Miyo Wahkotowin: Self-determination, Colonialism and Pre-reserve Nehiyaw Forms of Power

by

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B.A. (Hons.), University of Alberta, 2006

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Abstract

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This thesis explores whether reviving pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power represents a strategy of self-determination. To start, an understanding of colonialism is advanced based on the idea that colonialism is an intersectional process that involves both the actions perpetrated from a settler society unto Indigenous peoples, and the legacy of dysfunction that is left with Indigenous peoples as a result of colonization. Second, an understanding of pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power is developed, with a focus on how the interaction of legitimacy and authority can be used to explain pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power. Finally, I examine if reviving pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power represents a strategy of self-determination that addresses the intersectional nature of colonialism. I argue that it does, but in order to revive pre-reserve forms of power we must displace band councils as the site where we imagine a revival of pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power.

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Acknowledgments

To start I would like to thank my family for all the love, help and support they have given me, in particular my parents Brian Wildcat and Pam Cooke. Any success I have achieved is a reflection of my family far more so than myself. I would like to thank the faculty, staff and students with Indigenous Governance program for providing a spectacular academic environment to study, learn and research in. I look forward to continuing collaboration in the future. I would like to thank all the Indigenous peoples whose land I was on during my studies in Victoria. I would like to thank all the other Faculty members at the University of Victoria who provide support to Indigenous Governance and its students. I would like to thank my former colleagues at Maskwachees Cultural college who have helped me grow as a person. I would like to thank all the community members from Muskwacis who have taken the time to share with me over the years. I would like to thank the staff and Faculty with the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta who gave me my start in the field of Indigenous Studies. I would like to thank the Ermineskin Education Trust Fund for the their sponsorship and support they have given me throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies. I would like to thank the University of Victoria and SSHRC for the financial support they provided me in my second year. I would like to thank all the other people who I have been able to have honest and sincere discussions about politics with over the years. Finally, I would like to acknowledge people involved in the struggle and give my profound appreciation of the commitment so many display in making the world a better place.

Chapter 1 - Introduction and Research Outline

Introduction of Thesis

When addressing the issue of Indigenous self-determination one necessarily faces two tasks. First, identifying what inhibits Indigenous self-determination; usually done through a combination of articulating the historical and contemporary circumstances that have lead to and perpetuate a lack of self-determination among Indigenous peoples. Second, one attempts to offer a solution to the problems that inhibit self-determination, or put another way, one attempts to theorize pathways to self-determination. Examining the literature produced by Indigenous peoples in North America reveals that this dual set of questions has plagued many writers. The following is another engagement with the issue of Indigenous self-determination. My main query is does reviving pre-reserve Nehiyaw (Plains Cree) forms of power and authority represent a pathway of self-determination for Nehiyawak (Plains Cree people)?

To start, I'd like to give an overview of the most important findings of my research. These ideas will be elaborated on in the rest of the thesis. To give you a little information on my background, I grew up in Muskwacis (Hobbema, Alberta) and I'm a member of Ermineskin First Nation, which is a Nehiyaw (Plains Cree) band located in Central Alberta. Ermineskin First Nation is one of four Nehiyaw bands that make up the community of Muskwacis. Much of what I'm about to say emanates from my experiences growing up in Muskwacis and in particular from my family and the two years I spent working at the local first nations college from May 2008-February 2010. The following has come out of a prolonged engagement with the idea that we need to return to traditional foundations to improve the governance of our communities, an idea I

trace back to my teenage years where I first began listening intently to the political discussions the older members of my family were having. My research here focuses specially on pre-reserve forms of Nehiyaw power. At the moment the ideas around the issue are still in flux, and as such represent only a snap shot in time. Also, in the following thesis I use the term traditional governance as an umbrella term to refer to all structures, political rationalities, values and worldviews contained in Indigenous societies prior to the establishment of western nation-states on Indigenous lands. The term pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power refers to the forms of power, or the ability to influence and effect others, in Nehiyaw society prior to settlement on reserves.

Fundamental to my thesis is the idea that the pre-dominant way people think about reviving traditional governance is through changes or reforms to the band council. I first formulated this idea based on the fact that this is how I used to think about reviving traditional governance, and that this idea was so ingrained in my thought that it wasn't even one narrative among others, it was an unquestioned, implicit assumption. To illustrate that this implicit assumption was a prevalent idea, and not just the way I used to think, was no easy task. Primarily because nobody uses the term band council anymore, instead preferring terms such as nation and community. In order to illustrate that the band council is located as the primary site of reviving traditional governance I had to go a round about way and look at the dialogue around self-government.

Beginning in the late 1970's use of the term self-government become prevalent among Aboriginal Political organizations. The term was meant to signify the inherent right of Indigenous peoples in Canada to govern their own affairs. This would be accomplished by moving band councils out from underneath the auspices of the Indian

Act but the self-government dialogue was also concerned about how traditional governance could be incorporated into the structures of band councils.

The 1980's and 1990's saw the proliferation of literature on the topic of self-government. While earlier articles take an explicit focus on Band Councils as the site of self-government and reviving traditional governance, the articles in the 1990's avoid using the terminology of the reserve, band councils or Indian Act band. Rather, the terms first nation, community, and nation are used interchangeably to refer to band councils. In effect, the articles on self-government distanced band councils away from their Indian Act origins through using terminology such as first nations. In doing so band councils have become the assumed, unquestioned site of change.

I believe one of the reasons this is the case is because Indigenous political leaders were forced to entrench the primacy of band councils as the site of self-government in order to create avenues through which the federal government could bestow recognition upon Indigenous peoples. As such, it was necessary for Aboriginal leaders to distance bands from their Indian Act origins in order to re-brand Indian Act bands as legitimate political entities deserving of recognition.

Since self-government represents a main thrust to revive traditional governance, the placement of band councils at the center of the self-government debate has also meant that band councils are the site where people imagine a revival of traditional governance. As such, people rely on a strategy where band councils should be imbued with traditional values in order revive traditional governance, even through band councils are the institutions that eroded and replaced traditional styles of governance to begin with.

I also believe that this orientation toward transforming the band is the primary view held by the majority status Indians. In the paper "Subjects of Empire", Glen Coulthard argues that the politics of recognition in Canada subtly shapes and moulds the worldviews of Indigenous peoples to mimic the dominant society. In this vein, I would suggest that a main reason why people do not question the band council as the site where traditional governance should be revived is that we have confused the modern manifestation of the band council as resembling pre-reserve forms of the band. Somewhere between movement onto reserves and today people began to think of Indian Act band councils as being analogous to traditional bands.

One aspect of traditional governance that I always admired was that people did not promote themselves for leadership and were rather placed in positions of leadership due to the general respect they held amongst other band members. Additionally, the practice that Nehiyaw peoples could leave a band at any time, to join another group was also central to my thinking around traditional governance. With these two ideas in mind I started to focus the connection between the legitimacy people held in the eyes of others, and the authority they could carry within Nehiyaw political life. It also became apparent that a focus on legitimacy and authority was also talking about power. The focus on legitimacy, authority, and power became highly important as the research unfolded because it brought to the forefront the difference between the way power operated within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society and our contemporary political situation. Highlighting this difference is incredibly important because if pre-reserve forms of power within Nehiyaw society and contemporary forms of power within Band Councils are incompatible, and

Band Councils are treated as the site where traditional governance will be revived, we have a problem that needs to be worked out.

Based on how legitimacy and authority interact within the pre-reserve era, two immediate incongruities between the way power and authority operate in pre-reserve Nehiyaw society and our contemporary political situation are apparent. First, within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society authority only arose when groups of people came together in consensual arrangements in order to pursue shared goals. In our contemporary situation authority is divested within the structures of bands councils. Second, within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society people had the ability to associate with a band of their choice. Today, Band membership is largely concrete and static.

Within Nehiyaw society authority would only arise when groups of people came together in order to pursue shared practices or goals. People of esteem within the group would be delegated certain realms of authority based on a past record of scrupulous behavior and good deeds. Since those who held authority were always deemed with legitimacy, people in positions of authority always had the ability to lead groups in shared actions. Rigid structures of authority and mechanisms to enforce authority in the face of resistance were not necessary, nor would they have been effective.

Contemporary band councils, on the other hand, carry authority in and of themselves, and delegate realms of authority to people based on the positions they hold. The authority of band councils is actualized through a number of factors, but primarily authority structures are actualized because bands Councils control the vast majority of money that is available to status Indians.

I believe this signals an important shift in the way power works because authority primarily exists in holding access to positions within the Band Council. Since a person's authority is largely based on their position within structures of authority a greater emphasis is taken on gaining access to positions of authority rather than a focus on accruing legitimacy through building up a record of exemplary behaviour. Although this is not to imply that some people in positions of authority do not hold legitimacy as well.

Next, within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society people had the ability leave or join bands at their will. The ability of people to leave or join bands created a situation where authority was fluid within Nehiyaw society. If people no longer consent to authority within a band they would leave, often accomplished by parting with another band when larger multi band groups were camped together. This was enabled because people had a range of skills that allowed them to provide for their material and economic well-being. As such, relationships of dependency were minimized in plains life. One was not bound to follow the authority of someone else because they were not in a relationship of dependency, and as such it was impossible to create mechanisms within society to coercively enforce authority.

In our contemporary situation Band membership is highly static and concrete. For the most part people will not change their Band membership throughout their life, nor do people have the choice to if they wanted. One of the main forms of power relations within the band is the service provider, client relationship. The reason the provider-client relationship is so significant is because it based on relationships of dependency. Whereas in the pre-reserve era, up to the extermination of the buffalo, people had the economic means to provide for themselves; today, the client is in their position precisely because

they are reliant on the service provider to provide resources for their present and future economic security.

The static nature of Band membership also affects the way we think about power and authority. In our contemporary situation peoples political identities have become so tightly entangled with the Band that it has become the primary form of political identification for status Indians. This creates a situation where exclusionary and non-cooperative attitudes to take root amongst people from different bands. The identities of status Indians now revolve around their Band membership in ways that negatively limit and confine the scope political affiliations that could be made amongst Nehiyaw and Indigenous peoples at large. As well, the primacy of band membership as a political identity has the effect of entrenching and naturalizing the structures of authority within contemporary bands because, as I stated above, people now feel our modern bands are analogous to pre-reserve bands.

These shifts have serious consequences for thinking about the revival of traditional governance. Namely, if the problem of band governance is seen only as a matter of cultural erosion, the changes in the way power and authority operate goes unnoticed as a problematic. Thus it is deficient to view the imposition of the Indian Act as replacing Indigenous governance practices with western governance practices, because this means it is still possible to revive traditional governance practices within our current band council system. As such it is no wonder that our questions have revolved around how to imbue traditional values within contemporary bands. Any talk about the revival of traditional governance, without serious discussion of how power and authority has

changed, may only result in adding on cultural components to western modes of power and authority.

So, considering the above is reviving traditional forms of governance a pathway of self-determination? Growing up, one of the main ideas I learnt from my family was that it made no sense for our political leaders to fly around the country, and yell at Indian affairs for change when so much change could be accomplished through putting our own affairs in order first. My own observations made it clear to me that the primary way people attempted to make change in Muskwacis was an externally focused politics, and that this was not making peoples lives happier and healthier. This was likely one of the reasons I've always focused so heavily on how to imbue traditional values into band governance because I viewed it as a mechanism for putting our own internal affairs in order. So for many years, my stance was to turn my back on externally focused politics. This reaction lead me to my own close mindedness because the problems besieging our people are not just about fixing the problems in our back yard, rather these problems originate from and are perpetuated by living in a colonized situation. If we are truly to address colonialism, it is necessary to realize that colonialism is not just about what the colonizer has done to us, nor is it just about trying to take care of our own backyard, it is about both. We must understand how colonialism and its residual effects are related and ultimately intertwined. So with this intersectional view of colonialism in mind, what is the importance of reviving pre-reserve forms of Nehiyaw power.

Based on the incompatibility between pre-reserve and contemporary forms of power it is faulty to think that band councils should be the de-facto site where we revive traditional governance. As such reviving pre-reserve forms of Nehiyaw power is

important precisely because to truly revive these forms of power will require us to look beyond the band council in our journey toward self-determination. In doing so I believe that reviving pre-reserve forms of power will address the intersectional nature of colonialism.

To start, we must begin by creating/supporting "zones of Nehiyaw power" that do not derive their power and authority from the Canadian state. This will require us to create political communities through the same processes that happened in the past, where groups of people coming together in consensual relationships to pursue shared goals or practices. In this sense, the focus of our efforts should not be to change entire communities but to create communities within our communities.

Pushing forward these zones of Nehiyaw power is important in two ways. First, it would necessarily mean taking a concerted and focused effort on strong, healthy governance amongst Nehiyaw peoples. This would not only build up the governance and organizational capacity of Nehiyaw people, but it would create healthy relational webs. These healthy relational webs are important for individuals to attach themselves to when undertaking their own personal journey's to deal with the psychological effects of colonialism. Second, the establishment of zones of Nehiyaw power are important because they create alternate, non-imperial political rationalities. Due to the interconnected nature of existence, Nehiyaw political rationalities will necessarily come into contact with and produce friction with the imperial rationalities of the dominant society. The places where a clash of rationalities occurs will create the struggles through which colonialism can be challenged. Looking beyond the band council toward zones of Nehiyaw power as sites of self-determination is not only a radical proposal but a

humbling proposal because it means that Indigenous peoples must look at each other and how we form relationships with each other outside of governmental authorities. The rest of the thesis will now elaborate on the core ideas presented above.

Research Agenda

Presenting the research will take three chapters following the introductory chapter. The introductory chapter will give a brief summary of the thesis followed by a discussion situating myself within the research. The introductory chapter will also delineate the research rationale, research purpose, research questions, and research methodology.

The first chapter will look at what inhibits Indigenous self-determination. Asking questions about what inhibits Indigenous self-determination necessarily means talking about colonialism. The first chapter is spent developing an understanding of colonialism as an intersectional process. On one hand, we have Euro-North American society that practices colonialism through economic, political and social formations that dispossess Indigenous peoples of land and attempts on the part of Euro-North American society to control the minds and lifeways of Indigenous people. On the other hand, the residual effects of colonialism now operate within Indigenous communities through violence, abusive attitudes and relationships, and dysfunctional governance. It is important to understand how colonialism and the residual effects of colonialism are linked. The first chapter is devoted to exploring and articulating how colonialism and residual effects of colonialism intersect with each other. This will involve two sections. First, we will look at how I came to focus on developing an understanding of what inhibits Indigenous self-determination. My initial queries into the topic focused on the work of Taiaiake Alfred

and how he articulates "the root problem facing Indigenous peoples" in Wasase. My focus on the problems facing Indigenous peoples continued from there and eventually came to focus on understanding colonialism as an intersectional process. In the second part of the chapter an in-depth exploration of how Andrea Smith articulates the intersectional operation of colonialism is undertaken.

The second chapter will examine the operation of power in Nehiyaw society prior to settlement on reserves. In order to examine power the chapter will focus on how authority and legitimacy interacted within Nehiyaw society. Simply put, authority could only be exercised in situations where a person or a group of people were accorded legitimacy by others. The chapter is not an exhaustive account of Nehiyaw forms of power but the examination of authority and legitimacy will allow us to draw out some of the most important characteristics of Nehiyaw forms of power. To do so it is necessary to start with a discussion of Nehiyaw cosmologies. Second, it is also necessary to look at the heavy emphasis placed on inculcating a set of values within Nehiyawak and Nehiyaw leadership. Finally, the chapter will examine the interaction between authority and legitimacy.

The final chapter will look at how reviving Nehiyaw forms of power is a strategy of self-determination for Nehiyaw peoples that addresses the intersectional nature of colonialism. To start the chapter we look at how the band council is considered by most to be the location where a revival of traditional political ideologies will take place. With this in mind I look at how the Band Council and pre-reserve forms of Nehiyaw power are incongruent. As such, if we are to revive Nehiyaw forms of power it is necessary to displace the Band Council as the primary site of change for Indigenous peoples. The

remainder of the chapter shows how reviving Nehiyaw forms of power and displacing the band council as the site of political change represents an important strategy of self-determination.

Again, please note that I use the term *traditional Nehiyaw governance* to refer to all aspects of Nehiyaw governance such as leadership, values, worldviews, political ideologies, structures, etc. Primarily, I employ *traditional Nehiyaw governance* as a term to encapsulate the idea within Indigenous communities that we should return to pre-colonial forms of governance. As such it should be taken in the most broad ranging sense possible, and I will refer to specific aspects of traditional governance when I am focusing on a specific idea. As well, a definition of power, authority and legitimacy will be explored in-depth in the second chapter.

Personal Background

Before moving on with the rest of the thesis I'll situate myself within my work. I grew up in the Nehiyaw community of Muskwacis (better known as Hobbema) in central Alberta. Muskwacis is located in central Alberta, approximately 90 km south of Edmonton, Alberta. Muskwacis is composed of four Nehiyaw bands, Samson First Nation, Ermineskin First Nation, Louis Bull First Nation and Montana First Nation. I am a band member of Ermineskin First Nation. The four bands collectively have 13,975 registered band members, of which 72% (10,036) live in on-reserve. It is one of the largest Indigenous communities in Canada. Muskwacis has recently garnered mainstream notoriety for the large amount of gang activity that takes place there and was also previously known for the large amount of money the four bands received from oil deposits on our land. Among Indigenous people in the area it is known for the large

amount of cultural and spiritual people who reside in Muskwacis. It is also known as having a large amount of talented people in areas such as music, sports, and leadership.[1]

My father has lived in Maskwacis for the vast majority of his life and my mother grew up in Toronto before moving away after a nursing degree and eventually finding her way to Muskwacis where she met my father. My father is currently the Director of Education for Miyo Wahkotowin Community Education, a K-12 Band controlled education authority where he has held the position of director for 12 years.[2] His work there has brought him a high degree of praise for the excellent schools that are currently in place. I can trace a long legacy of leadership through both my Kokum (grandmother) and Mosum (grandfather) families who are also both from Muskwacis. Both my Kokum and Mosum were highly successful people, and my Kokum was also the first person from Muskwacis to finish High School and receive a teachers diploma from the University of Alberta, which she received in 1953.[3]

I lived on Ermineskin reserve from when I was a year old until I was seventeen when I moved away to Edmonton to attend the University of Alberta. I was originally enrolled in engineering and spent two years in the Faculty of Engineering. I was never very interested in engineering but at the time I thoroughly disliked writing and was very good at Math. Even back then my main interest was in politics and helping Indigenous

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[1] This was discussed in a conversation with Bruce Cutknife in November 2009.

[2] He first held the job for ten consecutive years and resumed his position at Miyo two years ago. In between he held the job of Director of Treaty Six education which was a regional organization.

[3] For those interested please visit the following website http://www.wetaskiwinonline.com/museum/wildcat_theresa/index.html for a biography prepared on my Kokum when she was featured in the "Women of Aspenland" exhibit at the Wetaskiwin and District Museum.

peoples, but I was directed toward engineering due to my academic strengths. While in engineering I always felt that being an engineer had the potential to help out Indigenous peoples by offering technical knowledge needed by Indigenous peoples. After my second year I received a job at Syncrude working in the Oilsands near Fort McMurrary in Dene territory. It did not take long to become completely disillusioned with what I was doing. While there was never a singular moment when I "cracked", an image that will always stick with me is a map of the area that had been staked out by oilsands companies. In the middle of this huge area was the comparatively tiny reserve of Fort McKay, which I believe will be left in the middle of a wasteland in future generations. During my second year in engineering I had taken two Native Studies courses, and these courses also had a profound effect on my understanding of the world. Before the end of June I had already switched my course of study to Native Studies.

It is also worth stating that I believe I grew up in a context where professional career paths (Engineer, Lawyer, Doctor, Accountant, etc) were expected from academically inclined high school students, from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous segments of society. Specifically, I believe, and I still see this when people make underhanded remarks about Native Studies to me, that Indigenous peoples should participate in these professional career streams, or "normal" disciplines in the social sciences and humanities (Political Science, History, Anthropology, English etc.) as a way of showing mainstream society that Indigenous people are as intelligent as non-Indigenous people. This is why I was regarded by my community as a role model more so when I was in Engineering, because I was proving something to the dominant society,

than when I decided to switch into an educational path allowed me to focus on how to make our community a better place.

I spent the next three years finishing my Native Studies degree and wrote an honours paper on changing the way we talk about governance and the way we talk about changing governance. The next year and a half was spent in Victoria completing my course work for Indigenous Governance. After my course work was done I made plans to move back to Edmonton and immediately set my eye on employment with Maskwachees[4] Cultural College, an institution controlled by the community. To my luck, the position of Registrar came open within weeks of planning my move and I was successful in the job competition. For the last two years I held the position of Registrar as Maskwachees Cultural College. I recently resigned but hope to stay within the field of post-secondary education. As such, this thesis is written with the long term goal that I will remain in post-secondary education, primarily within the field of Indigenous Studies. My interest has always lied in improving educational opportunities for Indigenous peoples in both within western institutions and promoting non-institutional forms of learning. This passion has come from a legacy of educators in my family notably my father and kokum.

My interest in leadership has come from the long legacy of leadership that my family has provided within the community of Muskwacis. Growing up, leadership, governance, and politics were constantly discussed by family members and references to traditional values were always infused within the conversation. As such, the majority of

[4] Alternate spelling for Muskwacis.

papers I have written going back go high school have always focused on Nehiyaw leadership or governance.

The focus on leadership and governance has constantly grown and changed over the years. During my time with the Indigenous Governance program many of the assumptions I had made about political change were disrupted. The line of questioning that is present in this thesis first started to come together after the Indigenous Leadership Forum, on the topic of anarcha-indigenism, in June of 2007. In reality, the focus on Nehiyaw forms of power can be traced back to the early day's when my political consciousness came into being. I remember that I was always fascinated by the idea that within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society, people could not promote themselves for leadership and instead had to be acknowledged by others. It is this initial idea which I have continued to explore and elaborate on over the years.

Research Rationale

The rationale of the following research is two-fold. Primarily the research stems from a motivation to see Indigenous peoples live life with dignity; specifically people from my community of Muskwacis. This is not to imply that we can separate people into two categories of those who live with dignity and those who live without dignity. Everyone carries themselves with dignity at one point or another. Rather to live a life with dignity implies the ability to live life void of: disproportionate trauma and violence; feelings of inferiority; lack of access to functional relationships; lack of access to just resolution of conflicts; inability to realize growth and potential; excessive confinement of personal freedom; and, overwhelming feelings of malcontent towards society.

Second, in thinking through this motivation to see Indigenous peoples live with dignity, my intellectual energy has revolved around how Nehiyawak can improve the governance of our communities. In thinking through the issue of improving governance my primary preoccupation has been with how Nehiyawak can restore and reinvigorate traditional forms of governance that existed prior to settlement on reserves. My thinking around the issue of how to restore and reinvigorate traditional forms of governance has undergone numerous phases. Thus the primary rationale of my research is to elaborate on the role of pre-reserve practices of governance play in contemporary pathways to self-determination.

Research Purpose

The primary purpose of the research paper is to add research and literature for Nehiyaw students who are interested in the topic of Nehiyaw governance. While writing I realized the de facto audience I was thinking of was Nehiyaw students, likely because my long term goals revolve around improving post-secondary opportunities for people from my community are Indigenous students at large. Due to the lack of literature in the field I often found myself reading many Master's theses and Doctoral dissertations during my undergraduate studies. This area of literature was often a useful source of information for me while researching papers during my undergraduate days. The focus on students also arises out of the fact that while I was working at Maskwachees Cultural college, I witnessed many of the students having a political awakening. This experience and my own experiences have also drawn me toward the ability of writing and teaching to cause political awakening. While western educational institutions do have a limited capacity to transform our conditions at this point I believe they do represent an important site of

struggle. With that being said, my belief is that if I view myself as someone existing within the western academy over the long term, my focus should not be placed squarely on transforming the academy into a site of change, but rather should focus on making relationships with people and places outside of western institutions to help foster a robust network of people working toward Indigenous self-determination. Thus my focus on post-secondary students is not to imply that this is the only place change will occur, rather it is based on the idea that this is the area where I see myself working toward Indigenous self-determination.

For those students who do find themselves reading the following I hope that it will allow you to help open up your own political creativity about the situation facing our peoples. I have finished working on this thesis while also finishing working within Muskwacis for the past 22 months. Based on this experience, I believe before change can happen it is first necessary to ask hard questions about how we constitute our political communities as Indigenous peoples. This thesis hopes to help Nehiyaw students free their political imaginations by offering a thorough account of colonialism, Nehiyaw forms of power and critical analysis of the Band Council.

Research Questions

My research, for a long time, has revolved around the question of how can we revive traditional governance. Under scrutiny, this question makes too many assumptions to be a valid starting point for research. As such it was necessary to break down the larger question to explore the foundations of how a revival of traditional governance might take place. In breaking down the question of how we can revive traditional governance it was first necessary to question what inhibits Indigenous self-

determination. This lead me to ask questions about how colonialism is intersectional in its operation. In order to revive traditional governance it was also necessary to take a longer look at what traditional governance was. Through this engagement I came to focus on how legitimacy and authority operated in pre-reserve society. Finally, it was also necessary to ask the question of whether reviving pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power would still represent a strategy of self-determination. Lets look at all of these questions, and their formulation below. I start with pointing out the broad question I was originally concerned about, and move toward the specific question I end up asking

The first broad question I was concerned with was: "What is colonialism?" Through an engagement with the literature of Indigenous and anti-imperial intellectuals I came to focus on the discussion of colonialism as an intersectional process. Many authors talk about the dual forms of colonial power in our present situation. First, colonialism is about an unjust colonial relationship between Indigenous peoples and settler society. Secondly, the processes of colonialism had left a legacy of violence and dysfunction within Indigenous communities, what I refer to as the residual effects of colonialism. Not only were many authors talking about two forms colonial power, but these authors were showing how the two forms of colonial power were inseparable and intertwined. Therefore I became interested in the question "How does colonialism and its residual effects interact with on another?" To answer this question I focused on Andrea Smith illustration of how of colonialism and its residual effects interact within on another in her book Conquest.[5] Of note is that when I first read Andrea Smith she self-identified as Indigenous. Since then she has recanted her claims to Indigeneity. I do not know the

[5] Andrea Smith. Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005).

details of this change in identification on her part but I would like to make two points here. First, it is no longer possible to consider her an Indigenous Intellectual. Second, regardless of the change, she is still a brilliant scholar and anti-imperial intellectual. Although some hard thinking and more information is needed to flesh out the implications of her switch, her previous work is still cogent.

The second broad question I was concerned with asked: "What is traditional Nehiyaw governance?" While my overall concern falls under the theme of what is traditional Nehiyaw Governance it is not my aim to distill the complexity of Nehiyaw governance to a single chapter. Rather, I came to focus on how power operated within Nehiyaw society because I became highly interested in the difference between colonial and non-colonial political rationalities. Many works have focused on the structures of Nehiyaw governance but less works have attempted to describe the underlying rationalities at play. A focus on power allowed a description Nehiyaw political rationalities to come to the forefront. Here power is described as the ability of an individual or group of people to carry out their intended effects. Authority is described as the ability to implement decisions. With legitimacy being described as a constellation of ideas that revolve around holding respect or admiration in the eyes of others. I have been interested in the concept of legitimacy, in one form or another, since I first starting hearing stories about the great emphasis that was placed on the value of humility in Nehiyaw society and how this value lead to the social norm of not promoting yourself for positions of leadership. In light of my new focus on power, I consistently returned to the idea that leadership was only invested in those who had built a good reputation through a long history of good deeds. Eventually I realized what I was focusing on was how the

concepts of authority, and legitimacy interacted with each other in pre-reserve Nehiyaw society. As such, the chapter looks at how exploring the interaction of legitimacy and authority allows us to explain pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power.

The third broad topic I look at asks the question: "Is reviving traditional forms of governance a strategy of self-determination?" I grew up listening to topics such as Nehiyaw governance, band councils and leadership being discussed around kitchen tables, and living room couches. How our community could revive traditional governance values/structures was a difficult question with an elusive answer. These discussions have led me to conduct research in the area of reviving Nehiyaw governance over a prolonged period. In this thesis I am ultimately concerned with examining my ultimate assumption which asks "does reviving traditional governance represent a pathway to self-determination for Nehiyawak?" Scrutinizing this assumption was very important because asking why reviving Nehiyaw forms of power has emancipatory potential allowed the research to take a direction it otherwise wouldn't have. As well linguistic scholars have recently talked about how Nehiyaw understandings of knowledge place a huge emphasis on how you came to understand an idea. They even use a book where my Great Kokum, Emma Minde, tells the story of her life as one of their primary documents. What they propose is that in Nehiyaw thinking, how you came to hold an idea or piece of knowledge is highly important, as evidenced by grammatical structures that allows one to trace how you came to hold an idea. In Nehiyaw rhetorical practices, Nehiyaw speakers go to great lengths to explain their background and why they came to hold the idea they are explaining. In a similar vein, while I only spend twelve pages near the end explaining why Nehiyaw forms of power represent a pathway to self-

determination, I was highly motivated to explore if this original idea was valid and why so. So it is not just the idea that is important, but the journey I undertook to get there. My final chapter is the last piece of the puzzle in exploring the question, "Why is reviving Nehiyaw forms of power a strategy of self-determination?"

Research Methodology

As all three chapters use a distinct methodology my methodology section will be split into three sections as well. Chapter one will examine the question, "how does colonialism and its residual effects interact with one another to prevent Indigenous self-determination?" To answer this question I began by undertaking a close reading of Andrea Smith's 2005 book, Conquest. In order for this question to form, a prolonged engagement with different Indigenous and anti-imperial scholars was necessary. The beginning of the chapter will quickly go over a short geneology of how research came to focus on the question of how the two forms of colonial power interact to maintain colonial domination.

The geneology is followed by an in-depth exploration of how Andrea Smith's Conquest illustrates the interaction between colonialism and its residual effects. To analyze the book two initial categories used to group how Andrea Smith discusses the intersectional nature of colonial power. First, how does the operation of colonialism imbue colonized mentalities, dysfunctional relationships, and structural conditions that foster poverty and dependency within Indigenous peoples. Second, how do the residual effects of colonialism prevent an effective confrontation and transformation of contemporary colonialism. After pulling this information a gradual distilling process was

used to key in on a few ideas that effectively demonstrated the interaction between colonialism and its residual effects.

To start chapter two a definition of power, authority and legitimacy will be given. In order to help develop the definitions of power and authority, I undertook an overview of power and sovergienty within the western tradition.[6] In order to develop a definition of legitimacy, it was necessary to undertake the readings below with an understanding of predominant values within Nehiyaw society. These values include: humility; ethic of service to others; compassion; sharing with less fortunate, ethic of non-interference; and leadership by example. These values helped to develop a definition of legitimacy that was based on a wide range of Nehiyaw values.

Next, chapter two will explore the spiritual nature of Nehiyawak existence. This inquiry will be based on the idea that Kichi Manitou, which is usually translated to English as the creator has the literal translation of the great mystery. The work of the late Vine Deloria Jr., in chapter eight of his last book The World We Used to Live In,[7] and the ideas of Leroy Littlebear on Plains Indigenous worldviews, will help complement this discussion. The main point I wish to emphasize here is how Nehiyaw cosmologies would have lead to different assumptions about what would be the logical way of organizing the political life of a society. In addition to Nehiyaw cosmologies it is also necessary to couch an examination of Nehiyaw power within a discussion about the process of grooming leaders. This section was added because the grooming process for leaders was

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[6] John Scott. Power (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2001).

Robert Jackson, Sovereignty: Evolution of an idea. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2007).

[7] Vine Deloria Jr., The World We Used to Live In: Remembering the Powers of The Medicine Men (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2006).

discussed within multiple sites through the literature on pre-reserve Nehiyaw peoples. Specifically, the process of raising children was the main topic of discussion for an interview I had conducted with Maskwacis elder Jerry Saddleback in the fall of 2006. The interview with Jerry Saddleback imparted the importance of raising children within Nehiyaw society.

After grounding the discussion in Nehiyaw spirituality and the process of grooming leaders, the chapter then focuses on the question of how authority and legitimacy interact with one another, with a focus on examining literature that discussed Nehiyaw life up to the Northwest Rebellion of 1885. The earliest piece of literature started with the horse and gun revolution of the 1700's for plains Indigenous peoples.[8] In addition to historical literature, a number of articles by contemporary Nehiyaw authors were read to gain an understanding of what those authors were talking about. In particular the book Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times by Neal McLeod is an excellent example of contemporary Nehiyaw literature.[9]

Before starting the research, I relied on three main articles to provide a theoretical understanding of pre-reserve forms of power on the plains. The first two articles are "Understanding Treaty 6: An Indigenous Perspective" by Sharon Venne and "Traditional Indian Government: Of the People, by the People, for the People" by Marie Small Face

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[8] Theodore Binnema, Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

[9] Neal McLeod, Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times. (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007).

Marule.[10] These articles describe how the authority to make and implement decisions in Plains Indigenous societies did not rest within static, everlasting governmental entities, titles or institutions. Rather authority rested upon the consensual agreement of people to form political communities that delegated authority on a case by case basis. Political entities did not have perpetual social contracts codified within a rigid set of institutions and as such, sovereignty could not be divested within a political authority that existed outside of people.

Second, the plains ontological outlook that individuals should have a general knowledge of all aspects of life was used to understand the information contained in historical literature. My understanding of individuals as generalists is grounded in the work of Leroy Littlebear. According to Littlebear, Plains Indigenous peoples held all the skills and knowledge necessary to provide for their needs in life. Since people could ensure their own economic freedom individuals could associate with each other on a voluntary, consensual basis due to their lack of economic and material dependence on each other.

These two understandings allowed me to read the historical literature in order to develop an understanding of how authority and legitimacy interacted with each other on the plains. Using these two theoretical frameworks will allow me to collect and sort information related to Nehiyaw lifeways in the pre-reserve era. Literature that was

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[10] Sharon Venne, "Understanding Treaty 6: An Indigenous Perspective," in Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada: Essays on Law, Equality and Respect for Difference, ed, Michael Asch. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997. 73-207.

Marie Smallface-Marule, "Traditional Indian Government: Of the People, by the People, for the People," in Pathways to Self-Determination: Canadian Indians and the Canadian State, ed. Leroy Littlebear, Menno Boldt, and J. Anthony Long (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 36-45.

reviewed included a first person account of life on the plains told by Peter Erasmus and written by Henry Thompson, reflections on pre-reserve life by Nehiyaw authors Joe Dion and Edward Ahenakew, autobiographies on Big Bear, and Atahkakoop (Starblanket), and plains histories.[11] Also, my analysis would not have been possible had it not been for the interviews I have done over the year and the general day to day interactions I have had with various members of my family and other community members who have been kind enough to impress traditional knowledge upon me. Particularily, I have had countless discussions with Bruce Cutknife and my father Brian Wildcat about traditional Nehiyaw governance and I probably should have listened to Bruce Cutknife more often when he said "that's good, you should write that down."[12]

Finally, the first draft of the chapter on pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power was also reviewed by Bruce Cutknife. Cutknife is the Head of Culture and Language at

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[11] Peter Erasmus, Buffalo Days and Nights, as told by Henry Thompson (Calgary: Fifth House, 1999).

Joseph Dion, My Tribe the Crees, ed. Hugh A. Dempsey, (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1979).

Edward Ahenakew, Voices of the Plains Cree, ed. Ruth M. Buck, (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1995).

Hugh A Dempsey, Big Bear, The End Of Freedom (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 1984).

Deanna Christensen, Ahtahkakoop The Epic Account of a Plains Cree Head Chief, his people, and their struggle for survival, 1816-1896 (Saskatoon: Ahtahkakoop Publishing, 2000).

John Tobias. "Subjugation of the Plains Cree." Canadian Historical Review Vol 64.4. (1983): 519-548. And Binnenma, Common and Contested Ground.

[12] Of note, I often do not write down ideas or conversations in the name of developing an oral memory. I think to develop an oral memory requires that you practice remembering conversations by reminding yourself of what was said, multiple times at first and then on occasion over time. I believe this helps to focus in on key idea's rather than the general form of scholarship which based around the increasing accumulation of knowledge.

Maskwachees Cultural College and is considered by many to be one of the most knowledgeable people on the topics of Nehiyaw history and culture. He suggested one paragraph that should be changed and otherwise approved the accuracy of the content from his perspective.

Chapter three is the result of my engagement with the ideas affiliated under the banner of Anarcha-Indigenism, which can be thought of as the intermingling of radical feminist, anarchist and Indigenous thought. This body of idea's was first introduced to me at the 2007 Indigenous Leadership forum which was a turning point in my understanding of the band council. In theorizing about how the importance of reviving Nehiyaw forms of power, this body of thought has been highly useful in opening up different approaches to thinking about Indigenous self-determination within contemporary Indigenous politics. In particular, Alfred's regeneration and resurgence framework and Smith's call that centering the lives and histories of Indigenous women within our analysis forces us to make a call for radical change. In particular her assertion that we must look beyond the state to solve problems it has had such a large part in creating.

Unfortunately, the methodology of this chapter was haphazard in its formulation, despite the fact that its main idea has been staring me in the face for the past two and half years. I eventually realized it was necessary to show that band councils were indeed situated as the site of change when talking about reviving traditional governance. An examination of previous literature that focused on reviving traditional political ideologies was necessary. Reviewing this literature made it clear that the band council was located as the primary site of change because of two reasons. First, one of the premises of

Aboriginal self-government is that self-government should be realized through band councils. Second, the literature on self-government also makes it clear that when band councils are vested with the powers of self-government, they should also be imbued with traditional forms of governance.

With this in mind I undertake comparison between pre-reserve and contemporary forms of power and authority. This comparison makes it clear that we have to displace the band council as the location where we will revive Nehiyaw forms of power. The end of the chapter focuses on how displacing band councils as the location where pre-reserve forms of power should be revived is a strategy of self-determination.

The final section can be understood as my articulation of a theoretical praxis for Indigenous self-determination, centered around the idea of *zones of Nehiyaw power*. Ending with a recommendation of how Indigenous peoples can move toward self-determination is a necessary part of the methodology that is woven into the Indigenous governance at the University of Victoria. I explain the idea of zones of Nehiyaw power without giving concrete recommendations because I want Nehiyaw students to use the ideas here to help them further their own thoughts and actions. I do have specific practice based ideas in mind when writing that allow me to form the ideas of zones of Nehiyaw power, but for now these ideas will not be put on paper.

Chapter 2- Colonialism as an Intersectional Process

Introduction and Genealogy of thought

My initial research into understanding the issues that prevent Indigenous self-determination was conducted on Alfred's book Wasase.[13] What caught my attention when reading Alfred's book the first time was his statement: "the root problem is that we are living through a spiritual crisis."[14] My interest in this statement lead me to ask, what Alfred meant by this.

To understand the statement "the root problem we are living through is a spiritual crisis" it is necessary to realize that Alfred is also attempting to cause a shift in how we understand the problems facing Indigenous people and our pathways to self-determination. The following series of quotes will illustrate his critique of the dominant discourse of Indigenous self-determination that Alfred is hoping to move people away from:

> "I am saying the real reason most Onkwehonwe endure unhappy and unhealthy lives has nothing to do with governmental powers or money. The lack of these things only contributes to make a bad situation worse.
>
> "Large-scale statist solutions like self-government and land claims are not so much lies as they are irrelevant to the root problem."
>
> "Our concern about legal rights and empowering models of self-government has led to the neglect of the fundamental building blocks of our peoples: the women and men, the youth and the elders."[15]

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[13] Alfred, Taiaiake. Wasase*:* Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom. Toronto: Broadview Press, 2005.

[14] Ibid., 31.

[15] Ibid., 31.

My research into what Alfred meant by the spiritual crisis revealed an easy to understand, yet layered and articulate account of the problems facing Indigenous peoples in their struggles for self-determination. My research led me to conclude that two major themes comprised the spiritual crisis. First, the spiritual crisis is a result of the disconnection, displacement and weakening of bonds between Indigenous peoples and their land, culture and spirituality and also the disconnection of bonds within Indigenous communities and families. The idea of disconnection is featured prominently throughout Alfred's work.

> The challenge facing all Onkewhonwe is the same: regaining freedom and becoming self-sufficient by confronting the disconnection and fear at the core of our existences under colonial dominion.[16]

Second, the spiritual crisis is a crisis of ones spirit or personal spiritual defeat. This personal spiritual defeat manifests itself in a lack of will to confront and struggle against the colonial nature of our surroundings and secondly in the psychic distress or internalization of colonial mentalities that is produced under conditions of colonial aggression. This is caused when "the burden of persistent colonialism has become mundane and internalized to Onkewhonwe life, and its effects subsumed within our cultures and psychologies."[17]

While a focus on how colonialism and its residual effects interact with one another was not my focus when researching Wasase, upon reflection it is clear that Alfred also describes colonialism in an intersectional manner. If one of the ways in which we can think about colonialism is as a process of disconnection, it is apparent that a legacy of

[16] Ibid., 20.

[17] Ibid., 25.

disconnection and lack of will to fight back against our colonized situation is a residual effect of colonialism.

As such, Alfred issues a call for the regeneration and resurgence of Indigenous peoples. Which is to say Indigenous peoples must regenerate their communities and their relationships in addition to leading a resurgence to fight back against our colonized situation. "Resurgence and regeneration constitute a way to power-surge against the empire with integrity."[18] This framework is clearly based around confronting the dual-faceted operation of colonial domination. Regeneration of Indigenous peoples is directed at confronting the residual effects of colonialism within our communities, and resurgence allows us to transform the colonial nature of the dominant Euro-North American society.

I continued to focus on how other Indigenous scholars were articulating the problems that inhibit Indigenous self-determination. Eventually I came to a new level of clarify around the way Alfred, Smith and many other critical minded scholars discussed colonial oppression as two fold. First, the initial thrust of colonial domination in North America was the creation of a colonial relationship between Indigenous peoples and a settler population. The creation of a colonial relationship was accomplished through the displacement and dispossession of Indigenous peoples from land and access to resources and forceful attempts to control the political and social life of Indigenous peoples. These basic elements of colonialism continue to this day. Even more insidious is that now Indigenous peoples are situated as partners in Government attempts to cement the colonial relationship in a permanent manner, such as the B.C. Treaty process and the large scale Indian residential school settlement in 2005. Both of these examples seek out

[18] Ibid., 24.

a final agreement that effectively ends the issue at stake. The operation of colonialism in this form has been extensively illustrated by a number of scholars.[19] While colonialism remains firmly in place to this day, framing the causes and perpetuation of Indigenous suffering and marginalization purely through colonial displacement and control, fails to fully capture the complexity of colonial domination in the North American context. Many Indigenous scholars today talk about how colonial mentalities and tendencies now exist within Indigenous communities and have extensively discussed the residual effects of colonialism.[20] According to these scholars, not only has colonialism imbued negative psychological effects within Indigenous peoples, but has also negatively affected the economic, political and cultural life of Indigenous communities.

Thus, a framework exists for describing colonialism within the North American context as consisting of actions on behalf of a colonizing population towards Indigenous peoples, and the residual effects of colonialism that now exist within Indigenous communities. The following is a representative quote by Patricia Monture-Angus:

> If colonialism brought our nations to this point, the undoing the damage of colonialism must be the answer. I now understand this thinking to be much too linear to be helpful. It is not just the colonial relations that must be undone but all of the consequences (addictions, loss of language, loss of parenting skills, loss of self-respect, abuse and violence, and so on). Colonialism is no longer a linear, vertical relationship- colonizer does to colonized- it is a horizontal and entangled relationship (like a spider web). Now, sometimes the colonized turn the colonial skills and images they learned against others who are less powerful in their communities, thus mimicking their oppressors.[21]

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[19] See Coulthard 2007, Alfred 2005, Waziyatawin 2008, Smith 2005, Nadasdy 2003.

[20] See Adams 1989 and1999, Alfred 1999, Deloria 1969, Corntassel 2008.

[21] Monture-Angus, Patricia. Journeying Forward: Dreaming First Nations' Independence. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1999. Pg 11.

Once this dual faceted framework was starting to formalize within my analysis, one of the first works I read to evaluate the framework was Prison of Grass by Howard Adams.[22] The way Adams articulated the connections between colonialism and its residual effects helped me to see the intersectional nature of colonialism. For example, Adams relates a number of personal narratives that shape his self-image as a Metis person. In these personal narratives Adams effectively illustrates a number of events that led him toward connecting his Metis identity with feelings of shame and inferiority. This poor self-image led Adams to abandon most connections to his family and Metis community. What Adams is able to show effectively through his narratives is how living in a context of racism, Euro North American political control, and economic oppression foments an attitude that leads him to reject his Metis identity and adopt an emulation of the white ideal. In these narratives it becomes apparent that you cannot talk about colonialism without connecting colonialism to the multiple effects it has within Indigenous communities and vice versa. Through reading Prison of Grass, it became clear that it is impossible to understand colonialism without understanding how colonialism and its residual effects interact with each other. The research questions that formed the basis of this chapter moved away from researching the different places in which writers had talked about the dual nature of colonialism, and turned toward examining how colonialism and its residual effects interact with one another. To undertake this inquiry, I felt the emphasis Andrea Smith takes on understanding how different forms of oppression

[22] Adams, Howard. Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View. Revised Edition. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishing, 1989.

interact with each other would give ample evidence. The remainder of the chapter sets out to detail how colonialism and its residual effects interact with one another.

Conquest and Intersectional Analysis

Smith extensively illustrates how the long running sedimentation of an unjust colonial relationship between settler societies and Indigenous peoples causes Indigenous people and communities to internalize dysfunctional and abusive relationships, and operate within marginal economic and political conditions. Additionally, it is also important to realize how the residual effects of colonialism currently stymie an effective confrontation and transformation of the colonial relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

First, and most important to Smith's work, is that Indigenous peoples were rendered inherently dirty and violable by a patriarchal settler society, and thus did not have boundaries that should be respected. Since Indigenous bodies were marked as dirty and having no boundaries one needed to respect, Indigenous lands by extension did not have any boundaries that an encroaching settler population needed to respect. In particular this effect was felt by Indigenous women where sexual violence was used as tool of colonialism. Andrea Smith states:

> "The project of colonial sexual violence establishes the ideology that Native bodies are inherently violable- and by extension, that Native lands are also inherently violable"[23]

As a result of an encroaching settler society designating Indigenous peoples as dirty, Indigenous peoples have suffered a tremendous amount of physical abuse from settler society. Smith argues that as a result of this abuse Indigenous peoples "learn to

[23] Smith, Conquest, 12

internalize self-hatred because body image is integrally related to self-esteem."[24] The result of this self-hatred is that Indigenous communities have inherited and now pass along a legacy of violence within our communities.

Not only has abuse been internalized within Indigenous communities, but conceptions of what is a normal practice within Indigenous societies has also been warped by colonialism. According to Smith, some Indigenous people will now claim that sexual abuse is "traditional" when historical evidence suggests that "sexual violence was rare in Native communities prior to colonization."[25] Smith cites an anti-violence group in Minnesota that reports "a primary barrier antiviolence advocates face in addressing violence in Indian country is that community members will argue that sexual violence is 'traditional.'"[26]

It is not only historical conditions of colonialism that contribute to the abuse that occurs within Indigenous communities. At a conference speaking out against abuse within Indigenous communities an elder made an acute observation about how the New Age movement has helped to create conditions ripe for sexual exploitation within "traditional" spiritual ceremonies. His reasoning was that the New Age movement created a distorted understanding of what spirituality has to offer by creating an unrealistic aura around what a medicine man can do. His line of argumentation is recounted by Andrea Smith here:

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[24] Ibid., 12.

[25] Ibid., 130.

[26] Ibid., 13.

> "New Age spirituality promises quick-fix solutions by 'powerful' shamans who know all. As a result, people seeking guidance learn to surrender their authority to so-called leaders and disregard warning signs when their boundaries are violated. This leader concluded, 'I am no one special. When you come to see me, do not leave behind your common sense."

Creating these conditions then obstructs Indigenous peoples efforts to confront colonialism. When Indigenous people seek to regain their sovereignty, they are labeled by settler society as "violent, self-destructive, and dysfunctional."[27] As such, the dominant settler society can feel safe and rest assured of its continued domination over Indigenous peoples and infringement of Native sovereignty due to its moral superiority over Indigenous peoples. Even though it is precisely through colonial conquest and the infringement of Native sovereignty that settler society was able to establish its stance of moral superiority in the first place.

Another example is the case of corporate tourism on the island of Hawaii. Hawaiian activist/intellectual, Haunani-Kay Trask, uses the idea of "cultural prostitution" to describe the consumption of Hawaiian culture. She defines prostitution as the institution through which women are defined as an object of degraded sexual value meant for use and exchange through the medium of money. Just like women who have been reduced to a commodity of sexual value, everything in Hawaii, "the place, the people, the culture, even our identity as a Native" is available for sale to the tourist. No boundaries apply for the tourist in Hawaii, as "Hawaii, like a lovely women, is there for the taking."[28]

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[27] Ibid., 13.

[28] Ibid., 125.

In response to pressure from tourism, Trask argues that Indigenous people are "transformed to be complicitous in their own commodification" in order to meet western consumer needs. Thus, the interests of the more powerful non-Native consumers and corporate tourism industry come to govern and control the interaction between Native Hawaiians and non-Native people. Through this process Hawaiian culture no longer exists to meet the needs of Hawaiian people, but rather exists to meet the needs of non-Native society. What this means, according to Trask, is that "the cultural base from which indigenous people resist colonization" is destroyed, leaving Hawaiians in a weakened position to fight against the theft of their islands by US empire.

One of Andrea Smith's main points throughout her book is that colonization is not only racialized but also gendered and sexualized, and as such we have to understand how multiple forms of oppression interact with each other. A main way she illustrates how colonization is gendered is to discuss the infusion of hierarchical gender values within Indigenous communities through residential schools.

Smith argues that "in order to colonize a people whose society was not hierarchical, colonizers must first naturalize hierarchy through instituting patriarchy."[29] Within residential schools Indigenous boys spent their time learning to do manual labour and Indigenous girls were slated to do domestic work. Most explanations of why this was the case rests on the idea that this division of labour was done in order to prepare young indigenous people to participate in the labour force. Looking beyond the obvious point that young Indigenous people could not fully participate in the labour force because of racism, some have argued that the division of labour within residential schools was

[29] Ibid., 23.

created in order to inculcate patriarchy within Indigenous communities. Smith cites Tsianina Lomawaima who states that an "ideological rationale" better explains the intended purpose of domesticity training because through domesticity training, Indigenous girls would learn a message of "subservience and one's proper place."[30]

The infusion of partriarchal norms within Native communities not only stripped women of their places of leadership within Indigenous communities, but also naturalized the operation of hierarchy and patriarchy within Indigenous communities. In doing so, Indigenous communities are then less equipped to diagnose and fight against colonialism. Additionally, disrupting systems of Indigenous governance through disposing Indigenous women from their place of power and authority has left Indigenous nations in a weakened position to combat colonialism.

Andrea Smith also picks apart how proponents of social justice have been unable to see the interconnections and intersections between different forms of oppression and violence. This has led to social movements taking a myopic and fractured viewpoint, in turn leading to an obfuscation of the root causes of violence and marginalization. When talking about Indigenous issues, the fractured viewpoint of the dominant settler society is able to reproduce a set of discursive conditions that help to maintain the colonial relations by setting a dialogue that does not centre colonialism within the analysis of oppression. In some cases, Indigenous people have themselves taken on a myopic viewpoint that legitimizes colonial relations and prevents Indigenous peoples from issuing a call for radical social change.

[30] Ibid., 37.

Smith is critical of people protesting the "decline in civil liberties" and the erosion of the democratic ideals found in the US constitution after 9/11 because of measures enacted by the Bush administration.[31] To do so, people in these movements must dismiss white supremacy, colonialism, and economic exploitation as *aberrations* of the otherwise democratic ideals of the United States. Yet, as Andrea Smith states:

> white supremacy, colonialism, and economic exploitation are inextricably linked to US democratic ideals rather than aberrations from it. The "freedom" guaranteed to some individuals in society has always been premised upon the radical unfreedom of others. Very specifically, the U.S. could not exist without the genocide of indigenous peoples. Otherwise visitors to this continent would be living under indigenous forms of governance rather than under U.S. empire.[32]

Yet, during the same time period after 9/11, "many Indian tribes came out in support of the U.S. 'war against terror.'"[33] As Smith states, it is important to understand "that consolidating US empire abroad is predicated on consolidating U.S. empire *within* U.S. borders."

The anti-violence movement has also demonstrated how it continues to reproduce the discursive conditions that maintain colonial relations within North America. The main critique that Smith levels against the anti-violence movement is that it has been unable to see the connections between personal violence and state violence. In doing so, it pursues strategies that leave in place the larger structures that oppress communities of colour, and especially women of colour. Smith argues that if you center Indigenous

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[31] Ibid., 184.

[32] Ibid., 184.

[33] Ibid., 179.

women within the analysis, it will become clear that it is "problematic for women of color to go to the state for the solution to problems that the state has had a large part in creating."[34]

As Smith states in one of her possible remedies, we must "anchor violence against women within the larger context of racism, colonialism, and inequality."[35] The following passage elaborates this idea:

> The analysis in this chapter argues for the need to adopt antiviolence strategies that are mindful of the larger structures of violence that shape the world in which we live. Our strategies to combat violence within communities (sexual/domestic violence) must be informed by approaches that also combat violence directed against communities, including state violence- police brutality, prisons, militarism, racism, colonialism, and economic exploitation.[36]

Generally speaking, we can say that mainstream discourses always create an unfit organizing climate for Indigenous peoples by limiting the available discursive resources people have to talk about an issue, thereby hindering a political consciousness which links particularistic struggles with larger systems of oppression. In doing so, Indigenous peoples are left with a highly constrained set of political options. Indigenous peoples can: a) join mainstream discourses even though they often implicitly or explicitly work toward maintaining conditions of colonialism; or b) eschew mainstream discourses although doing so may mean we will not have the same kind of financial and political resources available to pursue our political goals.

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[34] Ibid., 156.

[35] Ibid., 154.

[36] Ibid., 151.

Smith also illustrates the interaction between colonialism and its residual effects through her research on restorative justice programs. At their outset, it appears that restorative justice programs represent an anti-colonial alternative to a criminal justice system. According to Smith, in some contexts restorative justice programs are successful in diverting the accountability away from the criminal justice system and holding perpetrators accountable to the community. Such a task is always not so simple. For example, Smith looks at a study done by Rupert Ross on First Nations reserves in Canada. In this study restorative justice programs worked better in child abuse cases than in cases involving adult women "because community members are more likely to blame [the women], instead of the perpetrator." Restorative justice may offer alternatives but it does not necessarily address colonial or patriarchal mentalities within the community. While restorative justice programs are worth further exploration, they do not in and of themselves address the abusive and dysfunctional attitudes that exist within Indigenous communities, nor confront the ways in which the larger criminal justice continues to oppress Indigenous peoples.[37]

One of the problems with restorative justice is that it is envisioned as an add-on the to larger criminal justice system. This mirrors the "politics of inclusion and cultural competency."[38] The politics of inclusion and cultural competency are based around the idea that mainstream models should include a multicultural component. In some cases "cultural sensitivity programs" are expected to explain Indigenous cultures in thirty minutes or less. By largely leaving intact mainstream approaches Indigenous peoples

[37] Ibid., 140.

[38] Ibid., 152-154

unwittingly strengthen colonialism by not addressing the root causes of colonialism. As Smith goes on to further state:

> Cultural competency, no matter how reenvisioned, is limited in its ability to create a movement that truly addresses the needs of women of color because the lives and histories of women of color call us to radically rethink all models currently developed for addressing domestic violence.[39]

An event that occurred in my community of Muskwacis (Hobbema) provided an example which illustrated many of the points present within Smith's work. In the spring of 2009, the front page of the Edmonton Journal opened with a photo inside a sweat lodge, where a ceremonial sweat was being held by a Muskwacis community member for RCMP members stationed in the area.[40] The ceremonial sweat is an optional part of a two day cultural training workshop that has recently been made a requirement for all 175 members of Battle River RCMP district which includes Muskwacis in addition to nearby non-Native towns. The district supt. Darcey Davidson said the workshop was "very positive" and that "we're not trying to convert anyone. It's just an awareness. If nothing else, that aspect of respect."[41]

This situation is governed with interests of the RCMP in mind, as the RCMP are able to cross boundaries that are held to be sacred in order to teach their members about Aboriginal culture. While the cultural base of Muskwacis may be dismantled through such acts, the point I would like to focus on here is how when the RCMP devotes

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[39] Ibid., 152.

[40] Elise Stolte, "Sacred ceremony bridges cultures; Hobbema Cree elders invite RCMP officers to participate in traditional sweat lodge," Edmonton Journal, April 5, 2009.

[41] Stolte, "Sacred ceremony bridges cultures."

resources to a cultural training workshop, they implicitly set the discourse for how we talk about RCMP-Indigenous relations and Indigenous poverty and marginalization.

By devoting resources to cultural understanding through the participation of RCMP officers in a sweat lodge ceremony, the RCMP is able to push a tacit understanding that the reason for poor RCMP-Indigenous relations is a lack of cultural understanding; a process that is further augmented by publicity from the area's largest newspaper.[42] Yet to understand any poor relations between the RCMP and Indigenous peoples as a cultural misunderstanding overly simplifies the history of Indigenous-Canadian relations in western Canada by removing colonialism from the centre of the analysis. After all, people in Muskwacis are poor today not because a dominant society does not understand Nehiyaw culture, but because the assertion of Canadian sovereignty over the past 130 years required dispossessing people from our land and access to resources, the destruction of traditional governance structures through the imposition of state controlled Band Councils, draconian Indian Act policies designed to assimilate Indigenous peoples, and residential schools designed to cut off any link between older and younger generations.

Muskwacis is then affected because people begin to view cultural understanding as one of the primary ways the RCMP can be more effective within the community. In doing so the RCMP enlist community members to participate in RCMP strategies for community change and the real sources of stress for people in Muskwacis, namely a history of colonialism, remain hidden from public discourse and dialogue. When we focus on secondary issues like cultural understanding, it then becomes difficult for people

[42] The article was so popular that three Canwest newspaper's picked it up off the wire the next day in Regina, Saskatoon and Nanaimo, with the Leader Post in Regina titling the article "Learning about culture? No sweat, say Mounties."

to properly articulate the reasons why having a forty member RCMP detachment for a community of 10,000 people that suffers horrendous violence and abuse does not address the root problem.

In this case, even though many people felt it was wrong to publicly display a picture of a sweat in public, the discourse for talking about how to address the problems Muskwacis faces has been firmly set around a) devoting resources to the maintenance of a 40 member RCMP detachment as a way to alleviate community poverty and suffering and b) a discourse of RCMP-community relations revolving around cultural understanding rather than a history of colonialism. This was exhibited concisely by the only letter to the editor from a Muskwacis community member:

> "The pipe ceremony and the sweat lodge are traditions that are sacred to the Cree people. Although I agree there is a purpose to cross-cultural workshops and building relations between the RCMP and First Nations people, I disagree with this very public display of our ancient traditions."[43]

On the second point, it is now common for Indigenous peoples to willingly frame grievances around the need for cultural recognition, and eschew any discussion of Indigenous claims to land and a history of colonialism. I saw this focus on cross cultural understanding occur in my former work place with a strong internal push to develop cultural competency courses that would be offered to oil companies working on Indigenous lands. In doing so, Indigenous people themselves take a myopic viewpoint in regards to pushing forward Indigenous self-determination.

To close lets look at how Smith discusses the imposition of band councils on Indigenous peoples. The example here focuses on how tribal governments in the United

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[43] Mel H, Buffalo, "Breach of protocol," Edmonton Journal, May 3, 2009.

States carry out their sovereignty discussions. In dispossessing Indigenous nations of their land, and a systematic destruction of their economic infrastructure, the US government effectively made Indigenous nations dependent on the US government for economic support. With an understanding that political autonomy cannot be divested from economic autonomy, Smith argues that the main reason why Indigenous peoples in the US do not articulate sovereignty struggles in terms of political independence from the United States is that because without economic independence, "political independence in and of itself could contribute to further economic devastation for Indian peoples." As such, tribal chiefs couch the discourse about sovereignty around monetary remuneration. Yet a focus on monetary remuneration detracts from a dialogue around the need to fundamentally transform the embedded colonial relationship between Indigenous peoples and settler nation-states. As Smith states:

> "For no matter how large the monetary settlement, ultimately compensation does not end the colonial relationship between the U.S. and indigenous nations. The struggle for native sovereignty is a struggle for control over land and resources, rather than financial compensation for past and continuing wrongs."[44]

Since tribal governments are forced the present their claims in terms that are recognizable to the US government, Indigenous sovereignty discussions implicitly legitimize and normalize US colonialism. As Smith goes on to argue, "a proper struggle for political sovereignty cannot exist without reparations, and any reparations struggle that hopes to be successful must include transforming neo-colonial relations for all people who suffer from US imperialism." So not only does a focus on monetary compensation entrench the

[44] Smith, Conquest, 49.

legitimacy of the United States, but it prevents Indigenous nations from developing strategies of self-determination that confront the operation of colonialism.

Conclusion

By now it should be clear that colonialism and its residual effects are highly intertwined and simultaneously hinder Indigenous struggles for self-determination. As such we need pathways of self-determination that are able to eradicate colonialism and transform the dominant society, and simultaneously confront the residual effects of colonialism that exist within Indigenous communities. The driving question of this inquiry is if reviving Nehiyaw forms of power represents a pathway of self-determination. In light of the above discussion, it is now clear that pathways to self-determination must address the intersectional nature of colonialism. If reviving Nehiyaw pre-reserve forms of power is to address the intersectional operation of colonialism it is necessary to first understand what Nehiyaw pre-reserve forms of power are. The next chapter will outline an account of Nehiyaw pre-reserve power by looking at how authority and legitimacy operated in the pre-reserve era. This will be followed by the final chapter where we will look at why Nehiyaw pre-reserve forms of power do in fact represent a pathway toward self-determination.

Chapter 3 - Power, Authority, Legitimacy, and Pre-Reserve Nehiyaw Society

Introduction

We departed the first chapter with the question of whether or not pre-reserve forms of power represented a pathway of self-determination for Nehiyawak. Before we can answer this question in the final chapter it is necessary to explore what pre-reserve forms of power were among Nehiyaw peoples. To better understand pre-reserve forms of power the following will explore the interaction between political authority (henceforth simply known as authority) and legitimacy within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society. One can understand the following inquiry as a nascent attempt to articulate a Nehiyaw philosophy of power. Although this exploration does not describe pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms power in its entirety.

This chapter will be composed of four main sections. First, the definition of power, authority and legitimacy will be discussed. Second, a discussion of Nehiyaw cosmologies will be undertaken. A discussion of Nehiyaw cosmologies is necessary to properly understand the rationale behind the non-coercive forms of power and authority that existed within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society. Third, I will talk about raising children and the process of grooming leaders. Again, it is impossible to understand Nehiyaw power without considering the extensive effort Nehiyaw people put into inculcating a set of ethical values and norms into Nehiyaw citizens and leaders. Fourth, I will delve into the interaction between legitimacy and authority, which is the crux of the chapter. The final section will start by explaining the concept of plains Indigenous people as generalists. This idea forms the economic basis behind Nehiyaw forms of power in the pre-reserve era. Next, I will look into three concepts and their counter concepts. The

three concepts are: primacy of conscience; the people are the bosses; and the fluidity of authority. On the other hand the three counter concepts are: group consensus; delegation of authority; and the stability of authority. By highlighting and paying attention to how these competing tensions exist, were balanced, and were often complementary allows us to appreciate the complexity of Nehiyaw forms of power.

Definitions: Power, Authority, and Legitimacy

Before beginning, it is necessary to explain the three main terms of this chapter: power, authority and legitimacy.

Power

Inherent to the idea of a relationship, is that people within a relationship we have effects on one another. Power is ultimately about how some people within a relationship have a greater ability to cause intended effects. Power in the sense I use it is ubiquitous, operating at all times, with people constantly affecting and being affected by one another and the world around them. Power is constantly shifting and moving among people, such that peoples ability to cause intended effects is variable throughout time and space. While power is diffuse and fluid, its fluidity is not infinite and power does coalesce into stable formations where power can reproduce itself over time, space and multiple relationships. Of course the stability of power is not infinite either.

The definition of power provided by John Scott, as it has been researched and articulated within the western academy, will be useful in helping to articulate some ideas below. Although this definition of power does not replace the definition above. Scott writes:

> Social power is a form of causation that has its effects in and through social relations. In its strongest sense, it is an agents intentional use of

> causal powers to affect the conduct of other participants in the social relations that connect them together.[45]

A close reading of Scott's book certainly helped to developed an understanding of power, particularly in the difference between sovereign power (binding arrangements of power) and what Scott calls second stream power (relative arrangements of power). Yet, Scott's study of power relies on the idea that power is always oppositional, with different people competing to impose their will.

Sovereign power is defined as the strict and uncompromising authority that exists within nation-states, and any other organizations where a strict chain of command exists. Within these organizations power is exercised by actors who are invested with formal title and authority that allow these actors to impose their will "on the other participants … even against their resistance … and make others do what they would otherwise not do."[46] In this sense there is always a winner and a loser within a contest of power. Within this view of sovereign power the winner can be thought of as the "principle" actor and the loser as the sub-altern. Second stream power moves beyond, but does not replace, an account of sovereign power in that it is concerned with how "subaltern" actors use tactics of resistance, to counteract and shape the way in which "principle" actor can exercise power. My research aligns more with the idea of second stream power because sovereign power did not exist within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society. Yet it is worth repeating that the way power operated in Nehiyaw society does not align with Scott's study of power in western society because it is ultimately not based upon a contest of power. Rather, this study is based on the idea that people within relationships have the ability to affect one

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[45] Scott. Power, 1.

[46] Ibid., 1.

another and is interested in how people affect one another in pre-reserve Nehiyaw society.

Authority

Closely aligned with the idea of power, I define authority as the concrete ability to carry out actions and decisions on behalf of a group of people. As such authority relies on the power of individuals to carry out specific actions. Authority is the translation of power into concrete actions taken by a group of people. As such authority is not ubiquitous, but only arises when shared actions or practices need to be carried out by a group of people. Thus authority implies the presence of power within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society, but power exists at all times regardless of whether authority is present or not.

In his study of western, nation-state conceptions of sovereignty, Robert Jackson gives a different take on the relationship between power and authority that is worth discussing here. Jaskson asserts that the concepts of power and authority are often conflated into a single idea, causing conceptual deficiencies. According the Jackson, authority is the authorization, title, or official designation to undertake action. Power on the other hand, is the ability to carry out these actions. So while one may have the authority to make a law, it is power which allows someone the ability to enforce the law.[47] An illustration of international relations will help clarify this. In Somalia, the government is designated by the international community to have sovereign authority over the territory of Somalia. Yet, the government does not actually have any power to carry out their authority beyond a small area in the capital city. On the other hand, in Afghanistan, the International community does not recognize the Taliban as having any

[47] Jackson. Sovereignty, 14.

authority over land or people within the country. Yet, despite this the Taliban has the power to carry out political and legal action in parts of the country.

In the following, authority and power take on a different meaning because within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society authorization was not invested within formal governing organizations which held authority. Within Nehiyaw society, authority was only created when people came together in consensual relationships to pursue shared practices. The definition of authority necessarily involves the existence of power, because authority only existed when the power to carry out the shared action was present. Otherwise people would have chosen not to form a relationship in the first place. If one loses power, their authority automatically dissipates, and no longer exists. So when I speak of authority in the pre-reserve era I assume that power is also present to enact that authority. Authority always exists in concert with power in pre-reserve Nehiyaw society. On the other hand someone within Nehiyaw society can still hold power without authority if they have the ability to influence others within relationships, but cannot lead on behalf of a group of people.

The reason that Jackson's warning about the conflation of power and authority does not apply here is because there were not institutions that were invested with formal authority, titles and authorization to make decisions. Plains institutions did exist in the sense that many practices (spiritual, social, economic) persisted over vast lengths of time on a consistent and similar basis. Yet these practices derived their authority from the consensual relationships of participants and not from investing formal authority within an institution. As such whenever authority existed, power necessarily had to exist conterminously, or else the authority would not crop up in the first place. For example

when a buffalo hunt was organized, it always involved the delegation of authority to a leader of the hunt because if someone hunted a heard of buffalo individually they would scare the herd away and negatively affect the entire band. The hunt leader could use their authority to sanction people who broke the rules, but it was not necessarily their authority which allowed the hunt leader to carry out sanctions. Rather the hunt leader could carry out sanctions because the rest of the group respected the authority of the hunt leader at that time. If a person did not hold this respect, they would never have been delegated the authority of hunt leader in the first place.

As such, the type of authority I talk about here should be differentiated from what can be called *command authority*, where authority is divested in an organization, or title. In command authority, authority either exists or it does not. It is a yes or no proposition, categorical in nature. Again, this should not be confused with power, which is a relative, or variable concept based on your ability to carry out intended effects.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy is the banner word I will use to describe a constellation of values that were at play in Nehiyaw society. The following paragraph will quickly explain the ideas associated with legitimacy. In part, legitimacy describes the ideas of respect, or the admiration that people may have for one another. Closely related to respect is that legitimacy was based on a person's ability to hold oneself up to the highest standards of ethical and just behaviour, and make decisions in a prudent and conscientious manner. Next, the ideas of influence and persuasion, which is the ability to convince someone of your position, or in the event of not fully convincing them, to bring them on board with an idea to the extent that they can repress or let go of their desire to dissent. Also

associated with the idea of legitimacy is the idea of an established record of excellence, whether it be through war exploits, hunting, medicine, spirituality, or the force of ones character and charisma. As some have put it, an all around air of prestige. This also involves accruing wealth in order to help out the poor and destitute, resolve conflicts through the distribution of goods, and share with the multitude of visitors who sought out the advice and help of leaders. Finally, a person having legitimacy implies that one is considered to be fair or open handed in dealing with others, have compassion, be a generous and sharing person, and have the ability to resolve conflicts. Already we can see the interaction between legitimacy and authority.

In order to be recognized as an Okimaw (Chief) one must command a larger degree of legitimacy in relation to others who are involved in the decision making process. Those with the greatest legitimacy would be tacitly acknowledged or in the case of any uncertainty, the eldest people among a group may intercede and gently counsel someone to defer to another. The words of Chief Smallboy on leadership explain the process of how someone would accrue legitimacy toward themselves.

> "Only courageous men could earn the right to become chief. The more courageous, the better equipped a person was to be leader. His reputation would precede him. A chief had to prove his capability over a period of years. A body of legend would build up around him. … A man became chief *based on what he had already done*, not on what he was going to do." (emphasis mine).[48]

[48] Gary Botting, Chief Smallboy: In Pursuit of Freedom (Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 2005), 94.

Thus the process of accruing legitimacy and exercising authority took place over years of hard work and observation from others, and ensured competent leadership and strong governance in pre-reserve Nehiyaw society.

Kichi-Manitou, The Great Mystery

The following will provide us with a brief, and general understanding of Plains Indigenous understandings of the cosmos. This explanation is necessary because Nehiyaw forms of power should be understood as an extension of this larger view of the cosmos. To discuss the cosmology of Plains Indigenous peoples the work of Leroy Littlebear provides us with a set of key concepts. This discussion will key in on four aspects outlined by Littlebear: a) the world as composed of energy waves/everything as being animate; b) the interrelatedness of existence; c) the necessity of renewal; and d) the world as being in constant flux.[49]

To start lets look at the definition of Kichi Manitou given by Nehiyaw intellectual Stan Cuthland. Cuthland states that a direct translation for the word Kichi Manitou is "The Great Mystery." This translation is different than the dominant translation of Kichi Manitou, which is the creator or god. Cuthland is worth quoting at length here:

> Now this whole mystery in the language; when we say Manitou its translated like the Great Spirit, kichi-manitou. It isn't the Great Spirit, it's "a mystery." It's the unexplainable. Therefore, anyone who is a shaman, a medicine man, who has the power to do things, we call him manitouwiyo because he possesses some of that power which comes from "the mystery," which we have translated as God or the as the Great Spirit; but it means "a mystery." Therefore he has that power, he has that mystery within him so he's manitouwiyo. … Manitowan, it has that power to heal and you cannot explain where the power is but it's in that

[49] These ideas were originally presented to me during the IGov 540, North American Political Traditions in a lecture Dr. Littlebear presented as seven features of a Plains Indigenous worldview. I have used his writing to augment these four features I key in on.

> power and it comes through the Great Spirit. … But it's all in the terminology, Manitowan. It's a mystery how it cures people.[50]

It is important to highlight "the great mystery" as an alternate translation of Kichi Manitou because it aligns with the concepts of energy, interrelatedness, renewal and flux. Importantly a Nehiyaw cosmology is not predicated on the existence of an omnipotent being, something that can be confused when we translate Kichi Manitou as God or "the creator." The great mystery then represents the alter-material parts of existence that are both unknown and also unknowable, although certain people can tap into the energy of this mystery.

Considering this alternate translation is it also important to realize that Christianity has had a strong foothold within Nehiyaw society for over one hundred years now, and this impact this has had an impact on people's conceptions of the spirit. For example of the books used for this study written by people who had a close connection to the pre-reserve era, all of the authors had a very strong affinity with Chrisitianity (Dion, Ahenakew, Erasmus).[51] Although this is not to say that they did not retain Nehiyawewin, or a Cree mode of thinking. Local historian Bruce Cutknife has talked about hearing stories from Elders that bear such a strong resemblance to biblical teachings, that all evidence would suggest that at times people have refashioned Christian teachings as Cree traditions. I have also heard my late uncle discuss how traditionally people did not pray to God, rather people prayed to the ancestors. Thus in the following discussion it is

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[50] Proceedings of the Plains Cree Conference held in Fort Qu'Appelle (Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1979), 123.

[51] Dion, My Tribe The Crees; Ahenakew, Voices of the Plains Cree; Erasmus, Buffalo Days and Nights.

important to keep in mind how the idea of the "great mystery" in the Nehiyaw tradition should not be simply equated with God in the Christian tradition.

I'll start by looking at the notion that the universe is composed of energy waves which flow throughout all of existence. According to Leroy Littlebear, our material existence is the manifestation of particular combinations of energy waves coming together, and as such, everything is animate, which is to say everything has a spirit. Vine Deloria concludes his book on the powers of medicine men by comparing the conclusions reached by a number of contemporary scientists and philosophers with the understanding of the cosmos reached by Indigenous peoples. As Deloria states: "There seems to be a reasonable number of Western scientists and thinkers who subscribe to the idea that the ultimate constituent of the universe is mind, or mind-stuff."[52] This corresponds to the understandings of tribal peoples who "observed the world around them and quickly concluded that it represented an energetic mind undergirding the physical world, its motions, and provided energy and life in everything that existed."[53] In this vein, the physical world we know is part of a larger manifestation of the cosmos, energy, mind-stuff that is "beyond our powers to discern and was also part of our lives."[54] For instance, the words of Edward Ahenakew reflect the understanding of the relationship between the material and non-material components of existence:

> I will always say that it is not so much in the man himself as in the place where he lives that the true difference lies. We are told by some thinkers that between the material and the spiritual parts of man there is a great division, that there is no shading of one into the other. I cannot believe

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[52] Deloria, The World we Used to Live In,195.

[53] Ibid., 197.

[54] Ibid., 194.

> that. One affects the other and the place where a man lives can shape his character.[55]

Since the world consists of energy waves that flow throughout all of existence, it follows that everything is related through the flow of energy throughout creation. It is the idea that everything is interrelated that informs the actions and decisions of Plains Indigenous peoples to interact with the rest of existence on the principle that we are all related. Littlebear explains this here: "If everything is animate, then everything has spirit and knowledge. If everything has spirit and knowledge, then all are like me. If all are like me, than all are my relations."[56] It is these understandings that provide for the ability to think in a holistic manner because to think in a holistic manner entails the ability to see the interconnections flowing between people, and animals, and the earth. To think holistically, is a process and an action that must be on-going. This is why to call something holistic does not work as a title. To title something as holistic would necessarily involve a fuller description describing, or better yet doing some sort of action or being involved in some sort of process. Thus the title holistic is always incomplete because to be holistic is a process not a title. The focus on naming rather than doing is what has caused Alfred to state: "we have mistaken the mere renaming of our situation for an actual reconnection with our lands and cultures."[57]

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[55] Ahenakew, Voices of the Plains Cree, 58.

[56] Little Bear, Leroy, "Jagged Worldviews Colliding," in Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision, ed. Marie Battiste (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 78.

[57] Alfred, Wasase, 33.

Next, these energy waves revolve around cycles of renewal and humans and human society also revolve around the same principle of renewal. The seasons renew themselves with the movement of the earth, just as our human relationships must renew themselves through the fulfilling of mutual obligations and responsibilities we have to one another.[58] I'll go back to Edward Ahenakew's statement in light of the idea of renewal. Take the quote "The place where a man lives can shape his character." This quote speaks to the idea of renewal. To be Indigenous to a place is not an inherent characteristic or trait, or a gene that one carries with them. Rather, Indigeneity in the sense of connection to a land base, has to be renewed through different relationships between oneself and the land, or oneself and family, or community.

While existence operates on the principle of renewal it also operates on the idea that our world is in a constant state of flux. The world is ever changing and the interrelated schemata of existence is never wholly predictable. This is why kichi Manitou is the "great mystery." One can think of the energy waves that flow throughout existence as based on the idea's of flux and renewal. Thus, in the same vein as I will discuss below, flux and renewal are in tension with one another, yet they are also complementary because flux without renewal would be chaos, and renewal with flux would lead to a static universe. Littlebear also talks about flux and renewal as being complementary because if the world is in flux then it becomes necessary to step back and look at the

[58] Jeff Corntassel, "Toward Sustainable Self-Determination: Rethinking the Contemporary Indigenous-Rights Discourse," Alternatives 33 (2008):105-132.

whole to see the patterns within the flux. By stepping back to look at the whole patterns of renewal can be detected and this "leads to a holistic and cyclical view of the world."[59]

These ideas also seem to be gathering strength, evident this last summer by the eleventh annual language of spirit conference, a dialogue between physicists, Indigenous intellectuals, Indigenous elders and other philosophers exploring the connections between Indigenous cosmologies, quantum physics and other leading scientific theories.

Based on the concepts of energy, interrelatedness, renewal and flux, it is necessary to understand how Nehiyaw peoples ways of organizing their social and political life was an extension of their cosmologies. What becomes apparent is that if all of existence is interrelated within the flow of the "great mystery" supreme authority cannot be divested in a single being, title or institution. Rather, within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society, authority is only spawned when people consent to form relationships with one another for the purpose of carrying out shared goals.

In contrast, our present system of nation-state sovereignty, or what is also commonly known as westphalian sovereignty, arose out of Europe where Royalty argued that God had vested supreme authority in their office. Theological justifications for divesting supreme authority over a given land eventually gave way to conceptions of popular sovereignty, where supreme authority was invested in a state to rule on behalf of the people. Yet the present system, where ultimate authority to rule over a set piece of land is divested in the state to the exclusion of other authorities, found its origin in the idea of a supreme god who was the ultimate sovereign.[60] Just as our understanding of

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[59] Littlebear, "Jagged Worldviews Colliding", 78.

[60] Jackson, Sovereignty.

nation-state sovereignty must be understood in light of theological justifications, Nehiyaw cosmological understandings cannot be divested from our understanding of Nehiyaw forms of power in the pre-reserve era.

Child rearing and the grooming process

With the discussion of Nehiyaw cosmologies in mind it is also necessary to discuss how people were raised amongst Nehiyawak. In order to undertake a discussion of Nehiyaw forms of power within the pre-reserve era it is necessary to understand the huge effort people put into inculcating a set of ethics into their citizens from a young age. This section will talk about the inculcation of ethics within Nehiyaw citizens through the concept of a collective cultural code as put forward by Leroy Littlebear. The discussion of a cultural code will be followed by discussing how leaders would be groomed with a set of ethics from a young age.

As Littlebear states: "Given the opportunity, Aboriginal cultures attempt to mould their members into ideal personalities." This is done through "praise, reward, recognition, and renewal ceremonies and by example, actual experience, and story telling."[61] Although this education is strict and children are sternly lectured about the implication of poor behaviour, a child is seldom physically punished, and this strict training exists in a "'sea' of love and kindness."[62]

In the article "Jagged Worldviews Colliding" and in his foreword to Wasase, discussion of the grooming process is central. In 'Jagged Worldviews Colliding' Littlebear argues that the process of colonization attempted to destroy an Aboriginal

[61] Littlebear, "Jagged Worldviews Colloding", 83.

[62] Ibid., 81.

worldview and impose a Eurocentric worldview, but both attempts failed. The result was that growing up under the regime of residential schools and strict social control "left a heritage of jagged worldviews among Indigenous peoples."[63] Left with a legacy of a fragmentary set of values to regulate relationships, "legitimate social and political control" was eroded. In the foreword to Wasase, Littlebear picks this point back up and instead of focusing on the idea of jagged worldviews, uses the idea of cultural blanks. Here Littlebear posits that culture is a "mechanism for socialization with a built in reward system for those who subscribe to it."[64] Littlebear again returns to the questions of what happens when one culture is imposed upon another. Here Littlebear states that efforts at assimilation resulted not in acceptance of Euro-North American ways but rather in a cultural pollution resulting in what Littlebear calls 'cultural blanks.' As Littlebear states:

> A person who is a 'cultural blank' is a person with no cultural code or set of norms to guide his or her behaviour. The only norm is expedience.[65]

The emphasis Littlebear puts on developing a collective cultural code, or what could be called a shared set of ethics, points toward the importance plains Indigenous societies placed on inculcating a set of ethics within their citizens and leaders. As well, his framing of the destruction of the cultural code as the legacy of colonialism further augments the importance Littlebear places the cultural code in plains Indigenous societies.

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[63] Ibid., 84.

[64] Little Bear, Leroy, "Foreword," in Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2005), 11.

[65] Ibid., 11.

Also important to realize is that Littlebear's understanding of the collective code does not entail a strict and rigid confinement of personal freedoms. To the contrary, he states: "any individual within a culture is going to have his or her own personal interpretation of the collective cultural code."[66] He further states, "In Aboriginal societies, diversity is the norm, so deviation from acceptable behaviour is minimized" because multiple ways of being are accepted.[67]

Children, in particular, were given special attention in the process of inculcating a set of ethical values and raising leaders. Lets look at some of the ways in which young people were groomed for leadership. In an interview I did with Jerry Saddleback in Fall 2006 about Nehiyaw Leadership, Saddleback used the interview to talk about the importance of compassion in raising children. According to Saddleback, when raising a child it was necessary to constantly shower that child with love and compassion. This would result in the child feeling safe and secure in the world. Children should feel so safe and secure in the world that when a child took their first step, it would not even dawn upon the child what they had just done because they were surrounded by feelings of compassion and love. This is why, according to Saddleback, the highest spiritual offering one can make within Nehiyaw culture is the tears that a parent sheds upon being overcome with feelings of joy for their children.

According to Saddleback if one approaches the world with compassion they open up the full spectrum of intellectual pathways one can use to understand the world. If parents were successful in raising their children in a compassionate and loving

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[66] Littlebear, "Jagged Worldviews Colloding", 77.

[67] Ibid., 83.

environment, as a child grew into an adult they would have the capacity to utilize a full spectrum of human thought. On the other hand, if someone is mean-spirited and unkind towards other, they start to close down the full spectrum of intellectual pathways in their mind. To become regarded as a leader it is was necessary for one to be regarded as a wise, intelligent, fair, and open handed person. Thus, the process of developing one's full intellect started with imbuing compassion within a person as a young child.[68]

People who at a young age demonstrated they had the patience to sit and listen to older people talk were pegged as youth who might be potential leaders in the future. These youth had a special eye kept on them so they could be taught certain lessons growing up. Cree intellectual Fine Day, talked about the grooming process for potential future leaders, as recorded by Mandelbaum. In this oft quoted passage, Fine Day talks about the process of how older people would groom younger people to become leaders.

> Now young man, you are climbing higher and higher and are on the way to become a chief. It is for your own good (that we speak). It is not an easy thing to be chief. Look at this chief now. He has to have pity on the poor. When he sees a man in difficulty he must try to help him in whatever way he can. If a person asks for something in his tipi, he must give it to him willingly and without any bad feeling. We are telling you this now because you will meet these things and you must have a strong heart.[69]

In addition to leading decision-making processes, one of the main duties of the chief was to maintain good relations within the band. It was necessary for Okimaws to hold themselves to a higher standard than others. One story that was related to me by my Kokum was that when Dan Minde, her Mosum (grandfather), took the office of Chief for

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[68] Jerry Saddleback, "Interview with Matthew Wildcat", November 2006.

[69] David Mandelbaum, The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical, and Comparative Study (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1979), 106.

Ermineskin band, Chief Ermineskin came to him and said that he must learn to not hold ill will towards others. Chief Ermineskin said that you must be prepared to have people express negative energy and feelings your way, even to the point where some people may physically hit you, but that you must teach yourself to let go of any bad feelings you have toward these people.[70]

Another important trait that people attempted to inculcate within the next generation was humility. Anyone who hoped to become an Okimaw could never express any desire or promote oneself for leadership. I will call this an ethic of non-self promotion. It is important to realize the important role humility played in the interaction of legitimacy and authority. People were always counseled that publicly advocating oneself for leadership was an action that was highly frowned upon. The act of promoting oneself for leadership would have the opposite effect that a person intended because one would become delegitimized in the eyes of others. Thus, the *ethic of non-self promotion* played an important function in Nehiyaw society because it meant that people could only rise in prestige and gain legitimacy through the acknowledgement of others. This is one of the key components of the interaction between legitimacy and authority because it ensured authority could not be gained from individuals who attempted to harass or impose their will upon others. Rather, one was only placed in a position of authority because they were commonly recognized as outstanding individuals from the citizens of a band.

[70] Teresa Wildcat, Personal Communication, November 2006.

The Interaction of Legitimacy and Authority

Much of what I have said already has already illustrated or hinted at how legitimacy and authority interact with each other. The following will start by looking at the concept of plains Indigenous people as generalists, which gives us an economic understanding of how legitimacy and authority could interact in the pre-reserve era. After this, three concepts and counter concepts that are key to understanding how authority and legitimacy interacted among Nehiyawak will be described. These three main concepts are: primacy of conscious; the people are the bosses; and fluidity of authority. The counter concepts are: decision making by consensus; delegation of authority; and the stability of authority. In many respects the true value of understanding Nehiyaw forms of power lies in understanding how these tensions interacted with each other, were balanced, and how these counteracting forces were often complementary. As such, aspects of pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power may seem contradictory on the surface, but it is necessary to understand those contradictions in the context of how power worked generally speaking.

The work of Anne Waters in her article "Language Matters: Nondiscrete, Nonbinary, Dualism" gives an excellent description of how seemingly contradictory forces can be viewed as complementary within Indigenous modes of thought. In the following, Waters explains how an Indigenous viewpoint does not see dual concepts as necessarily being in opposition to one another:

> A nonbinary, complementary dualist construct would distinguish two things: (1) a dualism (e.g. male-female) that may appear … as opposites or things different from one another in some respects; and (2) a nonbinary (complementary) syntax that puts together such constructs without maintaining sharp and clear boundary distinctions (unlike a binary system). The maintenance of the rigid distinct boundaries of binary logic enable (though may not necessiate) an hierarchical value judgment to take

> place (e.g. mind over body, or male over female) precisely because of the sharp bifurcation. A nonbinary (complementary) dualism would place the two constructs together in such a way that one would remain itself, and be also part of the other. In this way, an hierarchical valuing of one being better, superior or more valued than another cannot be, or rather is, excluded by the nonbinary logic.[71]

Simply put, it is not useful to understand pre-reserve forms of power through drawing sharp, immovable boundaries between opposing ideas. The idea of non-discreet binaries is used below to understand how contrasting concepts can be related and even complementary. In this respect we must view what seems at the surface as juxtaposed forces, as actually interweaving and interconnecting with each other. Part of the value of having a textured understanding of pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power is of course access to decolonized ethical and intellectual frameworks. Yet, the above understanding also requires us to view Nehiyaw governance as a complex undertaking that requires intellectual work to balance, competing and contradictory forces. Viewing governance as a difficult undertaking gives us the understanding that governance is and has always been a complex undertaking that requires perseverance in thought and action.

Plains Indigenous people as generalists

Leroy Littlebear has described Plains Indigenous people as generalists. What Littlebear means by this, is that every person held the knowledge that was needed to provide for their material well-being, to the exclusion of being reliant upon others. Littlebear describes the idea of a generalist here starting with its relation to the importance of individual wholeness, balance and strength:

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[71] Anne Waters, "Language Matters: Nondiscrete Nonbinary Dualism," in American Indian Thought, ed. Anne Waters (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 98-99.

> The value of strength speaks to the idea of sustaining balance. If a person is whole and balanced, then he or she is in a position to fulfill his or her responsibilities to the whole. If a person is not balanced, then he or she is sick and weak – physically, mentally, or both- and cannot fulfil his or her individual responsibilities. The value of strength brings out other values such as independence and respect. Independence means being a generalist, which means knowing a little bit about everything. Independence (or being a generalist) manifests itself in many different ways. It may manifest itself in long absences from the group on the trapline, in not asking for assistance when in trouble, and in being a "jack of all trades."[72]

In an economic sense, the practice of everyone being a generalist meant that people were not dependent on others for their material well-being. With minimal exceptions, adults had the knowledge and skills to provide for themselves and were not dependent on others. The idea of people as generalists is illustrated by Kim Anderson in her book A Recognition of Being. Anderson states that it was necessary for women and men to understand the work each other did. For example a man alone on a trap line would necessarily have to cook for himself, while Native women would need to hold knowledge about hunting and trapping.[73] People in Anderson's study also pointed out that holding such a general set of knowledge meant that people would: "have respect for the work typically done by others"; "have greater flexibility around the gendered work roles"; and, would evade the public-private split, and hierarchy of labour that was ingrained in Western society.[74]

Robyn Riddington, also adds to our understanding of people as generalists in his study of knowledge and technology among Dunne-za, who lived along the Peace River

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[72] Littlebear, "Jagged Worldviews Colloding", 79.

[73] Kim Anderson, A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2000), 59.

[74] Ibid., 59-60.

between the Rocky Mountains and Lake Athabasca. According to Riddington, in regards to nomadic based societies, "Technology should be seen as a system of knowledge rather than in inventory of objects."[75] Rather than haul physical tools around with them from one spot to the next, Dunne-za would carry the knowledge with them needed to create tools on the spot and utilize hunting strategies based on their locale. For the Dunne-za, one's prestige was measured based on the extent of their knowledge and power was gained by the most knowledgeable. A group necessarily had to carry all knowledge of the environment with them in order to survive. As such, knowledge was viewed as a "means of production more fundamental than any set of artifacts."[76] Riddington argues that knowledge is more important than material technology within a society where the means of subsistence are garnered through a relationship to the environment, rather than control of the environment. Since all children would be raised to carry important knowledge with them, people within traditional Dunne-za society can be described as generalists, as opposed to a society of specialists where people carry knowledge in an area of specialization and people are reliant upon each other to provide specialized knowledge.

Although the system of technology in societies where people are generalists is not based around specialized material technology, it should be pointed out that one should not confuse material technology as being inherently anti-generalist. The point of people as generalist is to minimize relations of power where economic dependency is at

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[75] Robin Ridington. "Technology, World View and Adaptive Strategy in a Northern Hunting Society," in The First Ones: Readings in Indian/Native Studies, ed. David R. Miller, Carl Beal, James Dempsey, and R. Wesley Heber. (Piapot Reserve: Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Press, 1992), 161.

[76] Ibid., 164.

play. While I have not searched out examples of material technology that align with the principle of individuals as generalists, I did come across one example where a pair of eyeglasses have been constructed based on the idea of providing access to appropriate eyewear for as many people as possible. In the mid-1980's a scientist at Oxford realized the impossibility of providing appropriate eyewear in many, primarily non-western, parts of the world in light of the highly technical, and costly field of optometry. He set a goal upon himself of addressing this problem and recently came out with a pair of eyeglasses that the user can manually adjust themselves. The glasses are filled with a layer of water. Since magnification increases based on the thickness of the material it passes through, the uses can either increase or decrease the amount of water in the glasses to fit their vision. The tube to inject or drain water is then sealed off and the user now has a new set of frames. The cost is around one dollar per frame.[77]

The glasses are said to still be somewhat awkward and clumsy, yet this pioneering work is clearly a movement away from specialization. Of course does not live up to the idea of people as generalists in the purest sense because people are still dependent on a manufacturer. Yet the idea here aligns with a generalist version technology much more so than an eyewear strategy based on spreading a field of optometry that requires practitioners who attend years of medical school, aided by thousands of dollars worth of equipment . Allowing a greater amount of people access to an important piece of equipment illustrates how the principles behind people as generalists can still have salience in our highly specialized age.

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[77] Ester Addley, "Inventor's 2020 vision: to help 1 bn of the world's poorest to see better," The Guardian, 22 Dec 2008, http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/dec/22/diy-adjustable-glasses-josh-silver.

In terms of legitimacy and authority, what peoples as generalists meant is that people were not dependent on each other to survive, and as such the choice to belong to a political unit was done on the basis of individual consent. This meant people could choose to leave a group at any given time because they were not dependent on others for their survival. As such, any authority that a group might yield only existed as far as people within a band consented to that political authority. This of course meant that power operated among people in a very non-hierarchical, and non-coercive manner, although power still existed because leaders still would have had the ability to exercise influence, persuasion and ultimately authority within groups of people.

This is an important point because if everyone is economically independent it changes the playing field of power and authority because people cannot hold power over others through controlling the means of subsistence. Russell Barsh explains: "In indigenous American thinking, economic independence helps preserve political freedom. Leaders are inherently powerless to deprive any family of its means of subsistence. As long as each family stays within its ancestral lands and retains its economic autonomy, the right to dissent is a practical reality."[78]

Of course, the idea of people as generalists should in no way lead one underestimate the importance community played within plains Indigenous life. As reasoned above by Ann Waters, individual autonomy and the importance of community are not values that were pitted against each other in pre-reserve Nehiyaw society. The boundary between the individual and community was rather blurred and negotiable. This

[78] Russel Lawrence Barsh, "The Nature and Spirit of North American Political Systems," American Indian Quarterly 10.2 (1986): 186.

allowed the heavy emphasis that was placed on both the individual and the community to co-exist.

Primacy of Conscience

In his article, "The Nature and Spirit of North American Political Systems", Russel Barsh outlines three concepts that "recur throughout the theology and cosmology of North American Indigenous peoples; individual conscience, universal kinship, and the endless creative power of the world."[79] The idea I would like to explore on is individual conscience, or what Barsh later calls primacy of conscience. The concept of *Primacy of conscience* at its outset is the idea that each individual was ultimately responsible for making their own decisions and others were obliged to respect the conscience of other individuals. While others could attempt to persuade or influence someone, it was incumbent upon everyone that they let others make and act upon their own decisions. This is one of the most important ideas with which I remember growing up with. "But you have to let people make their own decisions" people would say in counsel. It was also an idea that has been called the "ethic of non-interference"[80] but I have chosen to use *Primacy of conscience* here as Barsh has done an excellent job of drawing out the foundation of knowledge and knowing upon which the primacy of conscience is based. A summary of Barsh's argument will allow us to see the interaction between legitimacy and authority.

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[79] Ibid., 181.

[80] See Rupert Ross, Dancing with a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality (Octopus Publishing Group, Markham Ontario: 1992).

As Barsh explains, a North American Indigenous cosmology rested on the assumption that the universe is composed of a vast, mysterious creative power. He states

> creative power is 'universally' available to all," and everything has "its own particular kind of power.' Nothing is intrinsically superior in rights or power, but temporary perturbations result from 'how carefully, or shrewdly, or skillfully" various spirits wield their unique talents.[81]

Since this cosmological foundation rested on the notions of diffuse, unknowable power, it is impossible for a singular knowledge to be imposed upon people; "each human personality, and its subjective impression of the world, is intrinsically valid."[82] Within this context it does not make sense for others to coercively enforce their will, or a set of externalized rules upon others. People can only influence each other and maintain political and kinship connections through "persuasion and demands on personal obligation." Only those who had attained a degree of legitimacy could exercise widespread influence and be delegated authority.

In tension with the primacy of individual conscience, and also very important for understanding the interaction of legitimacy and authority, is consensus decision making. Consensus, in a Nehiyaw political tradition, is not based upon absolute, unequivocal agreement among everyone. Rather, it is the need of everyone to consent to a course of action. Of course consensus could always be maintained through dissenters simply leaving the group, an idea I will discuss later. What is interesting to explore here is how consensus was maintained in the face of the ultimate ability of people to leave based on the primacy of conscience.

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[81] Barsh, "The Nature and Spirit of North American Political Systems," 181.

[82] Ibid., 183.

People had the ability to gather around common understandings and generate consensus, while maintaining primacy of conscious in two important ways. First, in a collective sense, power would operate through group censure carried out by public opinion, and ridicule. Barsh quotes the historic Annisanabe writer George Copway, who in 1850 states, "Fear of the Nation's censure acted as a mighty band, binding all in one social, honorable compact."[83] Thus, primacy of conscience cannot be thought of as uninhibited individualism. Rather primacy of conscience exists within relational networks, kinship connections, and an imbued set of ethics within people. Consensus could never be forcibly achieved, but a number of strategies and tactics were used to generate consensus, and also coax or persuade individuals to abide by the common sentiment of a group. For example, in Littlebear's discussion of molding individuals into an ideal personality above, many of the qualities speak to the balancing of individual conscience and consensus. Some specific examples Littlebear refers to are: "S/he is a person who puts the group's needs ahead of individual wants and desires… S/he is a person who attempts to suppress inner feelings, anger and disagreement with the group."[84] As well, other norms existed that improved communication within bands. For instance a priest living amongst Ahtahkakoop's band noted that people would not speak behind each other's backs "lest they should offend some of their friends." Rather issues were discussed in public where "people spoke quite freely."[85]

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[83] Ibid., 184.

[84] Littlebear, "Jagged Worldviews Colloding," 83.

[85] Christensen, Ahtahkakoop, 363.

Second, in an individual sense, a person who could accrue legitimacy towards themselves, would be placed in a position where they could influence the decisions of others. To gain legitimacy it required that a person consistently exercised their primacy of conscience in a thoughtful and delicate manner. The following quote from Barsh illustrates how an individual could rally public sentiment around them:

> 'The public or tribal position of the Indian is entirely dependent upon his private virtue, and he is never permitted to forget that he does not live to himself alone… Naturally when 'tremendous respect and trust is accorded to the individual this means a great responsibility.[86]

In order for someone to exercise the power of persuasion with others, and generate consensus it would be necessary that they had a long outstanding record of exercising their individual conscience in a prudent and scrupulous manner. Unless someone had accrued legitimacy toward themselves over a long period of time, it was difficult for them to rally support. Thus consensus was aided by having people of prestige and stature who could attract others, and exercise the power of persuasion and influence through a record of successful decision-making. In this way political authority could be exercised through consensus decision making while maintaining the primacy of conscience because processes existed to gather people around common, or shared understandings.

As we can see, while primacy of conscience and consensus decision-making are in tension with each other, they also complement each other. In order to exercise primacy of conscience while maintaining kinship and political connections, it is necessary that one exercise's their individual conscience in ways that lived up to the responsibilities and obligations toward the group. Individuals would then be rewarded for their behaviour through the multiple benefits of being part of a larger group of people. In order to

[86] Barsh, "The Nature and Spirit of North American Political Systems," 185.

maintain group cohesiveness and consensus decision making, it is necessary to uphold the right of people to have the ultimate ability to either consent or dissent. As well, group cohesiveness was also maintained through leaders who were in their position precisely because they made decisions in the best interests of the group. This was a necessity in order to build up a stellar reputation and attract band members. As such we can see that primacy of conscience and group consensus actually supported one another on the plains.

The People are the Bosses

The foremost statement on the idea that authority rests with the people is captured in the follow by Nehiyaw intellectual Sharon Venne:

> In a Cree Indigenous community, the *okimaw* (Chief) and Headmen are only empowered to implement decisions made by their citizens. An individual who is chosen as a Chief or a Headman does not have any prerogative to make unilateral legal or political decisions binding the citizenry without their express consent. The Indigenous peoples who selected the Chief and Headman are the boss. If the community has previously given direction, then the leaders are obligated to follow that direction. Chiefs cannot change the direction to suit the occasion, and they do not make decisions isolated from their people. Community members ensure that they are involved in all decisions given to their leadership. This is not to say that the Chiefs and Headman are not consulted about the direction of the communities. But the people have the political and legal authority, and the Chiefs carry out the decisions, not the reverse. Chiefs should not and cannot order their people to do things in contravention of the peoples' wishes.[87]

The above quote does an excellent job of describing the idea that authority within Nehiyaw governance structures ultimately rests with the people. But the above statement is not without its problems and does not give us a nuanced picture of how authority and power operated within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society. It's true that a band derived its

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[87] Sharon Venne, "Understanding Treaty 6: An Indigenous Perspective," in Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada: Essays on Law, Equality and Respect for Difference, ed, Michael Asch (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 179.

power from the people because they had the ability to leave and break up the band at any time. As such, authority (the power to make decisions) rested upon the consent of the people. Yet authority was delegated to leaders and exercised by leaders in many ways, and the idea that "people were the bosses" does not give us the total picture of how authority operated in pre-reserve Nehiyaw society. Even Venne on the following page when discussing the distinction between Chief and war Chief states: "In times when their enemies were far away, the Chief had undisputed control of the village. The soldiers carried out his edicts without complaint."[88] Of course in the large passage Venne is talking about collective decisions and in the passage in the previous sentence, Venne is talking about day to day camp life. Still exploring the tension between people as bosses and the delegation of authority is important.

Three important points should be added to the original point that people are the bosses, in light of how authority was delegated to leaders. First, authority was delegated to specific people to conduct specific tasks in some instances. The most prominent example of delegating authority to a leader is the strict authority structure that was put in place during a Buffalo hunt. During this time a leader would be appointed who had command authority over all other members of the hunt. A young warrior's tent would also be assembled and the head of the warriors would be charged with punishing anyone who stepped out of line during the hunt, or who left the camp without the permission of the Okitictaw (head of the warriors tent). All of this was important because if someone scared the herd away through either hunting on their own or charging the herd too soon, the herd might stampede out of the band's range and endanger the safety of the entire

[88] Venne, "Understanding Treaty 6," 180.

band. Again, such an authority only existed because of the respect accorded to those leaders by others, and was only delegated for set amounts of time.

The second example which complicates the idea that people are the bosses, is the idea that leaders were passive vessels through which the peoples carried out their wishes. On the contrary many sources show that Okimaw were often called upon to give people direction. Another source indicates that the way a decision would be made is that all the relevant people would gather in the Chief's tipi. People would sit in a circle with the least prestigious people near the front and the most prestigious near the back with the Chief directly facing the door. All people would go around the circle expressing their opinion and when it was the Chief's turn to speak he would make a decision.[89] While I cannot say definitively how often decisions were made in this way, it is important to remember than anyone who might disagree with a decision could always leave, that a Chief did not have mechanisms to implement decisions in the face of dissent, and that people would stop following an Okimaw if they abused any authority they might be delegated.

The biography of Robert Smallboy gives us a story about when he first rose to political office within Ermineskin band in 1959 that illustrates the need for leaders to lead. This story also illustrates the interaction between legitimacy and authority. Following in the steps of past chiefs, Robert Smallboy had built a large degree of legitimacy through his prior actions. When he entered office Smallboy attempted to acquire more land for Ermineskin band, yet only one councilor supported Smallboy in this plan. In later years this caused Smallboy to lament, that in the old days "people were

[89] Mandelbaum, The Plains Cree, 108-109.

respectful of their chiefs and were careful not to offend them." Smallboy had been chosen for chief due to "his past record of accomplishments, which implied astute leadership and decision-making capability."[90] Yet Smallboy was very bothered by the fact that "younger, less experienced, more arrogant councilors" would ignore his ideas "drawn from the long history of his grandfathers trying to negotiate reservations in both Canada and the United States … This was not the traditional way of doing things at all."[91] Smallboy's take on the situation was that based on his record of life experience, his ability to influence the course of the band should carry weight, and his legitimacy should imply an ability to make astute decisions in providing direction for the band. The point here is that was incumbent upon a chiefs to lead and as such they were delegated a limited degree of authority to make decisions and were not simply passive vessels through which people carried out their wishes.

Thirdly, some people who accrued a high degree of legitimacy even had the ability to influence people across bands, during inter-band relations. For instance, the proceedings of Treaty Six give us an example of this. Treaty Six was originally signed at two sites: Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt. The proceedings at Fort Carlton lasted for four days. On the night before the last day of negotiations at Fort Carlton a large meeting was held between all of the Indigenous people present. During the gathering Atahkakoop and Mistawasis, considered to be the two leading Chiefs present, both made speeches that supported signing the treaty and effectively swung the general opinion in their favour, despite the trepidations of everyone involved. The following day the treaty was signed

[90] Botting, Chief Smallboy, 129.

[91] Ibid., 129.

with most of the Chiefs taking Treaty at that time. This shows how legitimacy could operate across band lines in the exercise of authority, but the more interesting part comes during the proceedings a month later at Fort Pitt. Upon the chiefs gathering Fort Pitt, they listened to an oral report from Peter Erasmus, who was the interpreter during the negotiations at Fort Carlton. After delivering the report, the leading Chiefs at Fort Pitt were satisfied that the contingent at Fort Carlton had negotiated the Treaty as best as they possibly could and decided to also sign the treaty. In particular, because Atahkakoop and Mistawasis' names carried large degree of legitimacy, the chiefs at Fort Pitt were satisfied that they would have represented the people of the area as good as anyone possibly could have, and their followers agreed with them. This story of how the chiefs at Fort Pitt were willing to follow Atahkakoop and Mistawasis without any sort of prior arrangement gives an interesting account of how authority could be delegated across band lines.[92]

Another example of this can be found in the story of Big Bear. Treaty Six, covering present day central Alberta and Saskatchewan, was signed in 1976. At the initial signing Big Bear did not have enough time to either discuss the terms of the treaty, or to receive the endorsement of his band and as such decided to re-visit the issue of signing treaty six the following year. The following year in 1977 Big Bear met with government officials. Believing that the terms of the treaty could be changed, Big Bear lobbied the government office but soon learned that the government officials had no authority to change the terms of the treaty. After this encounter, Big Bear suggested that the treaty payment in 1978 be held out on the Plains at Sounding Lake. Knowing the large amount

[92] See Dempsey, Big Bear; Christensen, Ahtahkakoop; Erasmus Buffalo Days and Nights.

of influence Big Bear was accumulating amongst Indigenous peoples in the Treaty Six area Canadian officials followed his request. Both Treaty and non-treaty Indigenous people had gathered at Sounding Lake for the meeting. As many non-Treaty people were leaving their bands to join the bands of chiefs who had taken Treaty, the Treaty chiefs agreed that no one would accept their treaty payments until after the non-Treaty chiefs, led by Big Bear, had finished negotiating with the government officials. Not only was this a diplomatic gesture from the treaty Chiefs to allow the non-treaty Chiefs to carry out their political objectives in a more advantageous negotiating environment, but Big Bear was also looked to by treaty chiefs as the main spokesman for Indigenous peoples in the area.[93]

The explanation that authority rests with the people does not capture the entire picture. A more precise wording of the idea that authority rests with the people would be that the formation of authority within Nehiyaw society was dependent upon the consensual formation of relationships between people. Authority is then created through the consent of people coming together to form a band or a camp composed of multiple bands. In this respect, while the ultimate ability to create authority always rests with the people, within these structures of authority, authority is delegated to different people and entities in multiple ways. This discussion leads us directly into the final part of our discussion of the interaction of authority and legitimacy.

Fluidity of Authority

The final idea that helps us explore the relationship between legitimacy and authority is the fluidity of authority with Nehiyaw bands. Within Nehiyaw society authority could

[93] Dempsey, Big Bear, 80.

flow between different people and groups and was not permanently invested in any titles or institutions. As I discussed above, authority today is categorical because it largely exists within institutions and titles that are strictly defined. You either have a title or you don't, and by virtue of having a title, you can have authority. The ability to exercise power when in positions of authority is relative in our contemporary setting. Which is to say one might have authority but lack power to implement their authority.

Authority within Nehiyaw society could only exist when people consented to the existence of that authority. As such, authority could only be exercised as long as people supported the person in a position of authority. Power would always accompany people in positions of authority. If people no longer viewed someone as legitimate, their power would diminish and their authority would disappear. This is unlike our contemporary setting where authority is ultimately based on holding an official title or commanding an institution with resources.

Since authority could shift around in this fluid manner, plains bands might: split apart if a new leader emerged within a band who attracted followers; grow if the actions of a band attracted followers; shrink if the actions of a band caused people to leave; emerge from combining disparate groups; or disappear if people no longer consented to forming a band.

In order for this to make sense it is important to understand the fluid nature of plains life. Any individual would necessarily have kinship connections in other bands in the surrounding area. Additionally, many people were also multi-lingual and many bands were even multi-ethnic. For example Innes lists over one dozen leading chiefs on the

northern plains who had parents from different cultural groups.[94] The fluid nature of plains life provided for a wide range of options in deciding what band to affiliate with. This could happen in multiple ways. Historian Theodore Binnema explains the idea here:

> A band member was remarkably free to leave one band and join another. This fluidity did not threaten but enhanced the communities stability. Poorly equipped to deal with conflict and division, bands used many informal means to arrive at consensus. Dissenters, for instance, were encouraged to acquiesce rather than agitate when they disagreed with the majority of band members. If they did not accept the decision of the majority, they could vote with their feet by joining another band either temporarily or permanently. They could easily do so when several bands separated after camping together for a time. Every band member inevitably had family members in other bands, so the move from one band to another would not be difficult. Unhampered movement meant that local bands could emerge, grow, wane, and disappear over time.[95]

One of the reason's this was the case was that Nehiyaw society did not develop coercive and forceful mechanisms for enforcing the law that exist within nation-state sovereignty. A sovereign in the western tradition is the "exclusive and ultimate source of the laws of the state and of all other disclosures and acts of state authority."[96] In order to maintain supreme authority within a state it is necessary that you have mechanisms for enforcing state authority when people are not willing to peaceably abide by state authority. Within Plains Cree society, two other sources were used for maintaining cohesion within a group: culture and dissent.

According to Leroy Littlebear, and following on the lines of a collective cultural code discussed above, within Plains Indigenous societies "law is the culture, and culture

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[94] Robert Innes, "Multicultural Bands on the Northern Plains and the Notion of 'Tribal' Histories," Forthcoming.

[95] Binnema, Common and Contested Ground, 12.

[96] Jackson, Sovereignty, 10

is the law."[97] What allowed for the law and culture to be one and the same was the internalization, or knowledge, of the collective code by each band citizen. Since, every person was versed in how to exercise their primacy of conscience in an appropriate manner, all people were responsible for maintaining the law, because all were responsible for maintaining the culture. There was incentive for people to do this because the greater proficiency someone displayed in following the collective code, the more legitimacy they would accrue among their fellow band members. Thus, order could be maintained through a collective code that was internalized. According to Littlebear, this is opposed to western society where the law is externalized and because the law is externalized, order is maintained through external forces like the police. Within plains society, if the law was enforced through a set of external rule, people could simply leave the band if they no longer wanted to abide by the law. The only way order could be maintained was through mass abidance to a collective code that was in the best interests of everyone. Again, it is important to remember that abiding by the culture was not something that should be equated with a confining and limiting code because diversity was the norm and primacy of conscience was highly valued.

The idea of dissent is also integral to understanding the fluidity of authority within Nehiyaw society. It was necessary for bands to rely on consensus in order to maintain group cohesion. Often the most effective way to maintain order and address conflicts was for people to simply move to another band. Since people's choices should be fully respected the practice of leaving a group of people for another was not outside of the normal exercise of personal choice. Primacy of conscious was a value that was

[97] Littlebear, "Jagged Worldviews Colliding," 83.

ingrained within Nehiyaw society. Additionally, as discussed above, people did not have overt and cemented relationships of dependency with one another because everyone would have an immediate skill set to take care of their daily needs. Since people were generalists it would be incredibly difficult to use coercion to make people act against their will, as can happen under command authority. As such, people were not forced into a position where they would have to stay in an undesirable situation because they had limited options to ensure their survival. Since people had many ties with other bands in the area, it always allowed people multiple options to explore when choosing a band. While dissent can be thought of as illustrating the fluidity of authority, it was also integral to providing stability.

It is also important to realize how the fluidity of authority helped to allow authority to manifest itself into stable and long lasting formations. While authority had the ability to be incredibly fluid, this was a potential that often lied dormant. Authority manifested itself into stable and long lasting formations in two ways. First, in an individual sense, someone who had accrued a large amount of legitimacy would have done so over an extended period of time. Second, the authority that was created through groups of people forming consensual relationships with one another would often persist from one generation to the next.

As I have discussed above the process through which someone accrued legitimacy took place over decades. The process of grooming leaders certainly laid the foundation for leadership within Nehiyaw society. We can think of the process of grooming people for leadership as institutional, not in a formal manner, but in the sense that grooming people for leadership was a set of practices that people coalesced around, persisted over a

long period of time, and was not dependent upon one person or discreet group of people for its continued survival. As such, the process of gaining legitimacy was a very serious meaningful process within Nehiyaw society. Since establishing ones legitimacy and reputation was such an extensive and involved process, the legitimacy a person had built up would normally not disappear overnight, even under conditions of constant review by others. Even when one's legitimacy would fade and they lost the ability to exercise authority, remaining legitimacy would still allow one a degree of power and influence over others. The story of Big Bear is instructive. Even when he lost control of his band and been replaced as the primary authority, he was still able to wield a large degree of influence and power over people within the camp during the events of the NorthWest Rebellion.[98] The influence he wielded during this time was eventually used as evidence by the Canadian government to convict him of treason, because they did not understand the difference between the ability to influence others and the authority accorded to political and war chiefs.

While the process of grooming people for leadership created stability within the exercise of authority, it also enhanced the fluidity of authority. As discussed above, one major criteria of being viewed as legitimate was to conduct oneself in a humble manner. Since individuals could not promote themselves for leadership, they could also not coerce or pressure others to follow their leadership, what I call the ethic of non-self promotion. This meant that people were placed in leadership positions due to the widespread admiration they received from others. Thus, the existence of authority was always based on consent which allowed for the fluidity of authority. Yet, it was also ideals of consent

[98] Dempsey, Big Bear.

that allowed for the stability of authority because leaders were required to act in a fair, and radically democratic manner. Who would not want to be part of a group that upheld such standards. As such those who were highly adept leaders could exercise authority in a very stable manner.

Bands were also able to create relational networks that persisted in stable and enduring formations. For example, even when the leader of a band would pass away, the band was often able to persist without extensive disruption or chaos. It is well known that often the sons of chiefs would take over their father's positions upon coming of age. Yet, it was often the case that the son of a chief would not be suitable, or competent enough for the position. In this case the band would select another more suitable person for this position. This transition was done relatively smoothly as someone would already be considered second in line and they would simply step into place. Family members and other members of a tribe, often found it beneficial to increase the prestige and reputation of their chief, as it often brought increased people to the band, thereby increasing the wealth of the entire band, particularly those closest to the chief. For example, Imasees was the son of Big Bear and was considered to be next in line for chief. As Big Bear, was losing influence within the band, Imasees had to walk a fine line as he was considered to be the next in line for chief. While he wished to wrest authority away from his father, breakup of the band would mean he would lose his chance to become a chief. Again, while authority was fluid, the stability of a band's authority was also very common due to the large part legitimacy played in the formation of authority and the multiple benefits the stability of authority held for band members.

Conclusion

The above gives us a sufficient base to understand how power operated within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society. Understanding how power operated in pre-reserve Nehiyaw society is necessary to understand the reasoning and rationale behind how governance was structured within pre-reserve Nehiyaw life. Having an in depth understanding of pre-reserve life is a necessary step if we hope to revive pre-reserve forms of power, or any forms of traditional governance in our contemporary setting.

Chapter 4 - Reviving Pre-reserve Nehiyaw Forms of Power

Introduction

In the final chapter I will now discuss the utility of whether reviving pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power is a strategy of self-determination. In the previous chapter the pre-reserve era was chosen because the shift onto reserves changed the way in which power and authority could occur. The following will argue that reviving pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power represents a strategy of self-determination because to do so would require us to displace the band council as the political basis for Nehiyaw self-determination. In displacing the band council as the site of change for Indigenous peoples we can then create zones of Nehiyaw power that address the intersectional nature of colonialism. Displacing the band council as the site of change is similar to the idea advanced by Andrea Smith who states: "And just as we have to think beyond the state as the "answer" to violence, we need to think beyond the nation-state as the appropriate form of governance for the world."[99] As Nehiyaw peoples seek to restore traditional governance, we must think beyond the band council as the site where we will revive traditional governance.

Again, please note the term traditional governance is used as an overarching term referring to all aspects of governance from the pre-reserve era. As such the term encompasses, but is not limited to other terms that are used in the chapter like pre-reserve forms or power, and traditional political ideologies. Pre-reserve forms of power refer to the aspects I discussed in the previous chapter.

[99] Smith, Conquest, 184.

Many Indigenous peoples already have a strong mistrust of the band council. As well, anyone who has lived on a reserve over an extended period of time will inevitably have numerous dysfunctional stories and/or experiences ranging from interpersonal violence to unjust treatment to organizational incompetence. This is not to imply that there are no people on reserves who do very good work, or that many people on reserves do not make the best of the situation they are put in. Nor is the band council the only, or even primary thing that is dysfunctional about the situation Indigenous peoples. The point here is that many of the problems about band councils and reserves are well known. Yet, overwhelmingly, academics who focus on Indigenous politics ignore the question of whether the band council is an appropriate base for talking about Indigenous self-determination (although right wing political commentators are a different subject). In doing so, the band council and reserves are treated as a natural and normal part of the future of Nehiyaw peoples instead of being seen as a detriment to self-determination.

This chapter will do the following. First, the writing of academics will be used to illustrate how the reserve is treated as an unquestioned assumption within Indigenous politics. Second, we will examine the differences between pre-reserve and contemporary forms of power and authority. Finally, a discussion of how reviving Nehiyaw forms of power represents a pathway of self-determination that is intersectional will close the chapter.

Band Councils and Indigenous Self-determination

Beginning in the late 1970's use of the term self-government become prevalent amongst First Nation's political leaders within First Nations provincial organizations. The term was meant to signify the inherent right of Indigenous peoples in Canada to

govern their own affairs. Picking up steam with a number of reports that were published in the late 1970's and gaining wide spread acceptance with the release of the Report on Indian Self-government, better known as the Penner Report, the idea of Indian self-government became one of the primary expressions of Indigenous self-determination in Canada.[100] The term continued to be batted around through many constitutional talks through the 1980's and into the early 1990's. The idea of Indian Self-Government also began to receive a wide amount of attention and elaboration by academics in the 1980's. In particular two edited books were published by Menno Boldt and Anthony Long, in association with Leroy Littlebear titled the Quest for Justice and Governments in Conflict. [101] An earlier anthology, Pathways To Self-Determination, was also co-edited by all three. [102] What we see in the articles co-written by Boldt and Long on self-government is that the mechanism through which self-government should be realized are the more than six hundred band councils across the country. The process of gaining self-government mainly focused on how bands could move out from under the auspices of the Indian Act. Yet, in the literature the political authority of band councils to the exclusion of other governing authorities should remain intact.

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[100] Yale Belanger and David R. Newhouse, "Reconciling Solitudes: A Critical Analysis of the Self-Government Ideal," in Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada: Current Trends and Issues, ed. Yale D. Belanger (Saskatoon: Purish Publishing, 2008).

[101] Menno Boldt and J., Anthony Long ed., The Quest for Justice: Aboriginal Peoples and Aboriginal Rights, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

Anthony Long J., and Menno Boldt ed., Governments in Conflict? Provinces and Indian Nations in Canada, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

[102] Little Bear, Leroy, Menno Boldt, and J. Anthony Long, ed. Pathways to Self-Determination: Canadian Indians and the Canadian State (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

The questions around self-government became three-fold. First, how do we incorporate traditional ideologies into the structures of band governments? Second, how can self-government be realized within the constitutional, legal and legislative framework of Canada? Third, what does self-government look like? The third question was eventually dropped by the wayside under the successful critiques that such a question would be impossible to answer and would best be dealt with on a case by case, on the ground, basis. Still the first two questions remained and focused clearly on the pre-existing band councils as the site of self-government.

The works by Boldt and Long represent an important set of writing about reviving Indigenous political ideologies within contemporary political structures. While Boldt and Long do display a sophisticated understanding of traditional Indigenous political ideologies, they explicitly state that band councils will be the site through which these ideologies might be revived. In what is otherwise an excellent analysis why band governments see so many people running for political office as compared to similar municipal governments, Boldt and Long state:

> There appears to be no turning back from the elective system as the basis of band government. The acculturation of tribal members to the elective system and the guarantee of democratic political rights under the Charter, which legally precludes any form of elective system for band council will remain in existence.[103]

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[103] Menno Boldt and J. Anthony Long, "Leadership Selection in Canadian Indian Communities: Reforming the Present and Incorporating the Past," in The First Ones: Readings in Indian/Native Studies, ed. David R. Miller, Carl Beal, James Dempsey, and R. Wesley Heber (Piapot Reserve: Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Press, 1992), 359.

Although they do leave open the possibility that another form of "legislative assembly"[104] for status Indians may emerge, it is but a passing remark and is still based on locating the band council as the site of reviving traditional ideologies.

The 1990's saw a greater proliferation of literature on the topic of self-government. Notable is the edited versions of the book Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada which was first published in 1994, with a second edition in 1999 and a recently published a third edition in 2008.[105] Again, these compilations continue to treat band councils as an unproblematic political unit from which to push forward Indigenous self-determination. While Boldt and Long articulate an explicit focus on band councils as the site of reviving traditional governance, the articles within Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada seemingly evade using the terminology of the reserve, band councils or Indian Act band. An examination of the terminology used to refer to band councils illustrates how the terminology is meant to distance bands from their Indian Act origins. Within the Aboriginal Self-government in Canada series, the terms "First Nation", "Community", and "Nation" are used interchangeably to refer to primarily, but not exclusively, Indian Act band councils. To my mind this signals two shifts. First, the discussion about band councils in this series has moved band councils away from their Indian Act origins to our contemporary situation where band councils are situated as the vehicle through which

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[104] Ibid., 359.

[105] John H. Hylton, ed., Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada: Current Trends and Issues (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1994).

John H Hylton, ed., Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada: Current Trends and Issues, 2nd ed. (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1999).

Yale Belanger, ed., Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada: Current Trends and Issues, 3rd ed. (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2008).

self-government, and/or self-determination can be realized. This is done through a re-branding by labeling all bands as First Nations. The primacy of band councils as a site of self-determination, and the re-branding of band councils as First Nations clearly moves the concept of band councils from away from their Indian Act origins. Second, Glen Coulthard has stated that recognition is the hegemonic expression of self-determination in Canada.[106] As Indian self-government picked up steam in the 1980's Federal government sought to extend recognition to Indigenous peoples through the pre-existing network of Indian Act band councils. In order to seek recognition from the Federal government, Indigenous political leaders were forced to entrench the primacy of band councils as site of change in order to receive recognition from the Federal government. Again, it was necessary for Aboriginal leaders to distance bands from their Indian Act origins and re-brand Indian Act Bands as legitimate political entities deserving of recognition.

On the heels of the events in 1990 at Kanestake (Oka, Quebec) the Federal government commissioned the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). While the RCAP is interesting for a number of reasons, the reason it is noteworthy here is because of its definition of Aboriginal self-government. The RCAP stated that self-government should be vested in Aboriginal nations meaning "a sizeable body of Aboriginal people with a shared sense of national identity, that constitutes the predominant population of a territory or collection of territories."[107] Academics and politicians both construed the RCAP definition of self-government to mean that band

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[106] Coulthard, Glen. "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the 'Politics of Recognition' in Canada." Contemporary Political Theory, 6.4 (2007): 437- 460.

[107] Belanger and Newhouse, "Reconciling Solitudes," 13.

councils would have to gather their existing authorities into a larger political entity that would then exercise Indigenous peoples rights to self-government. As Belenger and Newhouse state, this was opposed to the "grassroots" view that advocated each Indian Act band was capable of negotiating its own self-government agreement.

According to Belenger and Newhouse, a number of forceful critiques were developed of the RCAP model that asserted bands would first have to reconstitute themselves into larger nations before they could exercise their right to self-government. Some of these critiques were that the RCAP model did not recognize Aboriginal visions of self-government, that it downplayed diversity in lieu of an the idea of a unified nation, and that undertaking such a project would be difficult in light of a history of colonialism.[108] As well, if self-government is only recognized when certain conditions are met, this indicates that the source of Indigenous self-government flows out of the Canadian constitution and/or Canadian sovereignty instead of Indigenous legal and political sources. Despite the problems, RCAP represents the only serious attempt at attempting to question the political units through which Indigenous people might pursue self-government. The effective quashing of the RCAP model also brought with it what remains to be the permanent entrenchment of band councils as one of the primary, if not the primary, site of Indigenous self-determination in Canada.

Attempts to imagine a revival of Indigenous political traditions in our contemporary circumstances through a transformation of band councils has become so ingrained that people do not even broach the issue when doing research. For example, a dissertation on Nehiyaw leadership values frames the problem as one where the

[108] Ibid.

imposition of a foreign system of governance (namely the Indian Act) destroyed the fabric of Nehiyaw governance. The disruption of traditional governance systems is still felt today by the difficulty of Indigenous peoples to govern our own affairs. For example the author states: "the most detrimental effect of the imposed reserve system on First Nations was that they could no longer govern the social, political, and economic aspects of their own lives."[109] Here the author does a very good job of drawing out how colonialism has been imposed on Indigenous peoples in an institutional sense through a) destroying Indigenous institutions and b) implanting Euro-Canadian institutions. Yet when the author goes on to talk about strategies of self-determination she relies on these same implanted institutions as the site of change. Like the literature from the *Aboriginal Self-government* series, the author uses the terms First Nation, Nation and Community to refer to Indian Act bands. Like Boldt and Long, it is not a matter of questioning all the current realities and past vestiges of Indian Act governance but rather imbuing our current band council system with traditional values. It is so ingrained in her work that it is even difficult to draw out quotes where she locates the band council as the site of change, because she uses the term self-governance systems yet does not state where these self-governance systems will be located. Based on the content of her dissertation, we can only assume she means a transformation of band councils. Here is a number of illustrative quotes, emphasis mine:

> We must critically examine our current reality and envision what *our reserves* will look like if everybody carries out his/her responsibilities.[110]

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[109] Leona Makokis, Nehiyaw Leadership, Dissertation (University of San Diego, 2000), 30.

[110] Ibid., 6.

> How can these beliefs be used to change our neo-colonial attitudes and then assist us to reshape our self-governance systems?[111]
>
> I began the study with two research questions: first, what are the Cree core values and beliefs; and second, how can these beliefs be used to change our neo-colonial attitudes and then assist us to reshape our governance systems.[112]
>
> First Nations Constitutions, Acts, By-laws, and policies will enhance and move our own communities forward.[113]
>
> Treaty Six First *Nations* (plural), through virtue of the Treaty signing of 1876, have a legal presence in Canada. As our ancestors of the past, we must take control of our own lives; making decisions regarding the development of our own sovereign constitutions, and institutions without further interference from a foreign government.[114]

It is clear in an academic sense that band councils are the site where people locate the revival of traditional governance. I also believe that this orientation toward transforming the band is the primary view held by the majority status Indians. Again the paper, "Subjects of Empire", by Glen Coulthard gives us insight into the issue. Coulthard argues that the politics of recognition in Canada will not significantly transform the colonial relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state. By applying the theories of Franz Fanon to the article "The Politics of Recognition" by Charles Taylor, Coulthard argues that there are three main reasons why recognition will not change the colonial relationship. First, it does not change the structural/economic conditions of colonialism. Second, Indigenous peoples themselves must undertake their own transformative journeys and positive self-esteem is not something that can be

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[111] Ibid., 9.

[112] Ibid., 184.

[113] Ibid., 214.

[114] Ibid., 217.

bestowed upon people by a dominant other. The third argument, and the argument of interest here, is that the politics of recognition in Canada subtly shape and mould the worldviews of Indigenous peoples to mimic the dominant society. In that vein, I would suggest that a main reason why people think of band councils as the primary site of political change is that we have come to think of the modern manifestation of the band council as analogous to pre-reserve bands. Somewhere between movement onto reserves and today people began to think of Indian Act band councils as resembling traditional bands.

A story which illustrates our association of contemporary bands with pre-reserve bands can be seen in how people talk about the creation of a constitution on Ermineskin Band (where my Band membership resides) in the late 1970's. Although this constitution has little to no effect on the operation of Ermineskin Band today, only being invoked as a political tool during conflicts, people now refer to our band as operating under custom law. In reality, the only real effect the constitution had was moving Chief and Council terms from two years to three and setting up an elders senate which rarely functions. When people describe Ermineskin Band as operating under custom law it is an example of equating our current situation with pre-reserve forms of governance. Certainly the creation of a constitution can be construed as an act of self-determination or self-government, but it did not transform Ermineskin band to closer resembling a traditional band. As I will argue in the next section, the reason why it is faulty to view band councils as the location where pre-reserve governance can be revived is because there are serious divergences between the way power and authority operates in contemporary bands as opposed to pre-reserve bands.

Pre-Reserve Forms of Power and Contemporary Band Councils

My experiences within my community of Muckwacis play a major role in this section. Muskwacis is a community composed for four Bands, Samson, Ermineskin, Louis Bull, and Montana. For the past two years I have worked at Maskwachees Cultural College which is one of the few truly four band organizations in Muskwacis. In my capacity as Registrar I was the primary person at the college who provided support services to students and was the main interface between the college and community. These roles also meant that I was actively in communication with different organizations from all four bands among other Federal, Provincial and Aboriginal organizations. A large amount of reflection on band membership is based on the multiple experiences I encountered attempting to help students return to school.

Based on our earlier discussion of pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power two immediate incongruities between the way power and authority operate in pre-reserve Nehiyaw society and our contemporary political situation are apparent. First, within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society authority only arose when groups of people came together in consensual arrangements in order to pursue shared goals. In our contemporary situation authority is divested within the structures of bands councils. Second, within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society people had the ability to choose which band they would associate with. Today, band membership is largely concrete and static. As well many status Indians would not want to disassociate themselves from their band anyways because it may exasperate already impoverished living conditions.

Within Nehiyaw society authority would arise when groups of people came together in order to pursue shared practices or goals. People of esteem within the group would be delegated certain realms of authority based on a past record of scrupulous

behavior and good deeds. Since those who held authority were always deemed with legitimacy, people in positions of authority always held to power to lead the group in shared actions.

As was detailed in the chapter before authority was not invested in titles or institutions, but rather arose only when groups of people decided to pursue shared or common goals. These associations would not last over indefinite periods of time, but rather were focused on accomplishing specific purposes. The size of a band, or grouping of bands, would vary depending on the time of year and type of activity. As well, the formation of a band usually meant the formation of authority in a stable manner, even lasting over multiple generations.

Contemporary band councils, on the other hand, carry authority in and of themselves. This can be argued whether the original divestment of this authority comes from the creation of band councils under the Indian Act, or whether it comes from the signing of the Treaties. Regardless of the answer, contemporary bands have been shaped by the Indian Act more so than pre-reserve governance practices. A greater degree of authority has also been invested in bands during the devolution of programs (i.e. education, child welfare) that took place in the 1980's and 1990's. Much like western sovereignty, bands hold authority to the exclusion of other bands and their authority is supreme within reserve lands. Of course, it is important to realize that in practice, Canadian sovereignty holds supreme authority over band councils.

The power of band governments to carry out their actions is made possible through a number of factors. Primarily, the authority structures of bands control the vast majority of money that is available to status Indians. Access over resources gives power

to the exercise of authority from band councils. For example the Lubicon Cree illustrate the way in which federal funding has confined the political realities of modern Indigenous political communities. The Lubicon Cree example is interesting because they are not even officially recognized as a band from Indian Affairs, although they receive funding for essential services. In the summer of 2009 they underwent a political dispute that has fractured the community into two camps. The one camp supported the leadership of Berniard Ominiyak, who had been chief for 27 years. The other camp supported the leadership of Steve Noskey. Noskey was elected to the position of chief unanimously in the summer of 2009 because the other camp refused to participate in the election. Here, two groups of people have formed political communities, but because oil and gas drilling in the area has destroyed traditional lifestyles they cannot simply separate as would have happened in the past.[115] Chief and Council controls the financial resources that are transferred to the band from the Federal Government. This means the people who belong to the Ominiyak camp are now in a position of dependence toward the ruling camp. Their options are either to live with their position of dependence or wrest control over positions of authority. To clarify, I am not trying to make judgments on either camp; I just wish to illustrate how power and authority can operate within the modern band as opposed to pre-reserve bands.

Despite peoples misgivings, the band is given a large degree of legitimacy by many people. As I stated above, part of this legitimacy is because people have come to view contemporary bands as traditional or normal part of our political life. As I will

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[115] Elise Stolte, "Leadership dispute engulfs land-claims champion; Lubicon Cree divided over band chief election results," Edmonton Journal 13 June 2009.

discuss later, people have also entangled their identities up with their band membership in a politically significant way and these attachments also lend legitimacy to the authority of the band. Finally, the band holds power because for many people supporting the band has many benefits, especially for those people and families who occupy positions of authority.

Regardless of how much power and authority a band holds, poor governance and organizational incompetence limit the ability of a band to exercise authority. Furthermore, the authority one can exercise is not based on accruing legitimacy through a long record of good deeds, but rather authority for many exists because of their position within the structures of authority and access to resources. Under this system a greater emphasis is taken on gaining access to authority in order to wield power instead of a focus on exemplary behavior through which someone accrues legitimacy and is eventually delegated authority.

These shifts have serious consequences for thinking about the revival of Nehiyaw forms of power that existed prior to settlement on reserves. Yet these shifts are rarely paid attention to. Namely, if the problem of band governance is seen only as a matter of cultural erosion, or disintegration, the shift in the way power operates within the formation of the modern "band" goes unnoticed as problematic. Thus it is deficient to simply state that band councils replaced Indigenous governance practices with western governance practices because a robust analysis would entail talking about the shifts in power and authority. As such it is no wonder that our questions have revolved around how to imbue modern bureaucracies with traditional values. Thus, any talk about the revival of traditional governance, without serious discussion of the changes in power and

authority, may only result in adding on cultural components to a western mode of authority and power.

Second, within pre-reserve Nehiyaw society, people had the ability leave or join bands at their will. The ability of people to leave or join bands created a situation where authority was fluid within Nehiyaw society. If people no longer consented to authority within a band they would leave. Since people were not bound by the structures of authority within a band, authority could dissipate or grow based on peoples choices. This was enabled in Nehiyaw society people because were trained to be generalists. Being a generalist meant that people had a range of skills that allowed them to provide for their material and economic well-being. As such people did not have relationships of dependency with each other. One was not bound to follow the authority of someone else because they were not in a relationship of dependency. The primacy of conscience, or ethic of non-interference, also played a large role in the movement of people between bands. Primacy of conscience meant it was acceptable for people to leave a band due to conflict.

In our contemporary situation band membership is highly static and concrete. For the most part people will not change their band membership throughout their life. Within Bands, if one does not agree with the way in which authority is being exercised, they do not have the ability to 'vote with their feet.' For many it may be impossible, nor desirable to attempt to extricate oneself from band membership because of the services, however limited, they receive. Additionally, people may often have limited access to mechanisms of appeal or the ability to voice opposition. The concrete nature of band membership has

many structural constraints to the way in which power and authority can operate within contemporary Nehiyaw life.

Relations of power within pre-reserve plains were contingent, mainly consensual, shifting and dependent on individuals accruing legitimacy towards themselves. Within the modern formation of 'the band' relations of power are often dependent upon the interaction between people who occupy positions within the structures of authority and people who receive services from the band. Thus one of the main forms of power relations within the band is the service provider, client relationship.[116] Many other power relations do exist, notably the strong kinship connections within and between families, the various spiritual and cultural people who hold legitimacy and the different economic enterprises that have been successful, all of which are not based on a service provider-client relationship in the bureaucratic sense. Still, in our contemporary situation the bureaucratic, service provider-client relationship holds a lot of weight.

One of the reasons the provider-client relationship is so significant is because it based on relationships of dependency. Whereas in the pre-reserve era, up to the extermination of the buffalo, people had the economic means to provide for themselves; today, the client is in their position precisely because they are reliant on the service provider to provide resources for their present and future economic security.

In addition to the structural issues described above, the concrete nature of Band membership also affects the way in which people constitute their political identities. At the level of band politics, band membership plays a major role in the distribution of resources to people. As such it has a major impact on the operation of power and

[116] Even more interesting, although I will not dwell on this concept because it is outside the scope of verifiability for this project, I would allege that the service provider-client mimics the relationship that exists between the band and the federal government.

authority. In our contemporary situation, people's political identities have become so tightly entangled with the band that it creates a discursive and political situation where exclusionary and non-cooperative attitudes take root. People's identification with the band has become so important that it has the effect of excluding other types of political affiliations Indigenous people can make amongst themselves. The identities of status Indians now revolve around their band membership in ways that negatively de-limit and confine the scope political possibilities for Indigenous peoples.

One of the effects the focus on band membership has had within Muskwacis is that people and organizations from different bands are actively non-cooperative with each other. This has the effect of creating poor services and generally an unsupportive environment for people. For people living in the community whose band membership derives from another band, their situation is even worse because many resources are not available to them, or they receive a cold shoulder from those providing services.

From chapter two we know that belonging to a political community was fluid and highly interchangeable. The practice of switching band membership persisted into the 1950's.[117] For example, there is a family of Ermineskin band members who's father was originally a Samson band member. In the 1950's, when this person was still a Samson band member and he had a serious conflict with another Samson band member. His response was to apply for band membership with Ermineskin band and his family was accepted. While this move has remnants of pre-reserve governance practices, people today still claim that this family does not truly belong to Ermineskin band. The immense book, Atahkakoop, which spares no detail of the early days of the Atahkakoop reserve,

[117] Bruce Cutknife, Personal Communication, February 2010.

extensively documents how many families left their band to join Atahkakoop's band in the early reserve period. As before, people had relatively free movement between reserves and "Ahtahkakoop likely found the numerical growth of his band satisfying, … as his band grew in size as new families and individuals were attracted by the chief's ability to provide and care for his people."[118]

Today band membership is very static and highly difficult to change. Those Indigenous peoples in the area who do not belong to one of the four bands are for the most part not considered to be part of the community even if they have been living in Muskwacis for years or even decades. Many of these people are caught in a difficult situation where their own band may refuse them services and they are given similar treatment from the four bands. Consider the situation of one of the students I encountered as a Registrar at Maskwachees Cultural College located in Hobbema. I use the gender neutral name Stacey to protect the student's identity. As well the Muskwacis Band in question will be referred to as the Bear Band. The other band in question will be referred to as the Eagle band, which is another Treaty Six band located in Alberta about a five hour car ride from Muskwacis.

> Stacey's mom is a Bear Band member but was originally an Eagle band member. At the time of Stacey's birth, Stacey's Mom was an Eagle band member and Stacey received Eagle Band membership. A year later Stacey's Mom married a Bear Band member and gained Bear Band membership but Stacey did not. At that time Stacey and Stacey's mom moved to the Bear Band and Stacey has lived there ever since. Stacey's Kokum (Grandmother) was originally a Frog Band member and most of Stacey's maternal kinship connections are through the Frog band and not with the Eagle Band. Growing up Stacey's primary connection to Eagle band was through having Eagle band membership. At one point Stacey attempted to switch band membership from the Eagle band to the Bear

[118] Christensen, Ahtahkakoop, 646.

> band but the Bear band told Stacey that it would cost $1,000. Now that Stacey is trying to go to school Stacey is attempting to get Post-Secondary funding that is provided to all status Indians. Since Stacey has little to no connections to the Eagle band they were very reluctant to provide Stacey funding, although Stacey did receive funding in the end. The Bear Band maintains that because Stacey is not a band member it is not their obligation to provide Stacey funding. Although it is worth noting that the Bear Band has provided Stacey social assistance in the past.

When talking to Stacey about this story and how it related to the thesis, we also talked about how Stacey's Kokum (originally a Frog Band member) and children were considered to be second class band members by many in the Eagle Band and as such felt there was double discrimination when dealing with the Eagle band. Stacey plainly stated to me, "well of course we should have membership rules that are more dynamic."

Of course tying up such a large amount of one's political identity with band membership ignores the reality of how Indigenous people, in the past and in the present, have always maintained kinship and social bonds across a wide array of communities. These connections that fall outside of 'the band' manifest themselves in various ways such as intermarriage between communities, kinship connections in different locations, following the pow-wow trail, political connections, and sporting events. It is unrealistic to think that the way in which we currently conceive of band membership, and the rules we set up around it could possibly account for the multiple, complex ways in which people actually conduct relationships across and within communities. Nor do our current rules and attitudes around band membership foster creativity in how we create political communities and alliances as Indigenous peoples.

The main point I wish to make is that band membership currently precludes pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power from existing within our current political situation. Additionally, the effect of such a heavy co-relation between political identity and band

membership is that people continue to direct their political energy and creativity toward how band councils can be transformed to become more traditional. Yet as argued above, by focusing our political energy and creativity toward reforming 'the band' system, we are unable to see the ways in which contemporary forms of power prevent us from reviving pre-reserve forms of power.

Finally, and most importantly, when we so heavily tie our political identity to the band, we by extension confine our Indigeneity to the piece of reserve land the band is located on. This more than anything is has serious consequences for Indigenous self-determination. If the story of colonialism is ultimately a story of being dispossessed from land and access to resources, it is impossible to think we could carry out struggles of self-determination without addressing the question of land. When we direct our political energy toward how we conduct traditional governance on reserve lands, we hinder our political imaginations from viewing our Indigeniety as encompassing all of our traditional territories. By not viewing Indigeniety as being ubiquitous throughout our traditional territories, it is impossible to ever truly challenge the colonial state of affairs in the places we live. Without addressing the original question of land I believe it would be impossible to ever have new beginnings that truly work toward a post imperial/decolonized future.

Pre-Reserve Forms of Power as a Pathway to Self-Determination

I first showed that band councils are the primary site of reviving traditional governance and one of the primary sites of Indigenous self-determination. Next I have shown that there are two major incompatibilities between pre-reserve and contemporary forms of power and authority. So if we are to take seriously the revival of pre-reserve

forms of power it must necessarily involve asking serious questions whether the band councils will be the site of this change. The conclusion I have come to is that reviving pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power necessarily means displacing band councils as a primary site of change. Reviving Nehiyaw forms of power and displacing band councils as the primary site of change represents a strategy of self-determination that addresses the intersectional nature of colonialism in the following ways:

a) By de-centering the band we will be required to form zones of Nehiyaw power that do not derive their power and authority from the Canadian state.
b) Undertaking such a revival would involve taking a concerted and focused effort on governance amongst Nehiyaw peoples. This would lead us to work on repealing the psychological and structural effects of colonialism.
c) If we are successful in establishing zones based on Nehiyaw forms of power, this alternate rationality will necessarily come into contact and friction with the imperial rationalities of the dominant society. It is through these sites of friction that struggles can be waged to challenge colonialism.

You will see throughout the following that reviving Nehiyaw forms of power is a strategy of self-determination that confronts the interaction of colonialism and its residual effects. I will now examine how a revival of pre-reserve Nehiyaw forms of power and the displacement of the band council as the primary site of change would accomplish the above three goals.

In light of the differences between contemporary and pre-reserve bands it should be clear that reviving Nehiyaw forms of power cannot be done within the confines of our current political system. One might argue that are goal should be to radically change the

way these political systems work. Yet, for anyone who has grown up on a reserve, or worked in a reserve community, we know that changing a band bureaucracy could potentially take longer than it would for a Styrofoam cup to disintegrate in a landfill. As such, it is time to de-center the band council as the site of political change.

In light of the above discussion we should be asking hard questions about the origins of Indian Act bands and their presumed inevitability into the future. Removing such an allegiance is the first step in freeing our political imagination to create a different tomorrow. By de-centering the band council we can begin to think about creating sources of power that fall outside the purview of the Canadian state. Doing so will allow us to create zones of Nehiyaw power. As you will see, the creation of these zones of Nehiyaw power is very important to my narrative of political change. Also, I do not intend for these zones of Nehiyaw power to replace band councils overnight. I realize that band councils will continue to exist for the foreseeable future. Rather, in my narrative of political change, zones of Nehiyaw power will exist alongside other mainstream political institutions.

If a true self-determination necessarily involves the creation of functional governance for Indigenous peoples, we have to ask questions about the root of our current dysfunction. Is self-government simply about running our own affairs, or does the structure of our political systems matter? How does origin of band councils influence our political systems today? What does it mean to have legitimate political entities of our own creation?

Based on the above it is clear that contemporary structures of authority and the way band membership operates would preclude pre-reserve forms of power from

flourishing. Most people acknowledge the violent and coercive way that band councils were established and how they contributed to the destruction of Nehiyaw governance. Despite the origins of the band council we do not question how we have located band councils as the site of political change. Rather, Aboriginal leaders have centered the band council in their calls for self-government. If we step back from a focus on reforming the band council, and begin to take a look at the big picture we can open up our political imaginations to view the full scope of possibilities. By opening up the scope of possibilities that can occur outside the band council we can begin to imagine how we might create legitimate political entities of our own creation.

The creation of legitimate political entities will not be easy. Legitimate governance will not arise out of transforming our current structures of authority to new, legitimate structure of authority. New legitimate structures will only be created out of the same process through which political communities on the plains arose. People will need to come together to form political communities on a consensual basis in order to pursue shared goals. In our modern age these political communities will more often than not be temporary. Many of them will lack stability and permanence over years and generations, due to lack of resources. Some of these zones may not immediately be based around the occupation of land, while other zones may arise over the occupation of land. They will have many forces which actively work to disrupt them, not the least of which will be cynicism. They will not be supported by many, and many who wish to support them will not have the means to do so. Above all they will suffer from the difficult task of people altering their lifeways in order to allow for the permanence of zones of Nehiyaw power.

How can we overcome these obstacles. It necessarily must happen through a re-priorization of what consumes and attracts our energies to make a better world. By de-centering the band council we can begin to reevaluate how we carry out political activity. We will begin to view the revival of zones of Nehiyaw power as having to occur through forming affiliations that occur outside of, or are not dependent upon the political infrastructure of the Canadian state. Doing so will allow us to free our political imaginations of how we can enact indigenous self-determination. We will begin to see attending an AFN meeting as being inconsequential when compared to planning a yearly canoe trip through sacred territory.

Of course it is currently impossible for people to entirely extricate themselves from the firmly established political and economic infrastructure of Nation-States and capitalism. Despite this obvious fact, there are relative degrees to which we can pursue associations that allow us to create sources of power that are not mediated by colonial relations. Activities that offer us the ability to create sources of power that arise from our own activities, instead of reform to the current system, can occur in many different ways. We should encourage a diversity of tactics because the more we allow political imaginations to be set free from a fixation on reforming the band council, the more we will begin to take a focus on our own practices of self-determination.

Creating these Nehiyaw political zones has important implications for how we can undertake strategies of self-determination. As we know from the first chapter strategies of self-determination must have a components of both counteracting the residual effects of colonialism, but also confronting colonialism itself. The creation of zones of Nehiyaw power ultimately has to be centered around creating relational bonds

based on Nehiyaw forms of power. If enough of these bonds take hold we can think of a zone of Nehiyaw power as forming relational webs based on alternate political rationalities.

Repealing the residual psychological and structural effects of colonialism to some degree must be based on the creation of zones of Nehiyaw power. Here, it is not enough to assume a simple cultural revival will change our conditions. Reviving Nehiyaw forms of power in and of themselves should not be thought of as enough to erase the residual effects of colonialism. Such a sentiment is captured by Taiaiake Alfred's own reflections in Wasase. Alfred states:

> Traditionalism, too, has imposed unrealistic and unproductive ideas onto the political landscape. The second book I wrote reflected … a "traditionalist" ideology which ignored the practical realities of quite extreme dependency and complacency … . It must be admitted by those of us who held the faith that we were wrong in the noble but futile hope that people can be made to change by simply exposing them to ceremonies, teachings and truths.[119]

Rather we ask questions about why reviving Nehiyaw forms of power would help to transform the situation of Indigenous peoples. Since zones of Nehiyaw power will be based on consensual relationships, the maintenance of Nehiyaw political zones must be based on the maintenance of healthy relationships.

If Indigenous peoples are to overcome the psychological effects of colonization, what matters most is that they have healthy relational webs they can attach themselves to in order to undertake their own healing journey. Not only are healthy relational webs necessary for peoples healing journey's, but these relational webs are needed in order to maintain ones health and resilience for those who are committed to Indigenous self-determination. Second, the creation of relational networks will combat the residual

[119] Alfred, Wasase, 224.

effects of colonialism because it has the ability to redefine our current relationship to land. Establishing, maintaining and strengthening our relationship to land will have the ability to establish new boundaries for zones of Nehiyaw power. These new boundaries are needed in order to open up new economic and social possibilities from which a revival of Nehiyaw forms of power can take place.

One of the detriments of a focus on reserves and the entanglement of our identities with band membership has been to confine the area of our focus to reserve lands. In doing so we sharply confine the area where Indigenous self-determination can take place. Others have already pointed out how this marginalizes Indigenous people who live in urban centers. These critiques are apt and Indigenous resistance should necessarily sprout up in as many sites as possible. What I am concerned about here is that confining Indigenous self-determination to reserves fails to address colonialism as a force that was primarily concerned with displacing Indigenous peoples from our lands. In order to address such questions, it is necessary that the creation of relational networks do not confine themselves to reserves. Since the revival of Nehiyaw forms of power opens up range of possibilities for how we associate with each other, it also opens up the range of possibilities for where these associations will take place. Of particular importance are those people who form Nehiyaw political zones that occupy land, protect sacred sites, and practice non-capitalist modes of survival on the land.

Look at some of the structural effects of colonialism. Lack of economy on reserve lands, unhealthy lifestyles due to disruption of land based lifestyles, authority structures within Bands that are based on exclusion and offer limited transformative capacity. Can we seriously expect that all of these effects can be counteracted through

reforms to our present reserve system. A revival of Nehiyaw forms of power will not always take place outside reserves or urban centers, but as these zones of Nehiyaw power take root and grow, they will necessarily spread to locales outside of reserves and cities. This will allow people to create new boundaries where Nehiyaw forms of power are practiced. The creation of these zones, with clear boundaries are necessary elements in order to confront the colonial operation of society.

In order to confront, disrupt and transform the operation of colonialism we cannot rely on a politics of demand in struggles for self-determination. The political landscape of Aboriginal-state relations has shifted since the strong First Nations response to the Government of Canada's White paper in 1969. Since that time, the leaders of Canada's major national Aboriginal organizations have developed a language based around recognition and a politics of demand. There is no doubt that the language of recognition has produced some positive political effects. Yet as Coulthard has effectively argued, "the politics of recognition will fail to significantly transform the colonial relationship in Canada." [120]

The politics of recognition are based on an external orientation for leaders of Aboriginal organizations. Within these organizations the focus is on large scale political agreements, legal cases, and articulation of grievances. Recently, the chief of the AFN has even come out with a strong pro-development platform inviting corporations to enter into partnerships with Aboriginal nations. In many instances this external orientation has been successful in garnering additional benefits and the delegation of greater authority over the operation of services within reserves. A major example of this has been the

[120] Coulthard, "Subjects of Empire."

devolution of education to Band Councils. Yet the result has been that many First Nations have fared no better in administering their own services. A whole host of reasons exist for the poor administration of services by Aboriginal organizations. Yet, as Alfred has argued in a Ghandian tone, there is a connection between the means and ends of political change. If struggle and transformation has not occurred in the means of gaining control over education, we should not expect that increased authority and control over resources will somehow serve as a wake-up call for people. The movement towards a desired end must occur through changing our situation in the present and not simply asking for a different future. We cannot expect things to suddenly change through granting of rights and increased power from colonial governments. Thus the creation of relational networks based on Nehiyaw forms of power is important because it seeks change in the present through addressing the residual effects of colonialism. Moreso, the means of this struggle allow us to practice the ends we seek in the here and now.

The creation of zones of Nehiyaw power is also important for transforming the dominant society. This will occur through a clash of rationalities. Zones of Nehiyaw power will eventually end up interacting with the dominant society. This is already seen in the clashes between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state that happen on a consistent basis (i.e. Oka, Burnt Church, Caledonia). Right now we see these clashes happening at different locations throughout the country such as the Chilcotin and Okanagan in BC and with the Innu in Labrador. Through the creation of strong relational networks that practice Indigenous political rationalities not only do we transform communities of Indigenous peoples, but we create a base from which resistance can

occur. When these zones come into contact with the imperial rationalities of the dominant society, a clash of rationalities will occur.

It is through the friction between Imperial and Indigenous rationalities that the struggle to confront and transform the operation of colonialism will take place. These clashes and friction points are not going to all of a sudden cause a mass awakening. In fact, if history holds true, many of these friction points will be coercively repressed by Canadian governments. Yet the same logic of blockading a logging road holds true. Even if logging trucks can take a detour around a blockade, taking a detour will take additional time, cost extra money, and decrease the profit of such a venture. Having clashes of rationalities, even if they do not produce any immediate benefits, challenge the operation of colonialism, and, as Alfred argues in Wasase "weaken the resolve" of Canadian society over the long run.

Conclusion

The ongoing revival of Nehiyaw forms of power, establishment of zones of Nehiyaw power, and the resulting clash of rationalities represents an important strategy of self-determination because it allows us to address the intersectional nature of colonialism. Yet, in order for this to happen it is my assertion that we must first displace band councils as the primary site of self-determination for Indigenous peoples. In doing so we will also detangle our identities from being wrapped up around band membership. It is this entanglement with band councils that limits the types of associations we can make as Indigenous peoples. Undertaking such a revival would involve taking a concerted and focused effort on creating zones of Nehiyaw power within our communities. This would lead us to repeal both the psychological and structural effects

of residual colonialism to the best of our ability. Most importantly, a new focus on how to create change will free our political creativity to envision a new future and how to get there. If nothing else, breaking open the realm of possibilities for a different tomorrow will allow Nehiyaw peoples to draw strength that change is indeed possible.

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