

**You'll never believe what happened...**

**Indigenous Knowledge, Storytelling, and  
the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Committee on Graduate Studies in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctorate of Arts  
in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences**

**Trent University  
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## Abstract

While some traditionalists — both Academic Scholars and Indigenous Elders — argue that video and emerging technologies take away from the authenticity of traditional storytelling, the argument can also be made that video and film are actually adding a new dimension to the storytelling process rather than replacing one with the other. Native storyteller Tom King states in *The Truth About Stories* that different media can coexist, complementing each other: “The point I wanted to make was that the advent of Native written literatures did not, in any way, mark the passing of Native oral literature. In fact, they occupy the same space, the same time. And, if you know where to stand, you can hear the two of them talking to each other” (101-102). Based on the results of my doctoral research, the combination of the oral and the written (in addition to the visual) occurs at the intersection of storytelling, Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN). Using the Seven Grandfather Teachings as guiding principles of IK, I examined the APTN produced children’s shows aired during the 2003-2004 broadcasting year. By acting as a site for the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge, APTN has the potential to bring Indigenous Knowledge into the lives of children through the medium of television. Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Wisdom, Humility, and Truth all come together within the episodes of *Tipi Tales*, *Wakanheja*, *Greenthumb’s Garden*, *Wumpa’s World*, and *Longhouse Tales*.

Keywords: Storytelling, Indigenous Knowledge, Television, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network

## Dissertation Preview

Tom King states in *The Truth About Stories* that the expression “you’ll never believe what happened” (5) is a great way to start a story. So, you’ll never believe what happened; this dissertation comes with a warning label. Caution: proceed at your own risk! Within the pages of the following thesis, you will find amusing anecdotes and academic analysis side by side, storytelling mixed with critique, and the end product developed through trial and error, cut and paste. Knowing that storytelling is a creative process, knowing that I am a creative person, and knowing that Indigenous Knowledge (IK) stems from Creation stories, creativity in this dissertation is a given. The alternative style of this academic work is unique in nature for the following reasons: the body of the text is structured like a TV guide; asides, colloquial language and the first-person narrative is used throughout

That form mirrors content and structure highlights how humour and imagination are reflections of my own personal and creative nature. This creative approach was a necessary inclusion so as not to lose my intellectual and emotional sanity. My desire to produce a unique and original dissertation is the direct result of the storytelling process that guides my work. Without one overshadowing the other, I have tried my best to find a balance between the imaginative and the academic. I apologize if the shadow of the scholarly overcomes the shade of the creative or vice versa, but such is the reality when blending two disparate ways of writing and ways of thinking. The work before you not only is innovative but also challenges the manner in which scholarship is conducted in the Ivory Tower. By walking the line between the creative and the academic, my work stands as a unique testament to the fact that there may be as many ways to write a

doctoral dissertation as there are ways to tell a story. As Tom King would say on the *Dead Dog Café*, “Stay Calm, Be Brave, and Wait for the Signs!”

# WARNING!

This dissertation contains colloquialisms, a creative narrative structure, and an artistic flair that might not be suitable for all audiences.

Reader discretion is advised.

Please note the following:

Indigenous, Native, First Nations, Aboriginal are words that are all interchangeable within the text. Also, Indigenous Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge, Traditional Teachings are also interchangeable.

North, South, East and West have been capitalized in situations where they indicate certain specific geographic locations.

Any typos and grammatical errors found within the text have purposely been placed there for your reading adventure. Consider them a test... a test of the dissertation writing process... they are only a test...

## Cast and Credits

### Ontario Cast (Peterborough)

#### Producers

Dr. Mark S. Dockstator

David Newhouse (The Universe did provide --- just not in the way I expected!)

Gordon Johnston

#### Executive Producers

Pudge O'Toole (I got 'er done!)

Yvonne Pompana

#### Associate Producers

Barb Rivett, Joean Argue, Chris Welter, Lynne Davis, Melissa Harvey, Bonnie Jane Maracle, Carolyn Johns, Catherine Taylor, Sherri Smith, and Joyce Evans.

#### Cultural Consultants

Shirley Williams and Doug Williams

A special thanks to all my students and colleagues @ Trent University. You know who you are!

### East Coast Cast (Moncton)

#### Executive Producers:

Mom --- Un Grand Merci! Je t'aime grand comme le ciel!

Sue Harrison --- a special thanks to the 1<sup>st</sup> Dr Harrison in the family

Garra Mitton --- yeah, I know, it's finally finished. Or is it?

Associate Producers: Kelly Patt, Heather and Garry Mitton (Maman and Papa), Mireille Savoie, and Gabrielle Savoie

\*Special Note: No dogs were injured during the research and writing of this dissertation. Special thanks to Stelllllaaaaa, Moose, Dylan, Gracie, Duke and Lady, Maggie and Kita - -- 'cause that's what puckky dogggs do!"

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Commercial break (First in the series...)

No, I can't prove it.

So it's lucky for me that literary analysis is not about proof, only persuasion. In our cynical world, where suspicion is a necessity, insisting that something is true is not nearly as powerful as suggesting that something might be true.  
(Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories*, 115)

Can proof be defined as evidence that compels the mind to accept an assertion as true?

King writes that "the truth about stories is that that's all we are" (2). We are nothing more than a collection of the stories told by us, told to us, told about us. Here is my story. Here is my truth as I know it...



You'll never believe what happened; one day I discovered I was getting a Ph.D. for watching TV. It sounds hard to believe, but I am actually making it happen. Who knew that my love affair with Mr. T from the A-Team or my crush on the Friendly Giant would serve as dissertation material? My love of television and of all things pop culture has been seen as both an academic curse and a blessing. Trying to find ways to incorporate my creativity and my storytelling into an academic work has been quite difficult, but the experience has provided me with an immense amount of personal and academic growth. The challenge of combining the creative with the academic is made manifest within the body of this research and will be a recurring theme throughout the text. Now, as Ed Sullivan would say, "it's time to get on with the show."

Taped to the frame of the computer in my office are two sayings. One is by the scholar Samuel Johnson and the other by a colleague of a colleague. The quotation from Johnson is as follows: "Read over your composition, and wherever you meet with a passage which you think is particularly fine, strike it out." The second piece of advice is from a colleague of a colleague and suggests that if you cannot write the first sentence, write the second one. While I have tried to ignore Johnson's words of wisdom, my supervisor and other committee members have had other opinions on my flare for the dramatic. This introduction is a compromise. The second lesson in the art of writing a Ph.D. dissertation also made its way into this introduction. Because the first sentence was difficult to find, the second sentence was how it all started. Maybe I should reconsider Johnson's recommendation, as I actually like the way this opening is shaping up – or

maybe it is time to strike it all out...

Great opening lines have always been the hardest for me to come up with in both the academic and the dating world. My lack of personal romantic skills aside, my usual scholastic *modus operandi* is to come up with a great title, and the rest of the paper usually falls into place. In my past academic history, I have come up with such unique academic gems as “Maple Syrup: hummmm hummm good!” “Mohawk Warriors: Freedom Fighters or Terrorists?” “The Green Indian: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle the Indigenous Image” and “Bingo and a Presentation.” Coming up with a proper title for this Ph.D. thesis has been a challenge. Since I view titles as a first step in the writing process, the lack of a title hindered my creativity to the extent that it stymied the start of my work. I did manage to work around the title issue, but finally arrived at a point where I needed creative inspiration in order to make the final push towards getting this academic monkey off my back. The data had been collected and analyzed, the literature had been read and reviewed; all that was left were the introduction and the conclusion.

At one point, the working title of my doctoral paper was “Storytime: Indigenous Knowledge (IK), Storytelling, and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN).” The title then shifted to reflect the storytelling mantra of the network – “Sharing our Stories: APTN, IK, and Storytelling.” In its third incarnation – and in a moment of profound discovery and humour – the title became “You’ll never believe what happened: How I got my Ph.D. by Watching TV.” This last title was my favourite and was inspired by the words of Tom King, who claims that “you’ll never believe what happened” is a great way to start a story (5). In order for it to be academically appropriate, the title had to be slightly modified to read “You’ll never believe what happened: Storytelling,

Indigenous Knowledge, and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network.” This dissertation is indeed my story, although a story shared by (and shared with) many others. The story of my doctoral research has been a lifetime in the making, but is the result of the past five years of direct research at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario. When I entered the program, my application for admission was centred on the representation of genre and language in the works of Tomson Highway — oh, how quickly things change! In the beginning of my third year, after all course work and exams were completed, I found that my research had shifted back to work that I had done during my undergraduate years at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick. I returned to the examination of representation and stereotyping in the modern medium of film and television. My passion for (or as some would say, “addiction” to) television inspired the creation of a course titled NAST 3951: The Indigenous Image in Mass Media, which I have taught for the past few years.

The problem with stereotypes and representation with regard to Indigenous imagery is a topic that has been “done to death” and killed by more profound and in-depth academics than me. Although a look at the stereotyping found within the programming of an Indigenous network such as APTN has not yet been done (however, I am working on it — see Episode 13: Sequels and Spin-offs) and would have contributed to the literature on the subject, a shift occurred in both my personal and academic life. Having been personally told by activist and scholar Patricia Monture-Angus that my role as a non-Native scholar in the field of Native Studies is not to teach Native people about their culture, but to teach non-Native people about theirs, I truly came to the realization that I hold a unique position within the field of Native Studies. With the completion of

this dissertation, I will become the first non-Native woman in Canada with a Ph.D. in Native Studies. How is that for a claim to fame or the answer to a Trivial Pursuit question? Interestingly enough, this honour comes with much responsibility.

Tom King writes in *The Truth About Stories* that “once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world. So you have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told” (10). The responsibility that one carries as a storyteller, as an academic, and as a human being is often not addressed in everyday life, or even in Ph.D. dissertations. Luckily for you, dear reader (lucky, depending upon your perspective), that is not the case in this paper. Having been taught well by the Indigenous Elders in my life, I have come to realize that being responsible for one’s actions is a prerequisite to a true understanding of oneself and of others. Respect and responsibility are two aspects that frequently arise during any discussion on Indigenous Knowledge. While I make no claims to possess such knowledge, I do find myself trying to live by such life lessons.

In her Ph.D. dissertation titled *Coyote learns to make a storybasket: the place of First Nations stories in education*, Indigenous scholar Jo-ann Archibald stresses that her methodology (dubbed “storywork”) follows the principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy (iii). She also notes that “responsibility and reciprocity go like this: Important knowledge and wisdom contain power. If one comes to understand this power, then one must be ready to share and teach it to others in order for this knowledge, this power, to continue” (3). By describing the lessons that I have learned through the process of writing my own doctoral thesis, I know that I am responsible for sharing the knowledge that I have gained. My hope is that this

dissertation will not simply collect dust on a lonely shelf in the Trent University library.

Following Tom King's advice (10), I have tried to be very careful with the stories I tell in this thesis, and I have also tried to be watchful of the stories being told to me. For the most part, especially where IK and storytelling are concerned, I have used Indigenous scholars and storytellers quite simply for the reason that they are the experts in their respective fields. I have also consulted greatly with the Anishnaabe Elders in my immediate academic community for their guidance and their counsel. In the end though, it is only my story that I can tell because it is truly the only story I know. This reality is outlined by Archibald who quotes Mohawk scholar Patricia Monture-Angus:

“As I have come to understand it from listening to the Elders and traditional teachers, the only person I can speak about is myself. [...] All I have to share with you is myself, my experience and how I have come to understand that experience... In my culture, not speaking from the ‘me’ is a violation: The only true knowledge that I can have is that which is learned from what I have experienced” (Archibald 3-4).

According to Tom King, “the truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (2), and I hold this tenet to be true. I think of myself as a storyteller or one who possesses “story magic,” for this act is one that brings forth “the valued knowledge of antiquity, which has informed and sustained generations, forward into new generations [...]. It is in the transmission of that knowledge that the greatest contributions are made” (Armstrong 182). I would like to think that my story, as well as my story about the story of APTN's stories, will make a great contribution. Such a circle of stories! The point to recognize is that all stories have their own value and need to be respected. Now “respect” is not a synonym for “believe,” because it is our responsibility to “watch out” for the stories we are told (King 10). With that said, here is an outline of the stories told in this academic

pursuit of Indigenous Knowledge, Storytelling, and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network.

Paying homage to the television genre and following the mantra that form follows content, this dissertation is divided into thirteen “episodes,” which is the normal run of a half-year television series. The idea of segregating the work into episodes rather than chapters led me to compartmentalize my doctoral research into feasible sections. This writing system also allowed me to add a bit of creativity into a project that seemed at times to strictly follow the traditional academic standards of the Western institution. Knowing that the subject matter of storytelling and the learning of Indigenous Knowledge are personal in nature (Brant-Castellano 26), I made this doctoral work also quite personal in nature; it reflects not only my passion for television but also my desire to break out (at least partially) of the academic jack-in-the-box known as a doctoral dissertation!

While the inclusion of an introduction and conclusion is par for the course in any research report, the episodes of this dissertation are structured in such a way as to create an interconnectedness that would be missing if a more traditional order were used. Since the three main areas of discussion — Indigenous Knowledge, APTN, and storytelling — are all interrelated, the decision to structure the dissertation as is currently found in this work was a struggle. Which comes first? The story or the Indigenous Knowledge? In order to share IK, you need to be able to express it either in demonstration, in experience, or in a narrative — all forms of storytelling in one way or another. The paradox of the “chicken or the egg” — the IK or the story — troubled me. The structure of this work

underwent a variety of transformations over the course of the research process, with a final structure settled only at the end of the storyline, which is to be expected when telling a story.

My work is centred on the intersection of three separate, yet equally important groups: television, Indigenous Knowledge, and storytelling. All three aspects function together to answer the following thesis question: *Through the act of Storytelling, can the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network serve as a site for the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge?* While the question might sound simple enough, the answer is quite complex. In isolation, the various components of the question could be dissertation topics on their own. The dissertation before you is focused on the transmission of values, based on IK, and does not focus on the form and method of how these values can/may be transmitted. However, by placing the three aspects of storytelling, TV and IK together in the structure of the following paper, the linkages between IK, APTN, and storytelling are woven together to form a complete and complex look at modern ways of understanding traditional knowledge. The three parts to my theory are:

Indigenous Knowledge is transmitted via storytelling.

APTN acts as a storyteller

APTN as storyteller transmits Indigenous Knowledge.

Now most scientists — even the social ones — would balk and cringe at such a theory until, of course, they see the argument behind the hypothesis! Can or does APTN act as the electronic grandfather to a new generation of TV-watching children?

Storytelling is a primary means of transmitting Indigenous Knowledge, a fact confirmed to me personally by the well-respected Elders, Doug Williams and Shirley Williams. While orality used to be the traditional means through which stories were told, the adaptation of Indigenous culture to the written form of communication made for a change in the manner in which stories have since been told. However, Tom King argues the following: “The point I wanted to make was that the advent of Native written literatures did not, in any way, mark the passing of Native oral literature. In fact, they occupy the same space, the same time. And, if you know where to stand, you can hear the two of them talking to each other” (102-103).

I would further this argument by theorizing that the combination of the oral and the written story are now centralized in television, which is an embodiment of aural/oral and visual storytelling. With that said, I reason the following: APTN is a storyteller engaged in sharing Indigenous stories, and stories are the means through which Indigenous Knowledge can be shared; thus APTN can act as a possible site for the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge. In acknowledging that storytelling is a fundamental principle in the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge, my research is focused on the theme of storytelling as espoused by the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network in their programming theme of “sharing our stories.” The network’s focus on storytelling is central to the transmission of IK in the modern context of television, which relies on both the spoken word and the visual content in order to tell stories. Adaptability and changeability are central, not only to stories but also to cultures facing the intersection between tradition and modernity.



Knowing how stories and Indigenous Knowledge are generational, passing from Elder to child, the choice of APTN's programming content is quite simple: focus on what APTN calls Kid's programming. Although APTN does import outside programming, my decision was to focus on the children's shows produced by APTN or in association with APTN. This category is further specialized with regard to the puppet-based series (à la *Sesame Street*) that dominate the Kids' programming line-up. The unique discovery made during my research process is that within the Kids' programming, most of the programs featured a central character who acted as a storyteller. *Wumpa's World* has Wumpa, *Longhouse Tales* has Hector Longhouse, *Tipi Tales* have the Seven Grandfather Teachings animal counterparts, *Wakahenja* has Kimimilla, and *Greenthumb's Garden* has Katchewa.

The multi-layering of the role of storyteller is made even more complex when one considers both the writer of this dissertation and the network itself as storytellers. I am a storyteller telling the story of APTN, which acts as the storyteller for all of their programming; the Kids' programming also features a storyteller telling the stories in which one finds elements of IK. Storytelling as a theme is the manifestation of Tom King's idea that there are "turtles all the way down" and that the "turtle never swims away" (1). This dissertation is in the form of stories all the way down, and the storyteller (i.e. me) never swims away.

The topics of this research were divided into three separate but interrelated groups. Each category — APTN, Indigenous Knowledge and storytelling — naturally fell into the order of presentation as found within this dissertation. Episode 2 of this work,

titled *Teletheory*, provides the reader with a brief grounding in issues of television theory. The works of various theorists such as McLuhan, Postman, and Fiske provide a basic look at the role of television in the modern era. The examination of this television theory leads directly into the next episode, which outlines my TV methodology. Content and discourse analysis, television theory, representation, and other methodological musings were all examined in the pursuit of a theoretical framework that would support research concerning the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. This section also outlines how, interestingly enough, I found my methodology on television of all places! In one of the APTN storytelling vignettes, the Métis poet, artist, and businessman, Duke Redbird, claims the following:

Traditional storytelling goes through a cycle. Passed from person to person, from storyteller to listener, from year to year. Just as there are four ways to come into a circle — north, south, east and west — there are four elements to storytelling — seeing, listening, remembering, and sharing — a complete circle that keeps the stories alive. Sharing our stories with all cultures. (APTN: Story Vignette 10 —Tape 10 — 2:28)

Seeing, listening, remembering, and sharing became the guiding structure for my research. By seeing the shows on APTN and listening to the stories, I hoped to be able to remember the lessons transmitted within and then share those lessons with others through the medium of this dissertation.

While Redbird's vignette takes on special importance in my research, APTN's other storytelling moments play important roles in the network's vision statement. In an attempt to ground this APTN research, I devoted Episode 4 to a historical look into the making of the network from its inception as TV Northern Canada. It was conducted by looking at various histories of the network from a variety of academic and non-academic

sources. The problem encountered with this particular search was that there is very little written specifically about APTN — especially after the year of its inception. Only two primary texts have been published on the matter, and both are centred on the Indigenous communications rather than on APTN itself. In my search I discovered that only a few refereed and published articles on the topic of APTN exist. Most of the available literature on the network comes in the form of newspaper and internet articles.

By claiming to be a “window” on the diverse ways of Indigenous knowing and being, APTN uses the theme of “sharing our stories” to show how their goal is to provide quality programming that reflects the variety of needs and concerns of Aboriginal People ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). Episode 5 is focused on the storytelling vignettes that celebrate the network’s vision statement and, with the mantra of “sharing our stories,” leads perfectly into the next section of my research, which is centred on Indigenous Knowledge and the way in which it is transmitted through the oral tradition.

In the second section, which is focused on Indigenous Knowledge, Episode 6 features a brief literature review of the main theorists in the field of IK. By looking at the views of various academics and Elders in this section, I was provided with a general overview of the ideas concerning Indigenous Knowledge. This episode also allowed me to discover that Indigenous Knowledge is personal in nature and transcends both time and space – and definition. Through this realization I came to understand that I am not the academic to define IK either in a traditional or in a modern context. The problem I faced was that if it could not be defined, would I simply know it when I saw it or heard it? I found the answer to my analysis problem in a leather scroll that hung in my office. The

Anishnaabe Seven Grandfather Teachings were emblazoned on a decorative ornament that became the guide for my analysis of APTN programming content. I eventually discovered that these teachings are the tenets of what I have come to know as Indigenous Knowledge. Due to my geographic location and the relationships with the Elders who have shared their wisdom with me, I have chosen to ground my work in the Anishnaabe ways of traditional knowing. Each individual aspect of the Seven Grandfather Teachings work together in creating my fundamental definition of Indigenous Knowledge. The use of the Seven Grandfather Teachings is outlined in Episode 6, which is concerned with how these seven principles are found within the content of the television show *Tipi Tales*. This look at the use of the Seven Grandfather Teachings highlights how song and humour<sup>1</sup> are also cultural forms through which Indigenous Knowledge can be shared. The search for the Seven Grandfather Teachings extends into Episode 7, which looks at the children's show *Wakanheja*.

During my analysis of the shows found within the third section of my research, I discovered that not only were the Seven Grandfather Teachings important, but these guiding laws would not be found within the content of the shows if there was no storyteller to disseminate and share the stories with the viewers. Interestingly enough, these storytellers were also engaged in a process of sharing stories with their on-air friends, all the while sharing stories with the at-home audience. Episode 8 serves to outline the role of storytellers in the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge. This

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<sup>1</sup> The importance of humour is also emphasized within the writing style of the author, who hopes that some of her own particularly funny moments make others laugh during the reading of this dissertation.

episode takes a look at Indigenous writers and storytellers and the way they see the importance of stories in the sharing of Indigenous culture and traditions. The central figure of the storyteller, and his or her role in transmitting Indigenous Knowledge via the Seven Grandfather Teachings principles, became the focus of the following episodes: *Wumpa's World* (Episode 9), *Greenthumb's Garden* (Episode 10), and *Longhouse Tales* (Episode 11).

The last two episodes of this dissertation summarize the results found during my investigation of APTN's Kids' programming. Episode 12, titled "Season Finale," recaps the research findings on the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge on the television airwaves. This episode contains a look at the notion of IK as a personal and experiential process. The final episode of my dissertation, *Sequels and Spinoffs*, describes my visit to APTN's national headquarters and my desire to conduct further study in the field of Indigenous Knowledge and storytelling transmission and reception. My visit to APTN occurred after my analysis of the Kids' programming and did not influence my dissertation with the knowledge gained during my visit to the network's programming department. As will be explained in this final episode, I deliberately chose to wait until the end of my research process to visit the network in order to avoid any bias and influence that might have resulted from direct contact with the employees of the network.

In a final note, actually two final notes, I need to explain the recurring use of Tom King's *The Truth About Stories* and my use of his wisdom in what I have dubbed "Commercial Breaks." In regards to the reliance upon King, all that I can say is that theories espoused in his text are suitable not only from an academic but also from an

Indigenous perspective. I have tried within the body of this dissertation to rely upon Indigenous theorists and authors and Tom King fit the bill. Of Greek and Cherokee descent, Tom King is viewed as a prominent Indigenous author and scholar. He is the author of numerous works of fiction, the editor of a fundamental text on Native writers in Canada and is a cultural theorist as realized by *The Truth About Stories*. King holds a PhD in English and currently teaches at the University of Guelph. Although I have read many of his highly acclaimed books such as *Green Grass Running Water*, it wasn't until I came upon *The Truth About Stories* that I truly saw the wisdom in his words. This text has become central to my theoretical approach to literature and to life. King states that "The truth about stories is that that's all we are" (2) and I have taken this tenet as truth as realized by my own personal and academic life. King also quotes Indigenous author Gerald Vizenor in saying that "there isn't any center to the world but a story" (32). This is my story; this is my dissertation. My story also includes "commercial breaks." These breaks were created partly to stress my tele-theory and also to allow for the creation of a theoretical space highlighted within the body of my dissertation. The commercial breaks serve as guideposts to what lies ahead and also as theoretical musings (from me and from Tom King). In addition, they divide the sections of my dissertation and frame the content of the various episodes of the thesis. The commercial breaks reflect the notion that form does indeed mirror content. What is a good TV show without the interruption of a food-for-stomach and a food-for-thought commercial? On that note, before proceeding to the next episode, it is essential that I tell you the stories of my lunchtime lessons with the Anishnaabe Elders who have guided my research.

You'll never believe what happened; one day I went out to lunch and gained Indigenous Knowledge. The best way to gather food for thought — both literally and physically — is to share wisdom over a meal. These lunchtime lessons were the occasions during which most of my conversations with Elders have occurred. From sharing nachos with a wise woman from Manitoba or a quarter chicken meal at Swiss Chalet with Anishnaabe Elders, the sharing of food has often led to the sharing of Indigenous Knowledge. In the course of my studies, I have had the privilege of sharing such meals and such knowledge. By asking the questions and listening to the stories, I have come to realize that IK is something personal and that Caesar salad is best served with chicken!

All menus aside, the sharing of IK is an act that requires not only patience on the part of the Elder, but also practice on the part of the recipient. Recently I have been fortunate to share meals with Elders Doug Williams and Shirley Williams, both well-respected Anishnaabe scholars and Elders, fluent in their language and possessing a wealth of Indigenous Knowledge. During both lunches, these teachers took the time to share their wisdom concerning the Seven Grandfather teachings. While these meetings proved to be rich in IK information, they also served to highlight the point that the process is as important as the product. The sharing of meals permits the nourishment of the soul as well as the nourishment of the body. I have often felt ill at ease in approaching Elders concerning IK, but when we are eating together, the process is facilitated. If the conversation comes to an impasse, the discussion can always shift to the quality of the french fries or the quantity of lettuce in the salad! In reality, my lunch

hours spent with both Shirley and Doug have been some of my greatest learning experiences.

In the case of my dissertation and the Seven Grandfather teachings, both Shirley and Doug have guided me through the process. Knowing my trepidation concerning IK because of my ethnic background and my life experience, both Elders have gone out of their way to help me in my scholastic and personal journey. They have provided me with background concerning IK and with direct knowledge on the Seven Grandfather Teachings. The clarity that they brought to my research on October 11, 2006 was invaluable to my work.

The day started out as any other, with the bus ride to school and the long, anticipated wait for the lunch hour to roll around. Today was a special day because I was having lunch (well, two lunches, to be exact) with Elders Doug Williams and Shirley Williams. I had double-booked my lunchtime, which often happens when trying to coordinate schedules between three people. My first lunch was scheduled with Doug and the menu featured Cajun gumbo with crackers. Doug said the gumbo was good, and I took his word for it! Although my Acadian ancestors were the forebears of the Cajuns of Louisiana, my palate is a bit less trained for the spicy hotness of the South. Doug and I had shared many lunches together – particularly in my first few years at Trent. I think he took pity on me as being the only non-Native woman in the program at the time and the only student without an experiential background in Indigenous Knowledge. Over our many meals together, Doug shared IK lessons with me (ask me about why the crow sits high upon the trees!) and he also became my confidant and my cheerleader. He helped



me through some rough patches where I had questioned my academic and personal place in an Indigenous Studies Ph.D. program.

Over lunch that day, Doug told me how all knowledge and all creation are interrelated. He told me this by telling me a story about stories. Doug explained to me that when trying to define IK, you needed to consider the fact that ways of seeing the world are directly associated with the land in which the people were created. In addition, language is something given at Creation and is directly linked with the land. For Doug, one of the main ways in which language and knowledge are transferred is by way of the songs and stories that are shared. In our talk, Doug told me that the stories of Nanabush (or Nanabozhoo) are unique in that they tell the tale of how this central character in Anishnaabe mythology acts as a go-between for the People and the Creator.

The stories of Nanabush provide the People with the laws by which they are to live together, to coexist. One particular story is that of the Seven Grandfather or Grandmother Teachings which outlines how Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, and Truth are central to community living and cultural survival. Doug stressed how these types of stories are essential to cultural continuance, due to the fact that they are often told to children who are the next generation of Elders. For Doug, the importance of stories and the Seven Grandfather Teachings are integral to the beliefs and values that guide the Anishnaabe People. Traditional stories and teachings have managed to stand the test of time. These inclusive stories teach about having good minds and good relationships with the land, with others, and with the Creator.

The notion of good minds and good relationships is echoed in the wisdom I gained through my time with Elder Shirley Williams. Although this was not our first lunch together, this particular meal shared was one during which I learned a great deal from the woman I consider a friend. In the time that I have come to know Shirley, I have learned a great deal from her: how to say “thank you” in Anishnaabe, how to recognize winning slot machines at the Casinos, and how the secret of happiness is found in the lesson of humility. This lesson in humility is one that I have taken to the extremes: underconfident in my academic work and overconfident in personal bravado – I am still working on finding the all-important balance! “Not too big, not too small,” or so the characters of *Tipi Tales* tell me! Humility is one of the Seven Grandfather Teachings, and it was with this in mind that I shared a meal with Shirley at the Hunter Street Café in October of 2006.

She had the chicken Caesar salad (a good standby for Shirley), and I ventured to have a gourmet grilled cheese sandwich, which was quite different from the one my mom would make for me! We had never been to this restaurant before but, as per our usual lunchtime lessons, the conversation flowed freely while we waited for our meal. When I am asked to define the term “Elder,” I think of Shirley. To me, she is the personification of all I look for in a teacher. She is kind, patient, and knowledgeable, and she is always ready with a smile and a kind word. I am not sure that she is even aware of the positive and profound influence she has had on my life. On this particular fall day, we shared a meal and we shared stories, she as the teller and I as the listener.

The story on this particular fall day was centred on the Seven Grandfather Teachings. With these teachings central to my dissertation, the lessons that Shirley shared with me were of the utmost importance. While our regular lunches together did not usually involve a question-and-answer period, today's mealtime was special. During our conversation, Shirley provided me with a nicely laminated print that outlined the original Anishnaabe words for the Seven Grandfather Teachings. In English, the lessons are of Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, and Truth. For Shirley, however, these concepts do not translate quite so easily from the Indigenous words associated with the lessons of the Seven Grandfathers.

Wisdom becomes *Nbwaakaawin*, which means the "art of knowledge." *Zaagidwin* is the "art of caring" (caring replacing love in this case because the word love is often mistaken for sex in today's Western vernacular). For these teachings, love is caring and friendship. The act of *Mnaadendiwin* becomes the "art of respect" and is manifested in the honour that we give to others and to ourselves. Bravery is the translation for *Aakde'win* which is the "art of being brave." *Gwekwaadsiwin*, or honesty, is more appropriately translated to the "art of living straight," to be honest with yourself about where your life is at, to live honestly with yourself, to fix things. Truth, on the other hand, is translated from *Debwewin* which means the "art of straight sound from your heart." *Dbadendizwin*, "the art of humility," is one that requires much balance and work. For Shirley, all seven of these teachings are interconnected and are necessary for "the art of living the good life," *Bimaadiziwin*. In essence, this dissertation is a combination of the teachings I have been given and the research I have done. For the

past five years, the processes of writing this dissertation and the relationships that have been developed have been my *Bimaadiziwin*, my good life.

### Commercial Break (Second of the series)

Personally, I'd want to hear a creation story, a story that recounts how the world was formed, how things came to be, for contained within creation stories are relationships that help to define the nature of the universe and how cultures understand the world in which they exist. (King 10)

Within King's testimony to stories, he considers and recounts stories of creation and the creation of stories. Reflecting the cosmological beliefs of the storyteller, stories are not only "wondrous things" (9) but also the means through which people — the listeners, readers, and viewers — try to "set the world straight" (60). APTN provides the space in which (and on which) stories can be told. Stories reflect and refract Indigenous cosmology and set the world straight. By using the television airwaves as a site for "sharing our stories," the network becomes a site where the Indigenous Knowledge of a multitude of people can be expressed and disseminated.

You'll never believe what happened; at the intersection of tradition and modernity, all traffic stopped! As used in this dissertation, the above metaphor describes the dilemma faced in outlining the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge in a world where many Indigenous languages are on the verge of extinction, where the urban "reserve" has replaced living on the land, and where the traditional family stories told around the campfire have been replaced by sitcoms told on television. One of the main dichotomies that exist in the study of Indigenous storytelling is between the oral versus the written narrative. Along with the shift from oral storytelling to the written work, the binary becomes even more complicated when a third element is introduced. With the advent of modern technology, new means of storytelling, such as television and film, have come to usurp the value placed on both the Indigenous reverence towards the oral tradition and the Western devotion to the written word. In this modern technological world, new spaces for new stories are constantly being negotiated within the landscape where Indigenous Knowledge is disseminated.

Interestingly enough and according to Tom King, "we do love our dichotomies" (25). By reducing everything to the simplest forms — the black and the white, the good and the bad (even the ugly) — easy oppositions are more than desired; they are sought after. When we do not have to consider the various shades of gray or the contemplations of enigmas, ignorance is indeed bliss. Sadly, things are not so monochromatic, and the subtleties of difference become quests for the modern scholar in search of complex

answers to complex questions. Perhaps the intersection metaphor should be changed to a “fork in the road” scenario, where it is the choice of one path over another. My solution? Forge straight ahead and create a new road!

While easier said than done, the reality is that this new post-colonial road is already well under construction. Despite a historical past where stereotypes concerning Indigenous Peoples were cemented on television, Indigenous Peoples have come to turn the use of television around in order to serve their own purposes. Advances in the use of mass media have enabled Indigenous Peoples throughout the world to have their stories heard, seen, and told to millions of people — Indigenous and otherwise. In their seminal text *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, authors Shohat and Stam outline that, although mass media have helped to make Western thought and philosophy “endemic” in contemporary society (1), an Indigenous use of mass media have created “vehicles” (35) for communities struggling to establish their own identity in a world where identity has been foisted upon them by a Eurocentric legacy and “Hollywoodcentricism” (29). Since contemporary media is “at the very core of identity production” (7), it is essential that Indigenous People gain control over the images produced of themselves and of their cultural beliefs. Shohat and Stam note that “film communicates the diversity of indigenous cultures” (35-36) and this syncretic realization is “a strategy for survival” (44). One prime example of the media being used to promote cultural survival and the celebration of multiple identities in a pan-Indigenous world is APTN — the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. Bianculli describes the impact of television in the following statement:

Never before has so much been available to so many so quickly. In some ways, that's a frightening thought; in other words, though, it's thrilling. From wide-eyed child to well-informed adult, television can open windows of observation – and opportunity – that otherwise would be unavailable or incomprehensible. (87)

Although TV has gained such monikers as the boob tube and the idiot box, I would have to place myself along side author David Bianculli as a “spontaneous defender” of television (x). With remote controls ready at the draw, all I need now is a superhero sobriquet in order to save television from “Turn-Off-the-TV Days”! Authors such as Neil Postman and Jerry Mander have written texts calling people to be careful of the great influence of television to “plant” (Mander 97) and “dictate” (Postman 6) how people should think, act, and be, according to the conglomerates that control the television airwaves.

For Indigenous cultures, the detribalization legacy of colonialism has left societies separated geographically, linguistically, and spiritually. While Mander states that television negatively serves to “homogenize perspectives, knowledge, tastes and desires” (97), I would argue that television (in the case of APTN) serves to unify and solidify Indigenous cultures that have been shattered by colonization. Although APTN is only one channel on a five-hundred-channel dial, this singular channel is a beacon of ethnic hope on an otherwise mainstream shoreline. In using television and other media to create the village (even global ones), Indigenous People have the opportunity to use technology as a means of cultural production and to represent the self (Leuthold 57). As producer of television shows directed towards a mainly Aboriginal audience, APTN finds itself in the position of not only cultural producer but also cultural storyteller.



Complaints concerning the TV spectacle of violence and sexuality abound, and critics are quick to condemn the medium rather than looking at those sending and receiving the messages. Blame is always shifted from one to the other — producers claim that they are only creating what people want to see, and people complain that all they see is sex and violence on TV. Both the producers and receivers are responsible for their actions. Channels can be changed and the TV can be turned off although I am not recommending that by any means! The passivity of viewers to become zombies to the boob-tube is always of concern, but if individuals become television literate they will be able to engage with television and the stories told via this particular medium. TV can indeed become the opiate of the masses; however, if people come to see and read the “texts” of television as suggested by Fiske (14), they can discover how television can be used within the context of the transmission of the “cultural world” (4). Individuals have freewill, parents have the V-chip, and teenagers can get their sex and violence on the internet.

The reality is that, whereas there are arguments for and against television educating and entertaining the masses, it also, like any other source of knowledge, needs to be understood and assessed within a particular social context of the inquiry. What might seem offensive to some might be seen as humorous to others. Take *The Simpsons* or *Trailer Park Boys* as examples... Both shows contain dual levels of semantic codes within their narrative. Even though some might see base humour and crassness, others find the inter-textual content of the program and the satire found within the narrative structure quite refreshing. The alternative style of the show, especially the irony and

satire of the dialogue, steps away from mainstream narratives found in other programs and other networks. Another example of the duality readings of a television show can be seen in *The Jerry Springer Show*. Although the program is self-proclaimed the “worst show on television,” any academic familiar with Bakhtin’s theory of “Carnival” will recognize the laughter, excessiveness, bad taste, and offensiveness (Fiske 241) as cornerstones of *The Springer Show*. The viewer’s response is based on the critical lens through which the program is viewed; knowing how to watch and “read” television is a skill that is both natural and learned.

Having been born into a technological world where television was a mainstay in my home and where my television friends became more real than the neighbours’ kid down the street, I had a lifetime of training in television watching before I entered university and learned how to “read” TV. We are taught at an early age to read cultural signs: red means stop, green means go, little white men on traffic light posts mean we can cross, and a flashing orange hand means we should stop — or run really fast before green turns to red! Living in an urban setting, these were some of my codes, part of my cultural programming. The difference between the codes of television and the programs shown on television is something that needs to be defined. In his work, *Reading Television*, John Fiske, one of the most noted television theorists, clearly outlines the difference between these two aspects. Fiske stresses that a program can be “a clearly defined and labeled fragment of television’s output.” He adds the following:

It has clear boundaries both temporal and formal, and it relates to other programs in terms of generic similarity, and, more essentially, of difference. [...] Programs are stable, fixed entities, produced and sold as commodities, and organized by schedulers into distribution packages. (14)

The programs of APTN make up the network's schedule and are considered APTN's output. Any assessment of the programming of APTN with regard to the issue of Indigenous Knowledge transmission requires a look not only at the programs of the network, but also at the cultural codes found within the programs being broadcast across the country.

For Fiske, "a code is a rule-governed system of signs, whose rules and conventions are shared amongst members of a culture, and which is used to generate and circulate meanings" (1). It is important to note that the cultural codes of people living in different locales and countries (with different languages and cultures) are different from my own. With that said, the only lenses through which I can watch and "read" television are my own, based on my own primary cultural codes and on those I have acquired through education and life experience.

For theorist Umberto Eco, television plays a greater cultural and educational role in the life of today's modern adults and children than ever before.

Television is the school book of modern adults, as much as it is the only authoritative school book for our children. Education, real education doesn't mean teaching young people to trust school. On the contrary, it consists of training young people to criticize school books and write their own school books. It was like that in the time of Socrates, and I don't see any reason for giving up this attitude. (105)

The reality for me, as for many of my peers, is that our semantic vocabulary is made up of the social and ideological codes taught to us by television. However, we need to critically examine the content of the programs we view and use this knowledge to increase our tele-literacy.

While learning to watch television comes naturally for some, the reality is that television itself has become naturalized within Canadian culture. In fact, for some people, television has become culture. TV is now

... a bearer/provoker of meanings and pleasures, and of culture as the generation and circulation of this variety of meanings and pleasures within society. Television-as-culture is a crucial part of the social dynamics by which the social structure maintains itself in a constant process of production and reproduction: meanings, popular pleasures, and their circulation are therefore part and parcel of this social structure. (Fiske 1)

For Indigenous People, the creation of a network devoted to their needs and visions has allowed television and technology to be “viewed strategically as a tool to facilitate larger social and cultural projects” (Roth 10).

Although criticism about the social changes which occur as a result of the introduction of television to Indigenous communities exists (see Mander 1992), many Indigenous communities and groups have come to see television as a means through which “the information superhighway and other technological breakthroughs and developments will continue to extend the possibilities for northern communications, and for north-south and circumpolar connections” (Alia 166). By opening up new avenues for communication and creating discursive space, Aboriginal uses of media have allowed Indigenous people to become something more than “receivers” of First World cultural transmissions (Shohat and Stam 30). By becoming producers rather than strictly receivers, Indigenous People can gain some autonomy in cultural production and the dissemination of Indigenous Knowledge. However, in order to be able to attain this

positional autonomy, Indigenous producers and Indigenous viewers needed to gain awareness about the creation of television texts.

Being familiar with the codes of television allows for a greater critical understanding of the messages being broadcast over the airwaves. For theorist Umberto Eco, being able to recognize and interpret cultural codes is of the utmost importance.

Every interpretation reflects a different cultural world with different codes. These codes, even if contrasting with each other, can be mutually compared, translated one into the other when possible, or recognized as incommensurable when they are so, and, when it is educationally necessary, that even their mutual incommensurability becomes the matter of critical discussion. To compare codes with each other doesn't only mean to deal with lexical competence, verbal fluency, knowledge of syntactical or rhetorical rules. It doesn't only mean, as I have previously insisted upon, to deal with narrative and genre rules. It also means to make clear various levels of visual competence. (Eco 106)

This ability to understand and compare codes, especially in the multicultural approach of APTN, allows viewers to become culturally competent in their own ethnic affiliation and also literate in the codes of other cultural groups.

Becoming tele-literate allows the viewer/reader to participate and understand the cultural discourses that are broadcast via television. Fiske notes that the individual's discursive repertoire is used to make sense of the cultural texts that constitute culture (15). While Fiske uses the terminology of cultural texts, author Tom King uses "stories" for they "define the nature of the universe and how cultures understand the world in which they exist" (10). Whether story or text, the discourse produced is a result of the "conflict between their forces of production and modes of reception" (Fiske 14). The viewer/reader "struggles for meaning" in a world where "strategies colour the stories and

suggest values that may be neither inherent nor warranted” (King 22). While the producers of a show may have a different goal or aim in their production, the viewers/readers have different interpretations based on their own cultural and discursive codes.

Although Indigenous People are often the topics of TV shows, films, and documentaries, they rarely have had control over their own representations in the celluloid realm. Often depicted on the screen as either a noble or an ignoble savage, it was not until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century that Indigenous filmmakers began to take control and use the medium of film as a means of self-expression in a Hollywood world where “distorted images largely went unchecked” (Cobb 207). On the smaller screen, many television shows have featured Indigenous characters, but rarely did they play anything more than minor roles. In series such as *The Beachcombers* and *Northern Exposure*, the Native characters were nothing more than “fleeting cameos” (Jojola 19), nothing more than a modern incarnation of Tonto of the *Lone Ranger* fame.

With APTN, Aboriginal Peoples have a venue in which to enact social change and create new representations of self with their own cultural markers. While having control over programming and cultural production is one site of empowerment, another is having the ability to critically assess and analyze television texts. Knowing how to read television texts is essential to any critical understanding of the current codes of television. In order to be fully engaged in the programs and the texts of television, one needs to become familiar with the tele-literate in the popular discourse of television. In his text *Teleliteracy: Taking Television Seriously*, author David Bianculli stresses that

“dismissing television in its entirety makes no more sense than dismissing the printing press” (65). The author continues by arguing that “sometimes, life imitates art. Other times, TV instigates art. And at this point in time, TV deserves to be recognized as art” (141).

You'll never believe what happened; the woman who refused to even say the word out loud had to write a chapter on methodology. The triumvirate of methodology, epistemology, and ontology has haunted me since beginning my doctoral studies. They have now come to plague my daily existence, especially with a writing deadline soon approaching. I have attempted to answer the question of my methodology in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, reading the central texts of literary theory, Aboriginal literary theory, media analysis, discourse analysis, narrative analysis, not to mention answering the crossword at the back of my ontological text known as the TV Guide. Where to start? This became the \$64,000 question. I had read a lot of material, boosted the Post-It Note sales to an all-time high, and was left with not only books full of little flags of red, blue, yellow, and green but also mega-bytes of typed-out information. At some point, I knew that I had to begin to write rather than continue to read. The voice of my supervisor (as well as the voices of all those who had to listen to me bemoan my academic fate) counseling me to start writing echoed in my head. The result of this defining noise is found in the current words on the page before you.

With storytelling in mind, I decided to take a more personal (and less academically formal) approach to writing this treatise on my methodology, for two very good reasons. Firstly, if I had had to struggle with the formal, academic verbiage that normally accompanies a doctoral dissertation, I would never have been able to produce a single word. Knowing that this is indeed my story and that IK is personal in nature, I



would have been a fraud had I changed my voice simply to reflect what some might think is worthy of a writing style for a doctoral dissertation. Secondly, I am of the opinion that some people use words as power, and the more they can mystify you with “supercalifragilisticexpialidocius” words, the more they value themselves. I am also of the opinion that I want my work to be accessible to the layperson who might not have a dictionary at hand or a Ph.D. hanging on the wall. For these reasons, I have chosen to write not only from the head but also from the heart (much to the consternation of my supervisor and my committee, but to the applause of Shirley Williams who sees Indigenous Knowledge as coming from the heart).

When first contemplating the methodology that would guide my doctoral research, I knew that it was important to start off with a definition of the term. Quite simply and “dictionary,” methodology is “a body of practices, procedures, and rules used by those who work in a discipline or engage in an inquiry; a set of working methods.” Having constantly made the intertextual reference to the Wizard of Oz with my utterance of “Methodology, Ontology, Epistemology, Oh My!” I relied upon strict definitions in order to understand these concepts. In all the material that I reviewed concerning the use of terminology, the words of Shaun Wilson served as the voice of wisdom. Wilson provided me with some valuable information: he defines ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology! Ontology is “a belief in the nature of reality” (175) while epistemology “is how you think about reality” (175). Methodology becomes “how you are going to use your way of thinking (your epistemology)” (175). Another reason why Wilson’s words are important is that he encourages various methodologies

that are suitable to Indigenous research. One of these methodologies is storytelling/talking circles/personal narratives (178).

While trying to find a methodology that would suit my pop culture background and interest, I remembered a study that my first Native Studies mentor, Dr. Sandra Lonergan, had once mentioned to me. She described how a researcher had once taken a number of daily newspapers and had looked at how often articles concerning Indigenous Peoples appeared. This was the first time that content analysis would make its way into my academic vocabulary. A preliminary review of some of the material concerning content analysis, and consultation with other academics within my social group allowed me to consider whether or not content analysis would be the best methodology suited for my research.

In the text *Media Research Methods*, Gunter notes that “the media provide a stereotyped representation of external reality which needs to be recognized for what it is. However, the reality is a constantly changing entity which thus needs to be constantly monitored” (7). Western views that were used to classify and categorize Aboriginal People were established during the contact era and are still present to this day; my research is designed to analyze the content of Aboriginal children’s stories currently found on APTN and to gauge whether the images are reminiscent of Eurocentric tales and myths and/or if they are new empowering stories by Aboriginal People, for Aboriginal People, and about Aboriginal People ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). Representation is the “key site” of power and cultural negotiation (Gledhill 348) and images, in particular stereotypes, have the power to “constrain and prevent,” as well as the power to “produce” new knowledge,

new discourses (Hall 261). Stereotypes are produced and reproduced, not only by the makers of images but also by the receivers of the images. Gunter notes that imagery, through a process of encoding and decoding, will be open to the various and “different interpretations placed on media content by audience members” (19). The audience is thus the creator of the imagery despite the intentions of the producer.

Gunter also highlights the use of content analysis as a means to study “a wide range of media issues” and asserts that content analysis is a systematic procedure to examine the content of recorded information (56). This theory that content analysis is a “systematic technique” is reiterated in the work of Budd, Thorp, and Donohew, who stress that this method is a tool for the observation and analysis of communication (2). Neuman, in *Social Research Methods*, outlines that content analysis is the technique that allows researchers to examine information in written or symbolic material (31). For Neuman, the content of the text — an idea that may be compared to Fiske’s theory that TV programs can be considered texts — is subject to an “objective and systematic” analysis (273). Content analysis is often employed in the fields of Communication Studies as well as in Literature, Journalism, and History (Neuman 273). This method of research is, according to Neuman, often used for discovering trends involving stereotyping and themes present in various forms of popular culture (273).

Neuman stresses that content analysis is “useful” for three types of research problems: problems involving large volumes of text; topics needing to be studied at a distance; and messages that are difficult to determine with only casual observation (274). Firstly, my research is made up of the Kids’ programming content of APTN, which

covers five programs and a great number of episodes — thus the content of APTN can be considered to be composed of a “large volume of texts.” Secondly, although the actual physical distance between the researcher and the TV broadcasting APTN is literally about six feet from chair to television, this type of extended arms-length research (in the figurative sense) will be primarily centred on textual and electronic sources of information. Lastly, thanks to an intricate reading of the programming content of APTN, my analysis will reveal themes and patterns of storytelling that might fail to catch the casual viewer’s eye.

One of the drawbacks of content analysis is that, although there can be a qualitative approach to this type of methodology, it is primarily done in a quantitative manner. Since I come from a literary background, statistics and counting are not my academic forte. Faced with this methodological conundrum, I was counselled by my employer at the University of Toronto (Scarborough) to draw upon my personal and academic experience in order to discuss methodology. Dr. Sarah King at the Writing Centre was surprised, considering my background in English literature, that I was leaning towards a social science methodological approach. She wondered why I did not simply use literary theory in my doctoral work and, in reality, I was wondering the same.

One of the greatest methodological dilemmas I faced was trying to be a social scientist, when in fact I consider myself more of a storyteller and a teacher. As part of my doctoral work, I was told by a professor that I needed to be more like one of my colleagues — a social scientist. I was even told to ask that student for a copy of his paper so that I might see what a “good” social science paper looked like. My own paper on the

same topic, focused on an academic's use of footnotes and how this use served to marginalize Indigenous Knowledge. I even went with the theory that form mirrors content and wrote my entire essay in the form of a footnote. Needless to say, this creative approach was not accepted as a social science paper. After being told to rewrite my paper in the proper social science manner (if such a manner exists), I became frustrated at the whole endeavour. Sadly, no one had recognized my innovative brilliance! OK, that might be pushing things a bit, but I did come to realize that sociologists and political scientists, historians, and anthropologists have different views on what makes for scholarship. Coming from a background in English literature and film studies, my approach to academic writing has focused more on imagery, themes, symbols, and storytelling. These aspects and my analysis of their presence in literature, film, and television are my scholastic specialty. With procrastination and apathy the seemingly ever-present thoughts of the day, I prepared myself to describe the methods (to my madness) that I discovered during the research process.

It was recommended by the proposal committee that I conduct a test run of my original dissertation topic, which was centred on stereotypes and APTN's programming. Upon a reconsideration of the topic area and knowing that a focus would be on storytelling, a shift occurred in the nature of my research. Rather than focusing on stereotypes (a topic covered by other, more brilliant scholars than me), I decided, with the approval of my supervisor and the members of my committee, to focus on the power of storytelling as found in the programming on APTN. Knowing that APTN's primary

focus is on “sharing our stories,” I saw the great academic opportunity that was found in looking at the art of storytelling in traditional and contemporary forms.

After scholastically stumbling my way through the academic avalanche that is methodology, I have decided to simply outline how I looked at things and then fit that into a theoretical framework — I am sure this must be making the social scientists cringe (which in reality might be a good thing and a form of post-colonial “résistance”) and making the researchers in pure sciences flinch in dismay! By looking at the “texts” of APTN’s programming and “reading” them like a short story or a novel, I have been able to draw on the academic training gained during my undergraduate and graduate work at the Master’s level. Had I done a traditional content analysis and “counted” the times I spotted “Indian” stereotypes, this section on my research methodology might have been an easier aspect of my dissertation to write — it would also have proved little and contributed even less to my personal learning and the public learning that this dissertation will provide.

Had I also gone forward with a set of themes and symbols to look for, I would have produced a doctoral work that would have resulted in a biased look at the programming found on APTN. Therefore, I decided to follow words of wisdom of Tom King in his text *The Truth About Stories*. According to King, “the magic of Native literature — as with other literatures — is not in the themes of the stories — identity, isolation, loss, ceremony, community, maturation, home — it is in the way meaning is refracted by cosmology, the way understanding is shaped by cultural paradigms” (112). Rather than going into my research with a set of predetermined themes, I decided to look

at APTN with a general theme of storytelling and the ways in which this motif is present within the network programming. By focusing on storytelling as a means of transmitting cultural knowledge, I am hoping to produce research that will outline the Indigenous cosmology as present on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network.

When I originally started my dissertation work, I had the great intentions of conducting research on all of the eight categories of programming as described in APTN's publicity material. These categories are as follows: entertainment (variety/drama), News and Current Affairs, Youth (12-17), Kids, Lifestyles/Culture, Documentaries, Voices, French, and Sports. Initially, I was going to conduct a strict content analysis of APTN, with a very specific focus on stereotypes and count and record every time the image of the Hollywood Indian was present on the network in order to prove or disprove that APTN presents an Aboriginal point of view. While this would have been an interesting research opportunity, the recurring presence of a storytelling theme prompted me to change my research focus. In the end, I think that this was perhaps the best scholastic decision that I have ever made. Rather than limit myself to stereotyping and representation (something that someone told me "had been done to death"), I discovered that a focus on storytelling and, in essence, Indigenous ontology would challenge me to think outside of the box and into the circle of knowledge.

In trying to come to terms with a sample size for my research, I soon discovered that I had bitten off more than I could academically chew. Having never conducted this type of research on a grand scale, I originally started with research that covered seventeen full days of programming — one full week from the 2003-2004 season (April), three days

from the summer 2004 (June), and four days from 2005 (February). While some might think that fourteen days of programming is not a large enough sample size, the reality is that fourteen days of TV at twenty-one hours per day equals two hundred and ninety-four hours of television watching. Upon an initial trial run of my research methodology, I saw the need to address certain flaws in my original research design. The reality is that for every thirty minutes of television, the time needed to conduct an in-depth transcription equaled ninety minutes. Seeing that this was a three-to-one ratio, I quickly came to the realization that my research material amounts needed to be reassessed in order for my dissertation to be completed in the time frame allotted by the Native Studies Ph.D. program at Trent University.

Upon consultation with my doctoral supervisor, the decision was made to scale down my research in order to prove true the old maxim that it is best to go for “quality over quantity”! I decided to eliminate the following categories for very specific reasons: Voices, the category of APTN programming dedicated to productions done in Aboriginal languages (such as Cree, Inuktituk, Mi’kmaq, and Mechif), was impossible for me to do justice to, due my own linguistic limitations. Although *le français* is my maternal language, the decision was made to focus on the programming that reached the greatest audience — those done in the lingua franca, the English language.

While these limitations would have resulted in a workable research scope, a further delineation was made in order to have a workable project within the time limits of my doctoral work. During the initial trial run of my research as suggested by the proposal examination committee, I soon discovered that I was not only considering the



wrong topic of stereotypes but also trying to do too much in too little time. I have since come to focus my research on storytelling as supported by the storytelling vignettes that dot the APTN programming schedule. These vignettes feature Indigenous individuals from a variety of cultural backgrounds and all walks of life who discuss the importance of storytelling and the sharing of stories with all generations, all people, all Canadians.

My sample size was then whittled down to an even more manageable size to focus on Kids' programming featured on APTN. By looking at a specific set of shows within a specific category, I was able to narrow my research to an area that was rich in storytelling and storytellers. Why children's stories? The decision to focus on APTN's Kids' programming was supported by the following statement from Anishnaabe Elder Eddie Benton-Benai in *The Mishomis Book*:

We must begin very early with our children in instructing them in these teachings. Children are born with fully-developed senses and are aware of what is happening around them. They can even communicate with the Spirit World. Most of us human beings are so far removed from the Spirit World that we cannot tell what an infant is saying. Let us learn from the Seven Grandfathers the importance of giving our young children the teachings they will need to guide them in their later lives. (61)

Knowing that children are the future storytellers and will be the ones to revitalize culture and language (G. Smith 224), the decision for me to focus on the programming directed towards them was obvious. A natural connection exists between children and storytelling, between storytelling and Indigenous Knowledge, and between children and the transfer of Indigenous Knowledge.

One aspect that became obvious during my initial Kid's programming preliminary research is that many of the show produced in association with APTN featured puppet

characters. Interestingly, the majority of the outside produced programs were cartoons such as *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Lost World*, *Quest for Fire* and *The Last Reservation*. The APTN co-produced shows differed from the outside production with puppet characters and, in certain cases, live interaction with a non-puppeted host/storyteller. Through the use of puppets, a synergy exists in the presentation of the stories being told. Unlike cartoons that rely upon two dimensional visuals, puppets shows allow for a greater sense of realism.

In addition to concentrating my research on Kids' programming, I further limited my analysis to APTN produced shows in order to assess the links between APTN's own programming theme of storytelling and the shows they produced. In doing so, I discovered that many shows featured storytellers as part of their episodic plots. For example, Wumpa, the title character of *Wumpa's World*, is a narrator fully engaged in the storytelling process because he is also part of the greater story. Hector Longhouse of *The Longhouse Tales* is also a perfect example of how the storyteller becomes part of the story, which is not unlike my role as writer and storyteller in this doctoral dissertation. The shift to looking at the role of the storyteller became a new source of inspiration and allowed me to expand my research. Interestingly enough, the process of writing this thesis is not unlike the process of acquiring Indigenous Knowledge. The method of getting to the end product is both personal and experimental.

The decision to focus on Kids' programming was also influenced by the storytelling programming vignettes that were featured hourly on APTN during the timeline of my research. These spots lasting thirty seconds served as an outline of the

network's epistemology and also as the main methodological foundation for this dissertation. Although the complete list of vignettes and analysis is included in the storytelling chapter of this dissertation, it is necessary for me to outline how one particular storytelling moment from APTN's programming theme came to influence my focus on children's shows as well as on a narrative content analysis of storytelling.

Traditional storytelling goes through a cycle. Passed from person to person, from storyteller to listener, from year to year. Just as there are four ways to come into a circle — north, south, east and west — there are four elements to storytelling — seeing, listening, remembering, and sharing — a complete circle that keeps the stories alive. Sharing our stories with all cultures. (APTN Story Vignette 10 — Tape 10 — 2:28)

This vignette featuring Duke Redbird is of great importance, for it is the guiding force of my methodological approach. Calling upon the symbolism and directionality of the Medicine Wheel, Redbird also outlines the four basic components of storytelling and, in my view, storyknowing and storymaking: seeing, listening, remembering, and sharing. I have incorporated seeing, listening, remembering, and sharing into the totality of my APTN research, which combines the act of TV seeing/listening and the act of Indigenous storytelling research which, according to Archibald's "storywork," is focused on remembering and sharing (3). The physical and intellectual process of my methodological approach is one that is based in a storytelling phenomenon, and I have realized the method of seeing, listening, remembering, and sharing as emphasized by Redbird.

#### Seeing and Listening

The medium of television is one that requires the viewer to have a greater and more complex use of some of the senses in the transmission of knowledge. Reading and

viewing require sight. Radio and telephone require hearing. Television requires the use of both these senses and, in the words of McLuhan, “an interplay of all senses” (245). Television becomes a site for the transmission of sensory interactive knowledge due to the nature of a medium that requires both senses to achieve a whole experience. While some could argue that TV can be enjoyed with or without sound (my mother, for example, who likes to use the mute button according to her own discretion), or with or without picture (my poverty-stricken friends who cannot afford the pay-per-view channels and try to watch films on a picture-scrambled screen), in order to have the total experience of television many of the senses need to be engaged. Listening and seeing are the essential components of the storytelling methodology summarized by Redbird and are the essential aspects of television watching/listening and researching.

On the topic of television, McLuhan comments that “TV is an integral medium, forcing an interaction among components of experience which have long been separate and scattered” (293). While famous for such quotable quotes as the “medium is the message” and the “global village,” the words of McLuhan still ring true, perhaps even more so, twenty-five years after his death. McLuhan’s examinations of media and television are the cornerstones of the study of Mass Media and Communication studies. McLuhan states that “television may be as decisively the successor to writing as oral speech was the predecessor of writing” (282). The circular theory that TV is a return to the oral tradition is a concept central to my dissertation, due to the power of television to extend the human senses and provide knowledge to a larger, trans-global community or village. McLuhan also states that television is “one manifestation of the retribalizing

process wrought by the electronic media, which is turning the planet into a global village” (248) — television is an appropriate medium that has the capacity to foster retribalization in Aboriginal communities. While it can be argued that this “global village” would be detrimental to the preservation of culture, I argue that the global village provided by APTN would actually serve to promote solidarity amongst Aboriginal Peoples and allow them a discursive space that previously was censored by the colonial culture of the oppressor. Although television is often seen as a cultural homogenizing force, one needs to remember that “our social experience has varied, and does vary, so much, our subjectivities are likely to be composed of a number of different, possibly contradictory discourses, each bearing traces of a different specific ideology” (Fiske 66). These differences in our subjectivities allow for the polysemic nature of television to allow for different venues of interpretation.

Another concept that McLuhan proposes in his work involves the relationship between man and literacy and how modern electronic technology can be theorized as being a return (of sorts) to the oral tradition of communication. McLuhan emphasizes that “before the invention of the phonetic alphabet, man lived in a world where all the senses were balanced and simultaneous, a closed world of tribal depth and resonance, an oral culture structured by a dominant auditory sense of life” (239). This “tribal” culture provided members with an “acoustic space” which manifested itself in a “radically different concept of time and space” (240). For McLuhan, television “is the most significant of the electric media because it permeates nearly every home in the country, extending the central nervous system of every viewer as it works over and molds the

entire sensorium” (245).

The interplay of the senses is also iterated in the words of Marlene Brant-Castellano, who claims that Indigenous Knowledge is holistic in the fact that it requires “all of the senses, coupled with openness to intuitive or spiritual insights,” which “are required in order to plumb the depths of Aboriginal Knowing” (29). Not only do many of the Indigenous Peoples exposed to APTN have an alternative ontological view of both time and space, but APTN itself literally provides a discursive space for the tribal and oral culture to flourish.

The oral cultures of the past are now in a state of return or revivalism, and this could possibly be encouraged with an increased use of technology in the form of television which, according to McLuhan as stated above, is a mainstay in most homes. The basic theory that I draw from a cursory examination of various works from McLuhan is as follows: television has facilitated a return to a society of oral tradition, and this return to orality offers a perfect “space” for the voices of Aboriginal Peoples to be uttered and heard. While the orality of Aboriginal cultures and the theories of McLuhan provide a foundation upon which my dissertation will be built, cultural critic John Fiske also supplies vital information needed for a proper and extensive look at the important role that television plays in the construction and preservation of cultural identity.

One of the most important aspects of John Fiske’s work on television culture, as with Stuart Hall’s work on representation, is the fact that the author draws upon the fundamental and classic works of the great literary and cultural theorists, including Foucault, Bourdieu, Bahktin, Derrida, and Barthes. For Fiske, television is at once a

“cultural agent” and a “provoker” and “circulator of meanings” (1). Like McLuhan, Fiske theorizes that television is a medium centred in orality that is “responsive to and is part of its immediate community” (78). This interaction between medium and community is an essential aspect of any research concerning Aboriginal People and television.

Since orality can “carry” the experiences of Aboriginal People and storytelling is central to Aboriginal ways of knowing and being (Armstrong 15), APTN and its theme of storytelling programming can be deemed a perfect means of cultural knowledge transference. This type of argument is furthered by Fiske, who notes that “television provides a common symbolic experience and a common discourse, a set of shared formal conventions” (80). Fiske also notes the importance of television in the daily lives of people: “Television consists of programs that are transmitted, the meanings and pleasures that are produced from them, and to a lesser extent, the way it is incorporated into the daily routine of its audiences” (13). The importance of TV in the lives of individuals and the messages or images that are produced in the minds of the viewer are the primary areas of interest for my dissertation. By looking at APTN as a specialty network directed towards an Aboriginal audience, the goal is to discover whether the stories present in the programming content reflect what Fiske notes as the “naturalized” representation (21) of a socially constructed reality or whether television can offer the audience alternative sites of resistance – a “postmodern collage” (105) of cultural representation or a site of “contestation” (239).

In addition Fiske makes the claim that television programs are “texts” that can be

“read” and are products of their readers (14). The theorist stresses that the viewer (or, in the textual theory of television, the reader) becomes “the producer of texts,” the “maker of meanings and pleasures” (17). Fiske further argues that the “form” of television is vitally important due to the fact that form is a “bearer of ideology” (23). TV, with its oral reality, promotes an active and participatory audience (79) which is not dissimilar to the notion of tribal culture and the orality of television promoted by Marshall McLuhan. Fiske points out that TV has the power, through its orality and its visual aspect, to “construct meaning” and “social identity” (317). By establishing a site of representation, the social dimension of television results in a “highly political” ideology that “involves the power to make meanings of both the world and one’s place within it” (317).

In his monumental text *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Stuart Hall establishes television as a possible site of symbolic experience and critical discourse. For Hall, culture is “about feelings, attachments and emotions as well as concepts and ideas” (2) and is made up of cultural meanings that “organize and regulate social practices, influence our conduct and consequently have real, practical effects” (3). Cultural meaning is primarily made via representation (Hall 15) and is re-circulated via culture itself. By stressing the fact that meaning is both socially produced and socially constructed (5), Hall further notes that representation is “the production of the meaning of concepts in our minds through language” (17). Hall outlines two processes or two systems of representation — one involving the mental representations that we carry in our heads and one involving the shared concepts and thoughts primarily made up of the signs of a common language (17-18). The difference between the



thoughts that are naturalized in our thinking and the words that we utter to communicate are the basis for my analysis of APTN's Kids' programming.

Hall, like Fiske, uses his text to put forth various theories of representation (30-32) by drawing upon the various experts in the field of social construction and meaning-making, such as Foucault, Derrida, Barthes and Bakhtin. Another similarity between the views of Hall and Fiske is that both authors stress the notion that power and discourse are important not only to television but also to representation. Fiske notes the following: "Television's foregrounding of its discursive repertoire, its demystification of its mode of representation, are the central characteristics of its producerliness" (239). The power of television to demystify representation and to open up a counter-discourse to the dominant hegemony of social construction is essential to the process of decolonization. By looking at the various stories circulated on APTN and the social codes that are present in the programming content, the aim is to examine the narratives found on APTN that serve to "mark, assign, and classify" (259) Aboriginal People in Canada.

### Remembering and Sharing

For traditional storytellers and researchers such as Jo-ann Archibald (quoting Lee Maracle), “words are not objects to be wasted. They represent the accumulated knowledge, cultural values, and the vision of an entire people or peoples. We believe the proof of a thing or idea is in the doing. Doing requires some form of social interaction and thus, *story* is the most persuasive and sensible way to present the accumulated thoughts and values of a people” (34). This view that stories are the means through which culture can be understood and presented is also echoed in the views of Tom King who stresses that “the truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (2). King continues and quotes Gerald Vizenor as follows: “You can’t understand the world without telling a story [...] There isn’t any centre to the world but a story” (32). In order to understand the central role of storytelling to Indigenous People and to Indigenous culture, it is essential to examine how stories and the telling of them, which also includes their remembering and their sharing, occur within the historical context of Indigenous storytelling.

The metamorphosis of the Aboriginal storytelling tradition into its contemporary form as found on television by way of APTN’s programming is highlighted by the fact that the network celebrates a storytelling theme. The idea of “sharing our stories” with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is exalted by the network and is illustrated in a series of self-publicizing commercials aired between broadcasted programs. “Sharing our stories” with not only all cultures, all generations, but also all Canadians allows the network to showcase the Aboriginal storyteller. The use of an electronic medium such as television in storymaking is a continuation of the transformative power or “flux” of

alternative Aboriginal storytelling, as manifested in the shift from oral storymaking to dramatic renditions, from literary stories to cinematic and television narratives. The creation of APTN has allowed an alternative platform upon which Aboriginal storytellers and their stories can be heard (in the oral sense) and visually brought to life, thanks to the medium of television.

Through my dissertation, I am sharing the observations that I have made concerning the storytelling process and the stories told on APTN. By recording my observations in the form of a doctoral dissertation, I am remembering the shows, the themes, the stories that are present within a selected sample of APTN's programming; I am not just sharing my views with the scholars who will choose a dusty tome or a neglected microfiche from a library's collection. From my experiences conducting this research, I will have made memories of academic frustration and scholastic success, of theme songs sung and memorized, and of remote controls lost and remote controls found. In the pages of my thesis, my thoughts and finding will be shared and my story of Indigenous Knowledge and television will be told.

You'll never believe what happened; the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network celebrated its seventh anniversary in 2006. This achievement in broadcasting is actually the result of many years of struggle to place Indigenous People and their issues on the television airwaves. On September 1, 1999, the inaugural broadcast of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network made national and international history by becoming "the first national network dedicated to Aboriginal programming" ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). While APTN is a relatively new network in comparison with other Canadian national networks such as the CTV and the CBC, the roots of APTN reach far back and beyond the recent on-air broadcast history. Being aware of this history is essential to this dissertation, for it provides you, dear reader, with the background information about the network that is at the centre of my analysis of storytelling, Indigenous Knowledge, and television.

APTN's roots can be traced to the Television Northern Canada (TVNC) which had as a goal (stated in their public relation literature and by Valerie Alia), to broadcast "cultural, social, political and educational programming to Canada's Native people" (Alia 103). Incorporated in 1990 and serving the people of Northern Canada, TVNC was designed to serve and meet the needs of the people living in the North through a variety of programming, much of which featured and was broadcast in Indigenous languages, including "Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, Chipewyan, Dogrib, North and South Slavey, Cree, Gwich'in, Ham, Kaska, Tagish, Northern and Southern Tutchone, and Tlingit" (Alia 104). Many of these programs and the languages found on TVNC also made their way

into much of APTN's programming. TVNC's programming was a direct result of trying to meet the needs of people residing in diverse and "underserved areas" (Alia 101).

TVNC was a "\$10 million, federally-funded dedicated satellite transponder service," which was broadcast via the Anik satellite system (Alia 103). Originally launched in 1978, this satellite system functioned to provide people of the North with TV broadcasting, community communications, tele-education and tele-health ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). Thanks to the reports of many federal government commissions (for example, the Therrien report of 1980) and thanks to the Northern Broadcasting Policy of 1983, the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) "recognized the need for a dedicated northern transponder to distribute television programming across the north" ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). In 1991, the CRTC granted a license to TVNC to serve the Canadian North (Alia 103). TVNC served ninety-four Native communities in the North (Valaskakis 83) with the goal of eventually reaching a nationwide audience.

TVNC's dream to provide service to the citizens of both the North and the South developed into APTN when TVNC "convinced the network's Board of Directors that a national Aboriginal television network would be a positive and important addition to Canadian broadcasting" ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). According to Ditchburn, APTN's creation can also be linked to the 1996 Royal Commission report on Aboriginal Peoples, which "outlined aboriginals' struggles to develop their own TV industry and get access to shows in their own language" (n. pag.). After much consideration and a great deal of support from Aboriginal communities, APTN was granted a broadcasting license by the CRTC and took to the airwaves in the fall of 1999. The event was touted as "the dawn of a new

age in Aboriginal storytelling” (Burke 1998: 33).

Although the place of APTN in Canadian broadcast history is noteworthy, as highlighted above, one must also place APTN in the context of Aboriginal media history, for it is not only the first of its kind internationally but also fundamental to the role of Aboriginal media to facilitate “Aboriginal participation in the cultural and political realities of Native and Canadian life” (Valaskakis 89). Regarding the impact that Aboriginal media have on documenting and sharing “Aboriginal culture, language and experience” (Valaskakis 88), APTN is but one avenue where “indigenous peoples have been able to enter the public sphere and there represent themselves in their own voices, under their control” (Browne 7). According to Tagalik, the vision for the network was to be more than just entertainment; it was also to provide a positive space for cultural understanding:

Our vision of APTN also goes beyond providing entertainment and information to our audience. We strongly believe APTN will be a powerful tool to bridge the gap of understanding between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians. We all know the impact of television. We know TV shapes opinions. APTN will shape opinions about aboriginal people. A realistic and comprehensive view will emerge. Viewers will be surprised and enthralled by our rich cultural heritage and our ancient stories. You will find something worth watching on APTN, whether it is Saturday morning cartoons for children, political commentary, programs on outdoor life and traditional aboriginal practices, sports like lacrosse and traditional games, phone-in and interactive programs on health and social issues, contemporary drama and music program. (44)

The ability to use television as a means of representation and cultural sharing is nothing new to the world of mass media, but with the power of representation residing in Aboriginal hands, Aboriginal control of Aboriginal television allows for the preservation and restoration of Aboriginal languages and cultures (Browne 7) and for the “formation

of culture, identity, and community” (Valaskakis 94).

In his text *Electronic Media and Indigenous Peoples: A Voice of Our Own?*

Donald R. Browne provides the following list, which encapsulates the purposes of indigenous media:

1. To “rescue” the language, chiefly by using it in daily broadcasts but also perhaps by direct language instruction.
2. To increase a sense of self-esteem on the part of indigenous population, both in their historical traditions and in their achievements in contemporary society.
3. To combat the negative images of indigenous peoples held by the majority population.
4. To work for a greater degree of cohesiveness among indigenous peoples, often so as to develop greater political influence in local, regional, and national life.
5. To provide a visible and audible symbol of indigenous society so that both indigenous and majority cultures would be aware that the former “counted for something” in the form of possession and operation of modern technology.
6. To provide an outlet for the creative production of, for example, indigenous singers, instrumentalists, and poets.
7. To provide another source of employment for the indigenous community, where, given frequently high unemployment, even the addition of 10 or 20 jobs can help. (59)

In the context of APTN, one can use Browne’s list in order to assess the viability of the network as an Indigenous media outlet. With regard to language, APTN provides broadcast time to a great number of Indigenous languages. For example, the 2004-2005 broadcast year saw 25% of APTN’s programming “in a variety of Aboriginal languages including Inuktitut, Cree, Inuinaqtuun, Ojibway, Inuvialuktun, Mohawk, Dene, Gwich’in and Miqma’aq, Slavey, Dogrib, Chipweyan, Tlingit” ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). By promoting language use and retention, APTN also serves as a means through which the language can be recorded and transmitted to a greater audience. With the geographic isolation of the reserves and the migration of Aboriginal Peoples to urban centres with a larger

Indigenous population, APTN as a national network affords people of cultural and linguistic backgrounds the opportunity to maintain contact with their Indigenous languages and cultural traditions.

Central to Indigenous media, the language broadcasts and culturally relevant programming contribute to the second aspect of self-esteem in the historical and contemporary issues stressed by Browne. In the CRTC decision, the Commission states in its rationale for granting APTN a license that, as the interveners have said, APTN will “give a strong voice to a lot of children and youth ...and give them the message that there is something out there for us, that we can become something, we can live up to our dreams” and also provide a “forum that has not been previously available for Aboriginal artists and producers to exhibit their work” ([www.crtc.gc.ca](http://www.crtc.gc.ca)). According to Robert Fulford, “a good story, perhaps, is essential to our self-worth” (26). The stories of APTN promote and provide viewers with positive imagery that could encourage viewers to challenge the way Indigenous People have been presented by mainstream media (Browne 7). In hoping to “help shatter some of the stereotypes about Inuit and native people,” APTN provides a space where Aboriginals are no longer “pigeonholed into one of two North American stereotypes: savages or sidekicks” (Clark 61). The network becomes a “meeting place” (Clark 60) where Aboriginal People can share their stories with an audience.

In APTN's CRTC application, the network stresses that they

...will contribute to a cross-cultural environment of mutual trust and respect ... we are confident that non-natives will be amazed at what they see. They will marvel at our stories, our value systems and our sense of humour. They will become



much more knowledgeable about our culture and the issues that affect our lives.  
([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca))

In trying to represent positive Aboriginal images and culturally relevant stories, APTN attempts to provide an alternative site of cultural representation. Combating the negative representations that have historically defined Aboriginal People was an essential aspect of the proposal submitted to the CRTC when APTN was granted its license. In its original application, APTN outlined that it would “be programmed predominantly by Aboriginal peoples and will reflect their concerns and the diversity within their cultures” ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)).

APTN further stated that the network would be a “celebration of our rich heritage and a sharing of our ideas... within the native community and with fellow Canadians” and will “fill a gap in the Canadian broadcasting system by providing a perspective that is currently not available” ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). By offering a platform that serves to unite all Aboriginal Peoples from North to South, East to West, APTN as a national network becomes the venue through which all Aboriginal People have access to the same information and the same means to share their cultures with others ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). This ability to transmit information and culture via the national airwaves is one of the primary aspects that have allowed Aboriginal cultures to flourish on the national Canadian scene. By using technology, APTN has found a way to reach not only an Aboriginal audience but also a great number of non-Aboriginal viewers. Add to this a website and an interactive show such as *Contact*, and as a result APTN is able to use technology in order to promote the viability and importance of Aboriginal culture to society at large.

Technology, as expressed by Marlene Brant-Castellano, will allow Indigenous People to

use the tools of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to help preserve and transmit the values and traditions of the past to a new generation of individuals (34).

Technology has allowed APTN to become the outlet through which the artists and storytellers can share their stories with a greater audience. When one looks at APTN's programs ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)), the support given to programs devoted to creative Aboriginal production is evident in programs such as *Creative Native*, *Art Zone*, *APTN Mainstage* and *First Music & Arts*. In looking at the production guidelines that are outlined by APTN, one can gauge that the network has taken great steps to ensure that the programs aired are "by, for, and about Aboriginal peoples, to share with all Canadians" ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). By supporting the creative arts, APTN showcases Aboriginal talent and provides a creative space for the dissemination of art and stories that serves to promote and exemplify the "window into the remarkably diverse worlds of Indigenous peoples in Canada and throughout the world" ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). According to Andrew Clark in a *Maclean's* article on the start of APTN, the network itself is "one of the most significant creative events in 20<sup>th</sup> century aboriginal history" (60).

APTN goes one step further than simply supporting the arts and cultural transmission; the network also employs a 70% Aboriginal staff ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). Beyond the physical employment of administrative and on-air staff, APTN also has a Board of Directors that is made up of community and professional leaders in Aboriginal communities. A look at the network's programming guidelines also indicates that "the majority of programming, except news and live events, originates with independent Aboriginal producers from across the country and around the world" ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). By

providing employment and economic development opportunities, APTN helps to combat the lack of broadcast training that has plagued past Indigenous media production (Valakakis 92). According to Valakakis, the development of a national network “is essential to providing accurate and authentic information to Aboriginal and non-Native media” (93). With a great number of the APTN staff being Aboriginal, the network becomes a site that develops and trains Aboriginal People in television production (Burke1999: B1). The network directly and indirectly provides other employment within the private sector of the film and television making by providing an outlet for their work even, at times emulating “mainstream network operations” (Baltruschat 50).

Unfortunately for APTN, the network has taken the emulation of mainstream networks to an extreme. Although some of the programming on APTN has changed during the initial years of broadcasting, many of the original shows aired by TVNC still dot APTN’s current lineup. Programs such as *Tukiginai* and *Nunavimuit* still find their place amongst newly created shows such as the news/call-in show *Contact*, which premiered in 2000 and the nightly *APTN: National News* (2002), which developed from another original program *InVision*, which was launched in the early days of the network ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). Since the seventh-anniversary celebrations in 2006, the network has witnessed an increase in the number of new shows in their lineup — shows that are also part of the lineups of other networks including TVO, Vision, and Showcase. Shows such as *renegadeexpress.ca*, *Tipi Tales*, *Greenthumb’s Garden*, and *Moccasin Flats* are now being broadcast to a variety of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people across the nation. In addition to shows that transcend network lines, APTN also has unique programming

that “is only on APTN and cannot be seen on any other network” ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). These shows include *Cooking with the Wolfman*, *The Creative Native*, *Seventh Generation*, and *Hank Williams First Nation*.

In the sixth season with a new seven-year CRTC license renewal granted, Gemini winning programs, and an increase in subscriber fees, the new face of APTN was launched in September of 2005. The 2005-2006 season reflects many changes that could be considered both positive and negative. Although there is an increase in the number of Aboriginal faces fronting the network in new programming, much of the imported content and new programming reflects mainstream culture and points of view. For example, the new show *Entertainment Beat* hosted by Kerry Green ([www.pyramidproductions.tv](http://www.pyramidproductions.tv)) is an Aboriginal-esque yet *Entertainment Tonight*-style view of the world of entertainment. Much of the content of the show, with the exception of the host and the occasional clip of Adam Beach or Graham Greene, features the goings-on in Hollywood. This shift towards mainstream content is also reflected in the increased number of imported programs which feature such Hollywood favourites as *Dances with Wolves*, *Little Big Man* and blockbusters such as *Speed* and *The Ghost and the Darkness!* One needs to wonder if the network acts as a site of Aboriginal resistance to cultural stereotypes or if it panders to the notion that if there is one quasi-Aboriginal actor in the cast, it is “about” Aboriginal People.

Knowing the detrimental effect that Hollywood stereotypes have on the identity formation, the network’s questionable choice of films (along with the questionable identity of “Aboriginal” actors Keanu Reeves, Val Kilmer, and Cameron Diaz) is one that

is perplexing. In *Dances with Wolves*, the noble savage Sioux stereotype is much better than the bloodthirsty heathen. However, since both savage and noble are found within the content of Kevin Costner's grand epic, let's just hope the Pawnee are not watching! This Hollywood shift is remarkable considering the previous comments made by APTN's first Chief Operating Officer Abraham Tagalik.

In speaking of the original intent of the Network, Tagalik is quoted by Clark as saying that the depictions of the sidekick or the savage served to alienate Aboriginal communities. "It was cowboys and Indians — the John Wayne version. The natives were always villains. They were criminals waiting to ambush people. That's carried over. It's not cool to be Aboriginal. Our kids are not made to feel pride in their culture" (60). One needs to question what sort of pride is instilled in Aboriginal children when the features on the multiple-night movie listings are *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Lone Ranger*, or *Passenger 57* where the Aboriginal villain played by actor Michael Horse is named Forget. Sadly, these negative images and Aboriginal actors in minor roles are not always easy to forget. While credit can be given to the network for featuring such hit Aboriginal films as *Smoke Signals* and *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, the Hollywood spin on the "Five Nights a Week" movies is hard to ignore.

Despite the shift to more Hollywood-style productions and programs, APTN continues to strive to "share our stories" and continues to provide Aboriginal People with access to programming in a variety of Aboriginal languages and cultures. A flagship of the network's original programming is found in the daily news broadcasts, which feature up-to-date events in the realm of Aboriginal affairs on both a local and a national level.

The live, daily news broadcasts on APTN allow an alternative point of view of mainstream news broadcasting. By serving as a launching point for stories about Aboriginal People told by Aboriginal People, APTN is a platform for the modern Aboriginal voice designed for “sharing our stories” with all cultures, with all generations, with all Canadians.

You'll never believe what happened; my research became outdated before it even made it to my doctoral committee. Such is the reality of doing research in a time-sensitive area. Although the APT<sup>2</sup>N storytelling vignettes have been replaced (see footnote), they were central to my research at the time. They provided me with a foundation in storytelling that proved invaluable. The thirty second vignettes were on the air during the time of my original research and were fundamental to APT<sup>2</sup>N, as it was during the years of my direct programming research. For this reason, they remain as central components to this doctoral dissertation.

When researching the theme of storytelling within the context of APT<sup>2</sup>N's programming, it is difficult not to notice that stories are central to the network's cultural content. In fact, APT<sup>2</sup>N advertises itself as a storyteller. At fairly regular intervals (per half an hour of broadcasting), APT<sup>2</sup>N promotes the idea of storytelling through a series of vignettes that features individuals addressing the subject of stories and their meaning to Aboriginal culture<sup>2</sup>. These vignettes are thirty second commercial-esque manifestations of the network's programming theme and agenda. Some of these half-minute spots feature recognizable faces within the Aboriginal Arts and Entertainment scene (e.g. Sid Bob and Duke Redbird), while others such as Angaangaq "Uncle" Lyberth might be more

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<sup>2</sup> As of the 2006-2007 season, APT<sup>2</sup>N has replaced the storytelling vignettes with flashy, teepee and Inukshuk images and have retitled the theme of the Network as "Coming Home," despite the fact that "Sharing Our Stories" is still contained in the voice-over. This episode on the story vignettes remains in this dissertation due to the fact that it was central to the network during my research. This episode also remains in the present tense due to that very fact.

difficult to recognize.

In assessing the epistemological view that guides APTN's programming, it is essential to look at the ten storytelling vignettes and the messages contained within the thirty seconds of air time. Each of the thirty second spots ends with one of the following mantras: "Sharing our stories with all cultures" or "Sharing our stories with all generations" or "Sharing our stories with all Canadians." The repetition of the network's storytelling mantra is reminiscent of the state and private-sector sponsored Heritage Minutes commercials which dot the Canadian television and film landscape. The Heritage Minutes (or Historica Minutes as they have been renamed) highlight great moments and people in Canadian history, thus making "Canadian history more interesting by the minute" (<http://www.historica.ca/minutes>). Each vignette ends with "*Part of Our Heritage*," thus supporting the collective notion of a Canadian identity or, in Trekkie terminology, assimilating all cultures into a Borg-like collective where "resistance is futile"!

The network's storytelling theme is reflected in APTN's mission statement, which is outlined as "sharing our peoples' journey, celebrating our cultures, inspiring our children and honoring the wisdom of our Elders" ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). This sharing and honouring of stories is the guiding factor that is expressed in their storytelling vignettes. While some of the thirty-second spots are culturally specific, many of the episodes are general with regard to their Aboriginal perspective. Of the ten storytelling spots found during my research, four vignettes are culturally specific while the other six do not mention any particular culturally specific elements.



Each of the vignettes illustrates various aspects of storytelling. From location to themes, from audience to storyteller, the reality of the vignettes illustrates Tom King's view that "meaning is refracted by cosmology, the way understanding is shaped by cultural paradigms" (112). Refraction, according to a dictionary definition, is the turning or bending of any wave, such as light or sound wave, when it passes from one medium into another different density. The aspect of King's theory of Native storytelling is that the Aboriginal cosmology is actually reflected within the stories and by looking at things holistically, one can come to see the bigger ontological picture. APTN's storytelling vignettes provide a much greater view of the purported goals of the first network devoted to the viewing needs of Aboriginal people.

Although, as noted in the previous chapter, the Duke Redbird vignette gave me inspiration for my methodological and theoretical storytelling perspective, the other APTN storytelling vignettes provide the grounding for a solid look at the network to be conducted. The vignettes represent the network's perspective and approach which, in the end, provide the viewer with a stand upon which to rest their TV spectatorship. Each of the stories on stories shows how the fundamental views are supported by the network and showcase Aboriginal world views. In a number of vignettes, Aboriginal philosophy and world views are expressed through the storytelling theme and the storytelling process.

#### APTN Storytelling Vignettes

For generations, Aboriginal Peoples have been brought together by the spoken word. Passing down our culture, our traditions, our stories. From East, to West, from North to South. Connecting young and old, friends and family. Sharing our stories with all generations. (APTN)

This first APTN programming storytelling theme (T1 - 0:04) features clips from a variety of individuals who also are featured in their own “storytelling” episodes. The vignette also serves to highlight the various components that are essential to the process of sharing stories: culture, traditions, location, and audience. For Murray and Rice, “each telling of a story, whether in speech, or in writing, generates another story, a story of relations between people and their worlds” (xi). Not unlike the creation stories that Tom King shares in *The Truth About Stories*, each of the stories found on APTN differs in certain aspects, yet they remain the same because they proclaim the cosmology of Aboriginal world views. The following expresses King’s point of view:

There is a story I know. It’s about the earth and how it floats in space on the back of a turtle. I’ve heard this story many times, and each time someone tells the story, it changes. Sometimes the change is in the details. Sometimes in the order of events. Other times it’s the dialogue or the response of the audience. But in all the tellings of all the tellers, the world never leaves the turtle’s back. And the turtle never swims away. (1)

The endurance of the turtle and the endurance of Indigenous Knowledge remain active and everlasting. Turtles and stories all the way down. While the stories of APTN might change, the message stays the same: “Sharing Our Stories.”

Also featuring the same storytellers as the first vignette, the second APTN celebration of storytelling is centred on the role of the storyteller. In vignette 2 (T1-0:58), the APTN storytelling theme features clips from a variety of individuals who also are featured in their own storytelling vignettes.

There is no denying the importance of storytellers to Aboriginal Peoples. Storytellers come in many forms: dancers, singers, chanters, artists, mothers, fathers, grandparents, brothers, sisters, you and me. Everyone has a story. Everyone is a storyteller. And our

stories have the power to move and inspire. Sharing our stories with all Canadians. (APTN)

According to King, “the truth about stories is that that’s all we are.” (2). This is echoed in the APTN vignette which underlines the importance of the storyteller and the story. Similarly, Lenore Keeshig-Tobias says “it’s your storytellers, your storytellers” (82). The importance placed on the storyteller is highlighted by the reiteration that everyone is a storyteller and has stories to share. The reality that stories are told by a variety of people in a variety of forms reinforces APTN’s ability as a television network to provide a storytelling space for the stories of Aboriginal Peoples. With the power to move and inspire, stories are not just “all that we are” but they are indeed “wondrous things” (King 9) that not only transcend space and time, but are handed down from generation to generation to generation.

Passing down stories from Elder to child is something that Anishnaabe writer and storyteller Basil Johnston primarily focuses on in his essay “How do we learn language?” in *Talking on the Page*. The individual nature of storytelling and storyknowing is highlighted in the text and Johnston states the following:

The elders did not comment on human conduct. To the storyteller and the tribe the story told itself. It was for the child to draw his own inferences and start fashioning his being and his world. And in letting the listener interpret his stories in his own way and according to the scope of his intellect, the storyteller and the elders of the tribe trusted in the common sense of the child to draw interpretations that were both reasonable and sensible. (46)

The focus on children as bearers of common sense is also found in the third APTN sketch. This vignette is of utmost importance for an examination of APTN’s children’s

programming because it is centred on how children are the vessels through which

Aboriginal stories will survive. (T1- 1:28)

It is said that storytellers are sometimes chosen at birth. And when you tell a story to children, you can sometimes see who will be a future storyteller by the way they listen, by the way they sit, and hear. Elders value telling stories to children because children are the ones who will keep this tradition alive. Sharing our stories with all generations. (APTN)

The focus on children as both storylisteners and storytellers is central to my decision to base my research on APTN's children's programming. Seen as "the ones who will keep this tradition alive," children are the means through which stories are generationally shared. This vignette strengthened my choice to focus on APTN's Kids' programming for my doctoral dissertation. Children are the vessels through which culture is carried and transmitted. Children, according to Johnston, "learn easily because they listen and give wholeheartedly of themselves to sound" (44). Storytelling is an action "in which tradition, heritage, custom and cultures were passed on to the youth" (Johnston 45) for the "child gave his spirit and his mind and himself to the story and the storyteller" (46).

The sharing of stories between Elders and the next generation allows for Indigenous Knowledge to survive and be shared. The storytelling tradition is one that has shifted since the pre-contact days but has endured. According to J. Edward Chamberlin in his article "Doing things with words," performance is also central to the storytelling experience.

The display of oral tradition of story and song, and of written traditions of narrative and lyric — as well as of a wide range of other discursive forms (such as woven and beaded belts and blankets; carved and painted trays, poles, doors,

veranda posts, canes and sticks, masks, hats and chests; and so forth) — turns out to be one of the time-honoured ways in which societies (as well as groups within societies) affirm their identity, establish their history, demonstrate the intellectual and emotional integrity of their critical and creative practices, exhibit the character of their intellectual and emotional lives. (73).

From the oral tradition to the written word, from the written word to the cinematic scene, storytelling is alive in the eyes, ears, and hearts of the children. If canes and sticks, doors and blankets can be discursive types of sources for cultural identity formation, why can television programs not also be considered an alternative form of cultural narrative?

The fourth APTN vignette is one that features actor Sid Bob (T-1-1:58), who is a star on the Youth program *Canadian Geographic for Kids*, also shown on APTN. This vignette delves into specific cultural traditions with the mention of the Hamatsa — a West Coast traditional drama and dance.<sup>3</sup>

In the West Coast tradition, months of preparation would go into our storytelling. I remember watching my cousins perform the Hamatsa. It is rich with song, dance, character and mask work. That is their tradition of storytelling which I have inherited and has inspired me to explore the storyteller within. Sharing our stories with all cultures. (APTN)

Not unlike other vignettes, this spot shows that storytelling can have various forms such as drama, dance, and character and mask work. This flexibility of the storytelling tradition translates well when considering the medium through which APTN shares the stories of Aboriginal peoples. By using a medium linked back to an oral storytelling tradition, APTN provides an alternative forum through which stories from a variety of cultures and geographic areas can reach their respective national audience.

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<sup>3</sup> For more on the Hamatsa see McDowell's *Hamatsa: The enigma of cannibalism on the Northwest Coast* (1997).

Although different storytelling traditions are central to different groups of Indigenous Peoples, the art of storytelling remains fundamental to most Aboriginal societies.

Cruikshank states that:

...storytelling contributes to large social processes. It is constitutive rather than referential; in other words, it makes the world rather than merely referring at second hand to disconnected facts about the world. Stories, they might say are not really about facts or events; they are about coming to grips with the personal meanings of broadly shared knowledge and converting those meanings to social ends. (114)

Cruikshank's view is echoed by King who notes that "what's important are the stories I've heard along the way. And the stories I've told. Stories we make up to try to set the world straight" (60). In setting the world straight, stories link the past, the present, and the future.

The shift-ability in storytelling structures is also featured in the fifth vignette (T-1-2:28), which highlights the idea of traditional storytelling in the modern world. This storytelling moment describes how the traditional ways of sharing stories have evolved with new generations of storytellers.

My Grandfather is a traditional man with contemporary ideas. He is filled with the knowledge of stories that he has heard from the time that he was young. And it is through these stories that he has imparted our traditions to me. And although he knew I would not live a traditional life like him, I would keep our Dene stories, values and beliefs with me wherever I am in the world. Sharing our stories with all Canadians. (APTN)

In this case, the storyteller Fionna Blondin shares her Dene stories in a modern era. The traditional stories are fundamental to her identity and her Indigenous world view. Stories not only facilitate the contemporary teaching of cultural traditions but also

allow for traditional knowledge to be transferred from one generation to the next. This demonstrates that storytelling is constantly changing and adapting to meet the needs of new generations and is fundamental to the transmission of cultural knowledge, even if it is done by different means and media because nothing is static. This is reminiscent of the opening “creation” story found in King’s *Truth about Stories* and the fact that despite all the changes and challenges “the world never leaves the turtle’s back. And the turtle never swims away” (1). So, despite the shifting in storytellers, storytelling sites, even storytellers and audiences, stories are fundamentally “the cornerstones of our culture” (King 95).

Not unlike the Dene vignette, the sixth vignette (T2-0:29) features a culturally specific story told by Angaangaq “Uncle” Lyberth, who “is a traditional healer specializing in Inuit specific trauma recovery for Inuit adult survivors of child sexual abuse. He also provides healing services in federal prisons and participates in national and international meetings on native spirituality, healing and culture. He is originally from Greenland but has lived in Nunavut and southern Canada. He currently resides in Ottawa but travels frequently in the North (<http://www.pauktuutit.ca/nuluaq/agency>). I had the pleasure and privilege of personally hearing “Uncle” speak at the Canadian Indigenous and Native Studies 2002 conference held at the University of Toronto. His tone and his storytelling ability were quite enthralling and his APTN vignette is along those same lines.

Ho, we used to live in the far north, in the village of Qaanaaq, in a sod house. And my grandmother who carried her long beautiful hair will ask us to come and braid her hair. She would start with a chant and ask us to listen, and listen, and listen more until the story becomes part of you and then you can tell your story yourself. Sharing our stories

with all Canadians. (APTN)

As with the previous vignettes, the means of storytelling is variable but listening (like seeing, sharing, and remembering) is essential to the “life” of a story. Blaeser notes that there is a sense of “response-ability” (54) when one hears a story and when one tells a story. For King, this response-ability is outlined as follows: “For once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world. [...] So you have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told” (10). The notion that relationships and responsibility are important in the process of storytelling and Indigenous Knowledge is reiterated by Monture-Angus who stresses “responsibility” in our “relationships” and that these factors are central to self-determination (1999: 8). This responsibility is also a fundamental aspect of Indigenous Knowledge as noted by Jo-ann Archibald in her doctoral dissertation “Coyote learns to make a storybasket: the place of First Nations stories in education” (4).

The chant that Lyberth proclaims as story is actually another form of story. Stories have different forms, a concept echoed in the seventh vignette, which moves away from the narrative form to include chants or songs as hinted at by Lyberth in the previous vignette. The seventh storytelling episode features a rap group, thus bringing the traditional narrative into a modern form.

Anishnaabe from the north to the south. All the people that are cool with what’s going down. From a television station that is making us sing. Bring the nation together for a tribal thing. Sharing our stories with all Canadians. (APTN)

While shorter, more colourful, and more upbeat than the other storytelling moments, this vignette is the first to directly mention the APTN “television station” and



seems out of place within the context of the other episodes. Although the differences are noticeable, the points made are poignant and the view shared is directed towards a younger audience: less story rhetoric, more popular culture. For Murray and Rice, the ever-changing and adapting use of alternative means of storytelling to bridge cultural, generational and geographical boundaries is essential to modern storytelling (xiv). This move towards a younger audience is shown in the eighth vignette, which showcases a rock and roll group proclaiming the virtues of storytelling.

Passing on the word to youth is power. From our Elders let's just speak. A Canadian drum for a song unsung, from a generation to its peeps. Shall our cultures drink together, make no mistake forever. We'll bring you the goods, from all our hoods. Rock up this station together. APTN is the voice of the people. Sharing our stories with all Canadians. (APTN)

By focusing on youth as the site of power and cultural voice, this vignette echoes and supports the APTN mandate of "sharing our peoples' journey, celebrating our cultures, inspiring our children and honouring the wisdom of our Elders" ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). Interestingly enough, the eighth and the ninth vignette also serve to promote APTN with direct references to the network — "From a television station that is making us sing" and below "Rock up this station together." The youth are the target or the source of inspiration for many of the vignettes in the APTN series. This is reiterated in the ninth vignette (T-3-4:27) which features the same rock group from the previous storytelling segment.

The drum represents Mother Earth. Sharing a dream of people working together. Trying to tear down this wall and ride out the weather. Being yellow skinned, brown skinned, black or white. We all stand together in the Creator's light. So let's check out that vision and live out the dream of a Nation as one in harmony. Sharing our stories with Canadians. (APTN)

The return to the storytelling theme with a rock and roll slant places an emphasis on the coming together of various cultural groups to share in the stories of Aboriginal People. Stories are a site of cultural renewal and resistance. For Indigenous academic Elizabeth Cook-Lynne, individuals “must be willing to invent whatever concepts are possible within their ken to acknowledge that Indians know what has happened to them and that knowledge is in the language, culture, custom, and literature of the tribe and, most important, that Indians are entitled to tell their own stories” (92). By “sharing our stories,” APTN outlines that stories become a means of identity formation as well as of cultural renaissance. The idea of stories as decolonization is echoed in the words of Janice Acoose who notes that the act of storytelling is one of “decolonization,” (91) one of “resistance,” and “re-empowerment” (109).

The assertion of a culture component in the process of decolonization is central to the last vignette featuring Métis poet, artist, and businessman Duke Redbird and features the Medicine Wheel as a central theme. As previously noted, seeing, listening, remembering, and sharing not only are my central methodological foundations but are four aspects that are found to be essential to the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge — via television or otherwise! The tenth episode has become the central description of the storytelling methodology that guides my work.

Traditional storytelling goes through a cycle. Passed from person to person, from storyteller to listener, from year to year. Just as there are four ways to come into a circle — north, south, east and west — there are four elements to storytelling — seeing, listening, remembering, and sharing — a complete circle that keeps the stories alive. Sharing our stories with all cultures. (APTN)

In this last storytelling vignette, APTN's self-proclaimed role as storyteller is evident and is cemented in their advertising. APTN becomes the medium through which traditional and cultural stories are brought into the lives of the network's at-home audience. One aspect that needs to be addressed concerns the fact that with traditional oral storytelling, the storyteller is actually present at the time of storytelling. With storytelling on television, the storyteller is far removed geographically from the audience. While I see the problematic nature of this separation for the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge, I would argue that despite this lack of presence knowledge can still be transferred. In the oral tradition setting, the storyteller might also not be accessible for questions or for further guidance after the story is told. A responsibility lies with the caregivers of children to provide guidance on the themes and stories. Storytelling through television is no different. The story is told in both an oral and visual form and a parental responsibility still needs to occur for the stories to be understood. In King's *The Truth About Stories*, the author notes that "...you have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told." (10). Children need to be taught the critical thinking skills that will ensure their survival in the modern world. By providing a new 21<sup>st</sup>-century means of oral storytelling, APTN becomes the modern-day storyteller to a new generation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal viewers.

### Commercial Break (Third of the series)

Of course, written stories can be performed orally; although, apart from authors on reading tours to promote their books and parents reading to children, this seldom happens.

And oral stories can be stuck in a book. [...]

I know I will generate disagreement on this point. [...] But the act of reading is a private act. And no matter how many people may have read a book or an article or a poem or a short story, each person reads that story themselves, by themselves, whereas oral stories generally have an audience in which there is a group dynamic. Though it could be argued that both reading and listening, in the end, are individual acts.

And then there's television. (King, *The Truth About Stories*, 154)

Trying to bridge the gap that exists between various types of storytelling is one that is challenging and yet seems quite logical in its progression. From oral to written, from written to oral — full circle one could say! The combination of the aural and the visual in the medium of television does act as an individual and collective bridge between two diverse means of storytelling. Some might argue that television is strictly visual (as can be claimed for the written versions of stories), whereas others claim that television is an aural/oral medium (as is experienced in the oral tradition of storytelling. Television, in my opinion (and in that of Marshall McLuhan) is an interplay of the senses — senses working together in order to understand or make “sense” of the story being told! Television is both the oral and the written, a 21<sup>st</sup> century hybrid of various means of storytelling. For the individual, trying to make sense of the story — oral, written, television — is an attempt at setting the world straight. This is my attempt at setting the world straight through the story of my dissertation.

You'll never believe what happened; it is only with the writing of my dissertation that I have finally come to feel comfortable with discussing my knowledge of Indigenous issues. As a non-Native scholar in the field of Native Studies I have always been reticent about expressing my views on Indigenous Knowledge, for fear of offending, for fear of condemnation, for fear of failure — all components of my reluctance to discuss the issue with colleagues and even with my students. Being from a very “White” background, my voice has often been silenced or muted in order to avoid touching upon the sacred while avoiding the profane. Although I have studied at the doctoral level issues such as Indigenous methodology, theories of Indigenous Knowledge in the Academy, and oral tradition in knowledge transmission, my background on the subject of IK is limited to that of an educated outsider. In trying to grasp the concept of Indigenous Knowledge, I have turned to the leading authorities in the field of Indigenous Studies as references for my research.

Due to the pan-Indian nature of APTN's audience, this same approach is taken in my current attempt at outlining the various elements that have come to make up the concept of Indigenous Knowledge. This episode not only looks at the Seven Grandfather Teachings as they are found within the show *Tipi Tales*, but also provides a review of the pertinent ideas on IK. In looking at various scholars and teachers from a range of cultural backgrounds, this examination offers a pan-Indigenous overview of Indigenous Knowledge. With storytelling and oral traditions as central to my research on APTN,

these elements are also essential in my search for a working definition of Indigenous Knowledge. Focusing on orality and storytelling as a means of transmitting Indigenous Knowledge, my research looks at the television shows on APTN as oral narratives that share the moralities of Indigenous knowing with an at-home audience.

In the seminal text *Life Lived Like a Story*, author Julie Cruikshank with Elder Annie Ned notes that “the persistence of stories and storytelling suggests that oral narrative is central to an indigenous intellectual tradition and provides the core of an educational model” (Cruikshank 340). Cruikshank’s observation and her co-author’s ideas outline perfectly the reality of IK transference: an Elder + Oral Tradition = Stories of Indigenous Knowledge. Pam Colorado suggests in “Bridging Native and Western Science” that language (8) and Elders (10) are key elements in her definition of what she calls Indigenous Science or, in the terms of my research, Indigenous Knowledge. Her views on the issue of IK describe specific teachings such as the Medicine Wheel (2) and the Seven Generations Teachings (3). For Colorado, Native Science is based on “observation” and “experience,” (8) and such acts are essential to the analysis done for this dissertation. In learning by observing and in learning by experiencing, children (as well as adults) come to know the true meaning of Native knowing. To define Native Science, Colorado uses imagery such as the tree (2) and the bear (5) as symbols to assist her in relaying her message. In essence Colorado tells her readers tales of bears and trees, and of Medicine Wheels and prayers that serve to tell the stories of her own experience with the holistic realm of Indigenous Knowledge (2).

The reliance upon stories in order to share IK is also found within the body of work associated with esteemed Aboriginal scholar Joe Couture. In his article "The Role of Native Elders: Emergent Issues," Couture states that Elders are often "perceived, not as harbingers of a lost Eden, but as the oral historians, guardians of the Secrets, as interpreters of the Life of the People, as unusual teachers and way-showers to the People" (1996: 42). In acting as oral historians and storytelling teachers, Elders provide individuals with knowledge crucial to identity development and bicultural survival (1996:46). Couture also stresses that Elders are "superb embodiments of highly developed human potential."

They exemplify the kind of person which a traditional, culturally based learning environment can and does form and mold. Their qualities of mind (intuition, intellect, memory, imagination) and emotion, their profound sense of humor, in a sense of caring and communication finesse in teaching and counseling, together with a high level of spiritual and psychic attainment, are perceived as clear behavioral indicators, deserving careful attention, if not compelling emulation. (1996:47)

In learning by observing Elders and hearing their stories, one can come to emulate all that is Indigenous Knowledge, for to respect the wisdom of Elders is to know Indigenous Knowledge (Dei et al .6).

Couture proclaims that it is "not possible to study and examine Elders in the conventional sense simply because that is not the 'way.' One learns about Elders by learning from them over a long period of time and by becoming comfortable with a learning-by-doing model" (1996:47). The development of relationships of learning is echoed in the works of Weber-Pillwax (1967) and Wilson (1967). Elders and Indigenous Knowledge are "centred in the pervasive, encompassing reality of the Life-Force,

manifest in ‘laws’ — the Laws of Nature, the Laws of Energy, or the Laws of Light” (Couture1996:48). Elders have the “power and personality” to “shake us and lead us out of the current global cultural pathology, and bring us along into and through a healing and restructuring at a most basic level” (Couture1996:49). Thus Elders are not only guides along the path of life but also living embodiments of the tenets of Indigenous Knowledge that are rooted in a historical past and continue to exist in today’s current global reality.

Couture continues in this vein in another text titled “Explorations of Native Knowing” where the author notes that the Elders’ wisdom is used in order for one to become a “balanced human being” (1991:60). Elders are “highly aware persons, and as carriers of oral tradition, are the exemplars, the standing reference points” (Couture1991:61). Elders are the bearers of culture and, through symbolism and orality (1991:58), they become the storytellers who share their wisdom with others in order to encourage the “living of the good life,” which is patterned by “connecting responses to self, others, family, community, and the cosmos” (Couture2000: 158-159). Through their stories and through their experiences, Elders remind us that “nothing exists in isolation, everything is relative to every other being or thing” (1991:59).

The theories expressed by Couture on the subject of orality and the Elders are not dissimilar to those expressed by Mohawk scholar Marlene Brant-Castellano. Storytelling and orality are essential aspects of the definition of Indigenous Knowledge given by Brant-Castellano in her article “Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge.” According to her, the various sources of knowledge that help to “examine the contours of



aboriginal Knowledge” include terms such as traditional teachings, empirical observation, and revelation (23). Traditional Indigenous knowledge is characterized by Creation stories that reinforce values — the “substructure of civil society” — and is normally drawn from the wisdom of the Elders (23). Empirical knowledge is defined as the cognition “created from observations by many persons over extended time periods,” what the author calls “Indigenous Science” (23). For Castellano, Revealed Knowledge is said to be the result of “dreams and visions,” is the “knowledge gained through spiritual means,” and “can serve economic as well as psychological needs” (24). This type of knowledge is normally viewed as a “gift” (24). Brant-Castellano points to the fact that “instructions given at creation of the world” provide “guidance on how to maintain harmony in relationship among human beings and the natural world” (24).

Brant-Castellano also implies that Aboriginal Knowledge has been assaulted by such negative forces as Residential Schools, colonial conquest, and capitalism and consumerism. These aspects are highlighted in the article, which claims that Indigenous People need to “adapt their traditions to a contemporary environment” (25). The author uses the metaphor of “fire” for a culture that must be “rekindled,” for fire/culture is “fueled by materials at hand here and now” (25). The author outlines the characteristics of Aboriginal Knowledge as “personal, oral, experiential, holistic, conveyed in narrative or metaphorical language” (25).

As far as IK being personal in nature, Brant-Castellano notes that “Aboriginal Knowledge is rooted in personal experience and lays no claims to Universality” (25). She continues by stating that “the personal nature of knowledge means that disparate and

even contradictory perceptions can be accepted as valid because they are unique to a person” (26). The reality that IK is unique to the individual is a view also expressed by Couture, who notes that “learning is personalized” (1991:65) and by Brascoupé who stresses that “spirituality is about our personal and daily relationships” (356). Brant-Castellano points out that relationships, both personal and communal, must exist so that, within the context of a relationship, knowledge develops as being “not only intellectual in content” but also “in an emotional quality” (27). This type of learning relationship often develops between a teacher and a learner (26) and centres on the oral transmission of knowledge, for “one of the most effective ways of learning was to listen to stories of personal experience” (27). This sharing of personal experiences from generation to generation through stories is also echoed in the knowledge shared with me by Elder Shirley Williams (April 2003), who emphasized that IK is based on personal experience: the experiential nature of IK is a process rather than a product developed over time.

Aside from orality and experiential knowledge, Williams is also in agreement with Brant-Castellano on the issue of the holistic nature of Indigenous Knowledge. Williams explained to me in a personal conversation that IK is global and holistic in nature. Brant-Castellano expresses this same idea in so much as “all of the senses, coupled with openness to intuitive or spiritual insights, are required in order to plumb the depths of Aboriginal Knowing” (29). For Williams, the focus on language and orality is the key to understanding Indigenous Knowledge. This quality is the means through which stories find their way into the hearts of the listeners. Williams sees storytelling and stories as providing lessons that serve to guide people and mold behaviours towards

something and someone. This view is echoed by Brant-Castellano, who sees stories as “the primary medium used to convey aboriginal knowledge” due to the fact that they inform and entertain; they hold up models of behaviours and they sound warnings. They “teach without being intrusive” and the tales of “personal experiences” act as “metaphors to guide moral choice and self-examination” (31).

In the past and the present, Indigenous Knowledge guides people in understanding what Willie Ermine calls the “mamatowisowin” (104) and what Shirley Williams calls *Bimaadziwin* or the Good Life. IK is the personal journey of the good life and one of the means through which we live this good life is through our stories, for our stories are all that we are (King 2). We are all our own personal creation story, “a story that recounts how the world was formed, how things came to be, for contained within creation stories are relationships that help to define the nature of the universe and how cultures understand the world in which they exist” (King 10). The Good Life means to follow the sacred teachings such as the Medicine Wheel, to live the Seven Grandfather Teachings and to walk the Red Road.

How each individual understands his or her place in the world is fundamental to the creation of identity and the notion of self. In looking at the values that work in the formation of identity (Brant-Castellano 23), theories can be drawn as to how the stories of individuals interact with those of others and also with their environment, the particular world in which they live. These relationships are of the utmost importance (Cajete 190) and, according to Couture (1996), are “centred in the heart” (42). The idea is also central to Shirley Williams’ view that IK comes from the heart. By locating IK and identity

within the self, both terms become inextricably linked and are made manifest in the stories that one is told and that one tells (King 10). The stories that we tell are reflections of who we are and of where we come from — the refraction of cosmology, of cultural paradigms (King 112).

APTN's refraction of cultural patterns is clearly outlined in their Kids' programming. Since the transmission of IK goes from generation to generation, a look at the children's shows, produced in part by APTN, clearly reveals the role that Elders play in the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge. While my research into this area was limited to very specific programming years (2003 and 2004), many of the television shows are still being broadcast on APTN, while others have gone out of circulation. *Tipi Tales*, *Wakenheja*, *Wumpa's World*, *Greenthumb's Garden*, and *Longhouse Tales* were all broadcast during my exploration of APTN's programming. All these shows feature a storytelling Elder who shares stories of Indigenous Knowledge not only to their on-air companions but also to the at-home audience. Elders impart their Indigenous Knowledge through the oral stories they tell to children, a process no different from what happens in the shows of APTN.

While *Wakenheja* features the eagle Flying Thunder as Elder in Residence, *Greenthumb's Garden* has Katchewa the storytelling crow, *Longhouse Tales* has Bella the turtle, and *Wumpa's World* has Wumpa himself. *Tipi Tales*, on the other hand, features great-grandparents as Elders and storytellers, but the show also incorporates animal spirit guides who act as Elder figures and storytellers to transmit IK. Utilizing the traditional seven sacred teachings of Aboriginal spirituality known as the Seven Great

Laws (or Seven Grandfather Teachings), *Tipi Tales* follows four children as they “learn about the ancient teachings of their ancestors” ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). The *Tipi Tales* website maintains that the show is based on a Cree world view and is guided by the “Seven Great Laws” ([www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com)). *Tipi Tales* uses the Seven Great Laws, which are teachings of Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Humility, Truth and Wisdom — all tenets of what I have come to consider Indigenous Knowledge, due to the fact that the Seven Great Laws are nearly identical to the Seven Grandfather Teachings that guide the Anishnaabe (Ojibway) world view (Benton-Benai 64). *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway* by Edward Benton-Benai outlines the Seven Grandfather Teachings. The author’s text traces the fundamental teachings of the Sacred Way of the Midewiwin (iii) and contains a chapter that sketches the story of “The Seven Grandfathers and the Little Boy” (60-66), which tells of a little boy and his discovery of the Seven Grandfather Teachings. While many themes and symbols in Benton-Benai’s story are quite detailed, the author also clearly lists what have come to be known as the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Benton-Benai’s seven laws are as follows:

- 1) To cherish knowledge is to know WISDOM
- 2) To know LOVE is to know peace
- 3) To honour all of the Creation is to have RESPECT
- 4) BRAVERY is to face the foe with integrity
- 5) HONESTY in facing a situation is to be brave
- 6) HUMILITY is to know yourself as a sacred part of the Creation
- 7) TRUTH is to know all these things (64)

The creators of *Tipi Tales* promote their show as one that is able to “communicate a modern vision based on ancient principles” ([www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com)). By bringing traditional teachings to a modern audience through television, the show makes manifest

Brant-Castellano's idea that the spark of traditional teaching will be rekindled by the materials, and in essence, by the methods of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (34). The promise of *Tipi Tales* to bring a modern spin to traditional teachings is one that is realized within the television show in the variety of characters that make up the cast. Children, great-grandparents and an assortment of animal spirit guides are included in the lineup of *Tipi Tales*. The show is a preschool children's television show produced by Eagle Vision. The series was launched in 2003 and received numerous accolades and awards, including the Parents' Choice Award, which deemed the series as having the "highest production standards, universal human values and a unique, individual quality that pushes the product a notch above the others" ([www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com)). In the show, which is set in the bush, the children are guided by their great-grandparents and the seven sacred animals who share with them the sacred laws and Indigenous Knowledge. The entire program revolves around the children learning to cope with various relationships with others and, in essence, themselves, thus discovering their own personal story.

*Tipi Tales* is very much a set of character sketches in more ways than one. The human and animal *characters* (as in "a person portrayed in an artistic piece, such as a drama or novel") are all rounded and fully developed with regard to narrative structure, but their *characters* (as in "moral or ethical strengths") are continually challenged during the series. Knowing that the reader of this dissertation might not be familiar with the characters of *Tipi Tales*, I have decided to include detailed character information so as to ground the reader in the lives of those who gather round the tipi, as indicated in the theme show of the program. The human characters are made up of an extended Cree family,

which includes Great-Grandmother and Great-Grandfather, Russell, Sam, Elizabeth and Junior. Great-Grandfather (voiced by Jules Dejarlais) is said to be a “fairly traditional man, but is willing to accept the modern world through the children” ([www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com)). He is a storyteller who regales his grandchildren with stories including those centred in the seven sacred laws. Great-Grandfather seems to be the “perfect” grandfather who never seems to get upset or lose patience with the children. As an Elder, Great-Grandfather is a storyteller and a reflection of the knowledge of the ancestors, which is shared with the children to “increase” and “spread” Indigenous Knowledge (Johnston 148). *The Tipi Tales* website also describes him as someone who has “an awesome respect for the natural world and teaches the kids about the voice in the wind, the spirit of the tree and giving a gift of thanks” – Great-Grandfather is also usually very thankful for Great-Grandmother’s Saskatoon berry pie ([www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com)).

Aside from her skill in the kitchen, Great-Grandmother (voiced by Michelle St. John) is “wise and kind, but often enigmatic” ([www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com)). She is greatly loved by Great-Grandfather and she is “truth and wisdom incarnate. She will always call it straight and with love” ([www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com)). Between her and her spouse, they have all the Seven Sacred Teachings covered. Great-Grandmother provides the feminine balance to Great-Grandfather and this balance between the genders is also present in the characters of Sam and Russell, Elizabeth and Junior. One question that needs to be posed about this familial arrangement is where the parents or even the grandparents of these children are. One guess would be that their absence might be due to geographic and economic dislocation as is noted in the character Junior’s bio on [www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com). Or

one could argue that their association with their great-grandparents represents and emphasizes the ancientness associated with the teachings being passed down from Elder to child.

The children of *Tipi Tales* are balanced in age and gender and thus reflect the majority of viewers – whether Cree or non-Cree, whether Native or non-Native. Through common factors such as gender and age, the diversity of the cultural backgrounds of the viewers is overshadowed by the positive and universal message. The characters of *Tipi Tales* are all unique, yet are ironically plagued by the same issues and problems. Russell (voiced by Herbie Barnes) is “four and a half but looks six” ([www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com))

He is big for his age but is a very gentle and sensitive boy. People often expect more from him because of his size. He loves to eat and is always hoping that great-grandmother has something cooking in the kitchen, especially cookies or pies. Russell has many fears. He tries hard to keep them to himself, but they usually surface in some type of disaster. He looks up to Junior and Elizabeth and wants to be ‘grown-up’ just like them. Russell counts on Sam to be his accomplice. Junior is his hero and Russell takes great pride in playing drums for Junior's dancing or even being asked to play with him. He is goofy and loud and his enthusiasm for life is contagious. But his greatest gift is the joy he brings to others. ([www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com))

Russell's opposite-gendered, age-similar counterpart is Samantha (voiced by Jan Skene) who is a “three-and-a-half-year-old who is a mischievous, funny, free spirit living in the moment. She thinks everything is ‘the bestest!’ She's cute and snuggly, with a curly bob of black hair flopping carelessly on top of her head. Sam can get away with just about anything. Her cousins find her a little annoying but would do anything for her. A tomboy, there is nothing Sam will not try, so she often needs her cousins' help to keep her out of trouble” ([www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com)). Sam's feminine sister-in-spirit is her cousin



Elizabeth (voiced by Rebecca Gibson) who is a “precocious and confident five-year-old. She is artistic and expressive, and she has an opinion on everything. She sees herself as the leader of the group. She can sometimes be self-absorbed and often ends up being excluded. The ‘princess’ of the group, Elizabeth wants things to go her way and is extremely determined to see that happen. She has many fears but usually manages to hide them well. She fights for what she believes in (even when she is wrong) and periodically has meltdowns which some might even call tantrums, but Elizabeth has a good heart and loves her cousins very much. While she can be nurturing, she often plays the martyr, complete with whole body sighs. ‘I have to do everything myself I guess....’ Elizabeth knows she is destined for greatness. And even though she drives them crazy, her cousins all look up to her” ([www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com)).

Elizabeth’s cousin, yet also her arch-rival at times is her cousin Junior (voiced by Ryan Black). “He is a five-year-old Ojibway boy who stays at his great-grandparents’ house every week while his parents work. His real name is Eugene, which he hates, so everyone calls him Junior. Junior is traditional and proud of it. He wears long braids and loves everything about being Indian. He is very spiritual. Focused and serious, his feelings often get hurt. He and Elizabeth frequently clash over leadership issues. He can be very self-righteous, even a bulldozer at times, but he has great passion for life and nature. Great-grandfather is his hero and like him, Junior is a great dancer and loves telling traditional stories. He is sincere, loving and hungry for life. Junior will be a great man” ([www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com)).

Since *Tipi Tales* is a character-driven series, the storylines of the program are

designed around the characters, and the themes focus on the trials and tribulations of the individuals who make up the *Tipi Tales* family. The structure of each episode is relatively similar and features one of the children facing a moral and personal dilemma. Each episode opens with the following theme song, which introduces not only the characters but also the guiding principles of the show:

From the silence came a voice: listen and you will hear. Ancient words of wisdom that the First People brought to share. The world is always turning: it carries us along. Let the seven sacred laws make your spirits strong. Gather round the tipi; hear the stories that we tell. We listen to the Elders, we learn our lessons well. Lizbeth and Junior, Russell and Sam. Learning. Growing. Gather Round the Tipi. Gather Round the Tipi. Tipi Tales. (W1-T9-2004-04-13-01:30:01)

The theme song stresses that by listening you will hear the “ancient words of wisdom” and the “seven sacred laws,” and your spirit will become stronger. *In The Words of Elders* also contains an emphasis on listening; the editors note that “Elders stress listening, observing, and waiting in an attitude of respect. Knowledge can often come in a moment of experiencing a hidden meaning” (Kulchyski xv). In addition, the opening song of the TV show suggests that the stories told around the tipi will be ones that help the listener to understand what the First Peoples have to share. These words of wisdom found in song are echoed in the various songs featured throughout the series. Each episode features at least two songs that provide not only a musical interlude but also instruction by the use of rhythm and lyrics.

Songs play a significant role in the series and in this particular show’s transmission of Indigenous Knowledge because they serve as the means by which the children come to understand their problems and their position within their family, their

community, and the world around them. In her interview for *In The Words of Elders*, Margaret Paul claims that “when you sing you make that sound, and with that sound you’re relating to the Creator” (10-11). She links song and spirituality in saying that “through the heartbeat, through us, through the Creator, it’s just that connection. That’s the way I think we can get back, trying to get it again, is through singing” (11). This is realized in *Tipi Tales* through the fact that the children are taught their respective teachings through song and through hearing the stories of their animal guides and their great-grand parents.

By using song, the characters of *Tipi Tales* are discovering how aspects of the Seven Grandfather Teachings will help them in their attempt to live a good life — to live *Bimaadiziwin* — in accordance with the teachings of the Creator (Kulchyski xv) or in the words of Willie Ermine “mamatowisowin” (104). The children find solutions to their problems by having open discussions with the animal spirit who represents the qualities of the Great Laws that they need. Great-Grandfather encourages the children to go and seek the advice of the various animals and, through this interaction, the children learn to acquire self-esteem and to resolve their issues in an independent manner. The interaction with the animal world as found within *Tipi Tales* is reflective of the importance placed on the role of animal guides in Indigenous storytelling traditions. Animals serve as mythical creatures who reflect “statements about the human mind” (Cruikshank 1990: 3). The refraction of the human world is often placed with the animals who serve to “reveal the ordinary in new ways” (Cruikshank 1990: 341). The animal spirit guide is also emphasized by Lawrence W. Gross, who notes that the animal-human relationship is

sacred and is central to the mythology of the Anishnaabe (440). Within *Tipi Tales*, the spirit animals are revered for their knowledge and their wisdom. They guide the children in their spiritual and cultural journeys — a guidance that usually takes the form of song.

During the course of my original research, two sets of episodes, each containing two stories, were assessed and while three sets of shows were actually recorded, one of the episodes containing the shows “Stand Up” and “All About Me” (W1-T9-2004-04-13-01:30:00-02:00:00) was rebroadcast. The episodes that made their way into this current analysis are “Stand Up” and “All About Me,” which teach the value of humility, and “The Song” and “Last Laugh” (W2-T13-2004-06-19-02:00:00-02:30:00) which feature wisdom. Humility is personified by Wolf (voiced by Curtis ‘Shingoose’ Jonnie), and wisdom by Beaver (voiced by Ted Longbottom). While all of the seven teachings, including love, respect, courage, and truth, are featured in the entire backdrop of the program, the only two specific teachings celebrated within the context of my look at *Tipi Tales* are humility and wisdom<sup>4</sup>. The following look at *Tipi Tales* will be centred on the four shows that aired during my research schedule and will examine how the qualities of humility and wisdom are passed from Elder to child through story and song.

“All About Me” is an episode centred on Junior and features the animal spirit Wolf, who helps Junior to see that his selfishness is in direct contrast to the sacred value of humility. Junior does not understand why no one wants to play and sing with him. What he fails to see is that his own ego is to blame for Sam and Russell’s lack of enthusiasm. The episode opens with Great-Grandfather painting Great-Grandmother’s

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<sup>4</sup>The entire *Tipi Tales* series is available on VHS and DVD.

sewing cabinet in her favourite colour. In comes Junior who comments on the brightness of the colour, saying that it is “waaayyy too bright for me.” Great-Grandfather reminds him that the sewing cabinet is not his and that the other children (Sam and Russell) were looking for someone to play with. As Junior goes off to find his cousins, Great-Grandfather sings a love song for his beloved wife.

“I like to see her with a smile on her face. And be near her when we watch the sunrise. I like to do things for her and she knows why. Because, just because. I like to hold her hand when we go for a walk. And twirl her around when we are dancing. I like to do things for her and she knows why. Because, just because. She’s a part of my life like the roots of a tree. When she’s happy, I’m happy. It was meant to be. She’s my buttercup, my Mother of Pearl. There is nobody else in the whole wide world. Everyone can feel this way for somebody else. Giving is the best part of living. And the answer to the question is as easy as pie. Because, just because.” (W1-T9-2004-04-13-01:32:20)

The loving relationship between Great-Grandfather and Great-Grandmother serves as a positive ideal for the children to aspire to in their own relationships. Love, as one of the sacred teachings, provides the stability that strengthens the family unit. While love, within the context of the program is personified by the animal character of Eagle, the “All About Me” episode is actually focused on the theme of humility personified by Wolf.

After Junior leaves Great Grand-Grandfather, he meets up with Russell and Sam who are playing at the tipi. Junior decides that the perfect game for them to play together is to make up a song — a song all about him! When Sam starts singing a song that includes her and Russell, Junior tells them that they “don’t get it.” The song is supposed to be about him. “A song about everything I am good at, like dancing powwow and soccer.” He suggests: “Junior is great at lots of things. I like the way he dances and sings and he is a super guy.” Junior’s selfishness is quite apparent to Russell and Sam.

Russell proposes the following verse: “Junior’s cousin Sam is the best cousin in the land.” Sam then adds: “And then there is his cousin Russell who likes pies the most.”

Both suggestions would “make the song longer.” Junior gets upset because the song was supposed to be about him! Russell and Sam decide to go off and pick berries, and Junior is confused because he thought they wanted to play. They answer: “We do, but not with you!” (W1-T9-2004-04-13-00:34:58)

Junior is a bit upset that the cousins do not want to play with him and he goes off to get counsel from Great-Grandfather; he suggests that Junior contact Wolf, who might be able to offer him some advice. As Junior leaves, Great-Grandfather sings another song – this constant return to music is a mainstay for the show. The songs sung by Great-Grandfather usually reflect the natural world, interconnectivity and Indigenous Knowledge. The following song is no exception to this general rule of thumb:

“The water of life flows forever, flows forever, flows forever. The water of life flows forever, flows for you and me. The moon and stars will shine forever, shine forever, shine forever. The moon and the stars will shine forever, shine for you and me. Every plant, every animal, everything we see can show us how beautiful life can be. When the children of the world all sing together, sing together, sing together. When the children of the world all sing together, it’s joy for you and me. Every plant, every animal, everything we see can show us how beautiful life can be. The water of life flows forever, flows forever, flows forever. The water of life flows forever, flows for you and me. The water of life flows forever, flows forever, flows forever. The water of life flows forever, flows for you and me.” (W1-T9-2004-04-13-00:39:25)

The stressing of water as a source of life is echoed in the Anishnaabe traditions where water is seen as an essential aspect of life because “food grows on water”

(<http://www.turtle-island.com/customs.html>). The focus on the natural world echoes traditional views of the land as a source of Indigenous Knowledge and of the

interconnectivity that exists between all creatures and things — a theory repeated in the work of Couture, who notes that “nothing exists in isolation, everything is relative to every other being or thing” (1991: 59).

Another interesting matter to note about the use of songs in the series is that while the song of Great-Grandfather reflects general ideas and themes, the songs provided by the animal spirit guides help the children with specific teachings. In “All About Me” and “Stand Up,” the animal guide Wolf repeats his song concerning the teaching of humility. Also of note in this particular set of episodes is that Great-Grandfather and Wolf both use the same idioms, such as “Tell Me About It” to start the learning process. This can be considered yet another link between wisdom and the interconnectivity between man and animal. Great-Grandfather is Wolf and Wolf is Great-Grandfather; both are sources of Indigenous Knowledge.

In “All About Me,” Junior goes to meet with Wolf, who counsels him regarding his selfishness and his vain ego. Wolf is the Elder who shares the teaching of humility. He does so by talking with Junior and by teaching him the following song, which is later repeated to Sam in the “Stand Up” episode, but for different reasons:

“Not too big, not too small. Just the right size is best of all. Don’t try to be someone that you’re not, be proud of all you’ve got. Every morning you look in the mirror, who is the person you see? Is it someone who is bossy or shy, or someone with humility? Not too big, not too small. Just the right size is best of all. Don’t try to be someone that you’re not, be proud of all you’ve got. Growing up isn’t easy, it is true. Let me take you by the hand. There are things you shouldn’t do. And, in time you’ll understand. When someone hurts your feelings, and makes you want to cry, don’t go and do the same thing to some other girl or guy. Not too big, not too small. Just the right size is best of all. Don’t try to be someone that you’re not, be proud of all you’ve got. Not too big, not too small. Just the right size is best of all. Don’t try to be someone that you’re not, be proud of all you’ve got.” (W1-T9-2004-04-13-00:41:05)

The lyrics to this song, the theme of being proud of who you are without being boastful, convey the main message encouraged by Wolf. In this instance, Wolf teaches Junior that his ego needs to be checked so as not to be “too big” for his young boy britches. By sharing the lesson of humility, Wolf imparts one of the key components of the Seven Grandfather Teachings to whichever child is currently in conflict or in need of assistance.

Not too long ago, that child was me and Wolf was an Anishnaabe Elder! One day over lunch at a restaurant called Charlotte Anne’s, I asked Elder and Professor Emeritus Shirley Williams what the secret to her happiness was. Anyone who has ever had the pleasure of spending time with Ms. Williams can attest to the joy she brings to life. Being one of the most photogenic persons that I know, Ms. Williams is always ready to share a smile and a laugh. Her answer to my query about the secret to happiness was humility! I didn’t quite get it at the time, but I have since come to understand the importance of being humble and respectful of self and others – a lesson also learned by Junior in his relationships with his *Tipi Tales* cousins.

The “All About Me” episode ends with Junior shouting “I’ve got it!” He returns to his cousins who are busy, quite literally “watching paint dry” on their Great-Grandmother’s sewing cabinet! They all start to sing a song together and then are drawn to the tipi by the sound of Great-Grandfather’s drum. All of the *Tipi Tales* episodes end with the sound of the drum that connects all living beings (Paul 35). This drumming beside the tipi brings the family together and calls them all to hear the stories and the music imbued with Indigenous Knowledge. The repetitive nature of the show’s themes



results in stability for the young viewer who might need to hear the story a few times in order to get the meaning and to make new meaning. Meanings, like themes and teachings, are reviewed and reaffirmed by having the same animal spirit guide appear in each of the two-part episodes.

In the second episode of the show, “Stand Up,” we find Sam struggling with the challenge of affirming herself to her cousins. “Afraid Junior will be mad at her, Sam hides so she won’t have to tell him she doesn’t want to play. After talking to Great-Grandfather, Sam visits Wolf to learn about being too small” ([www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com)). With the help of Great-Grandfather and Wolf, Sam finds the courage to express herself. While one would think that this segment might be about courage, this show is actually focused on humility and Sam learns to find pride and the ability to stand up for herself. Great-Grandfather teaches her that humility is all about being “not being too big, or too little, but being just the right size.” This teaching is repeated when Sam visits with Wolf, who sings her the same song that he taught Junior. Consequently, humility seems to be an issue for those who have too much pride and for those who do not have enough; humility and pride are different sides of the same coin.

The “Stand Up” episode opens, as usual, with Great-Grandfather singing an ode to Great-Grandmother – and her Saskatoon berry pie.

“Make me a pie to start the day. Only you can make it in your special way. With a crust so flaky it can make me cry. Great-Grandma’s Saskatoon berry pie. Great-Grandma’s Saskatoon berry pie. Make me a pie to start the day. Only you can make it in your special way. With a crust so flaky it can make me cry. Great-Grandma’s Saskatoon berry pie. Great-Grandma’s Saskatoon berry pie. Make me a pie to start the day. Only you can make it in your special way. With a crust so flaky it can make me cry. Great-Grandma’s Saskatoon berry pie. Great-Grandma’s Saskatoon berry pie. Give me a pie after lunch or dinner. Your pie’s

the best, your pie's a winner. Hummmhummmm my oh my. Great-Grandma's Saskatoon berry pie. Great-Grandma's Saskatoon berry pie. Great-Grandma's Saskatoon berry pie." (W1-T9-2004-04-13-00:26:22)

While this song might seem trivial, the lyrics actually outline Great-Grandfather's love for Great-Grandmother. Their love is what binds them together — pie and all. Great-Grandfather does tear himself away from the thought of crusty, flaky pie in order to counsel Sam who has run off from her "game" of building a pine cone fort with Russell and Junior. Because Sam was afraid that Junior would get angry at her for not wanting to continue, she just leaves without telling him she was going. She arrives back at the cabin and stays inside, although she speaks to Great-Grandfather through the window. She is hiding from Junior because she does not want to help him with his fort but is too afraid to tell him. Great-Grandfather suggests that she go and talk to Wolf about humility. Sam says that she is not too big, and Great-Grandfather tells her that maybe it is because she is too little.

Sam goes out to find Wolf and worries that she has even become too little for Wolf to find her. Wolf is there and reminds her that he always knows where she is. She tells Wolf the story about how she was helping Junior with his fort, but what she really wanted to be doing was singing with Great-Grandfather. Wolf replies: "Wanna Tell Me About it?" — a line that both Wolf and Great-Grandfather use to get the children talking! She explains that she did not tell Junior because she was scared that he would get angry at her. Wolf reminds her that she is a person too and that she needs to understand humility — that being humble is about being just the right size.

"Not too big, not too small. Just the right size is best of all. Don't try to be

someone that you're not, be proud of all you've got. Every morning you look in the mirror, who is the person you see? Is it someone who is bossy or shy, or someone with humility? Not too big, not too small. Just the right size is best of all. Don't try to be someone that you're not, be proud of all you've got. Growing up isn't easy, it is true. Let me take you by the hand. There are things you shouldn't do. And, in time you'll understand. When someone hurts your feelings, and makes you want to cry, don't go and do the same thing to some other girl or guy. Not too big, not too small. Just the right size is best of all. Don't try to be someone that you're not, be proud of all you've got. Not too big, not too small. Just the right size is best of all. Don't try to be someone that you're not, be proud of all you've got." (W1-T9-2004-04-13-00:52:11)

Whereas Russell was "too big" (as discussed in the previous episode), Sam thinks that she is too small and does not value herself. The lesson in humility emphasizes that being "just the right size" is the most important size of all and that you should be "proud of all you've got" without being arrogant. While Sam debates her position, Junior finds himself completing the fort all by himself. Not discouraged by this, Junior realizes that "if you want to do something, sometimes you just have to do it yourself." Junior learns that he can indeed be independent and is able to accomplish things on his own. After a discussion with Great-Grandfather, Junior completes the fort, all the while singing the following song:

"Yoopie Hooray! What a wonderful day. Don't need anyone else to play. I can be here by myself with a book or game or toy. I'm a happy boy! Yoopie Hooray! What a wonderful day. Don't need anyone else to play. Built the fort the way I like. Watch the clouds up in the sky. I'm a lucky guy. Yoopie Hooray! What a wonderful day. Don't need anyone else to play. I can be here by myself with a book or game or toy. I'm a happy boy!" (W1-T9-2004-04-13-00:54:40)

Sam arrives and apologizes for running off. Junior is very accepting — a fact which surprises her. Russell enters the scene and they go off to visit Junior's fort. Russell, being Russell, volunteers to help Junior play in it! They then hear the sound of Great-

Grandfather's drum, which is a signal that it is time to return home and gather round the tipi. Great-Grandfather's drum is the tie-in that opens and closes each episode and, in reality, links all the aspects of the series because the drum represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth (Hawkins 14).

The episode entitled "Last Laugh" features poor Russell, who is ostracized by his cousin Elizabeth for having a loud laugh that she claims "sounds like a donkey." Determined never to laugh again, Russell visits with Great-Grandfather. Great-Grandfather loves Russell's laugh but the young man does not quite believe his great-grandfather. The Elder suggests that Russell visit with Beaver because "Beaver is wise. You know that wisdom is being able to look at all the pieces so you can make the right choice." This linking of all the pieces and making sense of things is reminiscent of the words of wisdom from Willie Ermine, who sees Aboriginal ways of knowing as inclusive and holistic in nature (103-104). This all-inclusive system of knowledge is central not only to the definition of IK but also to the nature of relationships that the children of *Tipi Tales* have with their great-grandparents and their environment. The concept of a link to the environment is similar to an idea emphasized by Henderson, who is quoted as saying that Indigenous Knowledge is located in "ecological sensibilities" (256).

Russell leaves the house on a quest to find Beaver and seek his counsel. When Russell arrives at Beaver's dam, they talk about Russell's laugh. He tells Beaver that he has decided to never laugh again. Beaver makes him laugh so that he can hear his laugh — Beaver thinks that Russell has a great laugh — a boomer — a squeaker is a little one — thumper is a middle one — and then there is the BOOMER — "that's the best one!"

Beaver breaks into the following song to illustrate his point:

“I heard a little laugh in the middle of the house, in the corner by the window was a squeaky little mouse. He looked right at me and he winked his eye, hey are you a porcupine? A big laugh, a little will set you free. Laugh a little, laugh a lot, laugh with everything you got. I went to the barnyard and found a little sheep, I said what’s a matter, can’t you get to sleep? I tried counting sheep when I got into bed, I said try counting people instead. A big laugh, a little will set you free. Laugh a little, laugh a lot, laugh with everything you got. The bigger the critter the lower the laugh, but you won’t hear a sound from a tall giraffe. You might get a chuckle from a lion one day if you say Tiger Woods has come out to play. A big laugh, a little will set you free. Laugh a little, laugh a lot, laugh with everything you got. A big laugh, a little will set you free. Laugh a little, laugh a lot, laugh with everything you got.” (W2-T13-2004-06-19-00:54:40)

The song outlines for Russell that it is fine to laugh and to laugh loud and to laugh often.

Russell laughs so much that his face hurts — but he says that he will only laugh there with Beaver because Elizabeth laughed at him. Beaver says that people laugh at him all the time because of his teeth and his big tail. “Let ‘em laugh, so what!?” Beaver breaks into yet another song which not only is representative of wisdom but also reflects sentiments of humility as outlined in the views of Wolf.

“I’m me, this is how I’m supposed to be. Look at me, I am great and swell. I’m me, this is how I am meant to be with my big buck teeth and my great big tail. I’m me, this is how I want to be, no one else is the same as I am. I’m me, don’t you see, I am the one and only me. I’m me, I’m best, I’m grand. I’m me, I’m best, I’m grand!” (W2-T13-2004-06-19-02:52:00)

Beaver reminds him that he is special, the best, and that he must take pride in himself.

Beaver asks him who likes his laugh — Beaver, Great-Grandfather and himself — only

Elizabeth does not like his laugh! Russell thanks Beaver for his advice and his wisdom.

As he exits, Russell breaks into a song reminiscent of the previous verse.

Russell walks through the woods laughing for the birds and for the trees, all the

while singing his laugh song. He comes across Elizabeth and Junior who are finishing their play. Russell tells them that their play is nice, and Elizabeth admits that it was just not as much fun as when he was there with his laugh. Russell then explains to his cousins that there are differences in laughs. He proceeds to sing the laughing song for them. They decide to redo their play; Russell wants to take on the role of the handsome one, and Junior volunteers to act the part of the Chief's daughter — they are being quite silly. They hear Great-Grandfather's drum and off they go to the tipi — thus ends the episode.

Although the focus of this episode is wisdom, the stress on laughter hearkens back to the importance of the role of humour in Indigenous societies. The stereotype of the stern and stoic “Indian” is prevalent in much of the colonial and Eurocentric literature that defines the Indigenous experience, although a look at the works of many of the Indigenous writers and social critics proves this point to be moot. Anishnaabe writer and humourist Drew Hayden Taylor notes in his article “Heard the one about the missionary?” that “humour always comes at someone else's expense, but native humour takes no prisoners.” Humour is also seen as a fundamental aspect of how stories and knowledge are passed from generation to generation. Humour is said to be “what keeps us alive” (Paul 15) and plays a fundamental role in storytelling, for it provides a venue where people can recognize the “healing laughter of stories” (Moses 111).

Laughter and stories, humour and comic vision are reflective of the “continuity between traditional and modern culture” (Gross 437). Laughter and humour allow for Indigenous People to heal from the effects of colonialism and to deal with current

realities of living in a “bi-cultural world” (Kulchyski xxiii). Humour is as important as song in the *Tipi Tales* series. Every episode features not only humour but also a flurry of songs which open and close each show. This is especially true of the episode titled “The Song.” This episode opens with a song by Great-Grandfather outlining the skill of being resourceful and describing necessity as the mother of invention and perhaps Indigenous wisdom!

“Is it broken, is it bent? When you feel self-confident, you can fix-it, you can fix-it. Mend it, make it right, repair a swing or kite. You can fix-it, you can fix-it. Set your mind to it, all you have to do is do it. Set your mind to it, you can do it if you try. Think about the problem, maybe you’ll find the answer that you need will pop in your mind. Set your mind to it, all you have to do is do it. Set your mind to it, you can do it if you try. Set your mind to it, all you have to do is do it. Set your mind to it, you can do it if you try. Set your mind to it, all you have to do is do it. Set your mind to it, you can do it if you try. You can do it if you try.” (W2-T13-2004-06-19-02:32:05)

By encouraging his great-grandchildren to attempt to do things on their own and by fostering their sense of accomplishment, Great-Grandfather guides his young progeny towards independence and acts as a role model for living the “good way of life” (Kulchyski xv). The children go off on their own and Elizabeth uses her linguistic powers of persuasion — what Junior calls “circle talk” — to convince her cousins to sing her song.

“Nothing is more beautiful than a song of peace. A song of peace. The planets and stars and sun and the moon will twinkle and shine forever. Floating in space like a water balloon, spinning in space forever. Nothing is more beautiful than a song of peace. A song of peace. Children learn and children play, building their dreams forever. Seasons change, children grow, changing and growing forever. Nothing is more beautiful than a song of peace. A song of peace. Nothing is more beautiful than a song of peace. A song of peace.” (W2-T13-2004-06-19-02:34:03)

The other cousins find the song too hard to sing and end up quitting. Elizabeth does not understand why the boys are being so difficult and tries to teach them the difference between “can’t” and giving up! Junior is frustrated by the whole situation and by Elizabeth’s “circle talk.” He goes off in search of Great-Grandfather’s counsel. Junior tells Great-Grandfather that Elizabeth’s talking makes him dizzy, to which Great-Grandfather laughs and says this is just Elizabeth being Elizabeth. He suggests that Junior go and talk to Beaver about how he thinks about Elizabeth. Great-Grandfather has fixed the rope swing when Junior asks him how. Great-Grandfather tells him that he just had to change his way of thinking: get a new rope. This focus on change is reminiscent of the notion that culture does not remain static and that Indigenous cultures have found ways to adapt and adjust their environments and ways of thinking in order to meet their new needs. This theme of adaptability is found in the fact that Elders are “individuals who are not relics of some outdated way of life; they are contemporary people struggling (like many of us) to resist, sometimes ride the waves of change” (Kulchyski xvi).

When Junior makes his way to Beaver’s dam, the spirit guide helps Junior realize that, since Junior can not change Elizabeth, maybe he needs to be the one to do the changing. If Junior loves her and can accept her the way she is, Junior needs a whole different way of thinking: he needs to laugh. Beaver repeats the wisdom of Great-Grandfather and breaks into an encouraging song that was also shared with Russell in the “Laugh” episode:

“I heard a little laugh in the middle of the house, in the corner by the window was a squeaky little mouse. He looked right at me and he winked his eye, hey are you a porcupine? A big laugh, a little will set you free. Laugh a little, laugh a lot, laugh with everything you got. I went to the barnyard and found a little sheep; I said



what's a matter, can't you get to sleep? I tried counting sheep when I got into bed, I said try counting people instead. A big laugh, a little will set you free. Laugh a little, laugh a lot, laugh with everything you got. The bigger the critter the lower the laugh, but you won't hear a sound from a tall giraffe. You might get a chuckle from a lion one day if you say Tiger Woods has come out to play. A big laugh, a little will set you free. Laugh a little, laugh a lot, laugh with everything you got. A big laugh, a little will set you free. Laugh a little, laugh a lot, laugh with everything you got." (W2-T13-2004-06-19-02:38:00)

Junior thanks Beaver and heads towards home. When Junior bumps into Elizabeth and says "hey," she goes off on a bit of a spiel about the word "hay." Junior starts to laugh and says that she is just "so her." Elizabeth goes to see Beaver and tell him about her situation. Elizabeth sings her song and Beaver admits that although it is a beautiful song, it would be hard even for him to sing. Beaver asks her if there is something in the song that she could change and she says no. She then realizes that she is the one who needs to change, to have different thinking. She comes to the conclusion that she does not have to sing and that she could play another type of game. Beaver tells her that she is getting "it" — wisdom. She thanks Grandfather Beaver for his help.

The scene shifts and we find Junior now on the swing, but Russell will not try the swing until he sees if the rope is strong enough not to break. Elizabeth comes by and apologizes for making them sing, and they tell her that they really liked her song. Her cousins ask her to sing the song that caused them all to come to self-realization.

"Nothing is more beautiful than a song of peace. A song of peace. The planets and stars and sun and the moon will twinkle and shine forever. Floating in space like a water balloon, spinning in space forever. Nothing is more beautiful than a song of peace. A song of peace. Children learn and children play, building their dreams forever. Seasons change, children grow, changing and growing forever. Nothing is more beautiful than a song of peace. A song of peace. Nothing is more beautiful than a song of peace. A song of peace." (W2-T13-2004-06-19-02:41:10)

The boys join in for the last refrain and peace has returned to the lives of the cousins.

They hear Great-Grandfather's drum and head back to the Tipi.

The stories and songs within the body of work known as *Tipi Tales* truly demonstrate how Indigenous Knowledge and a very specific Indigenous Knowledge of the Seven Grandfather or Seven Great Laws is disseminated via a television program. Focusing on the themes of Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Humility, Truth, and Wisdom, *Tipi Tales* devotes each episode to the exploration of a specific teaching, along with songs and humour exemplifying the episode's cultural lesson. Although each episode features specific and individual aspects of the Seven Grandfather/Seven Great Laws philosophy, each episode stresses the interconnectivity that exists between all of these morals and the holism of Indigenous Knowledge. The great-grandparents of *Tipi Tales* and the animal spirit guides act as storytellers conveying Indigenous Knowledge. By sharing their wisdom with the children, the storytellers transmit "traditional norms and social values, as well as mental constructs that guide, organize, and regulate the people's way of living and making sense of the world" (Dei *et al.* 6). Stories act as "cornerstones of our culture" (King 95) and cement the relationships that help the individual find their way in the world. *The Tipi Tales* series offers stories that provide children with a foundation in the Seven Grandfather Teachings and gives them televised examples of said life lessons.

While *Tipi Tales* featured a combination of human and animal characters all in puppet form, *Wakanheja* features a real live host named Kimimila (which means “butterfly” in her Lakota language), in addition to the puppets who populate the Tipi in Season 1 and the Park in Season 2. Unlike the segmented nature of *Tipi Tales*, *Wakanheja* is reminiscent of the individualized components that make up television shows such as *Sesame Street* and the Cree-based series *Wawatay Kids TV*. *Wakanheja*’s preschool target audience is provided with an array of educational exercises that draw children into the world of learning and play.

*Wakanheja*, which means “sacred one” in Lakota ([www.filmwest.com](http://www.filmwest.com)), is made up of two full seasons, each with twenty-six fifteen-minute episodes. Each episode (two shows per episode) follows a pattern which contains the following: “[...] a giveaway, the letter of the day, the Aboriginal word of the day, words of the day that start with the letter of the day, singing time, visitor time, story time, counting time and Flying-Thunder-stretching-his-wings time” ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). This repetitive pattern provides the young preschool audience with a sense of security in knowing the order of events in the series. The pattern also covers the basics of cultural and scholastic learning: Aboriginal languages and cultural teachings, alphabets and number counting. Although *Wakanheja* does indeed contain multiple segments, they are quite limited in their content and only lightly touch upon the various issues being presented to the young viewing audience. While for an adult viewer this lack of thoroughness could be viewed as problematic, the

series is appropriate for the attention span of the average four-year old.

Created by Kim Soo Goodtrack, a Lakota visual artist and school teacher, *Wakanheja* is said to be “warm and inviting” and “a magical place to laugh and learn, along with Kimimila the gentle host and her puppet friends, Cubby the Bear, Braidy the Chipmunk, Flying Thunder the Wise Eagle, Bebe Buffalo and Terri the Turtle” ([www.filmquest.com](http://www.filmquest.com)). In addition, the morals and knowledge shared on *Wakanheja* are not dissimilar to the definitions of IK that have been previously outlined in the *Tipi Tales* series. Following a specific narrative pattern, *Wakanheja* promises to encourage “Generosity, Kindness, Traditional Singing, Traditional Dancing, Aspirations, Positive Thinking, Awareness of the Natural World, The Desire to Learn, Gentleness, Humour and Goal Setting” ([www.filmwest.com](http://www.filmwest.com)). These goals mirror those set out in *Tipi Tales* and the Seven Grandfather Teachings that guide this dissertation’s definition of Indigenous Knowledge: wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth as touchstones of IK. *Wakenheja* encourages viewers to learn about the importance of wisdom, kindness, and love and to have respect for and awareness of the natural world — all aspects that point to the universality of the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

While a larger number of episodes of *Wumpa’s World* and *The Longhouse Tales* were analyzed in my research, *Wakanheja* was only featured two days per week, thus limiting my sample size. Along with this twice per week airing, the fact that two of the four episodes were rebroadcast (or were, in the words of other networks, “encore presentations”), also limited the material that I had to work with. This lack of episodes was also the case in my look at *Tipi Tales*, but *Wakanheja* proved quite difficult to

analyze due to the alternative narrative structure of the show. With only a smaller set of episodes to analyze, I needed to approach this show with a slightly more alternative method which, in the end, actually suited the different style featured in the show itself.

One aspect that differentiates *Wakanheja* from the other shows analyzed in this work is that this program differs from the standard narrative structure featured in the other programs. The segmented nature of the program is similar to that of mainstream children's shows, such as *Sesame Street* and *The Friendly Giant*, with the flute-playing rooster named Rusty being replaced by an aspiring rap artist named Bebe the Buffalo. As a child of pop culture who grew up with Mr. Dressup and Mr. Rogers as my favourite TV neighbours, I found myself comparing *Wakanheja* and the host Kimimila to the presenters and shows from my childhood memory. The pattern of the show with human host and puppet companions is simple in theory but complicated in content. While segments such as counting, alphabet, and words games are standard in the show, the storylines also feature Aboriginal role models, Aboriginal language instruction, and a focus on mind, body, and spirit.

The first season of *Wakanheja* takes place within the setting of a tipi. In the second set of *Wakanheja* episodes, the TV friends move from the tipi to the great outdoors where repetitive learning is the focus ([www.filmwest.com](http://www.filmwest.com)). Each episode of *Wakanheja* is regimented and ritualized in the following manner: introduction, giveaway, word of the day, letter of the day, singalong, visitor, story time, counting, words of wisdom and exercise, and finally, a closing. Each segment of each episode is normally centred on the individual characters that represent not only different genders and different

species, but also different Aboriginal cultures. This differentiation allows the show to reach a varied, pan-Indigenous audience and also provides the general preschool audience with a chance to “learn about Native culture” through “storytelling, counting, animation, and music” ([www.filmwest.com](http://www.filmwest.com)). Rather than looking at each episode in the chronological order in which they were broadcast during my research, I have examined the various components of the *Wakanheja* show and outlined the focus of each section, as well as the characters found within these specific segments of the show.

#### *Wakanheja* — Introduction and Giveaway

The opening of each episode features a traditional style “giveaway,” which allows the characters and the viewers to acknowledge each other. The gifts are how “we honour people” (W2-T1-2004-06-13-00:00:16). The host, Kimimila, provides each character with a gift directly linked with the letter of the day. In the episodes from Season 1, Kimimila gives away oven mitts and hints about the letter of the day. In the second episode, Kimimila gives the characters traditional ribbon vests, and the friends reply that they will wear them with “pride” (W2-T1-2004-06-13-00:18:00). The pride and honouring that arises with the giving of gifts is essential to the promotion of these values and can be associated with the Seven Grandfather Teachings where honour and humility are central. The honouring of friends is situated within the first segment of *Wakanheja* and cements the importance of giving thanks to others; their spirits are honoured through such actions.

This honouring links back to the Seven Grandfather Teachings and is continued in other episodes where Kimimila gives away utensils (W2-T13-2004-06-19-00:00:20) and

yellow bracelets (W2-T13-2004-06-19-00:17:45) which Flying Thunder, the wise Elder figure among the friends, connects to the traditional colours of the Medicine Wheel; this results in a linkage that is reiterated in the goals of the show, which focus on the mind, body, and spirit. The Eagle states that “yellow is one of the four sacred colours, along with red, black, and white.” Although not going into details concerning the specific teachings, the hint of Indigenous sacredness implies that greater knowledge is available to be gained. In episode U, Kimimila gives her friends utensils. She gives Braidy and Terry wooden spoons whereas Cubby and Bebe both receive forks and spoons. Flying Thunder tells the story about how he had once been at a feast and was given the utensils — “the best gift to receive is a useful one.” All the friends say, “thank you” as she gives out the gifts. Flying Thunder gives special thanks for the giveaway and says, “Utensils are very special and they will be used with pride” (W2-T13-2004-06-19-00:02:17). In response to all the gifts given, the friends thank Kimimila and are filled with pride because she would honour them in such a way. The honouring of friends that occurs within the opening of *Wakanheja* is vital to the link between the show and the Seven Grandfather Teachings. This connection is indicative of the morality that accompanies the ideals of Indigenous Knowledge.

#### *Wakanheja* — Word of the Day

While the main dialogue of the show is in English, *Wakanheja* features the Aboriginal word of the day, which allows young viewers to gain new language skills — albeit quite minimal ones. Since the program is focused on Salish, Lakota, Ojibway, and

Cree characters, the word-of-the-day segment features a variety of words from the cultural backgrounds of the characters on the show. In the V episode, the Ojibway word for food, *mijim*<sup>5</sup> (W2-T1-2004-06-13- 00:02:02) is provided by Braidy the Chipmunk while Bebe the Buffalo provides the Cree word for visitors, which is *ogiwge wagk*<sup>6</sup> (W2-T1-2004-06-13- 00:18:20). In episode U from Season 1, the word of the day is “uncle,” and Cubby explains that this word in the Salish language<sup>7</sup> is *sečs*. In another episode, Cubby, the Salish Bear, also provides the word *hee’ə*, which means “yes” in his language. By moving from Salish to English, from language to language, from culture to culture, the connection between cultures and languages is made manifest. The multicultural, multilingual cast of *Wakanheja* is representative of the multi-ethnic viewers of the show. By appealing to a broad-based audience, this children’s show lives up to the APTN mantra of “sharing our stories” with all cultures.

In introducing a variety of Aboriginal languages by means of the word-of-the-day segment, the television show is inclusive of the pan-Indigenous audience who might be watching the program. *Wakanheja*’s appeal to a broad span of viewers is also reflected in the cultural backgrounds of the various characters on the show: Braidy is Ojibway, Bebe the Buffalo is Cree, and Cubby the Bear is Salish. The use of Indigenous languages as part of *Wakanheja* demonstrates the belief that language is a central component of Indigenous Knowledge and culture. In the words of esteemed Elder Ernie Benedict, “I

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<sup>5</sup> Anishnaabe spelling provided by Shirley Williams

<sup>6</sup> Cree spelling provided by Charles Meekis

<sup>7</sup> Salish (Saanich dialect) spelling found at ([www.cas.unt.edu](http://www.cas.unt.edu))



think that the biggest component to culture is the language” (128). Language skills are an integral aspect of IK and, in a conversation (February 2006) with Elder Shirley Williams, I was informed that without the language, a complete knowledge of Indigenous ways cannot occur. Williams’ fear was that with the loss of language there is a loss of culture and of IK. The Indigenous languages provide a deeper context that cannot be truly translated into English. The only question that remains is whether or not one word per day is enough of a foundation for the development of language skills. If the child viewing the program is multilingual the recognition of familiar words might be comforting. If the child is without his or her Indigenous language and is exposed to a new Indigenous vocabulary, the use of Indigenous words of the day could also be beneficial. However, with such a limited vocabulary-building segment, true language acquisition is doubtful.

#### *Wakanheja – Letter of the Day*

The letter of the day is usually directly linked to the episode’s giveaway and provides vocabulary building skills to the preschool audience. In the O episode, oven mitts (the give-way), orange, ocean, otter, Oneida, Okanagan, and old comprise the listing of words that start with the letter O. As with all letter-of-the-day segments, children are given time to respond and to think. U is the featured letter in an episode that depicts uncle and utensils as focal words. Bebe brings up the word umpire and tells the story of his playing baseball. Flying Thunder gives “ute” and “uqulit” while Kimimila brings up the word ultimate, as in Ultimate Frisbee. Bebe says that Ultimate Frisbee is a

great game to play (like football but with a Frisbee), and that maybe they should all play sometime (W2-T13-2004-06-19- 00:03:45).

In the V episode, the letter of the day is found in the following words: vest (the giveaway item), vegetable, village, voice, vision, Venus, and finally visitor, foreshadowing the upcoming segment in which the gang welcomes their guest of the day. In the Y episode, yellow is the colour of the bracelets that served as the giveaway gifts. Words such as yes, Yupik, Yakama, and youth are noted. This last word is of particular importance due to the fact that Flying Thunder states that “youth is an important Y word. It is important because the young people are the future leaders and our next generation. We Elders must treat the youth with respect and kindness” (W2-T13-2004-06-19-00:19:40). The quality of “respect” links to the Seven Grandfather Teachings, fundamental elements of Indigenous Knowledge. By using the letter of the day and words of the day to reinforce Indigenous teachings, *Wakanheja* provides traditional teachings in a non-traditional format. The program offers vocabulary and language skills with Indigenous Knowledge thrown in for good measure.

#### *Wakanheja* — Singalong

The words of the day and letter of the day segments are interconnected with the sing-along, which celebrates both program segments. In episode Y for example, Bebe the Buffalo raps the following song with the accompaniment of Cubby the Bear: “I heard some words that start with Y’s. I will tell them to one of you guys. There’s yummy and Yukon and Yellowstone Park. The youth are important, want to make their mark.

Yakama and Yupik are First Nations too. Cubby's got a good back beat, Yahooooo!" (W2-T13-2004-06-19-00:20:30). By repeating the elements of the word of the day and letter of the day, the song reinforces the importance of youth and their roles within society. The song also notes places and people who are of importance to the episode in question and to Native issues in general. Bebe's rap song for the letter U is as follows: "I heard some words that start with U. We'll fly through the Universe, me and you. My Uncle Leo loves to joke. The Ute Nation are unique folk. Cubby the Bear is my backup crew. Come on let's rap, just me and you!" (W2-T13-2004-06-19-00:04:30).

While Bebe the Buffalo usually performs his raps, Braidy the Chipmunk also provides a musical interlude from time to time. In the V episode, Braidy provides the following song for her friends: "V, V, V, V, V is a valuable letter to be. You can vote for a leader or be a good leader. I have a ribbon vest and you are the best. We can fly the universe and see Venus in the sky. But for now I will just say bye-bye." (W2-T1-2004-06-13-00:20:06). This song highlights the universe, which is also central to the song from the U episode. The universe and the natural world are recurring themes in the show and are included in the song from the Letter O episode. Bebe the Buffalo provides the audience with the following tune: "I heard some words that start with O. There's ocean and owl on the go. I visit the Ojibway nation way out east or the Onondaga at the least. There's only one Earth and only one Sky, so take great care of them, just give it a try" (W2-T1-2004-06-13-00:03:47). Taking care of and respecting the elements of the natural world are important principles in the Seven Grandfather Teachings where respect and honour are

essential. Ball and Simpkins note that many of the Elders in their research stressed the importance of respect as “being a fundamental traditional value” (489-490).

The use of song in *Wakanheja* is similar to the importance placed on song as found within *Tipi Tales*. Both series employ song not only to convey meaning and knowledge but also to provide a form of entertainment and humour. While the spirituality found within the songs of *Tipi Tales* and *Wakanheja* might seem trivial at times and nothing more than the musical musings of marionettes and rapping rodents, the reality is that within these songs, the fundamental aspects of Indigenous Knowledge, such as respecting and honouring others and the natural world, are stressed through melodious interludes.

#### *Wakanheja* – Visitors

The arrival of visitors to the tipi (Season 1) and to the park (Season 2) usually marks a transition in the show. From the giveaway to the letter and word of the day, the visitor provides a link to the overall theme that structures each show and acts as a guide to culturally based learning. Indigenous scholar Gregory Cajete points out that education is “about helping an individual find his or her face, which means finding out who you are, where you are from, and your unique character” (182); he also states that the purpose of an Indigenous education is to achieve “completeness” (183). *Wakanheja* educates the young viewers in counting and vocabulary skills as well as by showing the viewers role models to whom they can relate. For example, in episode O, the visitor to the set is Glenn Woods, a traditional carver who fashions totem poles using the “ovoid” design.

This traditional Gitskan art form is, according to Woods, directly linked to the different parts of the creation story (W2-T-1-2004-06-13-00:04:27). This connection to the creation story is reminiscent of Tom King's view that creation stories outline the "relationships that help define the nature of the universe and how cultures understand the world in which they exist" (10). As with each subsequent guest who arrives to visit, the group gives thanks.

In the V episode, the visitor is Sto:Lo hairstylist Magdalena Kelly, a young Aboriginal woman who is a hairstylist specialising in vertical cuts — the V being the letter of the day. Her appearance on the show demonstrates to Aboriginal youth that there are many professions available to them and that they, like Magdalena, should choose something that they enjoy doing. During her visit, all of the friends ask her for hairstyling advice, and Flying Thunder makes the joke that most of his friends and family do not need hairstyling because they are bald — bald eagle, get it? Flying Thunder is a source of Indigenous wisdom and also of stand-up comedy. Speaking of stand-up comedy, the next episode features a young man who also dabbles in the art of humour — a quality which is "what keeps us alive" (Paul 15).

The U episode features Forrest Funmaker who is a First Nations university student. When Forrest Funmaker visits the friends, we witness the true role of the visitors. Each guest is a role model for Indigenous viewers and non-Indigenous viewers. Funmaker appears on the show as an example of the letter of the day — U for university student, who also works at the Tribal College. Flying Thunder asks where Forrest got his degree and Forrest responds that he received his degree from Simon Fraser University.

Terry, the counting turtle, asks how long it took him to get his Master's degree, and Forrest responds that it took him about two years. Terry congratulates him on his Master's degree from university; then Cubby asks what Forrest thinks is the most important thing that he has learned at University, to which Forrest replies that he has learned "that hard work really pays off and being perseverant really make a difference." Bebe pipes up to say that we learn from our grandparents, but asks, "Who else do you learn from?" Forrest answers that he has learned from the internet and from his parents, and has "learned from listening to the stories from different Elders and from different Nations."

Forrest explains that he represents two different Nations: the Hochun from Wisconsin and the Anishnaabe from Manitoba. Braidy is quite impressed because she is Ojibway also, and Forrest says that he should have known from the ribbon dress that she is wearing. Kimimila asks him how it feels to get a Master's degree. He replies that "it feels great. You put all that time in and you get a piece of paper that shows that you have done all the work." She asks him what kind of work he does and he answers that he is an instructor who teaches College learning skills to students who need upgrading. Kimimila asks him what he likes to do for fun. He replies that he goes to powwows, and sings, and writes poetry. He also likes to do comedy and is delighted to tell the following joke: "What kind of bow is the only one you can't tie?" "A rainbow!" They all laugh at this and thank him for visiting with them. As they say goodbye to him, he says he really likes it there, to which Flying Thunder responds by calling him "brother."

Appearing in the episode featuring the letter Y, is Michelle Olson, a dancer from

the Yukon. Although trained in Western forms of dance, Olson, a graduate from the University of Alberta and the University of New Mexico, also performs traditional style dancing. Ms. Olson dances for them with a turtle-puppet named Tanner — the dance is set to big drum music (02:23:30). Dance becomes a “means of instruction” that has “transformative and regenerative effects” (Bradford 203). Ms. Olson’s dance pays homage to traditional creation stories, which are fundamental to the understanding of Indigenous world views. The role models who make their appearances on *Wakanheja* serve as sources of knowledge and inspiration for the young viewing audience. By acting as examples, these individuals promote cultural pride and reinforce a healthy Indigenous identity (Ball and Simpkins 493).

#### *Wakanheja* — Storytime

Very much in the style of the classic children’s show *Romper Room*, storytime is a central part of each episode of *Wakanheja*. The manner in which storytime is conducted is very ritualistic: the pillows are fluffed and they are all “ready to listen.” Together the friends settle in for a story that features one of them in an exciting adventure. In episode O, Cubby the Bear reads the story about Braidy and how she traveled to outer space. Wearing her favourite ribbon dress, Braidy is flown down to Houston, Texas on the back of Flying Thunder and travels to space with her cousin Orson. This is nearly the same story as is repeated in episode U. In this retelling, Flying Thunder does more than transport Braidy; he also joins her in going into space. Flying Thunder uses this opportunity to muse upon travel and Indigenous Knowledge.

“Certainly I will take you there Braidy. To travel is one of life’s ultimate treasures. To travel the universe is an opportunity of a lifetime. Many First Nations People have a great respect for the Universe and the Universe is a very powerful place.” The reiteration of the power and place of the universe in the *Wakanheja* storyline makes its third appearance in this wisdom of Flying Thunder. The universe and the interdependence between all things is a fundamental aspect of a natural law that promotes the establishment of a balanced relationship as central to a healthy physical and spiritual life (Kulchyski xvi).

Although voyages across the universe are featured in two shows of the program (O and U), traveling in general seems to be the recurring theme in the storytime tales. In the V episode, Bebe is set to travel to Vancouver. This story is recounted by Terry, the regular storyteller – with the exception of the hostess Kimimila who is the storyteller for episode Y where she recounts the story of Terry the Turtle and his trip to visit with his cousin Mitchell. In this episode, Kimimila recounts the story of how Terry had to exercise the quality of patience while in the company of his cousin. Terry’s passion is counting, but his cousin Mitchell did not share Terry’s enthusiasm. By the end of their day, they both learn to respect each other through a series of compromises. After a session of participating in Mitchell’s games, the cousin asks Terry to start counting, and they are off to count the yellow buttercups in the field; there are twenty-one, which also happens to be the number of the day!



### *Wakanheja* – Counting

Counting is a favourite pastime of Terry the Turtle, and each episode involves the number of the day and counting. In the O episode, Terry's number of the day is 1 – a number that is also linked to the space adventure experienced by Braidy and the launch of the space shuttle that carries her into outer space. 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1! The countdown occurs and Terry concludes his treatise on the number 1 with the remark that there is “only one Earth.” Terry's foray into counting extends to the V episode where Terry's focus is on the number 5. The number 5 is representative of the five senses that guide people: the senses of touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing.” Some of the counting elements seem a bit mundane, but appearances can be misleading. The counting segment allows the show to delve into the arena of Indigenous Knowledge and cultural production. In the U episode, Terry's counting is focused on the number 13 and how there are thirteen rays to the Haida moon. This focus on specific cultural elements is also echoed in the number of the day for the ensuing episode Y where braids of sweetgrass are counted to equal twenty-one. Most of the elements found in the counting segment are related to specific cultural groups and lessons, for example, the sacred medicine known as sweetgrass. While the counting segments in themselves are simple enough, the teachings that follow in their wake are the core element to the traditional knowledge transmitted through the *Wakanheja* program.

### *Wakanheja* – Words of Wisdom and Exercise

Terry's counting from the number-of-the-day segment flows directly into the

teachings that are shared by Elder-in-Residence, Flying Thunder. The Elder figure is a wise eagle who takes on the role of traditional teacher for the young friends in his care and company. Directly following Terry's counting prowess, Flying Thunder proceeds to offer further musings on the traditional knowledge touched upon by the information from Terry. For example, Flying Thunder expands upon the idea that there is one Earth when he notes the following: "Yes, there is only one earth, and one sky. We should all be respectful of our Earth because we only have one." The theme of respect hearkens back to the Seven Grandfather Teachings and elements of Indigenous Knowledge. This same theme of respect is also reiterated in the Y episode which saw Flying Thunder state that "youth is an important Y word. It is important because the young people are the future leaders and our next generation. We Elders must treat the youth with respect and kindness." This sentiment of Flying Thunder is echoed in the words of Deborah McGregor who notes that knowledge moves in both directions: from Elder to youth and from youth to Elder.

It is not a simple matter of transferring knowledge from elder to youth, although this is an important process as well. I have heard elders say that we learn much from children, that they are closer to the spirit world than we are. They also teach us patience. [...] I believe it is a welcome and exciting prospect that we can learn IK from our children and those yet to be born. There is hope, and that must count for something. It is true that IK comes from our ancestors, but it will also come from our future. (McGregor 405)

The elaboration on IK as part of Flying Thunder's teachings is furthered in his comments concerning the five senses. The eagle notes that "we must value every thing we see, hear, and touch. We have been blessed with a beautiful world and we should honour and respect all of creation. That means everything that we experience with our

five senses.” The theme of respect is thus reiterated within the programming content of this APTN-produced show. The honouring of the body is also present within Flying Thunder’s follow-the-leader stretching and exercise regime, which is reiterated after each set of Words of Wisdom. “What’s good for the body is good for the soul” reminds viewers that it is important to maintain the balance between physicality and spirituality. This “balance” is also reinforced in the words of Lawrence W. Gross who notes that one needs balance both in the outside world and also within the individual (442).

Flying Thunder also provides culturally based teachings in his look at the rays of the Haida Moon and the braids of sweetgrass. In his comments on the Haida Moon rays, the eagle emphasises that each of the thirteen rays of the moon stands for a different time of the year – a natural calendar (W2-T13-2004-06-19-00:11:35). Flying Thunder also comments on twenty-one, the number of strands of sweetgrass in a braid. “Each strand of sweetgrass stands for a lesson that you learn in life. Many First Nations have sweetgrass for ceremonies and others make baskets” (W2-T13-2004-06-19-00:26:40). The eagle becomes the source of IK in the *Wakanheja* series due to his Elder status where his fundamental role is as a mentor “thought of as a highly respected older person who has the knowledge of the ancient spiritual and cultural ways” (Kulchyski xix).

#### *Wakanheja* – Closing and Conclusion

At the end of each episode, Kimimila says goodbye to the viewers. The ritualized closing of *Wakanheja* brings the show full circle with the similarity in style found in the opening when Kimimila states that her name means means butterfly in the Lakota

language. She announces to the audience that they are Wakanheja — Sacred Ones. The hostess' comments echoes the words of Margaret Paul who states the following:

But what I would like to tell the kids is that they do matter. They do count. Your voice is as important as the little ones, up to the old, their voice and what they have in their hearts and what they have in their minds is so important to share with everybody. [...] You know, when the Elders look at a little one, they can already tell how they are going to be like when they growing up, because of the way they are when they are small. Even when we do our ceremonies, when we do Sweetgrass and smudge, they want to learn. [...] To be proud, look at Creation out there. That's what we have to teach our little ones. (35)

Paul's words are reminiscent of APTN's storytelling vignette which stresses that storytellers are often chosen at birth and that the children are the ones who will keep the traditions alive.

While the introduction to certain traditional IK information is related to the viewing audience, the lack of completeness and thoroughness is a drawback. The segmented nature of the program is in direct contrast to the other story-based or narrative programs featured in the Kid's programming section. *Wakanheja* has the same formulaic nature as *Sesame Street* and other mainstream programs. Although this fact in itself is not necessarily a negative, it does make the show choppy in structure, which is perhaps a bonus for the short attention span of the preschool audience. The show does touch upon some important aspects of knowledge transmission, such as Aboriginal language vocabulary found within the word of the day, traditional customs like giveaways, and the words of wisdom espoused by the Elder-in-Residence, Flying Thunder.

With Flying Thunder acting as the onscreen Elder and storytelling as a major theme of the show, *Wakanheja* uses Aboriginal subject matter and traditional activities to demonstrate how Indigenous cultures can come together in an amicable way. By

focusing on the pan-Indigenous audience of the on-screen community and the multicultural audience at home, the show allows for a cross-cultural look at elements of Indigenous Knowledge. From storytelling to song to Indigenous languages, *Wakanheja* provides key elements relating back to the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Respect and wisdom are showcased. Bravery and humility are encouraged. Truth and honesty are encouraged. Love is central to all.

Commercial Break (Fourth in the series)

If we stopped telling the stories and reading the books, we would discover that neglect is as powerful an agent as war and fire. (King, *The Truth About Stories*, 98)

Neglect is indeed a powerful thing. By looking aside, ignoring, and disregarding the power of stories to influence individuals and communities, we fail to understand the true power of the stories we hear and the stories we tell. King also notes that “for once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world. [...] So you have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told” (10). Responsibility for the stories heard and the stories told is also akin to the responsibility that accompanies Indigenous Knowledge. Responsibility and the act of being responsible for and responsible to are central to the definitions of Indigenous Knowledge as provided by many Indigenous scholars (Brascoupe 357, Couture 159, Deloria 292, Henderson 269, Monture-Angus 8, and G. Smith 218). This dissertation is the result of my sense of responsibility and my small contribution to the academic and cultural communities that have enriched my life through the sharing of their stories.

When examining the evolution of Native storytelling in its traditional oral forms and contemporary written forms, both a linear and a circular history are noticeable. The “history” of Native storytelling can be traced from traditional oral narratives to political oratory, from the pioneering poetry of Pauline E. Johnson to the groundbreaking narrative efforts of Maria Campbell, from the dramatic works of Tomson Highway to the storytelling programming theme of Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. The linear history of Native storytelling is outlined in many scholarly works and anthologies. One such example of a thorough look at the evolution of Native writing is *Native Literature in Canada: From the Oral Tradition to the Present* (1990) by scholar Penny Petrone. In this work, Petrone notes that the literary and literal disregard for the body of Native literature is a result of European cultural ignorance, the Western belief that oral literature is the product of primitive people, that “Indians” were a vanishing people, and that a fundamental problem exists in the proper translation of Native literature (1). For Petrone, “the oral literature of Canada’s native people embraces formal narrative, informal storytelling as well as political discourse, song and prayer” (3). The ability of storytelling to take on different means and measures is fundamental to the multi-faceted role that storytelling plays in the historical and contemporary cultural and social lives of Indigenous Peoples.

The progression of storytelling from the oral to the written tradition and back again is one that is continuously evolving, and this theory is also a cornerstone of the

academic work before you. The physical structure of this chapter is based upon a chronological theory that storytelling has shifted from an oral genre (traditional storytelling), to an oral, yet literate type of storytelling (the drama) to a strictly literary mode (the novel), and is now in a stage of a return to a written, yet oral style (film and television). This “circularity” (Blaeser 1993: 57) or the process of thinking and presenting stories in a round-about fashion is inspired by the words of Armstrong,: “And I think that a circle is a circle that has to happen in people, many people. And if we present a picture of that happening, then we have a complete picture in terms of a comment, in terms of a political process, and spiritual growth” (20). So perhaps, rather than it being turtles all the way down, it should be turtles all the way around? Storytelling is a didactic process of social and cultural commentary (Brant-Castellano 31) as well as a means of political and spiritual empowerment. It is a realization, according to Anderson, of how writing (137) and creativity (142) can be perceived as acts of resistance.

In order to assess contemporary forms of Native storytelling, regardless of narrative media, an examination of the legacy of traditional means of oral storymaking must be undertaken. In the world of Native oral tradition, there is an abundance of perspectives upon which to draw. These various points of view can include the works of sociologists, anthropologists, literary theorists, and many so-called experts (or the leading and emerging scholars) from the academic community (not to mention from the Euro-Western traditions of knowledge). While many of these theorists provide valuable insight and often useful points of view, their opinions should clearly be used as secondary



sources to the true “experts” on the topic of Native storytelling. The Native artists weave the magic of stories in a variety of forms including, but not limited to, traditional mediums of storytelling.

Native author Jeannette Armstrong, in a conversation with academic Harmut Lutz, said that “the oral tradition will carry some part of that, pieces of that and various experiences of our people, because we are an oral tradition people, that continues” (15). The cultural importance of the oral tradition to Native People is outlined by other experts in Native literature. In his article “The Imposition of Western Definitions of Literature on Indian Oral Tradition,” George Cornell makes the claim that oral tradition is highlighted by three important aspects. Firstly, oral tradition is said to consist of the “respective histories of diverse Native Peoples” (177). Secondly, oral traditions have “specific cultural content” (177). Thirdly, oral traditions have the ability to “carry with them messages and meanings” (177). Cornell’s views on oral traditions are not dissimilar to those of other Indigenous scholars; however, Cornell also notes that “in most instances, stories, prayers, songs and all other forms of oral communication teach and reinforce personal conduct and a way of life which is critically important to understand” (177). The author continues by adding that “the reason why people do things and make things, the ways in which they relate to other beings, the terms by which they choose to express these concerns are more important than the fact that their aesthetic tradition is oral” (177).

The vibrancy and necessity of the oral tradition is echoed by Marlene Brant-Castellano as follows:

Traditionally, stories were the primary medium used to convey aboriginal knowledge. Stories inform and entertain; they hold up models of behaviour; they sound warnings. Recounted in ceremonial settings and confirmed through many repetitions, they record the history of a people. They teach without being intrusive because the listener can ignore the oblique instructions or apply it to the degree he or she is ready to accept, without offence. Stories of personal experience can be understood either as reminiscences or as metaphors to guide moral choice and self-examination. (31)

Stories are the conveyors of Aboriginal knowledge and are the means through which an individual's experiences can be used as examples. Stories act as metaphors and as "morsels of understanding" from which individuals may draw their own "inferences and start fashioning" their own being and their own world (Johnston 1999: 46).

Employing the metaphorical and didactic power of the story is a fundamental role of the traditional and modern storyteller, who teaches lessons but in addition uses the story to "create a sense of self-hood and community and loyalty powerful enough to fuel survival" (Blaeser 1999: 54). The sentiments of Indigenous storytellers are supported by other views that focus on the oral tradition of storymaking. Stories are seen as a "time-honoured way in which societies (as well as groups within societies) affirm their identity, establish their history, demonstrate the intellectual and emotional integrity of their critical and creative practices, and exhibit their intellectual and emotional lives" (Chamberlin 73). The ability of stories to serve as a resource of cultural identity and survival is echoed in the fact that the storyteller becomes central to cultural transmission, becomes the "translator" of meaning, beliefs and customs (Petrone 7).

For Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, "it's your storytellers, your storytellers. And I don't know what it is about the storytellers, their attention to detail, cultural nuances. Those

things that give life, or give credibility, to what people call universal motif" (82). The "credibility" of the storyteller is also essential to storytelling's "educational process" (Little Bear 81) in the eyes or ears of the reader/spectator/listener. For Chamberlin, a "storyteller becomes believable when his or her language is accepted both as an expression of the tradition within which belief has become customary, and as (in some sense) the witness's own words (or the words of the witness in his or her ritual role), authentic and authoritative" (88). Stories extend beyond subject matter and stereotypes as they become the vehicles that transport and circulate values, perspectives, in essence, the lifeblood of a culture that promotes sharing and reciprocity amongst individuals and groups. This sharing of stories, of histories, of societies, is the fundamental aspect of storytelling that transcends the static notion of culture and traditional storytelling as being limited to both a historical time and an oral tradition.

While traditionally stories were transferred from individual to individual (or to small groups), modern Indigenous storytellers have developed new skills and new languages that have permitted them to move beyond the strict cultural and linguistic confines of traditional oral storytelling to include a larger audience by way of alternative media. That is not to say that the traditional means of oral storytelling will be forgotten or dismissed. Jeannette Armstrong notes the following:

The oral tradition will be there. It is remaining and it is intact. But those oral traditions reach a certain number of people in our community, whereas a written piece like a novel can reach further than that. It is an important documentation, not only I think for our people, because of some of the political insights that were reached and for some of the insights that are wrapped up with philosophical world view and political insights together that come about... (15)

The move from the traditional storytellers to writers and authors is reflective of the linguistic changes and adaptations that have resulted from centuries of colonialism and assimilation policies – a fact which is now coupled with the storyteller’s current ability to reach a greater audience, thus transcending not only linguistic but also cultural and ethnic boundaries.

The universality of language (which for this current examination of APTN’s Kids’ programming is the lingua franca, English) provides an avenue where the Native storyteller can “translate not only language, but form, culture and perspective” (Blaeser 1999: 53). Translation, or what Ridington would call “discourse,” is a “means of defining cultural identity” and a form of “human communication,” which serves in the creation of “point of view” and “cultural accomplishment” (Ridington 275). The ability to create identity and to be “markers of who we are, and where we belong” (Chamberlin 74) empowers storytellers to move beyond being providers of myth and legend, and allows Native storytellers to become agents of change within their own cultural setting, and also in society at large. For Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, storymaking and writing has a decolonizing effect.

By freeing ourselves of the constricting bonds of stereotypes and imposed labels of identity, we empower ourselves and our communities and break free of the yoke of the colonial power that has not only controlled what we do and where we live but who we are. In this way, Indigenous literatures will shape themselves on their own terms. (24)

The power and ability to have great influence over an audience is amplified, due to the storyteller’s capacity to reach larger groups by means of the adaptive use of the written word. The beneficial usage of the written form of the English language in Native

storytelling is that the use of a common language provides the storyteller with the opportunity to make texts available to different generations (Chamberlin 73). According to Julie Cruikshank, “storytelling does not occur in a vacuum. Storytellers need an audience - a response - if telling is to be a worthwhile experience” (103). Modern Native storytellers need to reach their audience who, for the most part, are fluent and literate in the English language. A common language provides a national and international platform (a pan-Indigenous narrative soapbox of sorts) upon which Native storytellers are able to share their stories and their words.

Native storytellers (be they orators, dramatists, novelists, or filmmakers) have a unique adeptness in combining the oral and the written form, for they “attempt to continue the life of the oral reality” (Blaeser 1999: 53). Thanks to the infusion of the oral traditions of storytelling into the written product, Native storytellers are finding a way to “encourage re-speaking the imagined rediscovery of inflection, gesture, rhythm” (Blaeser 1999: 53). This way of incorporating the gestures and the rhythms of oral storytelling is found within the works of many authors who find ways to bring lyrical life to their written works through a “deep and affecting cultural investment in orality” (Blaeser 1999: 57). Native storytellers, it can be said, are attempting to maintain the oral in the written tradition. For storyteller Daniel David Moses, the reality of modern Native storytelling and the role of the Native storyteller are described below:

I’m always getting phone calls from people who want me to come and tell Native legends. I know Native legends but I really have a feeling that it’s not my right to go traipsing around, telling other people’s stories. This image of traditional Native storytelling places Native people in the museum with all other extinct species. We’re living now, in this world, and like everyone else we have to deal with mass media, everything from video to paperback books. Of course, our ways

of expressing ourselves are no longer only oral storytelling. We have seen other media and some of us know them intimately enough to use them to express whatever we need to express. (1997: xx).

Similarly, Basil Johnston states that “a word is elastic. It changes its form, it changes mood, it changes tenses. It even changes its own structure by adding to itself and sometimes subtracting from itself” (47). Words, be they uttered in oral or written form, make up the narratives of Native storytellers. This continuation of the oral tradition of storytelling, regardless of story medium, is exemplified in the evolution of the storytelling tradition, which is in constant flux and shifts to meet the eyes, ears, and hearts of both the Native and the non-Native audience. The flux in storytelling modes is reflective of the decolonizing era also called the Native literary renaissance or the “renewal” (Armstrong 24) which results from Native writers, storytellers, and artists finding their unique voices.

Awkiwenzie-Damm observes that the colonial and Western expectations put upon Native Storytellers are stifling and severely limiting:

In Canada, First Nations writers are often expected to write about certain issues, to share certain values, to use certain symbols and icons, to speak in certain ways. We are expected to know everything about our own culture and histories from land claims to spiritual practices to traditional dress. More than that, we are expected to know all of this for all 52 First Nations in Canada, and, where applicable, in the United States. And when we write, we are often expected to draw on this knowledge in writing poetic tales about shamans and tricksters and mighty chiefs. (15)

The relegation of Native storytelling to a specific storytelling tradition of mythic legends and stereotyped trickster tales is one of the contemporary issues that Native storytellers are faced with. Partly due to Western canonical exclusion from the mainstream literary

traditions and partly due to the curio-aspect of Native traditions that remains in the colonial mindset, Native storytellers are faced with a multitude of current and post-colonial debates including issues of translation, interpretation, appropriation, romanticization, museumification, consumerization, and marginalization (Blaeser 1993: 54).

In countering the marginalization that has occurred to the Indigenous voice in mainstream culture, Indigenous storytellers have come to use the media to their own benefit. The process of acculturation has allowed Aboriginal storytellers to use electronic media such as video, television, and film to promote the use of the oral culture and also to reach a far greater audience than could have been previously established in traditional storytelling sessions. In "Rhetorical Dimensions of Native American Documentary," author Steven Leuthold outlines that "indigenous media grew out of documentary traditions that have their origin within Native American cultures" (56) in the oral tradition. The argument is made that film and video have the "ability to transcend temporal and spatial differences" (64). By crossing geographic lines and time lines, video and film allow the stories to not only reach larger audiences but also survive the test of time.

Although the argument can be made that video and emerging technologies take away from that authenticity of traditional storytelling, the argument can also be made that video and film are actually adding a new dimension to the storytelling process. Rather than replacing one with the other, Native storyteller Tom King states that different media can exist at the same time, complementing each other. King states that "the point I

wanted to make was that the advent of Native written literatures did not, in any way, mark the passing of Native oral literature. In fact, they occupy the same space, the same time. And, if you know where to stand, you can hear the two of them talking to each other” (101-102). For this dissertation, a new approach to story reception had to occur. I had to learn where to look and listen, where to watch and read. This ability to observe the children’s shows on APTN allowed me to see what was being presented on the network and also how the teachings found within the shows had an impact on me as a viewer and as a researcher. I learned that through observation, much like the observation that occurs in the acquisition of Indigenous Knowledge, all the pieces of the puzzle tend to fall into place, much like the end results of this dissertation.



Intended for an audience of three to five year olds, *Wumpa's World* offers a unique look at the Canadian North, which is “the perfect snow- and ice-covered setting for adventures, mutual support, fun and friendship” ([www.wumpasworld.ca](http://www.wumpasworld.ca)). In addition to the television series, *Wumpa's World* offers an interactive website full of activities and information for both children and their parents. While the previous chapters on *Tipi Tales* and *Wakanheja* focused on how the Seven Grandfather Teachings were found within the context of the storylines, this chapter, as well those for *Greenthumb's Garden* and *Longhouse Tales*, marks a shift from looking at the teachings to looking at how the storyteller is engaged in sharing Indigenous Knowledge. This shift in content is also reflected by a shift in style, since this chapter acts as a bridge between IK and storytelling. The chapter is centred on Wumpa as storyteller and his sharing (through stories) of the concepts of Indigenous Knowledge as outlined in the Seven Sacred Teachings: Love, Honour, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, Truth and Wisdom.

Set in the Canadian Arctic, *Wumpa's World* features puppets that not only play together but also live and learn together. The show's puppeted cast is made up of Wumpa the Walrus, who acts as the show's storytelling Elder, Tiguak a sly polar bear, snow bunnies named Tuk and Seeka, and two snowmobiles called Zig and Zag. Their adventures in the frozen North are ironically “warm and welcoming” ([www.wumpasworld.com](http://www.wumpasworld.com)). The show was “based on an original idea by Greg Dummet and Steve Westren, [...] written by Carol Commisson, Cathy Moss, Bernice Vanderlaan,

and Steven Westren, and produced by Luc Martineau and Greg Dummet”

([www.wumpasworld.ca](http://www.wumpasworld.ca)).

One of the characteristics that make *Wumpa's World* such an important text to be analyzed and read is the fact that the storyteller is often present within his own narrative. The show features a storyteller who weaves in and out of the story like a thread linking the past and the present – not unlike my personal narrative found woven into this dissertation. As a character, Wumpa is a central figure in the narrative and serves as both a character in his own stories and as the storyteller telling the tale. This is exemplified in the end song, which is as follows:

“The story there is no more; I could tell it again though you have heard it before. But remember when, and what happened then, my favourite bit, but oh that’s it. Whimsical, Wonderful, Wintery, Wumpaful, Wonderful Wumpa’s World, Wumpa Wonderful. So I’ll say goodbye, adios and adieu. Until my next story just for you. Wonderful Wumpa’s World. Whimsical, Wonderful, Wintery, Wumpaful, Wonderful Wumpa’s World, Wumpa Wonderful” (W1-T1-2004-04-12-00:13:25).

Wumpa as storyteller and narrator is emphasized in this closing song. The lyrics stress the merits and components of storytelling with the idea that stories can be told and retold. The song itself promotes telling/hearing and time/place as found within the simplicity as well as the complexity of the narrative structure. By having a narrator such as the Wonderful Wumpa, the television show promotes the use of story and the role of the storyteller. This narrative motif is echoed in the opening song which serves as an introduction to the characters and setting of the narrative text. The *Wumpa's World* song is as follows:

“In a snow-wonderful place, up on top of the world, where it’s chilly and icy,

frosty and cold, live a pack of pals, the best of friends with adventures and tales that never end. Wumpa's World, Wonderful, Whimsical Wumpafull. There's Zig and Zag, they skid and they race, zooming and vrooming all over the place. Zip off to the igloo see who lives there, hey it's Tiguak the sly polar bear. Scoot over the hill and around the bend, to meet Seeka and Tuk, our snow-haired friends. Slide a bit further and take a quick look, it's me Wumpa the Walrus in my cosy nook! Wumpa's World, Wonderful, Whimsical Wumpafull. Wackily, Wintery, Wonderful, Wumpa's World" (W1-T13-2004-04-15-00:00:57).

The opening song highlights the fact that the adventures and stories of the characters are never ending and highlight snow and action filled northern activities. The characters of the show also serve a narrative function in filling the necessary gender and age roles, resulting in a balance between characters. Zig and Zag, together with Seeka and Tuk, fill the masculine and feminine youth roles, while Tiguak serves as a transitional character between the childlike qualities of the snowmobiles and snow-hares and the Elder, the storytelling statesman named Wumpa.

Characterization and the role of the narrator are vital to the structure of Aboriginal storytelling; they are also important for a complete understanding of the significance of *Wumpa's World* in the context of APTN's Kids' programming, and it is essential to examine the content of the shows in order to facilitate this process of Indigenous Knowledge transmission through storytelling. For the purpose of this dissertation and as a result of a pattern of data collection, a total of seven episodes of *Wumpa's World* were examined. The following fifteen-minute episodes were viewed, transcribed, and analyzed: "Great Eggspectations" (2004-04-12), "Don't Tell Wumpa" (2004-04-13), "Tig's Buns" (2004-04-14), "Hot Rod Zag" (2004-04-15), "Like a Bear to Water" (2004-04-16), "Can't Live Without a Watchemacallit" (2004-06-15), and "Fast Friends" (2004-06-17).

The episodes illustrate how the “sense of community, goodwill and mutual support” ([www.wumpasworld.ca](http://www.wumpasworld.ca)) is present not only in the themes of *Wumpa’s World* but also in the way the stories present a narrative reflective of Tom King’s theory that “stories are wondrous things” (9) or maybe even, in this case, “Wumpaful things!” Although King notes that the magic of Native literature (and all other literature) is not found in the themes of the stories (112), I would argue that themes are reflections and vital components of the interconnected cosmology and epistemology that guides Indigenous ways of knowing. The narrative structure and content of the programming that APTN chooses to broadcast become the manifestation of the goal of “sharing Our stories with all Canadians, all cultures, all generations.”

The sharing of knowledge is prevalent in Indigenous storytelling and is also found in the narrative of *Wumpa’s World* where sharing, friendship, and responsibility are central themes in several episodes. By looking at the “sense of community, goodwill and mutual support” (three themes reflective of Indigenous philosophy as noted by Ermine (10), Henderson (269), and in a personal conversation with Anishnaabe Elder Shirley Williams in February 2006), this chapter on *Wumpa’s World* also examines how the themes of Love, Honour, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, Truth, and Wisdom are found within the narrative of the show.

In discussing my use of the Seven Grandfather Teachings/Seven Sacred Laws, I was reminded by Anishnaabe Elder Edna Manitowabi during a conversation in September 2005 that these teachings are also (and perhaps should be) known as the Seven Grandmother Teachings. Professor Manitowabi pointed out that these seven teaching are

prime examples of the value system that defines Indigenous Knowledge. She also told me that all of these seven teachings are interrelated and inseparable. The interrelated nature of the values that make up my definition of Indigenous Knowledge is symbolic of the interconnectivity which Ermine (103), Deloria (292) and Couture (59) note to be essential to Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Professor Manitowabi also provided me with assistance in differentiating between the similar concepts of honesty and truth.

The difference between honesty and truth is one that puzzled me and needed to be clarified. In trying to recognize the difference between these two similar concepts, I first tried to define the terms using my usually literary source, the dictionary, [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) to be specific! Honesty can be defined as “the quality or condition of being honest; integrity” while truth as “that which is considered to be the supreme reality and to have the ultimate meaning and value of existence.” Honesty is the action whereas truth is the quality. By emphasizing the interrelatedness of the seven teachings, Professor Manitowabi helped me to see that honesty and truth are very similar, but that there is a slight difference. For Manitowabi, honesty is an attribute that you have, while truth is a quality that you live. Truth, she explained, is also in the knowing of the greater values and morals you live by as handed down in the original instructions and as an integral component of Indigenous Knowledge, inseparable from the other six teachings.

Going through my transcriptions of the various episodes of *Wumpa's World*, I quickly discovered that the seven teachings are found in many of the episodes. In addition to this discovery, it also dawned on me that these teachings were all present within the program and were shared via the narrative of the storyteller known as Wumpa.

Since I went into the process of transcribing APTN's programming without a prelisted search agenda (along the lines of a modified grounded theory), I was more than academically surprised to find that the Seven Grandfather Teachings were present in the variety of adventures of Wumpa and friends in the Canadian North.

With my analysis of the value of Love as present in the *Wumpa's World* series, the obvious is made clear when the friendship between various characters is tested. Not only are sibling relationships stressed with the characters of snowmobiles Zig and Zag and snow hares Seeka and Tuk, but a quasi-parental relationship also exists between the elder statesman Wumpa and the northern initiates, including Tiguak. The friendship and caring/love emanating in every one of the episodes is a testament to the value placed on love and friendship, which are the foundations of the television series. In some fashion or another, the theme of friendship and love (including responsibility and respect) are present. I decided to start with the value of love, due to the fact that this quality of Indigenous Knowledge is found in all episodes under the pretext of friendship. I have also decided to start with the ever present value of love because it has also allowed me to provide the reader with a basic synopsis of the complete listing of episodes under consideration in this dissertation.

### Love

**"Great Eggspectations"** (W1-T1-2004-04-12-00:00:00-00:15:00). An Easter egg hunt on the Tundra? This is exactly what occurs in this episode of *Wumpa's World*. The only glitch? Tiguak has forgotten to hide the friends' Easter eggs! Seeka, Tuk, Zig, and Zag

spend the entire day looking for the eggs that Tiguak normally hides every year — this year is an exception to that rule. The friends spend the morning looking in all the usual and the unusual places for the hidden eggs only to discover eventually that Tiguak forgot to hide the eggs. In order to make it up to his friends, Tiguak agrees to hide the eggs for them all the while dressed in a pink bunny suit! The storyline of “GreatEggspectations” ends with Tiguak saying, “The things you have to do for your friends!” (00:10:57).

### **“Don’t Tell Wumpa”**

(W1-T5-2004-13-00:00:00-00:15:00). In this episode, friendship is highlighted when the gang plans a surprise party to celebrate Wumpa’s birthday. Despite their attempts to surprise Wumpa, one by one they reveal certain aspects of the party: Zag reveals that there is a party(00:01:55), Zig shows Wumpa the party hats (00:03:50), Seeka and Tuk end up showing Wumpa the wrapped presents (00:06:35), and Tiguak ends up not only eating four layers of his “fish” cake but also throwing the last layer in the air when Wumpa arrives on the scene (00:07:45). With wisdom and friendship, the Walrus reassures Zag that he will act surprised, tells Zig that he does not know what the other party treats are, and reminds Seeka and Tuk that he does not know what the wrapped presents are; he also mentions to Tiguak that a “surprise cake” would be wonderful. In response to all of Wumpa’s reassurances, the friends respond that Wumpa is the “greatest.” This love and reverence for Wumpa and their happiness in the fact that he is their friend (00:1:15) is celebrated in this episode.

### **“Tig’s Buns”**

(W1-T9-2004-04-14-00:00:00-00:15:00). In this episode, Tig bakes arctic berry buns and places them on his windowsill to cool off for the night. The morning light allows Tiguak to see that his buns have been stolen (00:03:35). In the name of friendship, Seeka and Tuk, and Zig and Zag agree to help Tiguak discover the identity of the bun- stealing monster only to find out that the monster is none other than Tiguak himself who sleepwalks (00:09:20). The next morning, the friends tease Tiguak until he realizes that he has stolen and eaten his own buns! In order to thank his friends, Tiguak bakes two dozen Arctic berry buns (00:11:11). The narrative ends with the friends laughing. Laughter (like love and friendship) is heavily featured in the *Wumpa’s World* series. The importance of laughter and humour is a theme echoing in all of the children’s programming on APTN and in Indigenous ways of knowing and learning.

### **“Hot Rod Zag”**

(W1-T13-2004-04-15-00:00:00-00:15:00). This episode features Zag and his need for speed. The friendship between “Zoomer” Zag and his friends becomes tested when Zag decides that he needs to be faster and louder than everyone else (00:04:30). After alienating all his friends one by one, Zag’s ego gets him into serious trouble when he plows into a snowbank and cannot get himself out. Luckily, his friends Zag, Seeka, Tuk, Tiguak, and Wumpa forgive his trespasses and help pull him out of the snow. Realizing the errors of his ways, Zag (contrary to the saying that “love is never having to say you’re



sorry”), apologizes to his friends, and promises to go back to being “plain ol’ Zag, not too fast and just a little loud” (00:11:50). Wumpa ends the narrative by recapping how Zag made amends by bringing back the broken sled to Seeka and Tuk, by helping Tiguak collect his fish, and by starting the ski-boggan wash for Zag. “His days as Zoomer Zag were over but his days as superfriend have just started” (00:12:35). The love that the friends have for Zag and the love that he has for them are exemplified in their everlasting friendship despite the challenges that often arise.

### **“Like a Bear to Water”**

(W1-T17-2004-04-17-00:00:00-00:15:00). This particular episode of *Wumpa’s World* is perhaps the best example of how love and friendship are guiding principles of the show. This episode features poor Tiguak refraining from telling his friends a most embarrassing fact about himself as a polar bear: he cannot swim. Tiguak is invited to attend the annual Polar Bear Festival and, although he was very excited about attending, the excitement is tempered when the sly polar bear realizes that this year’s festival will be held across the bay on an island. As Tiguak becomes sad and withdrawn, Seeka and Tuk are perplexed as to why. Unbeknownst to the rabbits and the ski-boggans and even Wumpa himself, Tiguak does not like the water and does not like to swim (00:07:00). They decide that Wumpa would be able to help their friend Tiguak get over his fear and dislike of water. Thanks to the love and caring the friends have for him, Tiguak is finally able to realize that “Water is my friend. Water is good. We don’t fear water, we respect it and we love it” (00:09:00).

### **“Can’t Live Without a Whatchemacallit”**

(W2-T2-2004-06-15-00:00:00-00:15:00) Wumpa’s search for an undisclosed item leads him to recount the story of how the discovery of a broken snowshoe led to tension amongst the Northern friends. Tuk saw the object as a “bouncy thing,” Seek as a “chair,” Tiguak as a “headrest,” Zag as a “soccer-net” and Zig as a “snow-smoother.” The sharing of the whatchemacallit becomes problematic, and the friends must turn to Wumpa in order to resolve their dispute. In the end, Wumpa reminds them that they never had this kind of argument until the object in question came along and that he does not want them to continue to fight over it. When the snowshoe ends up being tossed into the water, Wumpa tells them not to try and retrieve the object of their discontent. Without the snowshoe, they can return to the good way it used to be before the whatchemacallit came into their lives, “when they were all best friends” (00:11:00). When Wumpa departs, the scene ends with all the friends playing and laughing together with no struggle, no strife. The friends manage to overcome their selfishness by reminding themselves that friendship and love are better than any object.

### **“Fast Friends”**

(W2-T9-2004-06-17-00:00:00-00:15:00). Having a snowman as a best friend? This question is the primary focus of this episode featuring Zag and his friendship with a snowman named Beaufort. Zag not only creates Beaufort but creates himself a friend, much to the dismay and detriment of his friends Tiguak, Seek and Tuk, and Zig. Zag becomes so focused and obsessed with his new friend that he neglects his other friends. In doing so, Zag’s selfishness alienates him from the group. He and his best friend

Beaufort become outcasts. The gang becomes a bit resentful when Zag chooses his new snow-friend over them. When the Chinook winds arrive and there is a temperature shift, Beaufort suffers, and Zag comes to the realization that his snow-friend should never have come to intrude on his already-established friendships. Zag realizes that he has neglected his other friends in favour of Beaufort and he apologizes. The gang forgives him because friendship and love can withstand the creation and the melting of a snowman friend because “best friends never melt.”

In all of the episodes, one can clearly see how the platonic love or the friendship between characters is evident in the narrative storyline. The theme of love and friendship is prevalent and is the manifestation of the important role love plays in life — especially in the lives of the three- to five-year-olds who are the target audience of *Wumpa's World*. While the value of Love as noted in the Seven Grandmother/Grandfather Teachings is central to the television show, the other values of Honour, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, Truth, and Wisdom are also quite prevalent in *Wumpa's World*. In order to continue the compartmentalized or moral-to-moral approach established with the outlining of the value of love, I have decided to proceed with this type of structural design so as to provide the examples of the appearance and subsequent transmission of the factors I have come to understand as Indigenous Knowledge. The presence of the Seven Grandfather Teachings indicates how Indigenous Knowledge has made its way onto the airwaves of APTN and into the home of the viewers engaged in watching the wonderful adventures of the wacky walrus named Wumpa.

## Honour

The prime example of the Indigenous Knowledge quality of Honour is found in the reverence the snowbound friends have for Wumpa. Honour is exemplified in the way the friends treat each other and in the way in they celebrate each other's qualities and gifts. For instance, in "Don't Tell Wumpa," Wumpa the Walrus is honoured with a surprise party celebrating his birthday. By honouring the person they care for, the friends are honouring the love and friendship they have for each other. Wumpa becomes the "most Wumpaful Wumpa of them all" (00:10:55). The characters also celebrate the accomplishments each has, and this is made clear in the way the friends all rally together to help Tiguak overcome his fear of the water in the episode "Like a Bear to Water." They rejoice in his ability to brave the waters. They honour Tiguak by being there for him and, through their honouring, he is able to accomplish things that at one time would have been beyond his abilities. Honour is found not only in the respect that the friends have for each other but also in the friendship that binds them. The interrelatedness between love/friendship and honour is unmistakable and continues to make its way into the other qualities that make up Indigenous Knowledge as found within *Wumpa's World*. This honouring is reminiscent of the honouring that occurs in the series *Wakanheja* during the giveaway segment where the hostess Kimimila provides her puppeted friends with gifts.

## Bravery

Perhaps the most easily recognizable example of bravery in the *Wumpa's World* series is found in Tiguak's triumph over his fear of water, as expressed in the episode titled "Like

a Bear to Water.” This storyline features Tiguak overcoming his fear of water and, of course, swimming with the help of his friends. Invited to attend the Polar Bear Festival, Tiguak is excited to go until he realizes that the party is being held on an isolated island and that he will have to swim the Arctic waters in order to attend the event. The sly polar bear comically manages to avoid facing his friends and his fears until they discover that he is hiding something. With their help and the guidance of Wumpa, Tiguak braves his fears and braves the “WET WET WET WET COLD COLD COLD COLD and WET” water (00:07:25).

The concept of bravery is also present in the way the friends become brave enough to admit to their inappropriate actions. This is realized in two episodes which feature Zag, the little ski-boggan that could (and does). In the “Hot Rod Zag” and “Fast Friends” episodes, Zag eventually comes to the realization that he has acted inappropriately. He takes the steps to rectify this situation by apologizing and by being brave enough to admit that he was not only wrong but also arrogant and lacking in humility. The interrelationship between the values of Indigenous Knowledge is present in the connections between Love and Honour, and also between Honour and Bravery.

### Honesty

With regard to honesty, Tiguak seems to be the character to illustrate that telling the truth and being brave enough to tell the truth is central to his identity. In “Like a Bear to Water,” Tiguak is not quite honest with his friends. Due to his embarrassment over his fear and dislike of water, the Polar Bear is not completely honest and forthcoming with his friends. Rather than tell the truth, Tiguak spins a web of dishonesty and eventually

must confess to his friends that he is afraid of water. By being honest with his friends, Tiguak eventually comes to accept their assistance. The issue of honesty also comes into play in the slight deceit that occurs when the snowbound friends are planning the surprise birthday party in the “Don’t Tell Wumpa” episode. Interestingly enough, the interrelationship between Love and Honour, Honour and Bravery, Bravery and Honesty is linked to Honesty and Humility.

### Humility

In a comical scene, the sly polar bear Tiguak again accepts with great humility the fact that he did not uphold his responsibility to his friends. In the “Great Eggspectations” episode, Tiguak has to accept the fact that he failed to live up to his responsibility of hiding the Easter eggs for his friends. With great humility, he dons a pink rabbit costume to hide the surprises for Seeka and Tuk, and Zig and Zag. While wearing a pink bunny costume might be a great example of the physical humility that Tiguak experiences, the emotional and psychological aspects of humility are paramount in another character Zag, the snow-boggan. In two very important episodes, Zag’s lack of humility and growing ego are detrimental to his friendships with the rest of the Northern gang.

In “Fast Friends,” Zag abandons his friends in order to associate himself with his new snow-friend, Beaufort the snowman. Zag isolates himself and does not see that his neglect of his other friends in favour of Beaufort is detrimental to his already-established friendships. His ego does not allow him to realize that his actions further distance him from those who love and care for him. Only upon the melting death of Beaufort does Zag come to the realization that his lack of consideration strained his friendships. Zag accepts

the consequences of his actions, and with great humility, apologizes for his self-centeredness.

Interestingly, Zag again is the character who personifies the theme and value of humility in another episode of *Wumpa's World* titled "Hot Rod Zag." In this show, Zag decides that he needs to be louder and faster than everyone else. He becomes so self-obsessed that he fails to recognize the damaging effect that his ego-driven snow-boggan is causing for his friends. Zag breaks Seeka and Tuk's sled, he ruins Zig's sleep, he scares Tiguak, and he destroys Wumpa's sculpture with his antics. Only when he becomes trapped in a snow bank does he realize that he did not act as the best pal to his wintry friends. Despite this fact, the friends help him to humbly admit that he was not very considerate to the friends he loves. Love is connected to Honour, Honour is connected to Bravery, Bravery is connected to Honesty, Honesty is connected to Humility and, in return, Humility is connected to Truth.

### Truth

In following the theory that truth is a way of life or a reality of being, the primary example of a life of truth is found in the character of Wumpa. In leading by example and by acting as the elder statesman, Wumpa serves and functions as wise Elder and trusted friend. Wumpa is the storyteller of the series and his truth telling is emphasized in the role that he plays in recounting the stories of the many adventures of the tundra friends. In all of the episodes, Wumpa's current situation often mirrors one of the past life lessons learned by the friends in the Arctic. The shifting from past to present and the interconnectedness between narratives create a sense of trust in the viewer. Wumpa has

“been there/done that” and thus is a trusted expert on the current dilemma. Wumpa functions as truth teller and storyteller, and he lives his truth through his stories with friends and viewers. In recognizing past truths, Wumpa shares the wisdom of his experiences.

### Wisdom

Although the lack of wisdom of many of the characters would be enough to fill this entire chapter, the focus on the positive wisdom of Wumpa is central to the understanding of his place as wise Elder and storyteller. Wisdom is truly exemplified by the role that Wumpa plays in the past stories he tells. For example, although Wumpa plays a minor role in some of the past narratives, he is the central character in “Don’t Tell Wumpa,” “Can’t Live Without a Whatchemacallit,” and “Like a Bear to Water.” In “Don’t Tell Wumpa,” the walrus is planning to attend a surprise party for Mr. Seal, his stuffed toy. This leads him to recount the tale of how the arctic friends planned a surprise party in his honour but without the surprise. His position among his friends is one of honour and respect. They value his love and friendship, and they celebrate his wisdom. This respect for Wumpa’s wisdom is paramount to the reverence displayed towards him, as exemplified in the episodes titled “Can’t Live Without a Whatchemacallit” and “Like a Bear to Water.”

In “Like a Bear to Water,” Wumpa plays the role of teacher by helping Tiguak overcome his fear of water. Providing him with great advice, with great counsel, and with great hands-on experience, Wumpa the therapist gives Tiguak the confidence to overcome his fear of water. Tiguak’s anxieties are assuaged by the wise Wumpa, who encourages him, in a three-step process, to take to water like a confident polar bear. The



episode ends, like most, with the wisdom to “keep your tusks shiny and your blubber clean!” Words of wisdom to live by and quite reminiscent of Flying Thunder’s mantra in *Wakenheja*, which is “What’s good for the body is good for the soul!”

In “Can’t Live Without a Whatchemacallit,” Wumpa acts as counsellor to his friends when a conflict arises from the appearance of a multi-purpose broken snowshoe. Wumpa is the wise Elder figure who resolves the issues that come to disrupt the lives of the friends on the tundra. In this role, Wumpa is the wise figure of trust and resolves the dispute. He also reminds the gang that their friendship is worth more than an old, broken snowshoe. As peacemaker, Wumpa’s role in the series is one of love and friendship, one of honour and honesty, one of bravery and truth. He is the source of wisdom and Indigenous knowledge, and he shares his knowledge with not only his on-air friends but also the friends in the at-home audience.

By sharing the stories of their northern adventures, Wumpa shares values and knowledge with viewers, with all Canadians, with all cultures, and all generations. In doing so, the storytelling walrus provides a look at the teachings and the values that make up his northern, snowbound world. Wumpa’s stories promote the power of stories to provide “the way meaning is refracted by cosmology, the way understanding is shaped by cultural paradigms” (King 112). As is represented in the storytelling theme of the show, Wumpa is the Elder in his Northern community. As an Elder, he is charged with being the “historian” (Kulchyski xvii) of events past and guardian of the knowledge that will be shared with the generations to come. Wumpa the Elder acts as a role model for identity formation (Nitsch 78) who will guide his young arctic friends and the viewers at home. Wumpa’s role as storyteller allows him to be the means through which the power of

stories effects change in the lives of the viewers. In the words of Moses, storytelling has three primary functions:

The first purpose, to entertain, is clear even within the context of the larger Canadian culture. The laughter of agreement that the Trickster provokes in entertaining us helps us to recognize the familiar, the funny/ha-ha. The second purpose of storytelling, to educate, is not quite clear in the context I know, is a bit fuzzier, just because my mainstream peers - have they too been at the mercy of churches and schools? - fear being seen as preaching or teaching because it too often means bad writing. The laughter that the Trickster provokes in teaching us helps us recognize the funny/strange. The third purpose of storytelling, to heal, is not clear to me at all at first. Writers are not doctors, witch doctors even, are they? (110)

Wumpa exemplifies the ultimate storyteller for he serves as entertainer, educator and healer in his snowbound community. He represents both honour and fun to his at-home viewers. Wumpa provides guidance and knowledge to his arctic friends and, in the end, acts as healer with stories reflecting Indigenous Knowledge.

The task of cultivating an in-depth look at Indigenous Knowledge, as found within the program *Greenthumb's Garden*, is quite challenging since the premise of the show seems to be as far away from sacred teachings as can be found in any commercial television program. The APTN website provides the following production information summary for *Greenthumb's Garden*:

A puppet series created for kids aged 3 to 7 that's got broad, cross-over appeal as younger kids will enjoy the funny, engaging puppet characters and colourful visuals, while older kids will appreciate its offbeat humour, well-paced stories, visual gags and computer smarts. Grown-ups and other would-be green thumbs will also be entertained as they learn helpful tips about how to keep those rascally rodents out of their carrot patches, or how to grow the mother of all tomatoes! ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca))

Depicted as a fun series with crossover appeal, *Greenthumb's Garden* is more than just the telling of tales taking place in the backyard of a horticulturalist. The description of the show omits the fact that it is centred on the relationships between people and their animal companions, and features storytelling and the sharing of songs as a means of transferring Indigenous Knowledge. The show also accentuates the connections of all things with Mother Earth. The traditional teaching of respect for the natural world is emphasized by the producers of the show. This environmental theme is prevalent in the mission statement of the show and also within the various episodes of the *Greenthumb's Garden* series.

Greenthumb the gardener, his niece Lucy, and their garden-dwelling friends will teach kids that real power and freedom start with the respect for all living things. *The Wondrous World of Greenthumb's Garden* is all about caring for the natural world, learning what to do to preserve it and taking action to make sure it's all there for others to enjoy, forever and ever.

(<http://www.cinemaria.com/greenthumb.html>)

The show is focused on a garden cultivated by Greenthumb, who is both a gardener and a seller of his produce. Within the garden, Mr. Greenthumb and his niece Lucy have a growing friendship with the animals inhabiting the backyard space. Glory the Squirrel, Plucky the Rooster, and Snazz the Singing Snail are all mainstay characters of the garden. This garden gang is normally “supervised” by Katchwa the wise Crow, who plays the role of storyteller and Elder. Katchwa is adorned with colourful beads and a headdress. One needs to question whether or not the creators of the program thought that relying on outdated stereotypes were necessary for children to associate Katchwa with ancient teachings and wisdom – in other words, Indigenous Knowledge. Costume aside, the Elder role as played by Katchwa is a recurring feature in many of the programs found on APTN, such as the great-grandparents in *Tipi Tales*, Wumpa in *Wumpa’s World*, Flying Eagle in *Wakanheja*, and Bella the Turtle in *The Longhouse Tales*.

In addition to characterization, *Greenthumb’s Garden* is also like the other APTN shows where the puppets are the central characters and the storylines revolve around their adventures. The *Greenthumb’s Garden* series is produced in association with APTN, TVO and Cinemara. In total, thirteen episodes with two stories each have been created since 2004 and, due to the frequent rebroadcasting on APTN, only a total of two episodes (each episode contains two shows) were analyzed in this dissertation. Jean-Guy White, the head puppet wrangler for *Greenthumb’s Garden*, is also associated with another APTN program, *Wumpa’s World* (<http://www.atelierdesgriffons.com>). The website for *Greenthumb’s Garden* allows for an interactive experience with games and information

that are reflective of the stories told within the actual context of the show. How *Greenthumb's Garden* differs from the other puppet-based shows on APTN (with the exception of *Tipi Tales*) is that song is a featured and central aspect of the series. Although a brief musical interlude is present in *Wakanheja*, song is a mainstay in *Greenthumb's Garden*. Each fifteen-minute segment features a song that not only highlights the goings-on of that particular episode but also showcases the voice of Snazz the Singing Snail. Her love of song is also reflected on the official website ([www.greenthumbvirtualgarden.com](http://www.greenthumbvirtualgarden.com)) where all the lyrics of the songs are available for download. In addition, the website offers other games and activities and is reminiscent of the website available for *Wumpa's World* ([www.wumpasworld.com](http://www.wumpasworld.com)).

In trying to find a new approach to look at the examples of IK within the storylines of the various *Greenthumb's Garden* episodes, I found that this chapter focuses on the character of Katchwa and how she acts as the classic storyteller as well as the Elder-in-Residence for the garden of a certain Mr. Greenthumb. This shift from strictly looking for specific examples of the Seven Grandfather Teachings (as found in the previous chapter with the end focus on Wumpa as storyteller) is due to the fact that without strong storytellers, the knowledge found within the stories would not be made available to either the characters on the show or to the members of the at-home viewing audience. This repositioning of my dissertation's focus is also the result of the late realization that without the storytellers, the stories would not be told. The shift is also reflective of the true nature of stories and the true nature of culture in the sense that they are “vibrant” and “changing” (King 37) – much like doctoral dissertations!

Katchwa is the central storyteller in *Greenthumb's Garden* and her essence is

embodied in the physical manifestation of a crow. She plays the role of purveyor and transmitter of Indigenous Knowledge. The reason why I have noted the crow moniker is that, as in *The Longhouse Tales* where Caw is clearly identified as a Raven (her alter ego is named Nevar, which is Raven spelled backwards), Katchwa's identity is clearly outlined as a crow. In searching for information on the term/word "Katchwa," my quest resulted in a few Google hits referencing the Ketchewa tribe from the Andes Mountain range in Ecuador, the Katchwa tribe in Peru, and even the Katchwa tribe of the Serengeti.

Name origin aside, the character of Katchwa in *Greenthumb's Garden* does indeed represent both the source of traditional knowledge and the embodiment of the storyteller. Throughout many of the episodes, Katchwa provides minute words of wisdom in her brief moments of advice; however, she also acts as a classic traditional storyteller in her rendition of the legend of Woksis, his wife and their "discovery" of Maple Syrup. Playing the role of wise ol' Elder, Katchwa provides the link between Indigenous teachings and the natural world. Her words of wisdom also explain the activities occurring in Greenthumb's Garden. Although Greenthumb himself answers questions concerning nature and the growing of plants, he plays a supporting role to Katchwa and her wisdom of the natural world. For Henderson, Aboriginal world views are highlighted by the fact that people "understand the ecosystem as an eternal system tolerant of flux and refined by endless renewals and realignments" and that they "understand that each ecosystem encapsulates and enfolds many forms or parts, none of which can enfold or encapsulate the whole" (260). There is an "interdependency of life

forces” that indicates that “all life on earth is living and interrelated” (260), a reality that Henderson dubs the “laws of circular interaction” (260).

In the episode “Shadows in the Garden” (Story A), Plucky the Rooster cannot sleep because he is afraid that, if he falls asleep, he might not wake up in time to cry cock-a-doodle-doo. During the conversation about yawning, Katchwa arrives and reminds Plucky that not wanting to yawn is like “not wanting to blink or sneeze. You can try as hard as you like, but sooner or later nature will win!” (W1-T5-2004-04-13-00:30:58). She continues to illustrate her point by stating that “every living thing needs to sleep. Even the garden sleeps. It is all part of nature’s plan to keep us healthy” (00:32:25). This traditional view of nature as the be-all and end-all in Indigenous philosophy is echoed in Henderson’s theory of “ecological sensibilities” (256).

Katchwa’s reiteration of the ideas from the natural world is essential to her character and the role she plays in the series. Her support of Plucky is reflected in the song sung by Snazz the Singing Snail (W1-T5-2004-04-13 00:37:10).

Don’t you know that when you worry  
It’s impossible to relax  
Your mind is too full of the  
What if I do this?  
And what if I do that?

And when you think you’re gonna fail  
You might  
Because you won’t get the sleep you need  
At night

You see, when you worry  
You can’t think straight  
You think you’re going to fail  
But, please my friend...  
Wait!

Be positive. Be confident. You must!  
If we trust in you  
Then it's YOU you have to trust!  
Yes, that's true!

And then all your worries  
Will drift away  
That's a promise you can keep  
They'll drift away  
And away they'll stay  
While you sleep...sleep...sleep.

In stressing to Plucky that he must have confidence in himself, Snazz's song is also reminiscent of the songs sung by Beaver and Wolf in *Tipi Tales*. Plucky needs to live up to his name and become a "plucky" sort of individual who has the courage to believe in himself and have the humility to overcome his fears. The fundamental elements of Humility and Truth are central examples of how the Seven Grandfather Teaching are present in the *Greenthumb's Garden* series. By the end of the episode, Plucky realizes that he would indeed wake up in time for sunrise. Katchwa supports him and teaches him to trust in himself to do what nature has prepared him to do.

Story B of this episode starts with Glory the Squirrel discovering that her nutball treat has been eaten by a thief who is also responsible for the theft of Greenthumb's tulip bulbs. As a result, Plucky worries that the thief will get to his stash of corn. They bring their concerns to Greenthumb and Katchwa. The storytelling crow points to the tracks on the ground and Greenthumb agrees that the thief is Rory the Night Creature. The gang decides to stay up all night in order to confront Rory and find out all about the other creatures who live in garden at night. As the friends struggle to stay up all night in the dark, they are amazed to hear the following song, which is not sung by their usual



songstress Snazz, but by one of the Night Creatures, Eliza the Moth (W1-T5-2004-04-13-00:49:13) .

Don't be afraid  
We're all friends here  
Don't be afraid  
You've nothing to fear

While we're in bed  
You're up  
That's when you run and play  
'Cause your world's topsy-turvy  
And nighttime is your day.

Don't be afraid!

The Day Creatures quickly discover that they have a lot in common with the Night Creatures. The singing moth parallels the singing snail and reminds the Day Creatures that they have friends among the Night Creatures. They are mirror images of each other and share the garden but at separate times. Despite this song of reassurance, the night sounds prompt Plucky to exclaim that there are more Night Creatures. Out comes a bullfrog named Seymour who scares Plucky. Seymour has a bit of an attitude about the Day Creatures being there at night. Glory tells him that he should be living in the pond and he tells Glory that she should be living in her tree!

Up pops Rory Raccoon who says: "This is our Garden!" His arrival scares Plucky and Glory. The daytime dynamic duo of Glory and Plucky accuses Seymour of eating the bulbs and the nutball. Seymour explains that he prefers flies, mosquitoes and slugs, to which Glory and Plucky respond with an outrageous "yuck!" Liza Moth only eats flower nectar, but when she was a baby, she ate plant leaves and wool, a statement that

prompts a “yuck!” from Seymour. Rory the raccoon admits that he is the one who ate the nutball because it was left out in the garden at night and so he assumed it was a gift! “This is our garden too!” says Glory. “You shouldn’t leave them out at night in our garden!” replies Rory. Seeing the perfect opportunity for a song, Snazz provides the gang with the following rap (W1-T5-2004-04-13-00:51:30).

Oh this garden at night  
Is a wonderful sight  
Yes, it is! Yes, it is! Uh-huh!  
Oh, Yeah!

Everything’s movin’  
Everything’s groovin’  
Groovin’ and movin’  
In the air and on the ground  
Chirping, squeaking,  
Running all around!  
Hustling and bustling  
And even some rustling  
Crawling and scurrying  
Everybody is hurrying!  
Everybody is hurrying!

And do you know why?  
Yes, I do! Yes, I do!  
Yes, I really, really do!

’Cause they gotta get their work done  
See? They’re not just having fun  
They gotta eat, too  
Everyone! Everyone!  
They gotta eat, too  
Before they see the sun

’Cause when the sun comes up  
That means the night is gone  
And it’s time for the night folks  
To have a great big yawn!  
Have a great big ... YAWN! YAWN! YAWN!

With this song, the themes of respect and sharing are highlighted. Plucky finally figures out that the Night Creatures just live the opposite life: Plucky's crowing in the morning is a "lullaby" for the Night Creatures. They all come to the realization that they share the garden but have opposing schedules. Seymour exclaims, "It's a beautiful thing!" The Day and Night Creatures both thought that they were alone in the garden. Rory offers to give Glory the secret recipe for making the "yummiest nutball in the world," and promises to only eat half. They agree to share the nutball, and then all is good in the garden. The sun comes up and the Night Creatures say goodnight. Seymour is off to get a "cup of flies before beddy-bye." They say goodbye to their counterparts and they promise to get together again soon (00:54:11).

This Night and Day episode demonstrates that dichotomy is indeed alive and well. Although some people are as different as night and day, many similarities and parallelisms exist between the two sets of garden dwellers. When morning finally arrives and the gang recounts their adventures to Greenthumb and Katchwa, they are surprised to discover that Katchwa is already familiar with the Night Creatures. According to Greenthumb, "Katchwa knows everyone and everything that goes on in the garden." Katchwa herself adds: "There is always something going on in the garden, even in the middle of the night. Nature never sleeps" (W1-T5-2004-04-13-00:55:04).

Katchwa's knowledge of everything that occurs in the garden is reiterated in the only other set of episodes available during the research period of this doctoral examination of the series. Due to the small number of episodes, many of the stories were repeated. For example, during the initial research process, a total of four days of broadcast taping produced only two episodes, which were repeated. In the total number

of days under consideration, *Greenthumb's Garden* was only aired on four separate days and, of these four days, two of the episodes were repeated. "Shadows in the Garden" and "Sticky Situation" were each broadcast during the four days of airing. Call this fate or call it the luck of the draw, but the limited number of episodes aired makes the analysis of storytelling quite challenging. Luckily, the "Sticky Situation" episode features a wonderful example of how storytelling is used to convey Indigenous Knowledge.

In the episode titled "Sticky Situation," the garden gang is planning a surprise birthday party for Lucy. Glory and Plucky start practising their party games. During the course of the game, Plucky is blindfolded and ends up bumping, "beak-first", into a maple tree. When he finally dislodges himself, he fears that he has made the tree cry because "tears" are coming out of the puncture wound made by his beak. In an attempt to keep the tree's injury under wraps, the dastardly duo tries to plug the hole with a twig. With the band-aid solution failing, they resort to collecting the drops in a bucket in order to dispose of them later. At this point, in comes Katchwa with a Native legend to tell. The storyteller tries to set Plucky and Glory straight by telling them that the water drops flowing from the maple tree are not tears but *sinzibuckwud*, which means "sweet water" (W2-T2-2004-06-15-00:33:55).

Katchwa begins to tell Plucky and Glory the story about Woksis and his wife.<sup>8</sup> She begins as most storytellers begin ... "One fine spring day, a warm sunny day just like this one..." Katchwa tells the story about how Woksis's wife used the tree water for

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<sup>8</sup> This story of Wokis and his wife is found in a few texts on Algonquin legends but is also reminiscent of the Maple story (55- 58) found within Basil Johnston's *MINO-AUDIAUDUAH MIZZU-KUMMIK-QUAE: Honouring Mother Earth*.

cooking water. Glory becomes impatient and decides that she is too busy to stick around and listen to a story. Despite the fact that Plucky wants to hear the ending of Katchwa's story, Glory drags him off to help her figure out what to do. As Glory and Plucky find no solution to their problem, they return to the Crying Tree where the ever-patient Katchwa is prepared to finish telling the story of Woksis and his wife. Glory, being much more action oriented, would rather search for a physical solution, whereas Plucky insists that they listen to the rest of Katchwa's story.

The storytelling crow proceeds and finally completes recounting the legend of how Woksis' wife "discovered" maple syrup. Katchwa tells how Woksis' wife put the water on the fire, and it boiled and boiled from water to sap and finally to maple syrup. Glory realizes that they have tapped a maple tree. As Greenthumb is happy and surprised, they decide to have a sugaring-off party where the gardener describes the process of making maple syrup. Glory, still not quite "getting" the story, tells Katchwa that they would have discovered it sooner if Katchwa had not made them sit through that long story (W2-T2-2004-06-15-00:38:45). The storyteller Katchwa ends the episode with the gift of song for Lucy in honour of her birthday.

What's gooey and sweet  
And lots of fun to eat?  
Mmmm! maple syrup.  
That's yummy!

What drips from a tree  
Sweet as honey from a bee?  
Mmmm! maple syrup  
That's yummy!

You can pour it on pancakes  
Spread it on toast  
Sweeten up milkshakes

I love that the most  
So sweet!

Mmmm! maple syrup  
That's yummy!  
Mmmm! it's sweet and good for your tummy  
Mmmm! maple syrup  
That's yummy!  
So sweet!

While her lyrical example pays homage to the gastronomical sweetness of maple sugar and syrup, the ability of Katchwa to tell and share stories is her forte.

Unfortunately, Katchwa's wisdom and her habiliment are problematic in their universality. Katchwa is a crow dressed as a New Age guru-shaman. Around her neck is a bone-collar choker and breastplate, while her head is adorned with a brightly coloured feathered headdress. Her wings resemble a shawl and her plumage is as black as black can be. The character of Katchwa is the only "obvious" Aboriginal character in the garden community. Although one could argue that Greenthumb and his niece have the skin tone and the facial features that are normally (or stereotypically) associated with the Indigenous persona, Katchwa is the ultimate example of the Indigenous shamanic stereotypes. Although problematic, the character of Katchwa is the central Earth Mother figure in *Greenthumb's Garden*. She provides the natural wisdom that gives guidance and direction to the animal friends who live in the garden. She knows all and tells all about environmentalism. Katchwa says, "Every living thing needs to sleep. Even the garden sleeps. It is all part of nature's plan to keep us healthy" (W1-T5-2004-04-13-00:32:25). Her musings are not unlike those of Flying Thunder (body and soul) and Wumpa (tusks and blubber).

In the second part of the “Sticky Situation” episode, Katchwa plays the role of concerned Elder when Glory seems upset with her inability to count. The episode begins with Greenthumb and friends packing up plants for the two-hundred-year celebration of the town’s Willow House. Glory claims that her house in the garden is actually older. Her family has always lived there all the way back to the time of her grandmother’s grandmother. Plucky asks whether or not they were once children, and Katchwa explains that all children become grandparents if they stick around long enough! Katchwa tells Glory to look inside the tree to find out her family history. Glory remembers her grandmother telling her stories about playing hide-and-seek in the tree and that the tree is at least two hundred years old. But how can they prove the tree to be two hundred years old? (W2-T9-2004-06-17 -00:47:27)

Greenthumb returns from his delivery and hears Glory’s story about her house being older than Willow House. Greenthumb comes up with the perfect way to figure out how old the tree is – count the tree rings! Glory claims that her tree is not wearing any rings, thinking that the rings mean jewellery. The squirrel then states that she cannot count the rings because it is too “dark.” Plucky wants to cut the tree down in order to count the rings, but that idea would leave Glory homeless. Lucy brings back an increment borer that will allow them to take out a sample of the tree in order to count the rings (W2-T9-2004-06-17 -00:50:45). While Greenthumb drills the hole, they sing the following song:

Every year a tree grows  
It grows a brand new ring  
To measure just how old a tree is  
That’s how it does its thing

If the weather gets quite rainy  
Or so hot the leaves get fried  
Then the tree will grow much slower and  
Its rings won't grow as wide

These are stories  
Inside every tree  
Wondrous stories, you'll agree  
If you know just where to look  
In Nature's leafy, living book

These rings tell tales of hurricanes  
And winds and storms and floods  
And the good things too  
Like sunny days  
When trees would burst with buds

And that's how a tree can tell you  
All the stories that it knows  
For it keeps its stories in its rings  
As it grows... and grows!  
And grows!

This song echoes the idea that stories have various sources including trees. The emphasis on the natural world as an organic and ever-changing reality is echoed in the words of Pam Colorado who sees nature as being dynamic and working in cycles (5). This reality of trees being able to tell stories is reminiscent of a recent conversation that I had with my colleague Charles Meekis, a Cree from the Northern community of Sandy Lake. One academically frustrating day, due to the lack of progress with this dissertation and the myriad of complexities known as storytelling, I jokingly posed the following rewritten classic question to Charles. "If a tree falls in the forest and there is no one there to hear it, does anyone hear its story?" While I was waiting for a response (which I assumed would be filled with the usual semantic answers to such a question), Charles answered with something along the lines of the following paraphrase: "Of course,



because there are always other trees around to hear it. Other animals will witness the fall. And blades of grass and other plants will be crushed by its descent.” His alternative way of thinking made me realize just how stuck I had been in Western literary approach and how I needed to return to an alter-Native way of looking at the stories of APTN! While this small detour in my *Greenthumb's Garden* analysis might seem out of place, this conversation with Charles brought me back from the dead end that one often experiences in the long journey of dissertation writing.

Back in *Greenthumb's Garden*, Greenthumb finishes taking the sample from Glory's tree and they all begin to count. Plucky comments that the sample looks like a toothpick for a giant. Glory admits that the reason why she could not count the rings inside her tree is that she cannot count higher than twelve! Katchwa plays the role of concerned Elder when Glory seems upset. Greenthumb tells her that there is nothing to be ashamed of and that she has other wonderful skills, such as being very clever. They all count together. They reach all the way to one hundred and ninety-nine! Glory's home is one hundred and ninety-nine years old but not quite two hundred. Glory is rather upset but is cheered up when she is told that her tree is the oldest home in the garden! While the gang was busy counting tree rings, Katchwa has been busy decorating the oldest tree in the garden with flowers and other ornamentation. It has been a very special day and Glory has learned how to count to thirteen. Glory thanks her grandmother, and her great grandmother, and her great-great grandmother. Katchwa reminds them and the viewers/audience that “when we speak of our ancestors, we honour them” (W2-T2-2004-06-15- 00:50:45).

This last call to the moral of Honouring is fundamental to the Seven Grandfather

Teachings and reiterates Katchwa's position as Elder, storyteller, and transmitter of Indigenous Knowledge. The manner in which she conveys her wisdom is reminiscent of that of Great-Grandfather in *Tipi Tales*, Flying Thunder in *Wakanheja*, and Wumpa in *Wumpa's World*. All of these Elder characters play supporting roles to the younger generation, be they children or adventurous rapping buffaloes or curious squirrels. The Elders provide lessons to the younger generation and share their wisdom through the art of storytelling. The Elders do this by being patient, kind and, in the words of the creators of *Tipi Tales*, "they have gentle humour and great wisdom but never preach" ([www.tipitales.com](http://www.tipitales.com)) or, in the words of Indigenous scholar Joe Couture, Elders act as "the oral historians, guardians of the Secrets, as interpreters of the Life of the People, as unusual teachers and way-showers to the People" (42).

You'll never believe what happened; this study of *The Longhouse Tales* is the last of the TV shows being analyzed for the purpose of this dissertation. This last TV show also proved to be the most difficult of all assessments to write, due to the wealth of information found within the television series. Unlike many of the other shows found within this dissertation, *Longhouse Tales* proved to be unique in the fact that none of the shows were rebroadcast. In total, six full-length (thirty-minute) episodes were shown on the network during my research window. These episodes include: "Ginger and the Wind" (W1-T17-2004-04-16-02:00:00-02:30:00), "Bear Necessity" (W2-T2-2004-06-15-02:00:00-02:30:00), "The Big Scare" (W1-T1-2004-04-12-02:00:00-02:30:00), "Name Day" (W2-T9-2004-06-17-02:00:00-02:30:00), "The Deeps Within" (W1-T13-2004-04-15-02:00:00-02:30:00), and "Splitting Feathers" (W1-T9-2004-04-15-02:00:00-02:30:00).

Originally produced in association with APTN and TVOntario, *The Longhouse Tales* is a twenty-six-episode series that "features a unique combination of sophisticated puppetry, live action, and computer-generated images, and draws upon world-renowned puppeteers, animators, and writers" ([www.tvontario.org](http://www.tvontario.org)). The TVO media release for the show further quotes the star of the show, Tom Jackson, as saying: "The world we create is apolitical, a-religious and de-racial, and that's the intrinsic value for children" ([www.tvontario.org](http://www.tvontario.org)). He continues by stating that "the show is primarily about empowerment, as told through the characters' struggles to make sense of their world and the problems inherent in it" ([www.tvontario.org](http://www.tvontario.org)). These words echo King's view that

contained within stories “are relationships that help to define the nature of the universe and how cultures understand the world in which they exist” (10).

In recognizing the intrinsic value found within the program and due to the importance of the show concerning the theme of storytelling, I consider *The Longhouse Tales* to be an illustration of the value of stories and how they provide a greater understanding of the Seven Grandfather Teachings. The show also promotes the way in which these concepts are fundamental to an understanding of Indigenous Knowledge. The television show claims to be “a mystical fantasy series based on traditional Native characters and mythology” and asserts that each individual episode contains “a bit of conjuring, a dab of humour, and stories based on traditional First Nations’ trickster tales” ([www.tvontario.org](http://www.tvontario.org)).

Each episode of *The Longhouse Tales* opens with the following narrative, which addresses the arrival of two individuals in the land of The Wheel and The Trading Post.

“I remember that night of the shooting stars when that coyote Dwight came into our lives and all sorts of wonderful things began to happen. Stories beyond belief. But there was no one to tell them. And that’s when the mysterious storyteller Hector Longhouse arrived. He too came on a night of shooting stars and began to tell our stories for all the world to hear.” (W1-T1-2004-04-12-02:00:-02:30:00)

Set in the same location (but separated by time), two interrelated stories are told at once. The current setting features the Trading Post, which was built on the spot where The Wheel stands (within the context of the past story being told). Interestingly enough, the separation of time and place is fluid, and the dichotomy that divides the two “stories” is not clearly defined, considering that one could not exist without the other. This aspect brings to mind the words of Tom King who, with regard to the oral and the written

traditions, states that “they occupy the same space, the same time. And, if you know where to stand, you can hear the two of them talking to each other” (101-102).

This opening story also sets the tone of the show and highlights the interconnection or symbiosis that exists between these two sides of the same coin. By establishing a link between the characters, the voice-over foreshadows the relationship that exists between the storymaker and the storyteller. While Dwight the Coyote provides the action, Hector Longhouse describes the events in the stories that he tells Tyconderoga the Turkey in a location known as The Trading Post. The setting for the stories is the same location which Dwight and all his woodland friends call The Wheel. Not only does *Longhouse Tales* transcend the borders of characterization, of place, and of time, but the show provides an alternative version to the Creation story told by Tom King in *The Truth About Stories*. For King,

There is a story I know. It’s about the earth and how it floats in space on the back of a turtle. I’ve heard this story many times, and each time someone tells the story, it changes. Sometimes the change is in the details. Sometimes in the order of events. Other times it’s the dialogue or the response of the audience. But in all the tellings of all the tellers, the world never leaves the turtle’s back. And the turtle never swims away. (1)

In the case of *Longhouse Tales*, the storytelling never leaves The Trading Post/The Wheel. In both of these locations, a stone petroglyph in the shape of a turtle’s back is a central feature. In addition, the turtle petroglyph in *Longhouse Tales* is also identical in detail to the character Bella’s shell. As an Elder character, Bella the Turtle provides experienced-based wisdom and Indigenous Knowledge to the younger characters of the show. Ish the Wolverine, Ginger the Fox, Pepper the Skunk, and the Coyote Dwight all benefit from her knowledge. Bella the Turtle’s male counterpart is

Falstaff the Bear whose knowledge has been developed through research and “book” knowledge. Both Bella and Falstaff serve as Elders who guide the younger characters through their journeys in life. These journeys are chronicled in the stories told by Hector Longhouse to Tyconderoga the Turkey and to the viewing audience at home.

Rather than taking the approach used in the previous chapters of this dissertation, my analysis of *The Longhouse Tales* discusses the characters of the television show and how they relate to the Seven Grandfather Teachings. The characters of *The Longhouse Tales* are complex and provide the action of the narrative that regales Tyconderoga the Turkey. Pepper, Ginger, Ish, Dwight, Falstaff, and Bella all are central figures in the stories told by Hector Longhouse. These characters, along with Hector himself, all share in the stories told in *The Longhouse Tales*. Love, Respect, Wisdom, Courage, Humility, Honesty, and Truth are also present within the Longhouse narrative. The qualities are interconnected and interwoven throughout the stories and serve to promote the qualities of Indigenous Knowledge that the show has to share with the at-home viewer. Each character provides the actions that bring to life Indigenous Knowledge within the series: Falstaff is Wisdom, Pepper is Love, Bella is Respect, Dwight is Bravery, Ish is Honesty, Ginger is Humility, and Hector Longhouse is Truth.

Falstaff — Of all the characters in *The Longhouse Tales*, no other personifies the quality of Wisdom. Following Benton-Benai’s view that “to cherish knowledge is to know wisdom” (64), Falstaff’s desire to learn and know more is wisdom personified. Falstaff acts as an Elder and mentor for Dwight and Ish in their spiritual journey. Unlike the Falstaff in the works of Shakespeare (*Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, and *The Merry*

*Wives of Windsor*) who is described as an inconsistent hypocrite (O'Connor 118), *The Longhouse Tales* Falstaff is a much more sympathetic and father-like figure. He uses his wisdom, normally garnered from the books in his library, to help the young apprentices. Ironically, the love of learning and the cherishing of knowledge do not guarantee wisdom. Wisdom, like any other quality of Indigenous Knowledge, is gained through experience. Falstaff the Bear (Falstaff the Elder) learns just that in the episode titled "Bear Necessity." In this episode, Falstaff encourages Dwight to embark upon a vision quest although many, including Bella, do not think the Coyote is ready for it (W2-T2-2004-06-15-02:05:55). Needless to say, the Vision Quest for Dwight ends in disaster, but Falstaff learns a valuable lesson about how learning, like Indigenous Knowledge, is a lifelong process — even for him.

### Pepper

Pepper the Skunk, this most diminutive of characters, becomes the ideal example of the quality of Love found within the series. She is the kind young friend to her woodland companions, and her caring attitude is one that is highlighted within three separate episodes of *The Longhouse Tales*. In the "Splitting Feathers" episode, Pepper is concerned over The Deeps dweller named Caw, who is found to be under the spell of the nefarious Nevar. In the episode, the residents of The Wheel are trying to free Caw from the influence of Nevar. Through a series of incidents involving Sneezy Fruit and Fairy Tales, Pepper and company try to help the crow escape her current fate. Pepper insists that they have to "heal" Caw (W1-T9-2004-04-15-02:13:55). Pepper's caring spirit is also stressed in the episode titled "The Deeps Within" and "Bear Necessity" where her

love for Bella and Dwight is emphasized. The theme of love is realized throughout the series via the friendships that exist both at The Wheel and at The Trading Post.

### Bella

Bella the Turtle is a central character in *The Longhouse Tales* series and represents the quality of Respect. She is so important to the show that her shell literally acts as a grounding point between the two storytelling levels at The Wheel and at The Trading Post. She is the solid rock that guides The Wheel friends in their daily behaviour. Bella, in contrast to the other Elder character Falstaff, has earned her knowledge through the natural world and through her many lifetimes of experiences. The knowledge that she shares with the friends at The Wheel is best highlighted in the episode titled “The Deeps Within.” In this episode (W1-T13-2004-04-02:07:00), Bella is a bit out of sorts and is tired of having the world on her shoulders — a direct link to the creation story as reiterated in Tom King’s *The Truth About Stories*. Bella travels through time to arrive at The Trading Post in order to counsel Tyconderoga on his decision to leave The Wheel. Bella reminds the turkey that there is sacredness to all places and that he needs to respect the environment around him. Bella’s words of wisdom are directly linked to the stories told by Hector Longhouse to the troubled turkey. Bella tells Tyconderoga that at the Trading Post (The Wheel in the alternate timescape) “stories are told, it is enough that someone listens and thinks about them [...] they have to be told here” (02:20:30). Bella states that “This place is very special and it belongs to all of us. Ginger, Pepper, Dwight, Ish, Falstaff, Caw, Hector Longhouse, and you. We need this place. So do you Turkey! We are part of each other, always have been. This is our home. You see that now, don’t



you?” The respect for the world of creation around her is central to Bella’s characterization, and she honours that creation in the way she interacts with her environment.

### Ish

The wolverine Ish is an interesting character in *The Longhouse Tales* series. Being the last of his kind (the subject of the episode titled “Name Day”), Ish the Wolverine is blessed with magical powers and unique gifts associated with the local surroundings. Ish is an apprentice to Falstaff and by means of his experiences the wolverine must learn maturity and gain wisdom. Through his tumultuous relationship with Dwight the Coyote, Ish becomes the embodiment of the ideal of Bravery. In “The Big Scare” episode (W1-T1-2004-04-12-00:02:45), Ish must face the enemy, Nevar, in order to save the life of his friend Dwight. In the storyline, Dwight the Coyote mysteriously falls ill and enters a comatose state (symbolized on TV by the diminishing light in the Coyote’s paw). Ish takes it upon himself to save his friend and offers to give up all his magical powers and knowledge to the evil Nevar. After Nevar agrees and performs an incantation, the Coyote magically awakens. Before Nevar can take Ish’s knowledge, Dwight the Coyote uses his own magical abilities to protect his friend. Ish’s unselfishness towards Dwight and his courage in facing Nevar show the integrity that the wolverine has in facing his foes.

### Dwight

Upon his arrival to The Wheel, it was quickly discovered that Dwight the Coyote had special powers and magical skills. In *The Longhouse Tales* series, Dwight must face

various challenges to his trickster-esque character. Unlike the bravery with which Ish faces Nevar in “The Big Scare,” the Honesty exhibited by Dwight in facing difficult situations is remarkable. Being able to face situations with honesty allows the character of Dwight to be a lovable and trickster-esque figure — an allusion which is referenced in the opening voice-over. Dwight’s characterization brings humour and innocence into *The Longhouse Tales* and provides the show with a comical outlet when dealing with serious issues. Dwight experiences a failed Vision Quest in “Bear Necessity,” a life and death game of hide-and-seek in “The Big Scare,” and a near poisoning by Sneezzy Fruit in the “Splitting Feathers” episode. In all these situations, Dwight the Coyote faces issues with humour and honesty, which is unparalleled in the series.

### Ginger

In the “Ginger in the Wind” episode (W1-T17-2004-04-16-02:00:00), Ginger the Fox learns the most important lesson of all: humility. Ginger’s jealousy of the magical powers possessed by Dwight and Ish lead her into a series of wind-related adventures. With low self-esteem as her constant companion, Ginger finds a friend in the Wind when she learns from the Magic Boys (Dwight and Ish) that she is too practical to be magical. The Wind becomes incarnate and plays with Ginger, following her commands. Ginger becomes a bit drunk with her supposed power over the Wind and starts to abuse her new-found friend. However, the Wind decides to teach Ginger a lesson in humility and destroys a rare herb found by Ish, who then becomes upset with the wind-driven fox. Ginger’s sadness and low self-confidence is assuaged when Bella the Turtle reminds her that she is “brave and funny and loyal to her friends and that is very special.” Ginger

comes to realize that she was not being very humble when she gained control of the Wind. She says that she is sorry – sorry about what happened to Ish and sorry that she hurt the Wind. “Bella was right, I never said thank you. So Thank You!” At this point, the Wind comes back and re-petals Ish’s flower. She thanks the Wind and promises that she will be very patient and will never ask the Wind to do anything for her again – unless it wants to! And she will try to learn what the Wind is trying to teach her (02:26:00). Through her experience with the Wind, Ginger learns the all-important lesson of humility.

### Hector Longhouse

If the morality of truth as defined by Benton-Benai is to know all of the concepts of the Seven Grandfather Teachings (64), then Hector Longhouse is the embodiment of truth. Due to the wealth of information found in the various storylines of *The Longhouse Tales*, it is quite difficult to create a functional narrative for this chapter on Indigenous Knowledge and storytelling. Through the stories that he tells to Tyconderoga the Turkey at The Trading Post, the storyteller provides narratives that cover all of the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Although Longhouse himself is a trickster character like Dwight the Coyote (in fact both characters might actually be the same, as foreshadowed in the opening voice-over), he provides the Turkey and the at-home viewers with the tales and adventures of the characters at The Wheel. The storyteller of the series provides the narrative backdrop against which the Seven Grandfather Teachings can be shared.

In the retelling of tales, the stories related by Longhouse are told by a narrator who might not be recognized as an Elder in the traditional sense. Unlike the great-

grandparents in *Tipi Tales*, the main storytelling Elder in *The Longhouse Tales* is a relatively young character who is associated with mystery and magic — tricksterism. Hector Longhouse (played by actor Tom Jackson) is described in the media press kit as “an enigmatic storyteller with magical powers” ([www.tvontario.org](http://www.tvontario.org)). I would argue that Hector Longhouse is much more than a simple storyteller with magical powers; he is a complex character who supplies viewers with Indigenous knowledge and storytelling inspiration. He is the Trickster in human form! Longhouse encourages his audience (both Tyconderoga the Turkey and the viewers at home) to use their imaginations in order to suspend the cynical beliefs that often impede the storylistening experience. Longhouse encourages individuals to think and to try and understand that narratives guide the world — a sentiment most clearly expressed by King as the “stories we make up to try to set the world straight” (60). By using stories to explain epistemologies, Hector Longhouse provides viewers/listeners with a way to make sense of the teachings and stories that guide their lives and their environments. The viewers learn from examples and the characters on *The Longhouse Tales* embody the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

In addition to the characters being personifications of the various sacred teachings, other characters in *The Longhouse Tales* program also experience Indigenous Knowledge first-hand. Tyconderoga learns the lesson of Respect for his environment in “The Deeps Within” episode when he realises that the Trading Post and The Wheel are interconnected. This respect for the Earth and the natural environment is one of the fundamental tenets of Indigenous Knowledge. Indigenous Scholar Simon Brascoupe notes that “spirituality is about our personal and daily relationship with the environment and our community” (358) and “indigenous values are based upon a deep respect for

environment, natural law, and everyday spirituality” (360).

The teaching of Wisdom is found within the “Bear Necessity” episode where the natural knowledge held by Bella is tested against the “book” knowledge possessed by Falstaff. This episode also shows the lesson of Humility when the Bear’s ego is challenged by his desire to gain knowledge without taking the proper steps to gain this wisdom. The lesson of Honesty and Truth are found in the “Splitting Feathers” episode when the split personality of Nevar-Caw is realized within the narrative. Not unlike Falstaff’s lesson in Humility in “Bear Necessity, Ginger also learns the lesson of Honesty in the relationship that she develops with the Wind in the episode “Ginger and the Wind.” In addition Ginger demonstrates her love for Bella when she uses the quality of Courage to face her fears in the storyline of “The Deeps Within.” Ish uses Courage to face his fears when he needs to save his friend Dwight in the episode “the Big Scare.” His love-hate relationship with the Coyote is tested when Dwight becomes “lost in a story” — the same story which causes Tyconderoga to face his fears and test his love for Longhouse. Since all of the stories told at The Trading Post by Longhouse are renditions of events which happened at The Wheel, the interconnection between place and characters allows for the qualities found within the Seven Grandfather Teachings and the stories that transmit this knowledge to transcend both time and place.

Commercial Break (Fifth in the series)

Take [this] story, for instance. It's yours. Do with it what you will. Tell it to friends. Turn it into a television movie. Forget it. But don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story.

You've heard it now. (King, *The Truth About Stories*, 29)

Knowing that responsibility and reciprocity are fundamental elements of relationships in the field of Indigenous Studies, this advice from Tom King clearly illustrates the importance of sharing the knowledge you have received. Through his story about stories, King highlights the reality that stories, like cultures, are not static. Stories continually change with the teller and with the audience who then become responsible for not only the story told but also the stories to be told in the future. I have listened to the stories of APTN and retold them to you as part of this dissertation. Now it is up to you do with this work what you wish – retell it, let it sit on a shelf in a library, or turn it into a pilot for a future series on APTN. You've read it now; it's yours.

“You’ll never believe what happened...” is always a good way to start a story but, for the purpose of this chapter, it is a good way to end a dissertation. I could provide you with a recap of all the research I have done, give you examples of IK as found within *Tipi Tales* or *Wumpa’s World*, or outline for you the various theories on television, storytelling, and IK that have been addressed in this work. I could do this, but I won’t. I have always been one for surprise endings and cliff-hangers, and this is how it ends — I am the one who received Indigenous Knowledge thanks to my examination of storytelling on APTN. I received IK through the process of watching the shows on APTN and also through the process of writing this dissertation. That is how it ends; here is how that conclusion began.

I tell the stories not to play on your sympathies but to suggest how stories can control our lives, for there is a part of me that has never been able to move past these stories, a part of me that will be chained to these stories as long as I live.  
(King 9)

Although King’s words are strong and powerful, I see myself being tethered rather than chained to the story of this dissertation as long as I live — there is much more storytelling flexibility with a tether than a chain. I would like to claim that this dissertation, this story, started in September 2001 when I joined the Ph.D. program at Trent. The reality is that my Indigenous Studies journey started all the way back when I was in grade four at the école élémentaire Saint-Henri at home in Moncton, New Brunswick. A wonderful project titled “Les Indiens” was the crowning glory of my academic year. From that point on, I was hooked. In high school, I went on a student

exchange trip to Rankin Inlet in the Northwest Territories. Now in the newly formed territory of Nunavut, Rankin Inlet proved to be an important stop on my journey of self-discovery. From my time in Rankin, I learned the importance of community and the ways in which culture is essential to personal identity. Community, culture, and personal identity are also greatly influenced by personal experiences and personal stories. Here is the simplified version for those who would like to stop reading after this point.

- 1) Indigenous Knowledge is transmitted via stories.
- 2) Indigenous Knowledge is gained through experience.
- 3) Indigenous Knowledge is personal.
- 4) Through the stories that I have heard and through the experiences that I have lived, I have gained Indigenous Knowledge.

Too simple? Too succinct? Read on...

To paraphrase the opening monologue of the Star Trek series, the rest of this conclusion is for those of you who are ready to boldly go where no readers have gone before...

In Tom King's *Truth About Stories*, the author begins each of his chapters with creation stories where each one is the same yet different. For King it is not in the specific details, or in the order of events, or in the audience, or in the storytelling location (1); it is in the story and the fact that "the world never leaves the turtle's back and the turtle never swims away" (1). The reality is that the world is creation and the turtles are Indigenous Knowledge. Indigenous Knowledge is gained from creations stories and, from these



creation stories, multi-layered meaning and knowledge can be drawn — a self-perpetuating storytelling process, or as King claims “it’s turtles all the way down” (2). To make the metaphor even more complicated, Indigenous Knowledge and creation stories are interconnected to such a degree that it is often difficult to tell one from the other. The world is on the turtle’s back, and on that world, there is a turtle with the world on its back, and so on and so on and so on...to infinity and beyond.

In recounting a creation story in *The Truth About Stories*, Tom King notes that it is within creation stories that Indigenous world views and ways of knowing (or Indigenous epistemology) are made clear.

Personally, I want to hear a creation story, a story that recounts how the world was formed, how things came to be, for contained within creation stories are relationships that help to define the nature of the universe and how cultures understand the world in which they exist. (10)

The relationships that define the nature of the universe and who is to live within that universe constitute Indigenous Knowledge. Creation stories serve to reinforce values in a society and provide the “substructure of civil society” (Castellano 23). This wisdom is often drawn from traditional teachings, observation, and a series of personal revelations (Castellano 23). As instructions or paradigms, traditional stories help to shape the individual’s “being within that world” (Gross 439) and allow the individual to gain experience based on the physical hearing of the stories and also in the actions that result from the lessons learned through cultural narratives. From the “instructions drawn at the creation of the world,” individuals learn how to “maintain harmony in relationships among human beings and the natural world” (Castellano 24).

The experience of living and being within the world provides the basics of Indigenous Knowledge, or as Henderson states, “the process of recognizing and affirming one’s gifts or talents is the essence of learning” (265) and “Aboriginal learning is through all the senses and instincts” (266). The idea of IK as a “process” rather than a “product” (Little Bear 78) is also echoed in the words of Couture (2000:164), Colorado (8), and Dumont 32. Indigenous Knowledge is both “process” and “content” (Couture 1991: 56). Gained “through the process of learning the old, the new knowledge is discovered; this is what makes IK dynamic rather than static” (Dei et al. 6). The ever-changing face of IK is made even more complicated by the fact that not only is it “process-oriented” (Dudziak 254) but it is also “rooted in personal experience and lays no claims to Universality” (Castellano 25).

The claim that Indigenous Knowledge is experiential and personal is best expressed by Willie Ermine in the statement “experience is knowledge” and it is only in “understanding the physical world” that “we understand the intricacies of the inner space” (104). Conversely, it is only through journeys in the metaphysical world that we fully understand the natural world (107). The personal nature of experiencing and learning Indigenous Knowledge (Monture 10, Couture 1991:65) is stated quite clearly in the words of Henderson who notes that “experiencing the realm is a personal necessity and forges an intimate relationship with the world” (265). This intimate relationship with the world is akin to the personal relationships that Couture says are necessary for a deep connection with the “self, and with others, and with the Cosmos” (54). For Brascoupé, “spirituality is about our personal and daily relationship with the environment and our

community” (358). These relationships are personal in nature and through personal experience knowledge is gained.

I have learned IK based on the stories I have heard and the personal experiences I have had during my lifetime. Through the process of writing this dissertation I have come to know how the Seven Grandfather Teachings have come to make an impact on my life in a positive way and how they have come to influence the decisions I make in everyday life. The Seven Grandfather Teachings have allowed me to express the story of how a White girl from the East Coast came to know and experience Indigenous Knowledge and live a *Bimaadiziwin*.

Wisdom: Benton-Benai says that “to cherish knowledge is to know WISDOM” (64). During the writing of this dissertation, the desire to simply quit, pick up, and leave occurred almost on a daily basis on some occasions. Having to face being a non-Native student in a Native Studies program, having to design and create courses to suit my academic research needs, being young and inexperienced in classes dominated by four grandmothers, as well as facing homesickness and poverty, made for a very difficult few years. However, my love of learning has pushed me to stay and gain as much wisdom as possible not unlike the character of Falstaff in *The Longhouse Tales* and his own quest for knowledge. The reality is that I had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn from some of the best scholars and Elders. I cherish the time that I spent with Elders such as Ernie Benedict, Shirley Williams, Edna Manitoowabi, and Doug Williams. They are indeed Elders in every sense of the word, and through their stories and my personal time with them I have learned the true value of their wisdom. As the Grandfather in *Tipi Tales* says “wisdom is being able to look at all the pieces” and I have come to see the totality of

my experiences as part of the wisdom I have gained. In learning this wisdom, I have also come to understand that wisdom comes with responsibility and that reciprocity is a key to true knowledge and the manifestation of *Nbwaakaawin* — the “art of knowledge.”

Love: Benton-Benai notes that “to know LOVE is to know peace” (64). Finding peace within me has been perhaps one of the most difficult tasks that I have experienced during this dissertation journey. Being a non-Native scholar in the field of Native Studies comes with its own cultural baggage of White-guilt, fear of cultural appropriation, and wanna-be-ism, and an overall sense of not belonging or not being wanted within your own field of study. I have had to remind myself many times during the doctoral process that I am where I am for a certain reason — something once told to me by an Elder back home on the East Coast who told me not to give up on Native Studies. I have come to understand that I do belong here and that I have a lot to contribute to the field of Native Studies. Although I see things with a different set of cultural lenses, my understanding of Indigenous Knowledge is tested in my everyday actions. Love, as expressed in the friendships of the Tundra friends in *Wumpa’s World*, is a central lesson that I have learned during my 6 years at Trent. Love, like Indigenous Knowledge, is not necessarily in what you say but in what you do as exemplified by the patience and caring the Bella the Turtle has for her woodland friends in *The Longhouse Tales*. Through the love and friendships that I have developed during my doctoral research, I am at peace in my heart which is something that has taken thirty-five years to accomplish. This peace I have come to know as *Zaagidwin* — the “art of caring.”

Respect: According to Benton-Benai “to honour all of the Creation is to have RESPECT” (64). Only through my experiences here at Trent have I learned how

essential is the connection between the individual and the environment. During my first few years here in Ontario, I felt geographically isolated. Being from the East Coast where the ocean is but a twenty-minute drive away, I found that the only solace for me in Peterborough was the river that flows through campus. If I peek sideways enough, I can see the water flowing under the Faryon Bridge. This water ironically anchors me in place and gives me the strength to continue on my academic and personal journey. The power and life of the natural world give me inspiration and provide me with solace in otherwise difficult times. Taking the words of Flying Thunder in *Wakenheja* to heart, I have learned that not only should we “all be respectful of our Earth” but we should also “honour and respect all Creation.” The honouring of the Earth is also echoed in the words of Katchewa from *Greenthumb’s Garden* who knows how to live in harmony with creation. Being in balance with the world is essentially the act of *Mnaadendiwin* or the “art of respect.”

Bravery, in the words of Benton-Benai, “is to face the foe with integrity” (64). Being brave is something that I have struggled with. Like Tiguak with his fear of the water, I have been forced to be brave in accomplishing a most difficult task. Being able to express my voice without fear and without shame is something that I have learned during my time here at Trent. One of the earliest discoveries that I have made is that my voice has value, that my voice needs to be heard, and that my voice carries well over the large distances in the lecture halls and classrooms. Only in the final stages of writing this dissertation did I discover that I have come into myself as a scholar and as a woman. The confidence and honesty with which I have approached various undertakings this past year have been inspired by the relationships I have developed with my undergraduate

colleagues. Thanks to the support given to me by my students, fellow instructors, support staff, and Elders, bravery, or *Aakde'win*, is the key to the self-assurance and self-reliance I have gained through the experience of writing this dissertation.

Honesty, according to Benton-Benai, “in facing a situation is to be brave” (64). To be honest with you, sometimes I don’t feel very brave. At times, I second-guess my decisions, I rewrite paragraphs and chapters, and I contemplate leaving and becoming a professional dog-sitter. This final year of the dissertation has been a great time of personal and academic honesty. My teaching style has changed to reflect this new attitude and I have come to see the benefit of being honest and straightforward. By approaching life with a more honest and sincere perspective, I have gained valuable insight into myself as a person and as a scholar. Like Glory in *Greenthumb’s Garden* and her admission of her inability to count, I have become honest with myself in regards to both my academic and my social experiences. Living a more honest and brave life — *Gwekwaadsiwin* — has allowed me to overcome my fears and has opened up new avenues of experience and adventure.

Humility, in the words of Benton-Benai, “is to know yourself as a sacred part of the Creation” (64). The lesson of humility is one taught to me by Shirley Williams as *Dbadendizwin* or “the art of humility.” When I asked her how she was as peaceful and as happy as she is, she answered that being humble helps. Humility allows you to find balance within yourself and within your environment. When people would ask what I was studying at university, I would often say simply Native Studies; I would rarely mention the Ph.D. I would often downplay my accomplishments so as not to seem boastful. Humility is found in the way you treat others, especially when it comes to

sharing knowledge and experiences. I have since come to realize that humility is about not being conceited and also about being proud of all you have accomplished. I also learned this lesson of humility by watching *Tipi Tales* on APTN. “Not too big, not too small, just the right size is best of all!” The song still echoes in my head!

Truth, for Benton-Benai, “is to know all these things” (64). During my experience in writing this dissertation and telling this story, I have come to know the importance of truth and being able to live that truth. It is quite easy to say that because I listened to a traditional teaching the other night or read about Indigenous Knowledge in a book the other week, that I have Indigenous Knowledge. The truth is that in order to have IK you have to live IK. I have lived these Seven Grandfather Teachings by trying to put them into practice in my everyday life. Some of the teachings and some of the fundamental components of Indigenous Knowledge are much easier to accomplish than others, but the reality is that IK is a lifelong learning process. And, like the truth as espoused by Hector Longhouse in *The Longhouse Tales*, I have also become the storyteller who encourages my audience to contemplate the totality of the story being told. The story must also be told straight from the heart — *Debwewin*. This dissertation is an example of that fact.

While the Grandfather Teachings are only a small speck in Couture’s “Cosmos” of Indigenous Knowledge, it is a start. King, quoting Ben Okri, notes that

“In a fractured age, when cynicism is god, here is a possible heresy: we live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted — knowingly or unknowingly — in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, we change our lives.” (153)

Through my dissertation, I have changed the story that I live. “The truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (King 2). This is my truth. This is my story. This is who I am. My current story starts off with the world being on the back of a turtle. And, what is under this turtle you ask? Another turtle. And under that turtle? Another turtle. Now, onto experiencing the other turtles, the other stories, all the way down...



Commercial Break (Sixth (and last) of the series)

One of the tricks to storytelling is, never to tell everything at once, to make your audience wait, to keep everyone in suspense. (King, *The Truth About Stories*, 7)

While a conclusion normally serves to wrap things up in a nice little package, the reality is that this story continues and is never really finished being told...

*Picture It...    Winnipeg...    March 27<sup>th</sup> 2006...    Spring time in Manitoba!*

With the threat of rain in the sky, donuts and muffins in tow, and trepidation and fear firmly tucked in my laptop carry-case, I arrived at the Winnipeg studio for my official visit with the people from the programming department at the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. After having researched the programming content of APTN for the past four years, it was quite a unique experience for me to actually visit with the people in charge of making the decisions as to which storytellers share their stories on air. From *Wumpa's World* to the *Nightly News*, from *Tipi Tales* to *Cooking with the Wolfman*, the shows broadcast on APTN are as varied as the audience they aim to serve.

Not wanting to meet with the people at APTN too early in the research process, I delayed my visit until my work was well near completion and the data analyzed. This delay was prompted by two separate but equally important issues: bias and ethics – of which I might actually have both! My research has been limited to theoretical and literary work, due to the fact that I wanted to create a solid foundation upon which to build further scholarship in the area of television, storytelling and Indigenous Knowledge transmission. I also wanted to focus on the stories actually told in APTN's Kid's programs rather than the corporation of APTN and the daily operations of the network. Both the areas of corporation and operation are fodder for planned future academic research.

The decision to visit with the APTN programming staff was made at a point where my research data had been transcribed, where the analysis had been made, and where the theoretical underpinnings of my IK and storytelling research had been immortalized in print and in ten episodes of this dissertation. After having opened up a conversation with programming director, Chuck Clement, upon the completion of my research phase, I knew that it was time to head to Winnipeg to visit with the programmers who had given me much fodder for academic thought during the past five years.

Although I was originally set to meet with Mr Clement, a business trip called him away; however, he left me in the capable hands of his colleagues even though I think they were a bit uninformed about my research, who I was, and why I was visiting. My meeting with Monique Rajotte and Laurie Christianson of the Programming Department started off with a tour of the APTN headquarters. The tour itself made me realize how much more there is to TV broadcasting and production than “press play on tape.” Having only come to know the world of television as a viewer, seeing behind the scenes was both illuminating and daunting. Much like Dorothy’s realization at the end of *The Wizard of Oz*, there was indeed a man (and sometimes a woman) behind the curtain running the show. My visit included stops and introductions to various administrative departments, such as financial services, human resources and marketing, but my visit to the first-floor production area was indeed the highlight of the tour. Dizzied by the complexity of the on-air system, I was overwhelmed by the technology and the skills of those engaged in bringing APTN to the viewers.

During my visit to the production floor, I found myself in the position of watching a live broadcast of the daily news with Madelaine Allakariallak. Being inside the control

booth during a live broadcast was an exciting opportunity. To witness the abilities of those in charge of the teleprompters and the on-screen graphics, and of the timekeepers and editors was a remarkable experience. The smooth-resulting broadcast was interesting considering the organized chaos that occurs in the control room. Issues of mispronunciation, typos in the on-screen graphics, missing minutes, and the need to stretch the hostess' closing comments were only a few of the highlights witnessed by this visitor to the control booth during a live broadcast of the news.

Although my visit to the first-floor set area was a bonus, my original intention for a visit to APTN was to meet with the people whose decision-making directly influenced my doctoral research on APTN's children's programming. This brought me back to the third floor and a discussion with the staff in the programming department. In my initial discussion with Laurie and Monique, I think I might have come across as a bit too critical of some of the programming on APTN. Since criticism was not my original intent, I ended up overcompensating by praising some of their programs. This difficult tightrope balance between the good and the bad in APTN's programming resulted in a sense of unease and trepidation that in the end proved to be unwarranted. I think one of the programmers felt the need to be on the defensive about the programming choices. The reality of programming difficulties on an underfunded and strictly regulated network became quite clear. I brought up the issues of being "for, by, and about" Aboriginal Peoples, in particular the choice of a Tommy Lee Jones or a Cameron Diaz week. While the rumour is that both Mr. Jones and Ms. Diaz have Aboriginal ancestry, one needs to question how much ancestry makes them "chic to be Indian" celebrities in need of their own week of APTN movies? Having taught a film and television course focused on

stereotypes and having researched the abusive representation of Aboriginal Peoples by Hollywood, I find it interesting that a network devoted to “sharing our stories” would choose to highlight the works of actors whose Aboriginal identity is questionable at best.

This questioning of programming choices also extends into the decisions made concerning many of the children’s shows that constitute the APTN line-up. Even though my research is devoted to the children’s programs produced “in association with” APTN, many of the shows “imported” by the network catch my eye due to their content and the images they transmit to their viewers. Shows such as *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Lost World*, *Fire Quest*, and *The Last Reservation* are all, in my educated and personal opinion, quite problematic with regard to their storyline content and also their representation of Aboriginal People. With characters depicted as pre-contact curios, Neanderthals in search of fire, and classic stereotypical figures such as the Indian princess and the brave Buck, these shows are not APTN-produced but still find themselves in the weekly line-up. My concern with such programs is that for all the positive images that are found within the “produced in association with” category, the imported shows tend to reflect the Hollywood imagery that has misrepresented Indigenous People since the time of contact.

My conversation with Monique and Laurie in programming served to burst my idealistic bubble of APTN. In my research design for this dissertation, I deliberately chose not to speak with the people at APTN for two very specific reasons: 1) I did not want to have to jump through the ethical and logistical hoops that come with conducting community-based research and research with human subjects, and 2) I prefer to live in Kellyville, which is a place where all of APTN’s motives for programming are noble and

live up to the notion that the network would be a “celebration of our rich heritage and a sharing of our ideas” ([www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)). The honesty with which the programming executives spoke was refreshing yet disturbingly counterproductive to living in Kellyville! For the first time in the research process, I had to contend with the issue that APTN was a business and that the financial bottom line plays an all-important role in the programming decisions. While deep inside I knew that something had to justify the negative portrayals of the Indigenous Image in shows such as *The Last Reservation* and *Quest for Fire*, I was both surprised and saddened that the almighty dollar trumped audience and cultural demands.

When I asked the programmers about the “who, what, where, when, and why” of programming decisions, the question of “why” produced the most enlightening of answers. Scheduling, refreshing the line-up, availability and inventory of programs, audience needs, cultural programming, language programming, and conditions of license are central to the programs which make it to the APTN airwaves. When the totality of these aspects are lined up and analyzed, financial feasibility rears its ugly head into the equation. The reality is that trying to meet the CRTC regulations produces a financial pit that is difficult to climb out of, especially considering the financial needs required to run a national network. The response provided by the APTN programming staff to my concerns about the specifics of some of the programming decisions, such as *The Last Reservation*, was directly linked to financial decisions. The “least damaging” types of programs are chosen when faced with budgetary constraints. This financial reasoning still disturbs me to the point of pondering the following: would it simply be better to show nothing at all or perhaps repeats of even less damaging programs than to be a

transmission site for programs filled with negative and exploitative stereotypes? This line of thinking is quite reminiscent of the old saying: If you have nothing nice to say, best to say nothing at all! Interestingly enough, I can always find something nice to say so as long as I can also find something not so nice to say!

APTN does indeed have great IK quality programming when it comes to such shows as *Tipi Tales* and the others assessed in this dissertation's previous episodes. That's the nice part of what I am about to say! The network also does broadcast programs that are questionable to say the least – or least damaging. In looking at shows such as *The Lost World* and *The Last Reservation*, the commonly held stereotype of an Aboriginal People near extinction or, as Francis would express it, "The Vanishing Indian" (23), is profoundly and utterly re-ingrained in the mindset of a new generation of viewers who ironically are also Aboriginal! Despite the fact that Aboriginal People and their cultures are indeed alive and well, however, some of the shows that are broadcast (on a network determined to provide a "window" on the lives of Aboriginal People) are downright racist and stereotypical in nature. Take for example the recent addition to the French/Kid's programming, *Lucky Luke*. As a young Acadian girl growing up on the East Coast, I remember how the French language television station's program line-up was populated with works imported from Quebec and France, and *Lucky Luke* was one such program.

For those of you unfamiliar with Lucky, he was a happy-go-lucky cowboy who had quite the adventure out on the open range. Belonging to the Western and Cartoon genres, *Lucky Luke* is a program that often features "Native" storylines. When I came across the cartoon on APTN one day, I was surprised to see not only that the cartoon

itself was on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, but also that this particular episode contained a general storyline of General George Armstrong Custer running for President of the good ol' US of A! While the show itself did not portray Custer in a 'positive' light, it also featured a buckskin-clad 'Indian' with a headband and a single feather at the back of his head!

As for the view that APTN is a window on the lives and cultures of Aboriginal Peoples, perhaps the window needs to be cleaned. While I understand the issue of CRTC regulations and APTN's desire to offer new (and unrepeated *ad nauseam*) programs, I wonder if repeating good programs with positive role models might be better than offering outdated and negative stereotypes to an audience already marginalized and often discriminated against! Back to the old adage of not saying anything if you have nothing nice to say, maybe the network should find a new strategy that does not include the notion of broadcasting something that is the "least damaging!" Knowing the profound effect that stereotypes have on a person's perception of self, one needs to wonder how the "least amount of damage" caused by broadcasting such shows as *Lucky Luke* and *The Last Reservation* might have on APTN's young Aboriginal audience members who tune into the network everyday.

While stereotypes and their impact on identity formation would have been (and still might be) a great topic for some future post-doctoral study, my current research on IK and APTN is still not entirely concluded. Having found that the network does provide or broadcast the fundamental teaching elements of Indigenous Knowledge, I need to look further into the reception of IK as it is processed in the minds and actions of young viewers. Knowing that IK is viewed as something that you live and that is experiential in



nature, it is my hope to actually go out into the field to conduct research. OK, in this case, the field actually means that “have remote will travel” and that my research will be conducted in the living rooms and TV dens of those who are willing to take this lonely television watcher into their homes. The reality is that I would like to talk with the children who watch APTN shows in order to see if they “get” what is being broadcast by shows such as *Tipi Tales* and *Wakanheja* and if they have found ways to apply and incorporate Indigenous Knowledge, as found within the Seven Grandfather Teachings, into their daily lives.

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