is a chief duty of a parent. Another duty is teaching one’s children how to be parents, which means teaching them how to provide in turn. Providing is a relational practice, since it is about duties and obligations towards others. This values for providing speaks to the important of relationships, and specifically the parent relationship, for understanding what drives *passing things down* in Wabaseemoong.

4.2.3 Respecting Parental Knowledge

Passing things down drives traditional food practices in Wabaseemoong, at the same time giving meaning and structure to the relationship between parents and children. It is important for a parent to *pass things down* to their child—however, this sense of duty works in the opposite direction as well. *Passing things down* imbues parents' teachings with normative weight. Practicing relationship with one's parents meanings honouring and following the teachings they have passed down.

Georgina said, of her partner Marvin trying to learn how to process wild rice,

He would do this, and I'd tell him, no, you're doing it kind of wrong. He'd say 'kay what am I supposed to be doing?'. And I'd say, you're supposed to be doing this, and I'd tell him. 'Why, you the expert?' I'd say, 'Yes I am.' *I went blueberry-picking with my parents, I saw what was going on. They teached me. Your parents didn't, but my parents did.*

Georgina also said it was important to share knowledge, "So it could be made the way it's supposed to be made. Not from plastic or whatever. The traditional ways of making a *tikanagan*. The proper way. The way it was a long time ago."

Passing things down is not just a way of passing on knowledge, but also legitimizing it. Relationships with the earth ("not plastic") and with parents are maintained by making things out of natural materials, the way one's parents taught one to.

To Dean Letander, passed-down knowledge is valuable because it has been developed and tested over the course of generations.

"We learned to do things the easiest way possible, with the less effort and the most harvest. The way we pick wild rice, one guy's in front paddling, one guy has two sticks, the first stick grabs some rice this way, puts it over the edge of the canoe, the other stick comes down, bangs on the first stick three or four times, which loosens the rice kernels from the stalk, and then you let go. The way we do it, we planted twice the amount as we harvested, because of the way we harvested, this way over the boat. So some falls in the canoe, like ninety percent of it falls in the canoe, ten percent falls back in the water which

becomes next year's harvest. The way Caucasians do it is by an airboat, they harvest everything, so next year that field is not a rice field anymore."

The long history of this knowledge and these practices gives them a practical legitimacy—*Passing things down* provides knowledge and practices that have proven to be sustainable over the long-term.

But *passing things down* is not just normative because it is practical. A woman in Wabaseemoong once told me a story about a mother who always cut up her moose meat in tiny, tiny pieces. Her daughters grew up, and they would cut their meat in the same way. One day, one of the daughters was serving her mother, and her mother asked, "Why did you cut the meat so small?" "Oh...that's how you taught us to do it. I thought that's how we were supposed to do it," the daughter replied. "I cut it that way because our pot was too small!" replied her mother.

This woman did not tell me this story to suggest that following a tradition is meaningless. While poking fun, her story clearly communicated that doing things the way one watched one's parents do is important in itself.

While Dean above offered a practical reason for following parental knowledge, he also spoke about it as a way of maintaining identity through tradition. He said he always prepared traditional foods, like moose meat, deer meat, or beaver, the same way—with little seasoning, usually boiled—because that was the way it had been taught to him.

Do you need another answer than that? And this is where the younger generation, they need to know this, they need to know that, they can't accept that this is the way we've been doing it for [generations].

..the way my mother taught me to eat it, the way her mother taught her to cook and eat it, because that's tradition right there. And how am I continuing on, and how am I keeping my culture alive, by taking the little bit I know, and passing it along, and teaching them, hey listen, your grandma taught me this, your grandma's grandma taught her this. So, to give that ownership to somebody, do you think they'll ever mess with it? No. No, why? Because this is the way my grandma's done it, this is the way my dad's done it, this is the way my grandma's done it.

Referring to his kids, Dean said:

They always question, always. And they're always told why. . . It depends on what mindset you're looking at it, right. You're looking at it through a European—you need to know why it's done that way, what the benefits are, does it save time, is it because of this, is it because of that, as opposed to our way, it's done this way because this is how my mother taught me, and this is how her mother's taught me, and this has gone back ten generations. And it's just that.

As opposed to evaluating practices based on empirical factors such as time and efficiency, Dean holds up a value-based measure, based on maintaining a relationship with previous generations by doing things in the way one has been taught.

Maintaining this relationship by following one's parents and grandparents' teachings into the future, is, according to Dean, what it means to be Indigenous.

Most people you ask them, are you native? What does it mean to be native? Does it mean you're the first person to this nation? What does it mean, you have special status, you don't have to pay taxes? Well, what does it mean to you to be native, what does it mean to be Indian? It's a connection to our past but moving forward as well.

Dean shows how the practice of *passing things down* and following a tradition is, as the previous story about preparing meat communicates, important as a way of maintaining collective identity and connecting a group of people through a shared set of practices.

The value for *passing things down* imbues the knowledge one receives from one's parents with an authority and normative weight. Whether this authority is based on practical and empirical principles or more subjective values, *passing things down* structures parents' teachings as a source of normative knowledge.

4.2.4 Summary

Passing things down gives meaning to the relationship between parents and children by imbuing parents with a duty to pass on their knowledge and their children with a duty to follow and respect parental knowledge. The relationship between parents and children is practiced by teaching and receiving traditional food knowledge.

4.3 *Passing Things Down* and the Shift to State-Funded Schooling

George Land summed up the connection between a land-based way of life and the relationship between parents and children and how the relationship between parents and children has changed as the community has moved away from land-based livelihoods:

Today it's different. So when a child is born today... They'll go home for a month or two, and then after that, it's more like adoption into the daycare centre. The mother and child, that bond is separated. . . The child is raised in the daycare centre, until he's old enough to go into kindergarten. The mother is more like a friend to the child, because the separation took place while the child was growing up, learning to crawl or walk.

This is different, George said, from the way he was raised:

I went to school, but I didn't go to school until I was ten years old. (HM: So up until that point you were with your family.) Yeah, I was really close with my parents, with my mum and dad. . . There was always that, father and mother, and my brothers. There was always that family contact. There was nothing else to do.

As land-based livelihoods became less economically viable and families moved towards other forms of work and more permanent settlement in the community, the family-based context of *passing things down*, based on learning from parents practicing land-based livelihoods, began to change.

The practice of *passing things down* was disrupted for children who were sent to residential school, beginning around the 1950s, and as other forms of state-run schooling became more prevalent in the community in the 1980s.

This generation's experience with State or Church-run educational institutions varied. Some were sent to residential schools like St. Mary's, just outside of Kenora, returning home only during July and August or Christmas vacation. For others, time in school was organized around the family's livelihood activities.

Paul Michaud started rice-picking when he was eight years old: "Yeah, I started everything when I was small. I was only what, seven years old? ...You gotta work."

Later he started going to school at Malachi, which had a travelling school “passenger car,” which travelled between Malachi and Sandstrom on a two-week rotation: “We were two weeks at school. They’d give us books to take home. We’d work on it at home again.”

Similarly, another participant who grew up in Deer Lake in the 1980s, remembers going out for a month at a time to the spring and fall hunting grounds with his family and others. The school on the reserve would provide them with the month of work.

The flexible format of Paul and Jeff’s schooling allowed them to receive education in both the traditional Western curriculum and Anishinaabe land-based skills and knowledge.

But children who were sent to residential school had no such flexibility. An older female participant was sent to St. Mary’s Indian residential school in Kenora in the 1960s, while her parents continued to practice their seasonal round. She remembers catching a ride on a floatplane operated by a family friend from St. Mary’s out to her parents’ trapline at Christmas time. Residential schools removed children from the context of family and land-based livelihood practices that were crucial for learning land-based knowledge and skills.

Helen Fisher, Colleen Paishk, and Randy Land told stories of their families avoiding ever going in to Wabaseemoong, in order to keep their children from being sent to residential school.

Despite these interferences, some people spoke about how they were able to learn harvesting and cooking skills when they were home for the summer, or during periods away from residential school (Linda Cameron, Myrna McDonald, Glen Cameron).

Some people were removed from their families and sent into foster care as children. Glen Cameron lived in multiple foster care homes while growing up. The first one, from age eight to nine, did not allow the children outside at all—“we were just locked up in the basement, didn’t do nothing, just go to school, come home.”

The second home he was sent to allowed him more freedom. Glen and his brothers took advantage of free time outside to practice snaring.

Glen tells the story:

But when I was in foster care, we did our own snaring, me and my brothers. We did rabbits and partridges, maybe the odd squirrels. Other than that, those were the small

things that we kept, that kept our tradition alive. . . I'd already learnt that when I left home. Or even during the course when we came home, during that year and-a-half.

Glen described snaring as a natural way to spend free time:

Just instinct I guess, 'cause it was fun when we were out there. And that's what we did, during our time off, like, time off in the bush. We get to do—parents said, go out there and have fun so long as you don't get in trouble.

While the snaring started from the boys' initiative, their foster family was supportive: "And we took the meat that we caught, and they [their foster parents] cooked it up for us. That kind of relationship. They supported, the wire...we did the work, went out in the bush."

While he was living with this second foster family, Glen was attending school in Kenora, where he encountered other Anishinaabe children. He recognized his duty to *pass things down* by sharing his knowledge of snaring with them.

And then when I see my other Anishinaabe kids in school, I even took the initiative of taking my snares to school. A lot of my co-students still talk about that, when I meet them in Kenora. These are like white kids as well. They really praise, that I took 'em out to school at recess and lunchtime. Even today, they're almost 48, 47 now, they still say when I bump into them at Kenora, that's really fascinating... yeah it's very important, culture, to stay alive.

When Glen was 12 or 13, he was sent to the newly-established group home in Wabaseemoong, where he continued to go snaring, fishing, and hunting: "We had a good counselor. We went on the weekends, and after school. We did fishing, we did snaring, partridge hunting. We did all kinds of that. Yeah, he was a good counselor."

The counselor, who was from Wabaseemoong but did not have much knowledge of land-based activities himself, thought it was important, Glen thinks:

"... 'cause he seen our interest. And he was working, based on our interests, so we felt good about that... we just brought it home for the cook at the group home. But we did clean it, clean the fish and stuff."

Residential schools and foster care were extremely disruptive to the process of learning and *passing things down*. They removed children from their parents, whose responsibility it is to *pass things down*, and the context of land-based livelihoods in which knowledge was passed down through observation and participation. However, Glen was able to “keep the tradition alive,” with the knowledge and skills he had already received—as long as his caretakers provided access to the land.

In the early 1990s, a school was established in the community itself, though only for elementary grades. For some, this was an improvement, since children could now stay in the community to attend school, rather than being sent to residential schools in Kenora. However, it also meant that more children began going to school, and more families settled in the community, decreasing the opportunities for learning from family in the context of earning livelihoods from the land. Children also were required to leave the reserve if they wanted to attend high school.

While attending high school in Kenora, Myrna McDonald lived with a host family during the week, returning home to Wabaseemoong on the weekends. The move led to a shift in her diet. Despite the support from her foster parents to supply her with the foods she was used to eating, Myrna did not consider it important to her at that time: “My [host] parents said, “we’ll try our best to get you your rabbit, your moose...because that’s how you eat.” I was, like, well, I’ll just eat salad.... It doesn’t matter.”

Georgina Scott spoke about how the shift away from the reserve to the city affected her relationship to traditional foods:

I think the time it dropped off was when we left the community. We were in Kenora for a bit and then we lived in Winnipeg. That’s when it dropped off. I was young, then. My mum moved, we moved. That was the time I didn’t do any of that. I was in my teens, so maybe 13 to 17. . . I came back, I was 17, I could come back. (HM: Why did you want to?) Because this is my home. All my family is here. I felt safe here, being home. I came back.

In the 1990s, the school in the community expanded to include high school. Today, there is a daycare as well as the Mizhakiwetung Memorial school for kindergarten to Grade 12. While in the initial years in the 1980s, teachers were from outside the community (Julia Scott), today, the majority of teachers are from Wabaseemoong—they are students’ parents, aunts and uncles, and

grandparents. As mentioned before, the school is a major source of employment in the community.

Residential school, foster care, and moving away from the community for school all removed children from the social and economic context in which teachings were passed down—that of families practicing land-based livelihoods. As the colonial government began to wrest responsibility for Anishinaabe children’s education away from Anishinaabe parents, it interfered with *passing things down* and the practices that formed the basis of the relationship between parents and children.

4.4 *Passing Things Down* and the Role of Programs and Schooling Today

State-sanctioned educational institutions—first, residential schools like St. Mary’s, and later in the community—have been tools of colonialism, attempting to dismantle the contexts through which teachings are passed down by separating Anishinaabe children from their parents and taking them off the land. They have tried to shift the context of education away from day-to-day life and into the classroom. Though, as mentioned above, many parents work at the school, the school shifts the perceived responsibility of education towards people in the role of school staff, rather than parents.

In Paul Michaud’s memory, the establishment of the school in the community disrupted the passing on of traditional food knowledge:

“Yeah, ‘cause we had that school, and everything changed. I don’t know what caused that. They don’t eat wild stuff. . . I think the teachers, they don’t show how to eat wild stuff. A long time ago, and they only had school in Kenora, they still eat wild stuff. . . Yeah, they didn’t show them how to eat wild stuff. I think that’s what...changed it. . . (HM: Because people didn’t have a chance to learn from their parents?) No, they just went to school instead. They were in one place.... Go crazy. Yeah, I remember... we used to eat moose meat, deer meat. Now everything’s disappeared.

This observation was echoed by Glen Cameron, speaking about the present:

Yeah, like these guys here, they come to school, they don’t know what it’s like to be out in the bush on a daily basis, or even on a weekly basis, eating and hunting for the food that

you prepare and eat. I don't see that happening that much...they're an Anishinaabe person. And it's almost like a rule of thumb that you have to know these things.

But others, both from Paul's generation and younger, saw school and other institutional programs playing an important teaching role for the current generation. This generation may be unable to learn from their parents and grandparents, the process of renewal having already been disrupted for them by residential school and foster care.

As Randy Land put it:

A lot of the parents from that age have forgotten how to be parents...when you do ask the younger people, it's just not taught at home. It would be nice if we had something in the curriculum, in the schools. More teachings.

Helen Fisher said:

Since the res schools did their best to destroy our culture... 'cause they lost it... 'cause the parents were brainwashed—'anything you do that's trad you're gonna go to hell. So this generation lost how to prepare and how to go and get it.

Helen also observed that alcohol has also played a role in disrupting family relationships and the process of *passing things down*: “When the alcohol came in, it destroyed a lot of families...so I'm glad there are programs.”

When Ron McDonald shared his ideas for organizing a garden and farm in the community, he saw the school as crucial for making this a reality:

We even had discussions about farming wild food. You know, like we even had ideas coming from our—not just old people, young people even. How to make our own gardens, farming our own deer, our own moose even, if we could. Fish farming. . . “I'm trying to get Ryan Wheeler, a high-school teacher, to talk to the kids. See if they'd be interested in growing food produce at the greenhouse. Like, let's take that over. The school can take it over and produce their own gardening.”

Buy-in from the community is important, but according to Ron, the onus is on families and the community to support the school:

“I think there has to be an open-door policy. With the community. The parents have to have that mentality of sharing. They gotta get in there and get their hands dirty, get in there and support the teachers, support the school. If you get the teachers involved in a good way, in a positive way, there can be a resurgent return.”

Ron. trusts in the potential for the school to be a catalyst in addressing food insecurity in Wabaseemoong through gardening and farming—though his comments were framed more around food security than *passing things down* and traditional foods.

Helen believes it is important to consider how the programs are being run—when I asked her whether it was possible to learn from a program the same way as one would learn from a parent, she said it depended on who was teaching it: Who is receiving money to run these educational programs, and where did they receive their teachings from?

The government funds a lot of money for culture stuff. But it’s kind of given to people it shouldn’t be given to. I think it’s ‘cause I learned it from my mum. She taught me a lot of stuff about culture and stuff. I was very lucky.

For Helen, programs can play an important mitigating role in continuing practices of *passing things down*. But programs work best when those who are leading them learned from their parents themselves.

On the other hand, when I asked Randy about ways to teach young people about traditional foods, he immediately thought of holding “workshops,” but then veered away from that line of thinking: “I think, I don’t know if workshops would help. But I think maybe, just taking out or just asking the local people to go out once in a while would help. Just to get them interested again.”

While people identified the negative impacts on *passing things down* associated with the shift to government-based schooling, they were more ambiguous about the current role of school and programs. Some see school and programs playing a role in passing on knowledge that the current generation of parents have lost, because these disruptions prevented them learning from their own parents. But it is important that these programs bring in people who did have a chance to learn the proper way, by receiving teachings from their parents.

4.4.1 Bannock Classes

As I described in Section 4.2.1, Linda Cameron offers bannock-making classes with support from the Band Council. She holds them at the school kitchen, on a mostly informal basis (posting times on Facebook, responding to individual requests).

I met Linda when she was giving a bannock workshop for an extracurricular program for Grade 8 students called *Reach Ahead*. That afternoon she taught a group of six Grade 8 boys, and me how to make bake bannock and fry bannock. While on this occasion, Linda was teaching a group, on most occasions her classes were for one or two people at a time, offering an opportunity for chatting and one-on-one learning that classes with a greater ratio of participants to teacher do not.

Making bannock did not come naturally to me. Linda would tell me the proportions: two cups of flour, two heaping tablespoons of butter, one teaspoon of baking soda, one teaspoon of salt, one cup of milk. In the end she had to write these out for me because I could not remember them just by being told.

On many occasions, Linda would also take the bowl away from me to demonstrate the proper way to mix the flour bit by bit into the liquid—this was something I was not good at, and Linda often ended up simply doing it for me on more than one occasion.

As I noted earlier, Linda understands the bannock class as passing on what she has learned from her mother, and takes prides in doing so: “The more that I teach, the better I feel, that I had passed it on.”

Linda also mentioned that her mother taught her by making her watch what she was doing—while I had felt taken aback the first time she had taken my bowl away from me and mixed the flour in herself, I realized she was offering me an opportunity to watch and learn the correct way.

Linda’s bannock classes are an exemplary instance of *passing things down*—they include one-on-one teaching and learning from someone who learned from their parents. At first, I was unsure of whether bannock was a traditional food or not, since all the ingredients are purchased from the store. However, everyone I spoke to about this considered bannock an important traditional food. They remember their parents making it, and they wish to teach their children

how to do it. I suggest that bannock is important for *passing things down* because of the role bannock-making plays in practicing relationships between parents and children.

4.5 Chapter Summary

Passing things down occurs in part because it is the responsibility of a parent and knowledge that has been ‘passed on’ is highly respected. The relationship between parents and children is practiced through teaching, on parents’ part, and respecting teachings, on the part of children or those who are receiving teachings. Before residential school and the extension of other government-funded education institutions into the community, parents were the central institution for education in the community. While colonial interference has tried to undermine this role, values for passing on teachings to children still drive *passing things down* and traditional food activities today, exemplified in Linda’s bannock classes. This is one piece of how social-ecological resilience is grounded in the practice of relationships in Wabasemoong.

CHAPTER 5: PASSING THINGS DOWN, THROUGH RELATIONSHIP (ANCESTORS, LAND)

5.1 Introduction

The relationship with ancestors and land are the two other relationships that I found structured *passing things down*. Practicing a relationship with ancestors is based on giving thanks to them through offering and feasting. Similarly, practicing a relationship with land is based on recognizing animals and plants as agents and giving thanks for the life they give in a practice of reciprocity. There are several programs that bring community members into relationship with the land.

Together, these three relationships are maintained through practices that include teaching, feasting, making offerings, and harvesting. These practices in turn maintain these three relationships. Grounded in relational ontology, *Passing things down* creates resilience through and as the maintenance of meaningful relationships with parents, ancestors, and land.

5.2 *Passing Things Down Through Relationship: Ancestors*

Feasts are an important avenue for *passing things down* at the community level. Families will hold their own smaller feasts for family and friends throughout the year, but community feasts are held in fall, winter, and spring. These feasts are organized and funded by Prevention Services and usually take place in the school gym. Community members like Julia Scott or Linda Cameron are hired to cook.

Typical dishes for feasts include fried walleye, bannock (regular and molasses), and many kinds of soups, stews, and casseroles—wild rice, moose if available or beef if not. Participants emphasized wild rice and duck as two of the most important foods to include (Myrna McDonald, Ronnie P. McDonald, Mary Jane Scott). Myrna McDonald described cooking deer meat with blueberries, or wild rice with blueberries, as a very traditional dish. She also described how it is important to have a sweet dish at every feast, likewhite rice or wild rice with raisins.

At the Fall Harvest feast which I attended in 2018, the majority of attendees were students, as well as teachers and the Youth and Elders' Centre staff. Typically a feast would start with a prayer—"I was supposed to do one, but when I came here they're already in line," said an Elder

who was working at the Centre that day. At the Fall Harvest feast, there was wild rice soup, molasses and regular bannock, and fried walleye.

My friend Marlen also described the spring feast to me, which happened while I was living in the community but which I unfortunately missed. He told me how two Elders said a prayer, and there was a giveaway of household items that had been purchased by Prevention Services. There was also drumming and singing and an offering to the ancestors.

I heard many times of people going out to get fish, or deer, or moose, for a feast. Other foods are purchased from the No Frills or other grocery stores in Kenora. There was some discussion of how the foods used in feasts today are less likely to be traditional. Mary-Jane Scott commented, “Long time ago when they used to have a feast they would have wild rice, ducks. Now they use the same foods. Hamburger.”

But Myrna McDonald emphasized that it is following protocol surrounding the food that matters.

Long time ago they would have stuck with the actual foods. Now as long as there is food prepared. They’ll cook a whole bunch of dishes. As long as a portion of the food is offered. And it’s blessed. Then it’s okay. The spirits you’re feasting will accept it.

A plate of food is offered to ancestors before the meal begins. “Food has a lot to do with spirituality. Because it’s what you give. Tobacco and food.” (Mary-Jane Scott)

During the feast, offerings of food are made to ancestors. Randy Land said traditional foods are given because it is what his ancestors would have been used to eating.

Yes, we do harvest our wild meat, our blueberries and berries. Wild rice. For that purpose, so that when we offer food, we offer them that. I think it would be very wrong for somebody to offer Kraft Dinner and KFC chicken.

As well as ancestors, offerings of traditional foods can be a way of practicing relationship with one’s parents after they have passed on. Myrna McDonald described how she gives an offering to her parents whenever she eats traditional foods:

It connects me to my parents...I feel close when I eat the traditional foods. I feel like I’m close to them. I feel the connection there still, that’s how I feel when I eat it....And if I’m

going to be eating that, I'll always make a spirit dish for them. I always do that. Some to offer, out there.

Beyond giving an offering, Myrna said that even the act of preparing traditional foods makes her feel connected to her family and ancestors, through memory and imagination.

I don't know if it's just me, but when you're preparing the meal, it's like, it's different compared to when you prepare other foods. Like say I'm making lasagna...when you're preparing wild game, it's so different...I feel like connected, and I start thinking about my ancestors, I wonder how they prepared...I wonder if I'm cutting it right—you know what I mean? I always feel so good, preparing it, cooking it, eating it. . . I start thinking about my grandma, my great-grandma.

Jamie Mandamin is a community member who works at Anishinaabe Abinoonjii Child Welfare Authority, which organizes many of the community feasts. He described the purpose of feasts using the language of *passing things down*.

And they include a lot of other things in there, like on a feast day they also feed their ancestors and feast the drum. They always include them in there, in our feast. So give thanks to those that were here before us, thank you for teaching us. Just continue on. . . It's always going to be there. Keep that tradition alive, that teaching, to be thankful. And they always speak about the future, all the time, at the feasts. That's why they try to teach everybody, the younger especially. 'Cause that's what they're always telling, you guys are going to have to do this too, later. Everybody has to pass it down...the teachings.

Making offerings to ancestors and giving thanks are practices that must be passed on and feasts are where these teachings are demonstrated so that the next generation can learn.

Feasts are a practice of maintaining the relationship with ancestors and parents that have passed on. Along with the land and family or parents, this relationship is one of the key relationships that structures *passing things down*. This relationship is practiced by making an offering of the food at a feast to parents and ancestors before it is consumed. Participants described how foods served at feasts today are different than those in the past, being a mixture of more traditional foods from the land and foods purchased from the store. However, these changes in the content of the feasts are smoothed over by the continuous structure of feasting together and giving

thanks. Feasts involve younger generations in communal practices of giving thanks to parents and ancestors. In this way, feasts are a way in which the ancestor relationship is practiced while at the same time passing on that practice to the younger generation.

5.3 *Passing Things Down Through Relationship: Land*

Another imperative I often heard in connection to *passing things down* was teaching skills related to survival. Survival, according to participants, is not just about grit or technical know-how. Instead, I often heard survival described as knowing how to maintain proper relationships of reciprocity with the land. The relationship with the land, alongside the relationship between parents and children, also configures practices of *passing things down* in Wabaseemoong.

5.3.1 Survival

The concept of survival emerged in my conversation with Ronnie P. McDonald:

(HM: What else is important for young people to know?) Survival is important. What if something happens. What if the power goes off. A blizzard. How are you going to survive if you're stranded in the bush. These are the skills they need to know. . . These young people froze—in Wabauskang, their vehicle broke down in winter. Had gas in back but didn't know.

“Survival” might seem like a completely material meaning of *passing things down*— *passing things down* is important because it helps you stay alive. However, upon listening more to Ronnie and others, it became clear to me that their conception of survival was different.

Survival skills were based on practicing reciprocity with the land, and they are part of what parents teach. Ronnie's parents had a farm. His father was also a skilled hunter and his mother knew about medicines. Ronnie often spoke about the importance of knowing how to survive in the bush, and this was how he characterized the kind of teachings his parents gave him, which he described as “gifts that were handed down:” “My parents taught me how to survive. Get food from the land, preserve it, what types of medicine to use. What to eat—what types of trees I can chew on.”

The teachings Ronnie's parents gave him were a practical set of knowledge and skills about how to survive in the bush. Ronnie described survival skills as something that every child should know, even today.

On a commercial ice-fishing trip in March (discussed more later in this section), I watched George Land prepare offerings of food and tobacco in finger-length birchbark boats. One of each was placed on the fire, for the spirit world, and on the lake for the spirits that live in the river. George said that he offered these,

for the fish that we've been harvesting there. In return, we offer them food. To accept our offering. For the time we spent there. For all the rocks we use, the logs we use. Whatever we take from there, whatever we extract, we do our food offering. And that way, it continues, and it never ends. It's not like destroying the land. It's one of the ways the Elders teach the younger generation, about their business.

George and Marvin McDonald, the Traditional Land Use Officer, had wanted to teach commercial fishing, George said, because commercial fishing had been “one of the survivals of the community.” But knowing how to make a living from fishing is not just about maximizing your catch—it is also knowing how to demonstrate proper reciprocity with the land, in return for what you harvest. George's comment also shows how *passing things down* involves maintaining relationships with family and with land, as elders like George teach younger people the knowledge they were taught about how to maintain relationships that replenish the land.

5.3.2 Sustainability

As mentioned in Section 4.2.3, Dean Letander described passed-down knowledge as promoting efficiency and sustainability, because of how it has been refined over time: “

We learned to do things the easiest way possible, with the less effort and the most harvest. . . The way we do it, we planted twice the amount as we harvested, because of the way we harvested, this way over the boat. So some falls in the canoe, like ninety percent of it falls in the canoe, ten percent falls back in the water which becomes next year's harvest.

Passing things down provides knowledge and practices that have proven to be sustainable over the long-term.

Maintaining proper relationship with the land offers benefits beyond ensuring future harvesting. Ronnie P. McDonald told me a story about how the spirits that live in the water and land will

protect you if you offer them tobacco when you are starting out. The plants and animals that make up the land are not simply resources, but agents.

Another core principle of practicing the land relationship is non-wastefulness. Rojer Kejick, a hunter, explained it to me as not taking what you cannot eat, and using all that you do take.

Like some people, how come you didn't shoot it? Hey, if I shoot it, why shoot it if I can't get it? Why shoot it if it's just going to go to waste, if you can't get it...I'm not gonna shoot it and kill it if I can't get it. You know what I mean, that's what's in my mind. . . You're taking the hindquarters, well, if you don't want the rest bring it to the reserve, there's other people will take that meat and cut it up and eat it, instead of leaving it in the bush and wasting all that. . . . That's the way I was raised. Be respectful.

Respect is based on not wasting meat, and also about appreciating and respecting the plants and animals harvested through giving tobacco.

Mary Jane Scott told me how she was taught to put ash on the tips of her fingers before picking blueberries, "so it would help it grow next year." But sustainability is also simply saying thank you. When rice-picking, Mary-Jane remembers the person paddling behind would put tobacco down in the water. Giving tobacco before you take an animal or plant is important because, "If you don't it's like stealing. Because the moose is giving up its life."

Glen Cameron described how he puts tobacco down every morning before checking his traps in the winter.

In the morning, I put my tobacco down, asking the Creator for a good day, and whatever I catch, I'm respecting all the animals. I'm respecting the bush as well, 'cause I'll utilize branches, trees, everything like that. . . That's something I've been taught to do, yeah. Respecting the land and the nature... my father-in-law taught me way back when, in the early 90s.

Besides putting down tobacco before harvesting, I also heard people describe returning the bones and guts of a harvested animal to a body of water and hanging the 'bell' of a moose (the tuft of fur that hangs down from the chin) from a tree branch.

An important basis for this relationship of reciprocity with the land is the belief that all ‘natural resources’ are originally gifts. Ronnie P. McDonald said, “One of the things we know for a fact—*manomin* [wild rice] was handed on as a gift. . . This is the way the Creator made us to be. We have a connection with the rice and berries.”

The relationship with the land is another core relationship of *passing things down*. The knowledge parents pass down is knowledge of how to survive on the land. The relationship with the land is based on ensuring sustainability through replenishing the land and not taking too much. But there are also more symbolic ways of “giving back,” like burning offerings and putting down tobacco. These practices are based on the recognition that the land is not just inert matter to be managed, but a complex system of agents, who deserve and respond to offerings of respect and thanks.

5.3.3 Fall Harvest

I had already completed the bulk of my fieldwork by the fall of 2018, but the Fall Harvest offered the opportunity to return to the community and do some member-checking, while also learning more about this event which many people had mentioned to me as a highlight of traditional food activities shared by the community. The Fall Harvest is an example of *passing things down* today, and specifically, how the relationship with land is practiced.

History of the Fall Harvest

The Fall Harvest was established in the early 2000s by Ronnie P. McDonald, an Elder and teacher at Mizhakiwetung Memorial School. Elders and community members are brought in to demonstrate traditional skills, many of which include traditional food.

Ronnie noted the purpose of Fall Harvest is to provide hands-on learning, recreating the way he learned these skills himself. It is also about bringing in the right people to teach these skills—not necessarily the regular school teachers.

‘Cause I know how important it is—bringing those resource people in. And having that hands-on experience—it will be planted in their head. That’s how I learned it. ‘Cause in a classroom you’re just sitting there.

For the first Fall Harvest, Ronnie brought in deer and moose meat and showed the students how to smoke it. They also made pemmican. The students had a chance to taste the smoked meat and pemmican and took more home to their families.

When I asked why he chose to teach the students how to make pemmican, Ronnie returned to the idea of parental teachings, and surviving in the bush: “Because that’s the way my parents taught me. That pemmican was always survival for the winter. You smoke it, it never rots. You just chew on it.”

As discussed in the previous section on *passing things down* and parent-child relationships, practicing things in the way one’s parents taught one is an important part of *passing things down*, and this idea is woven into Ronnie’s discussion of the Fall Harvest.

Organizing Fall Harvest 2018

Wabaseemoong had recently received money through the new Jordan’s Principle fund from the federal government to build a Youth and Elders’ Centre, which opened while I was staying in the community. While the Fall Harvest had been organized by staff at the school since its inception, it was decided that the Youth and Elders’ Centre would take on hosting the Fall Harvest that fall as they had greater capacity. They continued to work with the school as well as Prevention Services.

The Centre paid their staff to do the work of organizing the event and offer honorariums to the community members they brought in as teachers, as well as cover costs for renting a tent and buying food and ingredients. Community members were contacted by the Centre’s cultural coordinator and asked to demonstrate different skills for the students. In many cases, they were the staff’s family relations. One staff person said: “The rice was picked locally, the fish is local. The bannock makers are local. It’s not our staff members except for the craft areas.”

While I was asked to help out with rice-roasting at the last minute, the other teachers were people chosen through family relationship, who were known to have specific knowledge and skills.

Gabriel Mandamin also said that the stations were determined by the knowledge and skills that community members have, although they would be interested in bringing in people from other

Indigenous communities in the area to teach skills that might have been forgotten in Wabaseemoong:

A lot of it right now just had to do with what's available. We were thinking of just what's available in the community right now.... Because a lot of the specific talents—not talents, but knowledge, has kind of died, like with the Elders and stuff. Like snowshoe making, I don't know if anyone actually knows how to do that, but you want that to be part of it. If somebody came down here to do it for Fall Harvest...but we didn't really have enough time...Bead-working, moccasin-making is another thing we've thought of, kind of the actual, living, like I wanna say the...like a talent or knowledge, something that we used to know. So brainstorming things like that.

The choices about what to teach in the Fall Harvest is determined by the knowledge of the community members and who is available to teach, as well as a reference to the past, 'what we used to know.'

Land-Based Teaching

"Land-based activities and traditional skills," was how Rachel described the focus of the Fall Harvest. Previous years have focused on food but the Centre is trying to add more non-food-focused skills.

'Land-based teaching' seems to be a funding category, that money can be earmarked under—part of the money the Centre received from Jordan's Principle was marked for this.

Another administrator echoed Rachel, saying: "There's so much that you can do in relation with land-based education."

Gabriel Mandamin described land-based teaching in reference to ancestors, and what older generations used to do and still do:

We're trying to push land-based teaching, which is basically just land-based activities that our ancestors used to do. And it's kind of, it's easy to miss that when we're dealing with the youth and kids and stuff inside the community, we forget that we really have to try to push that kind of knowledge. That people still do here, and also that our ancestors used to do, in this whole area, living off the land. So, I think that's—the steps leading up

to that, trying to connect with a lot of the Elders, and people still practicing that way, and so we kind of just contacted whoever we could to come and help the kids.

‘Land-based teaching’ is often defined in references to ancestors and their way of life. In Wabaseemoong, the term overlaps with the values and purposes associated with *passing things down*, such as practicing relationships with land and ancestors.

A Youth and Elders’ Centre administrator described the purpose of the Fall Harvest: “To show the youth our way of life, what we’re able to do with what we have.”

She also used the language of survival: “We’re hoping to teach the youth how to survive. How to start a fire. Medicines, being aware of uses, some of the animals are sick today....The language. It’s important for youth for survival. To know how to cook it.”

Representatives from the Centre met with Elders, as well as one of the school language teachers, to ask what should be included in the Fall Harvest. The Centre originally planned on having more stations—ideas included deer, grouse, jam-making, tanning hide, snowshoe-making, and making *tikanagans*, but in the end, it was limited to wild rice roasting, wild rice-popping, fish filleting, tobacco and birchbark basket making, and bannock-making.

Mental health

Much of the Centre’s work is understood through the lens of mental health. The Centre is funded through Jordan’s Principle, a federal initiative which is meant to address the discrepancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children when it comes to available health and education services.

Gabriel Mandamin described supporting mental health as one of the purposes of the Fall Harvest, saying: “I think it has a lot to do with personal identity and where you come from....the Fall Harvest is like, something just to get them involved, in something. To get them involved in the community. Part of something.”

Gabe linked the Fall Harvest to cultural identity.

I personally think it creates a sense of identity and belonging that I think a lot of youth in our community need. ‘Cause it is really easy to feel lost when you don’t know where you’re coming from and your history. So you see a lot of kids latching on to different

cultures, and different popular things. You almost forget that we've almost lost our culture. I think it's something that we have to reintegrate into everything. . . A lot of other societies and countries, they have that to fall back on. The whole society is one culture. Here, it was trying to be eradicated. So now we've gotta try building up, step by step.

Gabe describes how Fall Harvest supports strong mental health by helping youth build a sense of identity. The Fall Harvest is an example of how funding and programs to support mental health are linked to land-based activities, and the land relationship.

Timing

The limited number of days dedicated to the Fall Harvest, as an event rather than ongoing teaching and learning, proved a challenge for the organizers.

First were challenges around finding animals at the right time—hunters did not succeed in finding deer and grouse by the day the Fall Harvest was scheduled to take place. Gabe attributed this to the challenge of trying to align the schedule of the organization with the cycles of nature:

I think there was just a wish that we could have more time, have more stuff set up. But just the nature of a harvest, meaning, you kind of like harvest things when they're ready. That was one of the issues, like we couldn't get deer. That was one day, or three-day thing to do a harvest. When in actual fact it would be more like, this whole like season.

The Fall Harvest was supposed to be three days, but was condensed to one, in part because of having to schedule around a Band meeting the day before. "There's always something going on in Whitedog, so yeah, we kind of just made it a one day thing and just packed it all in." (Gabriel Mandamin)

These challenges of aligning the schedule could also be solved, Gabe suggested, by more planning ahead of time:

But like I said we didn't get enough notice, and—there are people that trap beaver that didn't have any, stuff like that. . . 'Cause....we had like a month. Which seems like a long time, but when we're talking about having to go catch things.

As a program, the Fall Harvest must align with the schedules of the Band, the school, and the Youth and Elders' Centre, which, as Wabaseemoong has moved away from land-based livelihoods, are not necessarily organized around ecological rhythms.

Fall Harvest 2018

After being rescheduled multiple times, Fall Harvest finally took place on a cloudy Thursday.

There was a large white tent set up outside the Youth and Elders' Centre that morning, with a fire going outside. I was surprised when upon my arrival Rachel, the director of the Youth and Elders Centre, approached me to ask whether I would be interested in staffing a station on popping wild rice. I was an outsider to the community and there were definitely others much more knowledgeable than me when it came to popping rice. But Rachel mentioned the workshops I had led at the school which had involved popping rice (I discuss this later in this section)—the workshops seemed to have formed an association between me and that knowledge in the community. I said I was happy to help.

The wild rice popping station, and my own involvement, was a last-minute improvisation on the Centre's part, since their plans to have a station on preparing grouse had fallen through when the hunters had not been able to find any birds.

Later, I would also be surprised to find I was being offered an honorarium for my participation. Rachel explained to me that this was true for all the community members involved. This reminded me that I had heard two people on separate occasions be mildly critical of the expectation that people be compensated with money for sharing their knowledge of traditional activities. Speaking more broadly, Jamie Mandamin said he saw the reliance on money to get anything done as the influence of white people's culture.

At ten-thirty in the morning, students began to arrive class by class, starting with the Junior Kindergarten. There was little formal interpretation by either the community members or schoolteachers—teachers mostly described what was going on, shared Anishinaabemowin words (“say *manomin*”) and urged their students to watch what was happening.

“Are they gonna demonstrate the dancing on it?” a teacher asked.

“Go get your moccasins,” another joked.

“Oh my gosh, makes me miss my *kookum* [grandmother],” said another teacher to herself.

Every class moved through the stations in the same order—wild rice roasting with Charles Muckle and William Boyd, wild rice popping with me and Gabriel from the Youth and Elders’ centre, then fish with Tummy McDonald and his son Chris “Cheap Meat” Mandamin, then indoors for tobacco and birchbark basket making with Mary-Jane Scott and then bannock-making with two female Elders.

Someone brought some already cooked rice for the students to try. And the popped rice students could try immediately—we sprinkled a little salt on it (which some of the older community members had told me they used to do). Most children agreed it was yummy, although a little too hot straight from the pan.

Beside me, William and Charles were roasting wild rice, picked at the wild rice camp that year. They were using Paul Michaud’s roasting equipment—a big metal pig trough about seven feet long and three across.

William and Charles are hunting partners. William said this was the first time he had roasted wild rice, but his parents had done it. He described it as a learning experience for him as well. He was also pleased at the money he was making: \$400 for him, \$500 for Charles.

“Do you like showing the kids?” I asked.

“They gotta learn,” he replied. That’s what his father had told him, he said: “When you watch, that’s when you’re gonna learn. That’s how you learn things.” He then told me a story about the time his father had got him to watch him butchering a moose, gesturing on his own body as he described the way to cut off the limbs, open it along the side, and take out the organs.

Nearby, underneath the spacious white tent, Tummy and Chris were filleting pickerel. Tummy is known as a fisherman in the community. He used to commercial fish near Whitefish Bay, but now just fishes for himself.

The students reacted dramatically to the fish, exclaiming “Eww!” with great pleasure and pulling their shirts over their noses. The next moment they would be pulling a whole fish out from the Rubbermaid bin and waving it at their friends.

“Anybody wanna taste this?” Tummy called out, holding up a raw fish fillet. The children backed away quickly.

For the younger students, safety was a concern.

“You try it!” one teacher urged one of her students, then seemed to think twice. “Oh, you might cut your finger...”

It was not just teachers that were concerned.

“What happens if you cut yourself!” a grade four student asked.

“You’re not gonna cut yourself,” Tummy said, shaking his head. “It’s how you use your knife.”

The context of the school, where teachers are responsible for children who are not their own, imparts greater concern for keeping children safe compared to learning in the context of family. This can limit the hands-on activities students are encouraged to participate in.

Once the older classes started coming, Tummy would sometimes ask if a student wanted to try it themselves—though there were too many students and not enough time for them all to have a turn.

Summary

Rollie Fisher told me a story of the importance programming through the school can have for *passing things down*, using his co-worker’s son as an example:

“The students came down, and they wanted to take in what we were doing during the week, how to skin beaver, how you prep it to cook, and all that. This boy, he ate half a beaver. He went home that day, and he says, ‘Dad, I love beaver.’ [laughs].

His dad goes holy shit, he loved it, he goes, he likes it. He ate almost the whole carcass. But his dad, I know, his dad doesn’t do that kind of stuff, eh. But the boy had a taste for it, and he loved it, you know. That’s kind of the stuff—those types of people, you’d wish and hope they’d carry it on, you know, try and learn more about the tradition, go out themselves and get it.”

Rollie emphasizes the role schools can play in contexts where parents did not receive the skills and knowledge themselves. Relying on school programs like culture week to create a space for

passing things down is not an adaptation but described as carrying on tradition. However, Rollie notes the next step for this boy would be to learn how to go out on the land and get it himself.

When talking about the success of the program, Ronnie P. McDonald referred to it in terms of its role in *passing things down*, with past participants passing on what they learned from Fall Harvest to their children. “(HM: Has it helped?) Yes, ‘cause now they’re taking their kids out. Every one of them still does that.”

The idea of land-based teachings which was significant for mobilizing resources for this year’s Fall Harvest was linked to what parents and ancestors used to do. As a program led by the school and then the Youth and Elders’ Centre, the Fall Harvest relies upon financing in the form of funding and paying organizers and teachers for their services. However, despite these adaptations, the people who I spoke to describe Fall Harvest as an example of renewing the knowledge and practices of ancestors and passing them down to the next generation—practicing relationships with parents, ancestors, and the land.

5.3.4 Wild Rice Camp

Picking rice

One afternoon in September 2017, I and a group of others from Wabaseemoong set off from the campsite Marvin and others had established just off Signet Lake Road, following a trail that sloped down through the bush, carrying knocking sticks (*manominaatig/manominaatigoons*) (Kuzivanova, 2016), paddles, and lifejackets.

Marvin had demonstrated how to pick the rice when we were on shore, but it was much different once we were in the boat. From watching two other pickers, I realized my picking partner, a young person who had not done much picking before, and I were sitting in the wrong position. The picker should be sitting not in the bow seat, but in the middle of the boat on the bottom. Or they can sit closer to the bow seat, facing backwards. As the boat moves forward, the picker reaches out and using the stick in their non-dominant hand, pulls a few stalks of rice in, bringing them over the boat. With the stick they are holding in their dominant hand, they hit the rice stalks, with a straight downwards or sometimes slightly angled, brushing motion, knocking the kernels off the stalk and into the boat, where they quickly begin to accumulate.

Our boat left a trail in the rice like a comb parting strands of hair. Sometimes in the midst of the rice we would cross another trail left by one of the other boats—Marvin and his picking partner, or one of the other two pairs. Sometimes we drew near the other boats and would exchange greetings, but mostly we left each other lots of space to pick, meandering where we pleased. Much later, Ronnie would tell me about how when airboats harvest, they go back and forth in straight lines, leaving no rice to reseed the site the next year.

At the end of the second day we returned to shore with a boat heavy with rice. Marvin was impressed and I felt happy. I asked how much he guessed it was—one bag, two, I thought to myself. I was taken aback when Marvin replied, “Oh, I’d say you guys picked at least half a bag. I didn’t expect you two to get that much.” That meant we had picked about 25 pounds.

We scooped the rice into a bag using our hands, and put it with the others, sitting in the shallow water. The goal of the pickers that year was to reach 1000 pounds—the buyer was Wabauskang First Nation, who wanted some rice to reseed some of the lakes in their own territory. But that year there was a lower turnout of pickers than expected, and the students who would usually come with their Native Language Teacher, Judy or Ronnie, were missing—the school was without power due to a lightning strike and had yet to open.

Inputs and Outputs of the Camp

The rice camp today is funded jointly by the Chief and Council, the health centre, the school, and the welfare office. Marvin also secured donations from outside organizations, including ten thousand dollars from the Energy East Pipeline Community Investment fund, which was used to purchase canoes and tents.

Though the rice-pickers have always sold some of their rice, and income is an important motivation that drives people to come out, rice-picking is no longer a viable livelihood. But people are motivated by the opportunity to *pass things down*.

Pickers usually sell the rice they pick to the buyer Marvin has made contact with that year. Though the second year, Marvin said,

We didn't sell it at all. We had it processed for us in Manitoba. We had 840 pounds we picked that year. I took it raw to a place near Fort Alec, in Manitoba. And then, Floating Leaf paid for the processing, so we gave them 340 pounds, I brought back 500 pounds.

That rice, Marvin will donate to community wakes, or to Elders:

And we donate—say somebody has a wake. If I'm around, my wife's around, we'll give four pounds to the family that's grieving. . . And once in a while if an Elder hears, hey I heard you're giving out rice, I say yeah we do, you want some. They say sure. I just give a sandwich bag full, just give it, we don't charge anything—it was already paid for by the Band anyway.

They also save a bit every year to process at the Fall Harvest. The rice has also been used in recipe workshops, organized jointly between the University of Manitoba and the school cooks.

The Establishment of the Camp

This rice camp started in 2014, growing out of a collaboration between Marvin and Valeria Kuzivanova, a Master's student at the Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba. Marvin described how they had met at a conference in Kenora, and the decision to do something about food, and then about wild rice restoration, had grown through discussions with Valeria and her (and later my) supervisor, Iain. During our interview the following spring after my experience at the rice camp, Marvin said he was happy to assist Valeria, but had not expected to end up helping her as much as he did. "I thought [I'd?] show her where the wild rice used to be, get her a canoe, a paddle, and there you go..."

But he soon realized Valeria could not do it all her own—she needed his help. He took her to the spots where he used to remember rice picking, Whitedog Lake, but the water was too high that year because of the dam. The first rice they found, finally, was at Scott River, another traditional picking area from way back, which is why Marvin wanted to check there. Finding the rice, said Marvin:

started bringing back stuff that I learned...stuff that I learned from my parents, my grandparents. I was thinking, 'eh this is good. If I keep doing this.' I didn't plan on

keeping it going, you know what I mean, at the beginning, but when I started doing the stuff with her, it sort of, I guess it made me happy. To do stuff and to show the kids.

Marvin and Valeria organized the first harvesting camp, which was at Scott River, in 2014, as part of Valeria's thesis.

Most years, the Anishinaabemowin language teacher has brought her class out to the camp. Students spend the day learning to pick rice. Marvin described it:

[The language teacher] was the one who did demonstrations—I have picture of it, she's at the bottom of the hill and the students are all looking down at her. She's showing them how to do it, one person push and one person pick—and with that little bit of instruction, they just went out there and started picking.

According to Marvin, the students are interested and engaged while at camp. He used the language of *Passing things down* and the teaching relationship between parents and children to talk about why he thought it was important students learn:

It's something that they could share with their grandkids...If they feel like it, maybe they could go out there and pick rice themselves someday. Then they'll know the basics how to do it, they've actually been out there, the ones that did come out. They could say I picked rice. And they wouldn't be, you know. They could actually say it to their grandkids, and their kids, when they come of age. They could say I picked rice. That'd be something they'd be proud of. Not just say my grandparents used to pick rice, my father, I heard this is how you did it. You know. This way they could show them, this is how we do rice. And maybe that will keep it going. Them showing their kids, you know what I mean. And then so on and so on.

Marvin's partner Georgina spoke about the holistic teachings that come from learning out on the land, describing what practicing relationships with land and parents looks like.

Because...they're actually moving, and...they're going out there, with nature. And also, communicating with their parents, using their own language. Going into the woods, enjoying nature, respecting nature. And also interacting with parents, that time bonding, whatever you call it. Language bonding. And they know the kind of tree. And then also,

exercising. Cutting down that tree. And then bringing it back. And doing it hands-on, teaching. . . You come across animals, you say what's that. They'll tell you what it is. Or you might even step on a poison ivy, they'll say kay that's a poison ivy... When you go there, there'll be a lot of things coming at you, and it's all learning experience, everything.

Julia Scott, who brought her daughters to the same camp I was at in 2018, and said she had told them stories of how she used to pick rice when she was growing up, said of the wild rice camp:

I think it's good. So the newer generations will probably know what the older generations did back then. (HM: So it's about kind of about—) —learning I guess. . . (HM: What did your daughters think of the wild rice camp?) I think they thought it was hard work. So it was like, 'can't believe they did this long time ago.'

Participants refer to relationships with parents, with land, and the idea that children could then *pass things down*. The rice camp, constructed through new relationships with research institutions like the university, is motivated also by the value for *passing things down*.

5.3.5 Commercial Ice-fishing

Fishing

In March, while I was living in the community doing my fieldwork, Marvin McDonald and George Land put on a commercial fishing course for youth. I spent two days with them—on the first day, a group of University of Manitoba students came out to spend the afternoon there. A couple of days later, it was just George, his 18-year-old grandson, Thomas Land, the youth participants, and me.

As already discussed, commercial fishing used to be an important livelihood for many families in the community, and a few continue to sell their fish informally to the community or to the Kenora Fish Market. Thomas had started commercial fishing the winter before because he enjoyed it and was interested in making money.

“It [commercial fishing] was one of the survivals of the community,” George explained to me. He and Marvin saw this as an important skill youth should learn as they transition to adulthood. They received \$1200 from the Band Council to run the course.

The Sunday that I went out the group for the second time was freezing cold and full of blowing snow. We could barely see the other side of the lake. The participants were two young men and one young woman, all in their late teens or early twenties, Thomas, another adult helper, and George—sometimes Marvin came out, but not always.

We started by pulling in the three nets they had set the day before. Some of the youth travelled by skidoo, while another youth and I rode with George in his truck.

The first net was at the south end of the lake. George, I noticed, always told the youth where they should set the nets and always had specific spots in mind.

Two rocks about a hundred metres apart marked the first net. I skidooed with George to the far stone and untied the net from the rock. At the other end, two of the boys had already freed their end, and began pulling the net up between them. Passing the net from hand to hand, and careful to pull at the same rate, the net emerged horizontally, falling in loose folds behind them. Soon grey and silver fish began to appear tangled in the green nylon cord. The other youth began bending down and tossing the fish in the bin as fast as they appeared, barely pausing to disentangle them. While they were somehow able to look at the tangle of line around a fish and with a few deft maneuvers, free it, everyone often had to pause while I tried to squeeze a fish back through the small holes of the net without damaging net or fish. It was not something you could accomplish wearing mittens—the nylon cord would dig into my fingers, my hands wet and freezing with water and blood. I expected someone would step in and help me, but each time everyone waited patiently until I finally pulled the fish free or broke down and asked for help.

After the first net, we had two full bins, or about 20 fish: lawyers, northerns, walleye, and whitefish, the most valuable at the market.

George wanted to move this net to a different location, so Thomas bundled up the net on the back of the skidoo and we drove over to the new site at the east side of the lake. While one of the youth made a larger rectangular hole with the augur, Thomas tied a 300-foot rope to the end of the net, and tied the other end to the jigger—a bright orange, wooden contraption about as tall as me, with a sharp triangular nose with a metal wedge sticking out the top and a long swinging arm.

Thomas inserted the jig into the water and maneuvered it using a pole so that it was parallel underneath the ice and pointed roughly in the direction we wanted to string the net. By tugging a rope which was tied to the arm of the jig, George sent the jig shooting forward under the ice—it was up to the rest of us then to follow the muted thud from below the ice that followed and keep track of where the jig was. At around 300 feet it was far enough out. One youth drilled a hole where we had last heard the jig and we pulled it up and out. He untied the rope from the jig and tied it to the end the skidoo—a much quicker way of pulling the net through than using our hands. We tied a rock to each bottom corner of the net first, so that it would spread vertically and taught underneath the ice. The youth on the skidoo drove forward slowly, while we on the other end made sure there were no tangles in the net as it unfolded and slithered into the water. After that all that was left was to tie each top corner of the net to a rock and mark each end with a stick for visibility.

At the end of the day, the youth filleted the fish in a shack at the edge of the lake, and George sent me home with a whitefish for the family I was staying with.

Meanings: Making Money and Passing Things Down

Every week George, as the owner of the commercial fishing licence, would drive the week's catch to the Kenora fish market. The licence allowed him to fish a certain number of different kinds of fish from Goshawk Lake that winter.

At the market, the fish would be sorted by species and by size: Extra large (over five pounds), large, and medium. The price is determined by the size and the types of fish, with whitefish being the most expensive. The money was split between the young people. Although a perk, it was not the main motivation for one young participant I spoke to, Graham, who told me, “I didn't know we were gonna get paid. I kind of did it for the experience.”

How come a young person would want to participate in such a program, I wondered, and Graham explained:

Thomas asked me if I wanted to go. He was gonna talk to Marvin. I said, yeah sure I'm not doing anything. . . I mostly did it for the experience. I never did [net-fishing] during the winter, I always do it during the fall.

Graham had been taught how to net fish before by his auntie's husband. He suggested that it is easier to learn fishing than it is hunting, because it requires less equipment, less travel, and is less complicated to prepare the meat. He had also attended a summer camp in his mid-teens hosted by the welfare office, where he had learned net-fishing. For him, this commercial fishing course was "something to do" that also made him feel good about himself:

I like the work...I find it exciting to do. I find it fun to do. . . I like the thrill when you get the fish out. It makes me feel good about myself. . . I had really nothing to do. Out here, it's hard finding a job, you try to make money. So pretty much, I do it for the experience.

By that day in late March when I went out with them, the youth had already been learning for several weeks, and appeared completely confident and competent in what they were doing.

Thomas said that at first, he played more of a teaching role:

That first day, they were just standing there, looking at us, while me and Darren were doing all the work. 'C'mon guys get to work, start chiselling, start finding that jigger!' So, taught 'em how. It took them three days to understand how it works. But it was the cutting, cutting the whitefish, that was the longest.

When I asked whether he thought everyone would keep fishing after the course, Thomas said:

"Maybe when they get older, if they get the chance, you know."

Not many people their age go fishing, said the other youth I spoke to. Many of them already have children by that age and are busy taking care of them.

Graham also used the language of *passing things down* to describe why he has been told it is important to know how to fish.

I kind of learned by watching the older people fish. So we could pass it on. Kind of passing it on, what they learned when they were younger, to us. If we ever have kids, in the future. Like our language, they try to pass it on to us, it's sort of dying.

While I did not hear George talk about passing it on when we were out there that day, according to Graham, he has before: "He keeps telling us you need to pass it on."

The commercial fishing course is an important space for *passing things down* and practicing relationships with parents and land. It gets young people on the land and lets them learn from an Elder (George), who even happens to be the grandfather and guardian to one of them (Thomas). Relationships with the land are practiced by beginning the course with an offering, something George also did on the occasion of the university students visiting.

The commercial fishing course also frames these skills as a livelihood and allows the participants to receive money from their harvesting activities. Afterwards, Thomas and a friend continued to commercial fish for the rest of the winter. This renewal of harvesting as livelihood is similar to the context in which many of the older generation would have learned these skills from their parents.

5.4 Summary

This section continued the examination of *passing things down* begun in the first section, by looking at how *passing things down* occurs in practice. I began by presenting some recollections by older generations of what they meant when they spoke about *passing things down*: learning from parents in the context of livelihood activities and learning by watching.

I then discussed how school interrupted the passing down of knowledge by removing children from their parents and the land-based contexts in which *passing things down* happens. This has led to some parents not feeling they have knowledge to pass down. For this generation, the school and programs offer a chance to connect Elders and other community members who have that knowledge with children and other ages.

The shift from family institutions of learning to school and program-based institutions conveys several differences: people are not necessarily learning from a family member, the teacher is often paid for their teaching (though they may see it as a duty as well), and the learning is limited to certain occasions (though these may be regular, they are not every day) and does not always accommodate ecological cycles.

Not all programs take place out on the land—those that are not organized by the school directly are more likely to. And they are not all aimed at children. Certain ideas, such as “land-based teachings” are also incorporated into some programs alongside *passing things down*.

But, overall, these programs (Fall Harvest, feasts, bannock classes, wild rice camp, and the commercial fishing course) are viewed not as adaptations, but as renewing the practices and knowledges of parents and ancestors.

While not every program engages with all three relationships of renewal (parents, land and ancestors), each program employs at least one. I suggest that this is how these programs become spaces of resilient renewal through *passing things down*.

5.5 Chapter Summary

Practicing a relationship with ancestors and with land is based on showing reciprocity. Traditional foods are key to practicing relationships with ancestors, as feasting and giving offerings of food are key ways in which ancestors are remembered and respected—without those practices, the relationship with ancestors would be lost. Similarly, eating and harvesting traditional foods are key ways that relationships with the land are practiced—whether it is through seeing and tasting (as with Fall Harvest), or making a living from the land (as with commercial fishing). Knowing how to survive on the land, which involves maintaining a relationship by making offerings of tobacco and food, is an important skill that is part of what is passed on.

Traditional foods are important in Wabaseemoong today because they exemplify *passing things down*. Untangling *passing things down*, I found that it was grounded in the practice of relationships, specifically, with parents, ancestors, and land. *Passing things down* is a framework for social-ecological resilience that is grounded in the lives and meanings of the community of Wabaseemoong. I explore some of the implications of this framework in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Overview

My research objective was to document contemporary meanings of traditional foods in the community of Wabaseemoong Independent Nations, particularly meanings around how people think and speak about traditional food activities as a means of response and resilience-building in the face of social-ecological change.

To frame this question theoretically, I used literature on social-ecological resilience and on Indigenous resurgence. While social-ecological resilience provides a framework for examining change and response in social-ecological systems, there are gaps when it comes to defining the role of agency in building adaptive capacity, as well as understanding what adaptation means in the context of colonialism. I wanted to follow the path suggested by resilience researchers of addressing the agency question by examining how resilience is understood in everyday contexts. I drew upon the resurgence literature, which theorizes decolonization, to help tune my understanding of resilience to an Indigenous context and help me think about colonialism as a type of stressor.

My research question and theoretical framing compelled me to use an ethnographic methodology, which is suited to exploring the shared symbols, values, and stories that people use to give meaning to their lives and construct shared cultural identities.

I used ethnographic methods of participant observation and unstructured interviews, living in the community of Wabaseemoong for four months, keeping my eyes and ears open for the role traditional foods play in the community today and what this might say about how we theorize agency and resilience.

Based on the stories people told me, and the events I participated in and observed, I noticed that the meaning of traditional foods as a livelihood seems to have declined in importance, while sharing and learning how to harvest, prepare, and eat traditional foods in the context of the school, feasts, and programs and workshops funded by the Band or health centre has become more common. I also began to notice that people often used the phrase “passing things down” when they spoke about why activities related to traditional foods are still important today.

Once I pulled out this theme from my data, I sorted my data on passing things down into three different relationships I saw as structuring these processes. My framework for how people build adaptive capacity in relationship to the traditional food system in Wabaseemoong describes a process of *passing things down*, through practicing relationships of reciprocity with parents, ancestors, and land.

My suggestion that people in Wabaseemoong see themselves building adaptive capacity by rebuilding and strengthening relationship provides one example of how people exercise agency to build everyday resilience. Thinking about relationship may be a useful starting point to bring the decolonial approach outlined in the resurgence literature together with resilience thinking. Focusing on relationship is one way the resilience approach can better support Indigenous people and communities to exercise self-determinative responses to colonialism.

6.2 Limitations

Like any research, my project has both methodological and theoretical limitations. My interviews and participant observation activities were guided by the relationships I formed in the community. I tended to interview people with whom I had a relationship and who also had something to say about traditional foods. I did not attempt to select a cross-section of ages or of people involved in different sorts of traditional food activities (harvesting different foods, through to cooking, teaching traditional food activities, etc.). In fact, many of the people who go out hunting and fishing and trapping regularly were harder for me to connect with, since they tended to spend less time at the school or at community events which was where I was attempting to meet people. While I believe my findings accurately represent the views of the people I interviewed, I would hesitate to say whether they are representative of the community of Wabaseemoong. My time in the community was also limited to two seasons, winter and spring. While I was able to return to the community to observe the Fall Harvest, being there for an extended period over the summer and fall would undoubtedly have afforded more opportunities to participate in food harvesting activities related to those seasons.

My main finding—that people in Wabaseemoong think about building adaptive capacity through *passing things down* through relationship—could be supported by talking to more people in the community as well as other Anishinaabe communities in the Treaty 3 region and beyond. While I found three relationships to be central to *passing things down* (land, ancestors, and parents),

there may be other relationships people in Wabasemoong or other Anishinaabe communities would describe as important which I missed.

Passing things down was also not the only meaning of traditional food which emerged—the healthiness of traditional foods in particular was quite commonly spoken about. This was connected to a narrative around how much healthier the community was in the past, and how this has changed with the rise of “processed foods.” People would speak about returning to traditional foods to combat the diabetes prevalent in the community today. However, I found that exploring both health and *passing things down* as meanings of traditional foods was beyond the scope of a single thesis.

Beyond other meanings from the community, there are also many, many other analytical approaches and literatures I could have drawn on. Relational ontology is informed by Indigenous beliefs in non-human agency, and there is a great deal of anthropological literature exploring this. But for this study, I limited myself to using the Resurgence literature to explore the concept of relationship and relational ontology.

I also chose not to take much of an analysis of power, either in terms of the community’s relationship to institutions like the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) or between different institutions within the community itself (for example, interactions between the school and school administrators and those teachers who fall outside those structures, such as Elders). I chose instead to focus on exploring and outlining the dimensions of *passing things down* and how it functions for adaptive capacity building. But a further study would do well to explore, for example, how Indigenous communities may employ different discourses of resilience, based on *passing things down*, compared to provincial or non-governmental development initiatives in the Treaty 3 region.

6.3 Analysis

6.3.1 Introduction

Resilience thinking draws attention to how systems respond to change, through processes of resistance or resilience, adaptation, and transformation. But some authors have suggested recently that social-ecological resilience thinking has not paid enough attention to how adaptive responses are not solely determined by a particular set of system characteristics (multiple

livelihood options or strong governance institutions, for example), but also represent choices made and actions taken by people, individually or in association with each other (Brown, 2016; Davidson, 2013; Westley et al., 2013; Wilson, 2018). The recognition of this gap has spurred a growing body of research examining the role of agency in building adaptive capacity (Berkes & Ross, 2013; Brown, 2016; Brown & Westaway, 2011; Charli-Joseph et al, 2018; Cinner et al, 2018; Coulthard, 2012; Hahn & Nykvist, 2017; Westley et al, 2013,). Understanding the role of agency in resilience has led scholars to engage with theories of power and to recognize that the definition of resilience is subjective, and that incorporating the perspectives of those whose resilience is being developed is highly important.

I found that theories of Indigenous resurgence offered guidance for examining how people might see themselves as building adaptive capacity for resilience in Wabaseemoong. Scholars like Leanne Simpson (2011, 2014, 2017) and Jeff Corntassel (Bryce & Corntassel, 2012, Corntassel, 2008) argue that any type of response to the social, political, and environmental impacts of colonialism has to be theoretically grounded in Indigenous worldviews and ways of life. When resurgence scholars discuss agency, they frame it in political terms, making connections between the actions individuals and families take every day to practice a certain way of life and greater Indigenous nationhood and political autonomy. Like resilience, resurgence theory considers questions related to how people respond to social-ecological change, but it is grounded in Indigenous worldviews and pays more attention to power and to the subjectivity of knowledge. In my literature review I explored the propositions that they offer, such as sustainable self-determination (Corntassel, 2008), renewal (Simpson, 2011), and *Biskaabiiyang* (looking back) (Simpson, 2011), for thinking about how resurgence unfolds and what these might add to current literature on resilience thinking.

6.3.2 Findings: Building Adaptive Capacity Through Passing Things Down and Relationship

Through my conversations and experiences in Wabaseemoong, I started to consider how people were building adaptive capacity in relation to the traditional food system as a process of renewing relationships, which community members described as *passing things down*. *Passing things down* refers to the maintenance or renewal of relationships with parents, ancestors, and the land in the midst of changing circumstances. It is one way by which people see themselves

exercising their agency to build adaptive capacity. Relationships are practiced and strengthened, in part, by harvesting, preparing, and eating traditional foods. I structured my results chapters around exploring these three relationships—with parents, ancestors, and land—that give meaning to traditional food activities.

The concept of relationship is present in the resurgence literature. In this literature, relationship refers to the mutual obligations one holds toward others. As I described in Chapter Four, people in Wabaseemoong spoke about how parents have a duty to pass on traditional food knowledge and skills and to provide for their children, while children have a duty to honour and follow these teachings. Linda Cameron described how she sees herself fulfilling her obligation to pass on her mother's teachings through her bannock class. Teaching how to make bannock helps Linda practice a relationship with her mother and with the people she teaches. It also enables those who learn from her to pass on bannock-making skills to their own children and grandchildren. One way that relationship strengthens adaptive capacity is through these values and obligations that promote teaching and learning.

The practices, beliefs, and knowledge that are handed down include how to practice reciprocal relationship with ancestors and land, as I discussed in Chapter Five. I described how building adaptive capacity, in this sense, is about knowing how to survive on the land, which requires knowing how to give thanks and practice reciprocity with the plants, animals, and spirits of the land—whether it is by burning offerings, practicing non-wastefulness, or feasting ancestors. The people I spoke to told me how offerings of food and tobacco are exchanged in return for the life-giving things received from ancestors and the land. Practicing reciprocity and non-wastefulness also fosters the adaptive capacity of the land by protecting sustainability—for example in Chapter Five, Dean Letander described how in the process of harvesting *manomin*, some grains fall into the lake, ensuring that more *manomin* will grow the next year.

An Indigenous lens that I came to understand during my research is that a relationship—between a person and *manomin*, for example—does not just emerge because of any innate properties of either person or *manomin*. Rather, relationships are created and maintained through practice. Relationships are embedded in and expressed through practices such as teaching others, following a parent's teachings, laying down tobacco, or feasting. If adaptive capacity is built

through relationship, then the role of agency in resilience is related to the building of relationship through practice.

Often in the literature about traditional foods, the focus has been on how their loss of use has led to a less healthy diet, a loss of livelihood, or a decrease in food security. However, while people I worked with in Wabaseemoong talked about these issues, they also considered the disruption of relationships as a significant impact that has come about through the loss of traditional food practice.

For some older community members, the shift to school as the main mode of education was experienced as a loss. In Chapter Four, I described how some people I spoke with saw school as interfering with the ability of children to learn traditional food practices and other skills from parents out on the land, and form relationships with both parents and land. While passing things down is seen as occurring through traditional food practice undertaken with family or knowledge keepers with specific expertise, other community members did also talk about some current school programs and other instances of teaching that they consider to be consistent with their concept of *Passing things down*. In these cases, it is because the program or activity is rooted in the practicing of relationships. For example, in Chapter Four I discussed how Linda's bannock class allows her to pass on knowledge learned from her mother, giving knowledge that other people can pass on to their children. Teaching things in an experiential way—whether it is the Fall Harvest or the wild rice harvesting camp discussed in Chapter Five—is important for practicing relationship with the land. Programs or activities to teach traditional food practice are seen as positive when they are based on maintaining or rebuilding relationships. Community members feel building strong relationships with parents, ancestors, and land is important in order to be able to adapt to new changes in ways that maintain cultural coherence and shared identity.

People in Wabaseemoong have continuously responded and adapted to changes in their social and ecological environments (for example, hydroelectric flooding) that have impacted their ability to undertake and pass down traditional food practice. People speak of how these types of impacts put stress on the relationships they hold with each other, ancestors and the land. Building relationships, from this perspective, is a process by which to build adaptive capacity and respond to changes in social or ecological environments. Rooting adaptive capacity in these relationships provides a means by which Wabaseemoong people maintain collective identities, a connection to

ancestors, and pre-colonial Indigenous ways of life through processes of change. In this sense, it centres continuity, instead of rupture, as a central requirement of adaptive capacity. Conceptual work related to the resilience of Indigenous communities would benefit from more attention to the importance of relationships built through traditional practice to adaptive capacity.

6.3.3 Engaging with Resilience Thinking

The focus on practicing relationship in Wabaseemoong is not trivial or coincidental. My findings on relationship reveal how the community's thinking, when compared to the resilience literature, is grounded in a different set of ontological assumptions. The focus on relationships, which are built through practice and structured by reciprocity, stems from the assumption that relationships are a fundamental component of the world: in other words, a relational ontology.

Relational ontology—developed within anthropology as well as the Resurgence literature—assumes that ‘what is’ cannot be understood as individual, distinct units—rather, everything is constituted through its relationship with everything else (Poirer, 2008). This applies equally to the natural and spiritual world as it does to the human world. Animals, plants, and spirits are alive and have agency just as humans do, which means they are equally capable of entering into social relationships in which respect and reciprocity is expected (Muller et al., 2019, Poirer, 2008). Ancestors too, are agents that may be especially present in certain places on the land. Relationships with them are practiced through dreams and rituals (Poirer, 2008).

The concept of relational ontology helped me to recognize the reciprocal relationships at play within *passing things down*. In Wabaseemoong, the ontological orientation towards reciprocal relationship was expressed as the impetus to pass on knowledge (such as teaching how to make bannock or pick wild rice), to honour parents' teachings (such as making the meals they taught you to prepare), and to give offerings to the land and to ancestors—putting down tobacco when hunting, or burning tobacco and food offerings at a feast. Relationships with parents were described as structured by reciprocity, and so were relationships with other-than-humans—ancestors, moose, deer, blueberries. All are understood as equal participants in social life.

Many scholars have criticized how resilience discourse, in practice, is often used to promote the status quo (Brown, 2016; MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013). While Resurgence begins with the assumption that there is more than one ontological way of engaging with and creating worlds, the ontological assumptions behind the social-ecological resilience literature are often hidden and

taken for granted (an exception is Miller & Davidson-Hunt, 2013). Being an approach to ‘development,’ social-ecological resilience is starting from the Modern premise that only humans are capable of forethought and agency and that nature is not alive, but passive and to be acted upon, that ‘intervention’ and ‘management’ are appropriate ways of engaging with the social-ecological world (Muller et al., 2019). Indigenous relational worldviews, on the other hand, are based on respect for other agents’ autonomy, whether non-human or human, through the principle of non-interference (Howitt & Suchet-Pearson, 2006). Practicing relationship with parents, ancestors, and land is not about management or intervention. While I observed the role of programs such as commercial fishing or Fall Harvest in *passing things down*, these are not framed as “interventions” or “development,” but as passing on knowledge and continuing ancient cycles of human and other-than-human life.

Many scholars have sought to make resilience thinking more relevant to the communities whose adaptive capacity is being ‘developed,’ by paying attention to “subjective” understandings of resilience (Walsh-Dilley & Wolford, 2015), “everyday” resilience (Brown, 2016), and to place-based and cultural perspectives of resilience (Brown, 2016; Simonin, 2015). They have shown how the perception of different adaptive responses may be shaped by cultural values and worldviews (Crane, 2010) and argued that connections to place and cultural identity may be understood as a source of resilience (Brown 2016; Lyon & Parkins, 2013). However, none of the authors cited above focus explicitly on Indigenous cultural meanings of resilience. In general, these lines of thinking have not paid attention to how cultural, everyday, or subjective understandings of resilience might be rooted in basic philosophical assumptions about the world that are distinct from the assumptions of Modernity. My findings not only contribute an example of an Indigenous ‘cultural’ understanding of resilience, they also move beyond the concept of culture to show how the understanding of adaptive capacity building in Wabaseemoong is grounded in a relational ontology.

With her concept of rootedness, Brown (2016) seeks to capture the relationship between cultural identity and adaptive capacity, arguing that this is one way resilience is understood in Indigenous communities. But Brown (2016) builds her idea of rootedness mostly through the literature on place and the concept of cultural identity. She misses the concept of relational ontology and how

connection to place, in Indigenous communities like Wabaseemoong, is understood as the practice of reciprocal relationships with human and non-human agents.

Practice is a key contribution of relationship. Rootedness is something that people may feel but not so much something they do, while relationships are maintained through practice. Thinking in terms of how adaptive capacity is built by practicing relationships implies a stronger sense of activity and agency. It is not just something that one inherits, or possesses, it is something one constitutes through practice and the living of one's life.

Within the relational ontological framework of *passing things down*, practicing relationships are *constitutive* of connection to place and cultural identity, *and* building adaptive capacity. *Passing things down* can be understood as how the skills, values, and knowledge that make up cultural identity get passed down. What *passing things down* and the practice of relationship emphasize is that a person does not just belong to a culture because of being born into it—cultural identity is something one constitutes through the practice of relationships of parents, ancestors, and land. In Wabaseemoong, *Passing things down* by practicing relationships with parents, ancestors, and land is how cultural identity is built and cultural resilience is maintained, as well as adaptive capacity.

A relational ontology lens also captures ideas of reciprocity that rootedness does not. Relationship is based on practicing reciprocity or respect—whether it is between parents and children, or with ancestors, or with the land. Rootedness captures ‘connection to place,’ but does not necessarily describe those connections as reciprocal or ethical.

A previous study of an Indigenous community and social-ecological resilience echoes the importance of relationship, respecting non-human agents, and practicing reciprocity (Miller & Davidson-Hunt, 2013). Miller and Davidson-Hunt (2013) found that Elders in Pikangikum First Nation (a northern neighbour to Wabaseemoong in Treaty 3) considered cycles of forest fire renewal to be a process of maintaining relationships of respect, reciprocity, and non-interference with the land (including fire, animals, birds, trees, and more). My findings confirm the centrality of reciprocal relationship to understandings of resilience and adaptive capacity. However, by looking at the sphere of traditional foods instead of forest management, I contribute to understandings of how cultural resilience, and not just social-ecological resilience, is maintained

through the practice of relationship. *passing things down* through relationship could serve as the basis for a joint framework for building Indigenous cultural-social-ecological resilience.

In Wabaseemoong, the meaning of traditional foods for resilience is *passing things down*, a process that upon closer look, is about practicing relationships with parents, ancestors, and land. Practicing and strengthening relationships of reciprocity are how the community sees itself building the adaptive capacity to respond to social-ecological, and colonial-driven, changes. Holding this meaning up to the resilience literature, I find that there are significant differences. While resilience scholars have been grappling with placed-based and cultural meanings of resilience, they have for the most part not examined how these meanings may be grounded in different ontologies, or philosophical assumptions about the world, not just different cultural “lenses.” But treating the focus on relationships in Wabaseemoong as a relational ontology helps me to recognize the roles of practice and reciprocity and seeing nature as agents that are part of the social world. These are key parts of what building adaptive capacity through practicing relationship means in Wabaseemoong, but they have been missing from the resilience literature. The resurgence literature, on the other hand, confirms their importance.

6.3.4 Engaging with Resurgence

Resurgence scholars argue that decolonization and development must be grounded in Indigenous worldviews. While they do not use the language of adaptive capacity, resurgence scholars argue that maintaining shared identity through collective control over political, and economic, institutions and social practices is key to protecting the ability of Indigenous people to respond to change. While researchers are working on deepening theories of power within resilience, there have been no resilience studies, to my knowledge, that have gone so far as to explore how decolonization or resurgence itself may be a means to build resilience for Indigenous communities.

I also noted that resurgence contributes to resilience thinking a more extensive theory of power, and a different understanding of the social-ecological system based on relationship. My findings on *passing things down* and relationship confirm the importance of relationship for thinking about resilience and adaptive capacity in Indigenous contexts. As I discussed above, people in Wabaseemoong seem to understand, like Resurgence scholars, that the world is fundamentally organized through relationship. This leads them to approach building adaptive capacity through

passing things down and the practice of reciprocal relationship. My findings show how thinking in terms of relationship or relational ontology could add a decolonial lens to resilience thinking.

In many ways, Resurgence addresses the same questions as resilience thinking related to how communities, and the ecological worlds they live in, can respond to changes both social and environmental. My findings suggest that ‘relationship’ may be a fruitful place to build on that intersection.

Two Stories of Resurgence and Relationship for Adaptive Capacity

To underscore how the Resurgence literature resonates with my findings, I provide two stories from Resurgence authors that point to the idea of approaching adaptive capacity through the practice of relationship.

The first is Jeff Corntassel’s concept of sustainable self-determination (2008). Corntassel rejects self-government and rights-based discourses as a path towards decolonization, arguing instead for a conception of self-determination based on passing on cultural knowledge and practices and practicing relationships with the land. He argues that Indigenous cultural continuity and continued existence are tied to the ability to re-assume responsibilities and practice relationships with the plants and animals of traditional territories. In a paper co-published with Cheryl Bryce, the two describe Bryce’s *kwetlal* project as an act of sustainable self-determination (Corntassel & Bryce, 2012).

Bryce is Lekwungen, a people whose territory is in what is known to settlers as British Columbia, around the city of Victoria. Her ancestors managed huge camas fields, and this plant was “celebrated, harvested, pit cooked, and traded with people up and down the coast” (Corntassel & Bryce, 2012, p. 157). Social structures were tied to the harvesting and managing of relationships with traditional foods and other components of the native ecosystem.

Bryce grew up harvesting *kwetlal* with her grandmother. Today, Bryce continues this duty to teach, by holding educational talks about the history of the Lekwungen in this territory and their relationship to the land, public *kwetlal* pit cooks, and offers an educational program during which Indigenous children can help remove invasive plants and learn more about *kwetlal* and other native plants. She describes this passing on of experiential knowledge as “crucial to the survival of Indigenous communities” (Corntassel & Bryce, 2012).

While Bryce does not mention giving thanks to ancestors specifically, she does talk about the importance of feasting or eating and cooking traditional foods together, as well as educating people about how her ancestors maintained sustainable relationships with their land—the second two relationships I found important to *passing things down* in Wabaseemoong. People in Wabaseemoong also described the importance of relationships with parents for supporting learning and teaching about traditional foods.

Previously, I discussed that approaching adaptive capacity-building through relationship added elements of reciprocity and practice to current conceptions of rootedness for resilience. Bryce's story of resurgence through sustainable self-determination provides support for this idea, as it touches on the norms of reciprocity and practice inherent in the relationship with *kwetlal*—for example, by centering hands-on engagement with *kwetlal*, pulling out invasive species, and holding feasts. Corntassel and Bryce's (2012) approach to resurgence supports my thinking about relationship as an agency-centered approach to adaptive-capacity building.

The second example of resurgence that helps frame my findings on relationship is from Yerxa (2014). Yerxa is Anishinaabe and based in Treaty 3 territory. In 2013, after a discussion with her grandfather, Yerxa helped bring together four Anishinaabeg communities (Couchiching, Naicatchewenin, Mitaanjigaming and Nigigoonsiminikaaning) within Treaty 3 to roast wild rice at *Neyaashing* (the Point). This place has been a historical gathering point for Treaty 3 nations. In this paper Yerxa frames this event as a moment of Indigenous resurgence.

Like Corntassel and Bryce (2012), Yerxa's story shows how relationships with land are central to resurgence—and, I would add, adaptive capacity building. Yerxa describes the relationship with the land as a “treaty.” Yerxa describes treaties as “living relationships,” that must be continually renewed through practice. Using the language of treaty to describe the relationship with *manomin* acknowledges *manomin*'s agency, and also shows how practicing relationship with *manomin* by harvesting or roasting it and practicing reciprocity is an example of political governance for the Anishinaabe. While I did not find that people in Wabaseemoong used the language of treaty, their conceptualization of the land relationship also involved recognizing the agency of the land and practicing relationship through engaging in harvesting and through giving thanks.

Yerxa (2014) continually cites knowledge from her grandparents within the paper, a demonstration of how knowledge of the land and how to practice relationships is passed on from parent to child. This is congruent with the importance that participants in Wabaseemoong placed on parental relationships. Yerxa (2014) describes learning about *manomin* and her responsibilities to it from her great-grandfather, just as Wabaseemoong community members talked about learning how to harvest and prepare food from their parents and grandparents. Resurgence theory frames these processes of nurturing support, and education, and reciprocity between parents and children in the course of learning how to harvest traditional foods as the true path to decolonization and learning how to adapt in ways that preserve cultural identity and connections to the past.

Yerxa (2014)'s main argument is that roasting *manomin* at the point is an assertion of nationhood and governance. This adds a political dimension to the idea of practicing relationship that will be discussed below. Yerxa's description of roasting wild rice suggests that resurgence also rests on practicing reciprocal relationships with parents, ancestors, and land—similar to my discussion above on how people in Wabaseemoong approach building adaptive capacity through practicing relationships.

I explored the Resurgence literature before entering the field, thinking that it could be useful for understanding what resilience means within Indigenous worldviews and in relation to colonialism. I found that the concept of relational ontology described by Little Bear (2000) and Simpson (2011) informed my thinking about one of the main discourses I found in Wabaseemoong around traditional foods—*passing things down*. I found that I could sort the values and activities people talked about in reference to *passing things down* into 'relationships' with parents, ancestors, and land. By relationships, I mean that by harvesting, cooking, preparing, or eating traditional foods, people are also engaging with, remembering, honouring, or giving thanks to parents, ancestors, or land.

These values are captured by the concept of relational ontology, in which Indigenous scholars put forward the idea that creation is based on relationships of reciprocity between agents. The examples of resurgence from Corntassel and Bryce (2012) and Yerxa (2014) are based on maintaining and practicing relationships and could also be understood as instances of adaptive capacity-building through relationship. In drawing these connections between the cited studies of

resurgence and my findings, I open a conversation about relationship and practice that can be a useful path forward for the exploration of agency in resilience and for expanding the decolonial potential of resilience thinking.

6.3.5 Conclusion

Brown (2016) has suggested that resilience's problem with theorizing agency could begin to be addressed, in part, by thinking about how cultural identity and connection to place foster adaptive capacity through rootedness. I go deeper than this by arguing that in Wabaseemoong, people understand adaptive capacity through a relational ontology, seeing themselves as agents fostering adaptive capacity by practicing and rebuilding relationships with parents, ancestors, and land. As well as implying a deeply different ontological view of the world (not just a different 'cultural lens'), that sees the natural world as part of a community rather than a source of resources, this approach of building adaptive capacity through relationship also adds important dimensions of reciprocity and practice. I suggest that in Wabaseemoong, both cultural identity and adaptive capacity are fostered through the practice of maintaining relationships in the midst of social, ecological, and colonial change.

This idea of practicing reciprocal relationship is one of the bases of Indigenous resurgence, as theorized by scholars like Simpson (2011), Corntassel and Bryce (2012), and Yerxa (2014). Exploring some examples of resurgence in this chapter, I found that the idea of practicing reciprocal relationships with ancestors, parents, and especially land are elements of how resurgence occurs.

Ultimately, these two literatures of social-ecological resilience and resurgence are seeking to answer different questions, are grounded in different ontologies, and may be more divergent than convergent. There may be better ways to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and decolonialism into social-ecological resilience thinking than through the resurgence literature.

While I drew on both literatures to shape my understanding, my framework emerges from my data. Theorizing adaptive capacity-building as practicing relationship is one decolonial approach to social-ecological resilience 'development.' However, there is much more work to be done to ensure social-ecological resilience thinking is also decolonial and in line with Indigenous understandings and aspirations.

6.4 Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should continue to elaborate on decolonial approaches to resilience—especially through the concept of reciprocal relationship. It may be interesting to explore how the concept of *passing things down* resonates in other communities, in areas beyond traditional foods, and to elaborate on how *passing things down* creates a sense of continuity and coherence while being a flexible and creative process.

As mentioned in the limitations section, this research did not look at the role of power, and it may be interesting to explore how *passing things down* interacts with other discourses around the role of traditional foods within programs and policies around traditional food development in the Treaty #3 region.

This work focused on understandings of resilience rather than disturbance, but it may be useful to flesh out the concept of colonialism as an ongoing disturbance and how it interacts with, and manifests as, forms of social and ecological disturbance.

My recommendation is that non-profits and funding agencies working on traditional food development with Indigenous communities recognize *passing things down* as a meaning of traditional foods, alongside food security or nutrition. They should pay attention to how the programs they support incorporate the opportunity to practice relationships with parents, ancestors, and land. They should especially be aware of how programs may represent a shift away from the valued practice of parent or relative-led teaching in the context of the home. They should consider who is teaching in traditional food programs, if those teachers learned from their parents or relatives, and how programs can incorporate more opportunities for learning from parents and relatives in an immersive setting.

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Appendix A: Research Instruments

A-1: Unstructured Interview Schedule

1. Theme: Early relationship with traditional foods

Possible questions:

What are some early memories you have of traditional foods?

When were you born? What was the community like then?

What did your parents do to make their living? How did they grow up?

Purpose of activities (selling, eating, etc.)

Who was involved?

Anything in particular you remember eating

Did you go to school? When did you start? How did that affect your relationship?

Where there stores then?

Do you remember any other community programs or organization, buildings, etc. around food in the community? E.g. fish program? Did people make use of them?

What kinds of foods/activities do you think of when you think of “traditional foods”? (e.g. rice-picking? Ice-fishing? Gardening?—why?)

2. Theme: Current relationship with traditional foods

Possible questions:

What types of things do you do now around traditional foods? How often do you do these things?

Where do you go to do them?

Who do you usually do them with? Who else might be involved?

Which of these things do you do most often?

How did you start doing (the things you do now)?

Tell me about a recent time when you (did one of these things)?

Which of these things do you enjoy the most? Which is your favourite? Why?

Tell me about a favourite memory of (most enjoyable activity)?

Which is your least favourite? Why? Do you have any stories about this activity?

Would you do more of these things if you had the chance? If yes, what are the factors stopping you?

What are some of the difficulties or challenges in doing these things?

3. Theme: Meaning of traditional foods today

Possible questions:

Have you seen changes in the community in terms of people's involvement with traditional foods?

What do traditional foods look like in the community today? (who does what—also education, feasts)

Do you think there has been a decline in availability and eating of traditional foods? How do you feel about that?

Do people share foods? How does that work? Is there less of this? Do you think this is important for having a strong community?

Do people talk about traditional foods? When they do, what do they say (about they they're good, or important? Why youth should do them? What they enjoy about them? (e.g. health, culture, spirituality, economic/political)

(If getting wild food is important to you), is going out and getting wild food important today? Is it important to the community today? (is it important for community cohesion, health, identity—for example, feasts) (should it be?)

What do you think about access to food in the community? Are you satisfied? Is everyone? Are there any foods you wish you could eat more, that are difficult to access?

Do you think culture, or being Anishinaabe is becoming more or less important to people? Do foods play a role in this resurgence or reclamation of culture?

What do you think about resilience, resurgence, healing? Does anyone here use that language? What do those words mean to you? Are foods connected to those things in any way?

Is it important that the young people here know about these foods?

Why—what kinds of benefits does it bring, would you say?

What kinds of things should they know?

In thinking about the above reasons, is there one way in particular you'd want them to think about these foods?

What do you think is the best way to interest youth in these foods? What are the reasons they are not interested?

A-2: Focus Group Questions

1. What are the main sources of food in Wabaseemoong? (I will mark on map). What types of food do you get from each of these? What proportion of the community's total food supply does each of these represent?
2. How has Wabaseemoong's food system changed (in the past fifty years)? [Use timeline to visualize]. What are the significant events/changes and when did they occur? How would you describe the response of the community to each of these?
3. These are the traditional food activities interview participants described (share a list). Are there any important activities that are missing? Which ones of these are most common and why?
4. Are there food activities that you would like to see that aren't currently happening? Are there food activities you would like to see more of? What are the barriers, if any, to these activities?
5. How engaged are youth with traditional foods? What activities do youth participate in? What are the factors that cause youth to be drawn towards or away from traditional foods?
6. What are the most important ways in which food and community interact? How important are traditional foods for maintaining community?
7. What benefits do you see traditional foods bringing to the community?

Do you see any (personal/spiritual/social/political/economic) benefits of traditional foods?

8. Who talks about traditional foods in the community? How do each of these describe traditional foods?

For example, elders or family members? Chief and Council? Programmes or agencies that teach about traditional foods? WNHAC representatives? Or other organizations working in the community?

Human Ethics
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB
Canada R3T 2N2
Phone +204-474-7122
Email: humanethics@umanitoba.ca



**UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA**

**Research Ethics
and Compliance**

PROTOCOL APPROVAL

TO: **Hannah Muhajarine** (Advisor: Iain Davidson-Hunt)
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Kevin Russell, Chair**
Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)

Re: **Protocol J2017:118 (HS21365)**
“Stories of Response: The meaning of traditional foods for resilience in Wabaseemoong Independent Nations, Ontario”

Effective: January 29, 2018

Expiry: January 29, 2019

Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) has reviewed and approved the above research. JFREB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*.

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described in the application.
2. Any modification to the research must be submitted to JFREB for approval before implementation.
3. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be submitted to JFREB as soon as possible.
4. This approval is valid for one year only and a Renewal Request must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date.
5. A Study Closure form must be submitted to JFREB when the research is complete or terminated.
6. The University of Manitoba may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

Funded Protocols:

- **Please mail/e-mail a copy of this Approval, identifying the related UM Project Number, to the Research Grants Officer in ORS.**