

*Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina*  
**[What the Elder leaves behind]:**  
*Maskéko* epistemologies, ontology and history

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
The University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Native Studies

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Winnipeg

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this project is to investigate the transmission of knowledge, and cultural values on the margins of the colonial agenda. The oral traditional accounts, and lived experience of *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Qeskekapow, in the community of *Kinoséwi Sípíhk* [Fish River], are examined through the lens of a postcolonial Indigenous research paradigm. As a synthesis of an Indigenous perspective, and Euro-Western research methodologies, consisting of an open-ended interview approach, and the local Indigenous knowledge, the goals and objectives of this project are: 1) to determine the role of the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* [Elders], 2) establish the local interpretation of *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* 3) to determine the impacts of colonialism had on the transmission of traditional knowledge, and culture 4) to analyze the impacts of colonization on the broader concept of community. This research locates the detrimental impacts of colonialism, the loss of identity in the historical context, and endeavors to contribute to affirmation of our cultural practices, and values in the present.

***OTATAMISKAKAWIN***  
**[ACKNOWLEDGEMENT]**

I would like to respectfully acknowledge the individual whose life experience, and knowledge served as the basis for this research project, my father, *Kéhté-yatis* [Elder] Charles F. Qeskekapow. I would also like to thank my family, especially my sister Phyllis M. Qeskekapow for her encouragement, and sustained support. Finally, I extend my most sincere gratitude to my advisory committee members, Dr. Christopher Trott, Dr. Mark Ruml, and Dr. Renate Eigenbrod for their scholarship, endorsements, and their persistence throughout the writing of this thesis.

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## Cree Roman Orthography - Language Key \*

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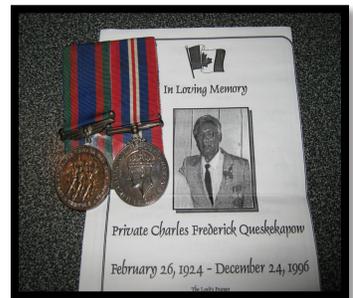
Vowels	Pronunciation within the Cree text
á	<u>u</u> nder
a	<u>a</u> pple
é	<u>e</u> dit
í	<u>e</u> at
i	mi <u>t</u> ten
ó	<u>f</u> ood
o	st <u>oo</u> d

Consonant	Pronunciation within the Cree text
c	<u>ch</u> air or jar

There is no distinction between ch or j in the Cree language.

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\* Refer to Wolvengrey's (2001) Cree dictionary volume 1 and 2 for more detailed usage of the Roman orthography.



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## INTRODUCTION

## **Research context**

The authority of the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* [Elders], that have for generations served to orient the *Kinoséwi Sípihk (i)niwak* [the residents of Fish River] to their knowledge, culture, and history, have been cited as sites of dislocation with the advent of the Euro-Western colonial encounter, as manifested in the educational programming, industrial developments and government interventions. Propagated with the assumption of progress and modernization, these Euro-Western state interventions have not been culturally “neutral” (Graveline, 1998: 118; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000: 103) nor have they been benign processes; as a result the existing colonial intrusions within the community have contributed to the subversion of *Ańisiń(i)niw kiskéyihitamowin* [Cree traditional knowledge] (Granzberg and Queskekapow Part 1, 1999; Milloy, 2003).

## **Background**

This work was inspired by my relationship with my father. While greatly informed by my father’s knowledge and lived experience, *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* [what the Elder leaves behind] as my Masters of Native Studies dissertation was not intended to serve as his life history. Rather, drawing from local *Kéhté-yatis* [Elder] Charles F. Queskekapow’s oral accounts and lived experience – sources that have been honored and accepted as the local record in *Kinoséwi Sípihk* (Apetagon, Vol. 1, 1991) – enables us to speak with authenticity and with authority of our way of life and of our struggles, as *Maskéko*, while existing within the colonial agenda.

In the body of this work, the use of *Maskéko* will denote the ethnic group the *Kinoséwi Sípihk* are afflicted with, *Kinoséwi Sípihk (i)niwak* are the treaty members of *Kinoséwi Sípihk*, and the term Aboriginal as a national and political descriptor identifies Aboriginal people of

Canada collectively. Indigenous people, the Aboriginal people of Canada who fit in this categorization, are those groups in the globe that are distinguished by their “distinctiveness”, and their prior occupancy of lands to that of Euro-Western colonization (Battiste & Henderson Youngblood, 2005: 63). Euro-Western are those of European descent that have colonized Indigenous lands in the form of conquest, or that of occupancy.

### **Positionality**

I identify as a member of *Kinoséwi Sípíhk* [Fish River], and as the son of *Kéhté-yatis* [Elder] Charles F. Qeskekapow. I am fluent in both, *Íníhímwín* [Cree language], the local language, and English. As the lead Student Researcher, I am enrolled at the University of Manitoba, Native Studies Graduate Studies Program, in Winnipeg, Manitoba and for that reason no longer residing in my home community. However, my work in the academy has not resulted in my divergence from that *Maskéko* way of living, *Maskéko* way of seeing and *Maskéko* way of being. Rather, at present I continue to draw meanings from my past experiences, and use them to inform and frame my research method and methodologies.

Writing authentically about *Ahisiñ(i)niw kiskéyihitamowin*, is a complicated undertaking. It is a process of drawing, giving voice to my father’s knowledge, his lived experience, and being challenged by the ever present colonizing literature. In transcribing his personal accounts, I acknowledge that my father was a complex and gifted person who drew layers of meanings from many sources and events that occurred under very different social circumstances. They undoubtedly would have contributed to the development of distinctive cultural forms of understandings, meanings, ideologies, philosophies, context, ritual and everything else to which a person may assign values. While I was absent when some of the events described in the acquisition of this local knowledge, that I refer to as *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina*, I had many

hours of extensive interactions, and being in his company. Thus kinship and immediacy performed a critical and vital role that enabled me to weave a cultural context and to cultivate a *Maskéko* inspired methodical lens.

A review of *Kéhté-yatis* Charles Queskekapow's oral account, and archival sources determined the *Maskéko*, that now identify as the *Kinoséwi Sípíhk (i)niwak* of *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*, had undergone a dramatic shift from that of independence to that of being situated in the confinement of the federal reserve system. This imposed sedentary lifestyle had significant cultural and social implication for the *Kinoséwi Sípíhk (i)niwak* in the past, and into the present (Apetagon Vol. 2, 1992: 26; Buckley, 1993: 39 & 34; McLeod, 2007: 72 & 73). Taken from postcolonial discourse, the theory of "place and displacement" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffins, 2004: 177) was used to frame this finding.

I draw meaning and representations from our way of life, and that of being *Maskéko*. To negotiate the problematic issues of generalization or 'essentializing', I borrow the concept of 'strategic essentialism' from the work of postcolonialist Gayatri Spivak (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffins, 2004: 79 Smith, 2006). Spivak asserted that for Indigenous people claims of being "authentic" within the colonial context can both empower Indigenous people to speak from their world view, and to mobilize against the adversity of being colonized. To speak of being indigenous, Smith argues, "[A]lthough this may seem overly idealized, these symbolic appeals remain strategically important in political struggles" (2006: 73). In that sense, "essentialism" opens an avenue to unfold a distinctive Indigenous narrative to that of a perspective permeated by Euro-Western systems of knowledge and values (Smith, 2006: 74).

## **Purpose and objectives**

The aim of this project was to investigate the *Maskéko* concept *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina*, through the oral tradition and lived experience of *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Queskekapow and its intersection with the assertions of colonial authority in the community of *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*.

The process telling their stories, Aboriginal people need to develop a literature to articulate our experience, and the outcomes of historical trauma originating from being colonized to give clarity to the present. Employing decolonizing strategies and existing models is critical in creating opportunities for the oppressed group to demonstrate agency. With those tools we can challenge dominating Euro-Western intellectual paradigms, and oppressive pedagogies. The capacity to claim our own identity and to locate ourselves as empowered people will liberate us from Other(ness), obscurity, exoticism, and oppression (Said, 1979: 1), at our own terms.

The goals and objectives of this project then include:

- 1) To determine the role of the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* in the community.
- 2) To establish the localized definition for *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina*.
- 3) To determine the impacts of colonialism had on the transmission of traditional knowledge, and culture.

One subsidiary objective that arose through this work and became a key constituent:

- 4) To investigate the impacts colonization had on the concept of community.

### *Kinoséwi Sípíhki*

Situated at the north basin of Lake Winnipeg, *Kinoséwi Sípíhki*, is located 500 miles north of the major centre of Winnipeg, Manitoba, and is approximately 100 miles south of Thompson, Manitoba. Numerous lakes and rivers course through the region, with the Nelson River, we refer to as *Kiscih Sípíhk* [central river], serving as our main waterway. Several of these channels bisect, and arrange how *Kinoséwi Sípíhk* partitions the community. They consist of the North End, Rossville, Paupanekis Point, Fort Island, Johnstone Island, Mission Island, Towers Island, West Island, and the now mostly abandoned York Village; otherwise known locally as *Kisihpíhkahma* [where the lake ends].

Currently, the community is divided into two jurisdictions. That divide is signified by the existence of a treaty and non-treaty side resulting of the fur trade, and government policy. The Status Indians, as they are identified within the Indian Act, fall under the authority of the Chief and Council. The non-Treaty side, known as the community council, is situated on the West Island, which is administered to by a Mayor and Council and is governed provincially under the Department of Northern Affairs. It is home to individuals that have come to identify themselves as Métis, non-Status, and non-Aboriginal.

Defining and determining the role of the *Kéhté-yatis* as well as the transmission of traditional knowledge were relatively unproblematic in this project, due to the ready availability of archival sources, my personal relationship to my father to serve as a source of *Maskéko* thought, and the availability of individuals that agreed to their inclusion in this dissertation. However contextualizing *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* [what the Elder leaves behind], defined here as the Indigenous knowledge, and its cultural content in *Maskéko* perspective, within a larger cultural context was more complex.

Often depicted as competing paradigms both Euro-Western scholarship and the Aboriginal perspective were reviewed, and informed this dissertation. In the use of scholarship, a decolonization approach was necessary to counter the repressive nature associated with western-based ways of knowing that depicts Indigenous people as, “the Other”, a term associated with Euro-Western representation of Indigenous people (Smith, 2006: 2). With the inclusion of the indigenous perspective, we are represented by the ones that know of our oppression, of our perseverance, our strengths, and our way of life the best: ourselves. It is with the expression of those trickles of truths that attest to our removal from the land, by colonial power and authority, to our relegation to life on the reserve; in our *Ihííimowin* we refer to the reserve as *iskonikan*, meaning literally the left-over-land. In this confinement was instituted the *okimáhkán*, meaning the made-up leader, to congeal our subjugation by the Canadian government (Dion, 1993: 80). Essentially, this transition was the disempowerment of our *Kéhté-yatis(ak)*, and the progression of denying us our *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina*.

## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **Decolonizing research**

This project recognized that there are a number of challenges in undertaking research in an Aboriginal community. Firstly, due to its close link to Euro-Western positivism and the need to establish objective truths, research has been met with skepticism in the indigenous communities (Smith, 2006: 2). Smith argues that the intrusive nature of western research has situated indigenous people in a precarious position. In Smith's analysis, "Research has not been neutral in its objectification of the Other", suggesting Euro-Western colonial domination is intrinsically embedded in the concepts of research and has served to advance the disempowerment of indigenous people, as we begin to detail our histories (2006: 39).

Krotz (1990), while undertaking research for his book, uncovered that the people of *Kinoséwi Sípihk* had expressed their frustration, and their disenchantment with the concept of research and outside interventions. They indicate, "What the Norway House people resent most are the hit-and-run artist who arrive with a preconceived thesis, take a quick look around to grab enough data to support it, and leave, never to be seen again. They complain about and feel powerless against reports and anthropologists who do not really want to understand them, and worse, have no affection or generosity for them" (p. 48).

However problematic research may be for Indigenous people, presently there is a growing body of work that suggests that research has contributed to the development of sites of struggle to advance self-determination for Indigenous communities. In that regard, research demands a critical engagement by Indigenous people on how to best balance its potential benefits, and avoid inflicting further injury to their cultures, and their communities (Smith, 2006: 39 & 40). Basing

his academic work on his Cree heritage, McLeod (2007) argues, that adapting the words of local people provides new and empowering methods of shedding insights into the lives of Indigenous people. He states, “Cree narratives are held within oral traditions and social relationships and provide a counterpoint to the narrative of non-Cree society” (p. 18). In recent developments, the courts have also demonstrated the value of research involving the testimonial of Aboriginal Elders. This is reflected the Supreme Court of Canada’s *Delgamuukw* decision in 1997 (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008: 221).

### **Methods and methodologies**

As a synthesis of an Indigenous perspective, and Euro-Western research methodologies, consisting of an open-ended interview approach, and Indigenous knowledge. In this research project, to address an unintended further oppression of the “colonized Other” with the uncritical usage of western-based research methodologies, “postcolonial indigenous theory” is used to inform from an indigenous perspective (Chilisa, 2012: 49 & 50).

Other available sources of information for the research included an examination of historical accounts, language, the cultural significance of the attachment to land, the role of relationships, cultural values, and spirituality to authenticate and represent the *Maskéko* culture.

The use of decolonizing methods and methodologies were utilized to exemplify the *Maskéko* perspective. That included the application of an Aboriginal postcolonial paradigm, postcolonial discourse relating to place and displacement, and language.

### **Research protocols and ethics**

This project was based on mutually demonstrating respect for local protocols and values and applying and abiding by accepted research methods and methodologies. In appreciation of

the complexities associated with acquiring *Ańisiń(i)niw kiskéyhtamowin* [Cree traditional knowledge], and the retelling of our collective narrative, this thesis does not propose to provide an all encompassing story of *Kinoséwi Sipińk*. Firstly, this work does not claim to speak on behalf of other *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* and their families, many of whom were mutual friends and acquaintances of my father who reside in the same community. In that way the project complements the local custom of respecting the autonomy of other families. Secondly, there is the recognition that they too have significant expertise and critical insights that they one day may desire to disclose within their own terms, to fill in the gaps that subsist in our collective memory (McLeod, 2005: 8).

In addition, I attempted to avoid assigning a particular order or role for each of the stories. In our local beliefs, the value of each story may reveal itself differently to each of the recipients or listeners. This is foundational to what we refer to in our language as *nipohawin* [wisdom]. This respects the local *Maskéko* concept *ka tisiapatistayah* [to make use of] (personal comm. C. Queskekapow, n.d.).

### **Personal commitment to research**

During his lifetime, my father *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Queskekapow, while he remained critical of the Euro-Western colonial interventions, was adamant in utilizing the potential value of Euro-Western based research methodologies to maintain the local knowledge. In his personal appeal, he stated in an interview with the Frontier School Division # 48:

Our young people should make an attempt to record and publish materials on medical herbs and roots. They must try to do it soon, before another culture does it. We know our young people have a new form of education--they have a new kind of intelligence, wisdom, and understanding (Apetagon Vol. 1, 1991, p. 13).

In general, these words demonstrated his genuine interest in keeping *Maskéko* knowledge as a vital attribute of the community, an initiative he reiterated in relation to the local pictographs that are situated north of the community (NCI, 1991). In this project, his interest in these proposed research initiatives served as a critical ethical constituent, and motivation, and vital justification for pursuing this project.

### **Postcolonial theory**

The concept of place is appropriated here to undertake an examination of being colonized within the *Maskéko* experience. In this work it is representative of the removal of the *Maskéko* from the land that they traditionally occupied, and in the context of the displacement of cultural values. To support the application of this theoretical concept as it relates to *Maskéko* experience, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin provide, “A sense of place may be embedded in cultural history, in legend and language, without becoming a concept of contention and struggle until the profound discursive interference of colonialism” (2004: 177).

To Aboriginal people land harbors many features that contribute to how Aboriginal people frame their world view, and in that regard the expression of their culture, and a source of identity. To Aboriginal people the attachment to land is an extension of their identity. Some would say for the *Maskéko* to know the language is to be able to identify with the land (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2004: 179). To the affect, or to enact the removal from a traditional territory for Aboriginal people is not a simple act of transposition to another locale it is equivalent to the denial of one’s culture, and physical and mental health. It is asserted, “The concept of place and displacement demonstrate the very complex interaction of language, history, environment in the experience of colonized peoples and the importance of space and the location in the process of identity formation” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2004: 177 & 178).

### **The Indigenous postcolonial paradigm**

This project considered a respectful approach to reflect the representation of the *Maskéko* world view. This included consideration for relationship, methods of transmitting knowledge and instilling of cultural values considered unique to the *Maskéko*. The work then considered the theoretical framed proposed under the concept of Indigenous postcolonial paradigm. The development of this theoretical frame is one that proposes to inform from an Indigenous perspective. Chilisa in her publish source, *Indigenous research methodologies* (2012) attempts to the address the issues associated with colonizing influence of the Euro-Western based sciences. She purports, the goal of this work is to address the unintended further oppression of the “colonized Other” (49), and problematizes postcolonial theory as “...of a Western tradition that emphasizes individuality, secularization, and mind-body duality”, and derived from a “...pathologizing view that focuses on damage, ignoring the wisdom and hope of the researched” (49 & 50). This she adds is contrary to the Aboriginal world view that is centered on elements that pertain to spiritual realm, relationships, communal collectivity (Chilisa, 2012: 49).

The result is the integration of the aboriginal perspective with that of postcolonial theory she refers to as the Indigenous postcolonial paradigm. As methodological applications, the “[p]ostcolonial indigenous research techniques include a process of decolonizing the conventional interview technique, using indigenous interview methods such as talking circles and invoking indigenous knowledge to inform alternative research methods compatible with the worldviews of the colonized” (Chilisa 2012: 23).

## *Kiskiswin*

Memory is an important tool in representing unrecorded stories and events. As a four year old, I recall sitting on the floor of our home in the *Kinoséwi Sípihk*, while my father recited the legends. Through a combination of listening and personal intuitive qualities, I was able to memorize the legends. On those occasions, I transposed words into mental images, allowing those images to stream unrestrained into my consciousness. Now the recital of those stories requires the effortless process of evoking those images that have remained vivid in my memory since my childhood, and permitting them to liberate the story they contain. Today I am honored to be the recipient of the stories that have been transmitted from the *Kimosóm pana*, and to utilize them in this research project.

In an oral based culture, memory is of critical value. In our local tradition we identify memory as *kiskiswin*. It is one of the essential *minikinswin* [spiritual gift] (Apetagon, Vol. 2, 1992: 8) from the Creator. It is an essential intellectual process centered on the accumulation and transmission of our *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina*. This gift stores the resonance of our stories, cultural values, laws, ceremonies, and our language. The value of individual memories is depicted in the following way:

Oral societies depend on cultural memory. Each person carries his or her personal story but also those of parents and grandparents. Elders link the coming generations with teachings of the past generations. The cultural teachings are the foundations of Aboriginal people's identity. If a culture is allowed to die, the identity of the people is buried with it (Royal Commission, 1996: 117).

The work of McLeod (2005) further highlights the significance of memory in an oral based culture. His work in his community in Saskatchewan captures the essence of a people in transition yet maintaining their ties to their values through memory. His work illustrates the invaluable nature of *kiskiswin* in an oral based culture.

Stories, lessons, and sharing of local knowledge came to me when I accompanied my father on fishing and hunting trips that were stored in my memory. Those experiences provided empirical insights that are considered critical in acquiring Aboriginal knowledge. In later years learning was accomplished sitting by his bed in the evening before he drifted off to sleep, which I did on many occasions. In those latter periods, I had been fishing with a net by our home. Checking the net and cleaning fish was done in the evenings. After those chores were done, a visit to his bedroom became a routine.

The home I shared with my mother and father was quiet and there was little distraction. This setting presented an ideal opportunity to learn and listen to him speak of the past, or to have him share funny stories, or legends. My stopover in his room consisted of a report of the number of fish and species that were caught with the net. Those reports provided ideal entryways into his store of knowledge. He may request a cup or perhaps full jug of tea of me which he stationed on a night table, before proceeding with his storytelling. He would have a drink of tea, and perhaps nod his head in acknowledgement of hearing the results of the fishing and then proceed with sharing his stories. I assume, on those occasions, he understood I was interested in hearing and detailing our cultural knowledge.

Methodologically speaking, in *Maskéko* culture direct questioning was rare except to clarify on a specific topic. Otherwise, most of what was discussed was of his choosing, and they were shared in our local language. Afterward he would lay back and close his eyes and drift off to sleep; that ended the session. Upon exiting his room, I always left his bedroom light on.

## **Language**

Much has been written theorizing the role of language in social, familial roles and tradition to understand the circumstances in which cultural norms are forged. The Task Force (2005) on

Aboriginal Languages and Cultures has provided some theoretical frameworks on how those social forms are formalized in the Aboriginal community. The Task Force, as a federally funded initiative, was mandated to “propose a national strategy for the preservation and, revitalization and promotion of Aboriginal languages and cultures” coupled with the intention to promote those values as shared national experiences and “enrichment” processes (13). Their work depicts unique Aboriginal cultural values that distinguish them from the dominant Canadian society.

A synopsis of most critical findings of that Task Force determined that among Aboriginal, Métis, and Inuit ancestry in Canada, “The philosophy and culture of a people are embedded in their language and given expression by it. Language is the vehicle for a network of cultural values that operate under the level of consciousness and shape each speaker’s awareness, sense of personal identity and relationship with others and with the universe itself” (21). Their findings further established that Indigenous people possess a particular spiritual connection to the land they occupy, and their languages mirrored their connections to that land. (2005: 23)

Language is a tremendous source of identity. It is by the virtue of language that people are able to communicate and maintain distinct cultural worldviews that distinguish them from the dominant society. For instance, drawing from my understanding, to speak of thunder in our *Maskéko* language is to address thunder personified. Thunder in the *Maskéko* ontology is represented by the Thunderbird. The Thunderbirds, according to *Kéhté-yatis* Donald Muswagon, are responsible for the occurrence of lightning and the resulting sound (Apetagon Vol. 3, 1994: 30 & 31). This is contrasted with the view that such phenomena occurs in a natural environment and can be made known through a process of Euro-Western based scientific inquiry.

This work recognized, and integrated the value of the local language with respect to the above findings. First, the work used and recognized the local *n* Cree dialect. Secondly, the

fieldwork was done in *íniíimowin*. Participant statements were then translated into English. *Íniíimowin* idioms and specific cultural signifiers requiring cross-cultural consideration and elaboration have been italicized and their translation in parenthesis. Fourthly, words with their translation are cross referenced using Wolvengrey's *Cree: Words* (2001, Volume 1 & 2), dictionary. Fifthly, *Maskéko* do not assign distinct gender-based verbal markers. Hence he or she are absent in our language. We simply identify individual identities as *wína* [they], or *wínawow* [them] to express the plurality of individual.

### ***Wáhótwin***

Family kinship patterns and relationships are integral cultural values in the community. Their linkages consist of customary adoptions, marriages, grandparents, and links to extended family members. These linkages are the avenues that facilitate in the transfer of knowledge, affirmations of established orders, and ranks of allegiances (Apetagon, Vol. 2, 1992: 11). They are the strongest surviving structures and examples of unity in the community. They have withstood the impacts of Euro-Western institutions that have promoted Eurocentric familial hierarchical structures. They have been assaulted by government policy as they were considered obstacles to the modernization of Aboriginal people (Government of Canada, 1960), or what has been described as the “civilization project” (Tinker, 8:23). Families, as in previous generations, continue to exist as relatively autonomous collectivities in the community. They have been able to maintain the continuity of their ancestral connections through visitations, recitals of family histories, and the recording of family genealogies (Apetagon, Vol. 2, 1992: 20). As cultural expression they exist as culturally unique institutions, and the main routes of the transmission of traditional knowledge.

My relationship with my father, informs this project of insight to *Ańisiń(i)niw kiskéyihitamowin*, and the processes associated with its transmission. The relationship with father represented a link our present, and to past. My continuity in the land-based activities subsisted with an ongoing contact with my father in my youth, and providing *Ańisiń(i)no omícim* [Cree food] to him in my adult life. As a result of those experiences, I gained critic insights on how to hunt, stories of the past and legends, our spiritual beliefs, engaging in preparation of the local foods, and receiving instructions on the healing properties of the local plants. My father's stories informed me of a way of life that had been dramatically altered, and the legends that were passed on to him by the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* that raised him.

### **Archival sources**

The review of archival sources provided key insights to existing perspectives, and theoretical frames. Archival source material for this project will consist of an existing collection of minor documents and video recordings that resulted from *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Queskekapow involvement in local research projects. Those sources, originate from a video recorded interview with Native Communications Inc. (NCI) (1989), a video recorded interview with anthropologist Dr. Granzberg, of the University of Winnipeg (n.d.), and documented copies of his retelling of local legends published by Frontier Schools Division # 48 (1989 and 1991). This also includes a review of literature to inform of theory, and on the Indigenous world view.

### **Informed consent**

Data gathering relied on the people of the community that had a shared relationship with *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Queskekapow. The research was contingent on the cooperation of the research participants. An agreement to participate in the research project was signified with

signing of a release form that was presented and explained to them prior to commencing with the interview. The research participants had the option of declining to identify themselves in the interview process. In the situation that they choose to remain anonymous, their testimonies are treated with confidentiality. However, the individuals that agreed to have their identities revealed had their names published and incorporated into the body of the thesis.

In addition, the participants in the interview maintained their right to terminate their involvement in this project. If they chose to terminate their inclusion in the process they were under no obligation to return or compensate the project in any manner. They, as the interviewees, had the choice of whether they want to have the interviews and images recorded by camera, or audio recorder.

As part of signing the release agreement, participants were presented with a copy of their signed release form and a copy of the interview. Other copies of the interviews will be stored on my hard drive, and one copy will be stored at the University of Manitoba. A copy will be provided to the Norway House First Nation upon request.

### **The community participants<sup>†</sup>**

**Debrah Ross:** resides in Pimichikimak First Nation. Debrah is the daughter of *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Queskekapow. She is a mother and is employed on a full-time basis with a parental support agency. She continues to rely on the teachings of our father.

**Phyllis M. Queskekapow:** resides in Winnipeg and continues to place great regard for her *Maskéko* heritage. She provides a home, and provides social support for youth.

**George Queskekapow:** lives in *Kinoséwi Sípihk*. He is the son of *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Queskekapow, and is recognized as a *Kéhté-yatis* in this project. George has been a trapper,

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<sup>†</sup> The names of the participants are not arranged in a particular order.

hunter and fisher since his youth. He has also made himself available to various occupations in the community.

**Darlene Omand:** our step-sister and confidant committed a vast amount of personal time to assist *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Qeskekapow at his times of needs, in particular in his later years. She is respected for the moral advice she provides.

**Priscilla Clarke:** has been living in Winnipeg, Manitoba for several years, and has continually worked for the same business during that period. She is a daughter of *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Qeskekapow.

***Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Qeskekapow;** the lead and inspiration for this work, was an advocate for his community. He lived out his life in community committing to sharing his knowledge with the local people, and continues to be respected for that.

***Kéhté-yatis* Helen Qeskekapow:** the wife of *Kéhté-yatis* Charles Qeskekapow, and our deceased mother. She was employed for several years in a nursing home in *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*. Her determination to work was an inspiration to all of us.



**CHAPTER TWO:**

**THE *KÉHTÉ-YATIS* [ELDER]**

### **The *Kéhté-yatis***

Charles Queskekapow passed to the spiritual realm at approximately midnight on December 24, 1996 while in the presence of various close family members and friends, and his apprentices at the Norway House Indian Hospital. The setting of his passing reflected his fondness of company, demonstration of the respect and the kindness of his wife Helen Queskekapow (Robertson), children, apprentices, and that of *Kinoséwi Sípihk*, his home community.

As a conscientious community member, much of his enduring commitment was dedicated to maintaining the social well-being of his home community in his lifetime. He was an individual dedicated to keeping the local culture vibrant, and relevant. In person, his spiritual beliefs were centered on the *Máskeko* values and the Christian faith he observed by the taking of communion on Sundays, and seeking wisdom of the Christian Bible.

His contribution to local knowledge was located and affirmed on having been raised and instructed by the local *Kéhté-yatis(ak)*, that adopted him following the loss of his mother and the subsequent dissolution of his biological family at a young age. That period was particularly difficult, and was a focal point in his life. Upon learning of the passing of his mother, he felt deeply distraught and he seated himself in a boat. He was unable to bring himself to accept the offers of kindness, and the prospect of a new home from the adult that approached him (Queskekapow, P.M., personal comm. n.d.).

My father's experience at that point is considered central in the *Maskéko* customs. In many of the local legends, the orphan is a central figure. The legends recited by Charles articulate how individuals came to be recipients of spiritual powers, and of certain knowledge relating to *Mitéw* practices. Mythological figures such as *Wisakácak*, *Iyas*, *Cakapes* and the youth from the

Mermaid story serve as examples of individuals endowed with such mythical powers. An overarching theme is of a solitary orphan that is subsequently adopted by supernatural beings. Adoption is confirmed with the Grandfather spirit addressing the orphan as, “*Nosim*”, translated to mean “my grandchild.” In the retelling of legends, the grandfather spirits empowered the recipient with their pity and custody to achieve miraculous feats. In our language we say *ek kí kicimakináh* meaning they were shown pity.

Charles suggests that in the past people were extremely eager to adopt orphans to train and instill in them the knowledge they possessed. This was meant to ensure their knowledge was conferred onto an individual that was destined to be favored by the spirits. We refer to the spirits as *páwáka* meaning the dream beings. This claim is qualified and further elaborated by Bird (2005: 45). According to my father, the transmission of knowledge pertaining to medicine was considered especially critical. Considering the complexities of acquiring *Ańisih(i)niw kiskéyihitamowin* [Cree traditional knowledge], the training of the child began extremely early in childhood. According to my father, the process of selecting and conferring specific training on a child may have occurred as young as four years old, or before they had the ability to walk. The selection of the child was made by a gifted *Kéhté-yatis* who was endowed with the ability to recognize the values and attributes a child exhibited.

On the day he lost his mother, though overwhelmed by grief *Kéhté-yatis* Charles Queskekapow was finally able to accept the affection of one lady that reached out to him. Her compassion and home was to be the first of many he would come to know (personal comm. P. Queskekapow, n.d.). Through those customary adoptions and the nurturing of the local *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* he became exceptionally well informed of the local history, myths, and medicinal

properties of the locally available plants and herbs (Apetagon Vol. 1, 1991: 1; Queskekapow, C., Personal comm., n.d.).

He drew more knowledge and insight from his many life experiences. In his adulthood, *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Queskekapow was enriched through his involvement with local politics, his work as a contractor, and trapping and hunting activities. Though isolated by the expanse of the boreal region and socially by way of the construction of the Other (Said, 1979), he made it his custom to view and maintain his connection to the state. His enlistment as a private in World War II, gave him more insight to the outside world and associated experiences reinforced his respect for a common humanity. From my personal experience, he continued to maintain his solemn respect for those individuals who gave their lives in battle, and those that were affected by the war (Personal comm. n.d.). I observed him coming out of his bedroom with his war medals on to watch the November 11<sup>th</sup> Remember Day Services broadcast on the television.

The community is proud of their local veterans. However, one day I recall his arrival at home from a school activity that included a gathering of veterans from the community to meet with the students at one of the local schools. Appearing extremely shaken upon his arrival at home, he proceeded directly to his bedroom, and he instructed me to get him a cup of tea. When I had brought him the tea, he shared, “One of the other veterans attempted to take my medals away from me because, he said, “I did not go to war.” With unsteady hands he managed to undo the pin that attached the medals to the shirt. Settling back on his bed he did not say anything and I sat with him quietly. *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Queskekapow was recruited to the Canadian Forces, but due to an injury he sustained while in training he did not make it overseas. Nevertheless, he was awarded service of medals, a full veteran’s pension, and the controversial granting of a tract of land to him that was situated on reserve for his enlistment in the war.

By maintaining the traditional practices that were handed down to him by the local *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* he imbued his family name with integrity according to my paternal uncle Nathaniel Queskekapow the surname Queskekapow translates as “‘turn around’, change your ways, look back to the Elders and the past and incorporate it in your life” (Granzberg and Queskekapow Part 2, 1999: 272). A name my father indicated originated with the decision by our distant relatives to change their name to Queskekapow in order to distinguish themselves from other family groups in the distant past in the James Bay region (personal comm. n.d.).

During his lifetime, *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Queskekapow participated in various research projects that have resulted in publication of several textual materials and video recorded interviews with Native Communications Inc., in 1989, Frontier Schools No. # 48 in 1989, and 1991, and one interview he participated in with Granzberg when he was in the city of Winnipeg, for a medical appointment (n.d.). Additionally, he generously gave his time to provide instruction to several middle-aged men on the use of traditional medicine and to instill in them the sacred stories held by our ancestors thereby perpetuating the local world view, knowledge, and history which we refer to as the *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina*.

Later in his lifetime, while serving as a *Kéhté-yatis* and Traditional Life Skills Instructor for the Norway House Cree Nation Cultural and Education Centre, he generously shared his knowledge with the youth of the community. *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Queskekapow made attempts to continue to transmit the skill and knowledge of traditional activities associated with living off the land, which not everybody agreed with. People felt that hunting and trapping were no longer a viable economic option. Undaunted, he continued to deliver *otamíwáwiná* which translates to mean hobbies or pastimes. Through this model he had sought an alternative to the Euro-Western based education program that is largely framed within Euro-Western system of

values. The objectives of the program were to prevent the involvement of the participants in crime, provide critical and useful skills, and to maintain personal dignity by drawing meaning from the traditional culture offered through this program, in that way, retaining the humanity of the youth.

In his home community, *Kéhtë-yatis* Charles Queskekapow observed numerous customary kinship ties, provided for his children, and upheld his life time commitment to his marriage to Helen. His immediate familial connections comprised of his: *nosimak* [grandchildren], *tosim* [nephew], and *kíme* [my namesake]. His inclusion of non-blood individuals to qualify them as *nosimak* represents a discontinuity with Euro-Western familial constructions. *Nosim* is a cultural reference inclusive of most minors and adults in the community. Similarly *tosim* is comprised of adult to middle-aged male that he shared an especially congenial bond with, and again, was expressed in the absence of blood-familial ties. In response, the individuals he shared his connections with respectfully reciprocate by addressing him as *nimosom* [grandfather], *nokomis* [uncle], or in the absence of his presence, they may address him more modestly as *kiseno* [old man].

In the representation of local familial structures, children of nieces and nephews are considered *nosim* [my grandchild], and children of brothers and sisters may identify themselves as siblings. In the case of Charles, adult and middle-aged males in the similar account were in some instances, dependent on relative closeness of the bond, referred to as *tosim*.

In practice, these customary linkages are observed by other community members, as in how the *kehta* [Elderly] men or women are respectively acknowledged as grandfather or grandmother by the adults and minors, unrelated community members. Conversely, as in

Charles' custom, he greeted youth and adults in the community, in traditional form, as *nosim* [my grandchildren].

Traditional family patterns continue to persist and are represented spatially. Presently, they are represented in the organization of housing patterns. In terms of residential housing patterns, Charles' children and grandchildren have preferred to situate their homes in close proximity to his home. Within these familial clusters the housing arrangement takes on abstract form –one that is free of the trappings of linear boundaries that are boxed and quartered in Euro-Western fashion. This has been theorized as the vestige of the early practice of living and traveling in family groups over the land the *Maskéko* once occupied (Granzberg and Queskekapow Part 1, 1999: 18). As in the past, these structures and alliances serve as socio-economic supports systems. The close proximities maintain family cohesion; contribute to language retention; family histories are recited; they facilitate in the sharing of personal items and they provide continuity of cultural organization and the socialization to cultural values.

### **Words of resistance and affirmation**

*Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Queskekapow believed that the culture of the community was of vital importance and must be maintained through active political resistance and engagement in research. Much of that opposition was directed at to what McLeod refers to as the “the new system of life” (McLeod, 73: 2007). The ‘new system’ is the residential schools, segregation by means of the reserve system, and the Indian Act that has been imposed nationally on Aboriginal people (Frideres and Gadacz, 2008; Buckley, 1993; McLeod, 2007). In some of his notable comments that characterized his concept of resistance my father once asked me, “Do you believe humans originated from a tree?” Sensing the inquiry was rhetorical in nature, I awaited his response: “The *Maskéko* [People of the Muskeg] did not climb down from a tree. The Creator

placed us on this land” (Personal comm., n.d.). To me, his words demonstrated an affirmation of his spiritual beliefs, political values concerning his home community, and that the land the *Maskéko* occupied is evidently theirs, and has been for generations. His views challenged the established theories such as the land bridge crossing – a view that is continually advanced in the academy, and is accepted as the official narrative to explain the populating of North and South America. It is a scholarly presumption Osage and academic Tinker refer to as a “vassal manufactured Bering Strait theory” (2011, 28:20).

In another instance, when tiring of my inquiries, he responded I was exhibiting the characteristics of the Euro-Western mindset. In my translation, he shared the following:

They (Euro-Westerners) are referred to as *Monias*. ‘*Mo*’ (pointing to his forehead) denotes that they are motivated by the endless quest for knowledge.

They use to say (referring to the *kéhté-yatis(ak)* of previous generations), “Watch the *Emistikoso*<sup>‡</sup> [Euro-Westerner], they will ask one question, and after you have provided a response, they will retort with another question, or two, or even, perhaps three. Also, as you are speaking, they will hand write your response on a piece of paper, and as they are doing that, they are in reality stealing your responses.

However, once they have acquired a new insight, they will embrace it with a demonstrated obsession for knowledge.

He further added:

Moreover, when the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* have all passed away, they (Euro-Western’s) will assemble what they have gathered about us, and then proceed to publish them in a book. They will then say to our youth, “Come (waving his hand) and we will educate you about your own heritage and in that process steal the minds of our youth” (Personal comm., *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*, n.d.).

The quote represents an ongoing distrust of Euro-Western researchers and the assimilative aspects to the Euro-Western knowledge. It speaks to the notion of authority and exercise of power to sculpt and subsume the identity of the Indigenous youth. In addition, this line questioning conflicts with living in the realm of *nahentawin* [contentment]. Thus my

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<sup>‡</sup> I do not have an exact translation, but *misti* as a root word translates to wood, perhaps to imply Euro-Westerns originated from wooden boats, as concurred by Dion (1996: 148).

constant inquiries transgressed the *Maskéko* philosophy of knowledge and of a world view which is centered on living in balance with what is known and acceptance of mysteries yet to be known.

In his lifetime, subsistence living from the land was transformed by the regulation of the traditional practices of the *Maskéko* through imposition of wildlife legislation. This was manifested in the confiscation of game and personal property used to feed the local families. In reaction to this flagrant abuse and disregard for their way of life, my father suggested a more direct form of protest:

Everybody from the community should go hunting. All the hunters should go hunting at the same time. Once they have charged and imprisoned, the women, and including the children of the community should then follow suit. The government will be then challenged to build prisons to accommodate all of us.

Colonial authorities and their policy relating to *Maskéko* hunting and fishing are the most obvious forms of official surveillance and monitoring of our traditional activities. Aboriginal-State tensions were actualized by the helicopter flights by the Manitoba Department of Natural Resources, in the 1980's. Thus being *Maskéko* was subject to surveillance as an additional form colonial intervention.

### **His healing practice**

Truth in the Euro-Western worldview is validated through an adherence to strict codes of 'objective' processes. The task assigned to science then is to filter out irrational values and practices. In terms of discourse it is about "exclusion and inclusion" in schema where "...some things can be said and some things cannot" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffins, 2004: 72). In terms of "positivist science" adherence, an opposing standard is considered of a "superstition" nature as it does not "concur with 'truth'" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffins, 2004: 72). For Bastien "Rationality, on the other hand, denies the spiritual nature of knowledge and sacrifices the wholeness of

human beings” (2005: 105). As in the *Maskéko* world view, medicine is associated with spiritual power (Waldram, Herring & Young, 2004: 100). For Aboriginal people our way of perceiving and knowing is then situated in competing circumstances to that of Euro-Western science.

The medicine as a specialized field in Aboriginal culture is an intersection of a distinct Indigenous definition, spirituality and concept of power. In healing practices Charles informed me that there was not one individual who was able to master all that was required in the use of medicine. According to him, and concurred by Waldram, Herring & Young, there were different categories of healers that possessed specialized healing abilities (2004: 103 – 104). In that respect, there were no all-knowing medicine people or the stereotypical Medicine Man. Native American theologian and academic Tinker agrees and writes:

Indeed, different medicine people have different gifts and work with different spirits and hence have different sorts of power to accomplish different kinds of healing and helping. A healthy and holistic Indian community needs a full variety of these special people in order to survive (2004: 75).

The use of medicines was a specialized field. Medicine in *Maskéko* thought encompasses knowing the physical qualities of what is considered therapeutic and acknowledging the spiritual realm. Medicine as synonymous with power is acknowledged through ceremonies and prayers. This included giving recognition to the Creator for the gift of medicine (Tinker, 2001: 43). Acquiring such knowledge is complex, specific in application, and required years of dedication. A depiction I translate from *Iihimowin* to English, as *Kéhté-yatis* Charles Qeskekapow expressed the use of medicine. He shared:

How much medicine do we administer to someone? Do we give quarter of a medicine, or do we give half or do we administer the full amount?

If we use only a quarter, then perhaps that would not be sufficient to heal the individual. In that case, should we then use half, but we are not certain, and if we use the full quantity of medicine then perhaps the individual may suffer from an overdose making them sicker or they may die.

How much water do we use? Do we use a quarter full of water, do we use half full of water or do we use a full container of water to dilute the medicine? Again, if we use a quarter full of water, then that person may experience an overdose, making them sicker. A half a container is not for certain, and using a full container of water may render the medicine ineffective due to over dilution.

Once we know how much medicine to administer and the correct amount of water to use, where do we find the medicine? Do we find the medicine on the land? Do we find it in the water, or do we find it in a body of an animal?

Once we have established which medicine we need, we must also ask, is that the lone medicine we require, or do we need a combination of medications? If so, where do we find the other medicine, do we find it on the land, do we find it in the water, or do we find it in a body of an animal.

Again, once we know all that, what type of ailment is the person afflicted with.

Are the eyes affected, or is the blood, or the torso of the individual, we must be fully aware of these to make a full and informed diagnosis.

Other than its therapeutic quality, medicine in the Aboriginal society confers to the ability to overcome and subdue the willpower of other people, which is a clear violation of its intended revered and respectful use (Tinker, 2001: 91). That may include its use to increase a hunter's and trapper's take of fur. According to Charles, the use of medicine to capture animals is considered unethical and a form of deviance. It cheated the animals of their gift of life and undermines the cultural code of respect accorded to all living things. In one story, he told of trappers that treated their snowshoes with medicine that induced animals to follow the course of their trails. In this way, the trapper had only to set traps on their trails. There is also the use of medicine to seduce other individuals. It is an all-consuming obsession, as Louis Bird describes it, "even if the person has to walk on water" (Bird, 2005). In my personal understanding, once the power of the medicine has dissipated the victim of the seduction will have an equal level of disdain for their seducer. Expressed as "witchcraft" in a distinct definition to that of Christian value, Tinker states, "Those who use their power to control other humans are evil in Indian sense" (2001: 91). Similarly it has been suggested, competitors in a sporting event can increase their ability to win

by drinking a concoction to enable them to outperform their competitors. Regardless of application, the misuse of medicine is referred to as *macapacihlawan* [malevolent application].

Traditional healing is an ongoing practice in the community. I once witnessed the arrival of an individual at our home that he had healed, bearing a gift for him at Christmas time. Situated in a cultural definition, this visit and presentation of the gift signified the ongoing socio-cultural bond between the beneficiary of traditional healing and healer. I have personally heard the testimonial of another beneficiary of my father's healing practices. In this testimonial, my brother, George F. Qeskekapow, and his wife Beatrice Qeskekapow, share an incident that occurred when they were traveling with our father to the trap line.

I asked him if Beatrice could accompany us for a trip to the trap line. Doubtful, he asked me if she was carrying<sup>§</sup>. Informing him she was not he agreed with our proposition. The travel was particularly strenuous and on arrival at the camp she informed me that she was hemorrhaging. Concerned, I informed our father of her condition.

Upon informing him of her condition, he asked me "Did she drop anything?"<sup>\*\*</sup> Returning to her, I reiterated the same to which she indicated had she had not.

Having related this information to him he departed from my company as if to go dream. He later came forward and produced a liquid at hand he instructed me to administer to my wife.

Content on the reliability of the medicine consumed the night before would bring relief we were both anxious to learn that the hemorrhaging had not ceased by that next morning.

Though appearing concerned when confronted with this news the old man seemed hesitant to prescribe another dose of the medication; deciding instead to provide more time. Fortunately, to the relief of my wife the blood loss ended later that day.

To her express her gratitude Beatrice instructed "Go thank that old man." Though after communicating her thankfulness, Charles, instructed me, "Go advise her to thank the One that placed the medicine on this earth" (personal communication, n.d.).

This testimonial provides many insights into our way of life, in terms of our beliefs, social relationships, and the value of our healers. Firstly, both contributors to the above statement

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<sup>§</sup> pregnant  
<sup>\*\*</sup> aborted

have faith in the potency of the medicine that was given them. Secondly, it reveals a social process McLeod refers to as the “Cree socio-linguistic etiquette” - that being the prohibition of direct communication between in-laws (2005: 14) which was negotiated with my brother acting as intermediary. Thirdly, the *Máskeko* attribute their healing practices to the spiritual which does not require direct examination of a patient (Bird, 2005: 98). Lastly, as an expression of his belief, by the refusal to entertain his own actions as the source of healing, Charles demonstrated that he, as a devoted and humble healer, viewed himself as a mediator for the Creator.

### **Mother’s teachings**

My mother too continues to reside in my memory. She as my father constant companion, she accompanied him on trapping and hunting expeditions in her earlier years. Sharing a common attachment to tradition as my father, she had faith in the healing properties of our medicines, attachment to land, and the appreciation for ‘real food’. Like my father, she provided me with great insights and gave me support when I needed it; yet she too was not spared the adversity of being colonized. She was a recognized and respected *Kéhté-yatis* of the community, though she may not have been accepted as an orator or pursued life to occupy a public office. She demonstrated through her dedication to years of service to her place of employment, Pinawachi Personal Care Home, in addition to making a substantial economic contribution to her family, that, she was as an exceptional role model for the many people who knew her. Her strength of will is brought to mind by her daughter and my sister, Phyllis Queskekapow, who witnessed our mother walk the federally funded dusty gravel roads that existed in our home community, prior to their paving in 1994. She often confronted blizzard like conditions, or departed home before the onset of daybreak to make it to work when no prearranged ride could be secured, as it was the custom. Often accepting a ride on her way to work, extended through

the goodwill and consideration of the local people, she made it to work, only to repeat the cycle again at the end of her work day. Her hard work and dedication are acknowledged here.

The issue of residential schools is one that has deep implications for Aboriginal people; as my research uncovered, it was the lived experience of my mother. While I was working in the archives, I had inadvertently uncovered records of her life. They indicated she was only 8 years old when her medical examination was completed to determine her eligibility for entry into one of these schools.

My mother did not speak much of her experience at the school, only that she attained a grade 3 level education. Nonetheless, her words contributed to my cultural development, and my identity.

In her teaching she shared the following: lines that run perpendicular to the length of the body exist as outlines of fingers belonging to that of Jesus Christ. She traced their origins to a time when Jesus Christ himself picked up this particular fish and bestowed a blessing upon it. Her words reveal how what was perhaps represented as immutable colonial principles pertaining to the gospel have been contextualized into *Maskéko* thought. In effect what was considered foreign to the local population had been nuanced and enriched to represent truth in *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*. That demonstrates the strength of cultural values, their ability to accommodate and cultivate rather than suppress.

### ***Kísawatisiwin* [generosity]**

Yet, within my parent's lifetime the community customs and values continued to be observed. Most are based on *Maskéko* values. They include the observance of generosity and living according to our spiritual values.

Sharing is a spiritual act. In his published source, *Custer died for your sins* (1988) Deloria wrote “Indian religion taught that sharing one’s goods with another human being was the highest form of behavior” (121). Deloria places emphasis on distinguishing the material aspect of “giving” to the Aboriginal concept of “sharing” in stating “Several years ago a Roman Catholic priest on the Wind River reservation complained bitterly about the Indian custom of sharing as being “un-Christian” because it distributed the wealth so well no middle class could be established” (1988: 121). In Canada, the Hawthorn Report concluded that the Aboriginal concept of sharing was an impediment to inoculating the Aboriginal people with the Euro-Western ideology of materialist liberalism and for that reason had to be stamped out (Canada, Government of, 1966: 121).

In *Kinoséwi Sípihk*, the act of sharing is expressed through the concept of *kísawatisiwin* [generosity]. Charles provided this observance in the following manner:

I remember some time ago, when a person died in the community, people got together to help the grieving family. They shared food, money, and the other things they could give. Sometimes I saw people go to all the homes. They carried three bags with them. People gave lard, milk, flour, meat, and many other things. When the three bags had been filled, they were taken to the home of the grieving family. Sometimes, people gave money to help buy coal oil and other things which were needed (Apetagon, 1995 p.).

A similar testimonial by another local member attested:

While trapping was restricted mainly to winter and fishing mainly to summer, hunting was a year-round source of food. Moose was the favourite and the meat was distributed among the family and friends of the hunter who killed it. Distribution was community-oriented. Meat was also presented to those who were ill or otherwise unable to provide for themselves. For anyone to ask to buy some was unheard of. Distribution of the meat was not viewed as a “handout,” but as a natural part of sharing and caring for friends, and relatives (Bird, 1984: 7).

In my experience, people continually demonstrate this fundamental *Maskéko* value by giving money in fund raising activities to support grieving families. That value was perpetuated by both

my father and mother by encouraging the family members to give what we may have and to share. Similarly, the people of the community continue to give their time and effort to assist their fellow community members that may be experiencing trials and bereavement.

In my father's *onakatamakéwina* [teachings], the giving or donation of food or any valued article, demonstrated their generosity, and the contributor can expect to be the recipient of *sawéyihákosiwin* [(“blessedness”, (Wolvengrey, Vol. 1, 2001: 288)]. The blessing may come in any form of good fortune in a hunting trip, or a display of kindness from others. In my lived experience, this belief is still faithfully observed by many members of the community.

I had learned much from my parents. They were decent people guided by the values of the previous generation. They were people that still held reverence for the values the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* had taught them in their youth. Those values taught them about respect and sharing. Turner argues, “Indigenous philosophies...are essential practices for preserving our indigeneity” (Turner, 2006: 119). Though those acts of humanity remain obscured by acts of colonialism and oppression, nonetheless they remain a reflection of our humanity.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### HISTORY

#### *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina*

The transmission of traditional knowledge and cultural values is complex of interaction and instructions during an individual's lifetime. For Aboriginal it not an impartial process rather "it's more a way of life" (Nadasday, 2003: 63). In my attempt to situate the *Kéhté-yatis* in *Kinoséwi Sípíhkí*, and profile the concept of *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina*, I have considered the content of the archival literature, the complex of interaction and comments that originate from the community, and my personal experience. Having drawn from the *Maskéko* perspective, I render the definition of *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* [what the Elder leaves behind] as an exchange of cultural values and practices that pertain to our ceremonies, teachings, both sacred and secular stories, and forms of knowledge that have been transmitted from one generation to the next from a *Kéhté-yatis*.

The tremendous value of a *Kéhté-yatis* is evident by the respect they are addressed in our community of *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*, and Aboriginal communities in general. In their work, after numerous discussions and meetings with various Aboriginal groups and individuals, The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, reflect this observance extended to most Aboriginal communities. They affirm:

The most powerful message heard by the Commission was that Aboriginal people see the Elders as a contemporary link to traditional knowledge. Elders are the keepers of the traditional culture. They know the teachings of the ancestors – the ceremonies, rituals, and prophecies, the proper way to behave, the right time for things to happen, and the values that underline all things. Elders are essential to the perpetuation and renewal of the traditional way of life (Royal Commission 1996: 118)

Contact with the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* is of critical importance to the youth in *Kinoséwi Sípihk*. It is through contact that a process of transmitting cultural ethics and protocols occur. This socialization principle may involve storytelling and engaging in various physical activities such as learning to live on the land, and sports activities (personal comm. C. Queskekapow, n.d.).

In the process of teaching or telling story it was proper to listen contently. In the local custom of the *Kinoséwi Sípihk (i)niwak* it is considered a demonstration of respect to sit quietly and attentively when a *Kéhté-yatis* is speaking. The people of the community, when reflecting on this social value reiterate, “If your Elder was talking, you didn’t jump in with questions or interruptions. That was not allowed” (Apetagon, 2005: 47). This allows the *Kéhté-yatis* to concentrate on the delivery of a teaching. It is considered a fundamental *Máskeko* collective learning process (Graveline, 2004: 145).

The term, *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* I have determined is, firstly, rooted in the stem words, *kéhté* meaning of, old age, and secondly, *yatis* is understood to mean one’s life. Together, these words evoke the understanding the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* are of the generation that have lived an ‘old life’ and with this ‘old life’ they have accumulated *Anisiñ(i)niw kiskéyihitamowin* [Cree knowledge] and wisdom. Likewise, *onakatamawéwina* literally means, what one leaves behind. In its whole, *Kéhté-yatis onakatamawéwina* suggests the accumulated knowledge and experience *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* endow with us during their lifetimes is the embodiment of their heritage that extends from the previous generations to the future generation.

The passing away of a *Kéhté-yatis* and the following period are opportunities to reflect on their teachings and stories they shared with us during their lifetime. Death in the *Anisiñ(i)niw* [Cree] tradition is understood as *nakataskéw*. Wolvengrey defines *nakataskéw* as, “s/he leaves the earth behind, s/he departs the world, s/he dies” (p. 120). For Deloria, as opposed to the Euro-

Western anxiety toward death, an Aboriginal worldview suggests “Rather than fearing death, tribal religions see it as an affirmation of life’s reality” (2003: 174). In the local beliefs death is not an end but the commencement of a journey to a new plain of existence the *Maskéko* refer to as *Kischi kisikoh* [the Great Daylight].

When in the presence of an individual in the process of passing on to the next realm we are encouraged to be strong and to remain quiet and to show restraint. This is a way of assuring the individual of our self-reliance, and that they may depart and rest in peace. To cry out or create a disturbance is to prolong their stay upon this plane – to some people it is a selfish appeal. It is a belief that when it is a person’s time to depart we will grant them their peace or in our language we say *ta anwásihik* meaning to rest in serenity.

I have observed in the community, the people are reminded to hold fast to the *onakatamakéwina* of a deceased individual. Their teachings are invoked to offer solace to the bereaved in that they have gained much knowledge and wisdom from that personal connection they shared with that individual.

Relationships with *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* are acknowledged as spiritual kinship. As noted by Berkes, as an ongoing demonstration of respect for a *Kéhté-yatis* that has departed this earth, tobacco may be placed at their gravesite (2008, p. 106 – 107), or other show of remembrance. It is not a mere act of tribute; it is an acknowledgement their *ocaca* [soul] lives on.

In *Maskéko* [People of the Muskeg] belief *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* may materialize in our dreams. This is an acknowledgement that they remain responsive to our daily hardship, and existence. In our language we refer to this as *é-pé-tawápénáké-t*, meaning the visitation. These visitations serve as sources of comfort having been in the presence of the departed, or for the earth bound individual it may provide as sources of insight or instruction especially if there is direct verbal

exchange. In instances where there is exchange or directive imparted, we refer to those as *wítamakwíswín* [the foretelling] to which we may act on.

*Onakatamakéwina* are invoked as a strategy to maintain a normative *Maskéko* social order. As an ongoing respectful connection to the departed, people may refer to those *onakatamakéwina* by simply stating “*ekosi ka kí pasínákátáwít*” literally meaning that is how they left if for me, or “*ekosi ka kí pasiwapámák ekota*” meaning this is how I saw them do it. Firstly, on those occasions, people may simply joke about what they have learned from the individual during their life. The humour in this context is expressed as a form of endearment not as a form of disrespect or to intentionally devalue the accumulated knowledge that has been bestowed upon the individual. Second, people may invoke *onakatamakéwina* to serve as correction in what could be deemed improper behavior, or antisocial behavior. The intent there is by invoking the status of deceased individual’s teaching to garner or lend direction and influence to existing social tensions.

One of the key methods of transmitting *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* was by means of the oral tradition. The oral tradition is a common conduit for the people in the community to communicate matters of cultural significance. The Task Force researching Aboriginal language concurs, “The tradition of oral recounting in the language of a people is the special preserve of Elders and other uniquely qualified individuals whose sacred responsibility is to preserve and hand down the stories that reflect the distinctiveness of the people and the relationship between the people and the places and events that define them” (2005: 23). To provide an additional insight for this work the report, in drawing from the Aboriginal consciousness, continues:

Our tradition thus has many purposes. Among others, they may be to educate the listener for a moral purpose, to pass on aspects of culture through stories or sacred songs, or perhaps to establish a claim of a family or clan to a territory or

social authority or prestige. In keeping with the structures of our many languages, the oral tradition does not isolate, it establishes and maintains important relationships and passes them on intact to future generations. For this reason our oral traditions has survived as a separate way of describing the human experience of this world even as we have survived as separate people (2005: 24 & 25).

### ***Maskéko history***

Our definition and the Euro-Western engineering our existing concept of community are presented in our historical context. It is outlined for the purpose of this work in the following way: 1) our Creation story 2) *ka kí maci-wícik* [the time people were evil] 3) *Kayásk ininiwak* [People of the recent past] 4) contemporary or the ‘modern age’, for the *Máskeko* it is the Age of Colonialism that refined our sense of community. In narrative form it is the retelling of our collapse from that of socio-economic self-reliance to the colonial counter, and to our eventual relegation to life in the reserve. The concept of generational cycles is utilized in this retelling to avoid the oppressive Euro-Western construction “that societies move forward in stages of development” to denote “progress” (Smith, 2006: 30).

In a story told by *Kéhté-yatis* Louis Bird, humans came to inhabit this world when Ehep the Giant Spider lowered a man and woman from the sky in a basket. In our Creation story it is said this first pair of human fell to the ground after contravening a word of caution from Ehep. With that violation they were condemned to subsist by their drudgery while in this world (2007: 17 & 18). That event represents the time of Creation, in our language is referred to as *Kayask*, meaning eons in time, by my father (personal comm. n.d.). The story represents the introduction of humans on to this land. Within our local dialect *Kayask* in Aboriginal myth serve to define “...our place in the world as human beings” (Tinker, 2001: 33). *Ka kí maci-wícik* presented here in detail is a time when *Maskéko* spiritual beliefs, and continues to serve as a basis of our current beliefs, determined our means of subsisting on this land, and dictated socio-economic patterns of

distribution of material goods in the society. The representation of *Kayásk ininiwak* is approximated to commence from the day of the signing of Treaty 5, in *Kinoséwi Sípihk*, to the 1940's, and from then on to the present it signifies the modern age. These 4 intervals represent our existence and occupancy on this land. The periods are detailed in our oral tradition – an element of *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina*. I elaborate within the frames of the subsequent narration:

One spring day, I had erected a tipi-like enclosure out of tarpaulin material outside our home to smoke fish, a skill I had acquired by watching and assisting *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Queskekapow process fresh whitefish by a similar method, when my father made his way outside in his wheelchair. Seated at the landing of the backdoor steps, and upon seeing my crudely fashioned structure, he commented that it was reminiscent of something people would have constructed back in our history. He referred to that period as *ka kí maci-wícik* [the time people were evil]. This period was prominent in the storytelling and the retelling of our history by my father.

Evil in our historical sense does not readily negotiate linguistically in the cross-cultural context. In defining its cultural form and context it is useful to differentiate evil from the Judeo-Christian religious attachments which is analogous to *sin* and the need for salvation, and redemption (Tinker, 2004). From my insights in the *Maskéko* consciousness, the definition of evil is layered of meanings. In our cultural perspective, *is pi kakimacawicik* as in its stem *maca* - meaning “evil” (Wolvengrey, Vol. 1, 2001: 83), relates to malicious intent. Yet, it can suggest a person is gifted with acute cognitive skills and a shrewd temperament. With their abilities they are viewed as individuals possessing the uncanny ability to negotiate shrewd transactions, or perhaps swindle a subordinate with the use of mind-power. Like most indigenous people, this

form of power is contextualized as existing as a form of “spiritual energy” (Fisher, 46: 2005). It is in this period in our history when reliance on our spiritual beliefs was paramount. The individuals that particularly gifted with this power were selected to fill many central roles. They served as leaders, protectors, healers and, spiritual guides of the group they co-existed with.

It is, and was, well understood by the colonizer that the annihilation and displacement of Indigenous collective values was an effective means of furthering colonization. Once the critical aspect of a strong and viable community are successfully obliterated, or discredited the rest of the members of the community are left vulnerable to the sway and influence of the colonizer. It is a process that denies them their meaningful contact and connection to their heritage. Within the early assimilationist campaigns much of this had to do with refiguring the Indigenous people to the Euro-Western image, supposedly making them more fully human (Miller, 2004: 217). Specifically, in the experience of the Aboriginal people this meant the removal of the *Mitéw* (Miller, 2004: 218). The loss of the *Mitéwak* affected the continuance of traditional knowledge, traditional leadership, healing practices, oratory text, and the spiritual values (Granzberg & Queskekapow Part 1, 1999: 8).

In *Kinoséwi Sípíhk* “Shamans were always the ones who dealt with the new and the future and the mediation between worlds”, state Granzberg and Queskekapow (Part 1,1999: 5). The removal of their influence ended an episode in *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*, the assertion of colonial power and influence progressed further. However, today *Mitéw* practices continue to be, however to a lesser degree, observed, talked about in story and in conversations, and acted upon. They demonstrate the resilience of culture, and its ability to bring forward items of the past and situate them in colonial present.

As *Kinoséwi Sípíhk (i)niwak* our history is revealed through our local legends, and oral stories and that of Euro-Western means. Euro-Western based archeological data theorize that the *Maskéko* people are derived of the Selkirk culture that prevailed in the northern region six hundred years ago (Ray, 1974: 3-5). Archival records reveal that the Anishinaabe ventured onto to the Lake Winnipeg and north eastern territory with the introduction of the fur trade in the region (Brightman, 2002: 265). Lytwyn places their arrival in the 1500s (2002: 42). Historical accounts also indicate that in the 1600's, the area where *Kinoséwi Sípíhk* is now situated served as the most northern boundary of the Assiniboine, the same group that now occupies the southern regions of Canada. The Assiniboine are reported to have allied themselves with the northern *Maskéko* people, including the people that would have occupied *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*, within that period. The alliance with the Assiniboine was sustained into the 1700's. The two groups traded guns at York Factory, and engaged in military expeditions, to maintain control of territorial areas against the Dakota to the south, the Dene to the north and the Siksikaitsipowahsin [Blackfoot] further to the west (Ray, 1974: 19 - 21).

The 1800's signing of the Treaty with its promises of continued self-determination was the onset of traumatic changes for the *Kinoséwi Sípíhk (i)niwak*. Like most Aboriginal people in Canada, our *Kimosóm pana* became more reliant on the government seeking and receiving assistance with the signing of Treaty 5. Historian Miller argues that our reliance on the good will of the government diminished our political influence as a group. Miller indicates:

Rather than valuing them as allies and trade partners, Euro-Canadians now saw Indians as obstacles to their own economic development and as people who were becoming dependent economically as a result of their traditional hunting-gathering way of life. As a result the state placed new emphasis from the 1830s onward on relieving First Nations of their traditional lands by treaties, establishing them on relatively small reserves, and subjecting them to a barrage of efforts through evangelization, education, and agriculture to change their way of life so that it would resemble that of Euro-Canadian (Miller, 2004:15).

For McLeod, the reserve system represented a “spatial exile” – the separation of Aboriginal people from the land (McLeod, 2007: 55). For our ancestors, life the reserve was to affect the *Maskéko*, as a land-based people, in very philosophical ways.

Up to the 1940’s, existing as relatively independent family groups, the *Maskéko* in the region adhered to the migration patterns that corresponded to seasonal cycles, as previous generation would have done. Beyond aimless wanderings, these strategies enabled the *Maskéko*, to both secure a living with the trapping of furbearing animals for the fur trade, to and to gain access to resources that were vital for their survival. It was a practice that retains its value into the early 1920s (Granzberg & Qeskekapow Part 1, 1999: 4).

Many families occupied various regions in the vicinity, where *Kinoséwi Sípíhk* is now situated, at the time. Family groups lived north of the community in an area known as Whiskeyjack. From there on, other family groups positioned themselves all along what is presently referred to as the Nelson River. While others occupied the area where the community is presently located, more people lived south of what is known as *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*. In this instance, *Kinoséwi Sípíhk* is a tributary that courses west and terminates with its juncture with the Nelson River, south of the community (C. Qeskekapow, personal comm. n.d.). Within these family groupings presided in the *Máskeko* consciousness, a distinct definition of community we defined as *ih táwin*.

*Ih táwin* resonates in the *Maskéko* perspective as an abstract form of land tenure. It is of connections that extend beyond that of Eurocentric legal expressions and abstractions of ownership of land as personal real estate (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffins, 2004: 180). In our language, and in our consciousness *ih táwin* is defined as “abode, place of residence; existence” (Wolvengrey, 2001: 37). It has its basis in relationships: social kinships, our connection to our

ancestors, and maintaining access and use of the land that we have occupied for generations. Indigenous writer and academic Cajete argued “Tribal people share in a deep and abiding relationship to place” (2000: 91). In that way ‘existence’ is an expression of holistic way of living.

Establishing a relationship was a way of living in *Maskéko* thought. Cajete provides the following insight of *ihotáwin* from an indigenous perspective:

Relationship is the cornerstone of Tribal community; the nature and expression of community are the foundation of Tribal identity. It is through community that Indian people come to understand the nature of their personhood and their connection to the communal soul of their people. The community is the place where the forming of the heart and face of the individual as one of the people is most fully expressed. Community is the context in which Indian person comes to know the nature of relationships, responsibility, and participation in the life one’s people (Cajete, 1994: 164).

In the traditional sense, community subsisted as a site of learning (Cajete, 1994: 164). It is where we learnt our language, and continued to nurture the retention of our language. We learned to identify the world around us in our communities. The animals were given names through our dreams and by their features. I asked my father, how did people come up with names for things? He told me “Through people’s dreams” (personal communications, n.d.). That sort of learning defined our way of knowing, how we gained knowledge and of our history. As demonstrated above, those elements are vital constituents of our definition of community, we identify as in our *Iníhímowin* as *ihotáwin*.

Movements on the land were reliant on local knowledge that had been accumulated throughout the generations, and careful consideration. In practice, relocation procedures to winter settlements were well planned and coordinated in late autumn. Travel in that period was made by boat. Arrival at the winter home meant awaiting the onset of winter (Apetagon, Vol. 2, 1995: 7). In the community we refer to this practice as *pinonswin* [awaiting the winter]. Over the

winter, the trapper, with the assistance of members of the family, engaged in the trapping and skinning of the animals. Those families returned once to the community over Christmas to trade their furs, and returned to the forest after the holiday season. There was another relocation of people that occurred in the spring. This we refer to as *sekonswin* [awaiting the spring]. That meant to travel on to the land in late winter and to return right after the ice broke from the waterways. Travel at that stage was again accomplished by boat. Much of this travel on our land relied on knowledge that had endured for generations by either sitting and listening, or the undertaking a journey under the guidance of a *Kéhté-yatis*.

The 1940's was a pivotal period for the *Kinoséwi Sípihk(i)niwak*. Up to that time, the concept of community had been fluid, and consisted of a tradition practice of shifting occupancy to meet their need. That ended with the introduction of the family allowance system and that of a “welfare society” (Buckley, 1993:76). For families to qualify for the benefits offered under this program the families had to enroll their children in schools. Milloy indicates the stark reality that was thrust upon the local Aboriginal families in the following way:

The Family Allowance, introduced in 1945, was a monthly income supplement issued to parents by the federal government on various conditions including compliance with provincial regulations. The Department was quick to appreciate its potential for “encouraging Indian parents to send their children to school regularly” given that it would represent an important income supplement for Aboriginal families. It, in fact, recognized and exploited family vulnerabilities. Local staff were reminded in 1947 that a child's failure to attend meant that the Department could suspend the allowance (p. 205).

To meet the compulsory requirement families remain in the community on a year round basis, to abandon life on the land. Once free to pursue trapping as a family-oriented venture, the husbands in the community were left to themselves to continue trapping (Granzberg and Queskekapow Part 1, 1999: 2).

With the altered lifestyle the family's socio-economic structure was impacted and transference of *Ańisiń(i)niw kiskéyihitamowin* was impeded. In that way the legislation deprived the parents and extended family of their traditional roles as educators, storytellers, and leaders (McLeod, 2007: 58). The children in the community to attend school meant to be subjected to the "European notions of utility, rationality, discipline of truth" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffins, 2004: 73).

The implication of this policy reverberates in our family. With his homestead situated a substantial distance from the government run school, *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Qeskekapow had to abandon his home. He had earlier selected to situate his allotment of land awarded to him under the war veteran's act in the north end of *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*, known now as the mostly abandoned York Village, in our language we identify as *kisihpihkahma* [where the lake ends]. The family relocated to Rossville to be within walking distance from the federally mandated, and missionary administered school.

Though abandoned many years ago, that home, now only remnants of boards to indicate where it once stood, remains a permanent fixture in our familial memory. My parents and older siblings often spoke of the area that was once their home. During one of our conversations, I asked my mother why the family abandoned their home that was once located at York Village. In her quiet demeanor she replied that they had to relocate so the children could attend school, otherwise their failure to comply meant the government would withhold family support payments (personal comm. n.d.). The relocation having occurred prior to my birth, the response evoked my personal dismay and sorrow.

From the time of the fur trade and onward to the 1930s the threat of disease was ever-present in the community. With *Kinoséwi Sípíhk* existing as a major centre in fur trade, the

enterprise unfortunately became as leading source of waves of pathogens that were lethal to the local population. Lacking antibodies to resist foreign diseases, and coupled with the inauguration of new confining communal arrangement contributed further to the spread of infections.

Countless the people succumbed to the ailments (Waldram, Herring and Young, 1995: 265).

The processions of those catastrophic events deeply impacted the community. Disease had intergenerational implications for *Kinoséwi Sipiik*. The ensuing deaths resulted in the loss of key individuals that possess both crucial skills and knowledge. The work of Bird, a student working on his research paper on Native economic development, uncovered the more recent disastrous epidemics in his interviews with local community members. One interview included my uncle, Nathaniel Queskekapow, and Leonard McKay:

Diphtheria and smallpox wiped out whole families because Indian had little resistance to the alien diseases. “Many of the industrious people were decimated; whole families were wiped out,” says McKay. Nathaniel Queskekapow supports this, and says that people used to stand at the doors of their homes and shout out the names of the relatives who died, and many died each day. The significance of disease is twofold: diphtheria and tuberculosis epidemics in the 1930’s killed off many of the most industrious people--men and woman who might have helped carry out the traditional ways. Also, some families were left without fathers to provide for them, leaving the wife and children dependent on other resources, which later to be government (Bird, 1984: 12 and 13)

In the local lexicon, those harsh periods are commemorated in our memories as *ka ki nipinawa*, literally translated to as the period of the dying. In his reflection on one of these tragic episodes, my father spoke of the people’s resolve to venture out to surrounding locality to assist the survivors. He reiterated, “People organized themselves into search parties to locate and to provide critical care to the stricken in the outlining areas”. On the period he shared, “The parties encountered scenes of lifeless bodies lying on the ground in the camps.” According to him, in

one remarkable event, a party found a small baby, as a lone survivor, still suckling on her dead mother's breast. From that carnage the small child was able to survive to adulthood.

Tales of the epidemics that swept through the area still dwell in the collective memory of the *Kinoséwi Sípihk(i)niwak*. I recall as a boy, during one of our duck hunting outings, my brother pointing out an island that served as final resting place for many of our former community members. Today we know that island as Tait's Island. Knowing of these sites is important to the community as they represent the presence of our ancestors.

Scholarly literature indicates within the Euro-Western scientific community death from disease was associated with a theory of localized weakness in Canadian history. Waldram, Herring and Young indicate:

The idea of race was the predominant way of accounting for the understanding human biological variation in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Racial susceptibility to specific diseases but one aspect of the supposition that humanlike could be classified into biologically distinct units on the basis of fundamental, observable, heritable characteristics. The inability to mount an effective immune response to particular diseases was one of the features thought to distinguish 'primitive' from 'civilized' races (1995: 263).

Existence of such as mindset has perpetuated the confiscation of Aboriginal land and the relegation of Aboriginal people onto reserves so as to serve as preserves of disappearing races.

In the local history, accounts reveal a correlation of disempowerment, and that of being *Maskéko*. At its most blatant form, White privilege and racism determined the roles of *Kinoséwi Sípihk (i)niwak*. In the context of colonialism discourse this exemplified the pervasive binary of the colonized, and the colonizer. In the construction of privilege, colonialism provides power and influence to the colonizer, and at the same time dehumanizes the Other (Smith, 2006: 26 & 27). Life on the reserve was then the domain of the oppressor, and the predominant site of a struggle

to overcome the oppressive control of the empire. The order of encounter with the privileged, ‘White’ colonizer is shared by local *Kéhtë-yatis* Bill Arthurson, who pointed out:

The way we were raised, you didn’t call a white man by his first name, always ‘Mr.’ or ‘Mrs.’ The way mom taught us, when you’re in a crowd or function, when a Mr. or Mrs. walked in, you got up and gave them your seat. If they were a white person. My mother always felt that way. Before my mother was married, she worked for Mr. Walters, the Anglican minister. The people in the white society had servants, maids and cooks and everything, and my mother was a house maid. My mother basically had to keep the house in order, make the beds. They also had night watchman who stoked the furnaces (Krotz, 1995: 54).

White imperialist society in the community was signified by the presence of the Indian Agent, medical staff, missionaries, conservation officer, and law enforcement officers. Sustained on the notion of racial supremacy, white authority figures were able to approve of, and decided on what constituted “civilized” initiatives. Local *Kéhtë-yatis* Fredrick Moore testified to the powerlessness experienced by the *Kinoséwi Sípíhk(i)niwak* in his recounting of an incident that entailed a plea from the local Chief Menow to a Mr. Morris, a non-Aboriginal government official, Chief Menow requested Mr. Morris to reverse a decision made by a local Indian Agent who refused to assist the community in pursuing a local meat production plant in the community, and amongst other ventures. He stated:

Chief Menow gradually worked towards another request. He asked, “Now, Mr. Morris, I ask you if you can give me two hundred pigs to raise. I could not get any from the Indian Agent.” Mr. Morris could not answer. However, the policeman spoke, “We have two pigs. They eat lots. How can you manage to feed two hundred pigs?” Chief Jacob Menow did not answer. It was clear he could not persuade Mr. Morris. This incident proved that Indian people did not have much voice. The Indian people did not make decisions for themselves long ago; what the Indian agent said was final (Apetagon Vol. 1, 1991: 22 &23).

Each representative of colonial authority maintained a singular purpose and that was to preserve the imperialistic control. The Indian Agent, as the representative of the Department of the Indian Affairs, as the broker, as well as other colonial authority figures assured that colonial order prevailed to maintain conformity to the colonial system, by the colonized (McLeod, 2007: 70).

Currently, 'Whiteness' that permeates colonial society perpetuates the oppression of the Indigenous people. It persists in the schools, media, and daily interactions. Whiteness as the dominating vehicle for speech pervades with the English language, the pervasiveness of individualism, domination of a Eurocentric historiography and 'White' mannerisms. Within this domain, "White privilege allows white people *not* to see race in themselves and to be angry with others who do so" (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008: 6). Cree academic and scholar Graveline encapsulates the difficulties associated with challenging the authority of White imperialism when she wrote:

How can we inspire an altered consciousness in those immersed in individualism, who are known to actively resist learning either the truth of colonial history or the devastation of modern-day racism? White people are often so blinded by their own language and values that they fail to see the pain of others. These blinders are painful to remove, but recovering the "truth" about historical and modern uses of power is necessary for the healing of people and our Mother Earth. Ingrained dominance, and artifact of a culture steeped in Eurocentric mentality, is evident in every institutional location: schools, churches, politics, the military, the media, the family, and the social service state (1998: 112).

I would argue, 'Whiteness' continues to privilege a 'White' individuals to function more proficiently in 'White' dominated institutions that operate within the Euro-Western world view, language and populated by 'White' staff. This privilege allow for ease of access to supports, contacts, and interaction with critical people in power and influence. Conversely, the existing White paradigms are alien to most Aboriginal people that originate from First Nation

communities that are attempting to transition from one ontology, epistemological apparatus, and history to another (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008, 5 & 6).

The existence of the residential school system constitutes a bleak period in of the history of our community. The existences of these institutions represented the most blatant form of oppression, and racism. Several of these federally funded schools were situated and operational in the community (Apetagon Vol. 1, 1991: 16).

Today the schools are overshadowed by their negative impacts however they were not outright rejected by the local people in the past. The one that fits most preeminent in the memory of the locals was located in the part of the community we identify as Rossville. First, the residential school provided opportunities to secure a government funded income. In the case of my father, he secured a short-term contract to haul sand that was then utilized during the construction phase of the school (personal comm., n.d.). Other community members engaged in providing wood to heat the building, and working as school security (Apetagon Vol. 1, 1991). Second, the institution was recognized and accepted as symbols of opportunity for social advancement for the local people of *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*. My father saw the advantages of acquiring a western education with the enrollment in the school. He felt skills development would distance the youth from the challenging, and arduous way of life that he knew (Apetagon Vol. 1, 1991: 55). However, the primary goal of eliminating the local language, local knowledge, and values and the inadequacy of the educational programming (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008: 112) greatly undermined my father's vision for the youth.

Rather than establishing appropriate environments for learning, racism of that period, and goal of assimilation undermined their potential to create opportunities to engage a technological,

and cash driven economy. The residential school system was one of greatest social injustices inflicted upon the *Maskéko*.

Established on the basis of racially biased scientific theories they are equated with that of “cultural genocide” (McLeod, 2007, 58; Bastien, 2005). The inhuman torment in these institutions have been associated with the loss of culture, loss of self-esteem, and internalized anger by the colonized. For countless Aboriginal people these schools entailed months of segregation from family, the denial of our language, and the goals of indoctrination into the Euro-Western world. In a discussion with my brother, he told of the abuse he encountered in the school. In one particular instance, he described how a nun had forcefully grabbed him and lifted him off the floor by his ears as punishment for speaking our language. Yet they were able to engage in their own French and English languages, he reflected (personal comm. n.d.).

As a process of social engineering the residential school system failed the *Kinoséwi Sípíhk (i)niwak*. Their existence reflected the colonizer’s hostility to the Aboriginal spiritual belief likened *Maskéko* to witchcraft and idol worship. Local knowledge was equated as primitive knowledge and western knowledge that of the superior. In this manner, local *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* were constructed as defunct cultural values (Milloy, 2003: 39).

The local oral tradition memorializes the self-reliance, and strength of people existing within the colonial system. My father spoke of families that owned large numbers of cattle they utilized for butter production, and to procure milk for home use (personal comm. n.d.). Treaty 5, signed in 1875 in *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*, clearly states extensive gardening had been undertaken by the local people in that period (Morris, 1991: 345). My brother told me, that people relied on cow manure to enrich the soil in their gardens (personal comm. n.d.). And so the cow came hand in hand with small scale subsistence horticultural practices.

There remains a question as to why local population abandoned the raising of livestock, and gardening. Key information relates to the intervention of a non-resident who informed the *Kinoséwi Sípíhk (i)niwak* their “cattle and potato crops were diseased and therefore should abandon their agricultural pursuits” (personal comm. Queskekapow, N. D.). Charles suggests the community members were misled into abandoning their agricultural activities. He speculated a resulting dependency for food stuff would increase the profit margin of the local grocers (personal comm. n.d.).

Sitting by his bed, as I had done on many evenings, I asked my father why the local people had not spoken out against at the obligatory surrender of their local agricultural activities. He simply stated “There was nobody to speak on our behalf” (personal comm. n.d.). With that response he pulled his bedding around him, and closed his eyes. I sat there as he drifted off to sleep.

In retrospect, I feel that my father understood the value of our land, and its ability to contribute to the well-being of our community. He therefore refused to abandon his goal of transferring his knowledge of horticulture to the youth in the community. He taught me how to grow potatoes. The garden started out as a couple of holes in the ground but was expanded in the following years. His overall concept was to harness a collective community spirit that he knew existed from past experience. His goal included the development of a self-sustainable garden to any interested people, which he pursued under community-based program, at a local community cultural centre where he was employed.

Though detached from the land our community members continued to demonstrate respect for each other. In the words of my brother, George Queskekapow, this was mirrored in the consideration the community members held toward other people’s personal belongings and

of collective concern for each other. My brother explained that in the past people did not have to be concerned about a personal article going missing or being stolen. As an example, he provided two scenarios that centered on the respect of personal property. First, he indicated a person could leave their personal belongs unattended in their boats without concern for them going missing. Similarly, people had no concerns related to locking up their home when they departed for extended periods of time – “People left their doors unlocked” (G. Queskekapow, personal comm. n.d.).

### **Settlement in *Kinoséwi Sípíhk***

The name of the community illustrates three distinct processes in negotiating the tension created by the struggle of the local *Maskéko* population to maintain the vestiges of our cultural heritage, versus those originating from Euro-Western political hegemony, and that of the goal of memorializing Euro-Western imperialism intrusion in the area. First, the need for the assertion of political autonomy within the jurisdiction of the national political arena, lead the leadership of the community to adopt the name Norway House Cree Nation. Second, perhaps because it is a source of abundant supply of fish, the community is known as *Kinoséwi Sípíhk(i)niwak*, within the realm of local dialect. Finally, as a thriving Hudson’s Bay outpost in the 1800’s and its permanent status with the signing of Treaty Five in 1875, today the community is more widely known by its colonial designation of Norway House, Manitoba. This title commemorated a group of Norwegian woodworkers that constructed a fort (Ray, 1974: 128) that still stands today as a provincial historical site to memorialize that period.

The community consists of several identifiable as geographical-based groups from the *Maskéko* viewpoint, as well as colonial designations. Each of the social factions are identified by our local custom, links with the land, naturally occurring features and by imposed external

distinctions that originate from colonial history and legislation. The people that are situated in the main settlement – which is located by the shores of Little Playgreen Lake – are referred to customarily as *Kistapinawíwak* [residents of the community center]. Similarly, the people that settled on fringes of the centre are identified as *Sípihkiwinwak* [the river people] – a direct reference to the river system their homes are adjacent to. And by government policy, the community has the *Owanawíwak* [the Outsiders]. Recently, they have come to self-identify as Métis. They reside on the West Island. In addition, identified as “white care givers” (Buckley, 1993: 20) the community is also home to several non-Aboriginal people that function as teachers, managers, and technical people. The community as a whole is comprised of various Christian denominations which exist with a blend of traditional *Maskéko* spiritual values that withstood the civilizing project. Many families in the community can identify with a Scottish background that dates back to the imperialist fur trade era. The descendants of the fur trade personnel of that period have family names such as Robertson, and Moore. They reside with *Maskéko* names such as Queskekapow, Apetagon, and Muskego.

My family history indicates how identity designation processes were imposed and in some instances arbitrary. My grandfather who was of Scottish descent was awarded treaty, as his home was situated on land that was going to be eventually transferred to reserve land (P. Queskekapow, n.d.). However they were developed, such social construction served to create political and socio-economic distinctions, and undermined the power of collective agency and to relegate selected members to marginality. That meant Métis could not settle in lands that were designated reserve lands. One segment of the population was entitled to treaty money, while the other was excluded. Local *Kéhté-yatis* Lillian McLeod in providing a description of life in community in the mid 1990’s she states:

Norway House is two communities. The reserve side, Norway House First Nation, has a population of about three thousand people. The non-treaty side of the imaginary, though very real, has the one thousand people. These latter people are the Metis or, as they traditionally called themselves, 'the outsiders,' those outside the reserve. Norway House has always been to the mixed-bloods. Its long history as the fur trade centre meant a constant traffic of people coming and going, both European and Native. Metis, is not a term that was ever readily used in Norway House because the local term 'Outsider' did not mean anything negative, and no one was offended by it. People used it to describe themselves. It is only in recent years that the term 'Metis' has come to for and by the people at Norway House" (Krotz, 1995: 39).

Similarly, *Kéhté-yatis* Nellie Munroe speaks of those imposed differences that serve as sources of disruptive distinctions. She indicated:

People don't know what to call themselves; they say, 'I'm Metis now,' but they don't think of themselves that way in the past. Even the word Indian or Native is recent, and now everybody's 'First Nation' or 'Aboriginal.' But in the past, most of the time people were referred to as Swampy Cree or Muskego. We accepted each other as people and we didn't put divisions. People from the north never call us Metis or Native; they call us Swampy or Muskego (Krotz, 1995: 47).

Being of strong will and resolve our *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* have found ways to challenge those disruptions. *Kéhté-yatis* McLeod left the reserve side to marry the person she loved, and had a family. In recent history those divides were further eroded with successful court challenge that dealt with the issue of Bill C-31. The people that had lost their treaty status were once again able to make the reserve their home community.

In historical terms, the gulf experienced by the Outsiders has its roots in the scrip that was issued in the late 1800's by the federal government. Generally, scrip was offered to individuals that were considered 'Half-breed' – they are individuals that were born of Euro-Western and Aboriginal parenthood – to address all unsettled claims they may have had against the government (40). In *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*, this resulted in the 'Outsider'. This process split, and diminished the collective political "voice" that may have existed in the region (Beaumont, 1989:

42). The advancement and assigning of “designer labels” enabled the federal government “to limit and reduce state financial responsibility” to the Aboriginal population (Miller, 2004: 49). With its demise as a centre of commerce and trading, the community was abandoned by the imperialist. The levels of outside influences were yet again amplified with the construction of an airstrip, and the construction of a year round road in the 1970s. With this new infrastructure the community was reopened to a wide array of external changes, travelers, and increased mobility with the introduction of automotive transportation. With increased availability of four-wheeled transport and telecommunication, this is considered the “modernized” period in the community (Granzberg & Queskekapow Part 1, 1999: 20). Regardless of this increase in interaction it did not translate to greater participation in mainstream society and political economy as it did in the early 1800s. As an indicator of a lack of engagement with the education system of and the unreliability of the colonial capitalist economy, the local population was living through a high level of unemployment, substance abuse, low scholastic achievement, and isolation were the established standard in the 1970s (York, 1990).

The historic economic downturn in the community is attributed to political and socio-economic changes. Our *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* speak of the time they were able to fish and trap for a living and were able to support their families. One time a single lynx could bring in a thousand dollars for a trapper in the 1980’s (G. Queskekapow, personal comm.). Through the decline of the fur trade in the late 1800s and a degenerated market for furs resulting from the animal rights movement in the 1980s, the price of fur dropped and markets diminished. Though the local trappers had demonstrated their willingness to operate with what are labeled humane traps that did not stem the tide of economic adversity. Such changes have impacted heavily on the community members. To add to their misfortune, the government did not intervene in a

meaningful way to provide an alternative means of making a living in that period for the trapper (Krotz, 1990: 45 & 46). This has similar outcomes as did the new development in the mid-1970's that led to the economic misfortune for the local population.

In the 1970's, Manitoba Hydro built the Jenpeg dam to harness the Nelson River as a source of low-cost electrical energy. This caused huge disruptions in both social and economic terms for the *Kinoséwi Sípihk (i)niwak* in terms of reliance on fishing, trapping, and the overall integrity of the cultural values and practices in that community to the present. For a land-based people, the hydro development, for 3 consecutive years occurring in the mid-1980s, led to extremely negative consequences for the *Kinoséwi Sípihk (i)niwak*, as York demonstrated:

...there were as many as fifteen suicide attempts each month by the Cree of Norway House. "There's just a feeling that they're being exploited, they're being used, their whole way of life can be overturned so casually," said Allan Ross, chief of the Norway House band. For the first time in centuries, band members realize there is no point in teaching their children the traditions of fishing and hunting. "I cannot pass on what was passed on to me, I can't pass on to my kids and they won't be able to pass it on to their kids," one band member said (1990: 97)

Hydro development has been linked to mercury contamination in the affected waterways – the same waterways Charles and his ancestors had relied for fish sources and *Ańisiń(i)no omícim*<sup>††</sup>.

A study funded by Health Canada in the 1980's determined that Charles had, among others that relied on *Ańisiń(i)no omícim* he referred to as real food, for most of their living years, elevated levels of mercury in his system, and for that reason was advised to alter his diet. The correspondence, dated February 5, 1985, was provided to him by Health and Welfare Canada. The correspondence indicated he had 39.3 ppm at the maximum in May of that year, and 28.6 ppm as the minimum of mercury in his system in September of that year. The letter indicated the recited as "normal range of 0 – 20 ppb" (Health and Welfare Canada, para.. 1, 2 & 5, February 5,

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<sup>††</sup> See appendices for an inventory of *Ańisiń(i)no omícim*.

1985). Undeterred, and unable to find another readily available source of “real food” such as the Nelson River and Little Playgreen Lake provided – though fish may have been acquired further inland but would have resulted in delays and complication to the requirement of additional planning and resources – he continued to consume fish from those sources.

### **Unemployment and poverty**

Buckley reports “In the winter of 1987, sixty percent of the population was on welfare, which has been a way of life for two generations” in the community (1992: 19). Reliance on government transfer payments such as family allowance payments, funding for the operation of the schools and medical units, which was transferrable to local civil sector employment, and monetary support for the administration of the community has remained critical as in the 1970s, and into the 1980s (Krotz, 1990, 25). Yet, for anthropologist Granzberg the community had demonstrated strengths during its most difficult times. For him, it was place “on the move” and as a community that had a “lost generation”, *Kinoséwi Sípihk* was “taking back its birthright and is generating hope and courage” (Granzberg and Queskekapow Part 1, 1999: 22).

Colonial alienation perpetuates the poverty of Aboriginal people. As in the past, as disempowered individuals, our youth are caught in-between the colonial power structures and the traditions and customs that had been discredited and degraded. As a result, White privilege and racism have an absolute bearing on the ability of Aboriginal people to effectively maintain their cultural values and knowledge, and to transmit those critical aspects to the next generation. It has been demonstrated in sociological studies, that poverty is the leading cause of crime and social disintegration in a society. In his work *The Dispossessed*, York (1990) argues “Across Canada, the crime rate tends to be highest in native communities where the unemployment rate is highest, and it tends to decline where recreational programs are provided” (143).

Reaffirming our identity will have its basis on the recognition and the affirmation of the Treaty 5 in *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*. As in most cases, I was sitting in my father's bedroom when I inquired as to what his thoughts were in terms of the hardship that existed in the community. He responded sternly in *Ihíńímowin*, "Promises were broken." The issues surrounding the provisions of the treaties remain contentious in terms of Aboriginal/State relationship. Turner argues, as my father did, that the treaties remain vital legal instruments as a basis for legal relationships with the federal government (2006:137 & 138). As a *kéhté-yatis onakatamawéwina*, recognition of our treaty within political processes, as referred to by the *Kéhté-yatis*, remains a dominant aspiration that is left to this generation to address and pursue.

This chapter demonstrates that the people of *Kinoséwi Sípíhk* had a particular social interactions, and connection to the ecology they inhabited prior to accepting a sedentary way of life. It was foundational on the concept of distributing 'wealth' to sustain its members. In the settlement in a fixed location refined the concept of *ih táwin*. It was a transition that impacted all aspect of the *Máskeko* way of life. Education was the domain of the Euro-Western institutions, Christianity as a leading form religious expression was enforced, and law as a Euro-Western value system was imposed.

Life in the community was of hardship, and disempowerment as the exertion of colonial authority increased following the settlement in the community. It was one that fit the model of "dominance" and the "...establishment of social boundaries between the indigenous population and the European settlers" society (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008: 383). Dependency in 1970s on the government money became a necessity. In that time, the concept of political economy was that of social distress, as reflected in the statistical figures provided, and of that social outcome, that were underlined by local unemployed and lack of engagement in the local government funded

educational programming, and desolation of local *Maskéko* values. Following the collapse of the trapping based economy there was the absence of long-term government strategies to combat the poverty that existed in the community other than securing work at the local social services, and educational sector, into the late 1980s (Buckely, 1993: 19).

## **CHAPTER FOUR:**

### **MODERNISM AND DECOLONIZATION**

#### **Theory of Modernism**

This chapter explores the concept of modernism, rather than the time period, and the implications of colonialism for the Indigenous people of the world. It then narrows that to present strategies to contest oppression to give form to a society that has gone through a process of healing, and has demonstrated a willingness to accommodate diversity, and has gone through its process of healing. That translates to transforming institutional settings that were once the sites of power for the perpetuation of Euro-Western dominance. In the end result, it will be a society that has we can reaffirm of our knowledge, way of seeing, and our represent what history in both our homes, and the institutions situated in *Kinoséwi Sípihk*, and beyond.

The eighteenth century, the Age of Reason most would argue rested on development of science. Within that period, the attainment of ‘truth’ was established through a process of objective methodological observations. As a system of generating knowledge, positivist analysis strived to eliminate and relegate metaphysical elements to the genre of superstition. Through scientific inquiry, natural phenomena were then extrapolated as an outwardly impartial process with the separation of the mind from the body (Smith, 2006: 55). With that concept, the cosmos was transformed into a mechanical model that could be observed and made known through empirical processes (Nadasdy, 2003: 137).

Euro-Western scientific inquiry is associated with the concept of progress, Christianity, and modernism. These were integral elements in successive exploration voyages, mapping, weapons, and the development of the concept of race, industrialization and of particular interest

in this work, the colonization of foreign lands. Their development and acquisition of various forms of knowledge and tools that were result of voyages of conquest and subsequent plundering of distant land became the cornerstone of colonization. To the colonialist the Indigenous people they encountered were the antithesis of modernism and with the absence of Christian doctrines they were not considered human. In those encounters Indigenous peoples were relegated to marginal lands, or subject to slavery, oppressive regulations, and much of their populations were decimated by war or disease via the colonizer (Blaut, 1993).

Over subsequent visits and wars of conquest, Europeans subdued the various Indigenous people they had encountered and laid claim to their lands and resources. Blaut argues much of the economic growth, technological advancements and the acquisition of land by Europeans, as the “European Miracle”, was the nothing more than the outcome of racist ideologies, oppression, and the materialism of the colonizer (1991). Exploration and claiming “the spoils of discovery” overlooked the horrendous consequences for Indigenous populations in writing the Euro-Western “master narrative” (Smith, 2006: 80 & 81).

In early historical narratives of the settlement of Indigenous lands, the colonizer is credited with introducing civilization to an otherwise untamed land that was inhabited by savages. In the case of the Aboriginal people the colonizer viewed the existence of the traditional values and spiritual practices as competing interests with the Euro-Western missionization work and that of modernization - therefore justifying an attempt at their complete obliteration (Smith, 2006; Frideres & Gadacz), 2008). Bastien categorizes the overall objective of the Euro-Western colonization as “cultural genocide”. She outlines “The concept of cultural genocide implies the destruction of a peoples’ belief system, meaning in the case of Indigenous peoples the destruction of concrete kinship relationships that are crucial for the survival of who they are...”

(2004: 30). For the Aboriginal, as the colonized Other, it meant the continued disruption and exploitation by Euro-Western industrialization of traditional lands, institutionalized pedagogy, Christianity, neo-liberal individualism and the relegation to a sedentary existence (Miller, 2004; Milloy, 2003; Bastien, 2005; Boldt, 1993: 168).

Colonization as a complex milieu of overt and subtle social, economic, and political forms of oppression has had a substantial role in the way Indigenous people are represented, and situated in the Euro-Western society and the social consciousness. Colonialism has in fact impacted or implicated the entirety of indigenous personhood, and their societies. Mullaly has contextualized oppression of disempowered people within theoretical framework he terms as a “multiplicity of oppression”, the “intersection” of one or more forms of domination (Mullaly, 2010: 198 – 200). In the history of Euro-Western and Aboriginal encounters, Aboriginal people will attest most of the colonial intrusions have been violent, and unremitting (Chilisa, 2012: 9; Miller, 2004; Milloy, 2003; Bastien, 2005). In our language we would consider their effects as *wanihwin* [pathology associated with the loss of one’s values, culture, and sense of self].

Numerous academic sources seek to articulate and unravel the processes and the implications colonization has had on the lives of the Aboriginal people (Frideres and Gadacz, 2008: 7; Granzberg and Queskekapow Part 1, 1999). Fundamentally, colonization “...as the subjugation of one group by another...It also involved the loss of control and ownership of their knowledge systems, beliefs, and behaviors and subjection to overt racism, resulting in the captive or colonized mind” (Chilisa, 2012: 9). Colonization in postcolonial discourse is the “dislocation” that is actualized both as “psychological and personal” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2004: 75). Similarly, colonialism for Cree academic McLeod is equated with being “exiled” from cultural values, and from traditional lands (2004).

In contemporary colonial discourse, the representation of the Other has come to constitute the crucial underpinnings of postcolonial theory. The Other, Said argues in the text *Orientalism*, is the means the Western can discern or accentuate itself as the essence of “culture” and the “civilized” – excluding the colonized (2). It is by these binaries the Euro-Western can distinguish themselves from the Other he argues. Drawing distinction then serves a means for the West’s assertion of dominance.

For Fanon, colonialism is centered on violence. It is a violence that is directed at the colonized. It is by this means the colonizer maintains their position of dominance and the colonized dependent (2). He further states, “The colonial world is a compartmentalized world” (3). It is premised on an enduring relationship shared by the colonized and colonizer. The eventual outcome of colonialism is to dehumanize the colonized (2004: 158).

### **Outcomes of colonialism**

Colonization is linked to the exercise of power. As a community intrinsically linked to Euro-Western colonization and imperialism, as demonstrated above, *Kinoséwi Sípihk* is a complex of designations, and identities that have been imposed, resisted, and cast into our own cultural frames. “They Came, They saw, They Named, They Claimed” writes Maori academic Smith (2006: 80). As postcolonialist and academic engaged in anticolonial discourse she concurred the assigning of names is a process that in itself is about power: the power to determine what is valid and the power to represent in the Euro-Western colonial context that ability to create identity is to claim to have power over the colonized Other (Smith, 2006; Turner, 2006; Said, 1994). Smith articulates being made ‘known’ is rooted in the traditions borne of the Euro-Western Enlightenment. Embedded in positivist science and the subsequent development of fields of knowledges, propagate “regimes of truths”, and claims of “superiority”. Smith argues

“It is through these disciplines that the indigenous world has been *represented* to the west and it is through disciplines that indigenous peoples often *research* for the fragment of ourselves which were taken, catalogued, studied and stored” (2007, 58 & 59).

Depicted within the Foucauldian lens, the power of discourse perpetuates that position of authority. Postcolonial discourse states:

Those who have power have control of what is known and the *way* it is known, and those who have such knowledge have power over those who do not. This link between knowledge and power is particularly important in the relationship between the colonizer and colonized (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2004, p. 72).

This is then to make aware and identify how power is organized and disseminated.

Euro-Western exercise of violence and power in colonial terms included the elimination of the Indigenous culture. As the marginalized, Aboriginal people were in the past, as well as in the present, were and continue to be locked in a process that denies them their heritage, and dehumanizes them. This was actualized through overt racist labels, poverty, violence, isolation, and that of self-hate (Bastien, 2006) – the internalized “inferiorization” or “internalized oppression” – the assault on one’s own kind (Mulday, 2010: 162 & 163). In addition, with the destruction of their cultural values they become ahistorical people – disconnected vacuums of humanity that are difficult to identify (Boldt, 1998: 16). It is process that led to the rejection of one’s culture and that of their origin. Thus colonization has a substantial role on how the contemporary consciousness of the Indigenous people is formulated.

Internalization of racist attitudes and self-hate are evident as outcomes of disempowerment. It consists of two pillars as identified in colonial discourse. The first are the external encounters which involve the exposure to a new language, unfamiliar surroundings, being instructed by the colonizer, and the imposition of Euro-Western authority. Secondly, “...the notion that tribal cultures are primitive and irrelevant, thus enhancing the hegemonic

power of the colonizer's ideological control" (Bastien, 2006: 152). In colonial discourse, this is analogous to "colonization 'of the mind'" (Smith, 2006: 59). Likewise, other postcolonial theorist contend, "Hegemony is important because the capacity to influence the thought of the colonized is by far the most sustained and potent operation of imperial power in colonized regions" (Ashcroft, Griffins & Tiffins, 2004: 116).

The marginalization of our local knowledge is located in the privileged colonial domain in *Kinoséwi Sípihk*. This was based on my uncle's experience. He himself as a practicing healer, storyteller, keeper of the local knowledge, and as a *Kéhté-yatis* was subjected to disparagement in the Euro-Western school setting, in the 1990's. In his work with anthropologist Granzberg, that resulted in the publication of *Nathaniel Queskekapow: Cree shaman and storyteller*, he specified:

As soon as children go to the white man's school, they become very skeptical of the wisdom of their parents and Elders. Nathaniel laments the fact that when he goes into a class of students at Norway House, many of the children don't listen. When he tells a legend they laugh and call him 'big liar'. Indeed this has come to be a general term applied by many adults to a storyteller...These, children, by in large, are persuaded by school, TV and movies to be infatuated with the west and to look down upon their own traditions as backward and primitive (1999, p. 202).

Colonization is manifested in the community as social disruptions. Local *Kéhté-yatis* Mary Farmer in her interview with local historian, researcher and teacher Apetagon reiterated her concerns for the loss of culturally-centered discipline, and respect that guided her upbringing and relationship with her parents. She states:

Today, the young people are rebellious towards their parents. But when they need something, they run to them for help. However, because many elderly parents received Indian values, they still show their young people those values regardless of the disobedience, disrespect, and the ignorance their children possess (Apetagon Vol. 1, 1991: 32).

The values Elder Mary, spoke about were centered on the acts of generosity. Generosity is an essential spiritual value of *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina*, however her words reflect the values of the past that once maintained order in community had lost their influence. As a colonized people, the disempowering of influence of the colonizing knowledge paradigms exerted tremendous pressure upon the Indigenous youth to detach from their identity.

In addition to the displacement of knowledge and authority, religious, educational, medical, and law enforcement institutions in *Kinoséwi Sípihk* were predominantly the domain of Euro-Western priests, teachers, and medical staff in the 1970's (Robertson, 1991: 57). The instituting of these services are effective measures in the displacement of the *kéhté-yatis*. As outcomes of colonialism they have contributed to the renunciation of Aboriginal cultural values, and perpetuated the alienation from and of our lands (Boldt, 1994; Frideres, 1993).

### **Decolonization**

Postcolonial discourse postulates that it is imperative to begin to locate sites of power. The work of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin reiterate that some of the most effective strategies include identifying how power is articulated in the colonizer and colonized paradigm (63). “Decolonization is the process of revealing and dismantling colonist power in all form” and being resolute to confronting “those institutional and cultural forces that had maintained the colonial power...” (63). These sites of power and influence subjugate us with oppressive paradigms and they rendered us invisible or worse dehumanize us (Smith, 2006).

Decolonization is not the exclusive responsibility of Indigenous people. Kremer, in broadening the opposition to domination, states “Decolonization is not just a challenge for Indigenous people, but just as much for peoples who have consciously and unconsciously

participated in a supremacist and racist system” (Bastien, 2005: 184). It calls for Euro-Western society to acknowledge, and engage their own history of oppressing indigenous people.

In his work, McLeod affirms committing towards establishment of anti-oppressive society includes living in balance of learning from the past, and engaging the present:

The challenge of an enlightened modernity is to create a modern institutions but, at the same time, to maintain key elements of traditional Cree philosophy. If this is not done, then modernity seems to be simply a vehicle for assimilation: rather than using the tools of technology for the development and expansion of Indian institutions, the technology and new modes of production have led to assimilation of Indigenous consciousness (2002: 45).

Education when utilized and produced in a supportive and tolerant setting can be a means for empowerment and the maintenance of identity. As the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* from *Kinoséwi Sípihk* understood and believed, attaining an education was a means to compete in the Euro-Western job market, and to contribute to the development of institution that reflects the will and values of the people it is meant to serve. It is an avenue that will enable the people of *Kinoséwi Sípihk* to participate and engage politically, socially and economically for their benefit and that of the *Kinoséwi Sípihk* (Apetagon Vol. 2, 1992: 31; Apetagon Vol. 1, 1991; 55).

For Aboriginal people the invigoration of cultural values is associated with the renewal of respect for the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)*. The means of doing that is to bring stories to the forefront through contact, and maintaining the words of the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)*. *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* as my dissertation as a story is narrated through the life of one individual; however, there are countless accounts held by our community members. Each storyteller has a critical role in teaching us with their stories. The recitals of teachings unfold ways of seeing the world. They are conceptualized from our ways of knowing and as they are being transmitted by language (Henderson Youngblood & Battiste, 2005: 49)

The struggle for decolonization is arduous and ongoing for many Aboriginal academics and scholars. For Wilson, maintaining sacred legends serves as a critical rule for the decolonization process. While acknowledging that the model she is contemplating contravenes the opinion of Fanon, Wilson argues, that the departing from our cultural values would fulfill the goal of the “colonizer’s dismissal and hatred for Native traditions...” She further states:

Indeed, as Indigenous people we must embrace the traditions of our past and advocate a return to those ways, beliefs, and values (many of which our oppressors have long disparaged) that informed the basis of our once strong and healthy nations... The strategies we develop as Indigenous of North America toward decolonization and empowerment must be distinct to us and developed from the principles that allowed us to live a sustainable existence for thousands of years (2004: 71).

The stories contribute to the development of our consciousness and of perceiving creatively (McLeod, 2007: 13), and giving meaning to our *ácinohána* [sacred myths] and *ácmiwina* [news]. Our *ácinohána* infuse us with *nipoháwina* [wisdom]. They serve as revelations of our ancient beliefs (McLeod, 2007: 18). The *ácinohána* illustrate the *páwáwina* affinity for the pitiful and codes of conduct. *Ácmiwin* inform us of the present as well as the past.

This work was undertaken with a commitment to “Indigenize” the retelling of the story of our community. In reference to “indigenizing” Smith reiterates, “The term centres a politics of indigenous identity and indigenous cultural action” (2006, p. 146). In this project, that is equated with invoking the words of a local *Kéhté-yatis(ak)*, and addressing them as they are addressed in their home community. It is also about using our language to speak of our community. It is by this means, we can begin to speak equally of the power and authority sustained in *Anísiń(i)niw kiskéyihitamowin* [Cree knowledge] in our home community of *Kinoséwi Sípihk*, and the academy.

From the stories we, as the marginalized, can draw from our cultural paradigms to begin the process of creating our own empowering discourse, theories, analytical methods, and methodologies to frame in opposition to the elite, and the privileged. That is to confront and act against racism, discrimination, and white privilege, and to give legitimacy, and speak with authenticity of our epistemologies, ontologies, and our expression of history, in what was once were the domains of the oppressor.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### MASKÉKO EPISTOMOLOGIES, ONTOLOGY, AND HISTORY

This chapter presents the cultural representation of traditional knowledge, and interrelated concepts of relationships, concept of power and passage of time. This is accomplished by drawing from literary sources, and from my early experiences in the community. The process elaborates on the similarities expressed in the boarder existing Indigenous world views, and the documentation of my experiences with my father's cultural teachings. In this work, such particularities warranted a distinctive consideration in their application, and interpretation to avoid the falsehood "of benign translability" (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000: 80). That included observing cultural values, language and

Those teachings are then situated in a local contextual description to center their significance, and relevance in *Kinoséwi Sípihk*.

#### **Traditional Knowledge**

*Ańisiń(i)niw kiskéyihtamowin* [Cree knowledge] may be categorized within what is now called traditional knowledge. Taken from social theory, Castellano (2008) provides the following characteristics and a definition of traditional knowledge:

*Traditional knowledge* has been handed down more or less intact from previous generations. With variations from nation to nation, it tells of the creation of the world and the origin of clans in encounters between ancestors and spirits in the form of animals; it records genealogies and the ancestral rights to territory; and it memorializes battles, boundaries, and treaties and instills attitudes of wariness or trust toward neighboring nations. Through heroic and cautionary tales, it reinforces values and beliefs; these in turn provide the substructure civil society. In some of its forms, it passes on technologies refined over generations (p. 23).

Though situated and deeply-rooted in the geographical center of the boreal forest, the *Ańisiń(i)niw kiskéyihtamowin* as it pertains to *Kinoséwi Sípihk*, as demonstrated above does not

exist in intellectual isolation from the other existing Indigenous knowledge systems. Rather, *Añisiñ(i)niw kiskéyitamowin* shares vastly similar values and philosophies, existing in the northern and south hemispheres, on this side of the globe (Battiste and Henderson, 2005: 40).

Accordingly, traditional knowledge is situation on the “principle of totality” that is to say, traditional knowledge is a fusion of spirituality, connection to land, language, the belief the in existence of life in what are considered inanimate in the Euro-Western world view, the presence of an energy in nature (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000: 43), and the interconnectedness of “[t]ime and place” (Cajete, 2000:49). Battiste and Henderson (2005) state, “No separation of science, art, religion, philosophy, or aesthetics exists in Indigenous thought; such categories do not exist” (43), whereas, Euro-Western society in its production of knowledge has failed to reconcile difference with that of religious beliefs and ongoing reliance on the concept of objectivity (Cajete, 2000: 26 & 27). In addition, they argue it would be “misleading and inappropriate” to present Indigenous knowledge as compartmentalized units of knowledges, or to articulate indigenous knowledge in the reductionist form (Battiste and Henderson, 2005: 101).

A holistic way of knowing is the bases of a Native Science, concurs Cajete (2000). In laying out the principle of his theoretical model Cajete argues, “Native science acts to mediate between the human community and the larger natural community upon which humans depend for life and meaning”. This entails the full participation of the human senses (2000: 20). As a foundational assertion of this Indigenous world view he states:

Everything is viewed as having energy and its own unique intelligence and creative process, not only obviously animate entities, such as plants, animals, and microorganisms, but also rocks, mountains, rivers, and places large and small. Everything in nature has something to teach humans. This the Indigenous view of “animism,” the anthropologically defined, superficially understood, ethnocentrically biased term used to categorize the indigenous way of knowing the world” (Cajete, 2000: 21).

As for defining and assessing knowledge, in the Indigenous worldview gaining knowledge as an embodied experience is viewed as "...a total way of life..." that "...is rooted in the spiritual life, health, culture and the language" and "it is a holistic worldview that cannot be compartmentalized or separated from the people that hold it" (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000: 43). Castellano states "Aboriginal knowledge is rooted in personal experience and lays no claim to universality" (2008: 25). Cajete makes clear that in Indigenous thought "True knowing is based on knowing nature directly" (2002: 66).

The work of the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (1996) outlined critical insights to Aboriginal values. The Commission indicate, "Past events have been recorded and interpreted by human beings who, much like ourselves, have understood them through the filter of their own values, perceptions and general philosophies of life and society". In addition the non-Aboriginal centers on a "humanist intellectual tradition" that honors human achievements and reliance on "linear" scale contrary to the Aboriginal values and world view (p. 33). The findings also articulate:

The Aboriginal tradition in the recording of history is neither linear nor steeped in the same notions of social progress and evolution. Nor is it usually human-centered in the same way as the western scientific tradition, for it does not assume that human beings are anything more than one – and not necessarily the most important – element of the natural order of the universe. Moreover, the Aboriginal historical tradition is an oral one, involving legends, stories, and accounts handed down through the generations in oral form. It is less focused on establishing objective truth and assumes that teller of the story is so much a part of the event being described that it would be arrogant to presume to classify or categorize the event exactly or for all time (Canada, Government of, 1996: 33).

The above work demonstrates history is an ambiguous concept, and based on the cultural understanding of a given group. Narration of the past is a lens of a particular ontology (McLeod, 2007: 18). Additionally, possessing human qualities, the *Maskéko*, as other societies, are not exempt to change over time and are subjected to the introduction of exterior influences, and or the developmental of innovations (Blaut 1993: 5 & 6).

### **A decolonized geography**

Located in the Canadian Shield, the topographical features of *Kinoséwi Sípíhk* consist of a rugged and demanding terrain. In the Indigenous paradigm the topography of this region is a composition of the seven predominant features. First, there is relatively little debate in the community, that the Creator gave the earth its present form (Granzberg & Queskekapow Part 1, 1999: 214). Second, for generations the *Maskéko* have established relationships with creatures and the land on which they relied for their subsistence (Granzberg & Queskekapow Part 1, 1999: 214; McDonald, Arragutainaq & Novalinga, 1997: 19). In this relationship, the creatures and what might be considered inanimate in colonial paradigm in *Maskéko* thought are sentient, and are able to communicate with humans. Our values reflect the teachings, and traditions uttered in the stories. One story tells of a time when a large rock came to rest on top of *Wisakácak* for ages at the end of a race (Apetagon Vol. 1, 1991: 12). The story indicates the rock was alive, and was to be respected. In our daily existence, my observance of my mother's reference to a rock as one that was alive reinforced this teaching. The water that is contained in the perfusion of lakes and rivers that exist in our territory is said to possess a consciousness (personal comm. Osborne, N. n.d.). In our cultural values, the water is to flow unimpeded to sustain its vitality, and enable it to provide potent medicines for people to use (Granzberg & Queskekapow Part 1, 1999: 214; McDonald, Arragutainaq & Novalinga, 1997: 5). Third, deposits of clay, sand and gravel

characterize the regions substrata. The top layer has frequent expanses of exposed ancient igneous shards, boulders, and bedrock whose exposed surfaces provide an ecological niche for a host of lichens that flourish upon its surfaces. Large rock outcroppings that dominate the landscape are accepted as being inhabited by whom the *Maskéko* identify as the *Mémékwésiwak* (Granzberg & Queskekapow Part 1, 1999: 212, Apetagon Vo. 2, 1994: 39). In my discussion with my father, he informed me that our *Kimosóm pana* considered them the Lost Tribe of Israel in the era when the missionaries confused the Aboriginal people as such. Fourth, to speak of this land is to speak of our identity. Muskeg and bog areas, with their subtle shades of pinks, yellows and various green hues, comprising of a blend of consistently moist and spongy sphagnum, and reindeer moss makes walking on its surface challenging. It is from these features we self-identity as the *Maskéko* (H. Queskekapow, person comm. n.d.). With the land's ability to nourish and support a diversity of plants and animals, and the spiritual relational connection the people have with this land, make it problematic in its valuation to accommodate industrial development. Lastly, stands of coniferous and deciduous trees dominate the landscape that stretches for miles in the region. These stands of trees too, under the capitalist ideology have been revalued as commodities and resources, and thus have been subject to commercial exploitation (McDonald, Arragutainaq & Novalinga, 1997: 54). Yet in the traditional *Maskéko* world view they exist as gifts of the Creator, and intricate threads that form ecological relationships to the animals and birds, and sources of medicines to sustain the life of humans. That is not to suggest the *Maskéko* are completely opposed to development. However, development must be undertaken with regards to the observance of their Treaty and Aboriginal Right, and with the involvement, and in consultation with the people of *Kinoséwi Sípihk* (Norway House Cree Nation, 2009: 9 & 10).

The *Máskeko* revered the Creator. Intersession through prayer in our language is expressed as *ayamihawin* literally meaning to speak to. In his prayers, I had often witnessed my father initiate his prayers with “*asamína kípetaastítotatin*” [I have come humbly], and he would then state “*ki cimákawínan*” [see our pity]. *Cimakawínan* is difficult to translate due to its multi-layered meanings. *Cimá* means to appear endearing or appealing yet situated in a pitiful condition. His reverence for the Creator was rendered by not addressing the deity directly. He may use “*Kápásiscikaw*” [the Creator]; *Naha* [the One], and *Naha kákánenimikóyah* [the One that keeps up]. If he had to make a direct reference he may use it only once. He felt that it pertains to his conceptual form of the observance of keeping the name holy, or as we say it *kánákácistáya*.

In the spiritual belief of the *Maskéko*, humans are pitiful creatures in need of supernatural intercession to sustain them through distress, and daily existence. The presence of the supernatural is expressed in the concept of eminence, suggesting in Indigenous theology the supreme supernatural deity is present rather than a distant deity (Fisher, 2005: 34). In *Máskeko* spiritual belief, the relationship with the central deity is not mediated or contingent on the concept of original sin that serves as point of separation and thus necessitating the need of mediation (Tinker, 2002).

In the area I grew up there exists numerous trails. Like conduits in the vastness of the forest they facilitated movement of people. Their presence subdivided and penetrated deep into the surrounding land. In many respects, those trails exist as our assertion of our ancestral occupancy. For generations, these trails had a particular purpose and that was to connect people to retrieve and make use of what was available in the forest. Today, they serve as markers of an extended and intensive use of the land. While acknowledging that for the future generations,

“Land will always be the key to survival for Aboriginal people” (York, 1990: 140) for me being in the forest, and on those trails served as a platform for learning.

One outing that figures prominently in my memory is setting snares for rabbits with my father. Snaring for rabbits required repeated walks into the forest with my father from then on. These repeated excursions were a method of teaching we refer to as *Ahisih(i)niw okiskinomakewin* [Cree way of teaching]. The lesson included not to take the catch of other hunters, humility when we returned home empty-handed, and gratefulness when blessed with a reward for our efforts. Essentially, I had gained the fundamental principles of *Ahisih(i)niw kiskéyihitamowin* [Cree knowledge] that included an affirmation of a connection to the Creator, the philosophies, and the values of *ka kistentawin* [respect], *tapuhteniwin* [humility], and *nanaskowina* [thankfulness].

Aboriginal people argue that they have lived on the land as active agents with specific purpose and means to utilize the available material in the forests. Enabled by their knowledge of the land and set rules of conduct, Tinker argues Indigenous interaction with the ecology was presided over by the concepts of “balance and harmony”. He asserts, this ontological frame is distinct from that of the contemporary interpretation of stewardship that “is still committed to the hierarchal privileging of humans” (Tinker, 2000: 35). It is a concept that recognizes the values of relationships (Graveline, 1998: 75).

In the present-day, fall is the commencement of hunting season. My youngest sister Debra has not forgotten the *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina*, as taught from our father. The appearance of red pigmentation on the leaves of the rabbit-root plant in the fall determined the readiness of the moose to be hunted. Readiness is based on the accumulation of body fat of game. Indigenous academics working within the Euro-Western paradigm described this as the

recognition of the ecological relationship. For Deloria, what our father displayed and relied on was “The Principle of Correlation”. That indigenous theory states:

Being interested in the psychological behavior of things in the world and attributing personality to all things, Indians began to observe and remember how and when things happen together. The result was that they made connections between things that had no consequential relationships. There was, consequently, no firm belief in cause and effect, which plays such an important role in Western science and thinking. But Indians were well aware that when a certain sequence of things began, certain other elements or events would also occur (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001: 26).

Today the old beliefs and knowledge continue to persist and are considered essential for hunting and navigational purposes.

My father told me his grandmother trained him to learn from listening to the land. Quiet meditation is an important aspect of knowing and connecting with the land. This form of knowing is a process of “internalizing the lessons of nature” (Cajete, 2002: 66). It is a way of gaining understanding and relatedness to the land. My father shared the following:

My grandmother used to tell me to sit in the forest and just listen – which I did. On those occasions, fear was never an issue except for one occasion when I heard a loud thunderous sound. Frightened, I quickly got up and I sprinted home.

In the home, my grandmother sat me down on a chair and spoke to me about what I had experienced.

These are the means through connections which are instituted. The lessons taught and received came from the land we occupied. My father understood and taught me that birds and animals organized themselves into moral and social patterns of behavior. From observations, he developed personal ethical codes of behaviors. He instructed, “To us ducks look alike, however, the ducks know who their leaders are. In similar circumstances, caribou know who their leaders are.” He further elaborated:

We do not see caribou competing for the food by racing ahead of herd to get at the prime feeding areas.

The leaders are not necessarily in the lead all the time. However, the leaders will come forward and take their place to guide the others to safety with the appearance of hunters or wolves.

Understanding who the leader, the rest of the caribou will intuitively follow them.

Through this oral teaching I come to understand animals and birds have important teachings to share with humans.

Within the worldview of the people of *Kinoséwi Sípihk*, and most relevant to the hunters, the four seasons and four winds are more than a moment in time, or mere natural phenomena that can be explained methodologically in a reductionist way as shifting climatic conditions. Speck in his ethnographic study of the Naskapi notes in the retelling of the *Origins of the Four Earth Winds*, the Four Winds in embodied terminologies (1977: 59). From that ontological viewpoint much of the world possesses sentience and subject to communication and interaction. Generally, in *Kinoséwi Sípihk* the East Wind is known as the bearer of misfortune. Nets may be empty of fish, and hunters may not find the animal they seek. I have also heard of an individual that observed a practice of placing a small piece of beaver castor into fire in the stove to sway the movement of the Thunderbirds (P. Queskekapow, personal comm. n.d.). This is recognition of a kind of power that exists in Creation. In Aboriginal culture:

“Power is understood as all-pervasive and consistent. Through knowledge of it, we can come to understand it and thus utilize it to our advantage. Knowledge in this sense is “virtually synonymous with power”...According to Deloria, the world that the Traditional person experiences is dominated by the presence of power, which manifests itself as life energies—“the whole life-flow of a creation” (Graveline, 1998: 53)

The *Maskéko* in their beliefs see power as energy that is emitted from the mind (Granzberg & Queskekapow Part 2 & 3, 1999: 315), and can be utilized to influence the fate of individuals (Bird, 105: 2007). Within that context it is considered a malevolent act. It was a

defining basis of forming social exchanges in the traditional context and is continually observed in the present. Based on my observances, mind-power can be synthesized in four ways:

*Kihanetamakewin* [possessing the ability to perceive an individual's thoughts and intentions]:

Under these circumstances, the individuals do not have to make eye contact with each other, but may be situated in close proximity to each other. However, there are exceptions to the malfeasant application of this practice, especially if an individual is seeking healing. The insightfulness of the gifted individual can use *kehanetamakewin* to diagnose and address a person's source of their affliction (Granzberg & Queskekapow Part 2 & 3, 1999: 315).

*Sapopimitohwin* [to see through someone]: This involves the ability of a gifted individual to assess and deduce the personal aspects of another individual by way of eye contact.

*Mamentahwin* [to constantly contemplate malfeasance against someone]: In this application, the power of the mind is also considered the center of a person's ability to inflict ill-health and misfortune to another (Granzberg and Queskekapow Part 1, 1999: 160, Bird, 2007: 105 & 106).

Recognizing the ability of the mind to inflict loss and injury to one another, people are encouraged to quickly resolve disagreements and to forgive each other in a timely manner.

*Sakohtenimitwin* [to overcome another person's mind]: this implies a person can control another person's action by overcoming their ability to control their thoughts.

That conceptualization of mind-power continues to be observed and acknowledged through a demonstration of respect and reverence for people that possess such energy, as in our past. Its observance is most often associated with interactions with particularly spiritually gifted

individuals, or spirit-beings (Apetagon Vol. 1, 1992: 39). Its influence in the traditional *Maskéko* society is articulated by Omuskego *Kéhté-yatis* and storyteller Louis Bird, and concurs with my father's understanding of mind, in the following fashion:

These are the things that happen before contact; and in that period, because of this mind structure of a person, because most of the individuals who lived acquired these capabilities and knowledge, they are powerful. The other people respect them. No one can fool around with such individuals. One has to respect them, to listen to them. That is why elders were most respected, because most of them had acquired such knowledge and power in themselves; they were fully capable of applying it when it's necessary. Therefore, they have acquired such knowledge and power and capability that they were looked at as leaders automatically and also expected to be the judges of matters, to enforce the righteous when necessary, and to prosecute the wrongdoers when they are called for (Bird, 2005: 44).

There is a recognition and acceptance in the persistence of this power. *Kéhté-yatis* Queskekapow informed me that people that possess, or are associated with those spiritual powers are referred to as *Mitéwak* [Shaman]. *Mitéwak* are particularly gifted individuals, and often mentioned in local legends. They are considered well endowed with *Ańisiń(i)niw kiskéyihitamowin*, in period referred to as *is pi kakimacawicik* [the time people were evil], they acquired through discipline, ceremonial practices and apprenticeship by a local *Kéhté-yatis(ak)*.

The *Maskéko* possess a description of *Mitéwin* consciousness. Omuskego Louis Bird suggest, in *Maskéko* world view, there are three stages of consciousness. They are the awakened consciousness, the creative consciousness, and there is the "subconscious". First, the awakened consciousness is the mental aspect that functions at the rational level. Second, the creative consciousness is responsible for creative expression. What he considers the third and "most powerful" is identified as the "subconscious". This is the level of consciousness that functions at the *Mitéwin* level. It is a process that weaves together physical reality and the spiritual realm. It

is the domain where the *Mitew* intermingling with a spiritual being to overcome physical barriers and limitations (2005: 98).

Early childhood was considered an ideal time to begin the training to become a *Mitéw*. Favor was with a child that possessed particular spiritual qualities, in our language we refer to as *mamáhtáwisiwin* [“spiritual power, talent; giftedness (Wolvengrey, 2001, Vol. 1: 86)].

With training, usually by a *Kéhté-yatis*, the child upon reaching maturity was expected to undergo state of *pawamwin* (in a dream state). Identified as “revealed knowledge” (Castellano, 2008: 24) in academic discourse, it served as means to prepare for adulthood in *Maskéko* terms. Identified as “vicarious suffering” (Tinker, 2001:63), the observance of these rituals and ceremonies aided the initiates in affirmed relationships with spiritual beings thus endowing them with supernatural powers. The successful establishment of these relationships was considered immense sources of benefits to the individual and the community.

According to my father they may include an induced state of sleep with the ingestion of a tonic. This enabled the recipient to enter the dream-world (Granzberg and Queskekapow Part 1, 1999: 163). Other related recorded practices included placing an individual in a large wooden box and situating them under the ice of a frozen lake to facilitate in the negotiation of travel to the spiritual domain (Siggins, 181: 181).

Equipped with powers that were considered critical for the good of the community the *Mitéw* were appointed the position of leader in most instances (Bird, 2004: 44; C. Queskekapow, person comm. n.d.). Such advantages from those trials may include the ability to foretell future events, assist in hunting, and wartime or healing practices (Fisher, 54: 2004) which were vital for surviving in a demanding land (Bird, 2004). On occasion, they may have used their power to oppose the feared *wihtikow* – a cannibalistic-being (Wolvengrey, 2001, Vol. 1: 244). With the

aid of their spiritual alliances, the *Mitéw* may fly through the air to meet and defeat this feared antagonist prior to them arriving and wreaking havoc in the camps (C. Queskekapow, personal comm. n.d.).

Although in practice, the *Mitéwak* (*plural for Mitéw*) may have served to benefit the community, other individuals within their category lived a transient life. Through my discussions with *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Queskekapow It was revealed to me some *Mitéwak* travelled freely over the land, and if they were to encounter groups of people they may set on their camp and they may sequestered a woman or women from that group. Unwilling to invoke the spiritual power of the *Mitéw*, people did not voice any opposition for their impositions, even if they found it objectionable (personal comm. n.d.). The trepidation associated with *Mitéwak* by other *Maskéko* is elaborated by Granzberg and Queskekapow in their work *Nathaniel Queskekapow: Cree Shaman and Storyteller* (1999: 162). Thus within *Maskéko* thought, reliance on and loathing the *Mitéw* practice, *Mitéwak* had been paramount for their survival (Bird, 2005: 214), community cohesion (Fisher, 2005: 55), and negotiating the onset of changes.

Remembering stories reinvigorates our way of life with the reconnection to our past. That learning can occur during those quiet moments in the evening when there is nobody else present except for you and the storyteller. Stories provide a means to inform us. The existence of our beliefs, the values of our voice are regenerated and reinstated honoring the way we pattern our lives in accordance with the teachings contained in the ancient myths (Cajete, 2000: 62).

Creation stories speak of our ways of knowing of our history. They decipher of how the present-day order of the world and human existence came to be. Fundamental to our stories are themes relating to spiritually-based relationships. They do not exist as uniform stories but vary

from storyteller to storyteller and do not represent a continual transition from past to present (Granzberg & Queskekapow Part 1, 1999: 170).

At the conclusion of the reciting of legend *Kéhté-yatis* Charles Queskekapow often stated, “*eka takitahmakihitaya kekon*” referring to the avoidance of inflicting needless pain and distress against all living things. It is expressed in the concept of *ocinawin*. This value mediates our actions with all living things. It is observed during the act of hunting. It obligates a hunter to locate an animal if it is wounded during a hunt. Leaving an animal if wounded during a hunt is an act of disregard for life and will result in retribution for the violator. Similarly, the obligation is carried over to the death of the animal. In this regard, the respectful conduct of the hunter during the dressing of the animal must be continually observed (Tinker, 2001: 42 & 43). In my lived experience, this value extends to showing respect to handicapped individuals or individuals afflicted with physical disfigurements. Generally, such afflictions are recognized as *minikwínswin* [gifts]. In recognizing individual *minikwínswin* we are to accept individual differences and what each person has to bear on a daily basis.

For the *Maskéko* this is sustained by spiritual connection that is based on respect for all living beings and the cosmos. This teaching is pivotal in the *Maskéko* culture. Respect was extended to the Elders, parents, family and the ecology. In our language respect is expressed as *kisténim* (Wolvengrey, Vol. 1, 2001: 510), or *kisténowin* meaning to act with respect.

This belief is actualized in both negative and positive outcomes. *Kíwepanínámakwín* in positive terms is understood as *sawéyihákosiwin* [“blessedness” (Wolvengrey, Vol. 1, 2001: 288)]. Its negative end results are expressed as *pasastékésuíwin* [to be whipped spiritually], or *ohcinéw* [“VAI s/he suffers in retribution for something” (Wolvengrey, Vol. 1, 2001: 148)].

The outcome of either the violation or to abide by the nature law was *kiwepanínámakwín*. Identified as “the fundamental laws of reciprocity” by Cree academic Graveline (1998), and the “natural laws of interdependence” (2000: 56), by Cajete of Tewa heritage, it is a spiritual belief that is centered on the concept of ‘home’. As our defining belief, it entails we are home to our actions whether they are intentionally ‘good’ or ‘bad’. It is a spiritual value that permeates and configures ecological, familial and cosmological relationships. It encourages us to look beyond the present and to await the coming home of good deeds or blessings at the most appropriate time. We refer to this a *ka kí tí ispanihk* it simply implies good fortune will materialize when the time is appropriate.

## CHAPTER SIX:

### DISCUSSION AND INTERPETATION

#### **Decolonizing the community**

The aim of this project is to investigate the transmission of knowledge, and cultural values on the margins of the colonial agenda. The oral traditional accounts, and lived experience of *Kéhté-yatis* Charles F. Qeskekapow, in the community of *Kinoséwi Sípihk* [Fish River], were examined through the lens of a postcolonial Indigenous research paradigm.

The project was completed with blend of an Indigenous perspective, and Euro-Western research methodologies, consisting of an open-ended interview approach, and the local Indigenous knowledge. The goals and objectives of this project were: 1) to determine the role of the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* [Elders], 2) establish the local interpretation of *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* 3) to determine the impacts of colonialism had on the transmission of traditional knowledge, and culture 4) to analyze the impacts of colonization on the broader concept of community.

This work demonstrates the cultural norms have resisted the condescension of Euro-Western imperialism and colonialism, however, those cultural values, as well as, the concept of community have gone through a processes of change, and adaptation to meet the needs of the *Kinoséwi Sípihk (i)niwak*. Various indicators suggest the people of *Kinoséwi Sípihk* have demonstrated their resilience, and ability to adapt to the various set of introduced challenging and repressive circumstance the colonial system imposed onto the *Kinoséwi Sípihk (i)niwak*. They include the presences of the longstanding respect for the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)*, continued land-based traditional activities, use of language, and notably the ongoing resistance to the colonial agenda.

In this work, in *Kinoséwi Sípihk*, the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* are not romanticized as mere wise people reciting ancient verbal texts. Rather, in filling their traditional roles, they continue to serve as the basis of community life, and connection to the *Maskéko* knowledge, ontology and history with their engagement in storytelling, transmission of traditional knowledge, and cultural teachings. As educators, cultural custodians and authority figures they retain a basis of community cohesion, social conduct in the community, and the vitality of *Kéhté-yatis(ak) onakatamakéwina*.

The research determined, as an outcome of colonial policy, the creating a centralized communal social arrangement was, and is, problematic in a number of ways. They include: 1) the sedentary way as a EuroWestern-oriented lifestyle contributed to the displacement of cultural activities 2) the instituting of the chief and council system centralized power where power once resided with the individual and family groups 3) the traditional role of family, and the young people were heavily impacted 4) connections to the *Kéhté-yatis(ak)* were altered by the introduction of Euro-Western styles of public administration, and economic social development systems 5) People were assigned identities that fragmented the community into distinct jurisdictional differences. They consisted of legal identifiable designations, such as Treaty, Métis, and non-Status identities.

To expand, Norway House, as a colonial designation, is a space the colonizer has both relegated and has attempted to confine the *Maskéko*. This colonial definition is the separation from the natural resources we rely on as it was for the previous generations. For generations now, the role of colonization has been to convince us the concept of community was defined as our confinement to a squared off block of land. It is this definition that the ‘colonizer’

continuously imposes upon the *Kinoséwi Sípíhk (i)niwak* with negative consequences up to the present.

For instance, while the local people and leadership continue to draw meaning from their cultural centers, they remain committed to capacity building, and to self-determination. That is apparent, in ensure the engagement of, and making leading technologies, and strategic planning, such as investing in cellular telephone service, broadcast internet service to community members, planning long-term economic development strategies and projects, increasing success rate in education, utilizing Euro-West-based health care and social services sectors, and bringing forth accountability and transparency to the community members leading compositions of community life. As the *Kinoséwi Sípíhk (i)niwak* engage these external technical innovations, they are actively incorporating their own social, customary factors, and language use in their applications (Norway House Cree Nation, 2009).

The use of *Ihíńimowin* continues to be the dominant language in the community despite attempts by the residential school system to obliterate its usage. The use of the local language pervades daily conversations, the local radio and television stations, and in the administration of community affairs. At churches, as a primary course for Euro-Western dominance in *Kinoséwi Sípíhk*, the gospel is read and recited in both in *Ihíńimowin*, and English.

Christianity has become a fixed feature in the community, yet our traditional values continue to permeate spiritual and social expressions. As an example, my mother's representation of the hand print of Jesus Christ's appearing on a fish demonstrates the *Maskéko* rather the reject the gospel have claimed it, and have contextualized within the local value system. Others have come to distinguish the Christian values from that of the abuse they endure.

Like my brother, George who has involves himself in a local Christian ministry, continues to do so to this day.

The local people value *Anisiñ(i)niw kiskéyihitamowin*, and recognize the significance of receiving a Euro-Western education. I have observed, as a community member, and lead researcher for this project, in the local secondary schools, as the sites of the epistemological struggle, there was marked success in the area of post-secondary education (Norway House Cree Nation, 2009: 13). In addition, a number of the community members hold diplomas and degrees in various disciplines. However as important as educating our people is, the local people indicate that it is equally imperative, as decolonization process, to hire our local people and not perpetuate the Euro-Western paradigm, but to ‘Indigenize’ the institution (Norway House Cree Nation, 2009: 13).

The ancient sites, and areas once occupied by the *kayask ininiwak* serve to awaken ancestral memory. In the span of the *Maskéko* memory they are markers of the presence of the *Kimosóm pana*, and of a *Maskéko* way life. Existing in the traditional concept of *ihotáwin*, the people arranged themselves into tight-knit family groups as the situated themselves as the seasonal conditions defined their locales. *Ihtáwin* was, as articulated in this work, was a site of social and ecological interconnections that were not defined as binaries of that of civilization versus the wilderness. Rather it is a concept that means a place that met the needs, and perpetuated the lives of the ancestors.

Presently, *ihotáwin* may include a heightened observation of the customary values and practices when the *Maskéko* are on the land. Presence in and around the old campsites provide a revived, and reaffirm familial connections as I have observed with my extended-sister Darlene. She shared that being in the place where her family considered their campground took her back

to her childhood. It reminded her of her now deceased parents and the way of life they had taken pleasure in living out (Personal comm. D. Omand, n.d.).

The recital of stories both legend and of lived experiences keep the traditions alive, and maintain our rootedness to the land. These connections definite *ih táwin*, claim to that land, and the foundation of our right as a cultural group to continue to exist as the *Maskéko*. Whether they are passively communicated, or acted upon with presence on the land, they serve as reminders of our identity and empowerment.

Within the context of the colonial paradigm, maintaining our stories is an act of resistance, and is substance for political action against the continued presence of oppressive colonial institutions. As such they are assertion that ensure that our *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* remain relevant, and offer us strength, and self-determination.

My own story of tradition communicates memories of gathering seagull eggs in the spring and eating them at our camp in the area we call Sandy Islands. Narration of family life speaks of how the land reinforced cohesion and opportunities to learn of respectful interactions, and of patience. Witnessing our parents functioning as proficient roles models on those trips instilled respect for parents and for our way of life. Such social learning enforced positive attitudes, and the formation of sustained memories, and they testify to a sustained use, and presence on our land.

During his lifetime he was well respected by both his family, and the community members that knew *Kéhté-yatis*, Charles F. Qeskekapow. For me personally, he was and continues to be an individual that has inspired my engagement in scholarship, and to research my culture. Though his passing was met with great sadness by all of us, his knowledge, cultural

values, and history that he instilled in us, which now survives in our memory, and which will be imparted to the next generation as *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina*.

## GLOSSARY

### *Iñíńmowin* [Cree language]

<i>ácmiwina</i>	news; true story
<i>ácinohána</i>	sacred myths
<i>ańisiń(i)no</i>	person
<i>Ańisiń(i)niwak</i>	people
<i>Ańisiń(i)niw kiskéyhtamowin</i>	Indigenous knowledge
<i>ańisiń(i)niw okiskinomakewin</i>	<i>Maskéko</i> way of teaching
<i>ańisiń(i)no omícim</i>	<i>Maskéko</i> food
<i>“eka takitahmakihitaya kekon”</i>	to the avoidance of inflicting needless pain and distress against all living things.
<i>ek kí kicimakináh</i>	they were shown pity
<i>Emistikoso</i>	Euro-Westerner
<i>ihťáwin</i>	“abode, place of residence; existence” (Wolvengrey)
<i>Iñíńmo</i>	to speak Cree
<i>Iñíńmowin</i>	Cree language
<i>is pi kakimacawicik</i>	the time people were evil
<i>ka kistentawin</i>	respect
<i>ka ki nipinawa</i>	time of the dying
<i>ka kí tí ispanihk</i>	good fortune

<i>Kápáiscikaw</i>	the Creator
<i>ka wítimistikosiwa</i>	we become like the Euro-Westerns
<i>Kayask Ininiwak</i>	the people of past
<i>Kéhté-yatis</i>	Elder
<i>Kéhté-yatis(ak)</i>	Elders
<i>Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina</i>	what the Elder leaves behind
<i>ki cimákawínan</i>	look onto us with pity
<i>Kiscih Sípihk</i>	Nelson River
<i>kihanetamakewin</i>	possessing the ability to perceive an individual's thoughts and intentions
<i>kíme</i>	my namesake
<i>Kimosóm pana</i>	Grandfathers of the past
<i>Kinoséwi Sípihk</i>	Fish River
<i>Kinoséwi Sípihk (i)niwak</i>	the residents of Fish River
<i>kisihpihkahma</i>	where the lake ends
<i>Kistapinawíwak</i>	residents of the community center
<i>kisténowin</i>	to act with respect
<i>kiwepanínámakwín</i>	reciprocity
<i>Maskéko</i>	People of the Muskeg
<i>mamáhtáwisiwin</i>	“spiritual power, talent; giftedness (Wolvengrey, 2001, Vol. 1: 86)
<i>Mamakweswak</i>	rock dwellers

<i>mamentahwin</i>	to constantly contemplation of malfeasance against someone
<i>maskawátiswin</i>	health
<i>Mémékwésiwak</i>	the Rock Dwellers
<i>minikwínswin</i>	gifts
<i>Mitéwak</i>	Shaman
<i>Naha</i>	the One
<i>Naha kákánenimikóyah</i>	the One that keeps up
<i>nahentawin</i>	contentment
<i>nanaskowin</i>	thankfulness
<i>nimosom</i>	grandfather
<i>nipoháwina</i>	wisdom
<i>nitih táwinan</i>	our community
<i>nokomis</i>	uncle
<i>nosim</i>	my grandchild
<i>nosimak</i>	grandchildren
<i>ocacapisoh</i>	buntings
<i>ohcinéw</i>	[“VAI s/he suffers in retribution for something]
<i>Oskonihkana</i>	the left over land
<i>otamíwáwiná</i>	hobbies or pastimes
<i>Owanawíwak</i>	the Outsiders
<i>pasastékéswiwin</i>	spiritual torment
<i>páwáka</i>	the dream beings

<i>pimawinina</i>	the travel corridors
<i>sakohtenimitwin</i>	to overcome another person's mind
<i>sapopimitohwin</i>	to see through someone
<i>sawéyihதாகosiwin</i>	blessedness
<i>sintohamakewin</i>	<i>Maskéko</i> thought
<i>Sípihkíwinwak</i>	the river people
<i>tapuhteniwin</i>	humility
<i>tosim</i>	nephew
<i>wáhótwin</i>	kinship
<i>wíhtikow</i>	cannibalistic-being
wína	they; the individual
wínawow	them

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. An inventory of *Añisiñ(i)no omícim*.

Animal	Edible parts	Cooking method	Notes
Beaver	All including feet and tail excluding entrails.	Boiling, roasting, smoking.	Castors were utilized by Charles for medical use. Beaver is considered a staple by trappers in the community.
Muskrat	All meat excluding entrails, tail and paws.	Roasted.	Enjoyed by many in the community.
Bear	Meat: no additional information is available.	Roasted.	Flavor may vary with availability of berries.
Woodland caribou	Meat: no other information is available.	Boiled, roasted, and fried.	Comments circulate in the community the caribou takes on disagreeable scent during its mating season and therefore not hunted at that time by some local hunters.
Ground hog	Meat: no other information available.	Roasted.	Charles considered the meat excellent for consumption, especially if it contained plenty of body fat.
Lynx	Only the hind and front quarters are consumed. The rest is discarded.	Boiled.	Charles was observed cooking and consuming lynx on one occasion.
Otter	Only the hind and front quarters are consumed. The rest is discarded.	Roasted.	Charles was observed cooking and consuming otter on one occasion.
Rabbit	All meat with head attached. Tongue and available meat is consumed.	Boiled: flour is added to broth to make cream style soup.	Rabbit is pursued and in demand in the winter, though not hunted heavily in the summer.

Fowl	Edible parts	Cooking method	Notes
Song birds i.e. Chickadees, buntings, wrens.	Due to their size the only the breast are the consumable part.	Roasted.	Due to local beliefs, robins are excluded.
Grouse: all species consisting of ruffed grouse, spruce grouse, and sharp-tail grouse.	Breast meat. All entrails are discarded.	Boiled, roasted with salt pork or a strip of bacon placed on top of breast meat.	All grouse are available year round. They are known to shelter under snow and fluctuate in availability.
Swan	No information available.	No information available.	Charles and community members considered this a consumable fowl.
Canada goose	All including: gizzard, neck and head (brain is eaten) attached. The feet	Fine feathers and down is singed off. Boiling: flour is added to	Traditionally singeing is done with an open fire, but a propane torch can be

	are removed and entrails discarded.	broth to make a cream style soup. Bird can be roasted. Grease is skimmed off prior to making soup, which otherwise make upset stomach, though it is kept and used as a dip.	utilized for the same reason. Some people comment the absence of smoke flavor detracts from its enjoyment.
Duck: all available species consisting of greater and lesser scaups, golden eye, wood duck, shovel nose, canvas back, teal, wigeons, ringed neck, mallards, black ducks.	All including; gizzard, neck and head (brain is eaten) attached. The feet are removed and entrails discarded. Eggs are gathered in the spring.	Fine feathers and down is singed off. Boiling: flour is added to broth to make a cream style soup. Grease is skimmed off prior to making soup, which otherwise make upset stomach. Eggs are boiled.	Traditionally singeing is done with an open fire, but of late a propane torch can be utilized for the same reason. Some people comment the absence of smoke flavor detracts from its enjoyment.
Loon	All meat: no other information is available.	Roasted.	Consumption of this fowl is low due to fish flavor.
Owl	All meat.	Boiled.	Owls were considered a bad omen to Charles.
Sea gull	All meat, no other information available. Their eggs are gathered in the spring.	No information available.	Charles considered this a consumable fowl.

Fish	Edible parts	Cooking method	Notes
Whitefish	All including roe, gizzard, and all consumable portions in head.	Boiling, roasted and stuffed with onions and bread crumbs with pepper for favoring, smoking, and another recipe the flesh is separated from bone, and mixed with flour, onion and salt to make patties. Roasted after being freeze dried.	Whitefish are stored outside in the fall in shaded area. An incision is made at the throat to allow blood to escape to aid in the preservation of this fish. This imparted freeze drying; according to Charles extended an agreeable flavor.
Mullet (Sucker)	The head of small and medium mullet. The flesh from the side.	The heads are boiled. The flesh is covered with flour and fried.	This fish is not in heavy demand in the community.
Burbot (Maria)	Flesh, liver and roe.	The flesh is fried. The liver and roe are roasted.	This is fish available year round, but especially plentiful in the middle of winter, when it spawns. It is very much demand in the community at this time.
Drum (Sunfish)	All parts including available flesh in the head.	Boiled.	
Sturgeon	All parts including flesh in the head and spinal cord.	Boiled.	The availability in Gunosao Sipi is low. Fish is transported from Cross Lake. Manitoba Hydro sponsors a release program.
Pickrel	Meat as fillets and cheeks are removed. Nothing else	Fillets are floured or battered prior to frying.	This fish identified as favorite by many members

	is consumed.		and youth of the community.
Northern Pike (Jackfish)	Meat, head and intestines.	The meat is fried and head spread open by cutting through bottom jaw which is then placed in a cooking pan to be roasted. The intestines are emptied of contents, rinsed and then fried.	Though head and intestines are not heavily consumed they were prepared and cooked by Helen Queskekapow.
Lake trout	All meat. No other information available.	The meat is fried, smoked and boiled.	Lake trout is not available in immediate community water bodies, though plentiful north of the community in Molson Lake.
Perch	Meat. No other information available.	Fried.	
Gold eye	Meat and available meat on head.	Boiled.	

Vegetation/Berries	Edible parts	Cooking method	Notes
Berries consisting of blueberries, cherries, cranberries, currents, saskatoons, cloud berries, strawberries, bunch berries, raspberry.	Fruit.	All berries listed are either eaten raw or cooked.	There are other berries that are avoided these are concerned 'bear berries'.
Flower peddles	Flowers	Eaten raw.	

Appendix 2  
Research Ethics Approval



UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | **Ethics**  
Office of the Vice-President (Research)

CTC Building  
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[www.umanitoba.ca/research](http://www.umanitoba.ca/research)

**APPROVAL CERTIFICATE**

**May 3, 2011**

**TO:** James L. Queskekapow (Advisor C. Trott)  
Principal Investigator

**FROM:** Brian Barth, Chair  
Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)

**Re:** Protocol #J2011:039  
"Kéhté-yatis onakatamakwina [What the Elder leaves behind]:  
Maskéko epistemologies, ontology and history as narrated by  
Kéhté-yatis Charles F. Queskekapow"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

**Please note:**

- If you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to the Office of Research Services, fax 261-0325 - please include the name of the funding agency and your UM Project number. This must be faxed before your account can be accessed.
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

**The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: [http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors\\_ethics\\_human\\_REB\\_forms\\_guidelines.html](http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors_ethics_human_REB_forms_guidelines.html)) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.**

## Appendix 3

### **Informed Consent/ Personal Release Form**

#### ***Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* [What the Elder leaves behind]: *Maskéko* epistemologies, ontology and history**

**Student Research:** James Qeskekapow, Student # 6752878

The aim of this project is to use the *Maskéko* [People of the Muskeg] concept of *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* [what the elder leaves behind], the oral tradition and lived experience of *Kéhté-yatis* [Elder] Charles F. Qeskekapow, to investigate the processes involved in the transmission of *Anisiñ(i)niw kiskéyihitamowin* [Cree traditional knowledge], and their intersection with the assertions of colonial authority, as they are located in the community of *Kinoséwi Sípíhk* [Fish River].

1. For the purpose of this research I agree to be:

(Please circle yes or no)

Video recorded Yes / No      Photographed Yes / No      Audio Recorded Yes / No

2. I agree to be identified by name for the purpose of this project (Please circle yes or no):

Yes / No

3. In signing this release form I consent to have my interview:

- Utilized in the completion of *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* [What the Elder leaves behind]: *Maskéko* epistemologies, ontology and history thesis project.
- To be stored and accessed in electronic format (cd-rom, or other electronic media, audio, or video).
- Edited or non-edited, in whole or in part, in video, audio and in print (books, journal and other printed media).
- To be accessed for use, in whole and in part, in classroom lectures and public presentations.

In addition, I understand I may terminate my involvement in this project at anytime without penalty.

As part of signing the release agreement, I will be presented with a copy of the signed release form and a copy of my interview. Other copies of the interview will be stored in the hard drive of computer belonging to the Student Researcher, James L. Qeskekapow and one copy will be

stored at the University of Manitoba. An addition copy will be provided the Norway House First Nation, upon request.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (participant's name) hereby freely agree to the above conditions, excluding those that have responded 'no' to, and grant Student Researcher, James L. Queskekapow, Department of Native Studies of the University of Manitoba, my cooperation in the undertaking and the completion of *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* [What the Elder leaves behind] research project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_.

## Appendix 2

### Research questions

*Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* [what the elder leaves behind] as a qualitative research inquiry will be centered on the principle question:

How do the people that knew this *Kéhté-yatis* [Elder] use *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* [what the elder leaves behind], the oral tradition and lived experience of *Kéhté-yatis* [Elder] Charles Queskekapow, to understand the processes involved in the transmission of *Añisiñ(i)niw kiskéyihtamowin* [Cree knowledge], and their intersection with the assertions of colonial authority, as they are located in the community of *Kinoséwi Sípíhk* [Fish River]?

The following will serves as the guiding interview questions:

1. How do you define a *Kéhté-yatis* [Elder]?
2. Did you consider Charles F. Queskekapow a *Kéhté-yatis* [Elder]?

3. What are the roles of the *Kéhté-yatis (ak)* [Elders] in this community?
4. What value does *Kéhté-yatis onakatamakéwina* [what the leaves behind Elder] hold for you?
5. Can you explain the meaning of *Kimosóm pana* [Ancestors of the past]?
6. How do you understand *Ańisiń(i)niw kiskéyihtamowin* [Cree knowledge]?
7. How do does one attain or receive *Ańisiń(i)niw kiskéyihtamowin* [Cree knowledge]?
8. What do you feel about this form of knowledge?
9. How do you use it?
10. Is there some knowledge we should keep to ourselves and can you explain why?
11. Do you think the Band can benefit from using *Ańisiń(i)niw kiskéyihtamowin* [Cree knowledge] and how?
12. Should *Ańisiń(i)niw kiskéyihtamowin* [Cree knowledge] be used by the Band in land use planning or other projects?
13. Do you see any problems with using *Ańisiń(i)niw kiskéyihtamowin* [Cree knowledge] and Euro-Western knowledge together?
14. What should become of the legends?
15. What do you know of the history of the community?
16. Are there particular myths/legends, funny stories or historical events that would like to share at this time and be included in this project?