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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-80801-6
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-80801-6

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Canada

Located in the Places of Creation: Indigenous Women's location within the Academy and
Community Imagining, Writing, and Enacting Community Survivance

By

Emerance Baker

A Master's Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of
Masters of Women's Studies

Memorial University of Newfoundland

November, 2010

| | |
|--|------------------|
| <i>Abstract.....</i> | <i>6</i> |
| <i>Acknowledgments.....</i> | <i>7</i> |
| <i>Chapter 1: Introduction to the Participants, Focus, Value System, Purpose, Goals, and Chapter Outlines</i> | <i>8</i> |
| <i>1.1 Chapter Descriptions</i> | <i>8</i> |
| <i>1.2 Introduction: What do you have in your canoe; the tools for critical cultural survivance. ...</i> | <i>11</i> |
| <i>1.3 The Participants; All My Relations</i> | <i>17</i> |
| 1.3A Formal Participants..... | 17 |
| 1.3B The Terms: Writer and Indigenous..... | 27 |
| <i>1.4 Making the Connections: Being Active and Present in the Academy.....</i> | <i>36</i> |
| 1.4A Introduction | 36 |
| 1.4B Making the Connections..... | 36 |
| 1.4C “Why is it important for Indigenous women to be actively present and contributing within the academy?” | 38 |
| 1.4D Standing Counterpoint..... | 39 |
| <i>1.5 Shifting the Focus</i> | <i>43</i> |
| <i>1.6 Indigenous Axiology; the cultural value system that grounds this research.....</i> | <i>47</i> |
| <i>1.7 Purpose</i> | <i>49</i> |
| <i>1.8 Thesis Goals</i> | <i>59</i> |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Introduction | 59 |
| Outcome 1 | 60 |
| Outcome 2 | 61 |
| Outcome 3 | 61 |
| Outcome 4 | 63 |
| Outcome 5 | 63 |
| <i>Chapter 2: An Indigenous Methodology Review</i> | 66 |
| 2.2 Ceremony and Research: An Indigenous Research Model | 81 |
| 2.3 Operationalizing the Research Plan | 83 |
| 2.3A Milestone 1 Developing Culturally Relevant Research | 85 |
| 2.3B Milestone 2 Developing an Indigenous Research Ethics Proposal | 87 |
| 2.3C Milestone 3 Getting Through the Worst of it All | 88 |
| 2.3D | 90 |
| Milestone 4 the Participant Conversations..... | 90 |
| 2.4 Qualitative Practices as Indigenous Research Methods | 94 |
| 2.5 Writing as a Restorative Process | 98 |
| <i>Chapter 3: Loving Indianness: Writing from a Critical Centre</i> | 101 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 101 |
| 3.2 Storytelling | 101 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 3.3 Indianness | 110 |
| 3.4 Loving Perception as a Critical Centre | 113 |
| 3.5 The Paradigmatic Shift from Resistance to Survivance | 120 |
| 3.6 Renewal | 125 |
| 3.7 Conclusion..... | 126 |
| <i>Chapter 4: Indigenous Women’s Writing as Vision, Action and Empowerment.....</i> | <i>129</i> |
| <i>Writing Indigenous Place and Being Back into the Cultural Imaginary.....</i> | <i>129</i> |
| 4.1 Introduction | 129 |
| 4.2 The Vision | 130 |
| 4.3 Setting the Context | 130 |
| 4.4 Innu Women Empowering the People through Writing..... | 136 |
| 4.5 Mi’kmaq and Mi’kmaq Differing Perspectives | 140 |
| <i>Chapter 5: Imagination and Writing in the Place of Creation: the Academy as Kisu’lt melkiko’tin.....</i> | <i>149</i> |
| 5.1 A Introduction | 150 |
| 5.2 Shifting from an Indigenous perspective to an Indigenous paradigm..... | 154 |
| 5.3 Writing as Solution of the ‘Split Mind: Ping geh heh’ | 158 |
| 5.4 Summation | 161 |

Abstract

This Master's thesis is an Indigenous research project with a purpose of better understanding Indigenous women writing as a critical site of what Gerald Vizenor refers to as "liberation, imagination, talk, [and] play" literatures, which I understand as fundamental to envisioning, articulating and enacting the survivance of Indigenous peoples and our communities from within the academy and the community ("Manifest Manners" 4). Using an Indigenous methodology—informed by both qualitative grounded theory and feminist woman-centered methodologies—this project examines two (of many) simultaneously occurring phenomena within the spaces of the academy and many Indigenous communities. An ongoing synthesis of theory from within Indigenous women's narratives and stories will better allow the reader to understand the connections between these phenomena as "relationality" in that they relate to the cultural survivance of Indigenous peoples in Canada (Wilson 152). This project examination begins from the positions of what I refer to as 'the evidence of absence' and 'the dissonance of discovery' in relation to Indigenous women's writing and its prior place in the academy. A paradigmatic shift marks the focal move into the synthesis of Indigenous theory. Identifying Indigenous cultural survivance as coming from within Indigenous women's writing is the result of this shift. The focus on the academy and our Indigenous communities, as places of creation, in this research is fundamental to addressing the need to create harmony between the academy and the community and to restoring balance in these relations and closing the gap between these two spaces.

Acknowledgments

This thesis is the realization of years of dreaming, thinking, talking, listening, and writing of the multitudes of possibilities of living Onkwehonwehnéha in the world today.

This work was only ever possible through the sacrifices, love, support, and understanding given to me from my family. Thank you to my parents, children and husband.

Over time, this project was made increasingly possible through the support and guidance of my thesis supervisors, Dr. Bonita Lawrence- Mi'kmaq and Dr. Natalie Beausoleil- Québécoise.

Niá: Wen

Thank you to the reviewers whose strong yet patient guidance helped to shape this work.

Niá: Wen

To the women and men, Elders and youth, whose voices and ideas also shaped this work I am indebted. When times were dark your guidance and good words helped shed light on the path.

I am ever indebted to all who smoothed the path and made our place in the academy a better reality. I am particularly indebted to our Flint Woman sister who has passed on. Patricia your kind words, passion, and spirit will always be alive in my heart, mind, and actions.

Ka-nin-geh-heh-gah-e-sa-nonh-yah-gah is our way of strength.

Niá:wenh ki'wáhi

All my relations

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Participants, Focus, Value System, Purpose, Goals, and Chapter Outlines

1.1 Chapter Descriptions

The chapter descriptions can be used as a general guide, showing the reader one *way* through the research project. As Gregory Cajete says “In traveling a pathway, we make stops, encounter and overcome obstacles, recognize and interpret signs, seek answers, and follow the tracks of those entities that have something to teach us. We create ourselves anew. Path denotes a structure: Way implies a process (55). This research project embodies process. For me the process was a way to understand Indigenous women’s writing as central to the production of Indigenous epistemology, pedagogy, and Indigenous knowledge. For the reader this process might look very different. Each chapter can stand alone as a section of research but they are better read as developing from each other.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the overarching concepts that guide and inform this Indigenous research project. After a general introduction, the reader meets the participants, moves through the value system that grounds this research, better understands the purpose of the project, and knows the identified project goal and potential outcomes of meeting the project goal. Chapter 2 establishes the methods which inform and were used as the methodology in the thesis project. This section focuses on both Indigenous methods and qualitative methods. The research plan is mapped out in this section and shows as a series of achieved milestones that helped keep the research process clear and allowed me to know when the research was done. This section

also includes a brief ethics review. Finally, chapter 2 reviews the literature relevant to the themes that emerged from my conversations with the participants. Modeled after a grounded theory approach, the literature reviewed in this section connects and is meant to support the themes identified within the participant interviews. These themes emerged from grounded theory methods of memoing, coding, and identifying themes until saturation was achieved. The themes that emerged from these methods of narrative analysis are:

1. Current and accurate voice with the academy.
2. The academy does not always fit the purpose of Indigenous research
3. The academy as a safer place for those yet to come
4. Identifying our relationships to each other
5. Being a role model for young women and community members
6. Giving back to the community

Chapter 3 is one of two published articles that make up this research project. “Loving Indianness: Native Women’s Storytelling as Survivance” provides the reader with a perspective of “loving ourselves back into being as Aboriginal women” (Lawrence and Anderson “Indigenous Women” 8). It also provides the reader with an examination of Indigenous women’s writing as coming from a ‘loving perception’ which I posit is a perception required for the creation of theory about Indigenous women’s lives. This section is a highly focused story about personal journey. As it was written five years ago I have thought about changing this story a number of times to better fit what I think of as an academic paper. I am hesitant to do so because

of this very miss-fit between what is known as ‘academic’ and what is known as ‘story’. This is the voice of an emergent Indigenous scholar who Lawrence and Anderson say, “provides an inspiring inquiry into how we can rewrite ourselves as protagonists within our own Indigenous story” (8).

Chapter 4 provides counterpoint narratives of visibility provided by Innu women and counterpoint positions of Mi’kMaq-ness provided by two Mi’kMaq writers on a similar topic, the known identity sign of Mi’kMaq-ness in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. This chapter reveals that Indigenous women's experiences are uniquely constituted by their relation to the specificity of the contexts in which they practice their identities; the land on which they live. While these themes did not emerge in this order, nor are they ordered in relation to importance, they are themes established as important within the participants’ narratives due to their repetition and reoccurrence across different participants’ narratives.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion of this thesis project. It is the bringing together of the theories that most resonated for me and the theories that I hoped to provide for the reader as a means of action; a way to be whole in the academy as an Indigenous researcher. A peer reviewed published article, the focus of this chapter is on providing the reader with possible solutions or ways of claiming space for ourselves as Indigenous researchers. “Locating Ourselves in the Place of Creation; the Academy as Kisu’lt melkiko’tin” provides the reader with one solution for those who feel like they are living the ‘split-mind’. It also serves the purpose of reminding the reader

that the academy can be better understood as just one viable ‘place of creation’ for Indigenous pedagogy, epistemology, theory and thought with community being the other.

1.2 Introduction: What do you *have* in your canoe; *the* tools for critical cultural survivance.

According to Genevieve Kroes’ policy research workshop report for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) titled *Aboriginal Youth in Canada: Emerging Issues, Research Priorities, and Policy Implications*, the enrollments of Indigenous youth in postsecondary education systems “have been steadily increasing over the last two decades” (3). I work with both high school and postsecondary students daily. I agree with Kroes about the increase of Indigenous youth entering the academy as I have personally witnessed that increase in my own institution. These Indigenous students just entering the academy are the readers that I hold in my heart and mind as I undertake this research project. My years of working with local Elders and many other community members in the support of Indigenous high school and postsecondary students provides me with a clear understanding that the relationships we develop as we traverse these topographies of survivance, whether in the academy or in our communities, are critical to our well-being as Indigenous peoples. Within my own cultural teachings is a message that we can’t and we were never intended to do this work alone. The observance of ceremony and focused cultural thought in my everyday life means, for me, that understanding my relations and responsibilities as a Haudenosaunee person (more specifically as an Upper Cayuga Mohawk Hungarian mixed-blood person) places relations, relationships, and “relationality” at the centre

of my heart and mind (Wilson 152). As an Indigenous researcher, these thoughts and actions are always already at the centre of this research project.

For a short while I was convinced that my mixed-blood identity was an advantage that would provide me with the knowledge I needed to work fully within Indigenous and non-Indigenous spaces located at various times both in my community and in the academy. I found that although I work in both, I don't fit fully into either of these spaces. Knowing fully about the practices and protocols of these two often disparate spaces and worldviews was not the same as trying to balance the practice of research within these at times diametrically opposed worldviews and spaces. There is some area of overlap between non-Indigenous and Indigenous worldviews; however, trying to enact a parallel practice of both meant having to choose one way of being over the other. In conversation with local Elders, I was reminded that this 'split apart' relationship is unstable, unnatural, impossible to navigate, and ultimately destructive in that not many people remain fully intact when these spaces collide or move apart.

Cultural teacher, Richard Hill (Tuscarora) recently related this story about these spaces, community and academy; calling them the canoe and the big ship (Hill). Hill said that the roles and responsibilities defined in the Two- Row Wampum means that we different peoples, "Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal", undertook a covenant to move side by side down the waterway of life keeping to our own sides of the waterway and not interfering with or impeding the progress and process of the other; "Aboriginal peoples travelling in their canoes and non-Aboriginal peoples in their great ships" (Hill). According to Hill, generations of colonial

policies, practices, and pre-meditations have resulted in many broken covenants. A result of these broken covenants is that today many Indigenous people have found themselves locked, lost, or landed in the Canadian nation state's great ship wondering what happened to their canoes. Hill elaborates that we are then left as peoples of many nations made similar to a point through our interaction with the Canadian nation state in that "we were left searching for items to rebuild our canoes within the confines of the ship itself. For some of us this worked, for many it didn't" (Hill).

Hill's story of the ship and the canoe is another example that a theory of survivance for the Haudenosaunee is within the stories specific to Onkwéhonwe peoples. The theory within Hill's story helped me pull together the tools and understanding I needed to focus the scope of this thesis project. I knew that I wanted to better understand how the words and writing of Indigenous women writers provided me and other Indigenous readers with the tools of survivance. To determine the best path in moving forward, I looked to fellow Indigenous women writers as authorities and role models. I wanted to find out from them what they have in their canoes so that I could better prepare my own. Like Kim Anderson's practice of looking to the Grandmothers as community authorities and role models for the ways needed to live good tribal lives, I looked to Indigenous women writers to gather the tools I needed to continue as a whole person focused on restoring the harmony between the communities in which I'm located, the academy and my own Indigenous urban community (Anderson 211).

To continue with this analogy, modeling what's in my canoe and navigating a path already set by Indigenous women writers, I now know that I am not alone navigating the connections between both the academy and the community. Knowing that generations of Indigenous knowledge and theory already exists within my communities even though it is relatively new in the Academy, means that I am not 'charting new territory' in the discovery of Indigenous theory. In this way my path in the community is already formed on relatively safe ground. In the academy there is also an already charted path created by Indigenous and non-Indigenous theorists who continue to open this space. These theorists not only forged the ground where this work is now possible, they also formed the practices of research that we now use. While we emergent Indigenous scholars may struggle with the miss-fit between locations and worldviews, we need to remember and acknowledge that we are actually able to do this work because of the sacrifice made by other scholars, community members, and Indigenous people in general. I am only one generation removed from being unable to attend University without having to give up my identity and the resources associated with being an Indigenous person. I am allowed to use my Cayuga language in the classroom. In fact it's encouraged. I am allowed to continue my education into postsecondary because my generation was one of the first to be encouraged to do so. For my children's generation it's a given that they will obtain a postsecondary education. Emerging Indigenous scholars need to remember that many of our mothers, aunties, grandmothers and even sisters (depending on our age) were not even able to do so. We are not so far removed from the beginning of this struggle that we can ever forget it.

Those who have gone before us provide us with the practices and the tools of Indigenous cultural survivance. Looking to the Elders, the grannies, the aunties, the sisters and brothers, and even the children of our communities we can see what works and we can see what to leave behind. According to Dan Longboat (Mohawk) listening to our Elders, our grandmothers and grandfathers, our aunties and uncles, and our sisters and brothers to understand what works is the key to the creation and sharing of Indigenous knowledge. As Longboat relates, “That’s Indigenous knowledge. That’s the part that’s the key and critical understanding of it” that “everything that we have in our culture is there because it works. Like that Chevy truck commercial tried, tested, and true that’s what our culture is” (Lecture).

From listening to the many stories that make up this thesis research, I knew that the very act of understanding what tools I needed to have in my canoe would help me achieve the primary purpose of this Indigenous research project. Having the tools of cultural survivance would help me work toward restoring the balance of relations between my two communities, the academy and my Indigenous community. Through this process, I can now better understand a number of emergent yet connected social phenomena.

The first phenomenon is the emergence of Indigenous women’s writing as a field of critical inquiry and theory production within the academy over the past decade. The second is the increased number of Indigenous students entering postsecondary studies over the past five years. The third is the increased number of Indigenous researchers, graduate students and Ph.D.s undertaking identified Indigenous research as a function of the increased access to and use of

published, formalized, and recognized Indigenous critical pedagogy and epistemologies within the academy. The fourth phenomenon is the increased presence of Indigenous cultures and values in knowledge sharing, curriculum development, and in the provision of support services now offered to Indigenous postsecondary students. This particular phenomenon is a function of the focused creation of policies, practices, and procedures created through of the existence of first three mentioned phenomena.

To date there is still very little research on the intersection of these emerging phenomena (namely the increased amount of Indigenous writing, the increase of Indigenous students attending post secondary, the increase of Indigenous centered research, and the increased sharing of cultural knowledge between the academy and the community) and what they mean to Indigenous scholarship and Indigenous communities. This research project only begins to address some of these points of synthesis. Other current research such as Castellano and Pidgeon's research speaks to the institutional climate faced by Indigenous students already attending postsecondary institutions. Their concern with the success of "Aboriginal" students in postsecondary undergraduate and graduate studies focuses on the barriers to success for Indigenous students which they understand still exist because "depersonalized and colonial institutional barriers still exist" (5). They also discuss that the success of Indigenous students already in postsecondary studies is impeded because "navigating racism is" still "a critical challenge" (5). Castellano and Pidgeon state that one way of addressing these challenges to Indigenous students' postsecondary success is the necessity of "sharing Aboriginal knowledge

and Aboriginal methodology” (5). To some degree Garrouette et al. also examine some of these connections. Their work focuses specifically between the commitment of youth to their cultural belief systems and their increased well-being. Their project, mostly quantitative research, titled “Spirituality and attempted suicide among American Indians” states that “spiritual commitment may contribute to the emotional well-being because it provides a source of meaning—a framework that renders the world more orderly and comprehensible (1576). While Garrouette et al. refer to a critical point of Indigenous knowledge, that it makes the word make sense for Indigenous people, I contend that the examination of these continually connected phenomena are more clearly evident through an examination of Indigenous peoples’ writing. For the purpose of this research project I have focused on Indigenous women’s writing. Similar to the premise of grounded theory, these theories of Indigenous identity and knowledge production are best understood as ‘*within*’ Indigenous women’s writing where they are writing about being Indigenous in the world today. The theory is grounded in their narratives, storytelling, and writing (Strauss and Corbin).

1.3 The Participants; All My Relations

1.3A Formal Participants

The formal participants of this research project were self-identified Indigenous women writers. The formal participants self-identified as Indigenous either within their writing or by their expressed location within their respective communities. However, many people outside of the formal participants contributed theory, knowledge, and understanding to this work. There are

many Indigenous women, fellow researchers, family members, relations, and Elders who contributed to the overall development of this research project. Some of these people are the informal participants of the research process but their words and knowledge are just as valuable as the formal participants. Due to the nature of research, for some of the formal participants my interactions were limited by time and geographic distance. My interactions with the informal participants were quite extensive in comparison to the formal participants and are still ongoing. Due to the nature of these relations, quiet often when asking for information or help, the informal participants were given tobacco as a point of protocol. An indigenous methodology recognizes this contribution as critical to a realistic research paradigm located in community.

Shelley Niro (Mohawk) is a member of the Turtle Clan, from the Six Nations of the Grand River reserve. A graduate of the Ontario College of Art (OCA), Niro received her Masters of Fine Arts from the University of Western Ontario. Working in photography, painting, collage, and film Niro often incorporates traditional craft elements from her Haudenosaunee culture into her work. While Niro's work offers a loving image of Indigeneity, it does not do so by expressing a romanticized version of Indigeneity. Niro's work often examines serious issues related to her local community but does so with a loving perspective tempered with a mix of humorous and playful notions of Indigeneity. Examples of this loving perspective and use of humor as a counterpoint to the pain and trauma of colonialism are the triptych named *Mohawks in Beehives* (1991), a sepia tinted hand painted *The Rebel* (1991), and her wonderfully playful

yet subversive *500 Year Itch* (1992). I have included these images here with the Author's permission for use only in my thesis project. Copies of these works hang in my office.



500 Year Itch

1992



Mohawks In Beehives

1991



The Rebel

1991

I have witnessed many students' inquisitive but warm reactions to fun and frivolity captured in these images of Mohawk women. One student recognized *The Rebel* as her grandmother and laughed. "That's my grandma" she said with clear pride and a large smile. Niro's works tells me that there is something great and enduring in our people. She addresses the challenges faced in contemporary representations of Indigenous people with her interplay of pop culture iconography and recognizable Mohawk imagery. Niro's work is significant not for just its subversive nature, it is significant for its creative and re-creative nature in forging current and modern loving identities and images of Indigenous women as a counterpoint to the "long and damaging history of representations of Native peoples" (Niro). Her film works include *It Starts with a Whisper* (Gronau and Niro) and *Honey Moccasin* (Niro). My examination of Niro's work more closely focuses on her short film *The Shirt* and to a lesser degree *Overweight with Crooked Teeth* (Niro and BIG Productions). While we did not meet until I asked Niro to participate in this research project, we share the same home community and her work closely reflects what I know and love about my home community.

Kim Anderson is a Cree/Métis writer, researcher, and educator. Anderson and I live in the same urban Aboriginal community. I have met Anderson in a variety of capacities, as a writer interested in helping emergent Indigenous scholars, as a researcher interested in women and children's health, and as a community member interested in helping a fellow community member. Anderson is actively committed to creating positive change in her community. Anderson's readily recognized published work is *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native*

Womanhood. Many of the Indigenous students in my classes and the young women in our community look to Anderson's work to make sense of Indigenous women's roles in the here and now. In an interview with Rebecca Kendall for the local University of Guelph publication called *At Guelph* Anderson explains that a reason for writing *A Recognition of Being* was "because it's empowering for our women to be able to understand or see how things were very different historically" (Kendall). Anderson says that this work was meant to act as a counterpoint to the abundance of negative press by telling "these wonderful stories of people doing amazing things" (Kendall). She also relates that the writing down of our stories is critical because "It's important to document the genius of the way people are able to survive and how they are striving to rebuild their communities" (Kendall).

Anderson's desire to assist emergent Indigenous researchers helped me a great deal through this research process. Even the most basic guidance, such as reminding me to bring extra batteries to tape our conversation, helped to ease the stress of finding my place and way as a new researcher. More fundamental guidance from Anderson came through our conversations such as her telling me about the limits of an ethics protocol which did not allow for an understanding that research continues after the recording was done and the questions were asked and answered (Anderson). I was just learning my place and my way in the academy and her assistance in understanding the multitude of processes involved in this proved invaluable. Having accepted that this relationship with Anderson is a part of my Indigenous research and Indigenous

methodology means that I have a responsibility and accountability to uphold her words, keep their meaning intact, and ensure I do no harm either in this project or in our community.

Anderson also co-edited a collection of stories with Bonita Lawrence titled *Strong Women's Stories: Native Vision and Community Renewal*. I rely on this collection of Indigenous women's narratives because they provide the voice and vision of Indigenous women who are not from my community or nation. Stories from this collection helped me to better understand the intricacy and intimacies of place and issues as they relate to place and identity for Indigenous women from different nations. This collection is where I first read Gertie Mai Muise's story, "Where the Spirits Live: Women Rebuilding a Non-Status Mi'kmaq Community." Along with Anderson's and Lawrence's writing, Muise's story about Indigenous women working to achieve federal recognition for Mi'kmaq communities in Newfoundland and Labrador was critical in the development of this thesis project as a community-based project. I lived in Newfoundland and Labrador and I had a desire to ground my research in the community where I lived. However, I am not Mi'kmaq, Innu, or Inuit. My own desire to understand this local community from their own perspectives meant that this research project became an inter-cultural project. The stories about life as an Indigenous person in Newfoundland and Labrador came from conversations with Gertie Mai Muise (Mi'kmaq), Catherine Martin (Mi'kmaq), Nympha Byrne (Innu), and Camille Fouillard. While I was able to talk with Nympha Byrne and formally interviewed Camille Fouillard, I was unable to have in-depth conversations with Nympha Byrne during my time in

Newfoundland so her writing is used to better understand the issues of place and knowledge relevant to Innu women in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Gertie Mai Muise (Mi'kmaq) is a member of the St. George's Bay Mi'kmaq community. She lived and worked for many years in Toronto with the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centers (OFIFC) and the Indigenous Health and Wellness Strategy (AHWS). When I talked with Gertie Mai, she had recently returned to her family home on the West Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. Muise is a vocal political activist who is interested in forwarding the collective sovereignty and rights of the Mi'kmaq peoples of the West Coast communities of Newfoundland. Through our conversations, I recognized in Muise a connection to the other Indigenous women writers of this project. Like the other writers, Muise's theory of Mi'kmaqness also emerged from specific places, the dissonance of discovery that she was not Mi'kmaq in the ways that other people understood Mi'kmaq to mean and the evidence of absence which meant that as a Mi'kmaq person her contribution to the social fabric that ties Newfoundlanders together was mostly invisible. From this place her work emerged as a counterpoint to the strong cultural meta-narratives pervasive in the Newfoundland and Labrador cultural imaginary.

Muise related how she was told for years (by the Canadian government, the Newfoundland government, local people, and other Mi'kmaq communities) that the Mi'kmaq people of Newfoundland were derivative of the Mi'kmaq people of Nova Scotia and thus not the First Peoples of Newfoundland. Muise knew that this was not her truth. She knew from traditions and stories that the Mi'kmaq people of Newfoundland were Newfoundland's First Peoples. Her

work was focused on ensuring that this truth was known and shared by many. In 2008 Muise's struggle was seemingly ended when the Federation of Newfoundland Indians accepted that the Mi'kmaq people of the West Coast communities in Newfoundland were finally recognized by the Federal government as a landless First Nations community.

When I last talked to Gertie Mai, she was in her Bay George community doing what she said "brings her back to what she remembers of her home"; the land where she drums, sings, and tries to coax plants to grow in her garden. It was bittersweet that I only met Gertie Mai after I left Newfoundland to move back to Ontario. We were both transplants in different ways. We talked about living and working in Newfoundland as Indigenous women. We talked about the invisibility of Indigenous people on the island and what that invisibility meant at times for the work we were both trying to do.

A different perspective on understanding Mi'kmaq-ness came from Catherine Martin who is a Mi'kmaq filmmaker interested in documenting what she considers to be the ways and knowledge of Mi'kmaq culture. Martin currently lives in Blind Bay Nova Scotia. Martin's work examined in this project includes the films *Mi'kmaq Family/Migmaoei Otjiosog* and *Spirit Wind*. I met Martin during my first semester in Newfoundland at the Nickel Independent Film Festival where she was screening her newly released *Spirit Wind*. Although we are not from the same nations or geographic areas, when she talked to me about the importance of her film *Spirit Wind* we found a strong connection. Martin's examination of the roles of men from Conne River, a First Nations Mi'kmaq community located on the Island portion of Newfoundland and Labrador,

was to provide her son with a loving image of Mi'kmaq identity and culture. Martin's film—documenting the men as they reclaimed their tradition of building ocean travelling canoes—emerged from her desire to provide her son with the knowledge of Mi'kmaq culture and identity which as Martin claims is “the gift that my parents gave to me” (Martin). In an early conversation with Martin, she related that by making *Spirit Wind* she would have a record of what these men had accomplished. This record, she said, could be looked at by her son and he could be proud of being a Mi'kmaq man himself some day (Martin). Her message resonated so strongly within me as one that needs to be shared widely; positive and loving images of Indigenous identity are essential so that our young ones know the goodness of Indigenous traditions and can use this knowledge at times when things seem dark for them.

Martin's film *Spirit Wind* also shed some light on something else that was happening in my own life at the time. I was feeling very alone in my first months in St. John's. Even though I had already visited the student centre on campus and the Friendship Centre downtown, I hadn't yet seen a visible Indigenous community in this new place. It was a strange sensation sitting in that darkened theatre with the faint glow of the overhead lights illuminating what were obviously Indigenous people who lived in Newfoundland. Martin's film, the images flickering by so fast, was telling me that I was witnessing something special and to pay attention. When it came to me, I was unable to articulate it but I now know that what I saw was a truth; Indigenous people did live in Newfoundland. It was possible, even though I was away from home, I could possibly feel at home here. I caught my first glimpse of Indigenous existence—Mi'kmaq existence to be

precise—in a place where the history and discourse said that the Indigenous people of Newfoundland were supposed to have perished at the hands of each other long ago.

While Martin's film proved to be only one particular view of many on Mi'kmaq lives in Newfoundland, it was for me a door that opened and a vision that emerged allowing me to ground the action of this thesis in the community in which I live. Up to that point, even friends I had met who lived entire lives in Newfoundland told me not to get my hopes up about meeting other Indigenous people to work with. Martin's film helped me to see the hidden or seemingly invisible Indigenous communities in Newfoundland. The urban Indigenous community in St. John's was a community that I grew to be a part of and still miss. Working on parallel research projects in Newfoundland, allowed me to meet Indigenous people where I least expected to. It was an exciting time to be working with people from Indigenous communities on both the mainland and island portion of the province. I felt privileged to be present during the growth of a political action that resulted in the federal recognition of the traditional territories of the Mi'kmaq peoples even if it was a landless victory; it was nevertheless an accomplishment that I witnessed in my life time. I also felt very privileged to be present to hear these stories of Mi'kmaq identity and ways of knowing. For me, as an emergent Indigenous scholar, it changed everything.

1.3B The Terms: Writer and Indigenous

1.3B 1 Writer

All of the formal participants of this research project were writers, as I understand the term based on Jacques Derrida's theory of arche writing presented in *Of Grammatology* (1967). For Derrida, the science of writing (grammatology) moves beyond understanding writing as a derivative signifier of speech; the deconstructive unpacking of which Derrida refers to as a 'vulgar' understanding of writing premised on the logocentrist valorization of speech where writing can only come through speech and speech emerges from language and thought (60). When I was first introduced to Derrida's theory of writing, arche writing, it stood out to me as something both inside and outside of speech, as something that is playful, and ultimately as something familiar. What I originally saw was the concrete value of the theory in that it would provide me a way to articulate what I see as evident in Indigenous women's writing; to better understand it as something that is always in synthesis. Derrida's theory of arche writing provides an organization of thought not focused on the location of Indigenous women's writing inside and/or outside the writing/written world, but as the '*Differance*', the simultaneous deferral and difference between the two. According to Derrida, writing *is* the slippery space of *Difference* (143). For me, Indigenous women's writing has always embodied this theory.

I'm certain that this synthesis that I perceive as *within* Indigenous women's writing occurred well before Derrida's theory of writing (1974) allowed me to see it in this way. Given this tool, I see the connections between Derrida's theory and the play within Indigenous

women's writing quite regularly. While not fully invested in the witty play of deconstruction for deconstruction sake, Indigenous women's written work embodies writing in the Derridian sense in that the synthesis of being, thought and action emerges through their writing. Another evidence of Derridian 'difference' is that the writers who contributed to this project are never static in the location of their writing. They are not fully attached to being inside or outside of writing. Their writing can be understood as interstitial and fluid; and in this way can be situated within the 'difference' between the academy and the community. This writing from within but outside of the academy is evident in Patricia Monture's writing. She relates that as an academic writing from with one defined space (the academy), "My writing is not anchored in my profession. I don't write like an academic. Not because I can't but because I don't." (116). As well, according to Monture, the intent and purpose of her writing can differ daily. She says that some days "I am writing to survive. Some days I resist with my words. Other days I write dreams, hope and prayers." (116-117). All of Monture's writing within the academy is created with a clear intent "to fill the silence that has existed between "Indian" nations, our citizens, the women, and power" (116).

Indigenous women's writing, as I understand it, has within it the power to synthesize a language outside and inside of what Lawrence refers to as the embedded grammar of Indian Act thinking (26). This project focuses on how Indigenous women writers use the powerful and attractive nature of synthesis and play within writing to help people in concrete ways. I have yet to find a writer, or speaker, who states emphatically that 'this is the way to be Indigenous in the

world today'; what they provide are many ways of being Indigenous in the world today. They defer meaning while simultaneously creating it. As Weber-Pillwax identifies, this is synthesis; the point at which we begin and the point to which we always want to return ("Indigenous Research"169).

While I engage Derrida's notion to understand writing as synthesis, it is a theoretical abstraction. As an Indigenous researcher I am bound by my accountability and responsibility to keep in mind that the people and the communities of this research are very real. These are people that I know and they know me. The ways that I write about them has both an emotional and material consequence. Considering the requirements of an Indigenous methodology—respect, reciprocity and responsibility—any further attempt to honour these traditions means sharing what I know about the participants and having them speak for themselves.

1.3B2 Indigenous

In *First Voices an Aboriginal Women's Reader*, Patricia Monture reminds the reader that the naming of Indigenous peoples is always a function of time yet the way we name ourselves is always a function of Indigeneity (1). According to Monture "it is always important to remember that the words Aboriginal, Native, Indigenous, or Indian are colonial words imposed upon many diverse nations. They are not our own words for who we are" (1-2). Many of the contributors to this Indigenous research project self-identify with their tribal/nation affiliations to make meaning of and connect to their communities and relations. It is not the intent of this project to attempt a definition of Indigeneity, Nativeness, or Indianness. It is the intent of this project to recognize

that our relationality, location and propinquity, to our lands and/or communities means that we experience the world in ways that provide us with a worldview which is comprised of “a manifestation of language, a special knowledge system, as a unity with many diverse consciousnesses, and as a mode of social order, law, and solidarity” (Youngblood Henderson 251). It stands to reason that the “discord between Eurocentric and Indigenous worldviews” would result in personal experiences of Indigeneity that differ from prior writing and theorizing about Indigeneity and thus my own and others’ writings reflect these differences (Youngblood Henderson 251).

While Indigenous people may share worldviews and may understand the connectedness of land and people, Indigenous peoples the world over, or even from neighboring communities, are not all Indigenous in the same way. Canada’s colonial past and present have created more peculiar connections between us as Indigenous people in that we now share in the forced removal from our lands, the outlawing of our traditions, the gender specificity of dislocating Indigenous women and their children from their rightful access to land and resources through the forced enfranchisement of Canadian citizenry and the forced disenfranchisement from Indigenous citizenry, the residential school system, and the many Indian Acts that have legislated our identity provide us with a shared common experience. What makes us the same as Indigenous people in Canada is that the outcomes of these assimilationist projects places us all equally on precarious ground (Lawrence “Legislating Identity” 1).

The Indigenous paradigm of this research project allows me to approach this issue of sameness from a shifted perspective. This paradigmatic shift away from how we are viewed or how we are made to how we view ourselves or how we make meaning of our lives, better allows the reader to see how we are connected to each other as Indigenous people in positive ways. To shift from how we are made the same, to see how we know ourselves to be different but still connected provides the reader with better tools of understanding and survivance. To better understand this concept of shared yet simultaneously different relations, Youngblood Henderson provides a Lakota term “mitakuye oyasin” which he say translates to mean “we are all related” (227). When we want to make clear our connections to First Peoples, many Elders, teachers, and writers use the term ‘all my relations’ when speaking of Indigenous people who are not necessarily immediate family members. This is how I regard the community of people who have contributed to this project and in greater ways my own life; they are all my relations.

A point of this thesis project is to move away from a pan-Indigenous pastiche approach and show that it is possible for Indigenous theorists to contribute to an increasingly recognized Indigenous pedagogy, yet do so in diverse, distinct, opposing, and even contradictory ways. The connections can be recognized as being similarly produced within their own place and nation and for the betterment of their own people. In this project, one way to both acknowledge our connections and our differences is through the terms I use to identify the people who have contributed to this work. The reader is always at the forefront of my thoughts as I move through

this section of the research. The questions “what do you want to be called?” and “what do you want to call yourself?” should be at the forefront of the readers decision making as well.

As Monture stated earlier, the term “Aboriginal” was a colonial invention (1-2). The term was constructed and enforced through policies that still exist today to simultaneously convey a range of Indigenous identities (Indian status and non-status, Métis and Inuit) within the context of Canada. In the public lecture “Inuit and the Canadian Arctic: Sovereignty Begins at Home” Mary Simon who is president of the Inuit Tarpiriit Kanatami argues that the generic use of the term Aboriginal denies the Inuit their individuality and obfuscates the differences in issues faced by the Inuit in relation to other Indigenous Peoples. She says that the Inuit’s concerns are decidedly different from any other cultural groups in Canada (Simon, Public Lecture). As naming and being named discourses develop as a function of time, “Aboriginal” was not the only term whose usage has been challenged, “Indian” and “Native” were contested forms of Indigenous identification that have been worked through in both the academy and the community; although not in the same ways or for the same reasons. As one person relates, “I don’t care for the term Aboriginal. Or whatever *they* decide to call us now. Whatever is politically correct. I was born an Indian and I will die an Indian. It didn’t mean anything bad to me then and it doesn’t now” (Elder). Relationality and accountability within this project defines the issue of naming as beyond which term is the better term to use; at issue is the ways we talk about and we name ourselves and our relations.

Indigenous scholars understand that the terms created outside of our tribal knowledge are objectifying and homogenizing, they flatten and squish all the different cultures across Canada into one always already knowable Indigenous identity. Awareness of this issue is only the starting point. This project looks at the ways we identify and name ourselves while always keeping in mind the respect required when talking about people from other communities as well as people from my own communities.

Naming is always political. We need to name ourselves in ways that does not undermine our status as First Peoples. It isn't helpful to unpack the ways we name ourselves as a deconstructive practice that does not move back into synthesis. As both Weber-Pillwax and Lawrence relate, deconstruction is an inappropriate tool for talking about Indigenous identity when it is so clear that the material implications of deconstruction are the destruction of real people whose day to day survival is tied up in their identity as "Indians" (Weber-Pillwax 169; Lawrence 3). This is an issue we face when we are named by those outside of ourselves in ways that are not sufficient or agreeable yet we cannot disconnect from these structures of dominance because being named is now tied to the very means of physical survival. Rather than focus my attention here on why we shouldn't yet unpack the naming of Indigenous peoples, I would like to focus on the many ways that we survive being named. One way is how *we* identify ourselves in relation to our Indigenous communities and in relation to each other. I am an Upper-Cayuga Mohawk Hungarian woman. I am the researcher of this project. My ideas, heart and mind, thoughts and actions are not separable from this identity.

As we are talking about ourselves to each other (and I always keep in mind the reader who I imagine is an emergent Indigenous scholar) it makes sense then to turn to names that we call ourselves. Our Elders and our teachers remind us that we are “The People” or “First Peoples”. However, these aren’t terms we use to identify ourselves when we talk to each other. We may ask, “Where are you from?” or “Who is your mother or father?” when seeking to identify someone from outside of our communities. But when talking with each other, we often use our tribal identities to locate ourselves and our relations. Some of my students, who suggest that I read and re-read the urban dictionary so that I don’t get caught out again (you know who you are) tell me that I should understand that I am now ‘Nish’ by association. I am also ‘one of the Jedi’ (the force is strong in this one) and ‘a member of the club’ depending on which student I am talking with.

Where the information is available and accurate, each contributor to this project self-identifies by their tribal affiliation. When speaking in general terms about our shared experiences and worldviews, I use the term “Indigenous” to acknowledge our connections and relations. In a recent public lecture held at Six Nations Polytechnic Institute, Local Elders explained this concept of Indigenous people’s ways of relating to each other despite the differences of culture and languages between nations by talking about the connections between peoples, land, and place. Locally, between the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabe we share land and resources in what is called the beaver hunting ground. Historically we have a covenant between the peoples sharing this place set out in the *Bowl with One Spoon Wampum*. While textual documentation

abounds, the *Bowl with One Spoon Wampum* represents a treaty whose details are repeated in storytelling to remind us of the ways we have undertaken to have good relations with our neighbors. This teaching is still used in our theory and politics today. *The Bowl with One Spoon Wampum* reminds us of the need for unity and peace in our relations with other differing Indigenous peoples. Similar to the tenet of the 1701 Haudenosaunee and Hahnyo:oh (white man) treaty agreement manifest in the more readily recognized *Two Row Wampum*, the *Bowl with One Spoon Wampum* also reminds of the need for peace and unity in our relations with other non-Indigenous peoples. Our own history and teachings show us that ‘the People’ are and have always been remarkably different and heterogeneous across Indigenous civilizations. As stated earlier, a concern of this Indigenous research project is that we identify ourselves in our own terms and that this identification acknowledges both the ways we are different and similar in our production of contemporary Indigenous pedagogy and epistemology.

While this projects works through theorizing the empowerment and sovereignty of Indigenous people from within Indigenous literatures and writing, the focus of this project is to better understand that there is no one “Indigenous” way of being or knowing, so too is there no one Indigenous theory that is not informed in some way by this very separate modernity in which we presently exist differently as the People. Considering this knowledge, that we (Indigenous scholars in this case) are all differently Indigenous, the crisis of cohesiveness and inclusion in defining (not a goal) or understanding what is ‘Indigenous’ epistemology and pedagogy is always present.

1.4 Making the Connections: Being Active and Present in the Academy

1.4A Introduction

The space and therefore the relationship between people or between people and their environment is seen as sacred and a key concept within many Indigenous peoples' spirituality. By reducing the space between things, we are strengthening the relationship that they share. And this bringing things together so that they share the same space is what ceremony is all about" (Wilson 165-166).

The intent of structuring the thesis in this way is to start moving toward creating harmony and balance between these two spaces. As Wilson reminds the reader even in the literature review (while they are not the participant's words they still contribute to Indigenous knowledge building through their contributions to the research) there is still the opportunity to find new knowledge and work toward this balance. Which Wilson says is "the goal of any research [...] is restoring the balance and harmony of a relationship" (Wilson 150). The themes that emerged from an analysis of the participants story's can be better understood as a guide for this review in that it is a result of seeking out theories and theoretical frameworks to better understand what I saw as connections between the participant's stories.

1.4B Making the Connections

Moving from codes to concepts to categories and then to theory, the selected grounded theory methodology, allowed the participant voice to determine the themes examined in the literature. Themes that emerged from the coding of the participants conversations are

1. Culturally relevant voice and knowledge

2. Fit within the academy
3. Survivance not resistance
4. Concern for younger women coming through the system
5. Appropriation of voice
6. Love for Indigenous ways
7. Women's roles within the community
8. Providing positive role models
9. The desire to help the community by giving back

While it would be a great opportunity to explore each one of the themes identified in the participant's conversations, the scope of such a project is too vast for this Master's thesis project. I have considered these themes and saw various connections running through them that easily lend themselves to grouping singular themes to form macro themes or thematic concepts.

Putting some of these themes together, such as the fit within the academy, culturally relevant voice, and concern for young girls coming through the system, creates a larger category or thematic concept that I refer to as 'the Academy'. Another broader thematic concept called 'the Community' can be made by connecting the themes of women's role in the community, positive role models, and the desire to help the community by giving back. A final larger thematic concept called 'Critical Knowledge Production' can be made by connecting the themes of appropriation of voice, love for Indigenous ways, and survivance not resistance. Considering we now have three solid areas of inquiry for the review, the Academy, the Community, and

Critical Knowledge another level of connection can be made to show the interrelatedness of each of these theoretical areas. The one question that would bring all of these macro and micro categories together is, “Why is it important for Indigenous women to be actively present and contributing within the academy?”

1.4C “Why is it important for Indigenous women to be actively present and contributing within the academy?”

Anderson says that she thinks “It’s also important for us to be in the academy because this demonstrates to our younger people that higher education is a place where Aboriginal people belong” (Anderson). Anderson goes on to explain that the academy is a generative place “where they can work on some of the thinking and teaching that needs to happen” (Anderson). Weber-Pillwax speaks to the world of opportunities that exist for Indigenous students and she says “This has always been one good reason to encourage my student to go to university” (168). The academy can also be understood to function as a place for Indigenous role modeling, mentorship and building aspirations in our youth. The location of Elders, traditional teachers, language teachers, Indigenous faculty, Indigenous staff, and Indigenous students within the academy means we are now better prepared than ever to provided role models and mentors for the hundreds of youth in that have moved through my Aboriginal high school enrichment conference series each year.

Monture says that “encouraging positive self-images must be the fundamental building blocks on Aboriginal aspirations are built into the education system” (78). I agree. And that’s

one of the best reasons to be active and contributing in the academy right now, because this is happening. Programs, like the ones I run, that are now operating in post-secondary institutions and high schools across Canada means that the academy can also function as safe spaces for Indigenous youth; not just a place to come and learn but a home away from home. The Indigenous students in my postsecondary program have Elders they can come and talk with, they have an open kitchen where they can make a meal together and spend time connecting with other students and our staff. They also have a safe place on campus to come and talk about something that happened in their day. Because, even though the academy is a wonderful space with real powers of transformation and change in every corner, it doesn't mean that it is without racism, prejudices, and its own kind of ignorance that still hurts these students.

1.4D Standing Counterpoint

Like Monture, I know that the academy, whether it's an issue within the scholarship or the community itself, can also be a damaging place; we "know that students continue to struggle with the amount of pain they experience (59). And like Monture, I also "know this because of the tears I have shared with these students" (59). Anderson (Cree) and Lawrence (Mi'kmaq) explain that our presence as agents of change within the academy is so sorely needed to counterpoint "the stunning extent of marginalization of both Indigenous men and women within Canadian universities [. . .] has a central role to play in [. . .] the largely absent [. . .] Indigenous women's voices [. . .]" (4). According to Monture (Mohawk), this academically enforced fragmentation of

being, mind and action is the product of trying to operate in a mainstream body that does not value or even recognize the necessity of operating with an Indigenous heart and mind (178-179).

In “How Scholarship Defames the Native Voice...and Why”, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux) further explores the relationship between the production of Indigenous Knowledges and discourses and the ongoing colonial apparatuses of the North American nation state. “The struggle of the colonized indigenous peoples of the continent to tell their own stories in the twentieth century through politics or literature or revolutionary movements has been the struggles to reveal to the public the hope for a new and remodeled world” Cook-Lynn argues (86). She goes on to state that when Indigenous people are denied their right to tell their own stories in their own way this is a “denial of the basic human rights, through the development of nationalistic, legal, social, and intellectual systems that make it impossible for a domestic people, or a domestic nation of Indians, to express itself collectively and historically in terms of the continued self-determination, is a kind of genocide that is perhaps even more immoral than the physical genocide of war and torture” (86).

Cook-Lynn contends that colonial impulses of control and power that are alive and well in the ideas of the academy has meant that “the efforts that indigenous peoples have made to speak for themselves and their peoples [...] are being subjected to abuse and scholarly/political attack that goes far beyond the normal critical analysis of academic work” (80). She goes on to say that much Indigenous literature and theory is systematically being denied its place in the academy as theoretically sound because it is “subjected to analysis as either inauthentic or too

transgressive and counter-hegemonic, and often is discredited as literature that is not even aesthetically pleasing” (81). Cook-Lynn’s focus on the place of Indigenous literatures within the academy is not incidental. The Academy, she says, has silenced and defamed the “native literary voice” by claiming the work to be ‘inauthentic’ and ‘untruthful’ when it does not measure up to the standards of the Academy when in fact Native writers are talking about the very real struggle between “powerless Indians and brutal colonists in North and South America...which is a real thing and has been a real thing for four hundred years” (86). Cook-Lynn reminds us of the need to take action with the academy silencing, dismissing or defaming the Native literary voice, as Native writers (Cook-Lynn is talking about Rigoberta Menchu’s ‘Testimonio’ as an affirmation of Native culture in her writing) provide the “hope for justice, land reform, economic stability in the communities from which such literature comes (88). This is what sits at the heart of this thesis. Indigenous writers, writing hope and survival into their stories, are the key to maintaining our cultural survivance.

Womack says, “At least until we get our stories told, especially in terms of establishing a body of Native criticism in relation to nineteenth century writings, postmodernism may have some limits in regards to its applicability to Native scholarship” (4). A move away from the impulses of deconstruction for some Indigenous scholars, Weber-Pillwax says, can be attributed to the desire of Indigenous knowledge to seek synthesis and action. Weber-Pillwax states, “As Indigenous scholars, we want to end up and stay in synthesis” (169). The real challenge for academics, Weber-Pillwax contends, is taking up such abstractions of concepts while keeping a

real hold on “the practicality of action” (169). Too often Indigenous scholars who enter the academy face the dilemma of having to know well and fully two very different and at times disparate sets of knowledges; academic knowledge and Indigenous knowledge.

In “Warrior Scholarship Seeing the Academy as a Ground of Contention” Taiaiake Alfred seeks to locate Indigenous knowledge within the academy and he starts by asking the question “what is Indigenizing the academy?” (88). He gives his answer to this question as he continues to say “it means that we are working to change universities so that they become the place where the values, principals, and modes of organization and behavior of our people are respected in, and hopefully even integrated into the larger system of structures and processes that make up the university itself” (88). Alfred provides another view of the academy as a “not safe space” he also says that it’s not so special or different from any other type of institution (88). Alfred even identifies the academy as the Indigenous scholars’ own location of colonialism (88).

However Alfred makes an important distinction between what the academy is and what our responsibility to that space is. Alfred reiterates “but they are the places where we work as academics—they are our sites of colonialism. And, they are our responsibility” (88). As our responsibility, just like the research we undertake, as Indigenous scholars Alfred says that “we have a responsibility to do what we can where we are to ensure the survival of our culture and our nations” (88-89). Alfred emphasizes that “We have the responsibility to work to defeat the operation of colonialism within the university and to reorder academe” (89). Achievable or not, Alfred suggests that reestablishing the harmonious balance in our relations and in ourselves is a

way out of colonialism (89). The academy as a place of creation is only one such place where such an event can take place, the harmonious balance between the community and the academy are required to work our way out of colonialism.

1.5 Shifting the Focus

A phenomenon of interest in this project is the evidence of a marked difference in the focal gaze of Indigenous women's writing as different from the focal gaze of the critical responders to Indigenous women's writing (Fiske 18). While developed more fully in Chapter 3, I think it can helpful for the reader to look to Laura Mulvey's theory of "to-be-looked-at-ness" and viewing pleasure to understand how an examination of this focal shift can illuminate mechanisms of control (17). Mulvey's focus on understanding viewing pleasure and the male viewer's gaze through psychoanalytic theory does have its limits in the context of this research. I caution the reader that it takes a much deeper reading of Mulvey than I provide here to see this fit. For the purposes of this project I suggest that Mulvey's theory of "to-be-looked-at-ness" (which refers to those who are the object of the gaze or who are being looked at) combined with her theory of the viewers pleasure (which refers to those who are the subject of the gaze or those doing the looking) can be thought of in the analogy of overlaying a projector transparency on this focus of this project, the academy and Indigenous people.

This attempt to understand the gaze now has the academy standing in as the subject of gaze (previously the viewer) and Indigenous people standing in as the object of the gaze (previously the viewed). If the reader thinks of the ways these identities (the gazer and the gazed

at) function as locations of power the very mechanisms, which Mulvey says keeps us “still tied to [the] place as the bearer of meaning and not the maker of meaning” become illuminated (6). Mulvey contends that understanding these locations of power “gets us nearer to the roots of our oppression [. . .] which “while still caught in the language [. . .] we can begin to make a break [. . .] with the tools it provides (6). Yes, one of the critical limits of Mulvey’s theory is her unquestioned reliance on the male gaze as central to understanding male pleasure when viewing women (which has been criticized for being heterosexist and responsible for denying female viewing pleasure or female agency). Using Mulvey’s theory in this application does not resolve these critiques but it does offer the reader a way to see the world and themselves in it.

What Mulvey does provide is a way of understanding the shift from being viewed to viewing as a shift in power relations. In keeping with Mulvey’s theory, this shift in power relations may mark the beginning of the decline of these traditional power relations. For those whose theory has “continually been stolen and used for this end” they should not see the decline of these traditions with “anything much more than sentimental regret” (17). The focus, Mulvey contends, needs to be on how we are “separated by a great gap from the important issues” (6). For the purpose of this research, the gap I focus on exists between our places in the community and the academy.

Whether we are Mohawk, Creek, Cree, Mi’kmaq, or Métis, as Indigenous writers, scholars, and theorists we often find ourselves practicing in a context that has primarily focused on our identity formations as the “merely contingent and negotiated” assumptions of Indigeneity.

Lawrence cites Lorraine LeCamp's unpublished theory to help the reader better understand that these post-structural impulses embedded in the deconstruction of identities which suggest 'being' Indigenous can be 'contingent' or 'negotiated', are actions within the academy that continue to be unquestioned on a larger scale because these impulses are supported by colonial understandings of Indigenous Peoples and place as "terra nullius/theoria nullius", empty land empty theory (qtd. in Lawrence 2). In "*Real*" *Indians and Others* Lawrence says that the foundations of the empty-land/empty-theory premise are forwarded by non-Indigenous writers, scholars, and theorist as a means of justifying writing about Indigeneity outside of the relationships and accountability required of writing from this position (2). Evidence exists within the academy that much prior scholarship on Indigenous peoples and Indigenous ways of life are justified through this theorizing *in absentia* of relationality. In a public lecture hosted at the University of Waterloo, Haudenosaunee Elder Dan Smoke, discussed this "need to address the absence within the academy" by saying that the creation of theories about Indigenous peoples were deemed necessary to understanding or explaining the presumed absence and the overtly negative presence of Indigenous peoples within pedagogy "but were usually only talked about within the strict limits of the noble or the savage Indian" (Smoke).

However, the reader can be thankful that the understanding of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous ways is still not a fully realized project within the academy. With room to create new knowledge in the understanding of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous ways, this project attempts to shift the focus from being looked at (it even shifts away from our responses to being

looked at) to look at ourselves and our relations to each other. Weber-Pillwax suggests that this paradigmatic shift is the movement from deconstruction to synthesis. Weber-Pillwax says, “We start out in Synthesis, and we move through the university system, we end up with deconstruction” (169). Simply, we start out in our respective communities looking at each other ↔ we move into the world outside of our communities and we start to look at how we are seen by others our focus turns to the centre with the centre now in our line of vision ←○→ we cannot see each other as we are more concerned with our relation to the centre. Within Indigenous research our vision is refocused ↔ and our hearts and minds are turned back to ourselves, our communities, and each other.

As Womack says, “Even postcolonial approaches, with so much emphasis on how the settler culture views the other, largely miss an incredible point: How do Indians view other Indians?” (13). Shifting to what we are saying about ourselves and each other is still not without its own challenges and limits. I can’t speak for or represent any other experience or perspective other than my own. I also can’t define what Indigenous theory is and I can’t define what Indigenous theory is not. Contrary to suggestions that we will have made it in the academy when Indigenous people can decide what is and what is not Indigenous theory, the action of anyone deciding what is or what is not Indigenous theory is not liberating in and of itself and cannot be considered a point of achievement. It is another example of postcolonial gate keeping and not an example of self-determination. Determining for ourselves whose theory is more fully

‘Indigenous’ or whose ideas are more closely ‘traditional’ is damaging and divisive. We have to ask ourselves “is this the goal we have set for ourselves; to be our own colonial gatekeepers”?

Deciding who is Indigenous enough (or not) to authentically make theory about Indigenous is an action inseparable from our notions of Indianness, which Lawrence says “has its own “grammar”, a way of thinking about Indianness restricted by the legislation of identity within the Indian Acts that embeds itself even in attempts to change it” (26). Which, she argues, is a notion of identity borne out of “blood quantum ideas and colonial measurements of Indigeneity” (Lawrence 26). Keeping this in mind, the writing examined in this project is not automatically conferred a measure of good and/or authentic Indigenous theory status by virtue of its location in this project. The writing, and by extension the writers whose works form the basis of this inquiry, provide Indigenous scholars with a positive way of looking at the world and provide them with the means of negotiating what can be at times hostile environments. For me personally, Indigenous writers help me be Haudenosaunee in the world today. They decide and identify that they are Indigenous. I decide the ways in which their works afford me ways to keep whole during the research process.

1.6 Indigenous Axiology; the cultural value system that grounds this research.

Shawn Wilson explains the concept of relationships, relations, and what he calls “relationality” as critical to an Indigenous research framework where,

In an Indigenous ontology there may be multiple realities, as in a constructivist research paradigm. The difference lies in that rather than the truth being ‘out there’ (as in the *X-Files*), reality is in the relationship that one has with truth. Thus an object or thing is not as

important as one's relationship to it. This idea can be further expanded to say that reality is relationships or sets of relationships. There is no one definite reality, but rather different sets of relationships that make up an Indigenous ontology. Reality is thus not an object, but a process of relationships, and therefore an Indigenous ontology is actually the equivalent of an Indigenous epistemology. 138-139

In a 2007 public lecture Dan Longboat described relationships and knowledge in the same way Wilson described his theory of relationality in 2004. Both Wilson and Longboat suggest that the reader can better understand the nature of the value system that grounds an Indigenous research process as fully relational to Indigenous cultural values where there is a direct connection made between understanding knowledge and understanding the origins of knowledge (Wilson 154; Dan Longboat). As much as the axiological system described by both Wilson and Longboat acts as a guide for much Indigenous research it also helps to form the very questions we ask as researchers working across an Indigenous research paradigm.

In the case of this Indigenous research process, the axiology of relational accountability—informed by a Haudenosaunee value system—informs the methodology of this thesis project. Within an Indigenous research paradigm of relational accountability, the axiology and methodology are highly interrelated as both are premised on what I understand to be the widely shared Indigenous cultural teachings of reciprocity, respect, and responsibility recently formalized within the academy as components of an 'Indigenous Methodology' (Archibald 377; Weber-Pillwax 80; Wilson 148). It can be difficult for a reader to fully grasp the proposed interconnectedness of these specifics of an Indigenous methodology—the methodology meaning the process you use to do things; the ontology meaning the origin of the knowledge you use to do

things; the epistemology meaning the study of knowledge you use to do things; and the axiology meaning the value system that drives the ethical ways in which you do things —as these are often taught in the academy as distinct and are not in and of themselves Indigenous. The reader might then ask, what makes an Indigenous research paradigm Indigenous? The best and simplest answer to this is that the researcher makes the research paradigm Indigenous by living the value system of their Indigenous community.

As a Haudenosaunee person, I have a direct responsibility to carry myself in good ways. I work closely with members of my home community, Six Nations of the Grand River, my local urban Aboriginal community, Aboriginal services agencies, Aboriginal high schools across Ontario, and many post-secondary institutions where my words and actions are closely regarded as reflective of my cultural values. While it wasn't always this way, over the years my roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities have grown within my respective communities and I have accepted these responsibilities as a way of living and being. I am an Indigenous person; my research does not exist outside of this value system. While it is not without its own frustrations, pain, tiredness, and conflict, this path I continually choose to walk keeps me whole and, I hope, helps my communities along the way.

1.7 Purpose

This Master's thesis is an Indigenous research project with a purpose of better understanding Indigenous women writing as increasingly recognized as a critical site of what Gerald Vizenor refers to in *Manifest Manners* as “liberation, imagination, talk, [and] play”

literatures, which I understand as fundamental to envisioning, articulating and enacting the survivance of Indigenous peoples and our communities from within the academy (a space which is explored in this thesis as but one place of creation) (4). Using an Indigenous based methodology informed by a grounded theory and woman-centered methodology; this project examines a number of simultaneously occurring phenomena using Indigenous women's narratives and stories to better understand the connections of these phenomena as they relate to the cultural survivance of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

This project shows that Indigenous women writers are 'word warriors', writing the "Survivance" of Indigenous peoples, as well as writers of resistance or subversive literatures (Vizenor vii; Anderson 140; Gunn Allen xi, Womack 12). Vizenor's theory of survivance affirms that we not only survived the trials and genocide of coloniality but we thrived in the face of destruction. Survivance means that we continue to produce generations with hope, with a "native sense of presence, a motion of sovereignty and a will to resist dominance"(53). Engaging survivance as a framework for understanding also begins to provide a better understanding of the limits of prior writing and research about Indigeneity. Currently accepted and valued within the academy, many commonly understood features of Indigenous identity were formed through the scholars' relations to text (historic texts or other genres) which fixed all Indigenous people as the same (always already knowable). This was only possible because many theorists who wrote about Indigeneity relied heavily on an historically specific produced and accepted evidence of Indianness which can be understood as a 'simulation of Indian' identity for which the

“simulations” exists through “the absence of the Tribal real” (Vizenor 4). A simulation of “Indian”, according to Vizenor, has no identifiable or knowable referent because it often exists outside of a “tribal” context (as within the academy and within literature) (4). In *Manifest Manners*, Vizenor suggests that the purpose of upholding the simulation as real has at its centre a goal of “the surveillance and domination of the tribes in literature” (4). This project also begins to demonstrate that Indigenous women’s writing can be categorically identified as ‘Indigenous’ through a variety of determinations posited by Indigenous theorists. As Thomas King says in *All My Relations* Native literature is “literature produced by Natives” (X). As Craig Womack says Indigenous writing is Indigenous because it provides Indigenous people (including those yet to come) with ways of being Indigenous in the world (Womack 15). As Kimberley Blaeser says, Indigenous writing provides Indigenous scholars with an Indigenous “critical center” (Blaeser 53). And finally, as Gerald Vizenor says, tribal literatures also provides Indigenous theorists with a “standpoint, a worldview, and a presence” (“Conversations” 93) to undertake critical inquiry, and it uses tribal humor as a counterpoint to the ‘tragic victimry’ so clearly present in the “manifest manners of domination” over tribal writing (“Manners” 5). And while not least, at last Indigenous women’s writing has reached what Thomas King referred to as the point of critical mass in which a matrix of defined visible patterns can now be discerned” (X).

Another purpose of this research project is to reinforce that tribal knowledges are critical ways of knowing and have massive generative potential for theorizing Indigenous lives. Building Indigenous epistemology, pedagogy, methodology and ethics on the current inquiries of

Indigenous researchers by, for and about Indigenous peoples and communities can also provide non-Indigenous researchers models of action that ground the researcher more fully in his or her community.

As an Indigenous researcher I have looked for other Indigenous researchers to follow, Indigenous methods to undertake, and Indigenous writers to talk to. An important outcome of this research process that I want to share with other students beginning to undertake an Indigenous research project is that this project is always about relationships and sometimes the ongoing nature of those relationships also means that the project or research can often continue well beyond the submission of any papers or reports. The narratives provided by the Indigenous women and many others who participated in this research project show how these writings are increasingly recognized as critical points of connecting what have been disparate places of creation, the community and the academy. This examination of Indigenous women's writing in the context of 'space' is meant to better make meaning of Indigenous identity, responsibility and connection to community, the contribution to personal and collective sovereignty of Indigenous peoples and the affirmation that "researching from an Indigenous paradigm" keeps these relationships and accountabilities as central (Womack 14; Wilson 175; Weber-Pillwax 80).

Use of an Indigenous research framework provides an opportunity which allows an Indigenous researcher to see their beliefs, value systems and worldviews back to them from within their own place in the academy. This can be a comforting space. It becomes a clear point through which they can see themselves reflected accurately and actively present in the academy.

However, it is sometimes the knowledge gathered through our own belief system, values, or worldviews—as it differs from dominant narratives and discourses about us—that allows us more clearly to see the occurrences of our own absences and or misrepresentations. If the reader grew up with local traditional knowledge about an issue or way of life, when he or she experiences the cognitive dissonance of reading something ‘about’ that traditional knowledge or way of life that does not mesh with their own understanding, it can be a painful disorienting experience. The reader is left to wonder about whose knowledge is more correct. As a new Indigenous researcher faced with this dissonance, you may ask yourself, “What source of information should the reader believe?”

The question of whose knowledge is more accurate or believable is the very question that initiated this thesis inquiry. The question of who is telling the better story about Indigenous people emerged from my own experiences of seeing these peculiar absences and misrepresentation of local Indigenous knowledge within the academy. Of particular interest to me was the absence and misrepresentation of local women’s Indigenous cultural knowledge from the academy. In the early years of my undergraduate studies, I discovered that my own understanding of Haudenosaunee relationships and cultural values (specifically women’s place, roles, and responsibility within the political systems of Haudenosaunee cultures) differed significantly from what I was told by a professor and what was published within academic literature on the subject of Indigenous women’s’ place in Haudenosaunee culture.

I knew that other Aboriginal women were attending the same post-secondary institution as I was. I thought that it was likely that I was not alone in experiencing this peculiar dissonance of discovery. When starting to examine current critical analysis focused on Indigenous literature and Indigenous theoretical development, I found more often that it was not Indigenous women producing this critical pedagogy (their own words and experiences gathered on the page) rather it was more likely a non-Indigenous theorist who was reportedly close to the text that was a published expert and thus their work was made more readily accessible than that of Indigenous women theorist.

It was this absence of clear Indigenous representation within academic resources that started my search for other Indigenous women theorists, students, writers, Elders, grandmothers, and aunts. I wanted clear answers as to why women's Indigenous voice and vision were mostly absent or misrepresented in the academic resources I needed to support my research process. In early conversations with other emerging Indigenous scholars, I found that the searches for resources meant to support our research resulted in more shared experiences of frustration and confusion than experiences of success. Much later in the research process I was able to discuss the lack of respectful and accurate published research about Indigenous women with the participants of this thesis project. For many of this project's participants, like Anderson, they felt "awful" because this lack of accurate and published Indigenous research meant that as Indigenous researchers they often had to rely on commonly accepted or published theory about Indigenous women's lives that did not include their own words, wisdom, or values (Anderson).

For many of the participants in this research project, when first starting out as researchers they were building relations and trust in their respective communities. Having to rely on what was published about, not by and for, Indigenous people was a serious breach of that trust and the participants recognized that their own participants' feelings of safety were undermined. I attend to this point here, because it is still relevant for Indigenous researchers to remember in 2010.

When first starting out as an Indigenous scholar, I asked, "Where were the Indigenous women scholars on Indigenous scholarship?" Like more and more Indigenous scholars, I went to graduate school to find out. Julia Emberley's "Thresholds of Difference: Feminist Critique, Native Women's Writing, and Post-Colonial Theory" (1993) was one of the few current—although at times highly inaccessible—theories about Native women's writing as boundary crossing between the disciplines of post-structural feminist critique and postcolonial theory. However exciting and fresh Emberley's work, it stood as proof; a material embodiment of the evidence of absence permeating all the corners of the academy up to that point. It was a signpost of things to come.

The concrete evidence of absence combined with my earlier dissonance of discovery prompted the purpose of this thesis inquiry. As much as I admired Emberley's hard-work tempered playfulness, I knew I needed to find works committed to the relationships required to further Indigenous women's own knowledge production. However, as was the case in any academy not quite ready for most Indigenous epistemology developed from within tribal knowledge and experience, I relied heavily on the square peg round hole model using readily

located theoretical work from non-Indigenous theorists. I applied their theories in a pan-Indigenous pastiche fashion and was not surprised with the miss/fit outcomes. As a new researcher, with the evidence of absence clearly marked out, it appeared that authorities such as Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha and to some degree Emberley (who was at least 'local') knew best how to navigate these perilous post-colonial struggles. As preeminent scholars in post-colonial discourse, theirs was highly accepted theory and their identifiable and knowable works were the only and best way to understanding our own 'post-colonial' situation here in Canada.

Since being aware of the dissonance of discovery, I started questioning the ways the 'solutions' to Indigenous 'problems' were created, often done in very different ways from how I understood knowledge building and sharing to take place. The 'best solutions' were offered up by the post-colonial scholar who did not live in Canada, who relied on an unquestioned use of East/West dichotomies (where some Aboriginal theorists contend that Indigenous peoples *are* the original West), and insisted that a post-colonial state was an achievable reality. In each of these limits of postcolonial scholarship, the discrepancy came from what I was reading and seeing written about Indigenous people and what I knew about Indigenous people. While only undertaking a cursory inquiry of postcolonial scholarship in this thesis, I would remind the reader that, while this position of postcolonial scholarship is limited within a Canadian Indigenous context, it is not without merit and should not be read as being dismissed or unimportant to understanding a colonized state, its mechanisms, apparatus, and language. What post-colonial theory has done is brought the ongoing mechanisms of coloniality into sharp relief.

We now have language, discourse, and theory about the embeddedness of colonialism in Canada through post-colonial theory and discourse. To have this language of coloniality is critical to moving forward because once you can talk about anything, you have the potential to change it.

Beginning to identify the purpose of this research project starting with these points of the evidence of absence and dissonance of discovery, what I saw was an opportunity to show why it is important to be represented and active within the academic production of Indigenous identity formations. The purpose of this research is to take an increasingly uncomfortable space— that growing gap between the academy and the community relating what is known about us and how we know ourselves—and ensuring that is less uncomfortable, less dangerous, less demeaning, and less deflating than it has been for many of us in the past. As Indigenous scholars, we have to begin by doing more than advocating Indigenous women’s writing within the academy as a space of empowerment while simultaneously using non-Indigenous theorists who wrote about Indianness as a fixed and knowable thing (the ‘Indian’ or the ‘aboriginals’) as the basis of inquiry and transforming these inequitable and inharmonious relations into what I envision as the place of creation. I just needed to believe that I, Emerance Baker, underrepresented emergent Indigenous researcher, could do this.

As Weber-Pillwax relates, the very reality of working in the field of Indigenous inquiry as an Indigenous researcher is “complex” in that the researcher has “values and beliefs [. . .] inherent to the culture implicated in the research” yet may not have the knowledge or the self-esteem to fully understand the value of those beliefs (“Indigenous Researchers” 78). My own

discomfort arose from knowing that academically acceptable feminist or interdisciplinary methods and project frameworks did not fit what I knew to be the purpose of this research. Simply applying a feminist or interdisciplinary method or framework would not fulfill a goal of this research which was to shift the focus from being looked at as Indigenous peoples to looking at ourselves in relation to each other. I knew there was a different way of framing and undertaking this thesis project inquiry but I had yet to find it. I was not sure, starting out on this journey, that I was strong enough to do this work. I was not ready for Indigenous women writers who were critical of my thesis foundations and my place in the academy, and some were. I was not knowledgeable enough to respond to criticisms about why I would use a male theorist to ground my work if I was woman focused or feminist in my approach. I needed knowledge and I needed to grow my skin seven spans thick (Elders Teaching 2009). While I may not have, yet, grown my skin to be seven spans thick so that I could bear the scars from so many assaults against my being and understanding as a Haudenosaunee woman, I am more clearly on the path and safer now that I am armed with these teachings.

From the Elders teachings and my own studies and experiences, I knew that it was not sufficient to have looked and not found the Indigenous theory, the stories, or the relations that this work required of me. It really meant that I had not looked properly or enough. I was reading Patricia Monture's work one day and I realized that she was writing for me. Her readers are Indigenous. She makes this clear in her words. It was one of those thunderbolt moments when I realized that the theory for understanding Indigenous women's writing as creation and ceremony

(ceremony as medicine) was within their words. I didn't need to apply an already developed, mass produced, and value inflated theory and make it 'work'. As Anishinaabe critical theorist Kimberly Blaeser (Chippewa) explains, even the best Indigenous research that relies on "applying" already established frameworks of post-structural, postcolonial and feminist inquiry to Indigenous research is still reproducing colonial impulses of control and marginalization (56). I had to have faith that I could find a way to make this *original* theory within Indigenous women's writing work for them. As Blaeser further explains, the difference between applying and employing mainstream critical frameworks comes from the writer's position "within" a native literary tradition, in which we will "discover appropriate tools or to form appropriate language of critical discourse" (56). It is the purpose of this thesis to show how Indigenous women are writing Indigenous identity and formulating unique and empowering possibilities for Indigenous peoples to be in the world today.

1.8 Thesis Goals

Introduction

In this section I want to briefly cover the goal and possible outcomes of this research project and examine what I hope to accomplish within the limited scope of this project. The goal of this project is to contribute to the growing body of evidence that the theory within Indigenous women's writing is at the core of our survivance as Indigenous people. While outcomes of this goal may not be fully achievable within the scope of this project, they are identified here and can be considered areas for future research.

Outcome 1

One outcome of this project goal may be to bring harmony to the relations between the academy and the community. Thinking through Indigenous women's writing as the hinge equally linking the academy and the community--these places of creation--to the development of Indigenous theory is one way of working toward striking a balanced relationship between the academy and the community. The theory within Indigenous women's writing may be created in both the academy and the community. Only recently, however, has the theoretical production of Indigenous knowledge within the community been understood as equal to the theory produced in the academy. As well, only recently with the use of Indigenous research, methodologies, and ethics, have Indigenous communities started to benefit in ways they can control, see, and feel. As more than just a function of time, the increased benefit to Indigenous peoples and communities through research is more a function of the critical mass of Indigenous scholarship and the value placed on that scholarship in both the academy and the community.

The increase of Indigenous theory production cannot be simply identified as a causal effect of more Indigenous people entering post-secondary learning institutions, because not all Indigenous students write Indigenous critical theory and not all Indigenous theory is created in the academy. I think it can be considered a phenomenon whose simultaneous occurrence with other phenomenon has a synergy of creation and provides us with what Thomas King referred to earlier as the matrix through which we will understand things.

Outcome 2

Another possible outcome of meeting the goal of this project comes from an Elders teaching of the Seven Grandfather Teachings, which reminds us to speak with love to each other. When we talk to each other we don't have to say that we are mad, tired of being seen as victims, full of grief over losing loved ones to ongoing colonial bloated ignorance and niceties, full of rage over ongoing discrimination and racism. Of course we are! This is a given and we know this much to be true. We acknowledge these things in each other because we have heard, lived, internalized, carried in our hearts and in our minds, borne the scars on our skins, and lived the realities of these stories.

A possible outcome of this project is to remind each other about the love we have for our traditions, our ways, our peoples, our families, our Elders, our children, our stories, our songs, our words, our lands, and rights and our wrongs. The Seven Grandfather Teachings about love is to remind us as peoples that we are to love our brothers and sisters and to share with them. I am always reminded at this point in my thesis, that the love our Elders talk about is not an uncomplicated love, but a love embedded in our everyday caring about each other and ourselves.

Outcome 3

An outcome of this project may be that an identified shift in being looked at, to looking at ourselves, creates new ways of understanding and organizing our place within the world. Along with establishing the importance of writing for ourselves and finding out what Indigenous women are saying about Indigeneity, is the question of do we (or do we even) interpret,

categorize, and locate our own writing within the academy and our communities (Fiske 18). There are examples of Indigenous and non-Indigenous theorists who categorize Indigenous women's writing as resistance or survival writing (Anderson 2000, Strong-Boag and Gerson 2000, Emberley 1993, Harjo and Bird 1997, Monture-Angus 1999 and 2009). In "By, For, or About?: Shifting Directions in the Representation of Indigenous Women" Jo-Anne Fiske suggests that "resistant and protest literature" are perhaps the most critical categories embraced by Indigenous and non-Indigenous critics to describe the politicized activity of Indigenous women's writing (19). This focused attention on the production of critical theory from within Indigenous women's writing is perceived as producing a genre of writing and critique in which Indigenous women are focused on their own "victimization/survival, rage, grief, grievance, personal and collective pain arising from alienation ... and cultural and linguistic genocide" (Fiske 19).

While Fiske's statement, "The writers themselves articulate theory that arises within their stories and is integral to their own, culturally-positioned narratives and narrative styles" states the very premise of my thesis project, the context in which it is situated better reflects the focus on a 'talking back' mode of writing dominant at the time the article was written (2000) than it does today. It is possible that the shift from 'talking back' to 'talking to' which focuses our hearts and minds on our communities and people will produce the language needed to theorize our lives in relation to each other.

Outcome 4

As stated earlier, this research project is about understanding, developing, and maintaining relationships. As Indigenous academics, researchers, and educators, the links between our research and our communities are continually connected. This can be a truism for any small and closely connected community. How many times have you sat on a committee with people you know from other committees or boards? The same thing happens in my community, regularly. We make these connections and build these relationships in one area only to find we are accountable and thus responsible for their maintenance and care in other areas. Working within a home community is not easy but I wanted to keep the people of my communities central to what I was doing. For this thesis project, a goal of relational accountability was not to simply achieve what is thought of as better practices in Indigenous research. Keeping relational accountability as a goal was a way for me to resolve the struggle that I face as an academic to centre Indigenous knowledge, epistemology, and pedagogy within the academy and the community, the places where I work and live. I am always hopeful that an outcome of this project, regardless of whether it is an action of my own or a result of another researcher's action, is that our young people (those scholars yet to come) see their hearts and minds positively and lovingly reflected back to them in our communities and our academics.

Outcome 5

Roxanne Struthers (Ojibwe) and Shawn Wilson (Cree) are Indigenous scholars who talk about the place of “ceremony in research” and “research as ceremony” within their own research

as their way of staying whole through the research process (Struthers 132; Wilson 175). While I would not feel comfortable sharing ceremonial aspects of my own culture within a strictly research context, both Struthers and Wilson give the Indigenous researcher a means of locating themselves in this context where ceremony meets research. It is a reality that for many Indigenous students they are coming to understand or even experience ceremonial aspects of their cultures through their educational institution. I have learned to work in Anishnabeg and some Cree traditions to better guide the students within my program, to communicate within their communities, and to understand their protocols. These teachings are outside of the teachings that I receive from Elders in my own nation and like many of my students, the knowledge of these ceremonies is gathered through informal conversations, email exchanges and lots of travel to just sit and talk.

For my own research process, I came to our community Elder when I felt that I was fully unable to proceed in the direction this work was taking. I talked. I was asked to listen. I gave tobacco with my left hand. I was asked to better understand what was needed to benefit my community, maybe not the writers themselves, but the reader who is as much a part of this community that I am. I was guided to listen to what my dreams and my own heart said until I heard what needed to be done. What started out as one line on the research page “this research is about relationships”, evolved into the core of this thesis project. This Indigenous research project is particularly grounded in the quest for establishing right relationships in research. It has become more about taking the time necessary to conduct relationally accountable research,

which not only places an Indigenous worldview at its centre, but understands more clearly that all Indigenous knowledge is relational and such relations are the building blocks of our Indigenous cosmology, epistemology, ontology and axiology (Wilson 19). A final outcome of this project may be that the examination of relationality and research grounded in ceremony and traditions is another means of striving toward harmony between the academy and the community. Building evidence that supports the practices of researching from home, using the words of our people and community members to benefit them, as key to Indigenous theory production shows the falsity of perceiving of these practices as “atheoretical” (Womack 13). As Womack says, “If we Native critics share the fault of being ‘theoryless’, my contention would be that this comes from not looking enough at our home cultures, not from looking too much at them” (13).

Chapter 2: An Indigenous Methodology Review

2.1 Indigenous Methodology

That's the spiritual part of it. If you talk about research as a ceremony, that's the climax of the ceremony, when it all comes together and all those connections are made. Cause that's what ceremony is about, is strengthening those connections." (Wilson 179)

As I understand it, Indigenous research, framed within Indigenous methodology, is grounded in a culturally dynamic epistemology informed by a holistic worldview that continually connects the researcher and the community to each other. Indigenous research is grounded in developing right relationships. As such, I understand that when I am in my community working, researching, or going to ceremony, I am always a researcher. When I am in the academy writing, teaching, learning, or supporting students, I am always an Indigenous woman. The difference between the two is the risk faced by the community within this relationship. Simply being an Indigenous woman in the academy cannot wreak havoc and do irreparable harm in the same ways that being a researcher who lives and works in community can. Yes, it's not as simple as that but this is a truth. According to Weber-Pillwax, "Relationships drive the core of the research" ("Indigenous Researchers" 85). It is my own relationality and accountability that keep me focused on a way to be a researcher whose goal is to do no harm to her community. While not always an achievable goal, past lessons in working within and working for First Nations communities are something I keep at the forefront of my thoughts and they are also what make

me stop and think “Can I do this in this way and still know that both me and my community are okay?”

The methodology of this project is heavily influenced and guided by the work of Cora Weber-Pillwax. I look to her as my methodology sister. This is not in reference to her age (which I don’t know because that’s not a question you ask an Indigenous women) or our relations (because while not fully sure, I don’t think I’m Métis or Métis Cree) but it does speak to her role in providing loving and kind guidance in her words and her works for other Indigenous students. In “Coming to an Understanding: A Panel Presentation-What is Indigenous Research” Weber-Pillwax suggests that the range of methodologies open to Indigenous researchers expands with the use of Indigenous methods as any methodology is then “available to me” (168). Having all the options open to you, she says, “has always been one good reason to encourage my students to go to university” (168). I agree that there is beauty in an Indigenous methodology.

Weber-Pillwax says that the beauty of an Indigenous methodology is in that “Indigenous research methodologies are those that enable and permit Indigenous researchers to be who they are while engaged actively as participants in research processes that create new knowledge and transform who they are and where they are” (174). The value I find in Weber-Pillwax’s work is within the concrete examples she provides that can be used as methods and tools for Indigenous researchers. Quite simply she not only ‘gets it’, she willingly sacrifices what can be understood as ‘authority’ in the academy by actually talking about her challenges, insecurities and frustrations with the research process and the academy.

In the panel discussion that formed the article “What is Indigenous Research?”, Weber-Pillwax (Métis), along with Shawn Wilson (Cree), Lewis Cardinal (Cree), Patricia Steinhauer (Cree), and others speaks to the need to ground research in a context, which for the panelists is “personal integrity” (168). Weber-Pillwax defines personal integrity as “how I contextualize myself in my community, with my family and my people, and eventually how I contextualize myself in the planet, with the rest of all living systems and things” (168). Acknowledging these connections also allowed her to talk about the “pain, humiliation, and shock” that left her with the “problem of figuring out where” she “fitted into this situation as a graduate student and as a member of the family” being researched (167).

When I first started to review different research methods, I was also very unsure, uncomfortable, and intimidated. I knew there was no way that I could ever go and talk to or research one of my aunts, friends, mothers, sisters or brothers in the ways these methods suggested were rigorous and/or valid. First, I would be too embarrassed. Second, I would be laughed out of the room. It was bad enough some days being one of the few community members who went on to University and then never left. Hard workers, my family members are all very supportive and ‘get’ what I’m doing, but they don’t put up with much. They would never let me get away with some of the suggested ways of working with ‘populations’ as outlined in many mainstream research methodologies, even if I desired to approach my research this way. I knew very early in this project that I had to take the mystery out of it all. I had to find a way to

be myself and be a researcher that honored who I was, as much as I would honor the rigors and value of good research.

An important goal of examining the methods that make up the methodology of this project is to take the mystery out of the process for future students, for the reader who may want to better understand the why of doing as well as the way and how of doing. I am not assuming to have all the answers or that the methods used in this project are the ‘right’ methods. Rather, I hope that I am showing that there are options and opportunities open to Indigenous scholars that they might not have thought of. While research methods can be found to be intimidating or inappropriate, methods are—as Weber-Pillwax explains—intentional, fluid, reflexive, and relational in both time and community. “Methods”, she declares, “arise from the flow of movement as the work progresses through time and space. The researchers make decisions about today’s methods based on yesterday’s activities and methods” (85).

When trying to define what is Indigenous research and from that define what is an Indigenous methodology, Weber-Pillwax takes the reader along on her examination of the logic she used to move beyond the assumption that being an Indigenous person undertaking research will lead to the production of Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous methods and thus an Indigenous methodology. “Writing a paper on Indigenous research methodologies raised an obvious dilemma” for Weber-Pillwax (168). She contends that the dilemma was caused because she “had trouble getting past the idea that ‘I am an Indigenous person; therefore what I’m doing is going to be Indigenous research’” (168). Weber-Pillwax moves this thought process from

deconstruction into synthesis where she explains her shift in focus from Indigenous research being about the researcher to Indigenous research being about the actions of the researcher, specifically the researcher's choices, intent, responsibility, accountability to the community. She continues, "I could also make a value statement and say that "Whatever I do as an Indigenous researcher must be hooked to the community or "the Indigenous research has to benefit the community"" (168).

It is not a truth to state that Indigenous research and, by extension, Indigenous research methods come from Indigenous researchers. There is no clear causal relationship identified in such a claim. Sandra Harding would suggest that such a claim confuses the perspectives, mechanisms, and actions of the researcher with the researcher his or herself (10). Although Harding is referring to the limits of understanding what are 'feminist methods', her work helps in clarifying this point of what are 'Indigenous methods'. As Harding defines it, "A research method is a technique for (or way of proceeding in) gathering evidence" (2).

Following this line of thought, there is nothing specifically 'Indigenous' then about gathering evidence as an Indigenous researcher. Weber-Pillwax explains that, "On the surface, there appears to be very little that is explicitly Indigenous in relation to the methods that an indigenous researcher may choose to employ in a research program" (81). She cautions, however, that to leave the inquiry at this point does not fully allow the reader to see how the most general of methods can be enacted differently from within an Indigenous framework. According to Weber-Pillwax the choice of methods allows the researcher to uphold to the

principles that guide Indigenous research (81). The principles of the research project become the focal point and the methods become the vehicle through which the process moves forward.

While there are many excellent Indigenous researchers and scholars, they are not all practicing within the academy. If they are in the academy, they may well find a good home finding value and pleasure in the rigors of mainstream deductive research. Indigenous researchers in the academy, Indigenous researchers in the community and those who work in both have at their disposal an entire range of methodologies that are available to everyone (Weber-Pillwax 168). Regardless of location, extrapolated from what I've read in Weber-Pillwax's work, the piece of Indigenous methodology that can be better understood as 'the hinge' (which allows an Indigenous researcher to locate themselves in the research process) is their connection to their nation or community and the ways they claim the process as representing these relations (Weber-Pillwax 178).

Indigenous methodologies are also not simply appendages of a mainstream research body. As an extension of the actions of the researcher, Indigenous methodology has its own body with its own movement, language, and breath. As such, Indigenous research methodologies are grounded in relational accountability (Wilson 2003). Wilson explains his understanding of relational accountability by granting that "An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge started with all creation [. . .] goes beyond individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge" (177). Both Wilson and Weber-Pillwax remind the reader that Indigenous methodology does not simply fit within,

contribute to, or support dominant research paradigms. In fact, Indigenous research may not look like research in the ways that research is currently understood within the academy. While research and theory building are not new in community, within the academy, Weber-Pillwax contends “the notion of a distinct research methodology for and by Indigenous people is still at the beginning stages of scholarly discourse” (33). An added burden for the Indigenous scholar is the reality that while learning an entirely different worldview and way of being (the community vs. the academy) they are responsible for teaching or informing the academy about the rigors and standards of Indigenous research and methodologies as a part of their work (O’Reilly-Scanlon et al).

In “Pathways to Understanding: ‘Wahkohtowin’ as Research Methodology”, O’Reilly-Scanlon, Weenie, and Crowe address this challenge of informing their board of ethics about approaching their research community for guidance as a parallel, not consecutive, process of establishing research ethics. They saw this as a positive event in which they had the “unexpected opportunity to educate and inform the board of ethics about the role of ceremony within Indigenous research” (6). Explaining the importance of holding a Pipe Ceremony for their research project as a parallel practice of applying to their ethics board for project approval was, as they said, an “opportunity” to educate their respective institution of the value of Indigenous methods in research (6). While O’Reilly-Scanlon, Weenie, and Crowe saw their cross-cultural research experience with their particular board of ethics as positive, it should not be lost on the reader that O’Reilly-Scanlon, Weenie, and Crowe were faculty members not students. The reader

should also be aware that these researchers' respective post-secondary institutions were located in fairly well developed urban Indigenous centres and propinquity more than readiness may have influenced the outcome of this process. Another thing for the reader to remember is that while an ethics review board can understand the value of using ceremony and/or engaging community in research about Indigenous peoples or communities, that doesn't mean, as Marie Battiste (Mi'kmaq) posits, that the academy can ever fully know Indigenous scholarship. According to Battiste, the contributions provided through Indigenous knowledge sharing will continue to be invisible to mainstream scholarship because "The Eurocentric strategy of universal definitions and absolute knowledge has made scholarship unable to know and respect [Indigenous] knowledge and heritage" (38). This also means that Indigenous scholarship and Indigenous research methodologies may not be understood by the academy as contributing to the development of non-Indigenous research, researchers, or communities. This is a great loss.

The understanding of Indigenous knowledge and ways as contributing to the ongoing survival of non-Indigenous peoples and communities is a critical challenge for the academy. Valuing the contributions of Indigenous knowledge and ways to theory making is required more and more simply because more Indigenous youth are entering postsecondary institutions. In light of Indigenous youth being one of the fastest increasing populations in Canada and the future target demographic of postsecondary consumption, I posit that the academy, being significantly peopled with those who research, is open to better ways of understanding all research and researchers with a goal of making a better place for these ones yet to come. We already know

that methods and knowledge change over the years as new knowledge and ways to build knowledge come to light. It my intent to ensure that the knowledge shared through Indigenous women's writing and the use of Indigenous research and research methods will continue to benefit the community of academe but first it has to benefit the Indigenous communities that the research is still ever about.

Within mainstream academic research, many Indigenous researchers are still “challenged” because they want to “engage in contemporary research for the explicit purpose of bringing benefits to their communities and their people” (Weber-Pillwax “Indigenous Researchers” 88). Researching from within culture, home, or community often means that Indigenous researchers are not, in the view of the academy, objective. Even worse, as Womack points out, they are critiqued in “what approaches the absurd” for attempting this kind of research (13). Womack says, his view of these critiques as absurd is not about the very act of critiquing Indigenous students or researchers (13). He suggest that his incredulous response is about the researchers being referred to as “theoryless” because they have the desire to better understand and show what they find as theory within their own community (13). However, as Womack also suggests, the goal is not to “present counterpoints to the ridiculous”. Rather, the goal is to better understand how theory is within Indigenous ways and knowledge (13). The act of attempting to equate it with something that is always already knowable yet somehow ‘wrong’ within the view of the academy is pointless and does no good (13).

In an Indigenous cosmology the compartmentalization of Indigenous knowledge into knowable discrete units of measure is often not a desire of Indigenous researchers (Struthers). As well, the desire for 'objectivity' is an illusory paradigm often used unquestioned by non-Indigenous researchers working in Indigenous communities (Womack 13). Quite simply, a paradigmatic shift away from a goal of objectivity toward a goal of relationality in research will help both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers work within and for Indigenous communities. As a point of working toward this paradigmatic shift, policy and procedures within the academy must also shift. I contend that updating the Tri Council Policy Statement on Research in Indigenous Communities is a good start to ensuring better outcomes of research for Indigenous communities. However, if the researchers themselves don't understand how their thought processes (embedded in dominant relations of power) can impede or even damage the research when they are not in sync with the communities' thought processes (differently embedded in dominant power relations) then the community will always be at risk as will the researcher (Mitchell and Baker 42-43).

As a researcher I did not fully understand the real power imbalances that can occur between the researcher and the participant/community. Because I did not intend to work in a known First Nation community for this project, my initial thought was that I didn't have to concern myself with community entry protocols or worry about being an academic studying a community that was not my own. I always knew that I wanted to work with women writers who worked within the academy. I thought that my location as a student did not merit the same level

of attention that the power imbalances in a research relationship between a faculty member as researcher and a community member as participant might engender. I didn't fully understand my connection with the academy as being powerful or perceived as a point of inequitable relations between researcher and researched. As such, I also did not originally understand *this* research project as an individual process continually tied to many larger community processes. However, it became clear that maintaining this connection between me as the researcher and the community is central to upholding the value system of this Indigenous research project. My research, as it is framed by an Indigenous methodology, is guided by my relational accountability to my Indigenous communities, including the laws, trust, and my commitment to the ongoing well-being of my community. According to Weber-Pillwax, thinking of community in this way means that 'community' is not an abstract out there thing (89). Weber-Pillwax speaks clearly to the ways that I understand my relationship to my own community when she says "It's not an abstract idea about the unity of living things. It is a connection to the specific localities, place, and physical geographies, where we live and in which our ancestors have lived. The connection is not to people in general or a collectivity, but to specific individuals with real faces, personalities, histories, identities. (89).

This particular research project did not take place in a First Nations community. I did not have to apply to Chief and Council for permission to work in my community because I did not work in or for Six Nations of the Grand River or Conne River. The participants of this research project lived in urban communities. However, I found that in many ways I was readily connected

to many First Nations and urban Indigenous communities through this research. Through many parallel research projects, the ways that I paid the rent, I was working with a number of First Nations communities, developing community entry protocols, working with Elders, and teachers to develop my own path through this process. This work and my growing understanding of the connections to community that my thesis work engendered formed the basis of many ongoing relations and friendships across Canada. Many of the people that I met (whether they were new researchers, established researcher, community members, or those who worked in the academy) were facing challenges similar to mine to some degree.

In 2003 I joined an email list started at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. The Indigenous Education Network (IEN) was a listserv of emergent Indigenous scholars who connected to each other through email. These email discussions with other self-identified Indigenous academics, researchers, and community workers provided a great deal of guidance and support. Without a ‘handbook’ of Indigenous research methods readily available, at times the synthesis on the network allowed us to develop and sustain our own Indigenous research methodologies. This was a great opportunity for many emergent Indigenous scholars to attend each others’ poster presentations, to attend Ph.D. defenses, and get a feeling for research methods that work from a collegial standpoint. We knew that we were all at the forefront of something bigger than we had seen before in the academy. With the number of Indigenous academics in training and the increase of communications between Indigenous scholars, in 2004 things were about to explode. And they did. Since 2004

there is an obvious increase in the published research by Indigenous researchers. As a caution to the reader, while Indigenous methodology and Indigenous research by, for, and about Indigenous peoples is still at what Weber-Pillwax referred to earlier as at the “beginning stages of scholarly discourse” this does not mean that Indigenous methodology and Indigenous research are not centuries old established practices within community, they are just relatively new to the academy (33).

Indigenous theorist, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Māori) locates Indigenous methodology as developed and constituted within the very academy that often excludes or does not readily recognize Indigenous scholarly discourse. Tuhiwai Smith cautions the reader to remember that Indigenous methodology is “a mix of existing methodological approaches and indigenous practices” (123). This “mix” she says “reflects a training of indigenous researchers which continues to be within the academy” (123). However, along with acknowledging this reality the researcher must continually be aware how these “parameters and common sense understanding of research which govern how indigenous communities and researchers define their activities” can limit the research and negatively affect Indigenous peoples and Indigenous communities (123). As Tuhiwai Smith suggests, for many years the primary concern for Indigenous scholars was the ‘decolonization’ of Western research methodologies and being able to understand how dominant research methodologies informed the Indigenous researchers’ own research process (123).

In the chapter “Research Through Imperial Eyes” from *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Smith cautions that research conducted by Indigenous researchers is not necessarily freed from a framework informed by the mainstream model of categorizing knowledge simply because of their location inside culture (39). As stated earlier, a paradigm shift for Indigenous researchers is specifically about focusing on the creation of Indigenous epistemology and pedagogy from within Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous communities. This shift marks an active move away from the glazed-over examination of the contributions that Indigenous research makes to western epistemology and pedagogy.

Tuhiwai Smith says that Indigenous research is “framed by our attempts to escape the penetration and the surveillance of that gaze whilst simultaneously reordering and reconstituting ourselves as indigenous human beings in a state of ongoing crisis”(39). While Tuhiwai Smith created this work over a decade ago, the state of “crisis” that she refers to as historically faced by Indigenous Peoples in the world has not resolved itself yet. I argue that Smith’s identification of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in the world as ‘in crisis’ can’t be resolved in and of itself. The movement toward a balanced relationship between the academy and the community can be a starting point which can bring about many possibilities for the resolution of this state of crisis. I also argue that the movement toward a harmonious balance between these two places of creation can only come about through the previously identified phenomena reaching a point of critical mass.

Tuhiwai Smith's contexts of research are useful to my research because these three contexts, "Community, Tribe, and University" are never entirely distinct and often converged inextricably throughout this research (123). As Weber-Pillwax asks the reader to keep in mind, while this project may attempt to theorize the community, tribe, and university, they are always ever real people and places that I am talking about, working with, and living within ("Indigenous Researchers" 80). Outside of relationality, the community of Indigenous women writers *can* be theorized as a purely theoretical community using established theory such as Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities" in which the community of Indigenous *women writers* could be deconstructed focused on imagined affiliations or within Homi K. Bhabha's understanding of "Imagined Geographies" where the community of *Indigenous* women writers can be understood through a post-colonial framework focused on location and place. I am aware of the limits of these theories as they come into play because I know and work with many of these women. I know the interests and lives of these women and their communities can be both simultaneously imagined and real. Like me, many of them simultaneously occupy these spaces, their community, their 'tribe', or their university. All of which are, at times, the same space, contradictory space, and competing space. However, the limits of theory come into play when the theories of "imagined" spaces are used to undermine the very real and material lives of Indigenous women whose livelihood and material resources are bound to the very 'realness' of their place in the community. The limits of any post-structural theory needs to be checked when deconstructing the 'real' lives of Indigenous peoples to see what is at stake with such play.

2.2 Ceremony and Research: An Indigenous Research Model

As I mentioned earlier, much of what we now know of Indigenous research practices and Indigenous methodologies is a function of time and relationships. As a function of time and relations, Indigenous research can have for the researcher costs that cannot be anticipated. As Mitchell and Baker found in their 2004 research, *The Indigenous Women's Cancer Care Project*, sometimes the cost to researcher in upholding the ethics of working with an Indigenous community or group is actually not being able to work with the group at all; sometimes the cost is your own project (Mitchell and Baker). Having learned a great lesson while working on a parallel research project, I strove to find other researchers who had successes in creating new ways of researching which kept their values and themselves intact.

Much of the Indigenous methodology used in this project comes from within Indigenous scholarship as a result of Indigenous scholars not wanting “others to speak in our stead” (Wilson 4). While I was working on my own project, I looked to researchers whose voice and intent were clear. Their work benefitted their community. They remained tied to their Indigenous worldview through their research. One such successful model of Indigenous research came from Roxanne Struthers’ (Ojibwe) article, “Conducting Sacred Research: An Indigenous Experience” in *Wicazo Sa Review: A Journal of Native American Studies*. Struthers research was something unique in 2001. Reading like a narrative of the research process, Struthers documented her own discomfort about negotiating between applying the mainstream research processes which she understood to be selecting a topic, reviewing the literature, formulating a research question, choosing research

design, supposed to move forward in a “linear fashion” and her desire to apply research process that was tied to understanding Indigenous knowledge production as grounded in a holistic worldview (125). As an Indigenous health researcher, Struthers used what she called “atypical” research methods that allowed her to conduct research in a “culturally sensitive manner” (125). Struthers discussed her proposed research with elders, community people, and specifically women of the community to define her research agenda. Struthers discusses her desire to use Indigenous methodology in her research because “The researcher and the participants interact with their whole beings in the research process. This includes their patterns, their knowledge, and their unknowns. Consequently, the research can be a study from within, which reflects a high level of research capability (132).

Struthers also reminds the readers, whom I think she imagines are Indigenous researchers, that “a feeling of linear construct, forcefulness, and/or constant attempts to keep the research *advancing* is not pivotal and perhaps not desired” (131). What may be desired in an Indigenous research process is “Being present throughout the process, keeping it whole, and not breaking it into parts” as she this “affords the research the possibility of fluidity, innovation, and freshness. Thus, an inclusive, holistic level of knowing can transpire as the researcher and the research participants travel the journey together” (132). After reading about Struthers’ work and research plan, I knew I was on my way to developing a better methodological fit for my own research.

2.3 Operationalizing the Research Plan

Having already moved through how the project idea was synthesized and defining the goals of the project, this section relates the realities of transforming these ideas into a workable research practice. Weber-Pillwax identifies that the desire to maintain a research plan is so that the project is accomplished without too many “detours or modifications to the original plan or research design” (“Indigenous Researchers” 79). The first task of the thesis was to establish a work plan that laid out the thesis framework, tasks, activities, milestones, and outcomes. This particular aspect of building this thesis seemed unproblematic. However the actualization of this well-laid plan looked more and felt more like it would if I had navigated the Narrows during a hurricane.

In my original thesis plan, I imagined traversing geographic and imagined boundaries, working in communities to produce a remarkably diverse range of ideas and opinions. Of course people would want to talk with me, right? I set my goals high. I wanted to talk to between ten and twelve Indigenous women writers and rely solely on their words for both the content of the thesis and the overall analysis of the body of Indigenous women’s literature on which this thesis is premised. I didn’t plan to use taped conversations as this project was going to be organic and what I remember from our conversations was supposed to be the important stuff.

What emerged when tumbled from my lofty perch was not a project, but a process. This research process involved doing much more than talking with Indigenous women writers to find out how they thought Indigenous women’s writing contributed to the survivance and renewal of

Indigenous communities. Specifically, I found that this process, as Weber-Pillwax (Métis), O'Reilly-Scanlon et al. and Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree) pointed out earlier, required a way of understanding the relational accountability of an Indigenous methodology. The desire of this project then was to create something that did more than superficially represent this relationality. What I found was a way of “keeping it whole” and keeping it real (O'Reilly-Scanlon et al. 132).

As mentioned earlier in the introduction to the participants, for this thesis project I talked with four Indigenous women writers about their work and their lives and how they thought these theories within their works contribute to the ongoing survivance of our Indigenous communities and traditions. From these four writers came a connected spiral of ideas on how to move forward through to synthesis. They provided me with connections to other writers whose words also supported this process and whose words contribute so much to this overall work that they must be considered participants in their won rights. Their work and contributions allowed this project to flourish and this plan to become a process. Even though the ‘research’ is done, these relations carry on.

I did however, need to move away from my perceived organic project flow to a more concrete project model that would allow me to look back on the process, reflect on what was accomplished, and know where more work needed to be done. I also needed to know when I was done. I needed a real plan with tasks and outcomes and tape-recorded conversations so that I was not relying on my already stretched memory for the important stuff. This next section takes the reader through the process of developing the research plan as a series of milestones within the

overall project. This organizational flow helped considerably when it came time to really focus the thesis project on one goal of showing that the theories of Indigenous people's survivance was within Indigenous women's writing.

2.3A Milestone 1 Developing Culturally Relevant Research

In keeping with Indigenous research principles, the research had to benefit my community and I was accountable for the effects of the research on my community (Weber-Pillwax 80). Clear on community protocol, my first milestone is be marked by the development of culturally competent practices in this research project. The first of which was to go to my community, in this case the community of Indigenous Women Writers, and ask them to direct my inquiry in ways that would be of greater benefit for the community itself. In this way, culturally relevant research practices require community commitment to work with the researcher guiding the research process to benefit the community. Culturally relevant research also relies on the community knowing its own needs, identifying any gaps to be addressed, and knowing the best ways to address them. Relational accountability combined with culturally relevant practices can be a lot to manage for any researcher, let alone an emergent one. Careful work and seeking guidance will assist any researcher in develop his or her process of establishing good research practices.

In recent years, increasing awareness has been drawn to the lasting implications of poor research practices and unethical research practices by non-Indigenous researchers in Indigenous communities (Canada *Tri Council Policy Statement*). An outcome of poorly developed research,

often fully formed outside of Indigenous communities, is distrust for researchers and research in general. Several historical factors including a general of culturally appropriate ethical standards examined by Haig-Brown and Archibald, lack of respect for the communities' cultural beliefs examined by Norton and Manson, failure to conduct research that is responsive to community perspectives and needs examined by Korsmo and Graham, and misappropriation of Indigenous knowledge examined in the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples have created this atmosphere of distrust for researchers and research. While a lot of these issues are currently addressed within the Second Draft of the Tri Council Policy Statement, this sense of distrust is so prevalent that, according to Freeman fear and distrust form the "biggest single social reality" in many Indigenous communities this includes "a widespread distrust of research or researchers"(192).

As community members and leaders, both urban and reserve, are now seeing the benefits of deeply collaborative and strictly controlled research, they are also requiring ownership over the projects that take place in their communities. Many reserve communities require significant input and direction as well as approval at the Band or Chief and Council level for any research that takes place in their community. In urban Indigenous communities, many agencies are decidedly restricting the use of their agency's role in general program building and fund development that does not immediately address the Urban Indigenous population's needs. Over the past decade, Indigenous communities have continued to assert their independence, autonomy, and authority (Freeman).

2.3B Milestone 2 Developing an Indigenous Research Ethics Proposal

One way this project changed as a result of my earlier discussions with the women of this community was that I would not be obtaining written consent from the women I would be communicating with, this included any informal conversations with Elders and teachers that I might use as the basis of this thesis. The research ethics board at the university asked for supporting evidence that not obtaining written consent from the participants was not a breach of ethics. In 2002 I only had two articles on Indigenous research practices that mentioned the challenges of written informed consent forms within the contexts researching in Indigenous communities. One of those articles explained the concept of research as ongoing and operating well beyond a timeline that written consent can anticipate and that Indigenous community members perceived the requirement of a written consent form as grounds for mistrust in that they saw the value they place in the spoken agreements undermined of that the academy was only out to protect itself (Wilson 213). I received permission from the research ethics board to use verbal consent in my research which allowed for a positive conversation about consent and the ways we value the spoken word with one of the research participants.

While I was allowed to use verbal consent in my research, I found out that I needed approval from the university's ethics review board before approaching the women, Elders or teachers of my community. What I learned from my parallel work in the field and from other Indigenous researches were the various methods used to educate and inform research ethics boards so that they could better understand the validity and value of Indigenous methodologies

as they work within a community context. Many of the research ethics boards that I have worked with have been very open to better understanding Indigenous research in order to better a diversity of research practices that more clearly reflects the growing diversity with the academy.

For this thesis project I submitted my ethics proposal after initially consulting with Indigenous women and Elders from the urban community I was working in. This point was reviewed by the Memorial University Research Ethics Committee and allowed to stand as a part of my Indigenous research methodology. As well, a consideration was granted for verbally asking permission and gaining consent to interview participants as this is also a strategy used by Indigenous researches to highlight the realities of keeping confidences as the ‘interview’ discussions often continues well after the questions are done and the relational accountability of the researcher is also shared by the participant in this case.

2.3C Milestone 3 Getting Through the Worst of it All

In February 2005 I contacted the Research Ethics Office at Memorial University to tell them that taped interviews and all related documentation to the interviews and thesis were stolen from my home during a break in. My laptop, tapes, tape recorder, notebook, and some storage disks were stolen by someone broke into my house, rifled through my bedroom and took prescription drugs and tore a hole in my confidence and resolve a mile wide. It was not for the laptop or tape recorder, which while expensive could be replaced, that I felt the most acute loss. It was the taped conversations that I had with my participants stored in my brief case after coming home from travel to actually get those interviews, which I grieved then and I still do.

While many of the taped interviews were backed up as typed transcriptions, because the laptop computer they were on was stolen most of the original thesis material was lost. The tapes were not in a locked filing cabinet as I had just returned from working in Ottawa and the laptop case was packed with the tapes, the recording devices, the laptop computer, notes, and my note book filled with contact information. As I was working on the Aboriginal Women's Cancer Care Project at the time, I also contacted the Wilfrid Laurier University research ethics board and went through a similar process with them and the participants with that project.

After the shock of losing so much wore off, I got down to work and I sent emails or had telephone conversations with the participants whose tapes had been stolen. I let them know that the tapes had no discerning identifications on them as they were numerically coded with dates and place. I was so worried about them feeling that I had breached their trust with my careless behavior of not locking the tapes up in my filing cabinet the way I was supposed to when they were not being used. Each one of the participants I talked with expressed their dismay at the loss of their work. It was their work too, their time and effort that went into those conversations.

Each of the participants gave their support and agreed to continue the work on this project and all were subsequently re-interviewed with the exception of one participant. Our schedules didn't mesh very well, and the participant did not feel right working with a different way of communication necessitated by the geographical distance between us as I had moved out of the province and returned to Ontario by that time. My interview notes, the memos written on the margins of some typed transcripts and printed copies of the thesis in differing stages of

progress were used to recreate what was lost due to the theft. From what I recalled of the first interview tapes and the writing that emerged from those earlier conversations, the second interviews with the participants were more highly focused with a different feel from the first interviews. This could be attributed to the feeling of anxiety I felt during the second or follow-up interviews, as by that point I felt less and less like this thesis project would ever conclude or be “right”.

2.3D Milestone 4 the Participant Conversations

When I returned for the second time to record a participant conversation, after ensuring that all the recording devices were working properly I settled down to talk. I was talking with Kim Anderson about the value of verbal consent as a research action that is aligned with the intent and actions of an Indigenous methodology and said, “I think it’s much easier for people to understand that it is consistent and it is part of the dialogue” (Anderson). Anderson’s response was “It’s also part of ongoing relationships with somebody” (Anderson). Keeping this conversation with Anderson in the foreground, the reader can better understand what Weber-Pillwax means when she relates the importance of choosing a method of data collection such as choosing conversation over interview. She says that methods have to fit the values and the desires of the researcher and the participants because for her,

My method has never been to record what people said with the purpose or goal of analysis. My methods have been more immediately motivated by my desire to address what I perceive or interpret to be a situation of injustice or despair, both individual or social. I feel compelled to go where people are crying out. (224, 88)

For the purpose of this thesis project I talked to Indigenous women writers to better understand what they think their writing contributes to the production of Indigenous critical theory. These conversations were less ‘interview’ and more ‘discussion’ as many of the women who contributed to this project expected me to share my own thoughts and opinions with them. They wanted to know who I was and how I thought before they were comfortable sharing who they were and how they thought. I became a participant in the process as much by their request as by my own Indigenous methodology which insists that I locate myself and establish my relational accountability to my community.

Considering my task of trying to re-establish trust and accountability with the participants of this thesis project, due the limits of time, I re-interviewed the participants of this project with specific written questions. The outcome of the analysis of our conversations reflects this guided questioning. All of the participants at the time of the interview lived or were working in an urban setting. All of the participants were highly active in their respective communities. While some of the initial participant contacts were made during social events, all participant contacts were followed up with a telephone call to request their participation. This method of requesting participation was a difficult part of the thesis process because it is a tradition borne out of respect to offer tobacco when asking something of someone. They don’t have to even accept the request at the time of asking. They have the option to hold onto the tobacco and make their decision based on a reflection on the request and what role they will have to undertake in granting the request. For one participant, I was unable to carry out this step due to geographic distance of the

participant, but again this led to a good discussion with the participants about this as a reality of the research models we use and the communities we choose to work in.

Only one of the writers was someone that I did not meet and talk with in person. However, the interview with this participant was one of the most dynamic and conversational. The subsequent transcription of the interview more closely resembled a conversation between long parted friends. We both worked on establishing what we were doing now as a means of creating a comfortable space to dialogue and then moved into what was happening in our communities as a point of entry into the larger conversation.

Having established myself with the participants as an Indigenous woman writer interested in the words and works of Indigenous women, I found the interviews that took place were readily grounded in the approach I took. Conversational approaches worked best with all the participants. Earlier in the research process, I approached one potential participant and was not successful in having a conversation with her because she saw my approach as too academic and felt as though interviewing was not something that she wanted to participate in.

As I mentioned earlier, when compared to first round of conversations— where I was asking for a story of how the participants work came to be and what it meant to them to be working in the academy—the second set of taped conversations with the same participants (completed almost two years after the initial interviews) did not have the same feel or tone of sharing and reciprocity. I attribute the difference in the second set of taped conversations to my own tiredness and feelings of nervousness. Thinking back, I'm sure that I attributed the feeling

or tone in the first round of conversations to both my own ease and confidence in the project and to the risk I took putting myself ‘out there’ so that the work more closely resembled what I was trying to achieve; relational accountability.

How the women perceived their own relational accountability can be attributed to their perceptions of what their work means to them and what they intend to accomplish through their writing. Two of the women interviewed did not see their work at all related to what they considered ‘academic’ endeavors; rather, they saw their work as a creative place from which the reader could draw and interpret their own meanings of Indigeneity. Three of the writers talked readily about their writing as grounded in a sense of restoring the balance. For them, their work had been a lifetime in the making. Their interest was in restoring the justice to what they saw as imbalanced relations in their everyday lives. Two of the writers, who wrote specifically for the academy and Indigenous organizations, saw their work as being relevant to all kinds of people in their communities but of particular relevance to young women and emerging Indigenous scholars.

This research project has a purpose of understanding the lives of Indigenous people through Indigenous women’s writing of these experiences as identity production. Castellano defines “Indigenous research” as a “means research that touches the life and well-being of Indigenous Peoples. It may involve Indigenous Peoples and their communities directly. It may assemble data that describes or claims to describe Indigenous Peoples and their heritage. Or, it may affect the human and natural environment in which Indigenous Peoples live” (99).

While examining Indigenous women writers theory making as a function of their location within Indigenous cultures, I caution the reader not to rely on the 'evidence of experience' alone. As Joan Scott says, "Experience is, in this approach, not the origin of our explanation, but that which we want to explain ... it does not deny that the subject exists instead it interrogates the process of their creation and in doing so reconfigures history" (38). This project moves beyond making Indigenous women's lives and experience visible, it also theorizes the ways we make meaning and theory from women's writing.

2.4 Qualitative Practices *as Indigenous* Research Methods

'Data gathering' for this project was based primarily on the use of formative open-ended one-on-one tape recorded conversations with the participant's responses to questions guiding the next question. The intent was to develop a fluid dialogue between myself and the participants. Conversations with Elders and other cultural teachers were not tape recorded but were taken from written notes created after the conversation. As well, I used the telephone to talk at length with one participant and email to ask additional questions of three of the participants.

I use the term "conversation" to indicate how I approached the act of data collection with my participants, because I want to— as Anne Oakley does in "Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms" — point to a differentiation between traditional interview techniques and feminist interview techniques. Oakley's own frustration with the limits of traditional interview techniques resulted in the creation of interview strategies that allowed her to establish the conversation as a dialogue between women. Oakley suggests that in traditional interview styles

there is established "protocol" which "assumes a dominant masculine model of sociology and society" which can falsely distance the researcher from the researched (31). Oakley also says that the traditional model of interviewing denies the interviewee's active direction in determining the extent to which the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is established "beyond the limits of question asking and answering"(45). The meaning of Oakley's caution was evident in my second round of taped conversations with the participants. There was an obvious direction that emerged in the conversation, where I was forcing the conversation to move in a particular direction and not because I was lacking for time during the conversations. I attribute this change in direction to my own anxiety that I had to find the answer to my thesis questions even though in reality this thesis was not structured to prove a theory or show a 'right' answer.

Thinking back to Weber-Pillwax's assertion that choosing a method is intentional in Indigenous research, my choice of data collection allowed me to maintain the principles of Indigenous research and thus retain my value system that these principles are based on. It's important for the reader to know that conversation as a data collection method is highly relevant to Indigenous research because it most closely reflects the values, traditions and protocols in storytelling. Using open-ended conversations with the participants really gave them the space to tell their story. After our conversations, I was able to better able to understand their experiences and see how their perspectives were shaped by their identity within their respective nations. While still a useful method in differing research models, interviews that adhered to a preformed set of questions would not have produced the type of knowledge that was shared in my

conversations with the participants. The conversations were formative in that the next question was based on what the participant talked about. When a participant mentioned that she was interested in helping young women better understand their roles in the community through traditional teaching, I asked a question that shifted the direction of the conversation to talk more about that issue.

From the content analysis of the participant conversations, some interesting common ideas and themes emerged that I would like to share. As I did not want to rely solely on the typed transcripts of the participant interviews, I downloaded the voice data into an MP3 format and listened to the interviews on my IPOD and phone while I walked. This kind of close listening and memoing provided me with what I believe was a closer understanding of the participants than I had previously experienced with the first set of interviews which I transcribed with intent to analyze them using qualitative software. Walking and listening to the conversations between myself and the participants afforded me the time and the patience required to get a fuller and more mindful understanding of the participants' narratives. The relational accountability required of Indigenous researchers compelled me to really listen to what the participants had to say. I hear their meaning and I had to get it right because I know these women and they know me.

This close listening to the participant's stories also allowed me to establish themes of similarity and difference between the participants. As I walked and listened I realized that the participants shared similar understandings of Indigenous identity and the responsibility this

engenders whether their location was in the community and/or in the academy. One of the strongest patterns to emerge in the analysis of the participants' stories was the similar goal of wanting to change the ways that Indigenous people are seen by other Indigenous peoples. Another shared story that emerged was the participants' experiences of being invisible within the academy and the increased isolation they felt the longer they were away at school. However, there was also a parallel theme of the participants feeling empowered by their relations and their ability to help their communities that emerged through their stories. The most important common theme found in the participants stories was the sense of purpose that their work gave to them and the hope that they be read and understood as way of supporting other Indigenous women and scholars.

Grounded theory provided me with the methods that I used to better understand the theory of Indigenous survivance as coming from within Indigenous women's writing. In "Doing it for ourselves: Feminist research as theory in action" Letherby explains that Grounded Theory is an inductive process with "theory emerging from the data", an analysis of the participant's conversations using Grounded Theory allowed the theoretical themes of this research to more clearly emerge (Letherby 67). She says that "Grounded Theory is theory developed from the data and aims to be faithful to situations. Thus, a grounded theory is one that is 'inductively derived from the phenomena it represents" (Letherby 67). Letherby elaborates that "Grounded theoreticians are advised to maintain an attitude of skepticism as all theoretical explanations should be regarded as provisional" (67). Which why she explains, it is suggested that the

literature search be conducted after the research takes place so the researcher does not come into the process looking for answers that satisfy known theory (67). While criticisms of the grounded theory approach are plentiful, this not a point to be examined here. I am aware of the cautions that the researcher is not ever fully approaching the ‘theory from research’ method with an ‘empty head’ nor is the theory that emerges from the research ever outside of gender and in this case the theory is also never outside of culture.

2.5 Writing as a Restorative Process

As Struthers stated earlier in section 2.2, there is a linear model of research that has within it an assumption about the flow of research which identifies the end of the research process as the ‘writing up’ of the findings. I suggest that the reader rethink the writing up stage of the research process as something that starts immediately and evolves and grows as the research itself evolves and grows. As such the writing stage of the research can be better thought of as a process as much as the research itself. As noted earlier, writing itself can be understood as an intentional act of the writer setting out to create. As an intentional act, it is important for the reader to purposefully choose a style of writing, a mode of writing and it is equally helpful for the reader to choose a place of writing to keep whole during this process.

After trying on a few different styles of writing, I chose to use MLA style to give cohesion and clarity to the written process for this project. Diana Hacker’s *a Canadian Writer’s Reference* provided the earliest MLA style guidelines for this thesis. Where Hacker was not updated or lacked information the website, *The Owl*, a website hosted by Purdue University

provided current MLA style information. I have chosen to follow *The Owl's* MLA reference guide to italicize the titles of books, anthologies, movies, journals, and proper titles of websites instead of Hacker's reference guide which suggests underlining to denote the name (Hacker 180-185). I have also used Joseph Gibaldi's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers 5th Edition* for citing electronic references. The mode of writing for this research project was typed in a Microsoft Word document. The place of writing was my kitchen table.

In and of itself these three items of the writing process are not definitively a part of an Indigenous methodology or of Indigenous research. The intentional choice of writing style, mode of writing, and even location of writing, however, is critical for the reader to determine how to best exist and even flourish within the writing process. The core concept of an Indigenous methodology is that the research and by extension the research process should not harm the Indigenous community. The nature of Indigenous research also locates the researcher/writer within the community of research. Remember reader that Weber-Pillwax and Wilson say that Indigenous research is always already tied to community. If researching from community, as many more Indigenous scholars are, the reader is also a part of the community to which no harm should be done. This means intentionally choosing a writing process that connects the reader to the ways required to remain a whole person. I chose to write at home at the kitchen table instead of my office because it keeps me in the flow of my family life. It shows my family that scholarship can be a wonderful and creative thing. I feel a comfort sitting at my dining room table that I do not feel in my office. These choices ground my work in my community and help

me to better understand when work, or family, or even myself is a priority in need of care or attention. Keeping it whole is not something that they will teach the reader in graduate studies classes and I want it understood here. Take care of yourself.

This notion of care is a predominant theory that emerged from the analysis of the participant's conversations. Within the earlier identified themes that emerged from the participants' stories was the need for careful and care filled positive ideas and images as a means of cultural survivance. Each of the writers expressed this idea that Indigenous people, and in particular young men and women, need to see a loving and positive image of themselves reflected in writing, education curriculum and institutions, so that they can develop strong self-esteem and ground their faith and belief in their cultures, values, and traditions as ways to survivance. Anderson asserts that she values "all types of expression, and think what scholarly writing can offer in particular is a more direct opportunity to shape the mainstream education system that we all go through. So once we begin to write and teach our own histories, philosophies, sociologies, literary criticism, etc.—this can shape the "knowledge" that is out there in these arenas and which in turn shapes our lives (Anderson).

The next section of this thesis examines this theory of a loving perception as a necessity in the creation of critical Indigenous theory. This next section examines the creation of Indigenous critical theory from a perspective of 'Loving Indianness' which can be understood as Indigenous cultural survivance in action.

Chapter 3: Loving Indianness: Writing from a Critical Centre

3.1 Introduction

there are times
when I am seeing how exquisite our being alive is
whatever may be
however it is our breathing
that is so sacred and so huge
it circles the earth. (Armstrong, 194)

Indigenous women writers are storytellers. They are agents of social change in their own communities. Even more so their writing is creating change in communities beyond the scope they intended. Central to their writing is a "loving" perception that acknowledges a value system and honors how we live and experience Indigenous worldviews differently. Yet it is that very experience of Indianness as different that produces a loving space for Indigenous peoples as a strategy of cultural survival.

3.2 *Storytelling*

I will tell you something about stories
[he said]
They aren't just for entertainment.
Don't be fooled
They are all we have, you see,
all we have to fight off illness and death.
You don't have anything

if you don't have the stories.
Their evil is mighty
but it can't stand up to our stories.
So they try to destroy the stories
let the stories be confused or forgotten
They would like that
They would be happy
Because we would be defenceless then. (Marmon Silko 2)

We all have our stories. Sometimes, our stories are all we have. In *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*, Thomas King tells the reader that "the truth about stories is that that's all we are" (2). Our stories, while at times humorous or playful, are also powerful and should not be trivialised as quaint customs of an archaic culture. Many of Indigenous peoples may know their own stories of creation and may understand their creative power. But Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo) reminds us, in *Ceremony* that it is not enough to know our stories. She says that in our move towards sovereignty we must control how our stories are told and who does the telling. As Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm (Anishinaabe) tells us, whether we are storytellers or rapt listeners our stories of being Indigenous in the here and now are defining for us, and those next seven generations, ways to be Indigenous in a world that imagines us as "vanished, dying, and dysfunctional" or as "culturally frozen dime store Indians" (16). More and more Indigenous women writers are telling stories of being in the here and now from a loving perspective.

This sense of loving Indianness that is evident in many of the stories that we tell about each other can be traced as a response to the damaging and hurtful construction of Indigenous

womanhood (Anderson) still present in popular media today. These stories are certainly out there. If you've read Margaret Wente's October 24, 2008 column "What Dick Pound Said was really dumb –and also true" printed in the Globe and Mail, Wente's very public assertion that Indigenous Peoples in Canada have a recorded and anthropologically defined history of "Savagery" only affirms that major media personalities have and will continue to show their ignorance about Indigenous Peoples in print and other major media sources, mostly without reprisal from their peers. The bad stories will just keep coming. In "Isn't Love a Given" Lee Maracle talks about the popular media and literary construction of Indigenous women as though she were "a female Native" an object of study and not a full human being "as though we were a species of sub-human animal life" whose death we read about in the paper (21). Maracle says that it's necessary but only a start to have "women leaders among us" (22). She supports this theory of loving Indianness by continuing to say, "But first we must see ourselves as women: powerful, sensuous being in need of compassion and tenderness (22). Maracle sees "love as the force which could be used to move mountains, change history or judge the actions of people" (23). Our stories of loving Indianness do just that they change history and the here and now.

The stereotypes and 'commonalities left to the readers imagination' about Indigenous people have to change (Akiwenzie-Damm 13). Because many of the ways that Indigenous people have been imagined are based on "misrepresentations" which are "faulty and at times damaging assumptions" Indigenous writers can use their words to "counteract the negative images of Indigenous peoples. We can fight words with words" (Akiwenzie-Damm 13, 24). Telling loving

stories of Indigenous people and Indigenous womanhood begins to unravel the falsehoods of our supposed "vanishment" (Vizenor "Fugitive" 25). These stories also act as a counterpoint to the over-determined vision of what an Indigenous person is supposed to look like, supposed to act like and supposed to write about (Akiwenzie-Damm 15).

Our stories of loving Indianness also have within them narratives of the ways that the survivance of Indigenous people is "more than a survival reaction in the face of violence and dominance" (Vizenor "Literatures" 53). Our stories in fact bear witness and give presence to our survivance which Vizenor declares is because of the postindian warrior who "encounters their enemies with the same courage in literature as their ancestors once evinced on horse, and they create their stories with a new sense of survivance" ("Manners" 4). The making and telling of our stories teach us to do more than react to and survive in this world, they bring us ways to heal ourselves, our families, and our communities.

This story speaks to a process. It was not created in any kind of linear fashion. Nor was this story produced overnight, fully and completely formed. Storytelling in the relative safety of the "ivory tower" did not spare me the pangs of anger, frustration, isolation, pain, or sadness experienced by my brothers and sisters in the community. As a process this story grew out of my own desire to know what other Indigenous women thought of our writing. I wondered how they came to loving Indianness within their own lives and how this played out in their writing. Not my own story entirely, this story came from other Indigenous women who took the time to tell me their stories. These women continually support my efforts as an Indigenous woman, a sister,

mother, auntie and new storyteller. It is mostly their understanding of what it means to be an Indigenous woman writer and scholar in the here and now. While you are hearing my own relating of the stories they shared with me, my intent is not to speak for them but to thank them for their guidance, to acknowledge what their story cost them, and to celebrate the gift of loving perception that they give back to us as Indigenous women.

Through our stories, I am reminded that Indigenous women are doing more than surviving Canada's colonial trajectory. However, not all Indigenous women are surviving the most pervasive attacks on Indigenous womanhood. The physical, emotional and material control of our bodies, selves, and imaginations imposed by governments, social institutions, and our own people has meant that some have not survived. For those of us who continue to struggle, and even for those of us who have 'made it' our relationality and accountability as Indigenous women writers remains the same, to create a loving space for Indigenous women regardless of where that space exists.

The changing places of women in our communities are reflected in the changes in our stories. In Janice Acoose's (Saulteaux Métis) "A Vanishing Indian? Or Acoose: Woman Standing Above Ground" and in Emma LaRocque's (Cree Métis) "Colonization of the Native Woman Scholar" each woman is writing about the ways our bodies and selves, theories and philosophies, laws and politics are vanished within academe and how this "vanishment" act has material implications for our survivance as Indigenous women and Indigenous scholars (Acoose 46, 28-29, LaRocque 398). These stories remind us that our relatively new place in the academy,

although one of great privilege is too often an unstable place fraught with daily choices that polarize the scholar and his or her communities and the constant contradictions that have to be negotiated within those choices. It is of great comfort to me as an emergent Indigenous scholar to have these stories and to know that they are working to create a more balanced and harmonious place within the academy for us.

The power to tell stories and to share them so widely is not new to Indigenous women. We have been telling stories for generations. And as the mediums for telling our stories changes over time, so too have the forms changed as a function of time. This reshaping and retelling of our stories reflect the differences of the spaces we now occupy. This story that I am sharing with you now comes, while not fully mine, comes from within my own interiority. It is a story that is constantly shaped by the desire to show the reader how other Indigenous women are forming spaces for us to take up and claim our place as Indigenous people in the academy. They've made spaces that are safer for Indigenous women to occupy in the world today as they are created through this perception of loving Indianness. It is also informed by those people I love, my children, father, mother, sisters, brother, aunties, and grannies; and because just being Indigenous in the world is not always safe for them they are all deserving of a loving gaze.

The control over the production and representation of Indigenous identity and ideology in academia or in education is always about power and control. Anderson reinforces this idea that within larger structures, such as education, power and control are always at play and shape our experiences profoundly. She says "education, of course, is power in this world—our ancestors

always knew this, and encouraged their youngsters to acquire what they might need to survive in the encroaching settler world” (Anderson). In her story, “Says Who: Colonialism Identity and Defining Indigenous Literature” Akiwenzie-Damm reminds us about the power we hold in telling and knowing our stories in our words “when we express ourselves and we listen to the creative and cultural expressions of others” (24). However, she cautions that “we must do so from an informed position so that we do not contribute to the confusion and oppression but instead, bring into sharper focus who we are” (24). As more than resistance or survival literatures, telling our stories means “freeing ourselves of the constricting bounds of stereotypes and imposed labels of identity” so that the result is liberation, where “we empower ourselves and our communities” (Akiwenzie-Damm 24)

Part of being Indigenous in the world today is often about negotiating the dissonance between how we perceive ourselves as Indigenous and how others perceive "Indigenous" itself. One of the ways we are negotiating this discord between what we know about ourselves and what others would say we "are" is through our writing. In order for us to do more than survive in this world as Indigenous peoples, we must write our stories of loving Indianness back into our own cultural imaginary in our own ways. Writing for ourselves is not simply a practice of retelling our stories in a different medium. Anyone who has seen the etchings at Petroglyph National Park knows that we have always used writing in some form for storytelling.

Writing from an Indigenous worldview is a strategy of being able to "imagine Indigenous people engaged in a broad range of activities which do not, in and of themselves, satisfy the

expectations conjured up by the notion of Indianness” (King xv). King's use of “imagine” in this phrase is intentional as the understanding of imagination and creation exists within multiple registers of knowing for Indigenous people. Understanding the vast and creative implications of the power of imagination is a major point of this work as it relates to the creative and generative power of storytelling and by extension storytellers. Indigenous writers, as storytellers re-creating stories that already exist within traditional knowledges and understandings, have the creative power to fashion ways of being in the world. Like storytellers, the fashioning of our stories to make anew the old ways of being and bringing the readers into the centres of these stories, we can envision and enact ways to make our communities whole and healthy.

This story is a part of a larger story, my master's thesis. As an Indigenous scholar, I wonder what it means for others to read and hear their own stories. While there are some great works by non-Indigenous scholars that bring issues relevant to Indigenous people into the light and some even stronger research created through inter-cultural partnerships, like LaRocque, I still question why there is so much written and spoken about us by others on our behalf. I also wonder why there is a general insistence to publish and re-publish those who write about us yet fail to see how their work might contribute to the continued dismissal of Indigenous theorists and theories (400). Of great concern for Indigenous writers is the silencing of Indigenous theoretical critical voices, the dismissal of Indigenous scholarship as theoryless, and the ways our words, knowledge, and traditions (and therefore our research and research methods) are viewed as “legends or myths” (Akiwenzie-Damm 13). As mentioned earlier in the Introduction section of

this thesis, the paradigm shift in this project is understood by Womack (Creek Cherokee) to mean that, as Indigenous scholars, we need to go beyond these basic academic inquiries of locating ourselves in relations to the centre or margin because such limited analysis "misses an incredibly important point" (13). Womack says that we must shift the focus of our inquiry and knowledge production from how the world "sees" Indians, to asking "how do Indians view Indians"(13).

This theory in thesis is formed within Indigenous women's writing: writers who are also concerned with the ways our writing is taken up and read/heard by Indigenous people. It is also informed by my realizing the necessity of telling and retelling our stories for ourselves in our own ways. Telling our own story, according to Anderson, does more than relate a way of being as this story potentially "has an impact on all levels of education—i.e. if we are writing Canadian history from our perspective, maybe someday this will make its way into the primary school classrooms and textbooks that have never represented our version of "what happened"" (Anderson).

To tell our stories in our own ways means to acknowledge that at the heart of Indigenous women's stories is a space for loving Indianness. But to know what loving Indianness means we need to know how we define both loving and Indianness from within our own worldviews. If, as Indigenous writers and as storytellers, we are writing to do more than survive (and I think we are) there must be a willingness to understand how over-determined and externally defined notions of Indianness, occupy our interiority that is how it occupies our imagined self, as well as

our bodies, and therefore shape our relations with each other (Acoose 52). The interiority of Indigenous knowledge means we Indigenous scholars and readers have to be aware of how this interiority influences our choices and words. This struggle is articulated by Acoose when she says, “How Do I Fight The Enemy When The Outposts Are In My Head?” (52). Understanding the historical and ongoing production of Indianness and the ways we have internalized these productions may also give us ways of looking at how our ideas of loving Indianness are shaped and in turn shape our stories and ourselves.

3.3 Indianness

I've often wondered how much external ideas of Indianness inform our identity processes. Like King and Akiwenzie-Damm, many Indigenous people have their own experiences of being both not Indigenous enough and altogether too Indigenous in someone else's opinion. Questioning how one reads Indigeneity, is not simply an issue of criticizing a non-Indigenous gaze focused on Indigeneity. It is also and becoming more clearly an issue of an Indigenous gaze focused on Indigeneity. Throughout this story King relates how he confronts numerous challenges to his own identity as an "Indian" person (48). King discusses this paradigmatic shift in the chapter “You're Not the Indian I Had in Mind”. While there is humour in King's story, the production of Indigenous identity is often a political and material concern for Indigenous people who are mostly confronted with and forced to reconcile with non-Indigenous and Indigenous people's ideas of who Indigenous people really are.

Akiwenzie-Damm talks about our psychological vulnerability in these moments when we don't live up to the "fictions of Indigenous stereotypes" (14). There is trauma in this exchange always, it hurts when someone questions your national affiliation based on phenotypic expression. At these moments our lived Indianness gets erased. King looks at the discrepancies of how we "are" and how we are "seen" and he muses,

So it was unanimous. Everyone knew who Indians were. Everyone knew what we looked like. Even Indians [. . .] Yet how can something that has never existed - the Indian - have form and power while something that is alive and kicking - Indians - are invisible? (53)

Consistent with King's and Akiwenzie-Damm's experiences of not being authentic enough, Indigenous women relate varying stories about our experiences of not being Indigenous enough for another Indigenous person. In a recent conversation with a community Elder, I was reminded that these questions of how Indigenous we are in each other's view stem from the historical and current political practices of pitting Indigenous people against Indigenous people by denying, circumscribing, or otherwise subverting our self-identities through various legislative practices to the point that we question each other and ourselves about our own Indianness.

Stories have ways of coming around again so that we get the chance to hear things we may have missed in their prior telling. Recently I watched Shelley Niro's collaborative short film which is based on Michael Doxtater's poem "Overweight with Crooked Teeth." In the opening scene Doxtater walks up to the camera in a three-piece suit and black sunglasses and asks, "What were you expecting anyway? Sitting Bull? Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce saying 'the earth and I are one'" (Niro)? Niro's short film created in collaboration with Big Brother Productions stars

her brother Michael Doxtater whose character and the questions his character asks challenge the stereotypes held by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Niro does this by referencing known tribal identities and stereotypical understandings of Indigeneity to identify her audience as both local and non-Indigenous. For a Haudenosaunee audience it is clear that Doxtater is not in fact Chief Joseph who was a real person and is known throughout Mohawk nations and Haudenosaunee culture. This focus on our local and knowable Mohawk notions of Indianness allows the viewer to see in sharp relief the ways that ideas of Indianness are pervasive as well as divisive and damaging, even within an Indigenous viewer. Niro also achieves a parallel effect of providing non-Indigenous viewers with an image of current Indigeneity that make us flesh, blood, and breath in the here and now. When the character in the film points out that he is not Sitting Bull, he can be read as saying “I am more than the image that lives in your mind” (Niro). The presentation of stereotypes as unrealistic and dated clearly acts as counterpoint to mainstream ideas of Indianess in this film. This affect is achieved because Sitting Bull’s image is so widely used and its use is pervasive and fixed in the imagination of non-Indigenous people as an example of real Indianness that when placed in sharp juxtaposition against a living and speaking Indigenous person, “the stereotype becomes impossible to sustain” (Niro). Niro’s emphasis on being Indigenous today and her stated intention of “creating better images of us” can be seen as an example of a focal shift from being looked at to looking at ourselves (Niro).

In personal conversation with Niro she explained that her films and photography are ways for her to do more than just respond to the negative or self-destructive (all too readily

available) images of us present in mainstream media. Niro says that “her work expresses the complexities and fluidity of Indigenous identities” (Niro). Niro also affirms that “as Indigenous people we need to retain control of what those expressions will be” (Niro). In her film work and artwork, she uses irony, humour camp, parody and a play on signs to point out the frailties of the stereotypical understanding of Indianness. Yet, within the subtext of Niro’s work there is a continuous thread of understanding the degree to which we engage or reject these ideas of Indianness. We need these stories, the sad ones, as well as the funny ones, for as Thomas King (Cherokee) reminds us, “if we change the stories we live by quite possibly we change our lives” (152).

3.4 Loving Perception as a Critical Centre

Whether Indigenous people grew up urban, on reserve, with our biological families, extended families, or in an institution, we all have different ideas of Indianness usually found in stories about what it was like for our parents and their parents growing up. These kinds of stories do more than establish family histories; they also give us ways to survive and tell us how to be in the here and now. The continued telling of these stories generation after generation is evidence of and bears witness to our ongoing cultural presence and ultimately Indigenous survivance. King (Cherokee) and Silko (Laguna Pueblo) tell us that stories are all that we are. Craig Womack (Creek-Cherokee) reinforces this by reminding us that these stories do more than preserve our various Indigenous cultures; our stories acknowledge that our cultures are largely intact because our stories are political and because our stories are political they need to be situated in “Indian

country, rather than” in the “canon” (11). Our stories tell us how we are adapting to the challenges we are continually encountering in our communities. As the carriers of these stories, Indigenous people need to be as enthusiastic about the stories of “Indian land title” as the world is about the stories of Indigenous culture (11).

Indigenous women are writing are addressing the complexities of what happens to those of us who don't have stories of survivance or stories of being Indigenous that are infused with a loving perception. The men and women of my father’s generation believed it was best not to speak their language because in too many instances they were forced to hide or deny their Indianness just to survive, to stay out of residential schools, or elude government custody by hiding out in the corn field when the green trucks were coming (Elder). Our local Elders talk about these experiences and help us to understand teachings, traditions, and value as a means of working through these experiences where many of us are only one generation removed from the residential school experience. It is a painful reality that many Indigenous people did not survive these darker days. The intimate knowledge of my father's experiences take these theories into action, where it is evident that the absence of our people from positive social narratives, the misrepresentations of our people and their ways in cultural theory about us, and the denial of ourselves as people worthy of love, has meant that we don’t survive.

My father, although he was Upper Cayuga and Mohawk, spoke the Onondaga language with his family and relations but not with his children. I will never hear his stories in his language from him. But these stories do exist, these stories show me that there is no one way, or

right way, to be Indigenous in the world. Even my father's refusal to speak the language to his children, was a subversive way to hold onto that part of being Indigenous in the world that could not be removed by the residential school or the "Indian day school" system. It was his way of being Indigenous in a world where it was so completely unsafe to be Indigenous. While of our stories of Indianness and what that means to us may be different they are still about the survivance of Indigenous people in the world today.

Although this project focuses on the theory of our survivance as coming from within Indigenous women's writing, this thesis project is always focused with a loving perspective of Indigeneity. Quite true, the researcher may not always find the 'love' in the story, but to sustain a focused perspective of loving Indianess often helps the researcher get through the worst of the stories. Even as a measure of self-protection, it is important for an Indigenous scholar to remember the message "We are a people worthy of love". The theoretical frameworks for articulating the theory of loving Indianness as coming from within Indigenous women's writing are provided by bell hooks and Maria Lugones. Both hooks and Lugones write about loving from what I understand as the space between the imagined and the real. "Loving blackness" according to hooks, is a political and critical strategy to affect anti-racist theory and practice. According to hooks, theorizing about Blackness, when fixed with a loving gaze, allows for solidarity in fighting against oppression. I think that hooks' strategy "provided a space for the kind of decolonization that for her makes loving blackness possible"(10). Similarly, Lugones suggests that a "loving perception" is a critical lens through which we can perceive ways of "cross-

cultural and cross-racial loving" where "love had to be rethought and made anew" (392-393). As Lugones elaborates, to love other women in the ways that we are taught to perceive them is a falsity and does not help to build the relations required to enact change. She goes on to say "I also think that there is a complex failure of love in the failure to identify with another woman, the failure to see oneself in other women who are quite different from oneself (393). For both theorists, a loving perception is necessary as a counterpoint to ongoing racism and oppression. As well for hooks and Lugones, a loving perception is a hinge that connects people from vast different worlds and allows for a movement toward harmony and balance in these spaces. For me, a loving perception provides a perspective (already within many Indigenous women's writings) and possibly a language through which we can create or at least articulate new theory about loving Indianness that can only be synthesised in the focused attention on how we see ourselves.

Loving Indianness in this context however, cannot be fully understood as just theory or a theoretical framework, it has material implication. It means that even while I'm walking in cities across Canada where our people are living on the streets and being ravaged by histories of cultural trauma, I need to be proud of the strength, courage, and optimism that being a Indigenous woman has given me. All the while I still need to acknowledge that all the negative and hurtful experiences that are still a part of being an Indigenous person today are faced by my students, my children, and our people even today, I also know that we need to continue to speak

about it, to address the negatives and the distortions of Indigenous identity in order for survivance to continue.

Too often as Indigenous women it is not enough for us to love Indianness to keep our bodies safe. I am reminded far too often that Indigenous women's bodies are not regarded in the North American cultural imaginary with a loving perception. The conflation of desire and power with loving bodies is far too prevalent in many of the representations of women's bodies in general. For Indigenous women there is far too often the added vulnerability of being located within the social context of economic poverty in which our bodies become even less loved. Sadly we don't need to look far to see how Indigenous women's bodies are not loved. The maddening case of so many missing, exploited and murdered Indigenous women from Vancouver's East Side and across Canada is just one story among many¹. The limits of this thesis means that these missing Indigenous women are not given the attention their stories fully deserve, but I would be remiss to not mention how the stories of these missing and murdered Indigenous women, their families, and their communities touch us and inform the production of Indigenous theory. As women, as family members, as writers, as researchers and as community leaders we have a responsibility to these women's stories, to keep their stories whole and intact and to tell them

¹ See the Native Women's Association of Canada's Sisters In Spirit website for more information on the actions taken to inform, educate, and reduce the violence against Aboriginal women across Canada. Sisters in Spirit is an action that grew out of the need to address the long-known over-representation of missing, exploited, and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada. According to Sisters in Spirit "To-date, our research proves that there are more than 582 missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in this country."

correctly and with the respect. Their stories are resonating across Indigenous communities world-wide. However, I want to make clear that a part of our over-determined representation is tied up in the way these stories are often told in mainstream media. The women are referred to as drug users and prostitutes, seemingly already lost according to societal measures of prosperity. The way these stories are told means that the stories their families, their children, and their communities are not told, the loving stories of Indigenous women are not talked about. And just because the good stories are silenced doesn't mean that they don't exist.

This theory of loving Indianness is not my own, it comes from within Indigenous women's writing. My articulation of this theory was made possible by the very act of Indigenous women writers imagining and writing into being the possibility of nurture a space to articulate our own loving. While other theorists may provide insights into how loving exists within their own selves and across cultures, my theorizing of loving Indianness comes from my everyday of being Indigenous in the world. I want to address the ways that Indigenous women are far too often written about in ways that denies our own ability to theorize about ourselves. I want to see ourselves expressed in theory in loving ways. The question is how to talk about being Indigenous then—how to theorize—in concrete ways that does not bind us to fixed ways of being Indigenous peoples. I think it comes back to the intimate knowledge we have of and the ways that we love those people that we are theorizing by, for, and about. The stories we write about when the storyteller has a loving perception informed by an Indigenous worldview manifest material differences to for us as Indigenous peoples. When Indigenous writes and theorists tell our stories

about us from a loving perspective, they are providing us with the tools of our survivance. These stories written by us and for us give me hope, allow me to connect with other Indigenous women sometimes sharing with each other the emotional and spiritual support we need to continue along this academic path.

Within this project, loving Indianness offers a way to articulate the ways I want to see our lives understood as material and real within theory produced about Indigeneity, to acknowledge that we are never separate from that which sustains us (no matter what nation we are from). This story is about the production of loving spaces through our writing. It addresses my own concerns about being an Indigenous academic and the responsibility to my communities that this identity requires. In a recent conversation with Kim Anderson, we talked about what having a loving perception means in our work as Indigenous women. For Anderson, undertaking a loving perception, while necessary, “is complex in that it is about establishing intimacy and responsibility while simultaneously acknowledging the problems in our Indigenous communities” (Anderson).

In both *A Recognition of Being: Reclaiming Native Womanhood and Strong Women Stories*, Anderson’s desire was to produce “something that Indigenous women recognize as their own” (Anderson). In conversation Anderson says, “I’m not particularly interested in writing to an audience that does not include the majority of people in my community”(Anderson). Anderson relates that the responsibility of relational accountability, whether in life or in research, means knowing your community. *Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* is

for many Indigenous women a tool of our cultural survivance. It is a text that is both intimate and responsible. Anderson provides a teleological tracing of the ways Indigenous womanhood has been historically venerated within Indigenous communities, vilified and commodified in Canada's colonial trajectory and goes on to show how the power of Indigenous womanhood is currently being reclaimed by Indigenous women and communities as the source of our history, present and future . From Anderson's writing about Indigenous womanhood, I have identified theory regarding how we have been seen, are seen and will be seen as Indigenous women and what this means for our own identity formations and political activities.

Anderson says that she "wanted people to read *Strong Women Stories* and say "Right on. I recognize that. I'm dealing with that problem myself" (Anderson). Both Anderson and Lawrence are clear about the need to recognize the relationality of their own work to the women who contributed the stories to this collection (11). Anderson and Lawrence also want to see their work used as a way of negotiating challenges, where Indigenous people can take the "visions and strategies" offered in these women's stories as tools for their own survivance (11).

3.5 The Paradigmatic Shift from Resistance to Survivance

The purpose of my writing has always been to tell a better story than is being told about us.
To give that to the people and to the next generations.
The voices of the grandmothers and grandfathers compel me to speak
of the worth of our people
and the beauty all around us,
to banish the profaning of ourselves,
and to ease the pain. (Armstrong 498)

Keeping the power of telling our stories in mind, it is also quite possible that if we tell our stories for ourselves we will change our lives. In Anderson and Lawrence's introduction to *Strong Women's Stories*, they say that a goal of telling our stories, "finding our voices," is "about articulating the circumstances we encounter as we work to bring about social change" in our communities (17). For years Indigenous women writers such as Lawrence and Anderson 2003 and 2005, Anderson 2000, Monture 1999, Harlan 1999, Harjo and Bird 1997, Lawrence 1996, Armstrong 1993, and LaRocque 1993 (to name a few) have been shifting the focus of Indigenous women's inquiries from stories told about us to the stories we tell about ourselves. As mentioned in section 1.3 of this paper, Shifting the Focus, Fiske identified that some of the earliest writing by Indigenous women proved to be focused differently than non-Indigenous theorists who "responded to Aboriginal women's writing" by attempting to "categorize, interpret and to locate the writings of Aboriginal women within mainstream feminist, postcolonial, and postmodernist theories" (18). "The writers themselves" Fiske states "articulate a theory that arises within their stories and is integral to their own culturally positioned narratives" which focuses their gaze on each other and not on their location to margin or centre (18-19).

Following from the shift in focus mentioned in section 1.3 of this project, shifting from being looked at to looking at ourselves, there is also a marked shift taking place in stories produced by Indigenous women today. I understand this shift in writing as a theoretical redirection from writing as a means of survival and resistance to writing as a means of survivance. This paradigmatic shift is markedly different from a focal shift that is still fixed on

understanding the gaze in that a paradigm shift changes “how we shape our view of the world and the word around us and how we walk though that world” (Wilson 161). Following Wilson’s understanding of paradigm, the reader can better understand how a paradigms shift is not just a theoretical or mind shift, it is action. Indigenous women’s writing is moving from talking about ourselves into action, or what Weber-Pillwax earlier referred to as synthesis.

While Indigenous women’s writing has been considered and analyzed in terms of resistance, the theory within Indigenous women’s writing places it more squarely as generative and imaginative, thus providing us with different means of survivance and community renewal. Anderson says "This is true for many Indigenous women—the process of writing creates a space where they can deal with anger pain and sadness and then begin to kindle positive feelings about their identity" (141). Anderson also says that “Writing offers both a means to resist and an opportunity to invent" (140). Indigenous storytelling, while always evolving, has always been political and critical. As Indigenous theorists writing ourselves into being and action, we need to ask different questions now in order to find out where we see ourselves going and how we are going to get there. We need to ask ourselves if it is enough to simply tell our stories to affect change in our communities, to create a space where we can love Indianness. We also need understand the actions needed to sustain that space in the years to come.

As stated earlier, Gerald Vizenor's idea of survivance is predicated upon an affirmation that we not only survived the trials and genocide of coloniality but we thrived and produce generations with hope, with a "native sense of presence, a motion of sovereignty and a will to

resist dominance"(53). Within this project, Vizenor's theory of survivance provides a way to frame and describe the creative power of Indigenous women's writing: it is "the Shimmers of imagination" and a space of "wild incursions" where anything imagined is possible, where the creation of new ways of being Indigenous in the world 'undermines the unreal in the literatures of dominance' ("Manners"12-14). Vizenor's theory of survivance also offers ways to regard our writing as more than resistance literature. In fact, Indigenous women's writing can be understood as "stories of liberation" as trickster literature in the play of articulation, "the pleasures of silence, natural reason, the rights of consciousness, transformations of the marvellous" which are all are very much alive in our stories of cultural survivance (Vizenor "Manners" 14, 8). Within Indigenous women's writing is the imagining of ways to be, an articulation of ways to be Indigenous at its most fragile, yet critical to developing Indigenous thought and political action.

While not as fully explored as I would have liked, within the limits of this research project Gerald Vizenor's theory of survivance offers this research project much more than a theoretical foundation on which to build methods and actions of research, Vizenor's theory of survivance ("native sense of presence, a motion of sovereignty and a will to resist dominance") should signal for the reader an emerging paradigmatic shift from being concerned with centre and margin (commonly referred to in what is described as 'resistance' literature) to what can be better understood as survivance, which focuses its concern in Indigenous peoples relations to each other. Survivance, as it focuses on the flourishing of Indigenous cultures gives the reader a way to think about the creative and transformative powers of words and language (53).

Survivance, a concept synthesized by Vizenor, is considered in this thesis project to be an Indigenous (which in this case includes American Indian) epistemology which provides a worldview of Indianness premised on an affirmation and valuing of Indigenous knowledge systems, beliefs, laws, and customs. The intent of this section is to offer Vizenor's theory of survivance as a way of thinking of Indigenous women's writing as more than resistance literature (which infers its own marginality in the very act of having to push against a dominant centre that is 'not ours'). Vizenor's theory of survivance suggests a centrality of Indigenous critical, political and creative thought that is not 'always already' known measured against (and found lacking) mainstream critical thoughts about Indigeneity. In an interview with Jack Foley, Vizenor asserts that prior focuses on mainstream manifestations of Indianness have not served us well. "Indians in this sense must be the simulations of the "absolute fakes" in the ruins of representation, or the victims in literary annihilation" says Vizenor (9). In an interview Vizenor continues to explain how ideas of Indianness are constructed and held onto even in the face of so many inconsistencies. In describing the "invention of the Indian" he says "we're forever locked into this binary invention of the savage, the Indian, this kind of homogenized reference to an Indigenous person. I don't think anyone could live up to the idea of the invention of an Indian, not even in photographs or costume or anything. I mean, you couldn't possibly do that, it's such a homogenized reference" (Foley). Vizenor continues to explain his use of the term "postindian": surely after five hundred years we can figure out that we're not Columbus's Indians. We're much more complex than that" (Foley).

For the purpose of this research project, I suggest that Vizenor's theory of survivance also speaks to the resiliency and the realities of Indigenous peoples and civilizations who continued to flourish despite what earlier mentioned writers have stated are centuries of colonial oppression, cultural genocide, forced assimilation, residential schools, outlawed traditions, stolen generations, and continued broken promises of the Canadian government. Vizenor's ideas of survivance, being both hopeful and brilliantly engaged, most aptly better reflects what Indigenous women's writing is about; a better future imagined and enacted for Indigenous peoples.

3.6 Renewal

These stories are turns on the circle. While my story is an old story told many times before, it is one that needs telling again and again. As King says, we may change it a bit in each telling, to make sure that new ways of being in the world are included, but the story is the same ("Truth" 1). Indigenous women are creating ways, through writing and storytelling, to love ourselves, our nations, and our Mother. The synthesis in Indigenous women's writing is remaking our worlds and our selves renewed through our words. Part of this renewal process is telling and sharing what Theresa Harlan calls "Indigenous Truths" (140). According to Harlan, Indigenous truths are being expressed through the work of Indigenous image-makers. Harlan says that "Indigenous image-makers who contribute to self knowledge and survival create messages and remembrances that recognize the origin, nature, and direction of their Indigenous existence and communities" (140). Establishing the life-long and centuries old connections to

the land is crucial in the creation of Indigenous theory and Indigenous “image-makers understand [. . .] their point of origin [. . .] and that it “is directly rooted to the land” (140). Harlan also understands that image-makers (who in the project are understood as writers) also “understand that the images they create may either subvert or support existing representations of Indigenous people. They understand that they must create the intellectual space for their images to be understood, and free themselves from the contest over visual history and its representations of Indigenous people” (140). As Harlan recounts, it is our own knowledge of our communities, ourselves, and our Nations, which needs to be spoken because we know these as our truths. Our responsibility is in maintaining what is real for us.

3.7 Conclusion

I want to leave you with yet another story. I started down this path to understanding the renewal of our communities through Indigenous women’s writing a number of years ago. My way along this path has brought me across oceans and land, from away to home, from small towns on the bay taking boats to work and into major cities and the 401, all the while talking to women about their writing and what they think it means to produce Indigenous knowledge of what it means to be Indigenous today. During one of my travels home, I had the chance to sit and talk with Shelley Niro. Niro’s work is a great source of comfort for me because she looks at Mohawk women with both pride and humour both of which are very prevalent in the way I see and understand Mohawk womanhood. She had made dinner and offered me something to eat while we talked (even though I thought that feeding anyone who comes to visit was special and

particular to how we treat each other at home, I had the same great experience working with women across Newfoundland). We were talking about her most recent work; an amazing photograph titled *Surrender Nothing Always*. She said that she wanted to make something that people "got" (Niro). She wanted her films to be understood and she worried that this kind of knowledge translation would be lost on anyone but her.

Talking about her film work, she told me a story about asking family members to watch her film, in particular her father. She was a bit dismayed that after viewing this particular film because he just wasn't "getting it" (Niro). After watching her film, I came to understand that my "getting it" had more to do with being an Indigenous woman than being Indigenous. I knew her characters were created with so much love and nurturing and that one character was a daughter in need of guidance. I knew this character and I connected with her in her search for what it meant to be an Indigenous woman in the here and now. When we met again, I said "Maybe your dad can't get this film because he's never been a young Mohawk woman looking for her own truths" (Niro). It was one of those moments. I know that my own truths were echoed in this film and Niro's film gave me something that I could articulate as a theory of loving Indianness.

As a researcher I am always looking for my own truths. As an academic, a mother, a daughter, or a sister, each one of these looks different. I am working in the academy with Indigenous youth from the world over. They sit in my office and voice the same concerns I had twenty years ago. They are looking for their own truths as well. The difference is that now they have more than just a few books get answers from. On my desk, piled around me are articles,

monographs, books, journals, videos, photographs, editorials, postcards, paintings, tapes and emails, all full of Indigenous women and men's voices, hearts, and minds. When I started this these things were meagre. In 1985 and even in 2005, to a large degree books about Indigenous theory were not on the shelves. Because our words were not in books about us they were not in our own voices they didn't leave me feeling like I had found comfort or solace. Since then things have changed so much.

I have come to realize that I have so many more questions now about what it means to be an Indigenous person in the world today than I have answers. Having more questions than answers is not a crisis of the heart of mind. Who doesn't wonder how they are ever going to be able to teach their children and grandchildren these things? I know this to be true of Elders who look to other Elders for knowledge they may not carry themselves but have identified the need to share this knowledge. I do know that all of our stories, no matter how different they are in their understanding of Indianness or how differently they are told or shared, have at their centre a loving perception in which Indigenous people can see themselves as loved, giving love, and loving themselves as Indigenous people. They also have within them an action that supports a loving perspective. The next section of this thesis explores this theory of Indigenous women's writing as survivance. The women's stories in this section talk about the context of loving Indianness and the limits of relying wholly on that perspective when talking about the politics of place, specifically Mi'kmaq and Innu communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Chapter 4: Indigenous Women's Writing as Vision, Action and Empowerment

Writing Indigenous Place and Being Back into the Cultural Imaginary

4.1 Introduction

For the purpose of guiding the reader through this Indigenous research project, this chapter will detail the ways that Innu and Mi'kmaq women writers are imagining and articulating a redefined understanding of Indigenous survivance, in relation to their place in Newfoundland and Labrador. As I mentioned earlier, I wanted this research to be grounded in community. I lived and worked in Newfoundland, but I am not an Indigenous person from Newfoundland and Labrador. As such the reader needs to understand this section of the research as cross-cultural research (given the outcomes of the differences between Martin's and Muise's location within Mi'kmaq culture this entire research project can be understood as cross-cultural *in that within an urban Indigenous community and even within Haudenosaunee and Onkwehonwe nations there are vast cultural difference*). I don't presume to speak for any of the women in this thesis, and this is a particularly salient aspect of the research in this section. Section one defines the vision of this section of the research. Section two sets up the context in which the women in this section are working and living. Section three examines their mechanisms of empowerment. And section four guides the reader through the actions of the women who examine the intricacies of relationality in what is perceived as a homogenous tribal nation, the Mi'kmaq.

4.2 The Vision

Having established in Chapter 3 that writing from a loving perspective differentiates Indigenous women's writing, by, for, and about Indigenous people, from the more readily recognized official and often cited writings about Indigenous women. This chapter examines how writing from this perspective of loving Indianness informs writing about place and the location of culture within in many Indigenous cultures across Canada. While a specific goal of this section is to reveal these links between Indigenous women's writing and Indigenous survivance what emerged was a profound understanding of the limits of loving Indianness as a perspective and how the application of this perspective alone is not an act of cultural survivance. Relying on a depoliticized story of coming home to talk about Indigenous culture can effectively efface and obliterate the political struggles within the very community this Indigenous research project is trying to address. As the reader will see, Martin's story about the Mi'kmaq men of Conne River 'coming home' is a compelling story of reclaiming Mi'kmaq identity. As Womack warns, people "love" stories about "Indian culture" but they are "much less enthusiastic about" stories that talk about "Indian land title" (11).

4.3 Setting the Context

As Indigenous researchers we need to pay attention to what Weber-Pillwax says is a limit of mainstream research paradigms imposed upon community-based research. One such limit arises when the research relationship and the research communities are often theorized as hypothetical in that, "when a researcher assumes that the ethics guidelines of a hypothetical

130

‘research community’ can take precedence over those of a real community of people (real faces and real bodies) situated in space and time, this surely constitutes a breach of ethics and ought to raise serious questions about the research project itself” (80). “Where a researcher cannot discern and does not recognize what lies in the space between the ethical world of the hypothetical research community and the ethical world of the real community” Weber-Pillwax suggests that the cost to the researcher is that “s/he will be unable to take such critical information into account in the research project being conducted” (80). At risk for the community, the researcher and the research process is that “Logically, the existence of such a knowledge gap would call into question the findings, results, products, and outcomes from such research” (Weber-Pillwax “Indigenous Researchers” 80). The reader must understand this condition of research because they are traps that as Indigenous scholars we can easily fall into. This happened to me on my way to researching place and identity in Newfoundland and Labrador. Not being a Mi’kmaq person, and not living on the west coast of Newfoundland, I could only theorize about this community and from the assumptions that I came to about ‘being’ from these communities as like ‘being’ from any Indigenous community, I came to a flawed understanding of the deep personal relations that exist within the Mi’kmaq communities of Newfoundland and Labrador. I thought all that was needed was a loving image of Indigeneity. My assumption may have worked in theory but it didn’t hold up in real life.

Far from theoretical, the very real Mi’kmaq communities of Newfoundland and Labrador are located and identified in the pervasive extermination myth and folklore of Newfoundland

culture and in the historically reinforced meta-narrative of Indigenous vanishment evident in the social narratives of place (Hanrahan 12). Knowing real people who live in these communities and witnessing how extermination and vanishment narratives affect the daily lives of people living in these communities provides the reader with a clear picture of how these social narratives of place and specifically the ‘Indianlessness’ within these places create material challenges and acute personal grief for people living in these communities. The commonplace narrative that there are no Indigenous people in Newfoundland is something that many Indigenous people in Newfoundland hear and have to negotiate as discordant from their own identity and location on a regular basis. Hanrahan suggests that this narrative is reinforced generally through myth and specifically through history because of the omission of Indigenous people from the 1948 Terms of Union between Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada which saw Newfoundland and Labrador become a province of Canada in 1949 (3).

There is a readiness to accept what Vizenor refers to as the tragic and melancholic common historic narrative which we can find woven through this specific story of an Indigenous-less place (83). Woven through the fibers of Newfoundland culture is the folkloric story in which the death of Shanaditti, also commonly known as the Last of the Beothucks, signaled the real demise of any Indigenous culture or presence on the Island portion of Newfoundland and Labrador. As stated earlier the roots of this idea, an Indigenous-less island portion of the province, can be traced back to the history of Newfoundland confederation.

According to Lawrence the omission of Indigenous people from the Terms of Union between Newfoundland and Canada can be attributed to the transition of the Newfoundland government from federal to provincial where “the government of Canada, which observes the distinction between the Inuit and other Indigenous people, had assumed fiduciary responsibility for the Inuit [. . .] the Innu and Mi’kmaq have, in theory, been administered by the provincial government” (287). Lawrence goes on to say that prior to the federal recognition of the Mi’kmaq landless reserve in Western Newfoundland in 2009 “the Innu Nation in Labrador is still struggling to be placed under the Indian Act [. . .] and [. . .] eleven of the twelve Mi’kmaq communities in Newfoundland are still struggling to be recognized as reserves, almost 20 years after Conne River gained reserve status in 1984 (287).

There were many mitigating factors that denied the ongoing existence of Indigenous people on the island portion of Newfoundland and Labrador, but the myth of the Mi’kmaq as mercenaries whose role was exterminating the last natural Indigenous inhabitants from the island needs to be considered when tracing both the vanishment of Indigenous peoples and the negative association of being Mi’kmaq in Newfoundland. Hanrahan explains, “These accounts contradict the myth that the Mi’kmaq were brought over from Nova Scotia to exterminate the Beothucks – a myth that was in schoolbooks until recently and contributed to the stigma attached to being Mi’kmaq in Newfoundland [I . . .] in addition, no solid evidence of a Mi’kmaq campaign of violence against the Beothucks has ever been discovered” (14).

The cultural narratives of an Indigenous-less nation continues to be exemplified in the many stories of ‘Shanaditti, the Last of the Beothucks’. These stories efface the very presence and ongoing social narratives of Mi’kMaq-ness in Newfoundland. According to Hanrahan, even the Mi’kMaq of Nova Scotia, who are often thought of as occupying the heart of Mi’kMaq territory, talked of the Mi’kMaq of Newfoundland as being ‘Sa’yewedjkik’ or the ancients (Hanrahan 14). Ready to accept this tragic victimry as truth, within the continually circulated and ongoing narratives of Shanaditti death lays the erasure of all other Indigenous life, history, or ongoing communities in Newfoundland despite a continued Indigenous presence across the province.

Considering both the cultural narratives and the federal and provincial government’s denial of Indigenous community (with Land) status to the Innu and the Mi’kMaq of Newfoundland and Labrador, one can fairly see how Indigenous people’s presence and contributions have been vanished from the cultural imaginary of Newfoundland’s narratives of place and nation building. According to what Denis Bartels calls the ‘Myth of the Micmac Mercenary’ the people of Newfoundland and Labrador were used to the story of the Micmac killing of the Beothucks. The Indigenous population was thought to have been killed off—by each other— and thus they were gone both physically and from the larger cultural imaginary (32). Echoing Hanrahan, Bartels also says that the “White hostility to the Newfoundland Micmac land claim” rested on the “Newfoundland folk belief” that the Mi’kMaq were brought to Newfoundland by the French to kill the Beothucks (32).

Vanishment acts can be understood as supported by an overarching social narrative that, according to Margot Francis, is embedded in the “romanticism and amnesias” of those who simultaneously love (in this case the claiming of Shanaditti as akin to heroic) and forget (all other Indigenous people in Newfoundland after Shanaditti’s death) the Indigenous people of that place (5). I personally found it disturbing that these pervasive narratives of Indigenous genocide and extinction were strangely venerated through an obviously loving story of Shanaditti which even went as far as placing a marker on what was supposed to be her grave in the East White Hills. More accurately, it’s likely that these stories were scaffolding supporting the ongoing denial of an Indigenous presence while simultaneously obscuring any contribution to the building of Newfoundland. According to Bartels, the theory of an Indigenous-less place (referred to earlier as Lorraine LeCamp’s theory of Terra Nullius) meant little or no resistance was given to the increased control and exploitation of Indigenous owned resources, land, economy, and industry (Bartels 33).

The twisted contentiousness and constant contradictions of existing within Newfoundland and Labrador as Indigenous people can be understood as a site of Indigenous theory production about place in the local cultural imaginary. As a counterpoint to so much active dismantling of Indigenous presence and authority, Indigenous women’s writing in Newfoundland and Labrador has created this synthesis of an Indigenous voice, presence, and authority that reaches out to other Indigenous people to say “We are still here. We have never left. We will continue to be here” (Muisse). These works do more than just speak back to the invisibility of Indigenous

people in Newfoundland and Labrador, they give a loving presence, image, and hope to other Indigenous people living in similar spaces.

4.4 Innu Women Empowering the People through Writing

It's Like the Legend: Innu Women's Stories was launched during my first year of Graduate School at Memorial University in Newfoundland. I remember the excitement in the air being fed by the buzz about the book launch and the Innu women's stories in the collection. At the same time as the book launch there was a great deal of media attention documenting the crisis and tragedies in Innu communities, in particular stories of Innu youth involved in solvent abuse played out horrifically in the daily news. At issue for Innu people in Newfoundland and Labrador was a damaging and tragic hyper-visibility created by pervasive and invasive media exposure that did very little to support the Innu as sovereign people. Byrne and Fouillard wanted *It's Like the Legend* to be a voice for Innu women. "We want to hear the stories of the women" they say in their introduction to the book (14). "Innu storytelling is rich and creative—full of heart. We felt that the women were unaware of the power of their words. We wanted to help them discover this strength" (14).

Wanting to address the inaccurate and misleading hyper-visibility of Innu people, after the *It's Like the Legend* book launch, editor and contributor Nympha Byrne (Innu) was invited on the radio show *Tapestry* (CBC) hosted by Don Hill. Byrne worked tirelessly, alongside co-editor Camille Fouillard, to promote the women's stories and experiences as positive and culturally affirming for Innu people. In Byrne's *Tapestry* interview she wanted to focus on the

realities that Innu youth face today and their relations to Innu traditions and land. She wanted to talk about the positive stories of Innu life and said that the traditions of Innu life “are still here” and “the younger generation are coming, trying to get that back again” (Byrne). The radio show host, Don Hill, had his own agenda which resulted in reinforcing much of the overrepresented sensationalism present in the media’s irresponsible portrayal of Innu people. Hill stated that “The Innu people have lost sight of themselves. A livelihood and culture, once sustained completely by the spirit of the land, had been replaced by substance abuse and a world view proposed by satellite television” (Hill). He also referred to the Innu as a “sadly typical” story in which “the memory of the culture had vanished” (Hill).

Contrary to the host’s intent, the intent of Byrne’s interview, along with the other Innu women present, was to provide tangible hopes and what Vizenor refers to as narrative chance for Innu peoples in the face of so much damaging media exposure. I was only able to talk with Byrne about some of the impact this radio interview had on the already stressed Innu communities of Labrador. “There’s so much bad press about us even our own people are having a hard time believing we will get through this” Byrne related (Byrne). Having heard the radio show and then reading the transcript of the Innu women’s interviews, I was asked to read a letter which requested an apology from the CBC for misusing the Innu women’s interviews. That letter was powerful and I knew that yet again this instance would be the tipping point for many Innu women’s action.

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Nympha Byrne's actions along with her poems and stories in *It's like the Legend* attest to the obvious inaccuracy of Hill's accusation that the Innu people were lost and removed from the land. While not denying the social issues that exist within her Innu community, Byrne speaks to the ways Innu people are still and always have been connected to the land. Her story ends with a loving and vital connection to the land. Byrne says, "I feel so rich whenever I am in the country, because the land is my survival" (230). As testaments to ongoing ways of life, the stories from *It's Like the Legend: Innu Women's Voices* offer narratives that do more than disrupt hegemonic assumptions of Indigenous cultures or subvert mainstream damaging ideas of Indigeneity or even establish a subaltern power discourse, they offer the chance of ongoing narratives of hope and survivance for other Indigenous people.

Mary Martha Hurley's (Innu) narrative, "Fifty-seven Days in Jail" tells her story about how she survived being arrested for her participation in protesting the use of NATO fighter jets over the communities in Labrador. Hurley's story documents her arrest, her time in jail, and more importantly her heart-strong connection to her family and the land. Hurley's story alone stands as a counterpoint to the fallacy of Hill's suggestion that the Innu have lost their ways and are removed from the land. Attesting to the strength of her connection to the land, after her release from jail Hurley says "After being released, I went straight to the country. I had to because I still felt like I wasn't free yet" (204). Hurley's own actions in the occupation of the air strip, her subsequent arrest, and her insistence that being in the country was the only way she

could feel her ordeal was over reinforces the steadfast connection of herself as an Innu person to the land.

She speaks succinctly to why her story and the collection of Innu women's voices are important to other Innu people when she says "Whenever non-Natives speak or write about our people they always say something bad. They say we always depend on social assistance and we are too lazy to work. They never look on the good side. It's very hurtful when someone writes these kinds of false stories about my people. That is the reason we try so hard to keep up with the struggle, so non-Natives will know we can stand up on our own two feet. We just can't watch or listen to people saying or writing these things about our people" (194). Hurley also explicates the political goal inherent in her need to share the Innu women's stories. Her story is a way of forwarding Innu women's continued struggles against the government and non-Indigenous ideas of Indigenous involvement in occupied spaces. Hurley says, "I wish the non-Natives could understand why we are doing everything to stop the low level flying [. . .] Does it ever occur to any of them how the environment surrounding us will be damaged, including the animals, rivers, lakes, fish that live in the water, the wildlife that people depend on for food" (194).

Through her story Hurley achieves her very desire of creating a space in which both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can better understand Indigenous people. The collection of stories in *It's Like the Legend: Innu Women's Voices* is the first published collection of written works by Innu women of Labrador. However, there is a strong history of other Innu and Inuit

writers that have spoken to the issues and ideas of Indigeneity played out through modern media in Newfoundland and Labrador.

4.5 Mi'kMaq and Mi'kMaq Differing Perspectives

This next section takes the reader through two very different understandings of Mi'kMaq culture in Newfoundland and Labrador. Focused primarily on Mi'kMaq spaces on the island portion of the province, both Catherine Martin and Gertie Mai Muise's stories of Mi'kMaq-ness speak to different but similar audiences. Martin's film is concerned with speaking back to mainstream culture about Mi'kMaq identity while simultaneously speaking to her son about Mi'kMaq identity. In sharp juxtaposition, the story written by Gertie Mai Muise in the collection, *Strong Women's Stories* speaks back to the continued denial of an ongoing and vital Mi'kMaq presence on the West Coast of Newfoundland. Muise's speaking back is more closely focused on speaking back to the metaphysical centre of Mi'kMaq culture presented in Martin's film about Mi'kMaq life. Muise contends, in conversation and in her written work, that the Mi'kMaq people of Newfoundland are the original people of Newfoundland, and states that Martin's film about Mi'kMaq culture is not a complete or representative picture. Muise's political activism stands as counterpoint to what can be understood as the ongoing denial of the existence of Mi'kMaq communities outside of Conne River and Chapel Island. This denial contends Muise, "silences our struggle as a land-less and leader-less people whose very survival depends on land and good leadership" (Muise).

As a loving perception of Mi'kmaq life, Martin's film is a wonderful film work that documented the building of an ocean-going canoe, a first for this current generation of men, within the federally recognized First Nation of Conne River. In 2001 I saw a screening of Catherine Martin's film at the Nickel Independent Film Festival at the LSPU Hall in St. John's Newfoundland. It was the first year of the Nickel Independent Film Festival and the organizers decided to host an Aboriginal film-maker's panel. Having been in St. John's for such a short period of time, yet knowing full well the meta-narrative of Indigenous absence that dominated the cultural imaginary of Newfoundland, I was obviously surprised to learn there was a large Indigenous community located on the west coast and on the southern shore. I was excited, and moved by Martin's images and ideas. I knew that I wanted to talk about the way she 'made' Mi'kmaq identity come alive through her film.

Martin's film, *Spirit Wind*, can be better understood as a follow-up film to her 1995 documentary on the role of women in Mi'kmaq family life titled, *Mi'kmaq Family - Migmaoei Otjiosog*. In the documentary *Mi'kmaq Family* Martin lovingly explores family roles as they are defined through traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge. She does this so that she can pass these teachings on to her own children. Martin says that her motivation for creating this vision of Mi'kmaq family life came from the birth of her second child, when she realized that she needed to know more about her culture so that she could "share that gift with him" (Martin). In talking about the importance of passing on traditional knowledge and ways of being Martin says that "The search of where I come from is for myself. Because I know that because of where I come

from, who I am, that the ways of my grandmothers and my parents and my ancestors were a good way because we're still here today and we survived. We must have been doing something right" (Martin).

Considering this earlier focus on Nova Scotia as the focal centre of Mi'kmaq civilization and her focus on mostly women's relations, it stands to reason that she would follow her earlier explorations with the story of what is considered by some to be the Island portion of Mi'kmaq civilization and the relationships and responsibilities of the men from that community. In making *Spirit Wind*, Martin is clear that the reasons she is undertaking this project is to documenting the Mi'kmaq men's struggle to bring their community back to their culturally defined ways of knowing and being. Martin focus on the men of Conne River is because "she wants her young son to be proud of the traditions and ways of the Mi'kmaq people" (Martin). The building of the ocean- going canoe, once used regularly in Mi'kmaq hunting practices, signaled a chance for the community to rally in support of regaining some of those 'lost' cultural practices in this only federally recognized land-based reserve in Newfoundland. Martin contends that the Mi'kmaq community of Conne River needed to be seen in positive ways.

According to Martin's narratives in the film, her son needed to have these visions of Mi'kmaq perseverance and tenacity to be empowered and proud of his heritage. In this way, Martin's film speaks back to the meta-narratives of Indigenous absence so very common in the Newfoundland cultural imaginary. Martin's narrative states that "We Mi'kmaq people were always here, our traditions show that to be our truth. We still value our ways and traditions and

we are still here reclaiming those practices for our next generations” (Martin). It is important to note that Martin’s vision, and the enactment of that vision into a tangible reality, is but one vision of Mi’kmaq identity practiced in Newfoundland and Labrador. The challenge is of viewing Martin’s film is not to perceive it as a representation of an all encompassing homogenizing vision of Mi’kmaq-ness but to see it as a story that speaks to one kind of particular and local Mi’kmaq knowledge.

Gertie Mai Muise’s “Where the Spirit Lives: Rebuilding a Non-Status Mi’kmaq Community” in *Strong Women’s Stories* relates another perspective and experience of ‘being Mi’kmaq’ and living in Newfoundland and Labrador that is sharply different than Martin’s. Muise (Mi’kmaq) speaks to the differing realities of Mi’kmaq people who live on the West Coast of Newfoundland by explaining that the West Coast Newfoundland Mi’kmaq live what she calls an “ultimate contradiction and duality” (25). In conversation with Muise, she reminded me that the story of *Spirit Wind*, although important, was not her story (Muise). Muise contends that the very politics of the film where the centre of Mi’kmaq culture is located in Nova Scotia’s mainland has been used against the Mi’kmaq communities of western Newfoundland as a federal government rationale for the “disappearance” of the “race here” (28). Muise says that “The federal government has spent a lot of time and energy encouraging our chiefs to get us to call ourselves “Mi’kmaq descendants” and go to join the mainland band, rather than struggling to acknowledge ourselves as a sovereign people” (28). In Muise’s opinion any work that focuses

solely on the Mi'kmaq being from Conne River or Chapel Island, undermines her very struggle for federal recognition of the Mi'kmaq communities on the west coast of the island.

In conversation Muise relates that these federal government negotiations of land and identity are not going to benefit the community “because the process has nothing to do with how we traditionally view ourselves” (Muise). However, “our people, the non-status people and the Mi'kmaq people across the province, we are involved in this negotiation process, this so called negotiation process as far as I'm concerned, there is no negotiation [. . .] it's just an imposition, that is further oppressing the people and we're just signing it over” (Muise). In “Women Rebuilding” Muise states emphatically that this fight and burden of rebuilding their community must be shared by all Mi'kmaq people and the burden must not be put down (29). When talking about the responsibility inherent in this work, the relational accountability and the burden, Muise says, “I for one do not wish to cede the territory of our people” (29). Nor does she think that it's beneficial for the coming generations to see the Mi'kmaq people “divided and conquered” by the “colonial tactics that are in full swing in Newfoundland” (29).

In conversation Muise questions the current practice of, “Deferring authority to someone outside the island” (Muise). As she said earlier, the Newfoundland government has been pressuring Mi'kmaq people to align themselves with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. For Muise this does not make sense as it is giving up the inherent right of self government for the Mi'kmaq people of Newfoundland (Muise). “Does this make sense” she asked? She goes on to question how such an action will resonate with Mi'kmaq youth when she further questioned giving up

local control of Mi'kmaq governance by saying "For the young people to see that too? On top of that? That's sending out a weird message" (Muisse).

In keeping with the thread that runs through this thesis, at issue for Muise is the way that Mi'kmaq people in Newfoundland see themselves and their relations to their ancestral lands. Muise says, "There's so much negative images of us around, even amongst our own people" (Muisse). From "Women Rebuilding" Muise relates the context in which she lives by saying "there is a tremendous prejudice and racism against Aboriginals among the non-Aboriginal population, yet 'racism' is a new word for the people at home and they are not comfortable with its usage" (33). "Now there's all this bureaucracy, all this cultural policing, all this Hollywood imagery. This stuff doesn't just come from others" Muise says "we've internalized these beliefs to the point that we forget who we are; we forget the strength of our traditions and values" (Muisse).

"It's time to get those traditions back" Muise declares (Muisse). "As fully dispossessed people we have yet to fully understand that we are the only ones who can find ways to improve our lives" (Muisse 29). We have to understand as well, Muise asserts, that to improve our lives is to first address the ways that we are "still we are so westernized in our thoughts and our education" (Muisse). Because "Christianity is still so embedded in our community [. . .] and our ways of life are informed by that [. . .] We need to see that we are coming at tradition and culture from that standpoint, which limits the ways we can express our self traditionally" (Muisse).

Muise's thoughts return full circle when she comes back to how Mi'kMaq people now live this forced "duality and contradiction" (25). She relates how people she knows and who know her will question her role as a woman when she is out advocating for the political rights of her community. "Then they say, "Oh she's a woman" and ask "why am I not a home with children" (Muise)? Muise continues to say "I've been getting this stuff from people. This is a contradiction of what you know of Mi'kMaq history, about what Mi'kMaq women did, this a huge contradiction of that! At the same time, the same people think that because I speak out for our people, people think that I should be in leadership, and that only leadership should speak out" (Muise). Muise asserts that these are not Mi'kMaq traditional teachings.

When talking about her own family and her relationship to Mi'kMaq knowledge she says, "Oh yeah. Yeah. I can remember...all of things about my personality, all of the things that I cherish and love, they came from him, my father, to be Mi'kMaq" (Muise). Muise goes on to explain "I was never really treated like a girl, you know. Indigenous concepts of life, how we were to live. For the most part I was taught everything that anybody else would learn. There was no gender. Now suddenly everybody wants to make these distinctions between what women and men do in Mi'kMaq traditions. Those distinctions, as far as I can tell, weren't necessarily there in Mi'kMaq culture" (Muise). Muise ends our conversation by saying that she wrote the story of women rebuilding their Mi'kMaq community because she wanted others to know about her community and the struggle she endured in coming home. We both shared this challenge of working from home for the well-being of our community and getting tired and worn down by the

struggle this work entails. Muise reminds me, however; that to work from home is to work from the heart and while this is not easy work it is a part of being an Indigenous person working in an Indigenous community. As Muise reminds the reader “To me that’s what being Mi’kmaq is about, that’s it right there. Basically making my own way in the world, being fiercely independent, loving freedom, being generous and kind... That’s what I was taught from my dad growing up. That’s why I am the way I am and I do the work I do” (Muise).

Muise’s story, while significantly different in motivation, geography, and perspective from Catherine Martin’s or the Innu women’s stories from Labrador, speaks to a similarity of experiences shared by the other Indigenous women writers who have shared their stories in this research. Each of these writers has created for herself a way of enacting her vision for the betterment of her community. Each Indigenous woman writer here has in her own way produced the means of the vision, renewal and survivance of their particular Indigenous community.

The next section of this thesis project is a published article, “Locating Ourselves in the Place of Creation: The Academy as Kisu’lt melkiko’tin”. While it does not focus specifically on or use the participant’s conversations to any degree, this work is a synthesis that came from the theory generated in the participant’s conversations. This next section can be read as an extension of the focused attention on the Academy as one particular place of creation. I understand the academy in which we work is a transformative space that for many Indigenous writers, researchers, and theorists needs to be continually connected back to the community in which

they live. It is my hope that the reader understand that Chapter 5, the conclusion of this thesis research, is only the beginning of this dialogue.

Chapter 5: Imagination and Writing in the Place of Creation: the Academy as

Kisu'lt melkiko'tin

“Reconciliation”

We are waking up to our history
from a forced slumber
We are breathing into our lungs
so it will be a part of us again
It will make us angry at first
because we will see how much you stole from us
and for how long you watched us suffer
we will see how you see us
and how when we copied your ways
it killed our own.
We will cry and cry
because we can never be the same
But we will go home to cry
and we will see ourselves in this huge mess
and we will gently whisper the circle back
and it will be old and it will be new
Then we will breathe our history back to you
You will feel how strong and alive it is
And you will feel yourself become a part of it
And it will shock you at first
because it is too big to see all at one
and you won't want to believe it
you will see how you see us
and all the disaster in your ways
how much we lost
And you will cry and cry and cry
because we will never be the same again
But we will cry with you
and we will see ourselves in this huge mess
and we will gently whisper the circle back
and it will be old and it will be new. (Tababodong 2002)

5.1 A Introduction

In Chapter 3, I established the necessity of recognizing that Indigenous women's writing, as it is grounded in our teachings and ways of knowing, produces something that is mostly missing from so much scholarly discourse *about* Indigenous peoples, that is, a "loving perception" of Indianness. Chapter 4 spoke to the realities of the different specificities of Indigenous women located in the same geographic space and even in the same nation. For the purpose of this thesis chapter, I want to shift from how writing *by for and about* Indigenous peoples is grounded in a perception of loving Indianness, to *why we need to write* about ourselves from these specificities and how the political action of this work creates synthesis. This intent of this chapter is to make clear that, as Indigenous researchers and scholars, we need to produce Indigenous research by, for, and about ourselves—informed by our own principles of "kindness, caring, sharing, and respect"—to better claim a place for ourselves in the real spaces in which we do this; namely the academy and the community and to make these spaces safer for those how are following after us (Weber-Pillwax, 80). Indigenous theorist, James Youngblood Henderson (Chickasaw) provides a way to better understand what I mean by the real spaces of the academy and the community with the Mi'kmaq word "kisu'lt melkiko'tin" which translates more fully to "place of creation" (257). The goal of this chapter is to mindfully locate ourselves as Indigenous scholars in these tangible places of creation and to link the physical space of the academy and the community with our hearts and minds in our production of Indigenous scholarly discourse.

As mentioned earlier, Chapter 3 (Published as "Loving Indianness: Native Women's Storytelling as Survivance") talks about the necessity of writing from our

150

experiences as Indigenous women in the production of contemporary Indigenous critical pedagogy. The loving perception that forms the critical centre of Indigenous pedagogy is grounded in Indigenous women writers respect for Indigenous Knowledge, teachings, empirical observations, and revelations (Castellano 23). Writing Indigenous theory from a loving perspective is also grounded in what Shawn Wilson calls “the lifelong learning and relationship that goes into it” (179).

To write from within our culture or to only engage a loving perspective isn’t of itself going to achieve the relational accountability that informs Indigenous epistemology. However, when we engage traditional teachings (and for some who go and seek out those teachings) we better understand that an action of politics is also needed to guide and inform our research. Weber-Pillwax reminds the reader that a part of this action means understanding the values and principles which guide Indigenous research. These can be attributed to “The interconnectedness of all living things [...] our motives and intentions [...] the foundations of research as lived Indigenous experience [...] our theories grounded in an indigenous epistemology [...] the transformative nature of research [...] the sacredness and responsibility of maintaining personal and community integrity [...] and the recognition of languages and cultures as living processes” (Weber-Pillwax 31-32).

As writers producing scholarly Indigenous discourse within the academy we also need to be mindful of the ways that the institutions in which we work (one such place of creation) limits the efficacy of our research process and can potentially devalue Indigenous knowledge bases. Weber-Pillwax explains that “the argument for exclusive use of institutional standards and/or forms [...] to guide research has the weight of

efficacy on its side: less time and money are spent if researchers accept their work is guided by one set of ethics and embedded in one culture” (79). What gets lost in this process for all scholars is that knowledge is fluid and always changing. As Weber-Pillwax suggests what gets lost is the “effectiveness” of this type of ‘efficient’ scholarship, in which the benefit to the community is either “ignored or not addressed” at all that gets lost (79). The reason this is important for us as Indigenous scholars is that much of our work gets carried out in communities that are close to our hearts. For this reason it is imperative that we recognize and change the ways that the academy privileges the structures of research, often perceived as taking place in “hypothetical communities” with objective researchers, creates challenges for our own very material and tangible relations to our own communities (80). Leroy Little Bear says that “when jagged worldviews collide”, which most of us working in the academy have experienced, we can see that “objectivity is an illusion” (85).

A particular interest of this concluding chapter is to move beyond the action of summing up the research into better understanding how our location in the places of creation –‘kisu’lt melkiko’tin’– defines the production of cultural and personal identity within Indigenous scholarship as it relates to our personal and the collective sovereignty of our people and communities. This focus has most recently come home in my most recent incarnation as an Indigenous postsecondary supports provider. In this role I am reminded time and again how imperative it is to have resources and materials which speak to the differing but similar life experiences of these Indigenous students (my children’s generation) now attending our universities.

I would like to say that, for them, the playing field has changed in that they have the privilege of working in a space that recognizes and values Indigenous knowledge systems. Sadly, for the most part, I would still be wrong. Wilson explains that much of what is written about Indigenous peoples reflects the mainstream ideology that knowledge is an “individual entity” and that the “researcher is an individual” who “gains” knowledge, so much so that it fails to ever really recognize us Indigenous peoples (179). Within the academy there is still a strong current of theory written about us flowing in and out of our classrooms and minds. Mainstream research, as many Indigenous theorists contend, is still understood as ethical and valid in the academy even though the outcomes of such research are only beginning to benefit our Indigenous communities. And while many research institutions have their own ethical guidelines for working with Indigenous communities, only as recent as 2009 has the Tri Council Policy Statement amended the ethics guidelines for research within Indigenous communities with strong consultation and input from within Indigenous communities. Yes, these are all great starts but they are not the end of the process, they are only the beginning. Not only have Indigenous people grown up surrounded by research about them, but they also bear witness to the outcomes of that research not benefiting themselves, their families or communities, misrepresenting their identities or ignoring their most obvious needs. As Indigenous scholars we are responsible for making these changes in both the academy and in our community.

Our local Elders call for an active shift in focus from being ‘researched’ to ‘researching’ implicates us, Indigenous researchers and writers, in the uptake of relationally accountable research. While hard to accomplish, we need to focus less on

decolonizing and speaking back to the academy and focus more on understanding how we are implicated and a part of this colonized space so that we can better develop our relational accountability no matter where we operate. In consideration of this, my interest over the years became less about the ‘mainstream’ and more about what we as are Indigenous writers were doing; including how and where we were doing this and the implications of this work for the generations yet to come.

5.2 Shifting from an Indigenous perspective to an Indigenous paradigm

A challenge inherent in this shift in focus is simultaneously addressing the need for a fuller and more accurate representation of Indigenous Knowledges in the academy while prioritizing the need for Indigenous communities and peoples to recognize the importance of their involvement in research and the production of our local critical Indigenous knowledges. Particularly, throughout this thesis work I’ve more closely focused on the impact of Indigenous researcher, writers, and theorists developing an Indigenous pedagogy within the academy and linking that to the theory already produced in the community. The goal is to create a balance between these two spaces to make the ground less contentious for those coming generations of Indigenous scholars. To be clear, my intent is not to suggest that by filling the academy with Indigenous scholarship we will somehow have ‘all the answers’. While sometimes when I’m tired I would like to have all the answers (mostly) readily at hand, I am reminded by Steinhauer that Indigenous epistemology doesn’t necessarily have the right answers as a desired end point. “A topic such as the articulation of an Indigenous research methodology is new” Steinhauer reflects “and like me, many Indigenous students are searching for answers. I

don't know if I can provide these answers, but what I do attempt to do is compile the works of Indigenous scholars who have written and spoken to me directly about this topic" (Steinhauer 69).

So, while the search for answers is meaningful it is not fully commensurate with the production of Indigenous knowledges. Most often gathering, talking about, writing and sharing Indigenous knowledge are the best ways to "give voice to and legitimize the knowledge of our people" (Steinhauer 70). As Little Bear writes, "This is why we engage in conversation. So I can share my experiences with you and make you understand what I am feeling. And when you respond you are doing the same with me" (85). A consistent intent of the thesis project is to remind the reader that we are doing this; we are talking to each other to forward Indigenous writing and thinking as the foundation of Indigenous epistemology and pedagogy.

A positive, while at times frustrating, part of working in and familiarity with our Indigenous community is that we are often intimately tied to the knowledge of what is needed in our communities. This knowledge comes from our worldview and intimate relations with those around us. I have come to realize that understanding this worldview this is a life-long process. As Henderson suggests, the difficulty for most Indigenous people working in the academy is that you have to learn yet another worldview and "this is a lifetime project that requires time and patience" (Henderson 261).

Fifteen years ago, as an undergraduate student, I didn't meet very many other Indigenous students in the university I attended. Talking with Indigenous graduates from other universities, I learned that I wasn't the only person who ate lunch in my car. Eight years ago, the university where I started my graduate work did not have an Indigenous

scholar that I could work with to guide my research. Today, some of that is changing but not much and not fast enough to meet the increasing need.

Recent trends in increased Indigenous high school achievement and enrollment in postsecondary program, while still below the national average for non-Indigenous students, means that more Indigenous youth are completing high school and entering postsecondary than in previous generations (Statistics Canada). With the increased participation in postsecondary educational programs, many institutions are now faced with an increased need for culturally relevant resources which specifically address the needs of these students. However, the point of this chapter is not to discuss who or what institution addresses these needs better or worse. The point here is to better understand how Indigenous students (Indigenous knowledge makers in the making) benefit from and need resources created by Indigenous scholars, writers, researchers, teachers, elders and even themselves so that they can better navigate the academy as a creative space: Kisu'lt melkiko'tin.

Starting from the premise that our desire to be located in the academy is to positively contribute to the overall wellbeing of Indigenous peoples in Canada, we need to find ways to better understand how to make the academy more of a creative space Kisu'lt melkiko'tin and less of a destructive space. An understanding of the purpose of undertaking Indigenous research for many Indigenous researchers, to benefit their own community, merits revising here. In discussion about this subject Weber-Pillwax says, "Many, if not most, Indigenous scholars engage in contemporary research for the explicit purpose of bringing benefits to their communities and their people" (78). She goes on to say "they are usually unprepared for these challenges" even though "an interest in

research is one of the reasons the people associated themselves with a university” (80).

My concern here is these ‘challenges’ that Weber-Pillwax mentions. As we are primarily talking about the location of Indigenous scholarship within academia, it is critical that we fully understand the difficulties of producing Indigenous scholarly discourse within the academy. While this was addressed to some degree in the Literature Review section, again it merits a revisit in this section. For many Indigenous scholars, understanding the difficulties of working in the academy and the community means starting the conversation by discussing our own entry into the Indigenous knowledge field.

Steinhauer relates what many Indigenous scholars experienced when she says, “It was not until I started the Masters Program in First Nations Education at the University of Alberta that I was exposed to the concept of Indigenous Knowledge” (70). Like Steinhauer (Cree), many of us starting out in Indigenous research ‘felt’ and knew that our education left us unprepared, as it was at best partial and at the worst damaging and segregationist by insisting that the work be done in ways that removed us from our cultures and separated us from our own ways of being. Australian Indigenous scholar, Nakata says these feelings of under preparedness can be best attributed to the works we studied *about* us (3). “In studying texts that have been written about them” Nakata says, “scholars are negotiating the representations of themselves, their ancestors and their experiences” (3). However, Nakata warns that “Negotiating these texts is not simply an intellectual process, it is also an emotional journey that often involves, outrage, pain, humiliation, guilt and depression” (3). I wonder how many times the reader has had to negotiate this pain of reading about themselves in a book and wondering whose knowledge was ‘true’.

Nakata's statement begins to speak to the strange duality many Indigenous scholars in mainstream academies experience when faced with a reading about them that they know is somehow wrong. This is what Leroy Little Bear refers to as "jagged worldviews colliding", Gregory Cajete (Tewa) calls "ping geh heh" or the split-mind, and Monture refers to as the contradictions of working in the academy. Each Indigenous theorist has a point of reference about their location in the academy, which they understand ties them to an overlapping and interconnected yet conflicting and often painful duality. The goal of this section of the research project is to show the reader that the knowledge these theorists have created for us can be used to lessen the impact of this split mind and following their example, writing is one solution for this disconnect between community and the academy, between ourselves and each other.

5.3 Writing as Solution of the 'Split Mind: Ping geh heh'

Monture's paper, "Flint Woman: Surviving the Contradictions in Academia" was and still is a work that better allowed me to do more than just 'survive' the academy. Monture's ability to "name and describe" the contradictions she was experiencing as an Indigenous scholar in mainstream academia is a strategy that I still use today (53). Monture explains that the emotional conflicts that arise as a product of living the split-mind mean that she has "felt either confused or uncomfortable" at many point during her academic career (53). The discomfort of a split-mind Monture says is a "feeling is rooted in my difference either as a woman or as an 'Indian' or some combination of the above" (53). Monture gave a name to her uncomfortable and confusing experiences in the academy. She called them "contradictions" (54). These contradictions made her feel like

she was going to “slam [. . .] headfirst” into a “state of being” that would leave her “overwhelmed and motionless” (54). Having the ability to put a name to and identify what she was experiencing in the academy allowed Monture to “understand my relationship with the university as a process of negotiating those contradictions” which she says, was “no good solution” but “the solution I can hope to secure” (54). I would like to remind the reader here, that while Monture says her way of negotiating the academy was “no good solution” she is not dismissing her agency in adopting this solution. Monture’s writing about her place in the academy is brave and can be understood as a sacrifice. It takes an amazingly grounded and incredibly secure academic to take the risk of making one’s self appear vulnerable so that the ones yet to come can feel safer. Yet, that’s exactly what Taiaiake Alfred suggests we do. He’s right. The Academy is not safe for Indigenous students. But it’s our Academy and our responsibility to change this.

The pain and frustration of living the ‘split-mind’ for many Indigenous writers, researchers and scholars has developed in us an urgent need to create harmony and balance within this particularly contradictory space so that those coming behind us can better understand it and have solutions for themselves. Castellano, Davis and Lahache suggest that creation from this place of pain, the ‘split-mind’ space, is exactly what we need to do to move from destruction to synthesis. They say we can “see it as introducing a new set of idea, a way of thinking and talking that pushes against existing boundaries, enlarging the space for new possibilities”(254). Like Castellano, Davies, and Lahache, I also argue that this ‘space for new possibilities’, as it has emerged from our split-mind or simultaneously occupied contradictory space, allows for new thoughts and ideas that

would not have been able to exist before. As Castellano, Davies and Leache say, “it becomes the grounds on which further discourse is generated” (254). This is ‘kisu’lt melkiko’tin’; the creative place.

For many writers like Monture (Mohawk), Cajete (Tewa), and Leroy Little Bear (Blood) their place of creation (their ‘kisu’lt melkiko’tin’) physically may be the academies in which they work; more specifically their place of creation is more fully located in the heart and mind of the writing that they do and the communities in which they live. To explain this end, Monture writes that “Things happen and I write them all down [. . .] writing--talking back--is the process through which I come to terms with my pain, anger and emotions. Often only through the process of writing does the feeling of contradiction become actuated. It is real because I make it appear in bold black letters against stark white paper. Writing is the place where I have found both strength and empowerment” (55).

Years have passed and I am still energized by Monture’s writing. For me and many other Indigenous theorists, writing is a place of empowerment and strength. Our ability to imagine solutions that meet the needs of our communities and write them down is in keeping with my worldview. This is why I write, because I’ve had a vision that writing ourselves into the academy benefits not only us, but the academy as well.

Writing within our communities happens all the time. It’s not a new practice to make theory at home but it is a relatively new practice to try and make that theory work and have life in the academy. Writing is a practice for many Indigenous scholars (whether in the community or the academy or both) that softens the blows we experience when our jagged worldviews collide and it creates the space—kisu’lt melkiko’tin—that fully makes

visible the possibilities of narrative chance and Indigenous imagination. A theory of the academy and the community as creative places also reveals that both places of creation hold within it their own flaws of character and hidden agendas. Yes, we must be aware of this and not overlook the things that have to be fixed. But a paradigmatic shift will allow us to better see how we can fix these gaps between our creative places. It's time for the reader to know that the academy is not a reclaimed space, it is our claimed space. The continued active presence of Indigenous scholars in academia should signal to the reader that we are still here and we have never left.

5.4 Summation

An outcome of this thesis project is a better understanding of what we need as Indigenous writers and scholars working in the academy today and that we need to be active and present within the academy for those yet to come. Battiste says that we need "a new story" and "ultimately this new story is about empowering Indigenous worldviews, languages, knowledges, cultures and most important, Indigenous peoples and communities" (viii). The women in this research project have told us that we need to write from our hearts and minds as Indigenous writers, because our young people, our contemporaries, and our Elders need to see themselves in the loving light our words cast.

They also remind us that we need to write about what it's like to be Indigenous in the here and now so that those who follow along on the paths we set are able to see positive examples of Indigenous worldviews around them when they enter the academy or when they step out into the world at large. It was a long path to understanding that the Cree, Mohawk, Innu, and Mi'kmaq women whose writing inspired and propelled this

thesis project forward provided me the very support and guidance that I expect they will give the reader and other future Indigenous scholars.

Increasingly each year more young Indigenous scholars are entering the academy. While the stories of these academics are not always good one, we are now starting to see the critical mass of knowledge their presence is generating. They are the writers now. And they are taking on the responsibility of writing out what it means to be Indigenous and to be an academic. As Spears' writing powerfully shows,

I am a Native woman, so my life story is about being vulnerable. I can be raped and left to die in a ditch. I can be shot. I can be used and abused. I can be desperate. I can envy and imitate the lifestyle of my colonizers. I can live in poverty and have my children stolen. People can believe that I am less human, and that I deserve to die, because they believe that I am probably an immoral and irresponsible person. My death can be ignored by the rest of humanity. After I am dead, my body can be dismembered. My physical remains can become property of a museum or anthropology department, and my grave can be pushed aside so that Canadian businessmen can play golf.

I am an *Anishinaabe* woman, so my life story is about being strong. I can be loving and hospitable. I can be funny. I can survive all that the colonizers hand me. I can heal, and I can prosper. I can support my sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews. I can be playful, ambitious, intelligent and sly. My life can be a miraculous act of creation. I can choose to experience well-being and happiness. I can celebrate life and my own survival. I can be goofy. I can focus on what I have, and work to gain more of everything that makes my life so marvelous: family, home, love and artistic excellence. Living well in my homeland can be my most scrumptious revenge.
(159)

The Indigenous women writers who contributed their words, hearts, and minds to this thesis project have provided within their own words the very means of our survivance as Indigenous people in the world today. And while our struggle to position Indigenous knowledges as central to an Indigenous pedagogy and rightfully maintain our place in the academy still continues, we have evidence within our own writings that the balance between the academy and the community is an achievable goal. Today I witnessed

something glorious. Piled up on my desk and on my desktop are numerous articles, books, essays, novels, films, and artwork all written and produce from Indigenous minds; works that just ten years ago were nearly impossible to locate. The significance of this is staggering. While some works may still take time to find, the difference between the scarcity that existed when I first started this thesis work and the current growth and accessibility of Indigenous writing in the here and now signals the very kind of synthesis that the writers and researchers that I've worked with insists is at the heart of Indigenous critical theory making.

This is why we are still here and why we need to continue to write, to continue to synthesize. We need to do this because, while the academy is slow to change and fearful of redrawing the boundaries around acceptable knowledges and practices, if we are to continue with our project of decolonization through Indigenous scholarship, then our writing needs to provide that balance. We need to make real those loving images and political actions produced by Indigenous people so that those yet to come can also imagine and believe that the Indigenous knowledges they hold will carry them into the future. Echoing Wilson, Akiwenzie-Damm also suggests that we need to start treating our writing as loving ways of enacting ceremony.

I write because I need to write; because for me writing is ceremony. It is a spiritual practice, a way of connecting with others, a way of contributing back to my community and to all of creation. It is a form of activism, a creative, positive, giving, true way to maintain who we are as indigenous people, as Anishnaabe, and to protest colonization in its many forms. It is a way to share, to reaffirm kinship, to connect with the sacredness of creation. I write because I believe love is medicine, love is the strongest power in creations, and writing is a way of expressing and experiencing this". (493)

According to Akiwenzie-Damm and all the other women who have shared their narratives on writing and being Indigenous in the world today, there is a strong message that a loving vision of Indigeneity written for us to witness, take into our selves, and then enact, has within it the ongoing survivance of Indigenous peoples, Indigenous communities, and Indigenous ways of being. It is also imperative for us to continue to think our writing for those who are yet to come. Those who are yet to come, those who are our future teachers, they are our future mothers and father, they are our future leaders, they are the keepers of our knowledge and they will be the ones to continue writing about us in the years to come. I see those youth daily sitting in our circles. They don't know fully yet the ways that the world will lay heavily on them. It is our responsibility to make that load bearable. Our words and our actions today will be lighting their way and our writing will make the path more concrete as they make their way to becoming self-determining peoples.

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