

*Searching for Arrowheads: An Inquiry into Approaches to Indigenous Research
using a Tribal Methodology with a Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin Worldview*

by

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B.S.W., University of Regina, 1988
B.A., University of Regina, 1989
M.S.W., Carleton University, 1993

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Interdisciplinary Studies

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

Through a qualitative, interdisciplinary inquiry of six Indigenous scholars who had completed or were currently enrolled in Education, Social Work or Family Studies doctoral programs, this study explores Indigenous methodologies with a specific focus on methodologies flowing from a Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin (*Plains Cree knowledges*). The study asked six scholars, four being of Cree ancestry, if they believed that there was a distinctive Indigenous methodological approach to research and if so what did it entail. Secondly, the study inquired into how Indigenous knowledges informed their research decisions and the applications of those decisions. Finally, given that each of these individuals were, or had been, enrolled in western doctoral programs this inquiry asks what were the challenges of using Indigenous methodologies based on an Indigenous worldview.

Findings from this study include an assertion of Indigenous methodologies and that this is a relational approach to research; that Indigenous methodologies flow from an Indigenous worldview while needing to be congruent with specific cultural ways and

protocols of the differing nations; that Indigenous methodologies encompass an inclusive, broad range of knowing which demands a holistic interpretation of ethical considerations; and that Indigenous methodologies includes decolonizing theory and action. In terms of application, the six individuals of this study affirm that research decisions (e.g. research methods) need to be congruent with the respective cultural epistemologies. Through their research stories, they provide examples of how they achieved this congruency in their methodology. Further, the study illustrates significant factors, such as allies, in nurturing the advancement of this approach to research in western universities.

To inquire into this topic, an Indigenous methodology flowing from a Nêhiyaw epistemology was used. This approach honours a relational worldview involving both the stories of the research participants as well as a reflective analysis of the researcher's experiences in relationship to kin, kith and community during this journey. To ensure congruency with Nêhiyaw epistemology, internal and external efforts were made by the researcher involving her own preparations to undertake this research including adherence to cultural values and protocols. The findings of the research are presented in two manners. The primary presentation is through story which honours the interpretive, oral tradition of Nêhiyaw culture. Secondly, to identify recommendations from this research, emergent themes were identified and thematically grouped.

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Kinanâskomitin (Acknowledgement and Thank-you)

My name is Maggie Kovach and I am of Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux descent. I am living and learning on Coast Salish territory, and I acknowledge the traditional caretakers of this territory.

How do I express my gratitude for all those who travelled with me through this journey? There is a poem *From Cement Floors* by Neil McCloud, Cree scholar & poet, in it he acknowledges all those, from the moment of his birth, who gave meaning to his life. To me this poem is about acknowledging the ancient ones, the relations who walked before us, also those who walk with us now, and those we have yet to meet. I think of a Cree educator who spoke to me about her doctoral research. She chuckled and said look at my acknowledgements it is a chapter! There are many to acknowledge and I give thanks to everyone who has given me support, encouragement, kindness, guidance, and love during this journey. While there are too many to thank individually, there are a few honourable mentions that I would like to make.

To both my mothers I want to acknowledge all of the contributions you have made to my life, for being the strong women that you are, and for being a continuing source of love and inspiration – thank-you. To both of my fathers, though you have made the journey to the spirit world long before I envisioned this research, I felt your presence with me throughout in more ways than I can recount – thank-you. To all of my siblings, in both my families, you have made me feel that I belong in this world and it is only through this sense of belonging could I embark on this research – thank-you. To all of my nieces and nephews who have kept me going, I see the future in your faces and I write this dissertation for you – thank-you.

I want to acknowledge Pasqua First Nation, my First Nation, who provided me with much needed support at a critical time. I would like to thank the small community of Cupar, where I was raised, as I spent many days during this research watching gophers, prairie sunsets, and being with my thoughts. I want to acknowledge Okanese First Nation and the time that I spent there visiting my brother and his family deepening my connection with my ancestry.

To the research participants – my friends. I want to acknowledge and thank-you for not only sharing your wisdom with me for this research, but sharing your knowledge for the many others who will read your words.

Earlier this fall, I was asked to think of a metaphor to describe a PhD committee. It caused me to stop and reflect upon my experience with my committee – Budd, Leslie, Leroy and Barb – and what metaphor would best describe this exceptional group of people. What kept coming to mind was a buffalo robe. This is my understanding of the robe. It has relational role in that people in the community know it's purpose, and though it is not worn all the time, when it is worn you feel its strength, protection and power. This was my committee – enough direction, enough space, with a purposeful way. Thank-you.

To my love, Monty, who has always been there, listening to my endless debriefing, traveling the many road trips, the seemingly total disruption of your life for this work - you have been my support, love and rock in too many ways to count. We've made it through this one, Mont – on to the next adventure! To Rachel, thank-you for being there, my girl! I want to acknowledge our good friends, Maurice and Jeannette. So many times throughout this research, I thought of Maurice's words – "if you are not

solving the problem within the context of the culture, you are just creating another form of assimilation". I want to thank Maurice and all those who helped me to keep this sentiment front and centre. Kinanâskomitin

Nakiskamohtah and Prologue: Locating Myself in this Research

Under the vastness of the luminous night sky
I stand shivering on this sacred Plains earth
breathing the air of my ancestors,
And know that I am home.

- Maggie

Tânisi. Maggie, nitisiyihkâson, Kovach, nitaspiyikasôn, Pasqua iskonikanik nipê-ohcin. Hello, I am Maggie, I am Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux, my lineage stems from the traditional territories of the Plains Cree and Saulteaux peoples of the Great Plains. My relations are of the Pasqua and Okanese First Nations in Southern Saskatchewan.¹ This tells you something about me, but there is more that I need to share for you to understand.

Nakiskamohtah¹ is the Nêhiyaw word for *introduce*. This section of the dissertation is where I introduce myself, explain right upfront. Helping us in translation – to bridge the worlds of Indigenous and academic cultural protocol and form – Maori scholar Dr. Graham Smith suggests we write our story in a prologue right at the front of our dissertation. The story we share in the prologue is *relational*, it is here where we say we are qualified to speak because of our relationships with our kin, kith, tribe, and community. It is here where we introduce our bloodlines and cultural influences as best possible. In community I would share this through talk, I would give just enough information about my lineage and those who raised me for people to ‘ssess me out’.

I understand story, but am curious as to how pop culture understands prologue, and google the word. My research tells me that a prologue “is a prefatory piece of writing,

¹ To follow Cree Scholar, Dr. Winona Stevenson’s example I have put the Cree words in roman type with their English translations in italics. This pre-supposes that Cree is the first language of Cree territory, and English is the foreign language.

usually composed to introduce a drama.” (Wikipedia, 2006). I smile and think of this research journey and my in life general. I tell my partner, Monty, a drama isn’t that the truth, he laughs. Ordinarily, I guess the prologue is the first thing you write about a specific story post experience when laying it into text. Likewise, in Indigenous research, our prologue introduces a certain event (i.e. our doctoral research) of a certain time, but it is more, way, way more. Our starting places seem different and we share them with others. I am trying to explicate this and Coyote flashes into my mind, he says be careful Maggie...

So back to sharing my story, I understand my responsibility, so why then am I having such difficulty here? All that this prologue asks is that I share a few lines about myself. I go to write and get tangled in three year’s worth of reflections, unable to make choices about what to put on paper. Both a lot and not much is different since I started this research and I don’t know what to say about it exactly. Maybe I haven’t sat with it long enough, maybe once I put this piece of writing away I will have space for that work, but right now I need to get this thing done and it’s not coming. Persistently I flip through old journal notes and course papers in an attempt to remember stories and conversations, trying to figure out what happened. What I know is that this research is an ode to my shifting prologue. By necessity, my story will come out in bits and pieces making its appearance throughout the next three hundred pages; it is of no use to try and separate them. I didn’t really want these two parts to meet, I didn’t think it had to happen, but somehow my inquiry into Indigenous methodologies got wound up with my own life in an inexplicable way, taking me on a journey that I did not envision at the outset. What I understand now, maybe the most poignant personal learning of this exercise is that stories

come to us carrying knowledge, they have purpose and power. And there is always a story. So, where to start?

As I craft this prologue, I have a memory flash of Monty and me driving down Victoria Avenue East in Regina just before Thanksgiving last year. We are heading to my mom's place, leaving Regina we drive past the A&W, then the Bingo Hall and can see a big Safeway sign off in the distance, as we get closer we can read the block letter words: "Utility Turkey on Sale here". Who knows why, but we just start to crack up (in all honesty it doesn't take much for us), anyhow we get to mom's place and I ask her, "mom what the heck is a utility turkey?" In as near as I can remember, she says, "a utility turkey is not a perfect bird, but you can roast it." It occurs to me that this is pretty much what I am looking for now, to share just enough to predicate possible conjectures... it is not my seminal memoir, more like a *Utility Prologue*.

So where was I before I was here? About mid-way through my PhD program, I took a directed studies course and used the opportunity to journal my positioning, I guess to mark the spot. I am not sure why I needed to do this, but I am glad I did. In a reflective paper, I wrote this in response to a book I was assigned:

On an early Wednesday morning, I go to the library with Keith Basso's book, Wisdom Sits in Places, in hand. I have not looked at the book since my flight to Saskatchewan in September. Flying over the prairies near Regina, on a crisp autumn day, I can see the golden fields quilted together and feel that customary sense of familiarity with this place. On an intuitive level, I understand Apache Elder Charles Henry's point that, in the grand scheme, the meaning which places have in our lives transcends our own momentary existence. I think of the name-place stories of Pasqua, my First Nation community – mostly that I do not know them. Yet even with this deficit of the cultural stories, I maintain a powerful connection to this part of the country that has shaped who I am. I get home from Saskatchewan and put the Basso book in my 'in pile'

for a few weeks. The notion of name-places keeps simmering in my mind and I consider how the sky, water, and earth, among other things, contextualizes our life. On a rainy Wednesday afternoon, I decide it is time to return to the book, and I head up to the UVic library to finish reading it. To me, it is intriguing the way the Western Apache stories intermingle knowing with communicating. Basso's analysis of the association between language and ethnography in understanding a culture makes sense, though I question if other variables need consideration. And I wonder how this translates to contemporary urban Indigenous life of Foucault readers, Starbucks, and SUVs versus oral story-telling, black tea, and pickup trucks. (M. Kovach, personal communication, October 11, 2004)

I include this here because it explains a bit about me, an expatriate Cree/Saulteaux on Coast Salish territory, a small town “girl” living in the city, a Prairie woman living on an island. I am also a daughter, a sister, a partner, an affiliate (the name my step daughter and I have for each other), an aunty, a friend, a cat owner, a student, a teacher, a curriculum developer, a researcher, a seeker ... all of which form my identity. Yet, it is my most nascent beginnings in this world that has shaped the foundational storyline of my story.

On September 4th, 2005, sitting at my desk late at night in Regina, I write in my research journal, “If I have any romantic notions about my life it is that I was born under a prairie sky with a Bob Seager tune playing in the distance”. I know this is romanticism, because I was born indoors and I don't think Seager was recording until a few years after my birth. Nonetheless, I was born with a mythology waiting for me in my cradle. That's what happens when you are an adoptee, I imagine, you fill in the blanks where other folks have heard their birth stories. I have kept my mythologies close, finding comfort in their malleability, but at some point, I am not sure when, maybe

inquiring into Cree knowledges while turning forty, I started moving away from myths and more toward what really happened.

So what do I know about who I am? I was born to my birth mother in a rural Saskatchewan hospital. I was registered to Pasqua First Nations at birth. Pasqua is a Saulteaux First Nation and my ancestors were signatories to Treaty Four in the Qu'Appelle Valley. On my mother's side, my bloodline is Cree from my kôkom and Saulteaux from my mosôm. My adoption records state that my birth father was non-Native and my identity from zero to forty was formed around this accounting. I didn't contest it; I just found a place for it in my mythology. Almost right at the start of my PhD, I had this uneasy, intuitive sense that my life would mess with my research. Sure enough, about a year into my program, I re-engaged with my Nêhiyaw lineage. Engaging with my Cree ancestry came easy, it wasn't a magical feeling, it was just that it made sense because I feel Cree, I always have. It was not surprising that I started thinking about Nêhiyaw ways of knowing, about epistemologies and research ways. Even as I tried to keep my inquiry cerebral, I started getting the sinking suspicion that I was perching on a precipice, that coyote medicine was in the air.

To make a long story short (and it felt long), I finally understood that I could not do this research without going home. On the one hand I really wanted to return to Saskatchewan, it is where I find my grounding, but then again I was trying my hardest to keep away: I knew that a significant part of my own story was there. Like I said, until 2005, I did not seek out the full details of my birth, staying just arms length away from it. I thought it would break my heart. I was mistaken – it didn't, and if the truth be told the story was healing. I won't say much else, except that my adoption papers were wrong.

My birth father was Nêhiyâw, and I share the same mother and father as five of my siblings. In total I have nine biological and one adopted sibling in my birth family with many nieces and nephews that I have known for over twenty years now.

I was adopted at the age of three months old. Both my adoptive mother and father were Eastern European, of Hungarian descent, and they both spoke the language...I was raised knowing that culture counts. I was the youngest child of two in our family, I had an older sister who has since made the transition to the spirit world, and I miss her more than I can say. She left two wonderful beings, my nephew and niece, in this world. I grew up in a small town in rural Saskatchewan. I was loved, but I was also mixed-up. I have always felt conflicted about where I belong, and so tried to stay at a distance everywhere. In my mind, my identity and education always intersect. I can't help but think of one of the first poems by an Indigenous author that I ever read, a long while back, it was by Chrystos. When I started my PhD, my Indigenous prof asked us to explore our narratives and to write these musing on found paper. I handed mine in on the back of Chrystos's poem, *I Am Not Your Princess*. If our soul can hold print markings, you would find these words somewhere on mine:

*Don't assume I know every other Native Activist
in the world personally That I even know names of all the tribes
or can pronounce names I've never heard
or that I'm expert at the peyote stitch
If you ever
again tell me
how strong I am
I'll lay down on the ground & moan so you'll see
at last my human weakness like your own
I'm not strong I'm scraped
I'm blessed with life while so many I've known are dead
(1988, p.66)*

This poem sticks, because any of my own attempts to conform to the Indigenous exotic have failed miserably, while I simultaneously get resentful if folks expect this of me. I respond to the poem, because I, too, know I can have an edge. I get angry about the racism that our people experience. I am writing this here, because it shapes part of my worldview.

My university education has consistently been a portal for self-discovery. I remember starting first year at the University of Regina. I meandered around finally majoring in psychology, eventually getting a BA, but my calling seemed to be social work. I registered as a social work student around the young age of twenty-one or twenty-two and haven't looked back. This Interdisciplinary PhD is my book end to a social work education that I started some twenty years ago. It's been pretty amazing as it was through my BSW program that I became knowledgeable about a program – *Peyakowak* – for First Nations adoptees. It was during this time I claimed my place as a First Nation woman, it unleashed a lot of anger that I thought I had worked through. It also unleashed a lot of sadness, but I knew that was still there.

My critical perspective on the world was solidified at this point through my education, but it did not begin in academia. My upbringing has been such that I never knew a time when I did not know about Tommy Douglas, my folks being of a generation to remember him. I can still hear my dad saying he was a good man because he wasn't a big shot and he fought for the little guy. Running around the kitchen, while the adults (mom, dad, aunties, uncles, neighbors) sat at the kitchen table talking politics, this was my first critical social theory classroom, since then I have sat in many other classroom racking up a few degrees, voraciously taking in the words of brilliant critical theorists

(Guevara, Freire, ...). But you know, once you distil the message, the fundamentals are the same: *big shots, the little guy*.

Throughout my career as a social worker, I have worked with First Nations organizations serving on-reserve communities in counseling and social development, but mostly within adult education and training. I have taught for a number of years as a university instructor in First Nations social work, but at heart I am a curriculum developer. Curriculum makes space like nothing else I know in education; it can be a mighty tool of social justice for the marginalized.

So that is about it, my story, my *Utility Prologue*. True to form during this project, I have periodically whimpered to Monty that my voice is not Indigenous ‘enough’ for this task (whatever *that* means). He just kept saying keep going Maggie, what you’re doing is important. While this research has not necessarily quieted my fear about voice, the gift of this journey is that I am now comforted in knowing the identity of my larynx – and that matters to me. In a nutshell, this writing comes from the heart, it comes from who I am and all that I am – nothing more, or less for that matter. It comes from my own need and longing to engage with my Nehiyaw and Saulteaux ancestry, and to say to my academic world that my culture counts. It is written from my voice, in my style and reflects who I am. The Elders say if it comes from the heart and is done in a good way, our work will count. My hope is that this work will count for Indigenous people in a way that is useful – that’s it, that’s all.

A note about voice: Throughout this work, I have attempted to interweave my own story with presentation of more outward knowleges (literature review, stories of research participants) and have relied upon the first person voice a great deal throughout.

I have done this to stay grounded and humble. Plains Cree scholar Winona Stevenson writes about this Cree teaching: “Seldom do you hear a Cree elder profess “I know.” What is heard is “I believe” or “I believe it to be true.” (2000, p. 19). Using the first person, is also a method of honouring the experiential as I engage with the abstract and theoretical in this writing. I have made this choice, because of all my understandings of Nêhiyaw culture that has guided me through this study, the one that keeps coming back is: keep it whole, girl. This is my way of trying to do that.

Chapter I: Introduction

Indigenous methodologies, what do they entail and how are they applied, is the focus of this dissertation. This introductory chapter introduces the purpose, the scope, and the specific research question guiding this inquiry. It identifies the significance of the research and the organizational flow of this document. The chapter begins with a statement of purpose underlying my research inquiry.

Purpose Statement

A central principle of Indigenous research methodologies relates to *purpose*, the question of why am I doing this research? Not very long ago, I attended a workshop by a non-Indigenous scholar who was presenting on a research project that dealt with the social conditions of Indigenous people. I felt the research was fascinating and was curious as to the researcher's motivation. During the time allotted for questions I asked him about his purpose in doing this research, what compelled him? It was a fairly straightforward question I thought, yet he seemed a bit unsure of what I was asking, although he responded as best he could. I took from that interchange that maybe this was not the most common of questions. I was perplexed, because by this time I had spent considerable time focusing intensively on Indigenous research approaches and many Indigenous scholars and researchers were consistently suggested that knowing one's purpose and motivation for research was fundamental.

With that in mind, I am starting this dissertation by privileging a statement of purpose, Indigenous style, on this research. By writing a purpose statement, I understand that I am relating why it is that I am doing this research. I also understand purpose to

entail the willingness to undertake work with an intent to resolve an unanswered question or respond to an unfulfilled need. Purpose is about doing meaningful work. I was less clear in my own mind about purpose at the beginning of this journey. At the start, my reasons had more to do with taking a respite from work at a First Nations organization with visions of lazy mornings frequenting the Victoria café circuit reading Willie Ermine's *Aboriginal Epistemology* and others over frothy lattes. (I have since learned that a PhD as respite is not the best idea). While my starting vision did not actualize, I began to clarify the enduring purpose, or rather purposes, for this research shortly after starting my program. I will attempt to explain them here.

Upon reflection, the purpose of this research has never been solely singular; rather there were several reasons why I chose to pursue this inquiry topic, a topic couched in the *relational* and requiring a *relational methodology*. Though I could not consciously articulate at the beginning, the very basis of this inquiry was rooted in the subjective experience of my relationship with my family and culture. I chose this topic, or it chose me, because I needed to learn more about my Nêhiyaw (*Plains Cree*) culture to learn more about Indigenous methodologies. To respond to this call, it then seemed that I would need an Indigenous methodology that respected the relational. This approach is not a formula to conjure "truth" as often methodologies can appear, nor is it product-orientated in that the research ends with the delivery of the final report. A relational methodology is process-orientated and the credibility of its findings are about the researchers connections with other. It is as much related to one's prologue, one's personal preparations during the research, to giving back as it is to presenting the findings in a final report. Because a relational methodology assumes interrelationships between

self and others, subjectivity is ever present and the “truth” and credibility of a researcher’s work emerges from these on-going relationships that last long after the research is formally completed.

An Indigenous relational methodology is process orientated. I know now that the purpose of inquiring into the nature and application of Indigenous methodologies is linked with who I am. I have come to know that my personal journey around identity is not just what happened on the way to responding to my inquiry question, or that responding to my inquiry question was what happened while I was engaging with identity. Both are about purpose, since both require meaningful work to resolve outstanding relational questions. However, it does appear that the purpose behind one of these questions involves Thunderbird knowledges, which can never really be known only respected.

A more conscious reason for inquiring into Indigenous methodologies relates to my experience as an Indigenous graduate student. As a student, I had ample, rich material critiquing the largely extractive and exploitive legacy of western research practices within Indigenous communities. In response, Indigenous scholars were unified in their call for methodological approaches to research that respectfully honoured and upheld values of Indigenous cultures. From that starting place, I did not question whether we needed to consider Indigenous methodological approaches, but rather was curious as to what those methodologies would look like. I was keenly interested in the matter of application, and there was a seeming gap in the literature on this area. Yet I knew Indigenous researchers were finding ways to apply their own cultural knowings into Indigenous methodological approaches to research and I began to wonder: How are they

going about this? Hence my inquiry into Indigenous methodologies asks how cultural knowings form the basis of Indigenous research epistemologies, and how does centering that knowledge guide research choices from an Indigenous worldview. The purpose of this qualitative study is to employ a tribal methodology (emerging from a Nêhiyaw Kiskêyîhtamowin or *Cree Knowledges* epistemological positioning) to explore and discover how Indigenous researchers (graduate students) approach research. More specifically, how have they incorporated the broad range of knowledges available to Indigenous people –cultural knowings² – into their research and what have been the challenges in carrying out this unique methodology in western academic institutions.

As I write this Vine Deloria Jr, who has so inspired me on this journey, has left the physical world to be with the ancestors. In honour of Vine's passing, the American Indian Movement asked us to remember a quote from *Custer Died for Your Sins*: "Ideological leverage is always superior to violence...The problems of Indians have always been ideological rather than social, political or economic...[I]t is vitally important that the Indian people pick the intellectual arena as the one in which to wage war" (<http://www.coloradoamin.org/blog/>). As I think about my own work and what it means to be an Indigenous individual writing a dissertation on Indigenous knowledges and research, Vine reminds me that as Indigenous scholars, researchers, thinkers and writers we have an obligation to challenge the ideologies that shackle us. A third purpose of this research then is about decolonizing methodologies which seeks to push at the edges of the ideological certitude of what counts as knowledge in the academy.

² Cultural knowings is meant to include the broad spectrum of beliefs about knowledge stemming from their own cultural grouping. This could include knowledges from the sacred and ceremonial.

Statement of the Problem

Let's be clear: certain "things" can be understood using the metaphysics of time, space and energy. However, a great deal of what we experience cannot be explained within the metaphysics of Western Science, and that is the critical point. An entire realm of human experience in the world is marginalized, declared unknowable, and, consequently, left out of serious consideration. (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 12)

More often, however, I think that indigenous research is not quite as simple as it looks, nor quite as complex as it feels! If I have one consistent message for students I teach and the researchers I train it is that indigenous research is a humble and humbling experience. (Smith, 1999, p. 5)

This inquiry seeks to ask how Indigenous scholars and researchers incorporate a relational, holistic approach to research, based within a cultural epistemic positioning, inclusive of narrative, experiential, social, political, language, thought and the sacred within a western science research paradigm that privileges a fragmented approach to knowledge. I am starting with the above two quotes, because they accentuate a focal aim of this research regarding the integration of Indigenous cultural knowledges. This includes a discussion of how sacred knowledges fit into an Indigenous approach to research methodologies. I use the term sacred knowledges to describe those knowledges that come from places that are deeply personal and involve an engagement with the spirit world. Cree Elders say that "*Iyiniw sawêyihâtâkosiwin* (the people's sacred gifts)" is a term that is used "to describe gifts deriving from the people's special relationship with the Creator, whether those gifts are material in nature (land) or metaphysical (as in the case of laws, values, principles, and mores that guide or regulate the people's conduct in all their many and varied relationships)..."(Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2002, p.10).

A review of the literature reveals that Indigenous approaches to research honour holistic knowledges (Struthers, 2001; Steinhauer, 2001), or a cultural epistemic positioning, from which their research choices flow. While there is ample documentation among Indigenous scholars identifying the importance of this cultural epistemic positioning to research, there is a need for more in-depth inquiry into the following questions on this topic: a) Why is it so difficult to incorporate a cultural epistemic positioning into research methodology? And is it a problem of incorporating a cultural epistemology or is it a problem of this epistemic positioning not being recognized by western, non-Indigenous, scholarship? b) How can Indigenous researchers create space for a research design (methodology) with a cultural epistemic positioning in western universities? c) What are the challenges in attempting to reconcile this holistic approach to knowing with the more fragmented approach to scientific knowledges which governs research practices?

In this context, the heart of this inquiry is about methodology – or the way to do research. If I were to summarize this project, it could shake down to the following sentence: This research inquiry entails one Plains Cree and Saulteaux perspective, with help from Indigenous friends, on applying Indigenous epistemic centered methodologies to guide research practices.

Research Question

Central Question:

How do Indigenous researchers approach research? More specifically, how do Indigenous researchers approach cultural/metaphysical aspects of Indigenous knowledges when making methodological research choices?

Sub-Questions

- How do Indigenous researchers understand their cultural/traditional (metaphysical) knowledges and how do they incorporate this into their research methodology?
- What are the challenges that Indigenous researchers face when they attempt to engage their cultural ways of knowing with western research and how did they counter-act these challenges?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is both political and practical. From a decolonizing perspective, it is critical that Indigenous researchers and scholars have an opportunity to not only challenge what counts for knowledge, but to create space for the full plethora of Indigenous holistic knowledges that enter into the dialogue on Indigenous research. In having this discussion and applying this broader spectrum of knowledges to research, Indigenous researchers, and our allies, may be successful in convincing conventional knowledge centres (universities) of the possibility of a more integrated approach to knowing.

On a practical level, this research is for Indigenous graduate students, like myself, who have bounded into a research methodologies class and have felt the confusion of knowing something isn't fitting, but not knowing what that is. This study was born of my

need to find out, at a 'deep knowledges' level why I was feeling this way. As more and more Indigenous students are entering into universities at the graduate level, there is a need for our methodological needs to be met as Indigenous researchers. Arguably, these needs (and responses) must come from Indigenous researchers. My hope for this research is that it contributes to this much needed on-going conversation. In a post-script to *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn reflects on the importance of community in creating paradigms and offers some guiding questions:

How does one elect and how is one elected to membership in a particular community, scientific or not? What is the process and what are the stages of socialization to the group? What does the group collectively see as its goals; what deviations, individual or collective, will it tolerate; and how does it control the impermissible aberration? (1996, p. 209)

The significance of my research is in its contribution to this conversation among Indigenous researchers within an academic and community-based context on Indigenous methodologies. It is here that it holds most of its promise.

Chapter Outline

The dissertation is organized into eight chapters. The following is a brief description of each chapter.

Chapter Two is a central component of this thesis as it outlines my conceptual framework for approaching this subject area. In chapter two, I introduce the Indigenous epistemological framework for this research. This framework centres on Nêhiyaw Kiskêyîhtamowin which when translated means *Cree (Plains Cree) Knowledges*. The purpose of this section is to offer an insight into the Indigenous worldview from which I am broaching this subject. This overview could never, nor does it even attempt (how

could it in written text) to give full insight into the nuances, intricacies and complexities of my Plains Cree culture. Rather, it is an attempt to provide the reader with enough information about values and ways of the Plains Cree so as to show that my epistemological positioning is coming from that place as opposed to Anishnabe, Blackfoot, Coast Salish and so forth.

Chapter Three begins with a historical context of western science and its influence on research design. It is somewhat of an anomaly to include here, but I believe it is important to incorporate this at the frontal point in my research thesis. Right from the start, as I was questioning why a relational, holistic approach to research wasn't necessarily being embraced (often ridiculed) in the academy, I became curious as to how the currently accepted approach to research is the way it is. This section attempts to show that the fragmented approach to knowledge and research wasn't always that way. I include it here because the whole point of my thesis is to argue that while it may take a while for western knowledge to re-invent itself, there is no time like now for some substantive paradigm renovations. By placing this historical piece at the beginning, it is my hope that this entire thesis will be read within the context of both the plausibility and possibility of creating ideological shifts. The second section of chapter three is a standard literature review and analysis of writing by Indigenous researchers and scholars on their approach to Indigenous methodologies. The literature review also explores what these individuals are saying about the relational, holistic nature of Indigenous research and articulates the four principles that this includes: knowledge, philosophy and language; self-location and story; cultural and sacred dimension of Indigenous research; and the decolonization, and praxis element of this form of methodology.

Chapter Four begins reviewing the dissertation methodology chapter of two dissertations written by Indigenous scholars – Dr. Betty Bastien and Dr. Winona Stevenson – and relevates their use of a tribal paradigm in approaching their research. The second part, and crux, of this chapter outlines my Indigenous methodology based on my own tribal worldview. The research design uses a methodology with a Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin epistemological positioning based on a tribal paradigm. Identifying the epistemological grounding of an Indigenous methodology is important, because it indicates which cultural grounding and subsequent perspective the researcher is coming from. While there are many shared methods in an Indigenous methodological approach that may use more generic naming (e.g. sharing circle), I found it necessary to name the specific Indigenous knowledge (e.g. Nêhiyaw) that is the centre of this methodology.

Chapter Five is a brief commentary of my own inward knowing that was inextricably linked to this research and is necessary to include for the reader to have a backdrop for the conversations and stories with the Indigenous research participants that follow.

The first chapter of two to deal with the findings of this research is *Chapter Six*. This chapter is central to the writing of a report flowing from an Indigenous research methodology because it showcases the stories of the individuals who were interviewed for this project. A characteristic of Cree knowledges (as with many other Indigenous cultures) is the use of stories (experiential or otherwise) as a teaching tool. When these stories are communicated, it is left to the learner to interpret what she or he needs from this special form of teaching. As a way of privileging (and honouring) this method of sharing information, this chapter is a dedicated to presenting the conversations that I had

with six Indigenous scholars. I include a brief introduction and reflective commentary for each.

Chapter Seven is an analysis of the themes and the findings of the interviews with my own reflections incorporated into the analysis. This chapter highlights the findings of this research in response to the research question. The findings from the conversations with research participants are thematically grouped into three sections: an Indigenous worldview impacting research choices; characteristics integral to Indigenous research methodologies; and creating space within the academy for Indigenous methodologies. These findings suggest that critical to Indigenous methodologies is the need to identify the cultural epistemology, that the holistic nature of Indigenous methodologies are challenging the fragmented approach to western research, and finally that Indigenous methodologies require ethical space within the academy for their emergence.

Chapter Eight is a short note on research implications as a way to conclude this research project.

This concludes the introduction. The next section is a broad overview of the conceptual context starting with an introduction to Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin.

Chapter II: An Indigenous Epistemological Framework based on Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin

For this research I am making use of an *Indigenous Epistemological Framework* as my conceptual model. My understanding of a conceptual model or framework is that it acts as a scaffold, or supportive framework which a researcher uses to make sense of their research. When I think about a conceptual framework, I think of a teepee structure or the placement of the alder posts in a Nêhiyaw ceremonial lodge. The posts (or poles) are the foundation of these structures, and provide shape and form for the hides or branches that enfold them. The ceremonial lodge gives shelter and holds inside it ancient knowledges. This thesis gives form to one type of Indigenous methodological approach and the conceptual framework for these thoughts is built around the centering knowledge, or epistemology, that is Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin or *Cree Knowledges*. I struggled whether to incorporate Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin at this point in this dissertation or later in the methodology chapter. However, in an effort to privilege and center Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin, it remains up front near the starting place of my work.

On a note about conceptual framework, in crafting the introduction for this piece, a term put forward by Maori scholar, Dr. Graham Smith persistently came to mind. He said those of us in relationship with western academic institutions will be asked from time to time to make strategic concessions (see Interview with Graham Smith in *Chapter Six*). The term *conceptual* framework in writing about Cree ways of knowing is a strategic concession for me as it does not fully capture the relational, holistic flavour of this worldview, nor the experience of this inquiry which honours this worldview. In the same instance as it gives the reader a sense of the conceptual basis for this research, it

works to privilege *thought* as ‘the’ pathway to knowledge and places feeling, spirit and experience as secondary. In her doctoral dissertation on *Decolonizing Tribal Histories*, Cree scholar Winona Stevenson proposes that even the post-modern thinkers, such as Foucault, who were actively challenging the ‘objectivity’ of western science, and attempting to recapture the experiential in knowing did not go far enough toward this end of an integrated worldview. She quotes Morris Berman,

Foucault denied the possibility of crossing the watershed precisely because the forms of discourse were radically incommensurate; which meant, of course, that he was unable or unwilling to suspend his own consciousness. And this is the problem with virtually all studies in the field of mentalité: they stop short of the attempt to recreate a previous consciousness, and opt instead for describing it from the vantage point of our own conceptual categories...Mind and body, fact and value, still wind up on opposite sides of the fence. (2000, p. 107)

While I use the term conceptual framework as a guidepost word, it doesn’t really capture the full essence of what Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin means for me personally, nor will Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin ever fit into one definitional category (this is both a challenge and gift). It is as much about being, as it is about thinking and theorizing. In a lot of ways writing, research, and scholarly activity are acts of individual, abstract magicians who conjure knowledge. And though I have tried to honour stories, relationship and the subjective experience, this dissertation is also about formulating theory based on abstracting ideas from stories and experience. Thus, in stating that Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin is akin to conceptual framework is a strategic concession (one of many I imagine) and an attempt at translation to bridge the two worlds. Prior to moving forward into a discussion of Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin upon which this Indigenous epistemological framework is based, it is important to include a note about

my own assumptions about epistemology, and why I see it as the centering force of this framework.

Some Reflections on Epistemology

In my moments (hours, days) of uncertainty about questions of knowledge, I have sought the philosophical insights of Vine Deloria, Jr. and Thomas Kuhn, but also Milan Kundera and Chrystos. I have sought out poets and writers and have been equally compelled by poetry and prose as by analytical deconstruction, have searched for those who have moved beyond how thought alone as a pathway for knowing to those who have referenced a more unbroken, humble approach to knowledge. Of Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin, Winona Stevenson says: “One of the major tenets of Western erudition is the belief that all knowledge is knowable. In the Cree world all knowledge is not knowable.” (Stevenson, 2000, p. 240).

So how does this apply to a conceptual model based on an epistemological framework? As researchers it is important to indicate our epistemological positioning, and arguably a great deal of this paper is about this very subject. But what does that mean? What is knowledge? What is ‘truth’? How have we come to hold the assumptions about knowledge that we hold? Which knowledges do we privilege and why? Does knowledge come from reasoning, observing, experiencing? Can you touch, feel and see it while at the same time it remains intangible, enigmatic? Why does epistemology matter in research?

In one of my courses on Indigenous research and its allied methodologies (Participatory Action Research), I wrote a paper and then from that paper I wrote a chapter for a book on Indigenous Methodologies (in *Research as Resistance*). I included

a quote by Manu Aluli Meyer, an Indigenous scholar. I did not understand the full essence of this metaphor either time, but knew she was making an important point about epistemology and Indigenous research. She said, “Every little thing. I mean, I can see a dead frog on the road, and it relates to epistemology” (Kovach, 2005, p. 27). I totally get it now, because I have been living these words for the past three years of this research. Every decision, every move I’ve made on this journey, has lead me back to consider whether this fits with what I believe about knowing and my conscious (and sub-conscious) understandings I have from Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin. It’s all about epistemology, but that I know this is not making it any clearer as I move along. The more deeply I submerge myself into Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin, the more uncomfortable I become with categorizing *in a western way*. I recognize that western research (which I am knee deep in whether I like it or not) is about coding, bundling, categorizing, and naming according to a set of values and principles to make meaning, then making use of the knowledge. Thus it is not so much an issue with organizing knowledges (Cree society was quite adept at this), as it is with the worldview that influences this organization. A fundamental learning from my epistemological positioning is that I am starting to know more about how much I do not know, and I believe this is both progress and a gift of this research. At the same time, it’s frogs everywhere!

So what are my assumptions about knowledge, about epistemology? This question is at the core of my identity, and what I believe to be true in this world has been shaping itself since my birth (possibly before). I believe I am entitled to know who I am (we all are), and seeking this knowledge will take me on a path with choice and destiny doing a dance. I believe that what I know, and who I am, is intricately connected to those

I know, while at the same time it is deeply personal, that it flows to me from both inward and outward places. I believe knowledge is about thinking, feeling, sensing and believing. I believe that the knowledge that sticks is nested in kindness and humanity. I believe that I show respect when I am real (or as real as I can be) about what I believe and how that shapes the ideas, and motivates the actions that I propel into the world. I believe knowledge is powerful, and because of its power it has sacredness and should be used carefully. I believe that this is often not the case, and it is used to hurt as much as to heal, this is why the natural world is now in jeopardy. I believe that there is a responsibility to use knowledge in a way that is helpful and good not just for myself, but for my world. I believe that knowledge, as a word and a category, is something larger than we can imagine it to be, and that we categorize it at our own peril. I believe that knowledge is alive and that it comes from the physical and metaphysic of our beings, and from the physical and metaphysic of our world. I believe that philosophers have a difficulty defining knowledge (epistemology) because it cannot be fully known, because it is alive, evolving, and shape-shifting. I believe knowledge is both simpler and more complex than we will ever know, and we need to take good care with it. I believe these values honour Nêhiyâw Kiskêyihtamowin (*Plains Cree Knowledges*) ways of knowing, but they are my interpretation of this worldview, my assumptions about knowledge and only that. So what do I understand about a Nêhiyâw Kiskêyihtamowin epistemological positioning? The next section relates my understandings.

Nêhiyaw Kiskêyhtamowin (Cree Knowledges)

This is a story told to Edward Ahenakew by Peyasiw-awasis (*Chief Thunderchild*) in 1923 as recorded in *Voices of the Plains Cree*. This discussion of Nêhiyaw Kiskêyhtamowin begins with a story by an old chief that was recorded during a time of great transition for the Plains Cree. It reads much like a biblical parable, and I do not know the story behind this except to say that Edward Ahenakew, a Cree, was an Anglican missionary priest who authored this work. This text was published posthumously. Paul Wallace and Ruth Buck were editors of Ahenakew's writings, and Peyasiw-awasis's stories. Whatever the subsequent influences on the original story, it marks a significant time in Plains Cree history.

This is of great moment," my father said, and it was from him that I learned the story of Painted Arrow, that has been told by our Old Men since ancient times.

Pointed Arrow was the earliest man, and it was he who gave to us the legends of the time when man was trying to prevail over the animals and could speak with them. Earth had been destroyed, and it was after that time that Pointed Arrow lived.

He was inventive, and his name was given to him because he made the bow and arrow. He made knives too, from the ribs of the buffalo, and hide-scrapers from the leg bones. He made pots from clay, and bowls and baskets from birch-bark, stitched with the pliable roots of the spruce. He made awls from the sharp strong tendons of moose, and he chipped and shaped stones for many uses.

Pointed Arrow spoke to men of the power of love, and immortality; through dreams he told of another man who would come to teach them. The one spoken of by Painted Arrow did come, and when he in turn was old, he said, "Do not be sad at my death. When I die, put my body on a high scaffold in the trees." It was wintertime, and they wrapped his body in buffalo robes, and did as he had asked. In the late spring, he came once more to his people in their camp. ("This is sacred," my father used to say.)

Now when this man came again, he told the people, "I am not coming to live with you. I am sent to tell you that the spirit of man lives always. Use love, and work out your own future. Do what is right."

All this he taught through the Sun Dance so that generations that came after might learn things that are good." (1995, p.45)

While Cree knowledges pre-dates a settler-centered discourse, this section begins with a proviso about colonialism. During the time Peyasiw-awasis's story was shared, treaties were being entered into across the prairies. I have a photocopy of an original document that was signed by members of Pasqua First Nation, where one of my family's ancestors marked his X. An action, no doubt, carried out with a heavy heart with little choice in the matter. It must have been heart wrenching, because of the sacredness of our lands, and the treaties were, and continue to be, sacred accords. Elder Lawrence Tobacco from Kawacatoose First Nations, Treaty Four gave the following description about treaties:

...what I have said, the sun, the river, and the grass, I have mentioned them; spirits for each one of them. If I don't deal with them, I could get punished too. My ancestors have set it up for me to deal with them in a proper way. That's what I'm trying to do. I'm not fooling around with the treaties. (Cardinal & Hildebrandt 2002, p. 8)

With the marking of the X, the treaties opened up land for European settlement, and with settlement the imposition of European culture, laws, traditions, and ways. It would be wrong to say that the culture and ways of the Plains Cree died that day, because it didn't. However, it certainly took a strong hit with many of our most sacred ceremonies (like the Rain Dance) having to go underground as they were legislated as unlawful by the first of the *Indian Acts*. The *Indian Act* would bring a number of changes that would strike an attack on Indian culture (i.e. Residential School, Pass system, Criminalization of Sacred

Ceremonies and on and on and on). The *Indian Act* was not wîhtikow³ in and of itself; but it was a powerful tool that assisted the physical and metaphysical colonialism of the Plains Cree resulting from the onrush of white settlement with its different ways and beliefs.

This section is not about the impact of colonialism, but the resistance engaged in by my Plains Cree and Saulteaux ancestors to keep the culture alive despite such a disrespectful intrusion and disruption must be noted. I am grateful to my ancestors for not giving up this struggle: that I can walk into the First Nations University of Canada (formally the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College) and take a Cree class at almost anytime of the year; that I can talk to Plains Cree Elders and read their words in published books; that I am writing about tribal methodologies with a Nêhiyaw Kiskêyîhtamowin positioning. For all of this and more, I say kinanâskomitin (*I am grateful*).

On another note about this section, and before proceeding further, I did not formally interview Plains Cree Elders for their knowledge for this research project. My relationship with my Cree and Saulteaux culture is sacred (and deeply personal) to me, and I did not want my relationship with Elders or other community members to be regulated by a university ethics committee. I did not want these relationships to be judged by anyone from the academy no matter how supportive they may be, or for these relationships to be bound in anyway by the timelines of this project. For those reasons this group is not part of my formal research design. My learnings with family, friends

³ Wîhtikow is an *evil presence*, a cannibal in Plains Cree legends. This should not be confused with wîhtikôhkan which is like a *trickster* and offers contrary energy that can be helpful. (McLeod, N.,2005)

and teachers of my culture has co-existed with this doctoral process (and will continue beyond), and I have chosen to keep them separate in a *formal* way. I am following one of those gut feelings about taking personal agency in what I share.

Fortunately, as a Cree researcher, I have a range of accounts of Plains Cree culture by Cree Elders, who have offered knowledge of Cree ways in published forms. As such these Elders have allowed this knowledge to be shared in the public domain, and so it is appropriate to share. It is for this purpose that Elders and others have agreed to have their words laid in text. Further, by observing and talking with Elders, family members and other Plains Cree individuals with knowledge of the culture, I have some understanding (and these are my humble understandings) about the ways. I have combined both of these knowledge sources in highlighting aspects of Plains Cree culture that inform the way I view the world and this research. This section highlights values, place, language and discussions of some of the cultural means (ceremonies) that Plains Cree have to accessing knowledge. These four foundational aspects of Plains Cree culture are apparent in Peyasiw-awasis's (*Chief Thunderchild*) ancient story of the first man and continue today.

As mentioned in the Introduction of this dissertation (p. 2), methodology based on Nêhiyaw Kiskêyitamowin is a *relational* methodology. As such, though I speak of knowledges (e.g. values, language) it should be assumed that I understand these knowledges to be nested, created, and re-created within the context of relationships with other living beings. While these relational aspects of Plains Cree culture are represented here in a linear manner, these elements are fluid and interact with each other in a web-like formation. Each value represents a strand in a web that is integrated and

interdependent upon the other strands. This is an important point, for I understand the *knowledges* based upon Plains Cree culture as emerging from this non-fragmented, holistic approach to the world. Segregating values from ceremony, or segregating either from place or language is done at one's own peril to understanding this unique way of knowing or epistemological positioning.

Values: In Plains Cree the word *miyo* means *good*, the literal translation of *miywâsin* is *valuable*. All cultures have mores, aspects of the culture that lie in the metaphysic and thus deemed highly valuable, upon which the distinctiveness of that culture rests. As I learn more about what it means to be *Nehiyaw*, I begin to see how the value system plays itself out everywhere, they are about sharing and generosity; about respecting the earth and all its inhabitants; about hard-work; about being able to tease and see the humour in situations; about being kind; and about caring for other people. They are about *miyo-wicêhtowin* meaning, "*having or possessing good relations*" (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2002, p. 14) which is the heartbeat of the Plains Cree culture. Irene Calliou, a Métis Elder remembers her Cree grandmother speaking of how these values were part of daily practices: "My grandmother used to dig up medicinal roots; and once she dug them up, she placed tobacco there [sc. in the hole]. I did not know then why she put tobacco in." (Ahenakew & Wolfart, 1998, p. 157). She tells us of showing respect for the earth, about reciprocity, and the importance of observation and attentiveness in learning as one generation transmits knowledge in kinship relationships. In talking about the land, *Nehiyaw* Elder Alpha Lafond references traditional values of sharing:

"In the way I was raised, I used to hear my father say, "All the people that are band members here, they all own this reserve" (R: yes). Many times do I remind them when we sit here on council for today there's much disagreement about the land,...that this land,

which is farmed all over, should be parceled out to each individual person, with everyone getting something of it...(In Ahenakew & Wolfart, 1998, p. 298)

This is about collective responsibility and stewardship of the land, about generosity and ensuring that all individuals are being taken care of. Still, there is much disagreement about the land, because it is sacred and that the handling of the land will cause much consternation because it is important.

Much like in the *Story of the First Man* by Peyasiw-awasis (*Chief Thunderchild*), “I am not coming to live with you. I am sent to tell you that the spirit of man lives always. Use love, and work out your own future. Do what is right.” These words are the Nehiyaw basis for the ways, the protocols, and the manner in which the Nehiyaw are asked to interact with the world. These pre-contact, ancient values are transportable across time to other places, sites and relational contexts including western practices of research, social work and education. When considering my culture as the guide for this research, I seemed to focus on the more visible components like the ceremonies, the hunt, feasting, and was equally fascinated by the cosmological constructs of Indigenous thought. All of these are significant, yet it seemed that in the process of ‘studying’ the more outward manifestations, I lapsed into a fragmented way of thinking. All the pieces work together (the beliefs, the protocols, the practices) and being mindful of that is not always an easy task. For many Indigenous peoples, being home helps ground us as the geographical environment of which cultural values are born is central to consider a culture’s way of knowing. A Cree perspective or value about place is that it is alive, the earth, the water, the skies, the stars. It has an energy that sustains us and comforts us. There is power in place.

Place: There are so many ways to start writing this section on place, so many reasons why place is important to Plains Cree people and how it relates to worldview. Yet I feel compelled to start with a story of my own connection with the place where I was born and raised. As Edward Chamberlain writes:

In many ways, home is an image for the power of stories. With both, we need to live in them if they are to take hold, and we need to stand back from them if we are to understand their power. But we do need them; when we don't have them, we become filled with a deep sorrow. That's if we're lucky. If we're unlucky, we go mad. (2004, p. 77)

As put forth in the *prologue*, I was not raised with my Saulteaux/Plains Cree family, but as far back as I can remember I knew I was native. I was raised on a farm, and when I was young, I would play by the slough, in the trees around our house, and sometimes on the unbroken prairie between our house and my Auntie's place not too far way. I remember running around on the prickly grass, picking dandelions, and collecting odd shaped rocks. You used to be able to find arrow heads on the prairie – this was the late sixties - and a neighbour of ours had collected some. I can't remember exactly, but I must have been around five or six, old enough to understand that arrow heads were from Indian people, and that I was an Indian too. I guess you could say it is my first memory of Cree identity, connecting those little stones with the land and circling it back to me. I was curious and spent hours searching for those little arrowheads, though I never did find one. Whenever I think about place and identity, my mind goes back to these early memories. The land holds these images and stories and has given form to my identity and it is who I am. A Saskatchewan Cree poet and scholar, Dr. Neil McLeod, wrote a poem about place, *From Cement Floors*, and how it can transverse time giving us immediate

connection to the ancestors and reminding us of who we are:

*I remember old men speaking
at Thunderschild with nimosôm
and now, I think of those days
from the cement floors
to the circle of old men speaking
echo of generations
gave form to the moment of my birth.
(2005, p.23)*

Place is about linking the present with the past, and seeing how the traditions are bound there, as Chamberlain said, without this we have a deep sense of sorrow at best, and go mad at worst (2004). What we know flows to us from the “echo of generations”, as McLeod says, our knowledges can not be universalized, because they are localized to the bounty of our places.

A historic practice tied with place offers an example of how the Plains Cree used to do things; it is about conceptual frameworks and methodology: it is the buffalo hunt. The *buffalo* – paskâwo-mostosw – were the mainstay of the Plains Cree economy. “In 1870, there hundreds of thousands of buffalo in the Saskatchewan country; by 1881, there were only a few head, widely scattered.” (Mandelbaum 1979, p.51). The slaughter of the buffalo by the encroachment of European settlement led to the starvation and destruction of the traditional Cree economy. In its prime, when the buffalo were plentiful the hunt was a central part of the activity of Plains Cree life. There were two manners of procuring buffalo – the hunt and the chase. In the autumn and early winter, tribes would use a buffalo chute or pound, but in the spring and summer as the herds were moving southward they would use the chase (Mandelbaum, 1979). These activities were central parts of the local tribe’s life. In reading stories about the hunt, it is apparent how place,

values and ceremony are integral parts of this act. Peyasiw-awasis (*Chief Thunderchild*)

shares a story of the hunt:

In the days when the buffalo were many, there were Old Men who had the gift of "making pounds." Poundmaker's father was such a one, and he gave the name to his son. Another we Eyi-pâ-chi-nas, and when it was known that he was "sitting at pound" – that he was seeking the supernatural power to bring the buffalo – hunters would gather.

One winter there were ten teepees, just for these hunters. Working all together, they cut trees to make a circular pound about seventy yards across...The gate was fourteen feet wide, and out from it they laid two long lines of tufted willows that spread farther and farther apart, to channel the buffalo into the pound. In the centre they set a great lobbed tree.

When everything was ready, other Old Men joined Eyi-pâ-chi-nas and sang the buffalo song. Far on the plain, a herd of buffalo was sighted, and two young men rode out to watch. They were to blow their whistles as soon as the buffalo started to move in the early morning. .. The buffalo came on between the lines of the wall and through the gate... Then the hunters closed in, and stopped the gateway with poles and buffalo robes.

We would cut up the meat till late at night, and haul it with dogs to the encampment. ... Other bands came to join us and to feasts. (Ahenakew, 1995, p. 36)

Underlying the hunt was a way, a methodology, which Plains Cree people used to undertake a sacred act that kept the tribe and its people alive. The hunt involved preparation for the hunt, a way, protocol, ceremony and respectfulness in going about the procurement of these animals, and a sharing of the bounty. The hunt is something of a teaching story for approaching research from a Plains Cree conceptual framework – preparation for the research, preparation of the researcher, recognition of protocol (cultural and ethical), respectfulness, and sharing of the knowledge (reciprocity). The buffalo hunt gives an epistemological teaching, a reference point for how to do things in a

good way, born out of place and context specific to Plains tribes. Driving through the Qu'Appelle Valley today, it remains easy to imagine the hunt in this place, and I can ground my conceptual framework in the place markers of my ancestors. The name-place of sites holds knowledges of the interrelationships between people and the way of living on the land.

My First Nations community, Pasqua, was named after Chief Paskwa a Cree Chief (interestingly there is no q in the Cree language). What do name-place stories have to do with my conceptual frameworks for knowing? Stories about name-places are relational, they put knowledge in context of place, history, ways of knowing, and the way a people related to the world. Place-names make theoretical notions concrete, they offer us tacit meaning. The stories of the how people lived in a place allows us to approach knowledge of a culture in a more holistic, non-extractive way. Stories, like name-place legends, give comfort, grounding and offer the warmth of belonging; it is from here that we can reach out to the world. Chamberlin offers this insight,

“ all stories are resistance stories and all songs are songs of resistance, pushing back the tyrannies of the everyday as well as the terrors of the unknown. They give us a way of responding with intelligence and invention when we're confronted with situations and events that are best incoherent and unstable. (2004, p. 192)

There is a name-place legend of how Fort Qu'Appelle, the valley in which Pasqua First Nation is located, got its name. It tells of a love story between a Cree man and woman who were soon to wed. Away from home on a hunting trip, he paddles home to her as the next day they are to marry. As he is nearing her place, he hears a voice calling out his name. He responds “who calls”, (Kâ-têpwêt in Cree or Qu'Appelle in French) but there is

no reply and he travels on. He arrives at her home and finds her family grieving, they tell him that she has left for the spirit world though, "Twice did she call for thee last night."

Pauline Johnson, a Mohawk poet, wrote "The legend of Fort Qu'Appelle" based on a legend handed down from the old people of my region. Though there are different versions to this story, and this legend with its tinge of frontier romanticism is "likely misinterpreted from a story told by the Indians" (Lerat & Ungar, 2005, p. 17). Even so, its haunting sadness still casts a line for me back through time to my ancestors.

Apparently there is an alternate version of how Qu'Appelle got its name; this version was by Loud Voice, one of the Chiefs at Crooked Lake. According to this story, "two groups of people arrived on opposite sides of the Qu'Appelle and since they could not get across to visit, they shouted news across the water, and that is how the river got its name."

(Lerat & Ungar 2005, p. 17). Either way these stories situate us in place, they localize history and knowledge of a peoples.

During a talk, Blackfoot scholar, Narcisse Blood, spoke about the significance of place. He talked about places being alive, that they are imbued with spirit and they are our teachers. I know this because when Narcisse Blood was speaking about place, I thought of home and wanted to cry – not sure why, just did. As Daniel Wildcat states: "You see and hear things by being in a forest, on river, or at an ocean coastline; you gain real experiential knowledge that you cannot see by looking at the beings that live in those environments under a microscope or in a laboratory experiment" (Deloria & Wildcat 2001, p. 36). Part of the conceptual framework for this research lives at the level of the experiential and contextual. While it does not focus specifically on kinship systems and

my relationship with family and community here in Saskatchewan, they are central to place, culture, values and knowing. Tied closely to place is language.

Language. Elder Joseph E. Couture of Cree Nation said, “Everybody has a song to sing which is no song at all; it is a process of singing, and when you sing you are where you are.” (in Friesen, 1998, p.28). Like place, language locates. There are five different dialects of the Cree language: East Cree (Montagnais and Naskapi); Attikamek Cree (R dialect) which is also spoken in Quebec; The Moose Cree (or L dialect) is found in Ontario; the Swampy Cree (N dialect) found in Ontario and Manitoba; the Woods Cree (or TH dialect) is also spoken in Manitoba and in north central Saskatchewan; and the Plains Cree (Y dialect) is found in south and central Saskatchewan and throughout central Alberta; and finally Cree language and communities are found in B.C, Northwest Territories and Montana (Wolvengrey, 2001). I am of the Plains Cree, Y dialect or *nêhiyawêwin* (*the Cree language*). A discussion of language in ways of knowing is central because its form or structure gives insight into the worldview of a culture. For this reason, as well a personal desire to become acquainted with the Plains Cree language, I decided to take an introductory Plains Cree course. While this would only give me a glimpse into the language, I found myself intrigued by what I was learning (I want to stress that I am a very new student) and how some of the language constructs fit with my understandings of a Plains Cree worldview and why language is so important when considering a *Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin* or *Cree Knowledges* and Epistemology.

The paradigms that we studied in my Cree course included the imperative, delayed imperative, the indicative and the subjunctive, which relate to how one conjugates verbs (e.g. I am, she is, you are, and so forth). The subjunctive paradigm is

the conjugation of the AIV in the “ing” mode, and if I were saying *I am sleeping* in Cree it would go like this: ê-nipayân. *I am getting up* would be ê-waniskâyân (adding the ê- to the beginning of the word and yân to the end makes it subjunctive in the first person singular) (Ahenakew, 1987). I am told that fluent Cree speakers most often speak in the subjunctive mode or the “ing” mode. The subjunctive is the opposite of declarative and suggests a worldview that honours the present, what we know now. It also suggests a worldview that focuses as much, if not more, attention on process as it does on product or outcome.

When Elders and cultural people talk about the world being alive, of spirit, it makes sense because this would have been reinforced on a daily basis in the language. Further a human being is no more alive than a tree or tobacco; hence all living things merit respect. By learning about the structure of Cree language, it gives one a sense of the way fluent Cree speakers would have related with the world. Though one may not become a fluent Cree speaker, having an understanding of how language influences Cree knowledge is a key aspect of a conceptual framework based on Plains Cree epistemology. Making the attempt to learn the language shows not only respect to the culture, but it is an act of resistance and reclamation in that we send a message to the nieces and nephews, the young ones, that this is worthy effort.

A personal reason for taking a Cree course was to be able to introduce myself in Plains Cree, which I now can do although it rolls off my tongue as little clunky. It is hard to articulate the importance of being able to do that, how it is good for my soul. More broadly, the power of language in keeping a culture safe cannot be understated. I have come to hold a reverence for languages as a way of knowing and being in the world,

bound with fear that they will disappear. “Languages spoken by only a few, like small pieces of land, would be just as precious as large ones; they would be like sacred sites.” (Chamberlin, 2004, p.16). If we lose the language, we lose insight into the ways of knowing of our ancestors. While language is a strand in the web of knowings and practices that comprise Plains Cree culture, this strand is frayed and thin. Though as Plains Cree, we are fortunate that our language is not in as much jeopardy as other First Nations languages, still it is vulnerable, and therefore it is critical that we as Plains Cree people take care to protect and make it strong again.

Ways of Knowing in the Form of Stories and Ceremonies. I have spent a great deal of time talking to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people about my research inquiry into cultural ways of knowing and how they apply to research methodologies. This has occurred on an individual basis, in informal groups and presenting at local, national and international conferences over the past two years. Consistently, there seems to be a stirring – an uncertainty of how to respond – that enters into the conversation when talking about the bridging of the cultural (metaphysic) component of inward knowing of Indigenous knowledges and the outward knowings of research built upon the physical, outward knowledge of western science. I believe this uncertainty arises because this discussion challenges long held worldviews about how knowledge is created. Yet, I am optimistic for recently, I had the opportunity to attend a talk by the Venerable Achok Rinpoche (who frequently represents the Dalai Lama overseas) at the University of Regina. He was speaking on Science and Monks. In his discussion he spoke about the outward knowing of science and the inward knowing of Buddhism and how these worldviews have historically been so far apart. He said this is changing, that these two

forms of knowing are starting to merge, that there was starting to be a bridge between Einstein's relativity and Heisenberg's Quantum physics. Much of what he was saying resonated with me, and it occurred to me that my very first introduction to quantum physics came from Indigenous scholars like Little Bear. As I sat listening to the Rinpoche I kept wondering how a discussion between Cree Elders and the Rinpoche would unfold. While I did not witness this, the next day I saw the Rinpoche speaking with several First Nations people in the ceremonial teepee room of the First Nations University – no doubt a very cool interchange.

I start this section here, because the proposition of integrating spiritual knowings and processes, like ceremonies, dreams, synchronicities, that act as catalysts or portals for gaining knowledge makes people uncomfortable, especially when brought into the discussion of academic research. This is because of the outward knowing vs. inward knowing dichotomy. Yet what I have been hearing and learning along this journey is that both ways of knowing are needed. This discussion is an attempt to show that my ancestors knew this; they knew about inward knowing and valued it highly. In fact this inward knowing was a central, integral component in how they approached the buffalo hunt and the most deeply sacred ceremonies like the rain dance (thirst dance). They were able to share this knowledge through the use of stories about their experiences, passed on through oral tradition, and it was respected as legitimate. Ancient knowledge is still alive in Cree communities and with Cree people who value traditional knowledges. However, consideration of such knowledges in academia is not really present, other than in an anthropological, exotic kind of way. Nonetheless, if one chooses to embrace Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin one must honour all that it is – regardless of context.

It is not my attention to try and describe sacred ceremonies, because it is not my place to do that. Rather the following shows, from documented sources, that sacred knowings were pivotal in accessing guidance from the spirit powers. The knowledge gained from those sources was honoured and put to use in a meaningful way. The following is a story, by Kamokishihkwew (*Fine Day*), recorded in 1934 when Kamokishihkwew was in his eighties. It is an excerpt from a story where he talks about a Sun spirit power, in the form of a woman, who gave him the power and knowledge to organize a Sun dance:

When I was a small boy somebody came to me in a dream and invited me to go along. I followed him. As I was walking along behind, he stopped and I looked ahead. I was in a clearing in which a young woman was sitting on the west side. I entered the north side but before I go to the center of the space the girl flew up. I was sorry, for I like the girl – she was so beautiful. (Mandelbaum, 1979, p. 363)

This second story is from Peyasiw-awasis (*Chief Thunderchild*) about a winter of hardship and how knowledge came to him in a dream of how to help his people.

One night I dreamed that someone came to me and said, "You can save yourself. Look to the South!" And looking south, I saw that the country was green, but to the north there was only darkness. I tried to flee to the south. The dream was vivid, and when I awoke it was almost morning. I lay thinking about the dream, and then I told it to my father. "Maybe it is only the hunger that made me dream," I said. But my father told me, "Dreams count, my son. Try to go south, all of you; and if I cannot follow, leave me. I will do my best." (Ahenakew, 1995, p. 14)

There is a belief that the dream is an opportunity, a portal, for the spirit helpers to come through to the individual to give advice and guidance. Kamokishihkwew (*Fine Day*) spoke about the nature of spirit helpers coming to a person:

The spirit powers may come to you when you are sleeping in your own tipi when you are young. If you want to be still more powerful then you go out and fast. The ordinary dreams you have while sleeping are called the pwawumuwin. They are not worth anything although sometimes you dreams things that are going to happen. (Mandelbaum, 1979, p. 160).

Dreams are not the only catalysts for inward knowledges to come from. As Kamokishihkwew (*Fine Day*) states, this knowledge comes through fasts; this form of knowledge can also come through sweats, vision quests, and during sacred ceremonies like the rain dance. Plains Cree who believe in the traditional practices still pay heed to dreams and what comes to them during dreams, this knowledge is highly honoured and respected.

Historically, there were different sacred gatherings among Plains Cree people, many of which still occur today. One of the most sacred is the Rain dance, and it is my purpose not to be too specific here. The Plains Cree and Saulteaux of the Qu'Appelle Valley area called their sacred ceremony the Rain Dance, instead of the more commonly known Sun Dance, to avoid prosecution during the period when it was deemed an illegal activity as per the *Indian Act*. As Brown, a Native Studies scholar with Cree ancestry from Pasqua First Nation noted: According to one Cree Elder “the white man never knew it was the same ceremony” (1996, p. 32). The Rain dance is held at a specific time each year, and individuals who participate (stall dancers) do so for solemn and personal reasons. “Traditionally, Cree and Saulteaux votaries often made vows in time of great stress such as when a family member was very ill or when an individual confronted immediate danger” (Brown, 1996, p. 44). The lodge is constructed in a specific way, and there is specific protocol around dance, dress, and ritual practice of the rain dance. The

Saulteaux and Cree of the Qu'Appelle Valley share similar rituals in carrying out the Rain Dance. Brown documents Tommy Anequad's explanation of the Rain Dance which points to the complexity of ritual and method within this ceremony:

The drums, the whistles, the chanting, the sweet-grass incense, fasting, the Thunderbird's nest, the ritual and ceremony are used to create the proper atmosphere...to help the person under vow who participates...to attain cosmic consciousness (Canadian Native Society Newsletter, 1960, p.3) (Brown, 1996, p.150)

From teachings conveyed through oral tradition, these practices are said to be timeless and that while there have been some changes, the internal integrity of the rain dance has remained since the first rain dance. Through ritual and ceremony, individuals give of themselves for another and in this sacrifice the dancers are able to make a connection with the spirit powers to receive spirit blessings for loved ones on whose behalf they dance. During the ceremony, a dancer may receive a vision or dream that would offer guidance or assistance. As Brown recounts, if someone was unsure about a vision, they could offer tobacco to the Rain Dance sponsor or a known sweat lodge leader who would assist in interpreting its meaning (1996, p. 139).

Not only were ceremonies sources of knowing, they also sanctioned acts of great importance to the people. The pipe, the drum, the songs and prayer were integral parts of Plains Cree ceremony and were ways to honour Manitow (*Creator*) and seek the Creator's blessing. Once an act was carried out with the sanction of the pipe, it was considered sacred. In Saskatchewan, according to Elders the treaties are a sacred accord that was sanctioned by the Cree people through one of the most sacred of ceremonies – the pipe ceremony. Plains Cree Elder George Rider of Carry the Kettle First Nations, Treaty Four tells us: "The pipe is holy and it's a way of life for Indian people...The

treaty was made with a pipe and that is sacred, that is never to be broken...never to be put away.” (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 28).

As with many cultures who use an oral tradition, stories are the means for passing on knowledge from one generation to the next for the Plains Cree. These stories were a means to share knowledge and to hold the history of the tribe. The stories shared in this section by storytellers as Peyasiw-awasis and Kamokishihkwew are examples of narratives that have survived the generations through oral history (then documented in written text). The practice of storytelling remains alive. Edward Ahenakew wrote that Elders “had a responsible and important position to play with the band. In a sense they have supplied our moral code taking both the place of historian and legal advisors. Theirs has been the task of firing the spirits of the young men through stories of daring” (1974, p.37). The stories of Cree grandmothers in Ahenakew & Wolfart’s work, *Kôhkominawak otâcimowiniwâna – Our Grandmothers’ lives as told in their Own Words* is a compilation of the stories of their daily lives as told in Cree (and translated into English by Cree interpreters). These narratives remind us (Nehiýaw) of who we are.

“Told by the grandmothers, these texts are at their most powerful when they conjure up the time when the narrators were themselves little girls. As they were raised and educated by their own grandmothers, they in turn try to counsel their granddaughters and great-grand-daughters. (1998, p.26)

The use of stories to teach is an ancient way.

Chapter Summary

As I conclude this section, what I hope to have illustrated is that the way of knowing and being of Plains Cree is a touchstone for my research and central to my Indigenous epistemological framework at the heart of a relational methodology. The values of respectfulness, relationship, reciprocity; the beliefs about a holistic, sacred approach to knowledges that is based on both inward and outward knowings; an understanding of the Cree language system and the interrelationship with thought and ways of the Plains Cree; an acknowledgement that my ancestors were highly strategic methodological peoples in both the practical aspects of life (buffalo hunt) as well as within ceremony and ritual; and a keen understanding of how place effects our own knowing, and why returning to the homeland counts. While I have not identified the relational, including kinship systems, as a separate section in this chapter it is my hope that the reader will note that Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin is bound with and exists within a relational universe. This thesis is becoming less and less about me (or academia), and more about my nieces and nephews who are watching me and telling me that what I am doing is important to them. This is what keeps me going.

Chapter III: Literature Review of Holistic Knowledges and Indigenous Methodologies

Our culture is once again thriving. Many ceremonies are being revived with the young taking an active part along with the elders... a new culture has evolved, a culture which has blended remnants of the past with adoptions from a new way of life.

*Elder Pat Dieter McArthur, Plains Cree Nation
(In Friesen, 1998, p. 67)*

The purpose of this literature review is twofold. The first part is to discuss the implications of the fragmentation of knowledge for a relational, holistic knowledge paradigm; and the second part is to identify, from the existing conversations, what Indigenous peoples are saying about their experience with research practice. Incorporating an analysis of the fragmentation of knowledges assists in revealing the construction of knowledge paradigms. Presenting a historic overview of western knowledge with its paradigm shifts reveals that there is room for alternative worldviews. Further this shows that western science was not always as fragmented as it is now and the move toward a more unified approach to science and knowledge has a historical context that saves it from being categorized as a product of utopian imaginings.

The second part of this literature review focuses on the central questions of my research inquiry: how are Indigenous people approaching research in general, and secondly, how are Indigenous researchers approaching the *cultural aspects* of Indigenous knowledges when making methodological research choices. These questions form the basic structure and body of this literature review. This literature review concludes by

identifying both the trends and the areas for on-going conversation. My intent is to show how my research will contribute toward new knowledge in this area.

History and Re-emergence of Holistic Knowledge Paradigms

This contextual piece considers the nature of the western scientific paradigm and its influence over academic research. As such, this attempts to show how the scientific paradigm, which seems established and immutable, is fluid and has shifted over history; that at one point in European history, both reason and faith were an integrated part of knowledge. Though they are now fragmented, the paradigm seems to be shifting again toward an integrated approach (i.e. quantum physics). Knowing that knowledge, science and research have never been pure – that inevitably they serve a ruling socio-economic system – I needed to understand how western scientific thought was a colonialist force greatly impacting Indigenous philosophies through invalidating, and attempting to eradicate, pre-contact Kiskêyihtamowin⁴. Finally, I was curious as to how research practices, both qualitative and quantitative (especially qualitative), are influenced by the prevailing scientific method and how this is causing a frustration for those seeking to apply an Indigenous approach to researching. Without knowing this context previously, it was necessary for me to work through this historical, contextual information to gain some insight into why Indigenous knowledges and current western epistemological positionings, arguably the foci of methodology, are an uncomfortable fit or why western scholarship seems to be having difficulty recognizing Indigenous epistemological positionings.

⁴ I am using the Cree term Kiskêyihtamowin to mean knowledge and science of an Indigenous form in this context.

Indigenous Science

This section briefly explores where Indigenous and western science currently diverge. In this section, the term metaphysical is defined as that which is concerned with aspects of being not solely in the physical realm. This includes consideration of the meaning of existence, the nature of space and time, and the contemplation of a Creator or God force. (Counterbalance, 2005). This section focuses more generally on Indigenous knowledges coming from Indigenous people from different cultural groups. In this sense it does not focus specifically on Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin (Cree Knowledges) forth in the conceptual framework chapter.

My previous research into Indigenous ways of knowing always, in one manner or another, referenced metaphysics through creation myths, philosophies on space and time, and an energy source which Indigenous people describe as the sacred (Berger, 1993; Cajete, 1999; Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000; Little Bear, 2000). The research by Indigenous writers of differing cultural groups, shares many of the same principles of Cree knowledges, which suggest that energy sources reveal themselves as knowings stored deep within a collective unconscious which surface through dreams, prayer, ceremonial ritual, and happenings (Cardinal, 2001; Ermine, 1999) in a manner that demands suspended judgment for the knowing to emerge in its own time (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). The value of this ancient way of knowing at a community level, outside the realm of western research, did not pose a difficulty. However, these extraordinary ways of knowing, more often than not were viewed (arguably marginalized) by western society as a cultural – Indigenous *exotic* – way of knowing encompassing Indigenous

spirit, mythology or mysticism, but definitely not as firm knowledge founded on scientific procedure. As Vine Deloria Jr., suggests:

Western science, when it encountered information from other cultural traditions that was arranged in a different format, rejected any knowledge that did not fit into its cause and effect analysis of the world. As Western science became more successful and adopted the Newtonian mechanical universe, much knowledge from other cultures was lost because it could not be explained in western terms. (2002, p. 119)

However, being aware of Euro-centric beliefs on knowledge, and understanding the limitations of language in explaining aspects of Indigenous knowledges lying within Indigenous sciences (specifically the extraordinary), Indigenous scholars were increasingly speaking of this force. More often than not, they would reference this force as both part sacred knowledge and Indigenous science, proposing integration rather than a fragmentation of the two (Cajete, 2004). A marked commonality of these writings was the heightened importance of an interconnected world, a web of relations, an integrated approach between the physical and the metaphysical. Increasingly, these scholars were making reference to quantum theory (Atleo, 2004; Deloria, 2002; Little Bear, 2000), and alluding to a consciousness that western science did not have the language to explain, other than to acknowledge that it did indeed exist.

My intuitive response to these readings was to ask how science (as a way of knowing) is defined from an Indigenous and western point of view. In summarizing the basic principles of Indigenous science, Cajete, in his article, *Philosophy of Native*

Science, says:

Native American philosophy of science has always been a broad-based ecological philosophy, based not on rational thought alone, but also incorporating to the highest degree all aspects of interactions of "man in and of nature," i.e. the knowledge and truth gained from interaction of body, mind, soul, and spirit with all aspects of nature. (2004, p. 46)

In localizing this more general Indigenous philosophy to a specific nation, Little

Bear summarizes the Blackfoot approach:

In summary, the Blackfoot paradigm consists of notions of constant flux, wholeness and interrelationship, all creation being animate and imbued with spirit, and space (land) being the main reference point to relate to all else, and the manifestation of the constant flux in cycles, phases and repetitive patterns. (2004, p.3)

Themes in these above examples of Indigenous paradigms for knowing (science) include: interactions and interrelationships; broad-based; wholeness; all entities of creation and nature (not just humans); constant motion and movement; cyclical; and inclusive of all aspects of the being including the spiritual. This integrated approach to knowing – and science – includes both the physical and metaphysical. Indigenous cultures have sophisticated and complex cultural practices to access this knowledge which comes from both the ordinary and extraordinary. It is difficult to define, de-construct or compartmentalize the different aspects of knowing ('science', spirit, inward knowing) within an Indigenous context – reductionist tools seem not to work within this realm. As Battiste indicates, "universal definitions of Indigenous knowledge" (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 36) do not work well either, because the knowledge, particularly that which originates from the extraordinary is deeply personal and particular. Two aspects of Indigenous knowledges appear to be: 1) Indigenous knowledges require more than a

reductionist (or even deconstructive) analysis for an understanding; 2) Indigenous knowledges cannot be fragmented, externalized and objectified. These points are in sharp contrast to the manner in which western science approaches knowledge. Indigenous science involves, and values, both outward and *inward* ways of knowing.

Western Science

According to western thought, science can be defined broadly or narrowly. One definition for science is “the field of study which tries to describe and understand the nature of the universe in whole or part” (Journal of Theoretics, 1999, p.2). According to this definition, science then is seeking an understanding of the world from a variety of sources. This definition fits well with the multiplicity of sources comprising Indigenous ways of knowing. However, a more conventional definition of science reads, “knowledge covering general truths or the operation of general laws specifically as obtained and tested through the scientific method” (The New Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1989, p. 650). Seemingly, it is in the latter definition with its emphasis on external evidence, testing and universal laws which conflicts with the more integrated, personal Indigenous approach to knowledge. This conflict seems to allude to the differing paradigmatic characteristics of western and Indigenous science, and suggests that they approach knowing from different entry points.

From a critical perspective, analyzing how western science approaches knowledge offered me some insight into the inherent conflicts within Indigenous ways of knowing. From my own previous readings, analysis and exploration, I knew that positivism with its propositions of neutrality and its purpose to serve a political and economic agenda of capital – more currently globalization – was philosophically in

conflict with Indigenous social values. Further, critical scholars, Indigenous or otherwise, pointed toward the primacy of 'objectivism' within positivism narrowing what knowledge can entail. Deloria and Atleo both suggest that western science which is based on a rationalist, secular paradigm discounts knowledge that emerges from happenings that cannot be explained through reductionist means (Atleo, 2004; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001).

In analyzing the primacy of western reductionist thought in academic institutions, one quickly senses the politics of knowledge, that it is about both epistemologies (our knowledge about the world) and ideologies (what should count as knowledge and who gets to make that choice) in maintaining western privilege. Rather than acknowledging the subjective, particular, centre of knowing as Indigenous Elders suggest, conventional western scholars have become formidable gate-keepers of this system by objectifying knowledge into criterion-defined models, paradigms and 'truth'. From a critical stance, I knew that non-critical, empirical research with its extractive nature was not a natural fit with Indigenous approaches to research. Fortunately, in the social sciences there were qualitative and critical methodologies to fall back upon which allowed for both subjectivity and critical social analysis to come through. This was all good and yet, even with the qualitative, critical research paradigms, they too were cautiously silent about the metaphysical issues. Why?

Fragmentation of Knowledge & Research: The Scientific Paradigm, Colonization of Knowledges and the Matter of Metaphysics

The western scientific paradigm is a product of social evolution. To support this claim it is necessary to trace the primacy of the scientific method in Europe and its relationship not only on the research process, but to understand how the importation and entrenchment of science (empiricism) impacted the Indigenous peoples in the Americas – or rather the colonization of Indigenous science.

In critically examining western science and the scientific method, it is useful to consider the nature of paradigms. In his opening statement on Indigenous Peoplehood theory– a model for Indigenous sovereignty – Holm, et al introduces their model by referencing Thomas Kuhn. “They say Kuhn “used the term “paradigm” (an example that serves as a model or pattern) to explain the idea that the sciences possess core assumptions on which most research is based or from which it stems.” (2003, p. 7). This led me to reflect upon what Kuhn was saying about how people create paradigms. More particularly, how do specific paradigms, such as the scientific paradigm, gain privilege and come to represent the ‘truth’? And how do paradigms change?

In the postscript of Kuhn’s seminal work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, he summarizes the nature of a paradigm and says that it consists of two forces:

On the one hand, it [paradigm] stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community. On the other, it denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science. (1996, p. 175)

In his analysis of paradigms, and relating to ‘normal science’, Kuhn suggests that a paradigm must consist of two characteristics. First, there must be some accepted

principles, based on some accepted approach toward scientific practice “which include law, theory, application and instrumentation together.” (1996, p.10). To elaborate on this point, a paradigm, such as in the sciences, identifies the types of problems – as Kuhn proposes that science is about problem-solving – to investigate, and the manner in which to go about the investigation of these problems. Secondly, for a paradigm to exist there must be a scientific community which acknowledges this practice and, through scientific textbooks and journals, supports this viewpoint. In this latter sense, a paradigm must have an educative component to it. It is not simply enough for a static scientific community to believe in a particular scientific approach (including epistemology and practice), but must in some way propagate the approach for it to become a paradigm.

The significance of Kuhn’s work is that he identifies that a scientific paradigm is both part sociological sell job and part scientific discovery. While Kuhn highlights the social processes of the scientific community in creating a paradigm, arguably, he is faulted for the lack of commentary on the influences of external socio-political forces. *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* fails to account for the military and industrial forces impacting science during the time of its publication (1960’s). According to Aant Elzinga, Kuhn’s primary work on the Copernican scientific revolution examined the external political forces – not just the scientific community – on paradigm development; however, in his most significant work on scientific revolutions this was not a focus (1997). Nevertheless, the point is that paradigms are not static, but socially constructed by both internal social process of a particular paradigmatic community (e.g. scientific community) and external social forces such as politics and the economy. Given, this insight, I was curious as to how the current western scientific paradigm emerged. In

particular, when did science and metaphysics become two distinct disciplines and when, and how, did the scientific method (the basis for physical and social science research) become so entrenched.

Paradigm Shifts and the Re-emergence of the Scientific Method

In considering the emergence of science and the scientific method, as we understand it today, it becomes evident that western science is a historical process evolving from the mitigation of scientific discovery and the socio-political forces of the times. In discussing the origins of western science, Vine Deloria Jr. states that:

Science and religion are concepts derived wholly within the Western historical experience. They do not appear as separate endeavours in the worldviews or historical memories of many other cultures. They originate in the great synthesis of medieval times, when, after the introduction and absorption of Aristotelian philosophy in the West, reason and revelation came to be regarded as the two equally valid ways of understanding the world, indeed of reaching god. (2002, p. 24)

As Deloria's comment suggests, it is as far back as Aristotle, the predecessor of modern science, where faith and reason as a unified way of knowing began to splinter. While Aristotle's metaphysics were central to his philosophy, he was an empiricist who believed observation was the key to understanding phenomena (at least most phenomena) (Hooker, 1996). In introducing *The Metaphysics*, Hugh Lawson proposed that Aristotle's philosophy was guided by three questions: "What is being and what are the things that are? How can the things that are undergo the changes that we see all around us in nature? How can the world be understood" (Lawson-Tancred, 1998, p. xxiii.). In addressing these questions, Aristotle suggests that knowledge could fall into two camps – that which is precise and observable (*empiricism*) and that which is probable (*probability*) (Hooker,

1996). The classification of knowledge into these two camps suggested that there were two types of knowledges – physical and metaphysical. Further, there were two ways of accessing this knowledge. By creating this binary, which advanced naturally from Plato's dualism (Waters, 2004), it seems that Aristotle was one of the first to separate science from faith. However, because he maintained that both were valid forms of knowledge, in fact privileging the metaphysical angle, he was able to stay in concert with the prevailing notions of his time. While it would be a long time before Copernicus would challenge the centrality of metaphysics in knowledge (*natural philosophy*), the seeds for a new paradigm separating the observable from the probable were planted.

It was Copernicus (1473-1543), in the 1500's, who is known for mixing it up regarding the long held beliefs about the workings of the universe. The conventional premise of the time was that the Earth was an immutable, static, universe-centric entity created in the perfection of God. These were notions which the religions of the day embraced (Stump, 1995). Copernicus put forth an alternate theory suggesting that the Sun, not the Earth was the centre of the universe. With the assistance of mathematical and geometric formulations, Copernicus proposed a Sun-centred theory, though he did not have the means (telescope) to prove it observationally. In his time, Copernicus's theory never did catch on, even though he attempted to spin his heliocentric theory to align with, rather than contradict, the more metaphysical and Church sanctioned beliefs that the Sun revolved around the Earth. It was a no go and Copernicus's theory would not find its scientific community until the 1600s when Galileo (1564-1642) would become Copernicus's champion. Galileo, with the help of Copernicus's calculations and the ability to physically view the cosmos through a telescope he invented, concurred that

Copernicus's theory was more right than misguided, that indeed the Earth did move and rotate around the Sun. Galileo was particularly vulnerable, as an Italian philosopher, in making this claim as it went against the Catholic church's preferential order of the cosmos. In essence, Galileo was bumping up against the same wall as Copernicus. However, Galileo was a bit pushier with more tools to prove his point; all of which eventually led him to face a papal inquisition forbidding him to expose his Sun-centred theory. The papal commission would subsequently ban his central work – *Dialogue of Two World Systems*.

It seems Copernicus and Galileo were responding to Aristotle's questions – "*How can the things that are undergo the changes that we see all around us in nature?*" They were both getting into trouble for making claims about the celestial motion of the universe. Galileo, in particular, was instrumental in heating up the debate between science and metaphysics, a conversation that was more of a tug-of-war debate than dialectic. Galileo's experience suggests that this was as much about the power politics of organized religion, spirituality enshrouded in dogma. According to the Church, much of the metaphysical was considered less spiritual and more occult (Luthy, 2000). Such as it was during Galileo's time, the Church was powerful and science was there to serve the Church. This is much akin to contemporary times where science (at least big money science) serves globalization forces – in some respects the more things change, the more they stay the same.

With Galileo in Italy, Frances Bacon in England, and Descartes in the Dutch Republic, there were intellectual forces purporting the primacy of logic and reasoning in generating knowledge, and demanding that physical observation be central to confirming

it. The mantra of these folks was simply that if it could not be observed, it did not count as scientific evidence. In his article, Christoph Luthy states: “According to our history books, modern philosophy and modern science were both born in the seventeenth century.” (2000, p. 164). While Luthy suggests that modern science was born in the seventeenth century, he cautions us to remember that historic documentation of this time focuses on the primacy of European thinkers with little mention of how other cultures were dealing with the same issue. While *European* science was gaining privilege, it was simultaneously shape-shifting and slowly shedding its metaphysical ‘residue’. Luthy suggests that the “success story of the modern scientific disciplines has been accompanied by the drama of increasing epistemological and ontological fragmentation.” (2000, p. 192). The paradigm was shifting and science, alone, was claiming knowledge.

On a more methodological level (during the same era), the Baconian inductive method of reasoning (otherwise known as the scientific method) outlined in *Novum Organum* was taking hold. It had at its basis observation of the natural world. The premise of his method was the relational dynamic of cause and effect. Evolving from Baconian thought were four components of the scientific method which include observation and description of a phenomena; developing a hypothesis to explain the phenomena; using that hypothesis to predict other phenomena; and finally a testing process, based on external evidence, to arrive at conclusions (Rochester.edu, 2005). Inherent within Bacon’s scientific method was the assumption that the researcher could access knowledge in a value neutral, objective, and unbiased manner. Arguably, Bacon’s scientific method continues to guide the methodological process for both qualitative and quantitative research today. If the philosophical or theoretical perspective of qualitative

research differs from quantitative, the essential steps of stating a problem; identifying theoretical approach; outlining methodology; gathering data; analyzing data; and presenting conclusions are hauntingly Baconian.

During Bacon's time, his scientific method came under the auspices of *experimental philosophy* as opposed to science as the discipline of *science* was still emerging. While there was still some residual integration of physical and metaphysical within knowledge construction, this would soon disappear with the "...institutionalization of separate scientific disciplines".(Luthy, 2000, p. 166). An interesting anecdote of Frances Bacon is that given all his emphasis on a value-neutral, objective scientific method, he was interested in the non-sensory knowledges. Robert Jahn notes that Bacon developed his empiricist approach which "he then proceeded to apply such methods to the study of telepathic dreams, psychic healing" and "experiments touching transmission of spirits and the force of imagination." (1989, p. 19). Alongside these philosophical shifts, science was becoming increasingly utilitarian. Bacon, himself, saw science and knowledge as useful in its most potent sense when it had practical application for what *he*, as a conservative, considered social progress. In this sense, he was an advocate for the pragmatic use of scientific discovery for political aims. While Bacon provided a scientific formalism, Newton established a particularly deterministic perspective on the world.

Where Copernicus, Galileo and Bacon left off, Newton entered. And Newton cracked it wide open. In *Principia Mathematica*, Newton proposed a theory of the movement of celestial bodies in space and time and developed the math to support it (Hawking, 1988). Newton's approach, specifically the three laws of motion, was highly

mechanistic in that all motion between particles in the universe could be accounted for through mathematical measurement. “Newton revealed the almost incredible predictive power of mathematical physics, which led to a kind of simplistic determinism.” (Bernstein, 1996, p.13). His method incorporated both Descartes’s deductive reasoning and Bacon’s inductive reasoning, arguing that both experiment and reasoning were necessary for a scientific procedure. From the late 1600s to present, Newton’s influence on the scientific method would crystallize and have a far reaching influence on research practices today. Further, the split between metaphysics and science was complete and would not re-emerge again in western science discourse until the 1920s (and thereafter) in relationship to the likes of quantum theory. One could argue (most do) that with Newton, the scientific paradigm shifted firmly into place. Not only was there an ideological shift of what constituted science, but Bacon’s vision of a pragmatic science in service of the body politic was becoming an increasing reality. Western science, founded within ancient philosophies, would be used to widen the parameters of the European world – which would include the colonization of the Indigenous peoples in the Americas.

Colonization of Indigenous Science

When the voyageur ships first came to the Americas followed soon thereafter by the boats carrying settlers, they were packing aspects of their material culture that would seriously mess with Indigenous cultures; but they were also bringing an attitude about the world (and who owned it) that was in sharp contrast with Indigenous peoples’ worldviews. While colonization would affect every aspect of Indigenous life, this section deals with how European science, in general, has worked to first subjugate and then discredit the Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous people themselves.

In the colonization of Indigenous people, science was used as an ideological and racist 'justification' for subjecting Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing. Darwin's evolutionary theory of the survival of the fittest displaced a creationist approach and proposed that life evolved slowly and incrementally, with the superior forms of life prevailing and the inferior dying out. As Deloria states this theory fit extremely well for the elite in Europe who were engaged in the exploitive endeavours of colonialism and industrialism. "Survival of the fittest, the popularization of a Darwinian concept, became a means for justifying social piracy."(2002, p. 17). The racism inherent in this evolutionary paradigm contributed to the genocidal policy of Indigenous peoples in the Americas. Further, on a pragmatic level, science was responsible for increasingly effective weaponry as a means to force Indigenous cultures to capitulate.

On a more philosophical level, the new European scientific paradigm would have long-lasting impacts on Indigenous peoples. This science fundamentally contradicted the philosophical perspectives of Indigenous ways of knowing (or science). Pam Colorado, in her article *Bridging Native and Western Science* identifies some characteristics of the western scientific paradigm that were in conflict with Indigenous knowing: that the universe is empty space where atoms and particles live autonomously and independently of each other; the universe is static and atoms and particles do not shift or change; God, through Newtonian physics, no longer has a role in the cause and effect of the universe; prophecy or greater purpose does not exist, life is simply a cause-effect mechanistic dynamic; all energy patterns can be measured and accounted for by human intellect, hence humans are all knowing.(1988). Because Indigenous people did not separate reason and spirit, and because they did not espouse an evolutionist theoretical

perspective, their beliefs were viewed as superstitions (Deloria, 2002). Within this Euro-oriented philosophy of knowledge and science, only those research practices, firmly rooted in principles of Descartes and Bacon's scientific method, came to be the acceptable route toward the creation of knowledge.

With the justification and means, and with science serving external social objectives (i.e. colonialism) of its master, Indigenous ways of knowing would take a serious hit – though they would not die out. It had taken European thinkers a great deal of time and energy to arrive at this rather mechanistic, fragmented, worldview and in the process where once religion and the Church had held the greatest authority, science was now usurping that power. It would be a long while before a paradigm shift within western science would start to whisper of an alignment to Indigenous ways of knowing. Enter Einstein and the beginnings of Quantum theory.

Re-emergence of a Holistic Research Paradigm in Academy

The more I understand about Cree knowledges, the more fascinated I become with the natural world in general. It was while I was researching Indigenous ways of knowing, that I kept seeing the term quantum physics appear time and again (Cajete, 2004; Colorado, 1988; Deloria, 2002; Little Bear, 2000). Noticeably, there was alignment between this contemporary physics (as departing from Newtonian classical physics) and Indigenous philosophies.

Quantum theory has its roots in the early 1920's through the work of Albert Einstein. However, Einstein, a classical physicist and empiricist, was never comfortable with quantum physics. In attempting to explain an inexplicable phenomena emerging from experimentation involving quantum mechanics he commented on this strange

energetic force. “He [Einstein] referred to it as “spukhafte Fernwirkungen” – spooky action at a distance.” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 36). Polkinghorne goes on to say that Einstein, “found modern quantum mechanics so little to his metaphysical taste that he remained implacably opposed to it right to the end of his life.(Polkinghorne, 2002, *preface*). Hence, not Einstein, but Neils Bohr and Werner Heisenberg were key in the development of quantum theory.

Research on quantum theory suggests that that there is some force (call it consciousness) that causes energy fluctuations. Indigenous scholars, in relation to Indigenous science, have made similar comments. “There is a tacit assumption that, in the cosmic flux, there exists a particular combination of energy waves that allows for our continuing existence” (Little Bear, 2004, p.2). The mystery seems to be in the movement of energy and it is here where western science once again meets metaphysics – if uneasily. This energy (or consciousness) is available for all to tap; however, because Indigenous philosophies (and science) continue to value this unquantifiable but ever present force, and have cultural means for tapping into this source, we do not encounter the same difficulty in accepting knowledges from these places as out of the ordinary. Because Indigenous knowing embraces the extraordinary there are no “anomalies” because “Indians retained the ability to wonder at the behaviour of nature” and so could wait for the relationship between things to appear bringing with it the knowledge that one was meant to know (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 21). Through quantum theory, the pendulum of western science seems to be shifting to a place where it is more in-line with Indigenous knowing. This suggests there is a paradigm shift occurring within western science, and the issue of the metaphysical has reared its head once again. This is

important because it shows that while the current western scientific paradigm is packing privilege, it is just a paradigm. As a Plains Cree researcher, I find this perspective freeing. Secondly, quantum physics is showing to western science what Indigenous peoples have understood for a long time – knowledge comes from lots of different places – some of those places you can see and some you can't. Sometimes it's a matter of observation and sometimes it's a matter of faith, but in the end it all counts.

Within this discourse, Indigenous people have much to contribute and it helps to know that there are allies who are contemplating the place of the extraordinary within knowledge. Further, what counts as knowledge seems to be expanding in western ways of knowing. While this is exciting, the western scientific process, with its fragmentation, continues to dominate academic research. As an Indigenous researcher, I wonder how the existing methodologies (specifically those that are qualitative) serve the full plethora of Indigenous knowledges?

In concluding this piece on history of western science, epistemologies and knowledge production, and in tracing the history of its fragmentation, I was struck by a quote in Richard Atleo's recent book, *Tsawalk, A Nuu-chah-nulth WorldView*, where he summarizes the situation in a few short sentences:

From my perspective it appears that science, in order to gain some insight into the world, began first by isolating fragments of it and studying these in relation to other isolated fragments (known as variables) but then discovered through physics that knowledge of isolated fragments cannot completely explain what Braumbaugh and Lawrence have called the "experiential continuum," or the dynamic nature of existence. (2004, p. xiv.)

Atleo raises several points in this quotation. First he highlights the fragmented, compartmentalized nature of western science. Secondly, he points out that western

science, can identify, although not fully explain a dynamic force that underlies existence. The third premise of Atleo is that the established scientific premise of a world that can be fragmented, reduced, and then understood is not fitting with the scientific findings which whisper of a universe intricately and sophisticatedly engaged with itself. In highlighting this contradiction, Atleo suggests there is a shift taking place – a knowledge paradigm shift. And research, as a matter of course, will need to follow. Indigenous ways of knowing and accessing knowledge are central forces in this new dynamic. The next section of this chapter is a review of reflections upon Indigenous research methodologies by Indigenous researchers, and how they are entering into the conversation on research epistemology or ways of knowing and subsequent methods with an Indigenous point of view.

Indigenous Approaches to Research Methodology

When Indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, people participate on different terms. (Smith, 1999, p. 193)

“How are Indigenous researchers approaching their research?” “What are the points of commonality?” And what is it about Indigenous research methodology that can cause such a fuss? In response to this research curiosity, I began to speak with others and began reading articles by Indigenous people on Indigenous research. This literature review, then, is a sampling of sixteen published articles and excerpts⁵ by Indigenous

⁵ Of Tuhiwai Smith, I only reviewed Chapter 10 of *Decolonizing Methodologies* for this review. Likewise of Atleo, I only reviewed the Introduction and Chapter 7 for this review.

authors. The majority of the articles were written in the last ten years (1995-2004) with two articles predating this time (1994, 1998). Each article was selected for this review because of its relevancy to Indigenous research. Each spoke directly to either Indigenous methodologies or epistemologies with the majority of the authors from Education and the Social Sciences. All of the authors had participated in graduate studies research in a western university, and toward this end they have dealt with methodology in their Indigenous research.

In relation to Maori research practices, Tuhiwai Smith suggests that Kaupapa Maori research is “both less than and more than a paradigm.”(1999). By this she infers that while it consists of certain principles, its’ philosophical premise – based on Maori thought – is not reducible to finite parts. Rather it encapsulates a fluidity that intertwines itself within and around a paradigmatic structure in a non-linear way. Given this proviso, Indigenous researchers in this literature review refer to Indigenous research, in one form or another, as entailing a distinctive approach and to that end I identified four integrated themes that consistently emerged as methodological guideposts grounded within Indigenous theory. They include:

1. Decolonizing, Political, Ethical and Social Action aspect of Indigenous research;
2. Personal Narrative and Self-location encompassing the high value of story-telling as a means to acquiring knowledge;
3. Indigenous Languages, Philosophies and Theories as it influences the construction of knowledge; and,
4. Cultural and Traditional Knowledges that encompass the sacred and spiritual.

While each article may have focused on one of these elements, such as Russell Bishop’s article on historical and critical perspective of Maoris’ experience with research

(Bishop, 1997) or Richard Atleo's focus on Nuu Chah Nulth ways of knowing (Atleo, 2004), all of the articles in some way enfolded these four components in an integrated, rather than discrete way, when elaborating on Indigenous researching and knowing. The following highlights these four methodological considerations for Indigenous research. Though the more general term Indigenous is used here, much of the knowledges set forth here mirror the discussion of Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihitamowin presented earlier signifying many shared values of Indigenous people even while the expression of these values are diverse among the differing cultural groups.

Decolonizing, Political, Ethical and Social Action Approach

All of the authors within this review placed their research conversation within the colonial history of Indigenous oppression and acknowledged the political nature of this research.(Graveline, 2000; Steinhauer, 2001; Cole, 2002). Ojibway scholar Roxanne Struthers succinctly summarizes the history of Non-Indigenous research in Indigenous communities by saying it was not "managed in a germane manner" (2001, p. 127). Within a Maori context, Bishop states that often research benefits went to the research and "not the people being researched."(Bishop, 1997, p.36).

In providing a historical context, each author reminds us that researching Indigenous people is a deeply political process. From a methodological perspective, there seems to be three overriding political challenges for Indigenous graduate students in choosing methodologies. The first is to find an approach to research that is not extractive; an approach which is accountable to Indigenous community standards on research; and an approach that can, at minimum, allow space to honour the researcher's Indigenous worldview (be that Cree, Coast Salish,...). This arises most acutely in the

matter of methods such as the gathering of data: how is the data gathered; who owns the raw data (e.g. the community, an individual); and how do data and findings return to the community. Furthermore, who is the community?

The second is that there is a fundamental, epistemological difference between western and Indigenous thought and this difference causes philosophical and political conflict for Indigenous researchers within academia. Leroy Little Bear describes the meeting of Indigenous and western science as jagged worldviews colliding (Little Bear, 2000). Eber Hampton describes the violence directed at graduate students who hold alternative perspectives when approaching knowledges. He uses the analogy of the Cinderella story: "I like the analogy of Cinderella's slipper because we are not Cinderellas; the slipper doesn't fit." (Hampton, 1995, p.8). I have come to believe that a significant site of struggle for Indigenous researchers will be at the level of epistemology because Indigenous epistemologies challenge the very core of how knowledge is produced (and its purpose), and it subsequently flows – how research is carried out. While this is not a matter of one worldview over another, how we make room to privilege both, plus bridge the epistemic differences is not going to be easy.

Currently, there have been at least two types of politically motivated responses to the philosophical conundrum within western knowledge centres. Initially the response was to view traditional Indigenous systems of beliefs as not having any relevancy as knowledge source (Colorado, 1988); however, as Steinhauer suggests the increasingly common response is to equate Indigenous knowledges with a cultural exoticism (Steinhauer, 2002) and thus relegate it to a peripheral status away from the real work of knowledge construction. Both responses lead to marginalization of Indigenous

knowledges, the latter – the *Indigenous exotic* – can have disastrous implications as it can lead to a totemic understanding (and exploitation) of the more visible aspects of Indigenous culture without due consideration or understanding of the knowledges and *values* upon which these traditions are based. Additionally it is a form of fragmenting Indigenous culture and extracting aspects of it that serve a mainstream purpose. It also can then lead to the dismissal or disbelief by western academia that Indigenous knowledges have relevancy within the construction of knowledge.

On the pragmatics of who owns and controls research, the political and methodological challenge of Indigenous research cannot be separated from the ethical aspect of it – the *Ownership, Control, Access and Possession* (OCAP) (Schnarch, 2004). Increasingly, Indigenous OCAP is coming up against the Academy's OCAP and it is causing a rub. A pervasive and primary consideration of Indigenous researchers is the need for Indigenous research to benefit, be responsible to, to give back to, and serve their Indigenous community, hence the importance of Indigenous research protocol development. Weber-Pillwax tells us that: “The research methods have to mesh with the community and serve the community”(2001, p.128). Overall, the authors in this review did not attempt to define Indigenous community for others (Absolon & Willet, 2004) and there was an overriding assumption that an Indigenous scholar and researcher ought to know what (and who) community means in their own terms. It is only in the context of community accountability that the “respect, reciprocity, and relationality” (Steinhauer, 2002, p.73) of research occurs. By embracing these three principles – and adding the principle of responsibility – there is a natural answerability to the community, and as

Cole suggests a link in one's heart and mind between research methodology and an ethical compassionate life (Cole, 2002) .

Narrative and Story

The significance of narrative and story (of self and others) as a component of Indigenous research seems to emerge consistently throughout the literature. It is a knowledge derived from experience and revealed through stories, of which story-telling is a primary Indigenous research method (Steinhauer, 2002). Indigenous researchers had much to say about the intersection of personal narrative, voice and representation all necessitating self-location in Indigenous research (Absolon & Willet, 2004). Neil McLeod writes of the importance of narrative and memory for Cree culture in his book, *Song to kill a Wihitkow*, "mistahi-maskwa was in inspirational Cree visionary because he held the imagination and collective memory of our people at a time when a great darkness, a methaphorical wihitkow, fell on the land" (McLeod, 2005, p. 8). In her work, Robina Thomas cites one Indigenous woman's description of the importance of stories and narrative in her life, and how they "are rooted in a deep sense of kinship responsibility, a responsibility that relays a culture, identity, and a sense of belonging essential to my life." (Thomas, 2005, p. 240).

From this literature review, it seemed that the sharing of one's experiential knowledge, through story, as an Indigenous person is an essential aspect of constructing Indigenous knowledges. Absolon & Willet share with us that "remembering and talking" about their experience is "Aboriginal re-search" (2004, p.7) and they propose that our experience of being Indigenous, our identity factor, becomes a component of the conceptual framework that we bring with us to our research. Graveline argues that we

must embrace our Indigenous voice, our narrative, as it is part of our methodology (Graveline, 2000), while Struthers interweaves her personal story when relating her research methodology and findings (Struthers, 2001). This suggests that the Indigenous researcher needs to have a sense of who they are and where they come from in terms of self, culture, beliefs, values, life experience, memories and so forth. This surmises the life-long, transformational nature of the learning is bound in our personal knowledges.

Directly or indirectly, these researchers allude to the question that while anyone may conduct research within Indigenous contexts, can anyone incorporate an Indigenous methodology if voice is a central characteristic? And who gets to have an Indigenous voice? Responding to this question crackles with the prospect of Indigenous identity politics, yet there needs to be continued conversation. How we deal with the politics of this question internally as Indigenous researchers is one matter; however, the centrality of personal Indigenous narrative within Indigenous research does seem to separate western research methodologies from research using an Indigenous methodological approach that integrates the Indigenous voice factor.

After considering the importance of voice, narrative, and self-exploration, I began to think that an Indigenous methodological approach could be exhausting. Yet, knowing why we are carrying out research – our motive – has the potential to take us to places that involve both the head and heart. We need to know our own research story, because if we are doing Indigenous research it is likely that sooner or later an Elder or Community person will ask: Who are you? Why did you do that research? And why did you do it *that way*? We have to be able to answer these methodological questions honestly and in our own voice. To me, this is about being accountable to community.

Indigenous Languages, Philosophies & Theories

Integral to the discussion of personal narrative is the primacy of language and oral tradition in preserving the unique nature of Indigenous philosophies. In relation to the connection between languages, culture and knowledges, Anne Waters offers some insights into the structure of Indigenous languages and how form gives rise to a way of thinking and being. Waters indicates that dualist constructs such as like/unlike have resulted in a binary language and thought pattern in many European cultures (Waters 2004). Conversely, in many Indigenous cultures, the language constructs suggest a non-binary, complementary philosophy of the world. To assert the interrelationship between Indigenous language and worldview and the manner in which colonialism has interfered with this dynamic, Waters says:

In this way agents of Euro-American colonial theism wrenched Indigenous ontological constructs (embedded in the linguistic structures and thinking of the Indigenous mind) from Indigenist thought, causing a continental shake-down of the Indigenous worldview. (2004, p.102)

Western research that serves to extract and externalize knowledges in categorical groupings aligns well with the categorical premises of western languages. For if language both shapes and communicates thought, then as Waters suggest the conflict between Indigenous and western research approaches (and its involvement in knowledge construction) rests within deep language and the matter of dualist thought patterns. It is no wonder that, at times, Indigenous thought tends to dance around the sharp edges of the language binaries that define western methodologies. Given the philosophical basis of a complementary, non-binary Indigenous thought pattern, it makes perfect sense that narrative encased in the form of oral history would be the natural means to transmit

knowledges (Struthers, 2001). Within the structure of story, there is a place for the fluidity of metaphor, symbolism, and interpretative communications (both verbal and non-verbal) for a philosophy and language that is less definitive and categorical. My sense is that in the old days as now, the skilled orators were able to imbue energy through word choice, and allow the listener to walk inside the story to find their own teachings. Traditional academic research, on the other hand, still has a craving to pinpoint the 'objective truth'.

In considering Indigenous philosophy and languages, it is apparent from the literature that language is a central component of Indigenous knowledges and thus must be considered within Indigenous methodologies. (Bishop, 1997; Struthers, 2001; Weaver, 2001; Waters, 2004). There is a need for on-going conversation about how to incorporate not only the languages, but also the philosophy from which that language flows into research. Many Indigenous people do not know their own language and are attempting to relearn; however, it will take a lot of immersion to retrain our minds. Further, how to think and be in a non-binary way is a challenge when we live in a binary world. My guess is that very few can claim 'purity' here and binary righteousness (you're a real Indian/you're not) around languages seems to defeat the whole purpose (and what would the ancestors think?). So what do we do? Because language is central to knowledge construction, and knowledge construction seems to emerge from research how are we, as Indigenous researchers, approaching the issue of philosophy and language in our research other than to identify its importance? A very interesting question.

An equally important point about language and research is the ability to make the abstract theoretical findings of research concrete. The skill of making areas of study, as

research methodology, relevant to community rests largely with language. My hunch is that the ability to craft our own research methodology stories, in our own voice, has the best chance of engaging and connecting with others. The best way I know of meeting this challenge is through integrating into our speaking and writing not only our thoughts, but the imagery that paints the context of our lives. As I write this portion of my thesis, I am home in Saskatchewan. By being here I have been able to infuse my thinking, and some of the writing of my research, with this Great Plains landscape and the Plains Cree culture and language. That a magpie, a thunderstorm, a teepee set against the rolling hills of the Qu'Appelle valley can make an appearance in my writing about research seems only possible if I am here. It is the visitation of anecdotes, metaphors and stories about place that make cerebral, academic language accessible to the experiences of other. Nature and place seems to have great communicative power.

Cultural (metaphysical) Knowings

As I was reading, talking with others, and having my own experiences, I was learning more about how other Indigenous people were incorporating cultural (sacred, metaphysical, extraordinary) knowings into their research. It seemed that Indigenous people were accommodating western methodologies to fit cultural knowing rather than vice-versa. This was no easy task given that academia most often requires researchers to follow a western scientific research paradigm that asks for evidence of causation, reliability, and internal trustworthiness. It was not surprising then to review the literature and find this form of knowledge making its way into research – it was less identified as a methodological step and more as an integrated aspect of approaching research.

In each of the articles, the Indigenous researchers referenced the metaphysical as being a component of Indigenous knowledges. Ermine suggests that Indigenous knowledges include both inner and outer space. The outer space is the physical world and inner space is where the metaphysical resides (Ermine, 1999). Evelyn Steinhauer, in quoting Marlene Castellano, identifies Indigenous knowledges as coming from a multitude of sources including “traditional teachings, empirical observations, and revelations” and goes on to say that revelations comprise “dreams, visions, cellular memory and intuition” (1993, p.74). In discussing the components of Native science, Colorado states: “American Indian science is based on observation, experience, information and prayer. Native languages is the key to it all.” (1988, p.58). Richard Atleo’s theory of heshook-ish Tsawalk is a “theory of context” which “refers to the nonphysical and to the unseen powers”, a theory which recognizes that all aspects and variables within the universe are related and united (2004, p.117).

What these researchers are saying is that Indigenous people get information from many sources including spiritual places. Because of the interconnection between all entities, the process by which this information is sought ought not be extractive, but rather it is ought to be a reciprocal relationship of some manner to ensure an ecological and cosmological balance. Much of this knowledge comes to an individual inwardly and intuitively. Evelyn Steinhauer cites the example of Elders not making important decisions until they had a chance to engage in ceremony and sleep on the matter, hence waiting for guidance through dream (Steinhauer, 2002), and there are myriad examples within Indigenous stories and writing that speak of the reliance upon this type of knowledge. Metaphysical knowledge is central, integral component of Indigenous ways

of knowing, so the question becomes how do Indigenous researchers incorporate metaphysical knowledge into their research?

How do we quantify and validate these knowings within a western scientific approach to knowledge creation? Maybe we can't or shouldn't, but I do know that while I can't cite my own sacred experiences using a standard APA format or validate them according to a standard research protocol, they are huge in my own construction of knowledge.

The Research Methods

The major difference is found in the interpretation of what constitutes significance. Whereas other theories may assume that if variables do not show significant relationships, these variables are not related or connected to each other, the theory of Tsawalk always assumes a meaningful relationship between variables. (Atleo, 2004, p. 131)

This literature suggests that Indigenous researchers are grappling with ways to explain how their own Indigenous worldviews is informing their research design in a way that is translatable to western academic minds. In carrying out her research using a phenomenological methodology, Struthers wrote about honouring spiritual knowledge by offering a traditional gift of tobacco to her participants, as well as a daily offering of tobacco to the Creator. In preparing herself for the research – for example, in gaining guidance as to whether she should continue with her research – she relied on dream knowledge that came to her in the form of three Ojibway grandmothers. Throughout her research she relied upon guidance from dreams and spirit (2001). Atleo introduces the Nuu Chah Nulth method of Oosumich, which is a spiritual methodology equivalent to

that of a vision quest. He argues that western methodologies and Oosumich belong together as they are two proven methods of accessing information (2004).

Cam Willett makes this comment about 'objectivity' of the researcher in data collection, and the "lurking variables" of Indigenous research:

They collect the data without any understanding of its context and without only personal connection or stake in the data. They make no attempt to guess what the stories collected in a study might mean to the people who tell them. For example, the creation stories are often dismissed as some sort of superstitious myth. Both the research and the researcher lose respect and validity. There are lurking variables that are not accounted for. The data are skewed. (Absolon & Willett 2005, p. 105)

On a further note to data collection, Pam Colorado, cites Theresa Tuccaro as saying that one has to find the right spot for the interview, where the person will fit. Colorado goes on to say: "True Native scientists actually see the "spot". This ability stems from prayer, the hallmark of Indian science" (1988, p. 54). With regard to the interpretation of data, Patricia Steinhauer spoke of how she "... was overcome by a strange feeling" (2001, p. 186) and intuitively knew she had to take a break from academia and her research to think about how to proceed. She was at a loss of how to interpret the data of her interviews to ensure that the wisdom of the stories shone through. In a previous research methods class, her instructor had asked the students to spend an hour with a living object on campus (she chose a tree). At the time, she could not understand this assignment but in returning to her research, she remembered the tree. The tree metaphor allowed her to interpret her research data in a way that honoured the wisdom of the voices in her interviews. One wonders, did her cognition provide this solution, or did the tree give her a gift?

Indigenous researchers are incorporating cultural knowledge into their research.

What seems equally evident is that the Indigenous researchers are doing two things to create space for this knowledge:

1. They acknowledge that the cultural knowledge which includes the metaphysical/extraordinary is a necessary and legitimate form of knowledge (epistemology) and use it.
2. In preparation and during their research, they are paying attention to inward knowing and documenting how that knowing came to them and how they used this knowing to guide their research (method).

The above is my assessment in reading their research stories; however, the Indigenous researchers in this literature review did not specifically identify this as part of their research methodology. Rather, they seemed to be using western methodologies and incorporating the above as integral but not necessarily categorized or identified. Nor did they specifically reference any challenges that they had in incorporating cultural knowledges in this manner. One wonders that if by not straying too far from at least the language of western, conventional methodology were they able to incorporate this form of knowledge?

Chapter Summary

Overall, the literature in this review suggests that the principles of an Indigenous research methodological approach should at minimum address the following issues:

- Cultural epistemology or way of knowing
- Decolonizing approach (research as a form of resistance)
- Affirmation of Indigenous resiliency
- Indigenous research ought to have a transformative or social change aim
- Ethical considerations emerging from historic relationships with research
- Community Accountability

- Four Rs – Respect, Responsibility, Reciprocity, Relationships
- Personal Narrative, Life Experience
- Self-location, Reflection, Memory
- Voice, Representation
- Clear sense of motives
- Encompass Indigenous philosophy
- Speak to Indigenous languages
- Indigenous knowledges – holistic, integrated approach
- Acknowledgement of the expanse of Indigenous knowledges including the intuitive, metaphysical and spirit

As mentioned previously, these are characteristics of an Indigenous methodology.

Other methodological approaches to research (i.e. grounded theory, feminist, participatory action) by both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous can be conducted within Indigenous contexts. However, the act of carrying out that type of research within an Indigenous context and community does not mean the research process itself flows from an Indigenous approach and methodology.

In analyzing the literature, Indigenous researchers are articulating components of an approach to research that is grounded within an Indigenous way of being and knowing. However, there needs to be an on-going discussion of how we are managing with Cinderella's shoe that isn't fitting. From a decolonizing approach, Indigenous researchers and scholars have a unified, strong, critical analysis of the social and political relationship between research and Indigenous communities. Ethical protocols on research with Indigenous peoples suggest strong headway is being made in this direction (e.g. *Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples*). Most Indigenous researchers include ethical considerations (in its broadest sense of giving back to the community) as key in their approach to research. However, how are we doing with

chipping away at the knowledge paradigm that influences research methodologies which we are increasingly becoming involved with? What happens politically, when we attempt to incorporate methodologies that make use of different language (as in terminology) and different ways of knowing within the academy? Are Indigenous researchers coming up against barriers? What are they doing? How is that shoe situation?

From a self-narrative perspective, it seems there needs to be an on-going discussion – no matter how painful – of the role of Indigenous voice within Indigenous methodologies. Does an Indigenous paradigm suggest a race based approach to research? On the other hand, given the self-location, experience, and voice imperatives of an Indigenous approach to research, does this way really allow for someone who is not Indigenous (and what constitutes Indigenous) to participate? Is it all or nothing? Do these questions lead to the creation of a false binary? I am curious as to how both experienced and novice Indigenous researchers are responding to these questions.

Subsequently, the question of language and philosophy raises all sorts of interesting questions for those of us who are not fluent, nor live within a community where we are steeped in our Indigenous language and the thought process it affords. To me this is about our journey back to deep language (like deep culture) – and the extent to which we are able to travel there. Language as a criterion for understanding Indigenous philosophy, as part of our conceptual framework for guiding research is easy to identify. Yet the application of this criterion, as part of our personal narrative, is more complex.

Because so much of Indigenous ways of knowing is internal, personal and experiential, creating one standardized, externalized conceptual framework for Indigenous research is nearly impossible and inevitably heart-breaking for Indigenous

people. How are we customizing our Indigenous frameworks to fit into the larger Indigenous paradigm? And how is the language of frameworks, itself, ultimately chipping away at our philosophies? And how do we carryout research, within the academy, without framework language?

Finally, in relation to metaphysics it is clear that Indigenous researchers value this knowledge. Subsequently they are integrating this knowing into their research through what western research would likely recognize as a heuristic method of meaning making. However, they are not explicitly saying that this is what they are doing. Nor are they explicitly saying that an Indigenous methodology ought to have this heuristic component. Finally, they are not identifying what the challenges are in integrating metaphysical knowings, or whether this is being viewed as knowledge or whether it is minimized as simply a sensibility of the Indigenous *exotic*. Because of all of these lingering quandaries, my research question arises (as stated in the *Introduction*).

Central Question

How do Indigenous researchers approach research? More specifically, how do Indigenous researchers approach the cultural/metaphysical aspects of Indigenous knowledges when making methodological research choices?

Sub-Questions

- How do Indigenous researchers understand their cultural/traditional (metaphysical) knowledges and how do they incorporate this into their research methodology?
- What are the challenges that Indigenous researchers face when they attempt to engage their cultural ways of knowing with western research, and how did they counter-act these challenges?

The next section of the dissertation is on *methodology* outlining my approach – a tribal methodology based on a Nêhiyâw Kiskêjihtamowin – which I have used in seeking a response to my inquiry question.

Chapter IV: Tribal Methodology - A Modern Day Buffalo Hunt

Of all the chapters in the thesis, this is the one that I have laboured the most over, have spent the most time contemplating, writing and re-writing, and the one which has been the biggest puzzle. A year or so ago, I was reading a book about the feeling of writing and its connection to soul places. The author quoted an anecdote on writing by Margaret Atwood, she said “I was reminded of something a medical student said to me about the interior of the human body, forty years ago: ‘It’s dark in there.’” (Davis, 2004, p. xvi.). I feel the same way about methodology. Whether it is Indigenous or Western, the way one goes about research holds its own complexity. What I find interesting about methodology is that if approached in a certain way (in my circumstance an Indigenous way) it can be a holistic endeavour. It is like the buffalo hunt of my ancestors where due respect was given to the full range of considerations, or shall I say variables, in the hunt.

The crux of this chapter reveals my methodological framework for this research. However, before delving in to my methodology, this chapter begins with a brief contextual background on tribal methodologies. This is based on a methodology review of two PhD dissertations by Indigenous women, one Blackfoot and one Cree, to show how they have been able to privilege knowledge from their own cultural epistemologies and knowledge paradigms to guide their research. My research journey into Indigenous methodologies was imbued with an intensity and spirit that is forever a part of my story. It has been sacred research, a sacred story – âta’yôhkêwin, and while it may (or may not) come through this writing, it was there.

Indigenous PhD Dissertation Review as informing my Methodology

This section is a short document review of the methodological approaches of two PhD dissertations, written by Indigenous scholars, who have incorporated either wholly or in part an Indigenous approach to research. A central part of my inquiry question asks how Indigenous researchers incorporate cultural knowledges into their research and in-line with that question, explores how others have dealt with the challenges of this choice. My central premise is that, while quantitative and qualitative research differs philosophically, they are both based in the western worldview. My goal for this section is to provide context for the tribal methodological approach of this research that puts Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin at the centre of this Indigenous epistemological framework.

The following is a review of two PhD dissertations, both by Indigenous women who are of tribal affiliation with groups within the Canadian Plains: Blackfoot and Plains Cree. A criteria for this review was to highlight how Indigenous researchers incorporated their cultural knowledges as the epistemic centering in their research; how they were able to incorporate methods of gathering and/or presenting the findings from their research that aligned with their cultural epistemology; and finally to include any comments on ethical considerations they may have raised. This review is meant to briefly highlight these positions that inform my own methodology and it does not cover the full intricacies and thought that was put into the methodological considerations by each of the authors.

Thesis Methodology Review #1: Blackfoot Ways of Knowing

The first dissertation that I have chosen to review is the doctoral work by Dr. Betty Bastien. Her dissertation is entitled *Blackfoot ways of Knowing – Indigenous Science*. Betty completed her doctorate of Philosophy in 1999 through the Faculty of Transformative Learning, California Institute of Integral Studies. Betty's research topic grew out of an initial inquiry into the development of more culturally relevant curriculum for a Bachelor of Social Work degree for the Niitsitapi community. The purpose of Betty's dissertation was twofold "(1) to present the basic ontological responsibilities which form the epistemological and pedagogical principles of the Real People; (2) to identify a process for decolonization and reconstructing the Niitsitapi ways of coming to knowing" (Bastien, 1999, p. 6). As the title suggests the research centred on Blackfoot ways of knowing, what it means and the responsibilities that flow from those ways and the manner in which those responsibilities are taught to other members of this cultural group. The research methodology is qualitative and described as exploratory. "It is designed to obtain qualitative preliminary information from the grandparents who have been taught in the traditional Niitsitapi pedagogy, and who are respected among the Kainah sacred societies as traditional teachers and mentors." (Bastien, 1999, p. 83). In her research design, Betty's work illustrates two dimensions of an Indigenous approach in research: a) it is solidly grounded in Blackfoot knowledges; and b) the data gathering methods flow from her Blackfoot epistemic centering.

In stressing the importance of reconstructing our respective Indigenous cultural epistemologies as a libratory pathway, Betty states:

Tribal people must begin to reconstruct their tribal paradigms based in their own cosmologies. Without the development of a tribal paradigm grounded in the knowledge and science of tribal people, they will remain hostages of a colonial consciousness which inherently ascribes to them deficiencies in character and abilities. (1999, p. 50)

In the opening line of her methodology chapter, Betty articulates the necessity of engaging with a tribal paradigm for Indigenous research. She stresses that we must be able to both approach and interpret our research from our tribal way of knowing as a means of breaking from dependency. It is a decolonizing methodology which keeps Indigenous knowledges at the center rather than centering critical theory (an allied approach but western no less). This is no small task. Her dissertation explores Blackfoot ways of knowing as a topic of research, while at the same time relying upon Blackfoot epistemology in her methodological choices. She provides us with an insight into a Blackfoot worldview and comments on her research:

“The research proposal was premised on reconstructing the ways of coming to know which ontological responsibilities are. For Niitsitapi these are engagement, participation, and connecting people with relationships that form their world...Relationships form the natural world which includes the above people, the underwater and underground people, and those who walk the earth. (1999, p. 82)

In maintaining this epistemological positioning, the research design, the choices about methods, the ethical considerations and the writing and interpretation of the research findings flow in a specific manner that respects the Blackfoot worldview. From this perspective then, what were some of the considerations around methods, protocols, and making meaning of the data?

Betty's doctoral research emerged out of a research project involving the incorporation of Niitsitapi ways of knowing into Bachelor of Social Work curricula for the Niitsitapi community. In this sense, Betty's involvement in this research journey is couched in a pre-existing relationship with community. For her doctoral inquiry, Betty aligned her approach to gathering data with a Blackfoot worldview. She had a "Kaahasinnon - Grandfather for the Sacred Horn Society" (1999, p. 88) guide her research. The site of gaining knowledge from the grandmothers and grandfathers was a convocation which included cultural protocols, gift offerings, food, ceremony and prayer. At this ceremony, Elders were advised of participant confidentiality and tape recording of the session. "They [Elders] agreed to the recording and stated that confidentiality was not an issue" (1999, p. 91). The teachings were gathered in a manner that respected the oral traditions of Niitsitapi in several ways. For example Betty identified the importance of relationship with her research participants. "Relationships of alliances are the basis of all transactions among Niitsitapi" (1999, p. 91). In the act of gathering teachings, Betty used open-ended questions that facilitated a conversation with the grandparent and gave them room to "give what information they felt was necessary and appropriate." (1999, p. 92).

In addition to gathering teachings from the grandparents, Betty identified the importance of her own preparation (inward knowing and researcher preparation). She identified her own way of preparing for her research through visiting sacred sites and participating in ceremony. In terms of ethical considerations, Betty identified the parameters of what knowledges she has shared in her dissertation about Niitsitapi ways of knowing. "The guidance and advice shared by the grandparents about common

knowledge of the Niitsitapi I share here is meant to be shared with the uninitiated.” (1999, p. 95). Additionally, she goes on to say that an ethical consideration of this research, is that the knowledge shared with her by the grandparents is meant to be used in a helpful way, and it is her ethical responsibility to carry out that obligation. Betty spent time discussing the notion of validity, in relation to what validity means according to Blackfoot ways. She says,

“Grandfather is saying, the validity and ethics of the epistemologies and pedagogy of Niitsitapi knowing lives through the manner in which I live my life...Validity is demonstrated through living the teachings, and applying the teachings in daily living.” (1999, p. 97)

In considering the implications of validity for research in learning of the Niitsitapi approach, I came to wonder about validity. It seems that both a Niitsitapi approach and a western way of knowing ask the same question: Is it true? However, one reevaluates whether it be proven to be true outwardly, while the other seeks to know whether it can be true inwardly. In her discussion on validity, Betty further states that the peril of engaging with notions of validity from a western perspective emerges when knowledge like Niitsitapi ways of knowing is meant to be understood in the oral language of that particular culture. She says, “...the validity of the research from a Euro-western perspective is strongly compromised through translation.” (1999, p. 99). My sense of this cautionary note is that western institutions would have a tough time deeming as valid what they can only partially understand because of the language consideration.

These are just a few examples of approaches to research that acknowledge and honour the holistic Blackfoot worldview that is the centre of Betty’s research. This approach honours spirit, the self, self-in-relationship to others, responsibility, respect, purpose, stories and teachings, an animate validity, a decolonizing imperative, and an

relational epistemology that grounds of this all. Betty's approach was based on her cultural way of knowing, and shares many of the same principles articulated by other Indigenous researchers from a variety of different cultural backgrounds. The next dissertation to be reviewed in this section is by a Nêhiyaw researcher originating from southern Saskatchewan.

Thesis Methodology Review #2: Decolonizing Tribal Histories

Dr. Winona Stevenson is the author of the second dissertation which I reviewed for this thesis. Her dissertation is entitled *Decolonizing Tribal Histories* and was completed in 2000 through the Department of Ethnic Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Winona Stevenson is of Nêhiyaw and Irish ancestry, her Cree lineage stemming from the Qu'Appelle Valley area. Winona's research centres on oral history as a unique form of traditional Indigenous transmission of knowledge and history. From a Cree historian's perspective, the first part of her thesis is an analytical discussion of the impact of New History, postcolonialism and postmodernism that is pushing the edges of conventional historical research and allowing for the richness and complexity of oral history tradition to enter into this discourse. She documents challenges facing the Indigenous scholar in bringing oral traditions into the academy as part of her literature review, and argues although there may be thorny encounters, this is a worthwhile endeavour that will work to create a transdisciplinary "Indigenous oral traditions-based New Indian History" (2000, p. 2). She concludes her discussion on oral traditions by focusing her research on Plains Cree oral traditions through the use of a case study

approach. The case study demonstrates how the “necessity of a tribal-specific framework” (2000, p. 2) will give insight into Indigenous ways of knowing.

I found this dissertation held a fascinating discussion on the intricacies, and sophistication, of Cree oral tradition and how this tradition flows from a Cree worldview. I also found the comparative discussion of oral history from an Indigenous as opposed to a western historian point of view intriguing as it pertains to research. She states that Indigenous oral histories do not share the same conventional boundaries, and that they exist within relationships. As she says “...the package is holistic – they include religious teachings, metaphysical links, cultural insights, history linguistic structures, literary and aesthetic form, and Indigenous ‘truths’ (2000, p.79). She goes on to discuss the disciplinary objective of western scholarship when using story as means of collecting data.

“It often is the case in mainstream scholarship, that once a story is shared and recorded, ‘facts’ are extracted and the remaining ‘superfluous’ data set aside. The bundle is plundered, the voice silenced, bits are extracted to meet empirical academic needs, and the story dies.” (2000, p. 79)

In reading her work, I understood the sense of history nested in relationship, kinship, language, place, culture, spirit and the entirety of the contextuality of Indigenous ways of being. This approach to her work is born of her Cree worldview, the teachings of the Old Ones and the ancestors through story in relation to community. She writes: “Within the oral traditions are the stories that embody the laws and protocols the Creator gave to humankind to govern the transmission of knowledge and human conduct in relation to the Creator, creation and all others.” (2000, p. 232). Integral to this worldview is a decolonizing agenda. An epistemic example is found in the most relevant of ‘details’, as

in her choice to put Cree words in roman type with their translations in italics. While not contesting the notion that foreign words should be written in italics, she contests which language (Cree or English) is from a foreign land. She clarifies her strategy, by saying to "...refrain from taxing readers by presenting the entire English text in italics, when Cree is used I have inverted the relationship by setting the Cree words and phrases in roman type and their English translations in italics." (2000, p. 18). I have followed her advice on this point.

From reading the methodological notes in Winona's dissertation, I understand that she interviewed a number of people for this study over a period of time. While I cannot ascertain the time frame, she indicates that the teachings, memory, and knowledge came long before this project started. She indicates she went through human subject ethical review for the case study component of her work which relied upon her teachings and experience with the Ochekwí Sipi muskego-winniwak, *Fisher River Swampy Cree*. While she did not discuss why she chose a case study, she provided ample discussion of how her methodology followed from an Indigenous paradigm and protocol of teachings being shared for the purpose of helping a person in their life onward. "In the Cree way, our sources are our teachers and the teachings they impart are intended and taken as lessons to be applied and lived...Thus, seeking Cree knowledge requires an entirely different kind of relationship based on long-term commitment, reciprocity, and respect." (2000, p. 15). This demands a subjective involvement with one's research where the act of 'collecting data' is as much about cultivating and nurturing relationships as a long-term proposition, as it about acquiring information. It sort of turns the old adage of "don't get too close to your research", on its head.

What I found particularly helpful about Winona's approach to research is the time that she spent discussing the 'ins' and 'outs' of attempting to record teachings of the oral traditions that she received from her researching and putting them into written text. As many of her sources were stories shared in the Cree language, she had the additional challenge of first interpreting Cree into English and then having to *write* meaning. With regard to translation she says:

Gerald Vizenor explains that "stories that are heard are not the same as the silence of the written word." So much is lost in translation – the communal context of performance, gesture, intonation – "even the best translations are scriptural reductions of the rich oral nuance." (2000, p.19)

As I read through her work, the style of writing shifts back and forth from the more analytical commentary of discourse surrounding oral histories and the more personal 'feel' of her writing when she is speaking more directly of her experience with her Cree culture – one is theoretical discourse and one is story. These two ways presuppose differing assumptions about sharing knowledge as the analysis demanded of the writer as a declarative form of illustrating knowledge is in contradiction with the teaching method assumed in stories. "All stories are didactic to varying degrees, but they hardly ever have built-in analysis – analysis is the job of the listener." (2000, p. 233). When it comes to writing a scholarly work using an Indigenous paradigm, this 'closed captioning' creates a challenge for the Indigenous scholar. In Winona's work, it is as if she is moving back and forth between the two worlds with their differing paradigmatic approaches of knowing. She acknowledges this herself by saying: "Clearly, this novice had difficulty entering into debates in the literature writing in the oral tradition and struggled to remain in the text and avoid 'objective' distancing." (2000, p.19). My own experience is that

trying to write for both worlds is a bit of a head trip; while there is some overlap with the writing working for both audiences, there are many places where there is none. At these times trying to traverse the cultural epistemic boundaries, is just really hard.

Nonetheless, this is a critical factor in both presenting and making meaning of the teachings offered in the research.

On top of the practical challenge of trying to capture the nuance and meaning of Cree stories was the ethical dilemma of whether this was a good thing to do at all. The recording and documenting of Cree knowledges has been an on-going concern. Within Indigenous research, there seems to be a discomfort with using tape recordings of interviews. However, in order to keep the stories alive this approach has its defenders. During the early days of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, there was discussion of whether cultural knowledges should be recorded. In discussing this dynamic, she quotes Cree Elder Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw's thoughts on this:

The late Cree elder Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw spoke at an SICC workshop and expressed thanks that his teachings about the Treaty No.6 pipe stem were being recorded "so that our relatives might learn by hearing about it in this way." (2000, p. 238)

This is helpful for Plains Cree researchers, it was helpful for me, to know that there has been a nod, in principle, to some aspects of Cree cultural knowledges being recorded for the purpose of ensuring future generations have access to this.

The truth of stories and the power of words are aspects of ways of knowing that have great significance in both Indigenous and western cultures. In western research, this is often referred to as the validity of research in making claims – claims which will have power, because knowledge is power. From a Cree perspective, Winona states that the truth in knowledge is bound in a sacred commitment. "So when the Old People accept

tobacco from one seeking knowledge, and when they share the pipe, they are saying that they will tell the truth as they know it. They are bound in the presence of the Creator as witness to speak from the heart, to speak their truth.” (2000, p.249). She goes on to say that when the storyteller uses the term “tapwê” (*truth*) it means that the storyteller is telling the truth according to how she or he heard it. The story then becomes a part of the social and historical fabric of the people; it becomes the historical truth through the honour of the storyteller. The validity of this way of knowing is only unquestionable if one’s worldview or paradigm attests it. On the matter of tapwê (*truth or validity*), Winona’s suggestion to the Indigenous historian can also guide the Indigenous researcher: “Thus, the task of Tribal Historians are to recover the past and to present it to the public in a form that meets the approval of the people whose histories and lives it represents.”(2000, p. 298).

Winona’s doctoral research gave me significant insight into the nature of Cree oral tradition and commentary around its application within history (as a discipline). Her research flowed from a Cree way of knowing that nests itself in relationship, and the presentation of her research findings illustrated the complexities of applying this approach within a document like a PhD dissertation. Integral to this discussion was both form and content of sharing stories in a textual format and the limitations of this process. Further, she provided good insight into *validity* from a Cree way of knowing that contrasts to notions of validity and rigor from a western science perspective.

The choice of these two dissertations was fortuitous (if not conscious) in that the first dissertation – Betty Bastien’s work – provided me with insight into the significance of an Indigenous epistemology in guiding the research and gathering the stories.

Winona's work gave me insight into the complexities of interpreting, presenting and making meaning of data in a textual form based upon teachings gained through stories and the oral tradition. What is central to both of these dissertations is that while they were in positions of having to serve two distinct audiences (community and academy), these epistemological positioning centred within their respective cultural ways of knowing. This kept the research design and the meaning-making of their findings distinctly Indigenous. By reviewing their research methodology, it is evident that both pieces of work fall within an Indigenous paradigm of research by meeting the principles set out in their respective Blackfoot and Plains Cree ways of knowing. The methods and interpretation of the research seemed to be embedded in their worldviews and flowed naturally from there, if not always easily. A theme that was shared, and reelevated, consistently throughout both works, is the integrated, relational, holistic nature of knowleges that are based in their particular cultural paradigm. There is a distinctive pattern emerging from the literature review and these two dissertations. The second part of this work is to explore whether these patterns remains consistent in the stories and conversations of the researchers and scholars that I interviewed.

A Tribal Methodology with Nêhiyáw Kiskêyihtamowin at the Core

I was learning about Indigenous methodologies from Indigenous people (and from non-Indigenous people through their inquiries) as I was going along. In this sense this methodology is emergent. In reflecting generally upon the methodology, I necessarily began to question myself, "How do I understand social science research methodology?" There seems to be two broad definitions of methodology. The more narrow definition of

methodology focuses primarily on research methods (data collection and coding) (Alford, 1998); while the second, broader, definition of methodology enlarges the discussion to incorporate both the theoretical assumptions about choice of methods (Creswell, 2003). Approaching research from within a qualitative research paradigm is fairly unambiguous on the expectations of methodology – that one’s methodological choice should encompass both theory and methods (Harding, 1987; Stringer, 1999). My perspective on methodology aligns with this assumption, though I tend to use the broader term of epistemology and methods. (I use epistemology because it seems more fully capable of capturing the holistic, forceful essence of Nêhiyâw Kiskêyihtamowin than theory alone can).

Figure 1 is a graphic illustration of my methodological approach based upon an Indigenous Epistemological Framework. The epistemic center of this approach is Nêhiyâw Kiskêyihtamowin with research choices being made in relationship to this worldview. I did not use arrows or directional lines in this graph. This was for a reason. Rather than a linear process, this research followed more of an “in and out”, “back and forth”, “up and down”

Figure 2: A Tribal Methodology Centering Nêhiyâw Kiskêyihtamowin as the Methodology for this Research



pathway. In a visual sense, I see Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin as a nest that holds within it properties full of possibility for a way to approach research.

Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin Epistemology

As mentioned in *Chapter Two (An Indigenous Epistemological Framework based on Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin)*, I purposefully introduced a Cree epistemology at the start of this work rather than placing it in the latter methodology chapter. This was to privilege this knowledge and a way of indicating its importance to this study. In an effort to make this dissertation as succinct as possible, I will ask the reader to refer to *Chapter Two* for a discussion on the nature of Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin (albeit in a humble one). From a methodological perspective, the credibility of this design depends upon my ability to explain how each of my research choices aligns with Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin. Attempts to employ aspects of this approach (methods, giving back, researcher preparation...) without Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin as the epistemic centre would constitute a flaw in this design. Conversely attempts to employ Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin with incongruent methods, preparation, and so forth would also constitute a flaw in the design. Thus, there must be vigilance in assuring the cohesive, holistic, organizational intention of this Indigenous epistemological framework with Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin at its centre. The remainder of this section describes the terms identified in this framework (see *Figure 1*): a) *Decolonizing Aim*; b) *Researcher Preparation*; c) *Research Preparation*; d) *Conversations and Stories*; and e) *Making Meaning*; and f) *Giving Back* to the community.

Decolonizing Aim

Indigenous methodologies are inclusive of a number of approaches to research. My approach puts the tribal knowledge of Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin at the centre. However, decolonizing methodologies is also an Indigenous approach to research. Because of the decolonizing terminology, there is an assumption that its focus is toward decolonizing relationships between Indigenous peoples and settler societies. While I do not centre the “settler dilemma” in my approach, I do recognize this relationship has been problematic. Thus part of my Indigenous epistemological framework incorporates a decolonizing aim.

In terms of a decolonizing aim fitting within Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin, one could argue it does fit within this epistemological positioning. A value of Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin is to carry out *purposeful work* that *gives back* to the community, in contemporary times a decolonizing aim fits the bill. Betty Bastien clarifies this point. “In order to interrupt the cycle of dependency, and to begin to heal the genocidal effects of assimilative theories, policies and practices, research must address the heart of the indigenous world tribal paradigms.” (Bastien, 1999, p. 62). I was driven to carry out this research because of my own confusion as an Indigenous graduate student of how to apply a Cree centered research methodology. There was a gap and Indigenous students were struggling. This had everything to do with colonialism and western epistemic domination at western schools. One of my purposes for this research then is about creating change; it is about theory and *praxis*.

Integral to a decolonizing aim is attention to ethics. Ethics in Indigenous research are largely relational. The general readings on Indigenous research by Indigenous researchers (as identified in the *Literature Review Section*) and within Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin tells us that ethical considerations⁶ are paramount. Carrying out research in a “good way” means paying attention to the ethics that protect Indigenous culture, particularly when one transverses cultural paradigms such as bringing Indigenous knowledge into the academy. This encompasses both the general ethical conduct in carrying out research (research that is respectful according to cultural protocols); and it encompasses the Indigenous specific ethical issues which have emerged from an exploitive, extractive history of research. In considering ethics, I am reminded of the decolonizing aim of this research. What is my purpose? Will my research be a help or hindrance?

Of Indigenous research, flowing from tribal paradigms, there is general agreement on the following broad ethical considerations:

- That research methodology be in line with Indigenous values
- That there is some form of community accountability
- That the research gives back to, and benefits the community in some manner
- That the researcher is an ally and will not do harm

Of Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin, a critical ethical point is that one must be prudent and respectful about what one shares. This requires reflection on both the research topic and personal motivations. As mentioned earlier, the research needs to be done within the value miyo-wîcêhtowin meaning, “*having or possessing good relations*” (Cardinal &

⁶ Human Subject Ethical Review will be discussed under Research Preparation.

Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 14). Because I am a nascent learner of Nêhiyáw Kiskêyihtamowin, I have chosen to present Cree cultural knowledges from pre-existing published sources of teachings. Secondly, I have been increasingly judicious about including aspects of my own personal journey while still recognizing I must share just enough. An example of the values of *keeping good relations* – miyo-wîcêhtowin – I have ensured that participants are okay with how their teachings are represented. Again, I wish to re-iterate that these are my understandings and interpretations of these cultural values.

Another question in considering ethical issues is: “Who is my Indigenous community and how do I give back⁷?” In general, I define my Indigenous community as consisting both of my own community (Pasqua First Nations) and my people (Plains Cree/Saulteaux). However, for the practical purpose of this research, I see my Indigenous community as Indigenous graduate students who may be struggling with methodological issues. I also see the Indigenous research community (i.e. Indigenous researchers and research instructors) as part of my Indigenous community. The ethics of carrying out research with an Indigenous community (however it is defined) have long reaching implications. The ethical requirements of most universities match an individualist, outcome-orientated research process focusing on anonymity and protection of the person. It can be extractive, not reciprocal in nature. A relational research process built on collective values, like Indigenous research, demands that the researcher give back to the community.

⁷ I respond to the question of giving back to community later in this chapter.

Researcher Preparation

I use the term *researcher preparation* (see *Figure 2: A Tribal Methodology Centering Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin*) to describe the experiential aspect of my research. By this I mean that there were aspects of this research approach that required preparation and choices that were grounded in the inward knowing arising from my own experience. As I have mentioned, this PhD is in many ways a portal allowing me to carry out personal work; that I may finish with a degree is a cool efficiency, but it's only a juncture of my larger life work and knowings. I call this section *Miskâsowin* and it is included as part of my methodology because it flows from Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin. *Miskâsowin*, is a Cree word when translated means *to go to the centre of yourself to find your own belonging* (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 79).

In Blackfoot the English word 'story' literally translates as 'involvement' in an event. If a Blackfoot asks another Blackfoot to tell a story, he is literally asking the storyteller to tell about his 'involvement' in an event. (Little Bear, 2004, p. 6)

From the oral teachings and writings of Indigenous peoples of different nations, the message seems consistent – all we can know for sure is our own experience. In line with what Leroy Little Bear is relating about Blackfoot story-telling, my methodological approach includes a perspective for involving myself in this research story. The inward reflection of the researcher is not a new component of research, but arguably it takes up more space in methodology for those following a tribal paradigm because of the value placed upon this type of knowing. From a Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin epistemology,

attention to inward knowing is not really optional. From a traditional Cree perspective, seeking out elders, attending to dream knowledges, and participating in cultural catalyst activities (ceremony, prayer) are means to access inward knowledge. According to Plains Cree culture, teachings come from many places, and we need to open ourselves to those teachings and then give ourselves time to integrate them so we can be of use to our community. This requires preparation by the researcher which is uniquely personal to each individual. It is a process which can never lend itself to a check-box, universal approach – rather it is personal work that must be done by the researcher in conjunction with her or his world (both inner and outer). This section briefly outlines how I have made miskâsowin a part of my research process.

Incorporating Miskâsowin as part of Researcher Preparation. In qualitative research undertaken by critical researchers, with particular inquiries that seek to explore issues related to marginalized groups, there are often unambiguous statements by the researcher of their insider/outsider status. By reflecting on insider/outsider status, one is preparing oneself for research. In the *Prologue* of this paper, I have “self-located” by identifying my status as both insider and outsider in relation to this research. The *Prologue*, an emerging tradition for Indigenous research, as introduced in his doctoral research by Maori scholar, Dr. Graham Smith, is about putting ourselves upfront, it is about saying this is who I am and this what I know from this place where I am looking (Smith, 1997). This largely deals with the objectivity/subjectivity issue in research. For one Plains Cree elder expressed, all we know is what we believe to be true based on our experience (Stevenson, 2000), hence subjectivity in research is a constant.

Closely related to the issue of “self-location” in research is the matter of *Purpose*. When I think about how purpose figures into an Indigenous methodology, I reflect back on the work of Eber Hampton (Hampton, 1995) among others who ask us about our *motivations*, both academic and personal which must, at some point, be an internal inquiry. Because of the centrality of purpose in this approach to research, I have put a *Purpose Statement* – Indigenous style – right at the beginning of the introduction. Between the prologue and the purpose statement, it occurs to me that I am close to this research, but then it is likely I should be if it matters to me.

As a means to capture my personal reflections throughout this entire journey, I have been recording my thoughts in a *Journal* for the past two years. Unlike field notes, which I understand to be recordings of observations during field study, this journal captures my reflections on my coursework, relationships, dreams, anxieties, and aspirations. Some days it refers specifically to my research, while at other times it is a more general accounting of my daily activity. While the entries of this journal do not appear in this dissertation in a formal way, it has been a venue for me to make meaning of this research journey, and I attempt to share some of this personal journey, summarized from journal notes, in this dissertation in a chapter devoted to my own story and my own *research preparations* (see *Chapter Five*). This has not only been important for me in terms of processing information, but also it has been a means for me to practice writing out my ideas. I have strongly depended upon journal entries to assist me in writing the reflective commentary on the conversations and stories. As I reflect on my journal, I can trace my analysis and personal discoveries and it is a personal record of my own research story. It is a tool for meaning-making.

Preparing for the Research

This section outlines the design of my research dealing primarily with outward knowledges, namely talking with other Indigenous researchers about Indigenous research. As mentioned earlier, this research is a qualitative study with an exploratory aim. This is my attempt at trying to carry out an Indigenous research approach with a Nêhiyaw Kiskêyîhtamowin centering within a western research setting.

The following section is an overview of the specifics on gathering the data and includes a discussion of the participants, the method, the place, tape (*truth & trust*), and the human subjects review. Part of gathering teachings included the literature review and the methodology review for the two Indigenous dissertations that are included in this work.

Teachers (Participants)

Having a pre-existing and on-going relationship with participants is an accepted characteristic of research according to tribal paradigms. Prior to the interview, I had met all of the participants through collegial networks of Indigenous researchers and university instructors, and thus it could be described as my having a pre-existing relationship with research participants. Because of the commonality of our work, I hope to have on-going relationships with these individuals. In this sense I was both insider and outsider in relation to the research participants. In terms of cultural knowings, we all carry our own experience and knowing about our cultures and while I can share some general insight, there was much of the discussion where I was an outsider (even with those individuals of Cree ancestry). In terms of the power dynamic of the researcher and participant

relationship in this case, it was the power of the pen, and putting my own interpretations to the teachings I was given. To mitigate this power differential, and to be respectful of my methodology, I ensured that the participants had final approval over the transcripts (this is discussed more fully later in this chapter). More generally, these were individuals who were Indigenous colleagues, scholars, role models who had a strong sense of personal agency, and were not a high risk group in that sense. Many times during this journey I felt humble in their presence.

In terms of selecting the participants, it is suggested within qualitative studies that research participants be chosen for what they can bring to the study as opposed to random sampling (Esterberg, 2002). Further my study sought depth rather than breadth, and so I chose to a small sample size of six research participants or teachers. This was the criteria for selection of which each criterion was met:

- 6 individuals of Indigenous ancestry
- 4 of the 6 Cree ancestry (not necessarily Plains Cree)
- All individuals grounded in their culture
- 3 individuals female and 3 individuals male
- All individuals having PhD experience in western schools
- All of the individuals having recent graduate experience (within the past 10 years) at the time of the interview
- 3 individuals with a background in Social Work, 3 with a background in Education
- Majority having carried out human subject research and were well versed in methodological considerations

Conversations (Method)

I spoke with six Indigenous researchers (based on the criteria mentioned earlier) to find out their responses to my research question. The following is how I went about that process.

As previously indicated I had a pre-existing relationship (albeit only one or two meetings in several cases) with all of the research participants. Additionally, I knew of the work of all of the participants through publications or collegial networking. Thus I was keenly interested in having an on-going conversation with them about Indigenous research methodologies and their thoughts about it. In line with Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin that honours sharing personal stories through talking as means for knowing, I decided to arrange to meet with each of these individuals for a conversation about this topic. While this may seem like another way to say interview, I do not think that the term interview captures the full essence of this approach. For this was about an on-going conversation between individuals who are engaged in Indigenous research praxis by the work they are doing (and how they are doing this work) and will continue to carry out in creating space for Indigenous knowledges. Further it was very much a combination of reflection, story and dialogue.

To begin the formal contact, I contacted each individual prior to the conversation through personal contact, email or phone. I provided each participant with a briefing on the project, and with a short narrative and a brief contextual statement behind this research question, as well as the research questions (Appendix I). Included with this introduction form was a survey (Appendix II). The purpose of the survey was to gather some initial biographical information such as name, Indigenous affiliation, PhD program

of study and so forth. It also asked for participant comment on their PhD committee membership and their initial thoughts on methodology. Both of these were emailed to participants prior to the conversation. Initially, I was intending to have individuals fill in the survey which I would collect when meeting for our talk. As it turned out, this only happened in one instance, and so for all of the conversations we used the survey as the beginning place for a conversation, then moved into the more specific research question outlined in the information letter (Appendix I). By using the survey questions to guide our discussion, I was able to get a stronger sense of the context for their research and we were able to discuss more broadly on discussions of purpose, story, motivations, culture and worldview.

The participants did not receive pay for the participating in the research, but received a small gift according to Nêhiyaw cultural protocol. Any costs associated with the interview were covered by myself. Participants signed the Consent Form (Appendix III). The conversations lasted for approximately 1.5-2 hours and were recorded on audio tape. I indicated that I would provide the participants with a copy of the transcripts of our conversation for their perusal after compiling them in textual format. In presenting the findings, I employed two processes: a *condensed conversation* and *thematic coding*.

The condensed conversation was an attempt to ensure that the teachings were flowing from Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin worldview: a) allowing for interpretative teachings; and b) allowing for the voice of the person sharing the story. To prepare the condensed conversations to present in this study, I did some minimal editing to the transcripts, but have tried to keep as close to the transcripts as possible. I have attempted to take the essence – a snapshot – of each conversation which meant merging questions

and responses in some instances; however I did not edit the sequencing of the conversation as it occurred. In some instances, the reader will see square brackets ([]), this is where I added a word.

To ensure that the transcripts and the conversations in this research are concurrent with what the research participant's wanted to share, I sought each one's approval for both the raw transcripts and the condensed conversations. I also sought and received permission from participants to use their actual names.

The presentation of findings in thematic groupings reflects an analysis of the entirety of the data from the original verbatim transcripts.

Place

I was based in Saskatchewan (Regina) during the data collection process. The interviews took place over a two month period. The interviews took place in the four general localities of Regina, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Victoria. Each of the meetings and conversations took place at a mutually agreed location with three of the conversations at participant's homes and three at their offices. This decision is based upon both contextualizing the research within a Plains perspective as well as a limited budget for this research.

That I was based in the general vicinity of my traditional territory was critical to this research for two reasons that relate to research design. I specifically chose these people for their knowledge, the majority of individuals were based in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. I did not have a research grant or funding for this project, and so I may not have been able to financially or otherwise afford to have a conversation with these people

if I had to travel back and forth from British Columbia. The second reason is the most pertinent. I believe where we are, and the daily influences of our lives, shape how we think and write. If I was at the University of Victoria, the sense, flavour and feel of this document would have been drastically different. It would have been the writing of an expatriot Cree/Saulteaux from the cafés of Victoria. I would not have been able to put Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin at the core of my methodology and there is no two ways about it, without that I am lost.

Tapê (truth & trust)

As I am writing about research validity, I hear the Elder's voices enter my head – are you doing this in a good way? There is a Cree word, tapewin, which means to speak the truth with precision (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000). To me this is about validity or relationally speaking – credibility. To do this means tending to the process in a good way, that no matter what the outcome you can sleep at night because you did right by the process. I have included the following checks in my research, which are adapted to fit an Indigenous research paradigm.

I have attempted to show community accountability through consistently debriefing with other Indigenous graduate students and scholars throughout this process both formally and informally. I have attempted to keep the language of this dissertation as accessible as possible so that it is not mystifying, but rather useful to a range of individuals that comprise my Indigenous community. My rationale for choosing the participants that I did for this research links with the purpose of this inquiry. By presenting the conversations and talks through a condensed conversation format, this

meets the Cree criteria of tapewin. I have done my best to do the research in a good way that gives it dependability. For example I had participants review and approve their transcripts. I made the choice not to include an interview if a participant did not review and give me their expressed permission to include their transcript. They were able to make changes, and be comfortable with the both the raw transcripts and condensed conversations.

Perhaps one of the clearest indications of confirmability of this research is that I have examined Indigenous research from several different angles – literature, dissertation review, conversations and my own experience. I have also used my own sense of a tribal methodology to inquire into Indigenous methodologies. While this may have led to a dissertation that seems repetitive at times, what I am unequivocally saying is that there is a unique methodological approach that can be identified as Indigenous.

Human Subjects Ethics Review

I followed the *UVic Ethical Review* process for research with human subjects. This research is considered low-risk as all of the participants are voluntary, they were asked to sign a consent form, and all of the participants are university graduates, with experience in human subject research. Each participant had an understanding of informed consent and its application within the university structure. As mentioned previously, I prepared a consent form (see Appendix III) for the participants to sign that was approved, along with my ethics application, by the University of Victoria, Ethical Review Board. Participants were given opportunity to read transcripts and the condensed conversations and given the opportunity to make changes. I asked participants if they

would like to have their names included or if they wished to remain anonymous, they all gave written consent to let their name stand. They were given the opportunity to terminate their involvement in the research at anytime. The research did not cause any physical discomfort; and I provided for costs associated with the research. As mentioned earlier, participants were not paid but were given a small gift as this is cultural protocol.

I have kept the data in a secure place, a locked cabinet. The only person who had access to this data (journals, tapes and transcripts) was myself, with the exception that each participant had access to his/her data which I emailed to them.

Making Meaning

As mentioned earlier, I chose to present the data in two ways: a) condensed conversation form; and b) thematic grouping of the data. *Chapter VI* is the first chapter to present the findings of this research which are presented in condensed conversation format. Each condensed conversation is couched between an introduction and reflective commentary written by myself, identifying the teachings that were particularly relevant to me. It is also an attempt to show self in relation to others. In a traditional approach to using stories as a means for teaching, presenting the data in this way allows for the reader to interpret the conversations from their own vantage point and take the teachings that they need.

The second manner in which I present the data is through a thematic grouping or clustering of themes. As Moustakas states, I engaged in the process of "identifying the qualities and themes manifested in the data." (1990, p. 51). In identifying themes, I drew upon the tradition of transcribing, reading, reflection, identifying themes, re-reading

transcripts, and then creating themes to allow the stories to speak. I used an open coding process of first identifying themes into three groupings of worldview, way, and context that aligned with my research. I did a secondary level of coding which was more emergent. I grouped various themes that emerged within these three larger categories. These findings are presented in *Chapter VII* with a more detailed explanation of the coding process in the introduction of that chapter. For each sub-theme of the larger three groupings (worldview, way, context), I integrated a discussion and analysis with each sub-theme as to how it relates to my research inquiry question.

I did experience some uneasiness in the coding process as at times it felt like I was extracting the findings from the context of people's stories. In externalizing the data, I am cautioned about the limitations of Indigenous research in a textual universe. I am reminded of Vine Deloria Jr.'s account of Ruth Beebe Hill, a Non-Sioux researcher, who "...deliberately interpreted Sioux customs as an extreme form of individualism...She utterly gutted all substance in the kinship tradition and reduced the Sioux religion to bizarre mysticism..." (1991, p. 458). As I think about the data analysis and interpretation of any western research process, I am reminded to pay close attention to the principles of the Indigenous research paradigm and the decolonizing aim of this research. Particularly in the matter of coding, I tried to be as respectful as possible and as I mentioned in a recent workshop that I gave on this research, I am hopeful that the ancestors will not disown me for this one.

Throughout the process I was engaging in my own personal meaning making which I was recording in my journals. By persistently referencing my own experience as an Indigenous person in the middle of carrying out Indigenous research, I was having a

tacit experience of what the individuals in my research were referencing. This assisted me greatly in making meaning of what was being shared with me.

Giving Back to the Community

Throughout this project, I have been attempting to give back to my community (Indigenous researchers) through publishing on the topic, speaking on the topic, writing Indigenous research curricula, and co-teaching an Indigenous research course while doing this work. I have done this as a form of *praxis*. I did not see it as a part of my end goal, but more as an integrated aspect of my methodology throughout. In the three years that I have been working on this topic (and writing and speaking of it) I have watched while *Indigenous methodologies* has become an increasingly present part of the research vernacular (I think we create space by persistently harping on the subject!), and to me this is *miyo* (*a good thing*). I am reminded of a quote by Blackfoot scholar, Betty Bastien: “To continue practicing research outside of one’s culture, and attempting to develop research questions from experiences based on the western paradigm, continues to create dependency among tribal peoples” (Bastien, 1999, p.62). I am equally reminded by Susan Boyd, a critical researcher, that “knowledge is power” and the “choice of methodology is also a political action” (Boyd, 2005, p. 1).

Chapter Summary

In summary, my hope is that this chapter has accomplished several goals. First, I wanted to show a couple of methodological approaches to research by Indigenous scholars who have completed their PhD in western universities and managed to maintain

a tribal paradigm. Secondly, I wanted to show the link between my conceptual context, Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin, and my own approach to a tribal methodology. Thirdly, I wanted to cast a light on both researcher preparation and research preparation, and identify that importance of each within my approach. Finally, I wanted to show how I have made meaning of the gift of teachings given to me, and how I can return these teachings to the community. Hopefully, I have been successful in accomplishing those broad goals.

Chapter V: Miskâsowin – This Researcher’s Preparations

As mentioned earlier, miskâsowin, when translated means *to go to the centre of yourself to find your own belonging* (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 79).

This term gives space for personal knowing, a form of Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin. It is a word that found me when I was trying to understand the role of inward knowing, and speaks to preparation and purpose. It asks of me, why am I doing this research and why am I doing it this way and I needed to be able to answer these questions in a relational, holistic way. Plus, this personal journey is part of my research story, and gives context for my conversations with other Indigenous researchers in this study. What I learned about miskâsowin is that everyone has their own. This is a short story of mine.

When Eber Hampton recommended that we ought to know our own motives for research (1995), I did not realize that this would ask me to reflect upon my own story and narrative. My assumption about my doctoral research was that it would demand a significant intellectual commitment that would be cognitively taxing, but would mostly stop there. For the first year, though grappling with methodological courses, it was as smooth as I could have hoped. However, as I entered my second year, the clarity started to dissipate and my research became entwined with my life, my identity, and my past. While I knew I wanted to explore Indigenous methodologies, I was focusing solely on a more generalized Indigenous theory and it was not sitting right with me. The more I tried to control my learning about Indigenous knowledges, the more I manifested experiences in my life that aggravated a structured approach to learning that had worked so well for me in the past. During this time I was encountering people and being directed

to readings⁸ that were underlining the necessity of experiential ways of knowing, of the rich source of knowledge that lies in each of our personal narratives – and this was unnerving me. Though it was unnerving, there was this deep personal need to find out more about culturally specific ways Indigenous people make sense of the world, so I persevered. At this point, I can't say I really knew what I was looking for, but I just kept going. I was feeling uncertain and was grappling with emotions emerging from personal and academic places that were challenging the detached linearity that I coveted; in short my world was feeling gelatinous.

I was reading works by Indigenous scholars who were discussing the nature of sacred knowledges and the more I read, the more I became acutely aware that knowledge is culturally defined, and that western notions of “truth” or “fact” were bound in its own paradigm or construct of beliefs. So many Indigenous writers were saying that components of Indigenous knowledge dwelled beyond what the western knowledge paradigm could or would accommodate. This wasn't new to me from an analytical perspective, it was just that at this point (and I can't articulate exactly why) I was starting to integrate this possibility into my life on an intuitive, emotional, experiential level. It was a visceral, raw and bewildering time. During this time, I opened myself to sacred offerings of knowledge coming from unexpected places. I paid attention to my dream life. I do not know how or why we are shown paths, how the great Manitow, the universe, a sacred force guides us along at the most confusing times. I still cannot

⁸ Three books that had particularly impact on me during this time were: Basso, Keith H. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*. 1st ed. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996; Deloria, Vine, Jr., and Daniel Wildcat, R. *Power and Place*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum, 2001; Silko, Leslie, Marmon. *Ceremonies*. New York: Viking, Penguin, 1977

explain exactly what happened except that I became confused, uncomfortable, alone, sad and angry. I think I was confused and mad because I couldn't understand what was happening or why I was feeling so alone in this search. Because I was feeling so alone, I had a deep ache to go home, but it was more than that. I was also experiencing a strong gut feeling that I couldn't ignore, and it wouldn't go away.

In response to these emotions, I spiralled into a visceral journey back through memories of my Plains' childhood. Sharon Butala, a Saskatchewan writer, writes about her sacred connection to the landscape of the Cypress Hills in southwestern Saskatchewan Plains. She recounts how her spiritual relationship with the land emerged during a deep crisis in her life (Butala, 2004), and as I read about her experience, I was able to relate. In an attempt to make meaning, I began to journal what I was remembering and the feelings they evoked. I wrote about my first memory as a young child at a Cree Powwow and how I stood there shaking, one of my first conscious awareness's of a belonging that would take me years to understand, I had flashbacks of myself searching for arrowheads on the prairie grass. These memories came back to me as if no time had passed. I had not lived in Saskatchewan since 1987 and only returned for yearly holidays, and though I had missed family, I was comfortable with this arrangement. Yet as I engaged with my research, I was drawn into memories associated with this place on both a conscious and subconscious level. I was having vibrant dreams with unfamiliar symbols that were speaking to me of sacred knowing, identity, and exploring the deep abyss of my personal story that were intricately bound with place. I was having a journey into my own private *Miskâsowin*.

During the time that I was in a deeply reflective place, I had two significant experiences. These experiences led me to consider cultural knowledges coming from a non-rational, non-time sort of place that Little Bear, Deloria Jr. and others were writing about. The first experience came in the form of a dream. Without going in the nocturnal visual specifics, I dreamt of the Pueblo poet, Leslie Marmon Silko. Her message to me was that home was important for Indigenous people and I needed to think about that. At the time of the dream, I had not been consciously planning to go back to Saskatchewan for my research. I felt assured that I could finish this work from the place I was living, Sidney, B.C. I sensed this dream was giving me a heads-up, but I was not quite sure what to do about this and let it lie. In the back of my mind, though I knew enough about my culture to pay attention to vibrant dreams. Later in the fall, the occurrence of a second extraordinary happening would clarify my ambiguity.

The second happening centered on my own Indigenous identity. I was contemplating my upbringing and how this would impact my research and questioned whether, given my experience, I could authentically approach Indigenous knowledges. I knew that I had to square with being raised outside the culture, particularly if my research touched on cultural matters. One particular week in October, I was obsessing on this as several events occurred at school triggering these feelings. I was reflecting on European culture, and the metaphor of a white pearl necklace kept reappearing in my mind. There were a number of reasons for this association, but mostly pearls have strong associations for me of my childhood in a small rural town. Anyhow, that weekend I wrote these thoughts in my journal. On the Sunday of that particular week, I remember feeling overwhelmed by all of the reflective work I had been doing, and wanted to go for a drive.

When I got to the car there was a strange gift waiting for me – hanging from the car door handle was a pearl necklace. I was dumbfounded. It was the strangest synchronicity that I had ever experienced and I did not know what to make of it. Yet, it sat with me and I knew instinctively that this was about facing things, about Miskâsowin.

I won't say these two events were definitely causal, but by the winter of that year (December, 2004), I made the exhausting, emotional decision to go home in the Spring (May, 2005) to do my research. I would leave after completing my comprehensive exam and proposal.

After my decision to go home, life had to a certain extent gotten back on-track and I was busy teaching and preparing for my comprehensive exams. I put the pearl-necklace out of mind, and packed it away out of sight. I had one vivid dream about it, and would fleetingly think about the necklace when I would see a strand of pearls, but other than that I put it out of mind. I wrote a proposal for my research outlining a research project that involved going home to interview Cree researchers and scholars, to learn Cree, and to write this thesis while in my ancestral territory. In May (2005), my partner and I left Vancouver Island to return to Regina.

In the spring, I arrived home in Saskatchewan and had the pleasure of meeting the five-year old daughter of my cousin for the first time, a beautiful little girl of mixed blood heritage – Cree and Hungarian. She was with my Aunty who was visiting my mother, and she was playing dress-up with my young niece when I stopped by. As I walked into the house, she ran into the kitchen to see who came in and my Aunty (her grandmother) introduced her to me. She had been into the makeup and costume jewellery and was having a fine time. When I saw her I momentarily stopped short, around her neck was a

child's white pearl necklace. While this was not a synchronicity or extraordinary happening of any kind – it was simply a little girl wearing a child's toy necklace – it had meaning for me in a way that is not logical or explicable but bound in memories of own history. I chose to take this experience as the universe giving me a nod that coming home was important. I still do not understand these experiences fully, I have tried to analyze, theorize and rationalize, but some things you cannot deconstruct. As the Elder said, some knowledges we can't know. What I am left with is an acceptance that these knowings mattered to me inwardly, and because I allowed them to matter they impacted my research path in a good way.

By being in Saskatchewan, I have been able to consider not just Indigenous ways of knowing but my own Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux heritage, and I spent time with each of my two families. I have started learning Plains Cree. I crossed over from being a younger Aunty to a kôkom (because as my sister says that is what I am). I made a huge batch of bannock for a feast, and pickles to eat over the winter (first time for both). I attended traditional ceremonies and community fund raisers for school trips. I made road trips from Regina to Winnipeg, Vancouver and Victoria and had conversations with Indigenous scholars and researchers, in the process rekindling old friendships and making new ones. The list goes on. When I left Victoria, I was focusing so intently on how the sacred comes into research that I almost missed how the sacred is our research.

Post-script: I wrote the above piece while I was in Saskatchewan during the summer of 2005. In the winter, just before heading back to Victoria, the dream, the pearl necklace and the conversations that they both elicited became clearer. In December, just before Christmas, I arranged for my two mothers to meet at their request. It was the first

time they had ever met, and it was slightly awkward (at least for me), but mostly just a nice meeting. During the visit, in an organic way I had an opportunity to ask about my birth father, and as I wrote in the *Prologue*, I learned (or confirmed on a conscious level) of his identity. It took me forty years, but the story was waiting for me. After the visit, I had some difficulty returning to my research, because I felt a sense of completion to this project. The hard work was done, and through it something changed. As my partner, Monty, said, "You're different from when you started this research". Of course, I wanted to know how, he couldn't say, just that it was a "good different". About a week or so later (January, 2006), I got back on-track with my research, began working with my data, flew home to Victoria and started teaching full throttle.

As I write out the story of this research, I look over to the small book shelf that is next to my desk. On top of this shelf sits several objects that have been with me through this past while. There is a miniature easel upon which rests a small 4x6 painting from my Aunty. It is a painting of a wooded space with wild flowers growing among the trees. She painted this in the early seventies, when I was around seven or eight years old. To me this is a place of both magic and possibility. Sitting on the easel against the picture is a hand crafted dream catcher that my nephew made in school. His mom gave it to me as a gift when I was home visiting my brother and family at Okanese this past year. When I look at it I feel hope. Hanging over the easel, on top of the picture, is the pearl necklace that came to me during this journey. It propelled me home. Finally in a protective circle around all these items lays a piece of sweet grass signifying the sacredness of this work. I know these symbols represent stories of my life. What I also am finally getting from this whole experience is that stories will wait for us until we are ready, then they will

reveal themselves in purposeful, powerful ways and when this happens we are in the midst of the sacred.

Chapter VI: Conversation & Research Stories

In introducing the anthology of *kôhkominawak otâcuniwiniwâwa – Our Grandmothers' Lives As told in their Own Words* by Freda Ahenakew & H.C Wolfart, the authors textually present the stories of the Grandmothers speaking in Cree (primarily Plains Cree/Y dialect) as closely as possible to the orally spoken story. In introducing the stories they tell the reader: “The style of these reminiscences is casual, familiar and marked by numerous interruptions and exchanges.” (Ahenakew & Wolfart, 1998, p.19). The non-verbal nuances of these conversations are a challenge to capture in literal form, yet it is the conversations themselves – the stories shared in the immediacy of another’s presence– that contain the knowledge. It is the ability to capture the reflections of these *kôkoms* (*grandmother*) as they remember their *kôkoms* and *mosôms* (*grandfathers*) that give us an insider’s perspective on of a Plains Cree worldview and way of being. A contemporary Indigenous thinker, Fyre Jean Graveline re-asserts that we learn in relationship to others and she refers to this as “Self-in-Relation”. In an Aboriginal context, she says: “We are able to see ourselves and our imminent value as related to and interconnected with others – family, community, the world, those behind and those yet to come.” (Graveline, 1998, p. 58) The act of sharing knowledge through personal narrative, teaching story, and/or general conversation is a method by which each generation is accountable to the next in transmitting knowledge.

As identified earlier in the *Methodology Chapter* of this document, I have presented not only the thematic findings of this research exploration, but the stories and conversations from which those themes and knowings have emerged. As a way of

privileging this Indigenous method, or from my vantage point a Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin methodology, of transmitting knowledge, I have chosen to present the research conversations prior to *Chapter VII* which extracts themes and offers a more analytical discussion on the emergent theory arising from this research work. In fact, an aim of this chapter is to be less declarative about what these conversations mean for Indigenous research in a specific way, and allow for the reader to engage with the stories and emerge with their own interpretations.

It is out of respect for Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin and the deference given to knowledge within a Nêhiyaw context that I include this proviso. This point was relevant while I was sitting in my Nêhiyawêwin class. The instructor advised us that fluent Cree speakers will often talk primarily in the subjunctive mode (the “ing” mode). A student asked why this was so, and the Instructor responded that while he could not be one hundred percent sure, he felt that it had something to do with the Cree worldview of how knowledge ought to be treated. My sense from the conversation was that by speaking primarily in the declarative one can come off as a know it all, but the subjunctive only assumes one knows something in the present, at this moment, and the notion of the ‘expert’ gets put in its place fairly quickly. The use of the subjunctive is about being respectful and humble around knowledges. As such the research conversations that appear in this chapter are the thoughts and reflections of individuals during our conversations about Indigenous research at that time. The meanings that I ascribe to them arise from my own take on the world, which I will carry out more declaratively in the subsequent chapter, but for now I am honouring the tradition of my ancestors by

incorporating – *making room* – in this PhD thesis for the talk, or the subjunctive space, that conversations permit.

To summarize my proposition, likely shared by many of my Indigenous research contemporaries, a part of presenting the data within Indigenous research must pay respect, in some way, to the stories and conversations of the people who have shared their knowledge with the researcher. This can be done by acknowledging the research participant or respecting their anonymity depending upon their wishes. The question, then, that I was left grappling with focused on how to incorporate the stories and conversations with the people that I interviewed for this research so as to most adequately reflect their own voice. The words were engaging, insightful, and *really* instructive about the ins and outs of Indigenous research. With that mindset and having transcribed the 1 to 1 ½ hour long interview sessions emerging with close to two hundred and fifty pages of transcription, I knew that I could not include all of the conversations in this report. Concurrent with this, I could not stop being Maggie either – I yam what I yam – and for the past ten years I have been an Indigenous curriculum writer. As I was listening to the stories and reading the transcripts, I kept thinking (and feeling) that from an educative perspective these research stories were powerful insights into Indigenous methodologies, after all these people were both researchers and teachers. The question was: *What should I do?*

As I was working with the tapes and transcripts, and responding to them as a listener, learner, researcher (and curriculum writer), I began to see patterns emerging. It seemed that there were specific themes or focus areas of each conversation that resonated with me in a particular way that had specific value to me as an Indigenous researcher who

was actively enraptured in Indigenous research. My intuitions told me to go beyond what was engrossing my mind and consider what was engaging my spirit. My decision then, was to take each interview and transcript and to share the essence of each conversation, the research story which spoke specifically to me about my inquiry into Indigenous research. What I am sharing here, is in a sense, what each researcher told me that they remembered about Indigenous research during their PhD experience. As kôkom, Janet Fritz (speaking in Woods Cree) starts her story by saying:

Namôoa wiôa niwî-wîhtên ê-itahtw-âskîwinêyân, êwako wiôa namôoa kîkwây kiwi-âcimostâtinâwwâw. Mâka niwî-âtotên, nîst ê-pî-isi-kiskisiyân, pî-otâskanâhk ê-kî-pê-is-ôhpikihikawiyâhk ê-awâsisîyâhk.

I am not going to say how old I am, I am telling you none of that. But I am going to tell what I myself still remember, how we had been raised back then when we were children. (Ahenakew & Wolfart, 1998, p. 92)

This chapter offers the salient highlights, from my subjective perspective, of the six interviews and conversations that I had with Indigenous people who are currently completing or have completed their PhD doctoral research. The structure of this chapter includes the six research conversations in an interview format. Prior to each research conversation I include a brief introduction to the interview, which then is followed by the conversation and concludes with my brief reflections of why I chose the excerpts that I did and what particularly resonated with me. Because part of my methodology includes— *miskâsowin* – I have included the essence of my own research story (counting myself as a participant) in relation to the teachings of others, they are “what I myself still remember” (Ahenakew & Wolfart, 1998, p, 93).

The research stories that form this chapter emerged in response to my general questions about the participant's background, PhD program and research methodology arising from a survey I prepared beforehand. Included in our conversation is what I termed the *central question* which asks how each individual incorporated their Indigenous culture⁹ into their research methodology, and if they saw Indigenous methodologies as unique and distinctive approaches to research. The first conversation is with Cam Willett.

A Conversation with Cam Willett

On Purpose, Worldview and Remembering the mosôms and kôkoms in Indigenous research

Sometimes I read something, sometimes I am looking at pictures and I make connections and I realize who I am and why I am here. It is very humbling to realize the grandparents, what they did, just incredible.

- Cam Willett, excerpt from the following interview

Cam Willett is Cree from Little Pine First Nation in Saskatchewan. He is currently enrolled in a doctoral program within the Department of Adult Education, Community Development and Counseling Psychology through the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. Cam holds a Master of Education degree, and has worked for a number of years for First Nations educational institutes in Saskatchewan including the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology, and currently as a Professor within the Education Faculty at the First Nations University of Canada. While not specifically planned, it is a pleasant coincidence that I begin the first of my

⁹ The definition of culture in this question includes specific reference to aspects of Indigenous cultures that includes knowings coming from dreams, synchronicities, ceremonies, and other forms of knowing of that manner.

interviews with a fellow Nêhiyawîwin (person of Cree identity) from Saskatchewan – it is not lost on me that this is partly why I have come home.

It is late June and my partner accompanies me to the interview at the home of Cam Willett and Kathy Absolon (who I am also interviewing for this project). My partner and I are long-time friends of Kathy and have just recently met Cam at the Shawane Dagoiwin Aboriginal Research conference in Winnipeg earlier this June. Both Cam and Kathy are PhD students at OISE, and both have written about Indigenous research. Many quotations from a recent article by Cam and Kathy, *Putting Ourselves Forward: Location in Aboriginal Research*, appear throughout my literature review on Indigenous methodologies in this document. I see this morning's interview as an ongoing conversation about Indigenous knowledges, but it is more. I want to hear their stories, to connect with Indigenous people who share this journey that I am on.

We start the morning with breakfast and catching up on news, then move into the front room of their warm, comforting house, and sit near a large window overlooking a lake. We begin by talking of our experiences of being Indigenous within PhD university programs. As this is my first interview of this project, I am nervous but I feel that I am among friends. I offer Cam tobacco for his teachings, then hit the record button on the tape player and hope for the best.

I start by asking Cam some general questions about his Indigenous affiliation, his home community and program of study. The first interview is not without some technical difficulties with the tape recorder and I did not record the first fifteen minutes of the interview. The initial part of this conversation is from my notes afterward; however, the substantive portion of the discussion was captured on tape and subsequently

transcribed. For the purposes of highlighting the essence of both Cam and Kathy's story, I have chosen to present their interviews separately. The conversation with Cam and Kathy, itself, evolved as natural ebb and flow between us, a good talk about the lonely stretches and intersections of this Indigenous PhD road trip that we three are on.

(The first three paragraphs are paraphrased from Research notes)

Cam's research topic focuses on Indigenous student's experiences in post-secondary institutions. He is hoping to interview several people and part of his methodology is to use photographs as well as documenting (either through audio or audio and video) their stories about their experience in post-secondary education. A part of his methodology is interpretative. He intends to interpret his reflections of their experience (and his subjective impressions) through the medium of poetry (his own). Cam spent time talking about the importance of self-location in research and acknowledging who you are and where you are from. His point is that knowledge and interpretation is not value neutral and each one of us looks at the world through our own lens and perspective. (I have chosen to leave the interview single-spaced as a way to show that I am capturing the speaker's own voice.)

I (Interviewer/Maggie):

Cam, what precipitated you going back to get your Doctorate?

C (Interviewee/Cam):

[Going for a doctorate] Is it about community for me? I guess, but it seems more personal. I was thinking about that as you were talking and remembering. I think about my elementary education and my secondary education, and which were fine until grade twelve. I dropped out of school because of a lot of life pressures, I was working full-time and had an hour and a half bus ride to school and back. One day these three teachers ambushed me in the hallway— going from one to the next, to the next — saying things about me, “you sleep in my class, you're really lazy,…” I stood up and said, “well fine, I quit or whatever” and walked down the hallway. The Vice-Principal was walking down

the hallway, and I say to him, "I quit right now". He said "well you should think about it" and I said, "no". I got on the phone and I called my dad, he came and drove an hour to the school and we sat down with the Vice-Principal. He said I should think about this and that, but I couldn't be convinced. That was it for me. I went to Saskatoon and started delivering pizza and worked for a while then went back to school.

I think the reason I am talking about this is because at that time I was thinking to myself, gee, am I really capable of graduating from Grade twelve? Can I do this? I was really questioning my intellectual ability and whatever. I used to think, yeah, I could because I remembered my experiences from before where I did pretty well at school. I am a fairly smart guy I could do it. So after going through a lot ... I didn't really have any choice I went back to school. I did great and my confidence was restored and so I went into university. It was just sort of the logical thing, what else was I going to do?

So why did I start my PhD program? Because it's related to all that. I was coming out of my Masters program and the opportunity was there. I knew it wouldn't always be there, and I felt I should just do it. At this point I was starting to wonder what the heck am I doing this for. How will this benefit my community? How does it benefit me even? I think my major reason for continuing is to finish what I have started, you don't want to just bail. I know I can do this and that's my motivation. Do I think that it will privilege me or privilege my family or my community? It probably won't make a heck of a lot of difference because I think Aboriginal people with PhDs just aren't given the respect that others are. In terms of career opportunities when I talk to young people today, I don't necessarily encourage them to go into post-secondary at a particular university. I mean what do people want? People want to have a good life, they want a good job. They want to be able to just live.

As a young person thinking back about my experience in high school, a lot of that was pure racism. Today I know that, and at the time I was trying to figure it out. Has it made me happier to know that racism is so powerful in this province, in this country today? I don't know? I find now that I can't read the newspaper, I just sort of skim through it. My mind deconstructs everything very quickly and it's frustrating. I deconstruct everything, my mind is less – I wouldn't say it's totally decolonized – but, it's certainly a lot less colonized than it was. I don't know? What good does that do?

I guess there is a benefit in teaching, for the students that are there. It's not just me instructing them to teach the same old colonial curriculum. I don't want my students to go off into Black Lake and teach colonial curriculum. That's not what I am teaching them, I want them to be critical.

I:

Yeah, just this conversation that we are having makes me wonder what it is about a PhD program that makes it so hard. I don't know? What have been some of the challenges for you?

C:

When I was taking a course in a Master program, I was talking to my professor during a break and we were talking about how far I would go in my program. Would I become a faculty member or would I get a PhD. Of course, when you are a student you have the privilege of being radical. You can go into a classroom and say I defy school, I think we should tear down all the universities because it's all bullshit. But then he pointed out to me, "Well, you know if you don't get the PhD, will people ever listen to you?" "Will western minded people ever value what you have to say?" That's the thing; it's these two worlds that we are living in. The one world you are honoured with the eagle feather and the other world you are honoured with the doctoral degree. Maybe that's one of the big reasons why I want to finish the PhD. I guess finishing is partly for validation though it's not really that important to me, but if that's what it takes for people to listen to you, well then...

I:

Then that's what it takes, I guess. That's what I was going to ask you about in terms of your methodology so far and what you have chosen. Have you come up against any challenges or has your committee been generally supportive of the methodology that you are choosing...?

C:

I haven't found any resistance and I think our faculty, our advisors realize or see us more as at the same level. I know [person's name] has sent me a couple of emails, she is writing this book and wanted to I know if I know anybody that is writing about Aboriginal research methodology. I don't think she feels like an expert in that field or anything. I don't think that she would be a real resister in terms of research methodology. I don't know. Is that a good or bad thing? I guess it's good.

I:

So in a sense you have been given freedom to be able to explore, to figure that all out?

C:

It's taken me a long time, I guess as you decolonize yourself. I think of it is a timeline like I teach in class. There is this timeline of progress, from the Stone Ages where things were crude and savage toward becoming more sophisticated. I am starting to realize that is a bunch of baloney; we are not getting more sophisticated even with more, our lives are not getting simpler. And it's not that. Time, itself, is an illusion. There is no such thing as time when we talk about dreams. I haven't learned from Elders, but I think when you dream you are just transcending time, that you are going to alternate possibilities that exist. When I am writing, when I read something I wrote, it seems really disconnected from me because I feel I don't know anything. Other times when I write, the words are flowing through. When I was doing my Masters thesis, there were parts, I could show you paragraphs, that I don't feel like I wrote. I wasn't really thinking when they were coming out, I was just experiencing...

I:

You were a conduit of spirit or something...

C:

Yeah, they were very spiritual moments. I felt a connection, not with people around me, but with my ancestors. You start to realize all the things that they went through in order to survive and for me to survive. It's very humbling to realize, everything that they did for me. It also gives you a responsibility to live as good a life as you can because you feel indebted to them. I can't even imagine what my grandparents went through; I mean the racism, and the daily things they endured. When my grandfather died and I heard the drum, I could literally feel him inside of me. He is not gone, he is not dead at all, he is living inside of me. When I do things, when I have to be strong, it's my ancestors inside of me giving me that strength. It's not like then and now. It's like I read about quantum physics, there is no now, you are alive and dead at the same time.

My grandparents could still be alive and they are with me now, just in another parallel universe. When you dream, you are dreaming of one to another because there is no time, you could literally go to the time you were born.

I:

I hear what you are saying. I went to a Rain Dance on the weekend; there was an alder lodge with two teepees set against the hills. Women were walking in long skirts and for a moment it was a thousand years ago. Time meant nothing, there was no time. I knew in my heart, without having to explain anything, that this was my ancestral territory. I belonged there just because of who I am and who I was born to. The guiding word for my research journey – miskâsowin – is a Cree word meaning to go to the centre of yourself to find your own belonging. At the moment during the Rain Dance, there was a sense of being home that I didn't need to talk about or explain. There was something sacred about that.

C:

Sometimes I read something, sometimes I am looking at pictures and I make connections and I realize who I am and why I am here. It is very humbling to realize the grandparents, what they did, just incredible.

You know we were saying something about feeling alone and that was a pivotal point in my research. The first year you're learning all this western stuff, reading all these books that don't have anything Aboriginal and you're the only Aboriginal person in these classes with no Aboriginal faculty. You start to feel really alone. I think when you do any ceremony, you do reach some of these portals and you do realize that you're not alone. People are always talking about the language disappearing, cultures disappearing; I think that's a load of bull because if you put your tobacco down and you go to ceremonies, I believe that all transcends time and space. You can't be lost or killed because all you have to do is sweat and ask, and the songs will come back to you. That's the power of them. Our knowledge and legacy can never be erased. We are very strong and that makes me proud, the legacy of our people is this land.

We have to have this whole reversal of what we were taught in school, to understand what we were taught. We were taught that Aboriginal people were savage, ran around with a subsistence lifestyle, hunting and trapping and not amassing a bunch of wealth, well that is the whole point of life. We don't take from the earth more than we need to survive and we're thankful. That is what you should be doing in life. That is how our ancestors lived and as a result this land was beautiful, there was no clear cutting, there was no polluted water, it was beautiful. It was unaffected by the greed of people, we have all these things that we never ever use, so why do we have it. Indigenous people are incredibly wise and our worldview is the key to human survival, keeping it alive. That's how we survived, and when you start to realize that, it makes you feel humble and proud.

Reflections of the interviews

I am incorporating some brief reflections here at the risk of contradicting my initial aim of allowing the conversations to speak for themselves and the reader to interpret them as they need in relation to Indigenous research. Given that proviso, I cannot help but include some reflections on why I chose the specific excerpts that I did from each of the conversations beginning with Cam. In talking with Cam, listening to this interview on tape, and working with the transcriptions, there were several significant aspects of Indigenous research that he was alerting me to within the conversation. The first centred on the importance of understanding one's purpose for any endeavour (be it PhD research or otherwise) and secondly knowing one's purpose often lies somewhere within our own personal narrative. When Cam spoke of his experience in high school, I was taken back to memories of my own experience in public school and how the residue of that experience left me questioning my abilities. He made me pause to question my own motivations about returning to school. Would I have pursued the level of PhD studies, if I didn't feel I had something left to prove to the educational system? And when does that stop? Hmm, the conversation got me thinking.

A third point that resonated for me from this conversation was the discussion on worldview and what that means to not only research projects, but living a good life. In terms of research methodology, is it okay just to apply a worldview (feminist, Indigenous, etc.) to our research but not practice it in our lives? It wasn't really a question about the merits of purism or applying an impossible orthodoxy to one's life, rather Cam was making me consider that methodology, specifically the worldview aspect of it, can't be compartmentalized solely to a research project rather it ought to be (at least in some ways) congruent with the way a person lives their life, and if it's not then something's up. Again I was reminded of the holistic nature of an Indigenous point of view. While this may seem like a straightforward, sensible notion, I wondered about how we teach research methodology classes in western universities – often we assume people can just pick a methodological approach depending upon what they want to research and not necessarily with a lot of impetus on exploring who they are – no wonder it can be such a head trip of a course!

Both Cam and Kathy talked about the traditional knowledges that value dreams, the ancestors, the timelessness of ceremonies, I knew that whether or not these aspects of an Indigenous way of knowing were being identified in our methodologies, they were important and they were guiding our search for knowledge. I left my conversation with Cam with the distinct impression that an Indigenous methodological approach to research ought to be clear about purpose, about one's own self-location, about the worldview that is being privileged, and the importance of not just honouring the kôkoms and mosôms, but really remembering them. Right off the bat, this was no small order.

A Conversation with Kathy Absolon

Kathy's Research Story – Centring Anishnabe culture in Research Methodology

I believe that if we look at some of the methodologies along the continuum that are less oppressive, they might be supportive of Indigenous methodologies or they might even be in alliance with Indigenous methodologies, but they are still not Indigenous methodologies. They happen to come from their paradigm, and their reference point and while they might fit they are not based in Indigenous thinking. They are not based in spirit and where spirit comes from.

- Kathy Absolon, excerpt from the following interview

Kathy Abosolon is Anishnabe, from the Flying Post First Nation, and grew up in Parry Sound and is first degree Midewiwin of the Three Fires Society. Also, she is currently working on her PhD within the department of Adult Education, Community Development and Counseling Psychology through the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. Kathy holds an Assistant Professor position in Indigenous studies at the First Nations University of Canada and lives with her family in a small community just outside of Regina, Saskatchewan. Additionally, Kathy holds a Master of Social Work degree.

I have known Kathy for many years as a social work colleague, a friend and an Anishnabe sister. It so nice to have this conversation with Kathy about Indigenous research methodologies as this is the focus of her doctoral studies as well. Lately at this stage of my PhD journey, I have been feeling alone with lots of uncertainties about what Indigenous methodologies really mean. I am particularly interested in how she has integrated her cultural knowings into her research and the challenges she has encountered. Having this chance to talk with a friend, about a subject that is near to her heart is the boost I need. Being home among friends, this interview is good for my spirit.

I (Interviewer/Maggie):

Kathy, what is your research topic?

K (Kathy):

It's easier to start with my title because I spent a day working on my proposal and working through my title. My title was just *Aboriginal Research Methodology*, but the more I read and thought about it, the more I thought it has to be something different. My title now is: *This is how we come to know: Aboriginal methodologies in search for knowledge*.

This means it can't just be about research because research is a western ideology, a western way of thinking about searching for knowledge. When I think about what this is, I have to go back to what my teachers and my elders talked about, how we come to know what we know. How do we search for knowledge? Culturally and traditionally, this is something that we have always done. The notion of research isn't new to us; we are pioneer researchers because we lived on this land. It's always been about searching, questing or looking for guidance, knowledge, food or ways of surviving on the land. How we do that [search for knowledge] is the methodology. That's why I called it *how we come to know*. Aboriginal methodologies in how we search for knowledge.

I:

What prompted you to enter into PhD studies? What was it that made you decide that it was time to go back?

K:

For me, I don't think I can say that it was one thing; it was a number of things. I am still not even sure if this is a useful thing to do as an Aboriginal person, as an Anishnabe. I am not sure if it's contributing to the community or our overall healing, recovery and self-determination. But, I guess it's simply that I've been an educator. Having left UVic I went back to community practice for seven years in my community – community education – and thought, at one point, that I wanted to take those experiences and return to the academy to teach. I thought that when I go back, I want to be at a PhD level. It seemed like the next step. I guess it was the whole learning process.

Knowing what I needed, learning about the program [OISE], the universe was lining itself to say this is what you need, this is where you are going. My community said it was okay and it was timely in that I was feeling I needed to change my job. It was all winding up to say this is the doorway. I don't completely understand why we go through those doorways, or why the universe or the spirits present those doorways, but I think not all of us are medicine people, not all of us conduct sweats, Rain Dances, or Sun Dances, some of us are educators, some of us healers, some of us are a little bit of this and a little bit of that. I think I can accept that I am an educator. Doing this [PhD] is a doorway to actualizing or to just accepting that. A big part of who I am is an educator.

At a structural level one of the roles of the educator is to bring validation and help widen the path for other Aboriginal people to be okay with who they are. To know that if

you choose the path of education you can still come in and be who you are. At the First Nations University we have Indigenous people doing research. They are really struggling with western methodology, and I am saying just do what you feel. This one student, her methodology is water walks across the [Great] Lakes, her reflection on her water walk and the understanding and insights that come out of that. If doing this PhD gives me the power to say to somebody it's okay for you to do your research that way, then that's an important reason to do it.

A big part of it is a lifelong journey, and I know that when I am talking about my research it has to feel like it's meaningful. I can't just do a PhD because I want to wave a doctorate title in front of my name, that doesn't mean anything to me, and it doesn't mean anything in the eyes of my community. It means something to me that I know how to sing the songs in my language. When I go to ceremony and my Elders are saying the ceremonies in Anishnabe that I know what they are talking about. So, the PhD has to be meaningful, it has to help, that there is a purpose in terms of the bigger picture of who we are as Anishnabe.

Still it's pretty normal to go through periods of wondering how long its taking, and does it take you away from the things you want to do. Learning songs in your own language is hard because it takes a lot of memory work, to understand what those words mean. Would I rather spend the day learning a verse of a song or spend the day theorizing about my research? When my daughter does the ceremonies, I tell her that she is bringing those lines back into the world. That's more important to me than my PhD. So yeah it's important, but there are other things that are more important, but it's [PhD] also the catalyst, the doorway. I believe that if I wasn't meant to do my PhD that doorway wouldn't have been there, that path wouldn't have been created. That's what I believe.

[In doing this PhD] my challenges have been around how does this learning, a PhD in the academy, support me to become more who I am. The answer is that it doesn't. Where I have been supported – to be who I am, know what I know and have that grow – is in our lodge. In our lodge, in our communities I can talk the way I talk and people get me and they understand where I am at. The other thing is that I get them. They teach me, working at the community level has helped me know myself and to feel the strength, pride and identity as an Anishnabe person. The struggle, if that's what you need is not in academia. You have to get that from your family, your community, your own teachings and your culture. You have to go there.

I:

*How do you think Indigenous people approach research? And more specifically how do Indigenous researchers approach the cultural/metaphysical knowledges in making their methodology choices? During my research, there was a point where I spiralling down into a place that allowed me to be open to a lot of knowledges. I had some wild dreams, one in particular that has guided this journey. I had a dream about the Pueblo poet Leslie Marmon Silko. I was reading her book *Ceremony in the summer*, a First Nations woman friend and colleague suggested I read some of her work. I read*

Ceremony and was haunted by it. A few months later Silko came to me in a dream. She was wearing a long skirt and she said for Indigenous people home is important. This was before I made my major decision to come home, but I had this dream and it became very metaphoric for what I ended up going through.

That dream has been part of my Indigenous methodology about coming home, learning more, about listening to peoples' story. It made me think about Indigenous knowledges that there is more to Indigenous knowledges than academia can accommodate. That's what I was wondering about when I was choosing my methodology. Were you thinking about how it would mesh with culture?

K:

When I was thinking about methodology, I think about my experience with my Masters research. My dreams guided my methodology each phase along the way, it wasn't a research book that I went to. It was my dreams, the questions I had, what to do next, how do I do this, how do I do that, came from dreams. When I was thinking about the methodology this year, it was frustrating because its like we are functioning in a box. We need to morph out of that box into something that looks different, or something that is different. Inside of me is something different and needs to be morphed because when I'm reading about research, all the research books, texts and methodologies they all come from a western paradigm. It doesn't matter, I mean Participatory Action Research, it's just been shape shifted into a different thing, we use emancipatory words like participatory, but its still based on western paradigm. It comes from a place; from people within the western paradigm who are trying to shape shift the positivist methods into something more.

What I feel frustrated or constrained by doing research in the academy is that you are forced to begin from a colonized place, and we are forced to begin from that place for two reasons. One is that we are colonized – Indigenous people are colonized. The second reason is that the academy reinforces that and we are in that place. Yet within me, there is an Anishnabe thinker, person, and my European side. My European colonized self is in here too, and I am trying to morph into something that is genuine or authentically me. It's not just Anishnabe, it's not just European. It's about what I am; it's also what a lot of other Aboriginal people are too. We haven't had an education system that has helped us to reconcile those different parts within ourselves, so I begin with that kind of frustration. It's hard to articulate so it is a good question that you are asking. I had one of my friends, teachers once say to me when I was working with the Anishnabe education institute and we were going to do research into how we create an Anishnabe education based in Anishnabe principles. I said, "well we should do some research." He said, "the answers are not necessarily going to be in other people, or within the existing literature, because they are colonized and we're colonized. If we want to move toward something, we might have to go to the spirit to find out what that is." That is something he told me before starting my PhD, so I already had this notion of Indigenous research and what that might mean.

My topic is around how do we search for knowledge as Indigenous people. I believe that if we look at some of the methodologies along the continuum that are less oppressive, they might be supportive of Indigenous methodologies or they might even be in alliance with Indigenous methodologies, but they are still not Indigenous methodologies. They happen to come from their paradigm, and their reference point and while they might fit they are not based in Indigenous thinking. They are not based in spirit and where spirit comes from. A couple of people said that to me and so that's been imprinted in my notions. More recently, a colleague who has finished his PhD said: "Indigenous research is in the language. All you have to do is learn language." If we learn our language, the methodology is in learning your language because then you'll understand what the Elders are talking about. The knowledge is in the language.

When I was writing up my methodology and thinking about it, the first thing is that it has to be Indigenous, but that's a contradiction and kind of a state of anguish right off the bat. All of the things I've learned about in academia don't come from an Indigenous paradigm. Even the idea of doing interviews, I was writing about that and thought well we don't do interviews in Aboriginal culture we have discussions and talks. I talked to my committee advisor and said I think I am going to reword it to say this is what we are doing. She said the committee might not get that, but I reworded it anyway. We don't have focus groups we have circles. I am trying rethink the methodology, but that's a real hard thing because none of us can say we know what is authentically Indigenous. We are all colonized. The people who do know are not in the academy. We have all of these Indigenous doctors [PhDs] they are not in their communities, they are not speaking their languages fluently, or immersed in their cultures or their traditions. We all go in and pick up what we can, but the people who understand are the Aboriginal people who are poor, who are living in rez housing. If you want to know your culture, they will do the ceremony for you or they will help you understand the roles. If you need help they will help you. They will teach you about friendship and community and about what it means, what those teachings really mean versus just rhetoric. I don't know if I am articulating that clearly but our teachers are not really in the academy. Our teachers are in community.

I think of our methodologies, we have to be able to start from a slate that is not influenced by the other, so that it is okay to have your dreams be your methodology, if you go on a water walk or quest, that is your methodology. I was reflecting when you were talking about yours [methodology]. If I said I am doing my PhD and my methodology is my dreams, and I am going to go on a fast every year and after that fast (I wouldn't be able to bring a recorder or paper on the fast), I had somebody come and visit me and talk to me about my fast and take stuff [teachings] with them. I wouldn't propose that because, I wouldn't want that to be measured. I know that is Indigenous methodologies, but I wouldn't propose it as a methodology within a mainstream setting, because I don't want them to have the power to say that that's not research. But it is. What my friend was saying to me five years ago was true, that your research is through your dreams, that is where we go for our answers and that is where we go for our knowledge.

What I have done with my methodology – I know it's a long-winded answer – is that my methodology has become a combination of looking at what other Indigenous researchers have used in their process, knowing that they are only speaking about a small piece, its like an iceberg. Secondly, doing what you are doing, talking to other Indigenous researchers about their methodologies and then trying to create. The third is creating a learning circle, and facilitating Indigenous scholars to come together, to talk about what we are talking about right now and what they consider to be Indigenous methodologies. The big dilemma and struggles is doing that in a western methodological research context, trying to grow something Indigenous there. Out of a box, you're morphing a circle and there is something kind of wacky about that, but there is something kind of challenging about that too [laughter].

I:

Kinda magical.

K:

Our reality is the colonial box. We have to morph out of that, and so we have to identify what in methodology is representative of the box. For me that's hard because I am not always that self aware to say I am going to do this, and how did I learn how and where did I learn that. I need to scratch my head and go into the bush in my thinking, because I grew up in the bush. That is my decolonizing journey in my mind. I know what that bush looks like and I have to think about what is it in the bush that I will need to know because that's where my answers lie. Maybe I need to go into a dream or ask the spirits what I need to do that is different than this colonial thing where I automatically go. We have to turn ourselves off automatic pilot and we have to consciously go back into the bush, into your gramma's cabin or some place that is a piece of your experience that shapes who you are. We have to nurture that and have it come into consciousness and reality and to guide your process in some way.

I:

That makes perfect sense; you need to go to a place within your own story that is sacred.

K:

I think our methodology is process. I don't know what kind of boundaries I am going to be pushing at the university, but you know that you will be pushing boundaries. My ultimate goal is that I want to privilege an Anishnabe worldview, and *Anishnabe Methodology*. I am here to uphold and uplift *Indigenous Methodologies*, not for the world to see but for my children and their children and other Anishnabe children. To say to them that they exist and they are beautiful and that they are amazing ways of growing and learning and being.

I often question, should we be doing these methodologies. Even this conversation is making me think, maybe I should scrap my methodology, maybe I should just be saying I'm doing my methodology using my dreams and I am going to do what I already believe is Indigenous. Why do I need to go and talk to people about it when I already believe it? If you experience a fast, I know what that is like and so I know what comes

for you. It's different for everyone; I know that experience is sacred. What do you call it, like in sci-fi movies, a portal? I know that there are portals and when you go into a sweat lodge there are portals, when you go into different ceremonies there is portals for knowledge to come through. You take that knowledge and you go into a ceremony and tell people what you saw and what you experienced. That is research; that is bringing in knowledge.

You are making me think. I went to the books and looked at these methodologies and constructed thinking that I have to get through the ethics review, which is my colonized self, but my other self is saying I already know Indigenous methodologies, not in an arrogant way. It's what we will hear people saying over and over again – in my research in your research – we will hear people say that our methodologies exists in our dreams, in our fast. They will say that we traditionally knew about the portal, the doorway, how to get knowledge and that it was brought to the people by sharing, by community forums, by sitting in circles, by engaging in ceremony, by honouring your relationship to the spirit. When we do that the spirits will reciprocate and we will be given what we are needed. The universe will provide for us if we honour the great circle and cycle of being and that can only happen if we know how to do that. So why am I not doing the methodology based on what I already know?

We are talking about this, and I should have been taking notes because the questions that you ask urge a kind of a thinking, it instigates me to think about my research because its really similar. I am thinking it is really good to talk about this, reflect on it, and to just hear myself verbalize what I have been thinking about for awhile. If I was at home in my own community, I would be bantering back and forth with people in my community and saying, “well Indigenous methodologies what do you think I should be doing?” I would be doing more discussions. That is something that we talked about in terms of our own methodology [Indigenous] and we haven't done very well to date. We do it when we are doing a conference, but on our own we should be doing more sitting and talking about our research. Like here we are together doing our research, we need to be bouncing our ideas off each other because we are both in the same boat. We need to be talking about these things and creating a space for us to write, read and get feedback from each other. I think part of it is that you get so used to working in isolation, you just don't think to ask. We can talk about this and how we ought to do that, and I find I create things where the process seems like a lot of work. I know that with Indigenous methodologies or traditional practices, it is more work.

Reflective Comments

In listening to (and reading) Kathy's thoughts, I hear a resounding affirmation that there is a distinctive Indigenous research methodology, whether be it is centred on an Anishnabe worldview or Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin, it is a unique approach in its own

right based upon an Indigenous paradigm that includes epistemology, theory, methods, and presentation of the knowledge. While there may be a tendency to confuse an Indigenous approach to research as being a methodological prong of anti-oppressive or critical theory paradigm – it is not simply an offshoot of these allied research approaches. It is affirming to hear an assertion that while Indigenous research approaches may be new to the academy, the thought and method of seeking knowledges from an Indigenous context is founded on traditional teachings of ancient Indigenous cultures. As Kathy says, knowledge is found in the language, it is found in the spirit, it is found in the stories. It may be new to western knowledge centres, but ‘Indigenous research methodologies’ are an old practice.

Part of the conversation spoke to me on a deeply personal level and also as someone attempting to carryout a tribal methodology. At a certain level this approach demands that you know where your source of grounding comes from so as to go forth with the strength that you will need when engaging in Indigenous methodologies. I am reluctant to say that one needs to know who they are, because I am not sure what that means. I am not the same person I was ten years ago, or even a year ago for that matter. Still this research has asked that I have an understanding of who my people are, in my case the community I was raised in *and* the community I was born to. From those roots emerges my authentic self – a self I can only know if I am able to reconcile all parts of my being. I agree with Kathy’s perspective that the academy isn’t the place where Indigenous people are going to find their authentic self, you have to go back to community. My post-secondary education has always been a portal for exploration, but to do this research I had to come home. I had to be with all of my families, and I needed

to write, in Regina no less, close to the traditional territory I was born to and the small town I was raised in, here on the prairies where the natural light illuminates the shadows of my own vulnerabilities and where I can calm my fears with buffalo grass tea. Do Indigenous methodologies demand that the researcher go home? No, not really, but I believe that Indigenous methodologies do demand that the researcher know whether they need to go home or not, at least this is feeling that I left with as I reflected on my conversation with Kathy.

A Conversation with Michael Hart

A Nêhiyaw Perspective on Language, Place & Cultural Knowledge in Indigenous Research Methodologies

The methodology isn't just the dream, it isn't just your sitting back and coming to understand the dream, but what you do with that dream, how you put it into reality. So for me, when I think about how I approach research, the issue of research methodology – I never thought of it as an issue but that's an interesting point in and of itself – that's how I understand methodology.

- Michael Hart, excerpt from the following interview

Michael Hart is Nêhiyaw (Cree) from the Fisher River Cree Nation in Manitoba. He lives in Winnipeg and currently holds a faculty appointment with the School of Social Work at the University of Manitoba. He is nearing the completion of his doctoral studies in Social Work through the School of Social Work, University of Manitoba. Michael was part of the first cohort of students to take this PhD program through the University of Manitoba. Michael holds a Master of Social Work degree and while it has only been through this PhD research that I have come to meet Michael, I have been familiar with his work for several years. As a Social Work instructor and curriculum writer, I have

used Michael's book *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal Approach to Helping* in teaching and developing a First Nations Healing and Helping course through the *First Nations Specialization program* at the University of Victoria. I found the integration of his Cree knowledges in that research personally helpful to me as a Cree/Saulteaux, but the book has also been useful to Indigenous students in illustrating how to apply one's own Indigenous cultural approach to contemporary social work practices. Hearing that he was working on his doctoral studies, I was curious as to how he saw Cree knowledges applying to his methodological approach for his PhD research.

This is the third interview that I am undertaking for this project and it is early July. I am scheduled to meet Michael at his home in Winnipeg in the afternoon. This interview has taken me on another road trip, and I hit the Trans-Canada going east from Regina to Winnipeg in the early hours of the morning. A new learning is that I am not sure I would drive six hours and conduct an interview all in the same day the next time! By the time I get to Michael's place, I am feeling a little tired, frazzled and nervous, but I immediately feel comfortable – he offers me coffee and food and we sit at his kitchen table and start to talk about what is becoming a very familiar topic to me – Indigenous research methodologies .

I (Interviewer/Maggie):

Michael what is your research topic and program of study?

M (Michael):

My research topic is *Cree Ways of Helping*, that's as best as I can sum it up. I am going to be interviewing Cree Elders and Cree Social Workers to see if there are Cree Social Workers who rely on, or at least know of, aspects of their own traditions. I want to see if there is a helping philosophy that could be incorporated into social work.

I:

So how many people are you thinking of interviewing?

M:

It looks like four elders and four Cree social workers with hopefully a balance in gender. I was thinking about the number of interviews that won't get overwhelming. I am also thinking that it should be people I have a relationship with, people I know. For me, when we're talking about Indigenous methodologies it's important to know them [participants] in some way. All the people I am interviewing, I have either met or have had some kind of relationship with.

I:

From your research experience how would you describe methodology and do you believe there is an Indigenous methodology?

M:

Yes and the reason being if there was no such thing as an Indigenous methodology all of our learning to date would have been haphazard and by chance. When you talk with our own people, those who were raised in a traditional sense, they will talk to you about processes and means to teach their children. Is there methodologies? Yes, we have our ways to come to know. The challenge for me is to try and put them into an academic sense. For example, if you say fasting is a methodology, I think that is too far of a reach for those raised in academia to understand. Right now I see different parts [methods] and different people focusing on them. Somebody is doing story work for example, I also see people melding a number of them [methods] together. Part of the problem is that we haven't articulated these different methodologies yet and we are just in the process as peoples in doing that – articulating meaning in an academic sense.

I:

Do you think that there is no language in academia for what we are trying to do? What do you think are some of the challenges that we are having in trying to explain our methodologies to academia, to western knowledge?

M:

I would step back even further, I would go back to looking at – again it's a western concept – worldviews. The challenge with bringing out worldviews is language overall. There are concepts that we have in Cree that don't have English translations. Right off the bat we are going to lose some of the meanings, and we are also going to change some of the meanings. At the same time, we need to do that because we don't have the choice at this point. I have been trying to learn Cree for a long time, but I have a long, long way to go.

I was just remembering something...about protocol. One of the ceremonies that were important for me was a pipe ceremony to start this all this out. With some of these Elders, I may not just have to approach them with a tobacco and cloth, but I may have to

approach with a pipe and offering that way. The other part is being prepared to offer something back to make sure that I feel I know it before I move forward. Before I go on and learn something new, it's like they are watching to see if I have this other part down. Then they bring in something new.

I:

How do you know? Is that because of your own teachings or is it an inward knowing or do the Elders indicate that you are ready to move on.

M:

Some of the Elders are very blunt about moving on, most aren't. How do I know? Through my own experience of spending time with Elders. I am a young man in terms of the Elders I spend time with. But I am also lucky that ever since I was a boy I have been around Elders, so these are my interpretations about how I learned from them. It has been as overt as one person, a traditional teacher, saying you have seven years and after seven years you're going to finish this piece. It's been that blunt. When I approach an Elder with a particular dream and the Elder explains, "the dream means this and you'll get there, all in time". An answer can be as vague as that. It depends.

The way I've been dealing with things, let's say I will come to a ceremony, come to understand protocols, but it's not the ceremony that gets transferred it's the underlying meanings. What I am doing now is looking at the different things that I have been through with Elders, with traditional teachers, and try to understand the underlying teaching, what values are being demonstrated. What am I supposed to do and how I am supposed to act. I will try to transfer those pieces into the new context, which to me reflects what we have to do in life. What we have to do right now in terms of decolonizing. I wish there was a term because decolonization focuses on colonization. My intent is to focus on our own ways. What ends up coming to me again is that it goes back to language and place.

I:

Place is big, place is huge. I didn't realize it would be, but boy...

M:

Yes, because our languages comes out of place. How do I describe it? How someone lives in their natural environment will bring out language, will bring out new language. So it goes back to the relationship with that environment and who is having that relationship with the environment. It is all those factors. For me, place is key but it is only one component. In this territory, Cree people have been around here a long time – so have Anishnabe and the Dakota – but, the Cree have been here a long time. For example, I am thinking that with the Cree people who lived here they created a term for the river by putting different terms in the language together to come up with a term [for the river]. There is a story about Manitoba and the origin of its name. It is the bringing

together of different words to create a new word – Manitoba. There is a relationship between people and the land to come up with those terms.

I am Indigenous, I speak English and that's where I come from. I am trying to understand that perspective because it reflects my reality. My mother is fluent in Cree. I have listened to her growing up, speaking Cree, but when she spoke to us she spoke English. My mom said that we didn't want to learn, so there is always that piece. It doesn't mean that I am not Cree, but I have a different understanding than a Cree speaker. The journey for the fluent Cree speaker or the Saulteaux speaker isn't the same journey that you or I would take. The journey you and I would take wouldn't necessarily be the same, but they are all part of being Cree. If we deny that then we have to deny ourselves and my understanding about our peoples is that we don't do that. We are inclusive, we bring people in. They may come from a different place, have a different journey, but they are still part of us and they are still brought in. Its only when it's to the detriment of the group.

For me, and how I value language, it can be hurtful not to speak the language in terms of the peoples. If it gets to the point if there is not enough speaking [Cree], then we lost that aspect for the future, not just within us but as a peoples. I know it needs to be retained.

I:

I think we have talked a lot about my central research question. I will give you a brief background of how my research question arose[I share the dream]. I was struggling with my proposal at the same time. I decided I wanted to look at the role of dreams, the role of extraordinary happenings, the role of intuition. I wanted to look at that area of knowledge and how it comes into methodology. My question became, how do Indigenous researchers approach research, and more specifically how do Indigenous researchers approach the cultural aspects of Indigenous knowledges when making methodological choices?

M:

Give me a moment. There is a piece that I don't know if we addressed. In spending in time with Elders and being in ceremony one of the things that I see happen is that it isn't just the metaphysical. Because to me the metaphysical, in and of itself, doesn't get to the physical. In spending time with these Elders, they [may help you] come to understand a dream, but it's knowledge when you put those dreams, or that dream, into the physical reality. I am trying to explain this without speaking of a particular dream, so I am going to make something up. Lets say I dream about a smoke lodge, a dream about a particular aspect of a smoke lodge, the way you have to go to the smoke lodge. The dream in and of itself has informed me, but the knowledge process is just more than me having that dream. It is more than me taking that dream and talking with an Elder about it, it includes that process of doing whatever I have to do for that dream to become reality. What you're talking about, when you dreamed that you had to go home, that it's political and you have to go home, that's the knowledge process. The methodology isn't just the dream, it isn't just you sitting back and coming to understand

the dream, but what you do with that dream, how you put it into reality. So for me, when I think about how I approach research, the issue of research methodology – I never thought of it as an issue but that's an interesting point in and of itself – that's how I understand methodology. When I talked about there being no single methodology, this is another example. I see people focusing just on the one, maybe on the dream. I had this dream and therefore I come to know, which I won't dispute, but I think there is more to it.

There's a longer process that needs to be involved in bringing the dream to life. It's already alive, but bringing that dream into this world. So that whole piece, how you came back, how you ended up home. To me that is speaking about the methodology. It would be like doing interviews and saying the interviews are the methodology. There is more, there is whole bunch of other pieces that are tied to that.

The dreaming would almost be part of the method. Methodology is bigger than that. So how do I approach it, through a lot of reflection back on my time with Elders, with traditional teachers, in ceremony, those are my biggest influence. I do readings on other areas and talk with other people about their experiences, but I approach it more from there [Elders, ceremonies] because I want to try understand it the best I can in a way that reflects how we do things. I say ceremonies, because to me I don't hunt so I can't rely on that process. A key piece for us that reflects our culture is the ceremonies. To me they have probably have been influenced the least [by other cultures] as opposed to other things.

I understand methodology as meaning there is no one methodology. When you are talking about Indigenous methodology, I think cultures [Indigenous culture] are different; peoples are different suggesting different methodologies. They all hold different views and understandings of the world; I can't expect that there would only be one methodology coming from those different views. [An Indigenous methodology may apply] when we are talking more about the anti-colonial methodology, when we are talking about the commonalities between the different nations – whether it's Cree, Maori or Indigenous people in Japan. What we hold in common is colonization. When we start pulling out methodologies from different [Indigenous] peoples we are talking about more than the colonial process. Now I may be wrong here, because there are some things we share as Indigenous people such as ties to the land, but there is significant differences too. I am always cautious about that part, maybe it's just me. I think there has to be more than one [Indigenous] methodology.

As an Indigenous researcher how do you understand an Indigenous approach to research? Well, like I said, it depends upon which approach you take and which understanding you have. I think it takes a lot of self-reflection, not just self, but self in relation to the Elders, the ceremonies, your academic life. I mean when we go out fasting we are opening ourselves and inviting the spirits to be with us. We are reflecting on ourselves as well, so to me, both of those aspects would be present in Cree ways of approaching research.

I: *In terms of bringing cultural knowledges into academia, do you think that is okay?*

M: That is something that I am also struggling with. The reason why I looked at sharing circles in the past and wrote about them was that it was the safest thing I could talk about. They are a type of circle that is done without a lot of protocol, just some basics; other people are starting to talk about it [sharing circle] quite openly. Could I have done that with a rain dance or a smoke lodge? No. There are things that I can't do.

I: *Yeah, knowing where the line is that you can't cross.*

M: To me it is an evolving process. If you asked that same question ten years ago it would be different than it is now. My guess is that what is happening is that if someone takes steps, the communities will determine if they have gone too far. They will look at who is doing it and why they are doing it. They will look at what will result because of it being done. All of those things will be looked at. You have to be in tune with the communities to know: Am I going too far? The best I can do is know that there are certain ceremonies that I wouldn't write about. For me, my dreams are pretty sacred, I am cautious about which one I would go forward in sharing and writing about. [I would be] very vague in writing about them. It's an on-going line that involves going back and being connected to peoples in the community.

I: *Yes, because that's a tough one, I am really concerned about sharing too much. There is a real currency for the cultural within the academy. That's what they want, they want the cultural...*

M: And your word is appropriate; it's a currency which devalues it [culture]. All I can say is that people have to be connected, be part of the community, they have to be prepared to go through that evolving process of regularly going back, reviewing, talking and seeing about what you are including. [You] need to be prepared to be judged by what you have written and what you have done. I don't think it can put in neat boxes, have they done this, this, this.

There are some things that you can check off. For example, is it benefiting the community? We have already done a lot of that in different areas, and I think you can do those things. But we have yet to talk about the on-going process, the constant evaluating of what we are doing, seeing if it fits with the community or where we are at as peoples.

I:

How do you see cultural knowings, dreams, synchronicity, and connection with place, sacred as coming into in your research?

M:

For the most part I am trying to make it so that all of those ways are going to be the primary, the way of guiding how my research will be informed. I don't know the right words, but our own cultural knowings is going to be the core. What we are doing right now is called interviewing, but to say our people didn't do interviews would be to say the least a disservice to what our people have always done. It's all the other pieces that come with it, the tobacco that you offered and all of those things. I've already utilized dreams, the pipe ceremony, fasting, all of those have been incorporated as part of my research. For me, my research is beyond the block of time, block of activity, it's bigger. Yeah, I see our own cultural knowing, our own Indigenous ways as guiding my research.

Postscript – A written correspondence from Michael after the interview.

This is an email that Michael sent me after the interview which I felt was important to include as part of the conversation with his permission.

I know there is much more to conducting Indigenous research, or more specifically Cree research since I am writing as a Cree man who has and is learning from Cree Elders across Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. We have several tools to help us enter a place, a sacred, beyond physical place (I am realizing place does not capture what I want to say, since place is too often limited to physicality or the more post-modern/post-structural conceptualization of location) and these tools are aspects of our means to access knowledge. I guess even before we get to that we need to consider "what is knowledge?" For me, knowledge is that which helps people move forward in their lives. It may help one person, or it may help many. I guess that is one of the differences I see in my understanding of Indigenous knowledge and Amer-European knowledge, particularly Amer-European knowledge based in positivistic empiricism: That being knowledge can be applicable to one person. However, it is beyond one person in that it is between that person and the sacred world. Anyway, back to my commentary. It seems to me that tools are significant. These tools include our pipes, our songs, our rattles, and our sacred items that we care about, including plant and animal medicines. These items are catalysts in our processes. While by themselves, they may mean very little. But, these items have arisen through at least one of several processes. These processes including dreams of the items before they arrive, the interpretation of the dreams of these items, the acceptance of these items as catalysts, and the passing of these items from one person to another. As I was reading your proposal and thinking on Indigenous ways of coming to know and what is it that we know, I was listening to some stickgame songs. While these songs are not on the level (which suggests a whole other discussion since level implies a very significant consideration) as sundance, smokelodge, chicken dance, or sweat songs, they did remind me that part of our processes, hence

methodologies, including a reliance on such catalysts (I do not know what words to use to express my meaning other than catalysts). They are physical manifestations of sacred experiences. So when I have prepared for my research for my PhD, my methodology includes the use of these items, particularly a pipe and songs. I have also partook in other activities to seek guidance, specifically ceremonies. Finally, I will continue to rely on these sacred items for support as I complete my degree. Hence, our methodologies are bigger than we can easily explain. I think your task is an honourable, but large one as it bigger than we can imagine. I should speak for myself: Bigger than I can imagine.

Anyway, unless you tell me to stop, I may send pieces such as this periodically because I will be thinking some of this through further. I am realizing now that to sit and answer your questions without giving it the thought I needed, may have limited what I could have done for you. This point in and of itself is significant I think. I am reminded of the times different Elders have not answered me when I have forwarded questions to them, only for them to answer my inquiry at a later date.

Anyway, what do I know. I have a long journey ahead of me still. Hopefully I will be fortunate enough to make it. In the meantime, my heart goes out to you in your work. Michael.

Reflections of the Interview

There were several teachings that Michael offered me during our conversation. He re-affirmed that there is a distinctive Indigenous methodology based upon one's own worldview and cultural positioning. Finding out that basis of knowing (or epistemology) for the Indigenous methodology we are employing requires that we are certain about the cultural grounding from which it flows. Michael affirmed several times that there are Indigenous methodologies, in the *plural*, even though as Indigenous people we share many of the same methods, we have to be conscious of how our own distinctive culture will provide a unique flavour to our methodological approach. Michael proposed that these epistemological foundations are most accurately found in the language of an Indigenous cultural group.

Michael spent time talking about language and how it is linked to place and relationship among people. This made me reflect on how I was toying with the idea of

leaning my language (Cree and Saulteaux) over the last while, and how I felt a real resistance while living on Vancouver Island. It wasn't that I had any philosophical problems with the notion of learning Cree on Coast Salish territory, I just couldn't get into it – I am not sure why but maybe this helps to explain. When I came home and enrolled in a Nêhiyawêwin class (Plains dialect) one of the first phrases I learned was to introduce myself and where I am from in Cree. As I introduced myself in the prologue, it goes like this: Tânsi, Maggie, nitisiyihkâson, Kovach, nitaspiyikasôn, Pasqua iskonikanik nipê-ohcin. This means hello, my name is Maggie Kovach and I am from Pasqua First Nation. The iskonikanik loosely translated means *little piece of land that the white settlers didn't want*. This one word has so much connection to Plains Cree people, my reserve, the relationships between white settlers, treaty lands, farmland, buffalos... – it is one word loaded with the historical context of the part of Saskatchewan that I am from. Learning this word, from a Cree instructor at the First Nations University of Canada, in Regina (near my traditional territory), amid other students that were Cree, Saulteaux and Non-Native Saskatchewanians, makes sense in a way that I can't explain except like Michael said in our talk: place, land and relationships are all connected and they are the basis for our way of knowing. Each nation has their *iskonikanik* that tells a big story in a little word, and I think that's what Michael was saying.

The other point that I really appreciated from talking with Michael, is that he urges me to take care in how much to share around knowledges that come from the sacred, like dreams, especially in a context (like universities) where their power as knowledge sources may not be fully recognized. This is an important caution and it leaves me with the lingering question of how do we affirm that this is a part of our

methodological approach without sharing too much – this is one of the big ethical questions about Indigenous research that I grapple with. He goes on to say, that it is not just about the dream (or I assume vision or happening) itself, but the entire process through which actions unfold that begin with the dream – the dream is like a stone that causes a ripple in the water. However, careful we must be, Michael affirms that these knowledge sources comprise a Nêhiyâw methodology even if we have to watch how we use them when engaging with academia. I can't help but think this will demand a language all of its own for the purposes of communicating about Indigenous knowledge and research in university contexts. Finally an important affirmation that I gained from our conversation was that the ceremonies, protocols and ways of Cree people cannot be separated from the underlying values, rather they are there to affirm the values. Being kind, being inclusive, being community-minded in combination with the ceremonies, protocols and ways is the power of Cree culture.

A Conversation with Laara Fitznor

A Nêhiyâw Way of Gathering Knowledge in Research (Sampling and Methods)

I called the Teacher's Circle members, as many as possible, particularly the ones that submitted their surveys. They were all willing, I think everybody said yes. I panicked because I wanted to do a simple random sample selecting only so many of them, but I thought if I am working in a Cree way, this is forfeiting my Cree perspective. So what do I do? I included everybody, which meant that I would have as many circles as people want, because I am getting data from people that you can always merge anyway.

- Laara Fitznor, excerpt from the following interview

Dr. Laara Fitznor is a Cree woman from Northern Manitoba. Laara completed her doctorate in Education through the Department of Adult Education, Community

Development and Counselling Psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto in 2002. Laara currently works as a Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. Laara has been cutting trail for Indigenous people in Education for many a year and she is a role model for those of us Indigenous students working on our doctoral studies. It was personally meaningful for me, a Cree/Saulteaux graduate student, to have this opportunity to speak with a female Cree scholar who has completed her doctoral research and has stayed true to the Nêhiyaw ways and herself. Truly inspiring!

This is my fourth interview for my research; I have two more left to complete. I have had the opportunity to meet with Laara a couple of times this past year. We both presented at a Canadian Studies Conference in Edinburgh in May, then in June I had the honour of presenting in workshop with Laara on Aboriginal Research Approaches at the first (hopefully annual) conference for Aboriginal Researchers in Canada (Shawane Dagoiwin Conference, Winnipeg 2004) of which Laara was a key organizer. I am a little intimidated, but really eager to hear what she has to say about her research methodology journey. She is the first individual that I have interviewed this far who has their doctorate, and I am really looking forward to not only what she has to say, but any tips she has on how to complete one of these things. We met at her office at the U of M, and she tells me her story. I am particularly intrigued by what I understand to be her Cree approach to research sampling and methods of gathering data.

I (Interviewer/Maggie):

Laara, what was your research topic and where you did you do your doctorate in education? Could you talk a little bit about that?

L(Laara):

I really didn't think I wanted to do a doctorate program, but since I was working at a university, I thought it was the wise thing to do. I wanted to do it away from the university here, to do it somewhere else, and so I did it at the University of Toronto. I took courses, came back home and worked at what I could with my research. At first it was more of a cross-cultural focus, I wanted to examine the perceptions of teachers toward multi-cultural programming in schools and use a survey methodology and that. I wasn't happy with that [topic] because it didn't have an Aboriginal focus to it. This was still at [the time of] a discussion stage of what is Aboriginal education. Early 1990s, the topic was there, the discussion was there, but in terms of actual intensive programming at any level it was not there yet. It's just exploding now, but it wasn't back then.

At the time there was an Aboriginal circle of Educators [in Winnipeg], which was called the Aboriginal teachers circle. They had invited me to be part of their group, because they wanted to expand their organization, their grassroots organization. (This is where I eventually did my research, with participants within the organization.) I got involved with the Teacher's Circle and as I sat with [them], I began observing what was unfolding. [They were talking about] issues around advocacy, racism, isolation in the workplace, wanting to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives. [I was] trying to understand them, trying to work in an Aboriginal way with Aboriginal knowings and processes. In observing a number of things, I started to think, geez maybe I can do something with my research that involves this group, to look at their stories. In that sense, you look at a methodology. I wasn't wondering what methodology I would use, I would be getting the stories from them with the basic question being: How do Aboriginal teachers, or educators, see their experience as Aboriginal professionals who work in primarily Euro-centric systems? That was my long title back then. After it's all done, you change your title to reflect what you have actually done. [The actual title is]: *Aboriginal Educators Stories: Rekindling Aboriginal Worldviews*.

They [Aboriginal Teacher's Circle] were excited. I was excited about the idea, and everybody wanted to be interviewed. They were telling me that they had stories to tell. I had worked with my thesis advisor. I said I would like to work with the educator's circle. Of course then you are up against all kinds of things that they talk about in research, such as saying that you can't be too close to your subjects. One of the things that he [supervisor] recommended was a pilot study with the group. Instead of doing that, I had these initial observations which were in lieu of a pilot study. I developed in my proposal from what I observed. There were five themes which ended up being themes of the stories. The themes were things like what kind of accomplishments that the teachers group contributed to the community through their work and through their participation; and what kind of opportunities and barriers were there in their career paths. I observed that there was a lot stresses in the workplace, so people would leave. Another theme was looking at what I call uneasy relations, issues of difference in terms

of racism and how that took part in their life. Another theme was the point where people started thinking about what culture and language is all about. I call that an awakening to culture and language disruptions and the whole idea of reclaiming Aboriginal identity.

Those were the kind of themes that emerged, that I had grouped from the initial observations working with the Teacher's Circle. I worked with my committee saying, "now I have got something here, to interview the teachers one-on-one, and to do sharing circles." Those were methodologies. The Sharing Circles, the one-on-one interviews, and working with our medicines such as tobacco. Offering tobacco much like you did, to the participants explaining what that is all about, and if people were not comfortable to take it, I wouldn't expect them to take it, that it's just a little gift. The people who were part of the Teacher's Circle already knew that smudging was part of opening meetings there, there wasn't anything new that I was doing. It would be unusual for somebody in the circle not to know about these practices.

I need to backtrack a bit. There were eighty-eight names listed on the ACE membership list. This was an informal, ad hoc, grassroots organization, so people didn't actually formally sign up their names. It was by word of mouth, or somebody said, "well I know this Aboriginal person that works at that school" and names would be added to the list. I did an initial interview, a survey. I called it a biographical survey interview – a questionnaire, I guess – just to get the biographical background. I sent letters of introduction to the research project and tried to give that background information, ... your research is so much like mine in the initial stages. You want to lay the ground work out, you want to prepare people, let them know that this is a little bit different than the research they might have been participating in before because this might benefit them in the long run. I met with the group to explain what I wanted to do and I sent a follow-up letter. I did one letter followed by another letter saying that I would come back [to them] with the biographical survey.

I developed the survey myself, based on what I had observed. I didn't want to presume that everybody knew anything about Aboriginal perspectives, education, history, culture, language. Sometimes I would prepare questions in [context of] a story or in a rationale, background information. For example asking if you work with Elders, well what question is that, right? I gave the background information, how that [working with Elders] unfolds and what an Elder could be, so people can then know. I was trying to make it broad range enough, so they could also define culture. I was very careful to acknowledge that, because this is Manitoba and we have a lot of Métis. So rather than creating a tension between what is Aboriginal, I wasn't narrowly defining it as just being First Nations. I was kind of surprised at how detailed people were with the biographical questionnaire, which ended up being a very long twenty-six pages (chuckle) [survey].

There were twenty-two people who were actually involved whether through the biographical survey, one-on-one interviews or circles. The selection of participants came out of a simple random sample. For example, I received a 20% response from my survey [88 surveys were mailed out], that's about 20 people, and from there I further selected those interested in attending the sharing circles.

The sharing circles were a common thing happening in the community and in the schools, so a lot of people knew about sharing circles. I was talking of a research circle-talking circle where I could ask questions and people would share what they had to share. I was actually doing this in terms of methods. Because I knew Circles would be known and familiar for the group as opposed to, "I am going to come and ask you questions". Following the Circle, I had intended to interview maybe one person from each circle, just to further clarify.

When you do research, things don't always unfold the way you want them to unfold. I think there were three or four that attended the circle and the interview but didn't actually fill out the questionnaire, though I had enough background information in lieu of the questionnaire. These were people that had been around and had an Aboriginal perspective on education, so in a way the survey would have been redundant. Still in a way I was thinking you have to adhere to the plan you have [proposal], that the books say you have to do.

People were quite willing to be involved in the Circles, though it took me the longest time from the time that I had that plan to actually do the research, because of my fear of intrusion. I didn't want to intrude into their lives. There was a bit of shyness there, so that held me back a little. I was pushed that I have to do something, because I was hired to teach at OISE [in Toronto], and I knew that I gotta collect my data before I go [leave Winnipeg]. That pushed me to do data collection with the circles, because I had already done the biographical survey. I called the members, as many as possible, particularly the ones that submitted their surveys. They were all willing, I think everybody said yes. I panicked because I wanted to do a simple random sample selecting only so many of them, but I thought if I am working in a Cree way, this is forfeiting my Cree perspective. So what do I do? I included everybody, which meant that I would have as many circles as people want, because I am getting data from people that you can always merge anyway.

I thought, okay, sharing circles are not written up in any research methodology, in a methods book. I saw focus groups, so I wrote a long rationale in the initial part of my research explaining the importance for sharing circles. They both get at maybe the same information but in focus groups people are just talking and in sharing circles it is quite different. It is more of a ceremonial, sacred space where I am building in the cultural pieces of it, as opening and closing with an acknowledgement or a prayer, and open with a smudge. I used tobacco offerings.

In two of my five circles, I had an Elder that was involved. I had the Elder do an opening or closing for two of my circles. The premise was to bring an Elder into each of my circles, but I couldn't organize it for three of them. When I couldn't [have an Elder in attendance] I did the opening and the closing. I have done so much work with circles in my own teaching and in my own development through sitting in Elders circles, whether it's in the lodge, sweat lodges, or just sitting around listening to Elders talk and having an

opportunity for people to respond and talk about themselves and who they are, their own developments. I have team taught with Elders, so I have learned a lot from Elders.

What is Indigenous knowledge? If you listen to them [Elders] and put into practice what they are saying that's Indigenous. It was going back to my own way of thinking and recognizing the Cree way of thinking and being as Indigenous knowledge in terms of my upbringing. I was raised in the north, I was raised on the land, I was raised in the bush. I was raised using a lot of tobacco; we used tobacco when we picked medicines. We would leave tobacco on the earth. I knew this since I was a baby, a lot of things I learned as a child. You know you start to re-think what is life all about. You think about the cost of not feeling totally connected to mainstream institutions, yet at the same time recognizing that I need to be in mainstream institutions to create space, to remind them that we are here as part of the human family.

When I was doing the circles, when you ask about the quality difference from the focus group, is that everybody gets a chance for input, everybody has that air time, they can take as long as they want. I was prepared to be there for a good one, two, three, five hours. I reminded each of them about that, because a lot of them knew sharing circles. I said keep in mind that although I am saying this could be around two hours, likely it might be more. I think they were all about two to three hours. When each person spoke, sometimes it seemed ten minutes, twenty minutes, sometimes a half an hour. When we went through another round, it would be the same. The smallest size circle that I had was three, which was interesting because there was supposed to be five or six of us, but three couldn't show up and it so happened that the Elder was there, a young man and myself.

It's still a circle. I saw one your comments, the part on intuition, I know this happens to me a lot in terms of being guided by the Creator. I think I made some mention of it, that it [this circle] was needed for the young man, just for the three of us to be there. The Elder did the opening, then listened while this person spoke and did the closing. The things that the person spoke about were really fascinating, so it was almost like it was needed for that to happen. I did the usual thing in terms of tobacco and everybody was okay with recording, because I told them ahead of time. I said that I could either take notes or try to remember after, but I said to really get the essence of your voice, I think recording would be the next best thing. That is what we did. The other thing I did was let's say that one educator might not feel comfortable being in a circle with another, I would make sure they were not in the same circle, or say well there is safety in there, it's your voice and the person knows it's your voice. They know me, I have a good reputation and they know that I would be trustworthy.

I:

So it's that relationship that you had.

L:

The relationship is very important, and I did a lot of follow-up too. What I did in terms of making space, creating the space to reflect on our traditions, our culture, our ways, and our knowledge was before the circle, I would have a mini-feast. I prepared the

food myself, whether it was bannock and stew or bannock and chilli. I would prepare food, also keeping it open if they needed to bring their kids they could. That happened in a couple of instances, in one instance the child was old enough that she could play off on her own while we were in circle; and in the other instance the kid was in the circle, running around (laughter), driving us crazy. That was kind of neat. I didn't want to say well this is my work don't interrupt me, because that is not our way. Your kids are part of it, so how can I then say, "oh no don't bring them".

You find a way to work it in, it takes longer. I mean that took a long time, about four hours, but that was okay. I was talking about the opening and the closing. I think that there was one circle where one of the participants was known to do Elder or traditional work, so I offered her the tobacco and asked her to open the circle for us, and that was okay.

I:

How did you handle things like consent forms?

L:

Well these were all educators; I didn't go into a community, which I think might have been a different sense. I mean they are used to stuff being written and signed and everything. They were okay with this, they were signing it ahead of time... again it's the trust, the relationships, they know who I am. In the one-on-one interview I did the same thing, I prepared food. In one case, I went to somebody's office and interviewed her and went through the same tobacco offering. This is where [consent forms] with methodologies or research ethics that you want to protect people's anonymity for various reason, for good reason, because people know each other. Although people will know that I interviewed one of eighty-eight people that are listed, they will not know who I interviewed.

In terms of a methodology, I didn't really name a methodology. What I did was talk about the inquiry, listening to the stories and providing meaning to the stories, what the teachers meaning to the stories through description and an analysis of their stories. I wanted to compare these to what Indigenous scholars were saying. The difficulty I was having with methodologies was getting them to fit what I was doing. I noticed you talk about allied methodologies, in one sense that is kind of what I did. Then I looked at the Indigenous scholars. This is where the permission came for me to do the storying in lieu of research questions.

In the write-up, I think things start to unfold as you are doing it, things you hadn't thought of ahead of time. For example, what do I do with the Elders words because you also transcribe them. That's why for me it was good to transcribe as opposed to somebody else because they might have excluded it because that's not part of the [research] participants. They might exclude the Elders words. As I was going through I would transcribe their [Elders] words too and I thought, wow, it's so right-on, and then I thought what do I do with the Elder's words in the stories? You talk about how do you work with intuition. There were many times when I would feel stuck, I would smudge, I

would pray and then I would get an energy flow. I even smudged my computer. So, I was wondering what to do with the Elders words. You know how do I work this in?

I thought it would just be a major omission, if I didn't acknowledge the Elders and say thank-you. How do I write it up? When [circle] he was present, each time he opened he didn't say exactly the same words, but similar words. What I did was take the bulk of what he said for the bigger circle, because he is acknowledging to everybody. When I was writing it up, I put his opening before the stories and his closing after the stories. Anyway that meant that I had to backtrack and phone him, because I can't do it without his permission.

I:

It sounds like you have pretty good committee, that they created space for you to be able to do what you thought you needed to do to do right by the culture?

L:

I selected people that I knew would support that. Now in the end because I was in a lapse with my program for awhile, I just kept working with my supervisor. He still kept working with me and was okay with what I was doing. When we got a committee together, he didn't end up being on it because he was on leave. Budd Hall became the lead supervisor. Of course he was totally open and really supportive of people's energies, because this is our work, whoever the student is. Then I got two other [committee members], one who is Aboriginal and had just started [at OISE], and another who was in sociology. She connected me to the different writings, the Indigenous scholars and said, "you know your methods are all Aboriginal but your write up of the methodology is not". I said, "I know its not and I am struggling with it". I threw the whole damn thing out. You know what was interesting though, I had done a lot of work transcribing and I was not happy with the direction I was taking, because it was following a methodology that I was just not happy with.

My computer crashed on me. The work that I had been doing – March, April, May, June, July, when did it crash November, something like that – got lost and it was all of the grouping of themes. I had all the transcribed notes, I had data and stuff. I didn't know what to do, I was just in shock that day. I was going to allow myself to feel the pain and shock, the anger and anxiety for just one day. I phoned Budd Hall and I said that I am going to take it easy for today. So anyway, he says, "okay, do what you can". I said, "I have to take my computer in to see if they can retrieve any of it". I had enough of the layout because it was themes that I had been working on. I worked with Budd, and I worked like the dickens so that I had a rough draft ready in January, end of February. I was feeling stuck, I didn't know where to go, so I sat down and said some prayers and I smudged. I smudged my papers, I smudged my computer and I said, "you know Creator I need help, help to get me onto the next stage". All of a sudden I had this burst of energy and I just wrote, wrote like crazy, because I had to give something to Budd. He was so in awe about how much stuff I wrote in the short period, that's just the way that I write. I met with him and another committee member. So it was Budd that kind of pulled me through, and the other committee member that really pushed me through,

giving me permission by way of saying yeah you're on the right path, go with what you have got.

I:

Overall, I think you have responded to this, do you believe there is an Indigenous methodology and distinctive way we approach research?

L:

I think it's a lot more mindful, respectful of the bigger picture and the individuals within the bigger picture. It's not just the institution that matters or what publications can come out of it. It is about how it [research] can benefit the community.

I:

One of the things I was wondering about, what kind of kept you going?

L:

Fear kept me going (laughter). What kept me going? I needed to finish it to give it back to the participants, to the people. It wouldn't have been very respectful of me to start off and get their stories and words, and not give it back to them. I kept doing it for my daughter, and doing it for our people, the next seven generations. Once I was comfortable with the writing style, where it is more story, narrative, that kept me going. Good friends. People who got me started in this in the first place, see how long my acknowledgement page is, it's a story!

Reflective Comments

After leaving my conversation with Laara, I felt extremely grateful, not just for the knowledge that she readily shared about Indigenous research, but for the opportunity to have what seemed like an Indigenous research seminar at a critical point in my research. I was responding to what she was saying as an eager research student with much of my comments along the line of: "What did you do next?" "How did you handle that?" "What approach did you use there?" and "What kept you going?" I found this conversation to be very instructive on the nuts and bolts of gathering and interpreting data. From a pragmatic perspective, she spoke of various times that the western approach to research and Cree ways of doing things didn't reconcile with each other (e.g. exclusivity of sampling, rationalizing and utilizing a circle as a method as opposed to

using a focus group method, and so forth). By identifying these places of divergence and sharing how she managed to uphold a Nêhiyew epistemology was really important to hear, because it showed it could be done, and there was room in the academy for Indigenous methodologies – it just took some extra elbow grease in writing up the methodology section of the dissertation to explain why circles are an Indigenous method, and supportive allies in the institution.

From having Elders open the circle gatherings, to offering tobacco, to smudging and receiving help, Laara was working with the protection of Manitow. My sense was that these acts were a Cree way of ensuring that the research was carried out in good way that honoured the Cree values of respect, kindness, and giving back to the community. For me, it once again became apparent that while the relationship with the sacred – the offering tobacco, pipe ceremonies – may not be written as a formal part of research methodology they will be central to Indigenous methodologies. The sacredness of Indigenous research was bound in ceremony, spirit, land, place, nature, relationships, language, dreams, humour, purpose, and stories in an inexplicable, holistic, non-fragmented way... and it was this sacredness that fascinated me, that I was trying to get at. I was finally starting to get that the sacred would never reveal itself in isolation of the life the swelled amid, among and around it. Laara said she did not write much about intuitions, the dreams, the energy, and it occurred to me that much of the sacredness of my research would never appear in this document – family gatherings, kind words, friends, smiles, teasing, tears, teachers, the deer sprinting across the open prairie, manitow giving me the energy when I thought I went as far as I could go. These experiences can't be written, only felt and remembered. Were they a part of my

research? Without a doubt. There were so many times that it felt like I was rubbing sandpaper on chapped skin, but what the conversation with Laara caused me to remember was all those who have been there with me along the way.

The more I spoke with people (and from my own journey over the past two and half years), the more I was becoming increasingly aware of the way in which Indigenous methodologies had the challenging task of serving two distinct masters – the Indigenous community and the university. The challenge for the Indigenous researcher was to honour Indigenous community and culture first off, then to clear a spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual space in western institutions that was accepting of Indigenous methodological approaches. Initially I thought clearing space in the academy was the more arduous task, but the more I worked with Indigenous methodologies the more I recognized that honouring an Indigenous way was not an easy task. Writing-up Indigenous research, trying to capture its essence, was something else. I mean where do you start? That Laara completed her dissertation, that she did this, was affirmation that it could be done. I was in need of that reassurance especially as I was nearing the writing stage of this project.

A Conversation with Graham Smith

A Maori perspective on Critical Theory and Praxis in Indigenous Research

More often than not we would find particular issues that we were working on, and when we looked to the existing tools hanging on the wall of the University to help us understand and to deal with these issues, sometimes the tools did not completely fit the circumstances that we were dealing with. If you extend this idea a little bit further, my view was that we needed to put some Indigenous tools, or in the New Zealand sense, 'Maori tools', on the wall of the University alongside all the other theoretical tools and all the other research

methodologies, so that we would have a more effective and wider choice of options.

- Graham Smith, excerpt from the following interview

Dr. Graham Hingangaroa Smith is a Maori educator and scholar from New Zealand. He is a distinguished professor of Education and currently holds an Invited Scholars position at the University of British Columbia. He attained his doctoral degree through the University of Auckland where his doctoral research centred on Kaupapa Maori Theorizing and Praxis. The list of community action and praxis projects he is involved in both Canada and New Zealand is long. He was involved in the establishment and creation of the Kaupapa Maori elementary schools, and has been instrumental in identifying the function and role of Kaupapa Maori theorizing within research and teaching within the Academy. He, along with Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, has been influential in developing Kaupapa Maori and Indigenous focused research paradigms. My first introduction to Graham came through a project he is currently involved with at UBC, the SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement) project. The purpose of this project is to increase the numbers of Aboriginal PhDs in British Columbia specifically (i.e. 250 by the year 2010) and across Canada more generally. The program aims to develop a critical mass of highly credentialed Indigenous scholars who also have a consciousness about contributing to the cultural, educational, social and economic advancement of their communities. Moreover, it is intended that these individuals will be able use their education and learning as a tool of praxis for creating change in Aboriginal communities that are significantly and disproportionately trapped in various socio-economic crises. This program is based on a successful model utilized in New Zealand to

stimulate the growth of 500 Maori PhDs in five years. Already, there is significant growth and momentum around the SAGE program in British Columbia.

I am familiar with Graham's work particularly in relation to Kaupapa Maori theorizing and research and how these tools incorporate an Indigenous approach to developing Indigenous transformations in the Canadian context. I have been keenly interested in what principles we share with other Indigenous nations globally, and in what ways each of our nations are also different. I am looking forward to having this discussion with Graham. I am also interested in hearing his thoughts on creating 'space' for Indigenous interests within the Academy. This is an important area of struggle which is also useful for us in that it can assist us to expand the ways we engage from the Canadian perspective. We share a common concern to incorporate critical perspectives as a way of more accurately viewing and understanding the unequal power and social relations that are entrenched in colonized societies. More particularly, I share his interest in the work of Paulo Freire who has also influenced my thinking and critical understandings.

This is my fifth interview (mid August) and I traveled from Regina to Vancouver to talk with him at the University of British Columbia. I had yet to process all that I had learned from those that I had talked with so far. However, I anticipated that my conversation with Graham would offer me even more learning and a critical framework by which to interrogate the information that I had already collected. I was not disappointed.

I (Interviewer/Maggie):

Graham, what was your research approach to your PhD studies?[the methodological and theoretical issues]

G (Interviewee/Graham):

I used an eclectic methodology, that is, I drew methodological insights from many streams. It's probably important to understand my philosophy on this particular point about both theory and method. In my view the western Academy has a number of theoretical models and tools embedded within it. Many of those tools come from different cultural roots, and many of those tools may well be useful in a universal way. My argument is that indigenous peoples need to struggle over the academy. In this sense there is a need to critically understand how knowledge and pedagogy; for example how 'theory' is selected and privileged in the Academy. I am particularly concerned to challenge the narrow, mono-cultural, 'interest - laden' way in which particular theories and methodologies are produced, reproduced and privileged inside the western oriented Academy. Equally, I am also interested in how particular cultural knowledge and forms are excluded, marginalized and denigrated within these same contexts of the public institution that is ostensibly addressing all forms of higher learning. More often than not we would find in respect of our Maori situation that particular academic issues that we might have been working on, studying or researching, were unable to be addressed adequately by the existing range of theoretical tools and knowledge. That is, when we looked to the existing theoretical and methodological tools hanging on the wall of the University to help us understand and to deal with these Maori specific issues, we would sometimes discover that the available tools sometimes, did not completely fit the circumstances that we were dealing with. If you extend this idea a little bit further, my view was that we needed to put some Indigenous theory tools, or in New Zealand sense 'Maori tools', on the wall of the University along side of all the other theoretical tools and all the other research methodologies, so that we would have a more effective and wider choice of options. The argument here then concerns the necessity to add new indigenous options to the existing range of 'tools' and not argue for the complete deconstruction of western theoretical tools. In other words I am not arguing against western theory; nor am I arguing against western knowledge. What I am arguing for is that there needs to be a space for our knowledge and our tools as well inside the Academy. More often than not we are using western ideas, lenses and tools to help us engage with our own culturally shaped issues. We also now have the added value and option of being able to use our own tools and our own ways of doing things. It is not an either/or situation, and I think this is a really important point to emphasize. There are several points that inform my perspective here. First, we need to struggle over the Academy and to perceive the Academy as a site of struggle - this calls us to think and act critically about the social constructed-ness of knowledge and the curriculum; second, we as Indigenous peoples walk away from and disengage from the Academy at our peril given that the Academy performs the vital societal role of producing the elite knowledge in society; and thirdly, I would make the point that we need to add our own Indigenous knowledge(s) and understandings to the existing range of theoretical and methodological 'tools' that are currently available inside these institutions. I have used the metaphor of 'tools' hanging on the garage wall with respect to the need to ensure that we hang our

indigenous 'tools' alongside. Such a view is not creating a divide between western and indigenous knowledge(s); there is need for both. I can not say enough times, it is not an either/or option.

So that is what we have been trying to do with respect to the idea of Kaupapa Maori research methodologies and Kaupapa Maori theorizing. There are two distinctive Kaupapa Maori developments within the New Zealand University system at the moment. On the one hand you have the Kaupapa Maori research methodologies work which is formed around Linda's [Tuhiwai Smith's] book, and then you have Kaupapa Maori theorizing which is formed around my work and the work of other Maori scholars. The reason for this distinction is that both Linda and I did not want to clash with each other's academic work or get in the road of each other by trying to do the same thing and overlapping. I guess we informally agreed that I would concentrate on theory and she would work within the research domain. It was a decision to define our working space and to prevent us from competing in the same field.

I:

So what is the Kaupapa Maori research model, did you use it for your dissertation?

G:

Yes I wrote about Kaupapa Maori theory and I also attempted to model it in the way I approached and wrote about the study. Kaupapa Maori methodology has several components. Those components are drawn from an aggregation of the successful transformative factors that informed the intervention elements of the pre-school language program – Te Kohanga Reo. What I did in my PhD thesis was to take a sample of these parents and of these educational leaders, and ask them why they had committed themselves and their children to this alternative form of education and schooling. Then I aggregated all of the answers that came back from this sample and by numerically ranking their responses, narrowed their reasons down to the six most frequently articulated .

Those six reasons were things like; self-determination. Parents said they wanted more control, a more meaningful say over the education that impacted on their lives. The second element was that they wanted access to their cultural ways of doing things, their cultural knowledge, practices and languages. In other words Maori were saying 'we still want to be Maori', and 'we need our cultural elements'. The third element was that of cultural pedagogies. Maori parents wanted access to learning and teaching through Maori values and ways of knowing. What Maori parents were saying was that they wanted the learning context to reflect the cultural context of their homes and lifestyles as well. The fourth element was what I call 'mediating the socio-economic circumstances'. This is a very important element. What happened here is that parents kept saying, we have chosen this alternative form of schooling because we are sick of living on the socio-economic margins of society; we want an education that will improve and change our living circumstances. Yet another factor [in the Kaupapa Maori methodology] was the concern to develop the cultural practices and infrastructure of the extended family or whanau

social unit. Maori parents wanted to work within an extended family set of social relations and practices. The extended family is a familiar and cultural infrastructure that provides support and security – it calls into play the values of sharing, reciprocity, nurturing, respect and responsibility. More particularly, it focuses on group and collective action and responsibility – it moves beyond the notion of the individual which is emphasized in European cultural practices in New Zealand. In the Kura Kaupapa Maori schools, the learning site is constructed as an ‘extended family’ where the teachers are mother and father to all of the children and collective cultural obligations are implicit. All of the families are aunts and uncles to all of the children, every parent has responsibility to all the children and all the children are responsible to all of the parents. The socio-economic mediation is facilitated through our cultural obligations and propensity to act collectively in support of each other. The last element was a collective vision that everyone was motivated by and was working to. That is, Maori parents and communities wanted to feel that there was something better in the future, and that they were heading somewhere with purpose and that change was occurring – given that the status quo was not working too well for most.

So these were the six main elements that came out of this aggregation process. Having identified these key intervention elements I then asked can I now package these six elements into a portable theory to enable application in other sites in order to develop successful change. The answer of course has been ‘yes’. These elements are now also being used to sustain transformations beyond schooling and education. It is these six transformative elements that basically form the essence of the Kaupapa Maori theory and praxis – they are now being used to inform transformations in areas such as health, justice, economics, the labour market and so on.

I:

Transferability is important then, eh?

G:

Yes, in my view the portability and transferability of transformative theories is a very important element of what is generalized as indigenous theorizing. Indigenous theorizing should be able to move beyond the idiosyncratic and parochial context – it should have the ability to make change in different sites, in this sense one should be able to take the essence of the transforming theory and apply it in other sites and achieve similar results. The Kaupapa Maori theory and praxis approach is able to be used in other sites to develop transformative outcomes for Maori – its currently being used by different communities and government departments to develop positive change outcomes for Maori in many different situations. It’s permeated the whole of New Zealand, and again I would restate the point that it’s not an either/or option in choosing to use a Maori tool for intervention. One would still expect people to choose the right tools that fit the circumstances they are dealing with – we now have in New Zealand a set of transforming tools that are Maori focused and therefore available as appropriate. Such tools do concentrate on transforming ourselves [as Maori]. Kaupapa Maori theorizing puts Maori at the centre of the discussion and the discourse; it provides an appropriate cultural emphasis; its a positive and proactive approach. In other words it asserts what we as

Maori are about. It reflects our cultural epistemology and language; our aspirations, our expectations and our futures.

I have some difficulty with those people who are claiming to be working in the area of Indigenous theorizing and yet who have no understanding of their own native language whatsoever. In my view they are likely to have some major gaps in their cultural understandings. They are not actually hooked into the deeper meanings of cultural nuances; there is a disconnection from the epistemological bases of language and culture and the claim to be working culturally. I don't want to deny indigenous people concerned to make change the space to 'speak', but I do think that we need to be a little clearer about what we mean by Indigenous theorizing and by extension Indigenous research. There is a critical need to understand the epistemological roots that set the parameters around the notion of indigenous research – or to be more specific, Maori research, Maori theory, Navaho theory, Cree research and so on..

I:

Which [the epistemological roots] are found in language, to a degree?

G:

Yeah, it's in the language, it's reflected in the language. I think you need to be conscious of the fact that the deeper meanings and understandings of our cultural practices have their roots in the language – indigenous theorizing must have its foundations connected in a genealogical way to some cultural foundations – many of these foundations are lost to us today and have to be reconstructed through linguistic analyses as we attempt to rediscover the mindset and original intentions which give rise to particular practices used now, but their origins have been lost.

Let me just shift it forward a bit and say this. One part of my involvement with Kaupapa Maori theorizing has been my academic interest; it has been part of my own research if you like, but the other part of Kaupapa Maori theory, is that it is about practice. Its about actually developing transformative outcomes for our communities in real terms. In this sense its not just an academic exercise. It's not just the words on paper it's actually what you do. You will often hear me say to people, well what have you done? What's changed or will change as a result of your work? I will say to students when they come and talk about their thesis, okay let's start by dividing it in half. The first half I will concede to you. You can do a critique and talk about the pathology of what's gone wrong, but the second half has to be about what's going to change, about transformation. The reason I am directing students to think this way, is because I think we need to really centre the issue of transformation – to concentrate on getting beyond descriptions of what's gone wrong and get to the issues related to making change. In my own case as a student, my academic approach was to write about theory; this subsequently drew me into the practice element as I had to become engaged in doing a whole lot of intervention projects to prove that theory of Kaupapa Maori was indeed a theory of transformative praxis.

There are many sites in which I have developed different Kaupapa Maori projects, and one of those sites has been the University. We have developed a large number of Maori post graduate students out of University of Auckland who have all been schooled in Kaupapa Maori theorizing and Kaupapa Maori research methodology. The influence of these students has now spread out to other institutions and sites across New Zealand. Many of these students have become lecturers, teachers and researchers in other institutions and Kaupapa Maori approaches have now permeated most of the universities in New Zealand. It has made quite an impact and has driven widespread change for Maori as a result.

We've been working academically and practically. A key influence has been working with graduate students through course work and also working with student's research projects and theses. So, the theses themselves become transformative sites. Most Maori post graduate students in New Zealand will include a chapter on Kaupapa Maori research and theoretical implications. What this does is to provide a critically reflective context for growing and expanding the theoretical elements – more than this, these students are helping to name our own world. Their work allows us to speak from our own platform. It is also creating a literature base – we now have a substantial literature base that builds the legitimacy of this type of theorizing.

I:

Is there is a paradigm that is distinctive, that you can see emerging?

G:

I have been trying to encourage various indigenous Canadians to develop indigenous theorizing that is particular and located in their own landscapes. In other words, to develop the confidence put their own tribal nuances around it. That is, to begin to name our own world in our own cultural terms. For example, “this is an Ojibway theory of leading a good life – ‘the good way theory’”. Such a cultural philosophy about leading a good life, is also a ‘theory’ in my view – a theory of living.

To make the point again, we have a huge literature on Maori theorizing in New Zealand. I would estimate that we have over three hundred theses or academic publications addressing this topic, particularly if you count the Masters theses and so on. There is also some critique of my work by many of my own graduate students. This a good thing – it shows that critical reflection is alive and well and such activity is crucial if theory is to continue to have relevance and to be dynamic. These students are adding in other ideas – this work needs to be encouraged because that is what good academic and scholarly work entails [is about] as long as it's done positively and with the ultimate aim of improving the tools that we have at our disposal to make change. The other side to developing space for indigenous theorizing is to change the limiting structures of the university and its various components. Again we need to contemplate the idea of engaging in multiple sites of struggle and transformation, in multiple sites within the Academy. What I am saying is that our interests are not tied up with a single struggle; our struggle is many struggles. We need to recognize that there are many people involved in different struggles; we need acknowledge and positively support them. In this

sense all of these struggles, big and small are important. What is crucial is that we have a theoretical way of understanding all of these initiatives in an inclusive (as opposed to divide and rule) way. Too often we create, perceive or conceptualize transformation as a linear, singular movement. When we do this we create hierarchies and divide and rule amongst ourselves. If we are talking about change in the community sense, we need to articulate a way to do this that is inclusive, that is positive and that has buy in and support from the majority.

I:

What has been the interface with the western universities ...?

G:

Oh, it's been a struggle. Fundamentally we are contesting at the level of knowledge, but we are also contesting a history of colonization and colonizing processes. If you understand schooling and education as 'selection of knowledge' that is taught in institutions and that dominant cultural groups can determine what knowledge is selected to be taught, then you will understand how schooling and education become sites for colonization and assimilation. The interests of the dominant white society at the University are able to be reproduced, within the structures of social, political and economic dominance and so forth. In order to overcome indigenous complicity in the reproduction of white social, economic and political privilege, indigenous academics need a philosophy that allows us to engage within the Academy within the ambit of what I call 'the politics of truth'. 'The politics of truth' is about knowing the limits and the capacities of what we as indigenous scholars can and can not achieve in the University context – it challenges us to stop bullshitting. There are many of our own indigenous academic Faculty, staff and students who argue for space for self-determination and sovereignty within the Academy. While the sentiment is laudable, there is a huge contradiction here. When you look critically at such struggle, there is an obvious contradiction of being simultaneously inside an institution that is dominated and controlled by non Aboriginal interests – that is we need to appreciate the limits and capacities of what can be achieved and indeed what should be achieved within an institution that we do not own or have much power in. Thus doing a degree in a dominantly white institution requires indigenous scholars and Faculty to make compromises all over the place. The problem arises when Indigenous people do not own up to this fact. Developing sovereignty and self-determination in an institution where we do not have the power just doesn't ring true. We need to know the terrain on which we are struggling – we need to know the limits and capacities what can be achieved in particular sites. I think we need to make strategic concessions to win what we can, but the critical understanding here is that this is only one site of struggle – we ought to be developing transformation in many sites.

For me, the idea of the 'politics of truth' are an important measuring instrument to run over the top our transformative intentions, because we need to interrogate ourselves and to be clear about what is actually being changed and what is not; about what is being won and what is being lost. In New Zealand, the tribal university where we have brown

people in the structures are also limited. We need to understand this – although we would also argue that they are a big improvement on the Universities. We need to constantly interrogate what we are doing by asking the question ‘What has really changed?’ Have we changed anything? Or have we simply assumed the role of the colonizer and become brown colonizers colonizing ourselves. We need to be vigilant on all fronts. I would say that none of the tribal or indigenous institutions have a full self-determining culture inside it or indeed delivers such an outcome. There are compromises that are being made all over the place and this is fine up to a point as long as we know that we are making compromises, where we are doing it and the strategic reasons why it is being done.

I:

A question I have here links to this whole discussion about making change within the university -, did you have any Indigenous people on your Committee? Or how did it work?

G:

No, I did not have any indigenous people on my committee – but I developed my thesis through a praxis approach – I continually reflected on what I was doing with various Maori groups; academic peers, students, community groups, at conferences, family and with elders. I do not think this is absolutely necessary for everyone – as long as you are committed to a form accountability back to the communities and people whom you are purporting to serve and perhaps speak on behalf of. I would not say that the absence of a cultural person on my committee was ideal – I do look forward to the day when Maori doctoral students have several choices of supervision support – rather than simply having no options or perhaps having to take the single Maori academic in the Department, even though that person may have no expertise in the topic that you are doing. When I think about it, at the University of Auckland, our approach is to tackle the whole of the institution and to make the total institution responsive to Maori student needs – this is in fact an example if you like of applied Kaupapa Maori transformation.

Just to take you through this - at the University of Auckland we appointed a very Senior Maori position – the Pro Vice Chancellor (Maori) to oversee a number of structural changes. The case was won with the institution to do something about Maori academic needs and aspirations. This took some time and involved several meetings of Maori staff and faculty as well as community input. This was also supplemented by a Review of the institutions responsiveness to Maori. This Review consulted widely and ended up making some key recommendations, including the establishment of the Pro Vice Chancellor Maori position who was subsequently charged with initiating a number of intervention projects. However, I would suggest that Maori Faculty were prepared for this transformative process – most had good political literacy and critical understandings, so they were able to argue coherently, powerfully and perceive both structural and cultural change.

So there is a part to this whole story that I missed out. I really need to tell you about this as well. At the time when I was at university there was this whole movement within critical Marxist side of theorizing. There was a crisis in the Marxist theory field,

because of the failure of the Marxist doctrine to deliver. What happened, and this is really cutting a long story short, resulted in the rise of critical theory – which is a reinterpretation of the Marxist approach. What that did was create a space in which Maori were able to argue for and obtain a foothold in the Academy; we grabbed hold of critical theory as a very important insight. In fact, I would argue it was the Maori academic group at Auckland that resurrected a focus on critical theory in the New Zealand Academies and initiated a broad interest in this approach across New Zealand .

I:

Just for me to clarify in my own mind, because when I was doing my undergraduate degree Marxism was really big, then when I came back to do my Masters everyone was talking about critical theory, but I never knew that it was the failure of Marxism that led to critical theory...

G:

Okay if you want me to tell you about it – I think it is an important development to understand in respect of the rise of a critical Maori consciousness. What happened is that in the 1970s was that the civil rights movement, and the Feminist movement and so on, tended to concentrate their critique within broad generalizations that centered on issues of race, gender, class. You had a lot of academic work in these fields, but what that did was to privilege different groups. In order to write with authenticity and authority as someone in the race dimension, you had to be someone from the racial group. In order to write with authenticity from the gender area, you had to be a woman, etc. What happened is that it went too far – it became an exclusive paradigm. Many of those who were excluded began criticizing this approach as being too generalized, exclusive, essentialist and based on utopian idealism. In the end there was this overbalance of people who were excluded from writing with authority in these fields. This caused a legitimacy crisis for these kinds of studies. Much of this critique is embedded in the post-modernist writings.

Another one of the crises that developed was that everyone kept pointing to economics, but few writers able to engage significantly with these factors [and to transform these elements]; also another criticism was that such approaches were descriptive and pathologically oriented – they did not speak to change so much and were very pessimistic rather than optimistic in outlook. In some scenarios it was as if one should seriously question why we should struggle, and that because our lives were determined by structural imperatives beyond the control of individuals - we should simply be resigned to our fate!. Civil rights and the big movements of the 70s and 60s – ‘flower power’ and so on – promised this utopian vision of racial and gender equity and so on. When that didn’t materialize, people became disillusioned, and these forms of struggle (race, gender, class) lost its impetus. This was the basis of the crisis for Marxist explanations. Out of all these crises Jurgen Habermas, a German philosopher, writes back and says that we need to re-conceptualize everything, we have it wrong. We are asking the wrong questions about what is going on. He says, in terms of the utopian vision of racial equality and so on, people are looking in the wrong place for the victories. The victories are won in everyday struggles. These are small incremental victories. The

big vision gives you direction and impetus to struggle, but we need to celebrate the small, incremental victories along the way. He re-developed a critical theory approach which criticized the instrumental way of viewing the world and criticized the technocratic rationality which was part of the Marxist way of viewing the world. He also said that we need to revamp Marxism away from the structural element toward having more 'agency' so that people can mediate their lives. He argued for what he called 'emancipation' – which is a very liberal concept – but which is 'transformation' in my own re-interpretation of his work. Critical theory has become very important in the Maori struggle in the development of all of this stuff, because it created the space for us to move positively, proactively and with hope.

We came out of a pretty hot critical school – that was internationally ranked. We were taught by some really sharp academics who are internationally recognized in this field. The Maori Education group at the University of Auckland in the 1980s was a very advanced critical site both for study, research and political engagement. Now most of these academics and Maori students have moved on - we have all gone elsewhere and are influencing other sites across New Zealand and across the world. At the end of the day the work that is being done must connect and resonate with the community whom we are purporting to serve; in this sense Kaupapa Maori is as much a community concept and struggle as it is an Academic and institutional one. Kaupapa Maori belongs to the community, to Maori. That is why I keep talking about praxis, because when you are critically reflective, you reflect with the people whom you are purporting to serve and on whose behalf you are claiming to develop transformation and change. Maori theorizing is not disconnected from the people. One must continually reflect that you are not simply theorizing in the academy as 'the ivory tower'. Such theorizing must be grounded. In my view praxis becomes a vehicle for community accountability.

I:

I have questions around methodology specifically. The first question is how did you approach the cultural aspects of Indigenous knowledge when making methodological choices? Did you find that it was difficult to incorporate culture in your methodology?

G:

No, it wasn't difficult at all. I just developed my own [methodology]. I went with my gut feeling – with what I knew culturally and with what I knew was expected of me by my own relatives. I began with wanting to do the right thing, with acknowledging that I needed to be careful and at the same time, incorporated other reflections such as critical theory and so on. I ended up pioneering my own methodology because I couldn't find anything that was appropriate in the existing academic tools. My own methodology has become quite significant in its own right, and many students and researchers follow this pattern. My methodology was to put myself as a Maori researcher at the centre of the project and all that this entails. I argue for subjectivity as being a more honest position. I declare openly that I am arguing for my language, knowledge and culture and against reproducing colonizing forces in my research. I name these things overtly. I wrote my personal story at the front of my thesis in order to lay bare my biases and cultural nuances / preferences/ prejudices. That is, all the things that make me up as a Maori academic,

and that contribute to constructing my worldview and my perspective. In this way I am saying: “Well this is me, I am trying to be neutral but I can’t be because I am Maori, I am trying to be objective but I can’t be. So this is me warts and all, the onus for issues of objectivity and neutrality are for you the reader to work out. You can read my text against knowing my personal background and then make up your own mind about the validity and legitimacy of my arguments”.

I:

If it’s valid for you or not?

G:

That’s right. This is me and I am being truthful in laying out what shapes me and why I think and act like I do. This is more than most western researchers are prepared to do – they often continue the façade of claiming to be objective and neutral. My personal idiosyncrasies and so on are shaped in particular ways because of the incidences in my life, the things that I have experienced and have learned. I believe I am giving my testimony ‘authenticity’, not only because I am ‘owning up’ but also, because I am saying that I have these particular personal experiences and knowledge that also need to be considered as part of the contribution being made alongside the other streams of information in this thesis. Every thesis is written laden with the authors own interests that are often submerged in the text, yet researchers continue to make arguments that they are objective and neutral and therefore carry out this pretence that their own interests have not tainted their work. It’s a load of bull of course. As a Maori, my methodology should be true to my own traditions and these deserve to be laid out up front. Once I got into the thesis itself, I was using a range of other methodologies and eclectic theories. I incorporated the best available tools as I needed them. In the end I was using western and indigenous theory and method as appropriate. I want to elucidate this issue of using western and Maori tools a bit more. The example of Gramsci’s ‘hegemony’ helps me clarify this point here. The critical notion of hegemony is a great tool for understanding how indigenous peoples become complicit in forming their own oppression and exploitation. It helps us to understand how common-sense itself can become co-opted – as such it is a useful tool to allow this insight; it helps Maori understand the processes of colonization and that’s all. I am not going to say western theory is useless, that its white man’s knowledge and we shouldn’t use it and all that stuff. That’s a load of bull – we need to use all the very best available theoretical and methodical tools, and where necessary, develop new approaches when these tools are inadequate.

I:

So when you were looking at the tools that were up on the wall, and you mentioned that there was something that was missing, what was it about Kaupapa Maori approach that made it distinctive? Was it because it was coming from the culture?

G:

Kaupapa Maori is Maori centred. It is Maori cultural, Maori political, Maori social - a Maori centric positioning. It reinforces Maori academic work because it takes for granted Maori language, knowledge and culture as not only being valid, but also

being important. It acknowledges that Maori language, knowledge and cultural interests are at the centre of the project. It also connects with the epistemological foundations and basis in the way we think, act and live out our culturally preferred values. The politics is another dimension that is important here because within the Kaupapa Maori framework, we really need to understand the politics of colonization, although I don't like to talk about colonization. This is because such expression (colonization) puts the colonizer at the center of the discourse and we are positioned to become reactive. I prefer to use the term and talk about 'conscientization' rather than colonization, because such a term is more positive; it puts a focus on us at the centre (rather than the colonizers) and it also centres concerns about our development. The point here is that we need to learn the critical illiteracies that are required to unpack all of these colonizing processes. Doing a thesis and doing intellectual work is a political process if you are from a minority cultural group, because you are often working in an institution that is ruled by the dominant societal groups. There is a need to have a way in which to defend yourself with some critical and political understandings. We need types of theorizing then which take into account unequal power relations, which take account of the fact that there is a tendency in the institution to reproduce dominant race, class and privilege through manipulations of political instruments such as democracy, equity, individualism and so on. Unless we have that as part of our analysis, we are, in many ways, sucked into contributing to our own oppression.

I:

One of the things that I have also been looking at in this piece relates to theory and epistemology and ways of knowing. Knowledges were coming to me from dreams, knowledges coming from synchronicities that were directly related to my studies, coming from sources in the realm of the Great Mystery if you want to call it that. Do you have any comment on how that kind of knowledge can be brought into the academy? For example a dream, how do you bring a dream into a thesis?

G:

I just see that as part of Indigenous knowledge frameworks. You need a way to write them in obviously, but its part of the cultural approach that we are arguing for. I see dreams as being part of oral tradition and there is a space for all of that. It's just another tool that you can use; you can try and mediate it and say its 'subconscious' stuff and all that, but why bother. It's how we interpret what is important, because as a Kaupapa Maori view would support - we are the centre of this. This is our cultural knowledge, our cultural ways of knowing, our being, our living and our actions that are important in this mode of enquiry. It's not either/or. I think what we are saying is that we are looking to support different forms of knowledge; that is, one cultural form of knowledge is an equally valid perspective as other, different cultural knowledge forms. How these different knowledge forms are interpreted, believed and accepted is an entirely different thing. All cultural groups ought to be able to express their cultural views inside and outside of the Academy.

I:

So how do we, as Indigenous researchers, create space for those sorts of knowledge that aren't really validated or understood in western academy but we know as a source of information for us.

G:

The way I would do it, and in fact the way I have actually done it, is to argue for the political, cultural space. That is to use critical theory arguments to both interrogate the cultural narrowness and cultural reproduction tendencies of academics and the Academy on the one hand and also use critical theory arguments to create the space for it to exist. It's as simple as that. I think we buy into the colonization process if we start justifying everything to those who are trying to gate-keep, that is we need to be careful that we are not actually keeping the 'gate-keepers' in business. There is a way of justifying some of this stuff in terms of our own Indigenous interrogation, but to justify it in terms of the expectations of the system I don't think we have to do that. All we have to do is create the political space within the hierarchy of knowledge(s) that this particular form of knowledge makes the world and communities go round. With regard to dreams - I always dream about my work. I don't think it's something mystical for me, it's simply that I don't stop working. At night I am thinking about my work and dreaming. I write papers in my head when I am asleep, I will wake up and write the points down and then go back to sleep. Its just ideas are coming in all the time. Probably if I was from here, I would say that these ideas were given to me from somewhere - and they may well be, but Maori don't have that kind of tradition to the same extent, we have dreaming in a different way. On the other hand it is very easy for me to accept the cultural explanation that our dreams are given to us for a special reason - I can accept that. I think this kind of logic is a good way of talking about it (dreaming), that it came from somewhere, or that I found a song outside in the trees...- wind sang to me and gave me the beat, that kind of thing. I believe in that kind of knowledge, and that it can be common sense to some. It's just as common sense as the other forms of knowledge and beliefs which other cultural groups may have.

In the Academy and with respect to indigenous research, I think we are looking to utilize all of our tools that we have available to us. There are some of these cultural tools that we are saying are missing or excluded from the Academy. These are the tools that understand the dreams, the tools that understand our cultural dispositions. That's why Kaupapa Maori is important in our context, because it can deal with that kind of cultural knowledge. It allows space for that, so that whole metaphor of the 'tools on the wall' is about needing to create the additional, cultural tools that allow us to deal with some other forms of knowledge. In general, institutions are still reluctant to cope with indigenous knowledge and tend to privilege limited and selective understandings which produce and reproduce themselves and their interests.

I:

When we bring Indigenous methodologies into the academy what is the risk?

G:

There is risk, and we definitely should be careful around this – but what I say to my students is that you have to question why you are bringing it in. There is some Indigenous knowledge which is already out there. In this sense its already public domain knowledge in our own communities and perhaps even known and accessible in non Aboriginal contexts. On the other hand, there is some knowledge which is regarded as being sacred or restricted, and if by bringing such knowledge into the Academy is going to cause angst to others then it shouldn't be brought in. The reason I say this is because I can't guarantee that this particular institution for example can look after it; treat it with respect, and preserve it in the way that you need it to be preserved taking regard of the community's expectations. Its unfortunate, but I would rather that you keep such knowledge safe by keeping it outside. There are plenty of other things to write about, research and study for a thesis that do not open up indigenous knowledge to disrespect, exploitation and colonizing. [As Indigenous researchers] you have to make some decisions as well, take some responsibility about guardianship. Why would you put sacred knowledge at risk within an academic institution? Indigenous researchers need to act responsibly as well – why put at risk our culture and knowledge for the sake of an individual thesis or research project? Are you just opening it up and making it vulnerable? I think there is some onus on ourselves here – there is a need for us to exercise some 'agency'. This is again a constant theme of mine - about being pro-active and positive and retaining agency or control over our own lives. We have some power to enact resistances and to take action about what is happening to us. A key issue here is the need to retain some power and control over our own lives. I would ask the student why they are bringing such knowledge into the institution and give away the control and the power to the institution – to dominant society or to Pakeha. Then again critical theory gets me to think like that, so this is an example of how critical theory can assist us – the point being that it (critical theory) helps us make space for ourselves, our culture our ways of thinking. Also I would add that there are now many tribes and nations who have well developed local committees who handle research ethics and protocols and who are watching over the protection of our cultural knowledge.

Reflective Comments

Being a pragmatic person, a metaphor that Graham used particularly appealed to me, and that was the metaphor of Indigenous researchers needing “more tools on the wall” to be able to respond more adequately and effectively to the research needs of the Indigenous community. Critical theory has assisted in grounding my research, analysis and approaches to social work and education in a way that considers the power dynamics within society. A decolonizing aim born of critical perspective has given me the tools to think, write, and be in a way which furthers social justice so that the work I do benefits

those of whom I propose to serve. My conversation with Graham re-affirmed that theoretical tools like critical theory are useful to the Indigenous researcher, but it is not enough to stop there. There must be Indigenous methodological tools on the wall as well. It is as Graham states not an either/or proposition but rather advocacy for a more inclusive approach to research within academy that respects methodologies from the margins.

I must admit to certain nostalgia after having a conversation with Graham about the history of critical theory. As a young student, in my early twenties, at the University of Regina I was part of a student group who were social activists. It was a heady time, and along with the political organizing and demonstrations, I remember having long philosophical conversations about social Marxism as an analytical tool for understanding the oppression of the poor and working class. At that time race was not on the radar screen. Later when I returned to university for my Master of Social Work degree critical theory was the more pervasive perspective as it was offering an analysis on race, class and gender. I did not fully understand the movement from Marxism to Critical Theory and it was useful having Graham fill in those blanks. I believe this is important background information, because critical theorists have been instrumental in creating space in the academy for Indigenous knowledges and their contributions ought to be noted. Additionally, the stress that Graham placed on *praxis* in relation to Indigenous research is central to our methodology. We can call it decolonization, we can call it Indigenous praxis, we can call it resistance, the point is that Indigenous research needs to be of benefit to our people in some way, shape or form – that's the bottom line. The whole notion of 'knowledge for knowledge's sake' just does not seem to fit an

Indigenous research approach at this point – maybe some day we can have that luxury. That being said, it was good to hear Graham say that Indigenous research has got to matter in practical way. Miyo!

A Conversation with Jeannine Carriere

A Métis Researcher talks about her Research as a Lived Experience

All of those gifts come together in this PhD journey I have found, so it's good to honour all of that and just stay focused. That for me was the hardest part, to stay focused, to stay true to myself in feeling that I was worthy of this. A lot of stuff in my whole life has been about not feeling worthy and it came at me again in the PhD world, you're not worthy of this, having to fight to stay on track. We are worthy of this and those who come after us are worthy of our experience and what we are able to give them. That's all I have to say, Hei, Hei (thank you Cree).

- Jeannine Carriere, excerpt from the following interview

Dr. Jeannine Carriere is a Métis woman whose ancestral lineage flows from the Red River Métis of Manitoba. Jeannine recently completed her doctoral study (just a few months after this interview) through the University of Alberta, Department of Human Ecology and Family Studies with her doctoral research focusing on the connection between health and First Nation adoptees. She currently has accepted a full-time, tenure track appointment as Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work, University of Victoria. Jeannine has a long background working on behalf of Indigenous children in Alberta, and I have known of her primarily by her advocacy work in First Nations child welfare. I have a sense of connection with Jeannine because of our shared experience, both being Indigenous adoptees, and I have a sense that without me saying too much she will “get me” and the purpose of my research, that my own search for connection and

identity has led me to the study of Indigenous methodologies. She will know that this is okay, and important.

It is mid-August and this is my final interview. I return back to Victoria to interview Jeannine and have an opportunity to touch base with other colleagues as I have been on academic leave from my position at UVic since May to work on this PhD. I meet Jeannine in her new office where we will sit for the interview, then we will go to lunch to catch-up. I am eager to hear about her story as she has just recently completed the writing of her dissertation, and at the time of the interview is waiting to go to her defence. She is almost at the finish line, and I desperately need to hear what that feels like. This interview is about her PhD research journey, and it is about “getting to home” in more ways than one.

I (Interviewer/Maggie):

Jeannine, what was your research topic and program of study?

J (Interviewer/Jeannine):

The program of study came first, that was the Human Ecology at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. What I meant by the program came first is that at first I was struggling with an idea, “okay what is it that I am going to research”. At the time I was involved in Fetal Alcohol Spectrum disorder in terms of my research interests. I felt that women’s voices were lacking in that area, particularly moms who had given birth to children with FAS. I kept struggling with the topic and the approaches. I decided not to do that topic anymore, and I was struggling to find another one.

I was teaching in Hobbema, coordinating the Hobbema college program of the University of Calgary. Here I was teaching at a First Nations university, that was very impacted by the oil industry and I was interested in how it impacted the family structures. I went to the Elders and made my offerings, I got encouragement to pursue it, but it just didn’t feel that it was my research. It was with that kind of discomfort that I ended up in Saskatoon at the Prairie child welfare symposium – the very first one. We sat in a circle on the last day, and I can’t even remember how many people there were, but it was the largest circle I ever sat in. We knew at the beginning of the day that it was going to take all day. The reason for concluding with that kind of circle, is that Aboriginal people who attended the first two days were getting increasingly frustrated that even though this symposium was organized to discuss Aboriginal child welfare issues, the government

was doing all the talking and the universities were doing all the talking. Where were our voices and our process? With some advocacy during the evening, we arranged to have this circle as the last discussion.

In that circle, I ended up one of the last people to speak. Everybody started talking about their own experiences as opposed to the policy and what should be done in practice. It was more like, "this is my experience with child welfare". I felt this thing rising in me, because I thought can I really do this? Can I really talk about what my experience as opposed to my work experience? Can I talk about my family experience of being adopted and reconnecting, and the whole experience around that? As the circle kept going, it got closer to my turn, and I knew I didn't have a choice. I had to be authentic in what I said, and it had to be about my experience. I got through it without weeping too much, but after I spoke and the circle concluded I couldn't stop crying. Luckily I had good friends there and my partner came to pick me up, and he's, "what happened to you, you were at a conference (laughter), why are you doing all this crying?"

We were driving to Edmonton and I was trying to compose myself, but what kept occurring to me is, "why are you searching for all these research topics". You should be doing this research on adoption. This is who you are, this is your story and this is what you should be contributing. It was this sort of messages coming to me. I got home and called my friend from an agency I worked at right away and said this is what I think I should do. This is the third time I am changing the topic, and people are going to think I am nuts. She said, "you know that I have been wanting to tell you for a long time now, give your head a shake, why aren't you doing your research on adoption, it needs to be done. We need your help in this area, all the other First Nations do as well." To make a long story short, that's how the topic came to be and how it came to me. I knew that in my own life, I attributed a lot of stuff to the adoption experience, always looking for something and damaging myself in many ways while I was looking.

I:

Yeah, you know I am adopted as well, right?

J:

I didn't know that.

I:

You didn't know that? I thought everybody knew that, "there is Maggie, the adopted one" (laughter). I think, okay this probably going to be the burden I bear, but I needed to reframe that for myself in a way that I could live with, because I get tired of that label. Anytime you're searching it's because you're adopted and messed up, but it came clear to me not that long ago, that it gives you space. It gives you space to search, it gives you space to ask, it gives you space to do what we all need to and that is to find out who we are and where we come from. In some ways it's been a burden to bear, but it's also been a blessing because I think people give you room. Anyway that's just what I was thinking when you were talking about your own experiences. For your project, what was your research methodology?

J:

When I started my intuition was telling me one thing and the university process was telling me another, and that was very challenging for me. My intuitive self was saying you need to do things in a good way; you need to have the guidance of Elders; you need to have a community advisory committee that is going to work with you on this; you need to make sure you don't mess up on protocols and approaches; *and* you need to satisfy this university. How was I going to do that? That was the struggle. I really admired some of the descriptions that you used in your information letter, how you were able to somehow keep the real names of people. That was not a possibility for me.

What I decided in the end was the best [methodological] approach from a western perspective was qualitative approach. The best methodology that I found was in-depth interviews, because that gave me the space that I thought I needed to be able to at least guide people in terms of a question guide, but not be very strict in terms of what to say and when to say it. It was a more open approach. I also thought to complement that would be to use talking circles, which is an Indigenous approach, and can be done in the way that its supposed to, as opposed to the university saying no you need to run the talking circle in a certain way. The glitch there, where I digressed from the traditional talking circle was by using the tape recorder. I was able to get around that very nicely because of the people who worked with me, the First Nations advisory committee. They were all people involved in the Yellowhead Tribal Services Agency, and had all been well versed in technology because they had made videos, and they used tape recorders before in their meetings. The Elders were okay with it. I made my apologies for using the technology, but they were very kind and understanding. They said that somehow you have to capture everything that we say, so we are okay with you using the tape recorder. You just do what you need to do to get this information out there and we will work with you in that way. However, there were some cultural protocols that you need to adhere to and that was to first of all approach the Elders with tobacco, to ask for a prayer, and to engage in ceremony. We had a pipe ceremony for this research. Actually, let me backtrack, it started with a sweat. I made my offering to have a sweat, asked for a sweat, and that happened, that was a very good thing. We also had a pipe ceremony.

Even to talk about this [ceremony] on tape is hard. You feel like you shouldn't but you need to as well. In order for me to help you with your research, I have to be true to the process. This is an example where there was always a feeling of a dual kind of sense of responsibility and trying to dance between making sure that the university was kept over here and satisfied by me using whatever procedures, but that also that those procedures did not disrespect, interfere or drastically alter what needed to happen over here in a cultural way.

I:

There is also part of my methodology that is about me going home, about talking to people who know about the culture. I don't know what is going to happen when I start writing [what I will share]. I didn't realize at the onset, in conscious way, that I would end up having to go home...

J:

Mine in way has lots of parallels, there were cultural pieces for me that were happening in Alberta and I had a lot of supports there – ceremonial support and traditional approaches there – but, as with you when it came to writing, I had to go home. I went home to Manitoba. It's funny how the Creator works, because my partner had an opportunity to work in Winnipeg and I was getting sabbatical from the U of C to write. Away we went, but you know what I mean nothing is a coincidence right? I was supposed to go there, and not to disrespect my partner but he became a kind of instrument for me to get there (laughter).

There I was in Winnipeg transcribing tapes and writing. I was in my head, and not connecting in my heart and my soul, not stopping to think wait a minute this is where it all happened for you Jeannine. Where I grew up in my adopted parent's home is twenty minutes from Winnipeg. Why wasn't I going there? There was part of me that really wanted to go, but I was scared. I was surrounded by my birth family members, my siblings, my nieces and nephews and that was wonderful, but that was not the whole story. I kept wondering, what is keeping me from that? In order for me to write about connectedness, why aren't I connecting? I kept feeling this physical sense of discomfort, and I wasn't sure where that was coming from. A good friend of mine from Edmonton said you need to go back there, you need to go to the graveyard, you need to visit your adopted parents there, you need to try and get into the house where you grew up. I didn't think I could do that. She said, "pray about it, hold your tobacco and see what happens, and I think your sister needs to go with you". She was referring to my sister [name is deleted], because she was the one who found me when I was twelve.

The end of my sabbatical was coming and I knew I had to get back Alberta, and I thought if I am going to do this, I have to do this now. My partner was going away for a weekend, and I thought this is a perfect opportunity, so I invited my sister to come for the weekend and told her what I wanted to do, and asked her come with me. She said sure. She said maybe after we are finished with St.... we can go to St.... which was where she lived the longest in a foster home, not a pleasant experience for her either. We thought that we could bring some closure to these experiences together. Away we go, we decided to go to St.... first with first stop at the graveyard to visit my adopted parents. I truly wanted to go and thank them for what they tried to give me, because you know it really was my stuff, my resistance more than anything they did really. Sure they could have been a little less racist, a little more of this or little more of that, but all in all they were pretty good folks, they weren't the problem. It was the policies, it was the way things were done.

I am visiting the graveyard and we come to my parent's grave and by then I am mess. I said to my sister can you say a prayer because I just can't do it, so she started to pray and thanked them for giving me what they could. It was a beautiful prayer and I felt so much more at peace. We start walking out of the graveyard, and now I wanted to go to this house where I grew up but I haven't spoken to anyone in my adopted family for

twenty years, and I didn't have the courage to do that. I kept asking myself, where am I going to get courage to do that, how am I going to do that? My adopted sister is living in my parent's house, and ended up calling us when they passed away. I haven't seen her since my mother's funeral, so how do I go up to this house? I had all kinds of feelings of animosity toward my adopted sibling, I always felt like I was the different one that I caused so many problems for my parents, that I wasn't as good as them. I didn't want to knock on that door and re-open that can of worms, I mean what if she closes the door?

We are walking out the graveyard, and I see this woman walking into the graveyard and she is going to my parent's grave. I say to my sister that is ... my adopted sister. My sister said, "What?" I said, "Yeah, that's her". She said, "This is a sign, you need to go and talk to her". I said, "I don't think I can." She said, "Of course you can". I said, "What if I scare her?" She looked at me, then looked at her and said, "She looks like she can handle it (laughter)". I thought okay, so I started walking toward my sister and I called her name. When she heard, she looked up and went like this (shading her eyes with her hand) because the sun was bright, and when she did that she was the spitting image of my adopted mom. I told her who I was and she just couldn't believe I was there. I couldn't believe she was there, and we had a bit of a superficial conversation in the graveyard, then she said would you like to come back to the house. That was a gift! I said I would love to and we went.

We didn't go into the house right away, I savoured the yard for awhile because there was the tree that I used to climb on when I was a kid, to run away, I was always running away to the creek, to the trees, whatever. I thought, my tree is still there, so I had to take pictures of my tree, me and my tree, my sister, me and my tree. It's a tree, alright! (laughter) Everything was just so special, at first we sat in this sun room that she built onto the garage. She started telling my sister stories about when I was kid. It made me kind of nervous, because I thought she was going to say all bad things, but no, it was good. It was obvious that they loved me which is something that I never thought they did. There were humorous stories.

Then we go into the house and my bedroom is still the same. She pulls out something from the bottom drawer of my dresser and she says I don't know why I kept this, you don't know how many times I have gone to throw it out. To anybody else that would have been a piece of rag, but it was a piece of my pyjamas when I was four. I knew it as soon as I saw, it was pink flannelette with a little boy and a little girl on it. She says, "Do you want it?" You think she gave me gold! Then she said I also have this. It was a can of buttons that my mom used for sewing and I always used to throw them on the floor. I had my favourite buttons, they were the shiny ones of course (laughter)! I opened the pail and there were the shiny buttons. I asked if I could have the buttons, and she said of course. When I left, I had the buttons and the little piece of my pyjamas and it was just a really amazing experience.

I:

Did you write that experience in your dissertation?

J:

I did, right at the end. I forgot to mention an important piece to my work, to my dissertation. I used a portfolio and you know in methodology they advise you to take memo notes, to track your own process in journals or whatever. I did a little of that I had a journal, but I also used a portfolio. It was a method we used in the ACCESS program to assist students to integrate learning. They could use different approaches to integrate their learning, so it could be art, it could be music, and it could be collages. I ended up creating a scrapbook to chronicle my PhD journey, through using photos and snippets from my journal and different collections of stuff.

I:

Would you refer to this as methodology? Could you talk a bit about how you see it as methodology?

J:

I think it's important to capture your own process, and I think western methodology and Indigenous methodology meet in that way. It's very critical, and if you don't you are really doing a disservice to yourself and to your audience because it's important to present what you found in the most accurate and impactful way you can. If you don't acknowledge your own self in the research process, then you will always have a piece missing. I had seen portfolio at work with the students who I had taught and I had also been able to give guidance in using portfolios through teaching a course itself. I thought what a wonderful way for me to use this as research approach to capture my process. I am going to be demonstrating it at my defence, it will be another part of my defence explaining how portfolio works and what is in the portfolio. I won't go through it page by page, but people will have the opportunity to do that if they want. It is a collection of who I am in this research. The very first page is a copy of my adoption papers and then there is a section on my growing up years, a section on meeting my sister all with photos and snippets from my journal. I kept a personal journal as well as an academic journal.

I:

Would you have considered your methodology an Indigenous methodology if someone where to ask you?

J:

I would consider it a blend of both. I think to myself as a Métis woman, a blend of both, isn't that interesting. This research process became just that. It has a very First Nation, Cree focused piece of what I had to do in order to be given the right to do the research. This is not only at the permission stage, but throughout the research process in the way that the relationships developed with the participants, as well as the talking circle members. Another thing that I learned that is very different from western approaches is that I was always having a relationship with these people. It doesn't end with the research report or whatever. It's funny because I still get email from people who I interviewed, the adoptees, saying are you done yet and are we ever going to have this

ceremony. I was told by the Elders that we have to have this coming home ceremony, and that would be the closure for this whole research process. There will be a ceremony, a give-way, I am going to be hosting that and work with the Elders to do that. That is a commitment that I still have to meet. Some of the adoptees are saying are you ever going to have this thing (laughter).

Going back to your question, I feel very much there were two approaches all the way. I had to try and make them work together and not have one take over the other with the frustrations of all of that.

I:

What kept you going, it must have hard times, what kept you going?

J:

Ah, well, lots of prayer, lots of support from family and friends, my women friends especially. Especially those who are in PhD programs and who have completed, those who know the struggle, they know page by page what that struggle is about. Then I suppose a part of it was my sheer will and stubbornness. I like to finish what I start, but there were many, many, many times I can't even tell you how many that I wanted to quit, at least once or twice a semester. My reaction was always to run when things got hard, I wanted to run so many times. I would have these dialogues with myself, "Who's going to care anyway? What's a PhD? You've done okay with the Masters, you don't have to have a PhD. You can teach at the college, you don't have to teach at the university?" I had all these conversations to try and justify why I could exit, you know stage left. I would sabotage myself lots and lots of time, but somehow it all came to be because it was supposed to happen this way and I firmly believe that. I think that this is my life's work.

I:

Now we are up to the questions (laughter). We might have answered most of them though, the first one is do you believe that Indigenous researchers approach research in a different way and how? [I explain some of my research journey to Jeanine including my encounter with cultural knowledges.]

J:

Thanks for clarifying, I didn't know if I got it when I read it the first time, but now I totally get it in terms of your intent. I think it relates back to the graveyard story, that whole day was an out-body experience. I don't believe in coincidences, and that is what my sister said as soon as we got back to the truck to leave, she said that was no coincidence! I said I know that was a gift directly from the Creator, from God, because you know you put the facts together and it doesn't compute from a logical, linear way. When my sister said that was no coincidence and I acknowledged that. She said my parents wanted me there. It was a huge burden lifted from me that day in terms of being okay with who I am, and that was a very important part of my life.

My adoption was not a negative experience. They loved me and its obvious because they kept my things – later on she [adopted sister] mailed me my dictionaries

from grade one and the artwork that I created. They loved me, but I spent my whole adult life thinking that they didn't love me, and it was me who didn't love myself. I won't go into all that, but that experience was my pearl necklace. I was being told don't forget about this part of you, not only related to the adoption but the French Canadian roots and the gifts there.

I:

In thinking about your story, and your pearl necklace, how did you bring that into the academy without it being devalued?

J:

My supervisor directed me to write it up as I wrote it in my journal. I wrote it immediately after I went home that day and then added some [mementos] to my portfolio, my buttons and all that. She said you need to write about this, write it as the epilogue after the whole dissertation is finished. I did. I felt we will see what this committee member will say. When I went to meet with her about yet another revision, she said when I read the piece about you going to the graveyard I broke down and cried. She got it. She finally got that there is that other connection, as Indigenous people we have the gift of being a lot more aware of that and open to it. It was interesting that she got that, at that level and the tears were coming. That was good, because I was just waiting for her to say well that is kind of personal to be adding to your dissertation, what does it have to do with anything.

I:

Anything you want to say to round off the interview?

J:

Well I've said it many times, that it has been a journey. I would have to say that I never anticipated at the beginning what a journey it would be – I guess I misjudged the depth of the personal evolution. Going back to my old philosophy, nothing is a coincidence. I understand why it had to happen the way it did, and at this time of my life, and its just so fitting. I think if you allow that, to understand that it comes to you when its time, then it helps you to just stay on that journey, stay on the path, and do what it takes to get through it in your way, whether your way is through prayer and ceremony, through meditation, through visualization, through dream work. All of those gifts come together in this PhD journey I have found, so it's good to honour all of that and just stay focused. That for me was the hardest part, to stay focused, to stay true to myself in feeling that I was worthy of this. A lot of stuff in my whole life has been about not feeling worthy and it came at me again in the PhD world, you're not worthy of this, having to fight to stay on track. We are worthy of this and those who come after us are worthy of our experience and what we are able to give them. That's all I have to say, Hei, Hei (*thank you* in Cree).

Reflective Comments

The other night, after having worked with Jeannine's interview, I went to see Buffy St. Marie. It was wonderful to see this strong Cree woman (and an adoptee no less) in Regina not far from Piapot First Nations, her home community. In introducing one of her songs, she said there is a need for all of us to find room in our plans for life. It made me think about Indigenous methodologies, about Jeannine's story and my own research journey. The holistic, relational, and sometimes raw nature of an Indigenous approach to research seemed to be about making room in methodology for life, for the unexpected, for the path that emerges rather than the one initially planned. Both Jeannine and I had the experience of returning to our home communities, though this was not part of the initial plan having both enrolled in universities far from where we grew up. For me, I could chart out many good, rational reasons for heading home (i.e. learning Cree), yet the decision to go back was an emotional one. It came from my heart involving both angst and longing, and had it been otherwise I am not sure I would have returned. It seems there needs to be room in Indigenous methodologies for these heart-made choices, but how do you explain or articulate this unique aspect of this methodology that we might not even understand until long after our research has been stamped 'finished'? I don't know, maybe you just don't? This conversation with Jeannine left me wondering how we find the words for this holistic journey and whether words are even sufficient.

The more Jeannine shared her story with me, I began to hear a similar message. Her story echoed the centrality of *purpose and researcher preparations* in Indigenous research methodology. This came out not only in her personal story about going home, but right at the beginning as she spoke about struggling to find a research topic. She felt

that by researching and writing about adoption, which is her own story, she could give something back to the Indigenous community that would have the authenticity born of her own experience. As with everyone I spoke with so far, there was a personal connection to their research topic, they were close to it. After hearing the six research stories (and reading about many more), it seemed to me that you could tell if a researcher was using an Indigenous methodology if there was a self-location, purpose statement and commentary about preparations from a holistic point somewhere in their research.

Chapter Summary

It is difficult, near impossible, to provide a succinct summary of this chapter with the breadth of teachings that I was honoured with, though there were distinctive common themes among these researchers and scholars. Indigenous research was about relationships, giving back, doing things in a good way, keeping it whole, worldview, decolonization and the list goes on. What was absolutely exciting for me was to speak with a group of people actively engaged in Indigenous research within the academy, and shaping Indigenous methodologies through their resistance to accept a western methodology that did not fit. The next chapter is an attempt to thematically group distinctive characteristics of an Indigenous methodology emerging from the insights of these six individuals.

Chapter VII: A Discussion of the Themes

This chapter is a secondary presentation of the findings of my research. The previous chapter was an attempt at capturing the essence of the research stories of the individuals who I conversed with about Indigenous research methodologies. To re-cap, as discussed in that chapter and the methodology chapter, the purpose of presenting those stories in that form was twofold: a) it reflects a more Indigenous approach to knowledge sharing; b) presenting the conversations in their organic form as stories allows the reader to engage with the ideas from their own interpretative perspective and find their own teachings from the conversations.

In preparing and writing this chapter on the thematic groupings, I was struck with a wriggle of uneasiness. This felt contrary to the work I had done in hearing, witnessing and presenting the stories of the previous chapter. Initially, as I was working through the transcripts coding ideas and bundling the thoughts into themes, I felt as though I were in familiar territory. Here I was engaging in a western qualitative research process that I had been preparing myself for through my studies for at least two years. Additionally, there were individuals and countless books that I was able to seek out for assistance in this task. The more I ventured into the coding and grouping activity, I started questioning why this is even necessary. I persisted for three reasons. I stated in my research proposal, in my research ethics form, and informed the research participants that I was intending to present the data in story and thematic groupings. As much as possible, I believe that if you say you're going to do something, then do it – first reason. The second reason is grounded in my experience as a curriculum developer and instructor (as I

mentioned earlier I yam what I yam). From this pedagogical perspective, I believe research should be transferable to the classroom and that it is useful to have knowledges organized in a couple of ways that offer students different entry points to engage with it. Grouping themes is useful because it illustrates points of commonality; further, identifying common themes from this research also makes it really obvious that there are undisputed Indigenous methodologies – so watch out because here we come! The final reason, relates to something that Graham Smith said about methodologies. He stressed that it should not be an either/or situation, Indigenous students and researchers should have the choice about methodology. To present the interviews in story form, and to present the data in thematic grouping is a way of modeling choice.

This chapter then is a compilation of the six conversations that I carried out for this research. It is an attempt to pull teachings from these conversations into bundles. In working with the teachings from the conversations, I went back to the original transcript of each conversation. There will be overlap between quotes used in the stories (from the previous chapter) and those that are presented in this chapter. This is the consequence of presenting the same data in different forms. (The difference between the raw transcripts and the condensed interviews is some minor editing of the latter approved by participants.) The chapter contains three sections: *Worldviews*, *Research Way*, and *Context* (ethical and political space). The bundling of the teachings into these sections corresponds to the general inquiry questions of my research:

Central Question:

How do Indigenous researchers approach research? More specifically, how do Indigenous researchers approach cultural/metaphysical aspects of Indigenous knowledges when making methodological research choices? (*Worldview*¹⁰)

¹⁰ I use the term **Worldview** to include Epistemology

Sub-Questions

- How do Indigenous researchers understand their cultural/traditional (metaphysical) knowledges and how do they incorporate this into their research methodology? (*Ways*¹¹)
- What are the challenges that Indigenous researchers face when they attempt to engage their cultural ways of knowing with western research and how did they counter-act these challenges? (*Context*¹²)

Within the research questions, participants defined the term *culture* in a broad sense, they



Figure 3: The Inter-relationship between these three themes resulting from my research questions form the structure of this chapter.

spoke about culture in a holistic non-fragmentary way. I did not provide any definitional parameters around this term and individuals spoke to cultural values from their own knowings, as to do otherwise would have given into a fragmentary way of thinking that would contradict Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin.

An additional aspect of this inquiry spoke to methodology (a combination of

epistemology with a strong focus on methods) or ways that individuals used their cultural values to guide their research. I was seeking insight into how these participants saw their cultural values being applied to the way they went about research. Again, I did not

¹¹ I use the term **Ways** to include Researcher Preparations, Research Preparation, Making Meaning and Giving Back

¹² I use the term **Context** to include Ethical and Political Space

provide definitional parameters on how individuals should define methods, rather I asked for their story and their definitions. A third, ancillary (and less in depth), but critical component of this research was an inquiry into context. I was seeking to learn the challenges and opportunities of applying an Indigenous cultural way of research (Indigenous methodology) within an institution operating under a western, non-Indigenous, non-tribal paradigm. The purpose of this question was to keep my inquiry concrete by grounding it within the context of place, revealing how environment influences practice. Place holds power, and arguably acquiring space within a place can get political. However, if universities wish to attract Indigenous people into graduate studies, there must be room for us, not just our bodies, but our minds, our cultures, our ways of being. As Indigenous researchers we must continue to share our research stories, from our own voice, for it is our stories that will create the praxis. And praxis is a goal of this research.

The three broad themes (worldview, way, context) were the first initial groupings. After which, I re-read the compilations identifying the emergent sub-themes. This chapter then is a compilation of ideas reflecting a distinctive Indigenous research paradigm. My only hope for those who read this work is that it while it cannot help but be defining – for those of us involved within Indigenous research these are defining times – what is shared here is meant to entice more thought about the topic, to include rather than exclude. I have bundled the themes from my own interpretations, and those interpretations are born of my own life experiences and perspective. Finally I ask Thunderbird to relay my thanks to those who generously shared their knowledges with

me, and to let them know that it is with great humbleness and care that I write this chapter.

An Indigenous Worldview

If I have come to understand one thing about this research, it is that it is about epistemology and ideology. It is about who believes what about knowledge, and the struggle for ideological primacy, hogging space on the marquee. It shouldn't have to be this way, there has got to be enough room for everyone. The research project gives me hope in that it proposes a more inclusive way of being/thinking/believing in the world.

So what is an Indigenous mindset, a tribal worldview? In my research journey over the past three years, I have faced the most personal aspects of my identity, and have talked with Indigenous researchers exploring the depths of our cosmologies and what that means for Indigenous ways of knowing. I have been a seeker struggling with the simultaneous simplicity and complexity of our thoughts with this inquiry leading me to explore places I couldn't even have imagined. This research has allowed me to grapple with the boundless (and not) parameters of Indigenous research methods and choices, knowledge that I suspect will sit with me for a time, then change and evolve with new ideas. However, there was another knowing, that I became more attuned to in those around me, in the relationships with my environment, and in the way I want to be living my life. As best as I can explain it, is that this was about an inquiry into the nature of a gentler world, the nature of kindness. Dr. Leroy Little Bear wrote a forward to Taiaiake Alfred's book, *Wasáse*. He wrote:

“Given the opportunity, a culture attempts to mould its members into ideal personalities. The ideal personality in Native American cultures is a person who shows kindness to all, who puts the group

ahead of individual wants and desires, who is a generalist, who is steeped in spiritual and ritual knowledge – a person who goes about daily life and approaches “all his or her relations” in a sea of friendship, easygoing-ness, humour, and good feelings.” (In Alfred, 2005, p.10)

This to me is about an Indigenous mindset and worldview. This is not just about epistemologies or theoretical positioning, although it seeps into those places by necessity. It is about trying to live your life everyday according to certain principles.

When I was having conversations with Indigenous researchers for this project, the first place we tended to start was in the realm of worldviews. They shared with me their Indigenous mindset that impacted not just their research, but how they attempted to live their life – like all of us some days were better than others, but there was an ethic there, a grounding. This section is about what they saw as comprising their worldview (what mattered), and how they saw this worldview or mindset impacting their life choices. In some instances they spoke specifically about research, in other instances they spoke broadly about their PhD programs, and in other instances they spoke generally about life. There were five themes that kept emerging throughout: personal story, values, relationships, cultural knowledges, and a decolonizing agenda. What follows is a general accounting of what mattered to the individuals in each of the areas and why it mattered. What the Indigenous researchers said, unequivocally, that one has to work to clarify one’s worldview if one is engaging in tribal methodologies. Here lies the touchstones, get this screwed up and the whole research design can go sideways. And the thing is that it’s not just about research, it’s about so much more.

Reflections on Tribal Values as part of Worldview & Epistemic Positioning

As I was beginning to write this section on values as they pertain to worldview, and reviewing my research notes and transcriptions, I began to wonder whether the friends I interviewed were talking about values or ethics. This caused me to ask myself, had I ever thought about the two being different, or did I generally see them as interdependent of each other? In an attempt to clarify their meanings, I reached for my dictionary. The New Merriam-Webster dictionary defines value as: “to estimate the monetary worth of: Appraise. 2. to rate in usefulness, importance, or general worth. 3. to consider or rate highly: Prize, Esteem (1989, p.801). I then looked in my Cree-English language dictionary. It told me that the word for value was *miýo*, which I have used periodically in this dissertation as meaning “good, well, beautiful, valuable” (Wolvengrey, p. 109). I did the same with the word *ethic*. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines ethics as “1: a discipline dealing with good and evil and with moral duty 2: moral principles or practices” (1989, p 259). I could not find the term “ethics” in my Cree dictionary. It seemed that while *values* and *ethics* could be defined separately in English, in Cree they were more interconnected and were about *miýo*, about goodness. As I thought about what the participants were saying about values and how they shaped their worldview, the overarching theme was about living life in a way that reflects goodness, that reflects *miýo*.

In the first quote, Michael reflects on his thoughts of how Cree values exist in relation to his research topic choice and more broadly in life. He shares how all the practices, ways and manner of relating are based on foundational values. In specific reference to her research process, of putting values into practice in gathering knowledges

through her research circle, Laara spoke about how her Cree values were integral in preparing for, and carrying out this phase.

I guess the way that I have been doing that with a whole bunch of things, even with my topic and that and stuff I previously looked at. I will come to a ceremony lets say, come to understand protocols and its not the ceremony that gets transferred it's the underlying meanings, it's the underlying values, ... So I guess that what I am doing now, is looking at different things that I have been through with Elders, traditional teachers, and trying to understand what is underlying this, what values are being demonstrated here. (Michael)

I think what I was trying to do in working with the participants of my research were to look at ways that we work in the community, - our cultural, social interactions in the community, which is gathering, feast, food, to recognize that the time that I am invited to come is around the supper hour, so I would say well come, and I would prepare food, also keeping it open if they needed to bring their kids they could. (Laara)

In getting down to more specifics, different participants spoke about values in different ways but there seemed to be a consensus that reciprocity, humbleness, acknowledging other's good work, and inclusivity were aspects of their own personal values or ethics. On a broader community level, values around responsibility, giving back and collectivism were also brought into the discussion. With regard to personal and cultural values, Cam spoke eloquently about paying respect to not only those we live in relationship with now, but to those who have gone before us. In doing this he reflected upon why we need to be humble when working with Indigenous knowledges: "Its very humbling to realize, everything that they [ancestors] did for me, and it also gives you a responsibility to live as good a life as you can because you feel very indebted to, I can't imagine what my grandparents went through."(Cam) In a similar vein Kathy spoke about the need to consult with members of her community prior to entering her PhD program

and why this was important to her. She tells us that the reason she wishes to consult is that she holds their thoughts in high regard and respects their insights: “[In] making a life decision and life choice then for me it was important to have consultation and counsel with people who I respect about this life choice that I am making and what do they think and because I respect what they think.” (Kathy)

In speaking about the different life experiences of Cree people and the many ways that we connect to our language, cultural values and knowledges, Michael re-affirmed the notion of inclusiveness, stressing that our way is not the way of gatekeepers to keep people out, but rather to include rather than exclude. This is a fundamental value of the Cree worldview.

I guess the journey for the Cree speaker, a fluent speaker, or the Saulteaux speaker isn't the same journey that you or I would take, and the journey you and I take wouldn't necessarily be the same, but they are all part of being Cree, because if we deny that then we have to deny ourselves and my understanding about our peoples is that we don't do that. We are inclusive, we bring people in, they may come from a different place, have a different journey but they are still part of us, and they are still brought in. (Michael)

In applying cultural values to her research, and staying true to Cree ways of knowing, Laara talks about the importance of a flexible research design. To align with Cree epistemology, such as ensuring that all peoples and their contributions are included and acknowledged, Laara gave an example of how she was able to attend to the values of inclusion and acknowledgement within the writing of her dissertation. In some respects, it is a good case of epistemological troubleshooting.

So what I was wondering what to do with the Elders words, you know how do I work this in, I thought, to me, it would just be a major omission, if I didn't... so what I did, why don't I put his opening before the stories and his closing after the stories. So he is kind of opening the stories and then closing the stories so everybody

because included, you know part of the circle. So anyway that meant that I had to backtrack and phone him, because I can't do it without his permission, right. So I called and he said oh, of course there is no problem that he would be honoured. (Laara)

The notion of collective responsibility and giving back to the community was evident in many ways, and so many places within the conversations that I had with the individuals. From a decolonizing or critical theorist perspective, Graham addressed the difficulty with theoretical perspectives that do not honour the collective:

The problem with postmodernism is that it is the theory which underpins neo-liberalism, because it is about individualism. The individual point of view, so you can't talk about collective experience, because there is always the individual story that needs to be privileged. That really has been a hassle for us. (Graham)

The collective values that Graham references most urgently manifest itself in the need for Indigenous researchers to give back to the community. How does this impact PhD programs and research? Jeannine makes the point that the dissertation is only one piece of the PhD process, the larger commitment is to find a way to give back what we have learned (the gifts and insights we have gained from our research) to the community, or more precisely to give the research back to the community. "I know that is such a small piece of the work that has to be done to get this dissertation finished, the bigger challenge and the more important work is to publish this information to get it out to people,..." (Jeannine)

For these researchers, values, and ethics seemed to be intertwined. Furthermore, these principles – inclusivity, humbleness, and collectivity – were values that people spoke about in the broadest manner as applying to all aspects of their life. It was a worldview or Indigenous mindset that spilled over everywhere and so it was no wonder that these same values would appear in discussions on research epistemologies. These

general values seemed to grow out of their personal experiences and engagement with their cultural knowings. They further identified a part of their worldview to include the role of memory, story and experience in generating knowledge, or as part of their epistemic positioning.

Memory, Story and Experience as part of an Epistemic positioning

The story of our personal experiences, those reminiscences of life rooted in our earliest experience shape our understanding of the world. A Cree kôkum shares cultural knowledges intermingled with the "... deep impression of the fascination which the fabled attractions of modern life – such as lipstick or mail-order catalogues – held for her." (Ahenakew & Wolfart, 1998, p.24). In the research conversations with folks, we shared how our personal journey was integral to our worldviews in regards to Indigenous research and choices around PhD graduate programs. There were several points that consistently appeared, which in many cases mirrored what many Indigenous scholars were saying in their writings about their own research journeys. These included purpose and personal meaningfulness; personal self-knowing that encompasses cultural identity; and life histories that enfold memory and experience.

A central theme was meaningfulness or purpose as a part of their worldview and motivator in their graduate work and graduate research (this is huge across the board). There was a sense among these researchers that their work had to transcend doing research, writing a dissertation and getting a degree. Rather, they felt their work needed to have meaningfulness or purpose on a personal and community level that may or may not be reflected formally in a dissertation, but that they, and their community, knew that

it was there. Kathy expressed purposefulness in terms of a decolonizing mission. She said:

"I didn't want to be seen that I am going down this path that's not the path that we are supposed to be going down in coming back to who we are, which is one of our core missions in decolonizing and in our life is to figure out who are we, and in order to do that you are not going to find that out in a university, in the absence of your peers and your culture. You do that in your community and in touch with your culture..." (Kathy)

Jeannine reflected her upon her doctoral work as a personal journey of deep meaning, one which she said that she under-estimated at the beginning. In expressing the meaningfulness of this work she said:

Well I've said it many times, that it has been a journey, and I would have to say that I would never anticipated at the beginning what a journey it would be, I guess I misjudged the depth of the personal evolution that would be part of this, so again going back to my old philosophy that nothing is a coincidence... (Jeannine)

I understood this myself. The more I thought about my experience, the more I realized that the truly hard work was the heart work, and the kicker is that no one can really judge, grade or even see it except one's own self. It is this inward knowing that is between myself and Thunderbird. But then that in many ways is the point...isn't it?

Personal purposefulness for researchers was commented upon equally in relationship to how their work will assist the community. People saw the need and wanted their research to be useful. This was largely connected to the value of giving back to the community, but it was also about an inward knowing that as Indigenous researchers at this point in the game, what we do has to count, there is a personal need to assist.

From several of the researchers there was a strong sense of purpose driving their work that emerged from their own personal self-knowing rooted in their own identity and understanding of who they are. Laara stressed the importance of locating oneself at the onset:

I was raised in northern Manitoba not on the reserve, not in the First Nations community, although I have a lot of relatives there, I was raised in a non-status community. I became status through Bill C-31 amendment to the Indian Act. I am Cree with German/Scottish ancestry. For me, its always important to acknowledge those, the parts of who I am. (Laara)

In this sense, the researcher was connecting herself to her community, and acknowledging how that has shaped her Indigenous mindset. By keeping one's location front and centre, it is a way that an individual can consciously assert where their strength comes from. As Kathy shared, having this reference point helps as a way of ensuring that her integrity as an Indigenous person would not become compromised by the foils of academia: "Or that [if you] went and found out what it was like and if you feel that you can't be yourself, you can't be who you are, then you can leave. We will understand, and so that [was] what some of my peers and teachers said to me and so I went." (Kathy) Writing my own prologue was gruelling because at times I felt that I needed to say to non-Natives academics reading my work that my grandfather was Sitting Bull and grandmother was Pocahontas in order to give it legitimacy (I know that is not being really fair). But like Kathy says, it is easy enough to lose yourself when you are away from home.

Essentially, researchers spoke about their own life histories, their memories, and their story. As Cam said, "Is it about community for me? I guess but it seems more personal, I was thinking about, as you were talking, and remembering. My entire life

experience in education, at least in western education, like going back...” (Cam) and further as Michael tell us, “I am Indigenous, I speak English and that’s where I come from. So I am trying to understand that perspective as well, that reflects my reality. My mother is fluent in Cree, I have listened to her growing up, speaking Cree...” (Michael) As I write this, my own memory of myself as a young child searching for arrowheads flashes through my mind. So many of the answers to our questions sit with us in our story, and forge the dynamic of our relationships with the rest of the world.

The Pre-eminence of Relationships in a Tribal Worldview

As mentioned in this dissertation, there is a Cree term, *miyo-wîcêhtowin*, which means “*having or possessing good relations*” (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 14.) My understanding of Cree cosmology is that our peoples hold at our core the notion of maintaining good relations with other entities that we share this earth and cosmos with. In conversing with all of the participants (Cree or otherwise), the importance of relationship was illustrated time and again in various contexts. For this reason, I believe that relationship constituted its own section in this discussion of worldview. People spoke about relationship in terms of personal assessment of another character: Were they trustworthy? Were they seen as giving back to the community? They also talked about relationship in terms of general connectedness with others such as mentors, cultural advisors and community members. There was also discussion of the connectedness with our environment and why that matters. Overall, the notion of living in balance and good relations appeared time and again. This all factored into how they approached research,

and further that they saw Indigenous and tribal research as a relationship-based undertaking. Here is some of what the participants said about relationship.

In terms of a worldview that valued relationships in general, people spoke about the different forms of relationship that we have with the world that give us grounding and support. Commenting on the different forms of relationship was a way of acknowledging their presence and broadening the discussion to include relationship that knew no time, and relationships that exist in which the human species is simply just one player. Cam reflected upon the timelessness of relationship with the grandparents, the ancestors and the spirit world.

But I don't feel like that was then and this is now, like when my grandfather died and heard the drum, I literally could feel him inside of me, he is not gone, he is not dead at all, he is living inside of me and when I do things, when I have to be strong, its my ancestors inside of me giving me that strength. (Cam)

Michael spoke about a worldview that acknowledges the interrelationship between people, place, language, animals and generally the environment and how they intersect with how we come to know what we know.

Because our languages comes out of place. How do I describe it? How someone lives in that natural environment will bring out language, will bring out new language. So its not just, its back to that relationship with that environment and who is having that relationship and all those factors, so to me place is key but it is only one component. (Michael)

He cautions us to remember this web of interconnections.

Further, a person's character gets taken into consideration. Were they considered generous and kind? Did they give back to their community or Indigenous people in some way? Were they trustworthy? It seemed that an individual was seen as

possessing good character if they were seen as living their life in a way that was respectful to the notion of “good relations”. In the first quote by Cam, he spoke about how he chose his supervisor for his committee, an Indigenous faculty member. In the second quote, Laara commented on the importance of living one’s life in a way that engendered trust in other people in general, but gave a specific example of why this was important in carrying out Indigenous research:

I didn't really take a course from her, I didn't know a lot about her, but I knew that there was a small cohort of faculty who had started developing at OISE and she was really one of the first people to, done a lot of background work in getting people there and supporting students over the years...(Cam)

The other thing I did too, lets say that one educator might not feel comfortable being in a circle with another, just because of past difference. I would make sure they were not in the same circle, or say well there is safety in there, it's your voice and the person knows it's your voice...so I made sure of that. They know me, the thing is that I have a good reputation and they know that I would be trustworthy in terms, to all of them.(Laara)

Commenting on relationships as researchers within the academy, this is what people had to say. On seeking counsel as to whether to enter her PhD program Kathy shared her thoughts about connecting with cultural people in her community and getting their counsel: “I had talked it over with people in my community, like traditional people who I respect and said this is what I am thinking about doing. How do you feel about it? Is this going to put me on the outs? Or should I do this?” (Kathy). Once individuals were inside the university, there were a variety of different relationships that were helpful to people. For example, Jeannine shared how the role of a Métis mentor assisted her in finding her PhD supervisor, and the importance of finding someone who was an ally to an Indigenous approach:

He had suggested that I meet the woman who ended up being my advisor, my PhD supervisor, [she] really encouraged me to come into human ecology, that she could be my supervisor, she seemed to have the philosophy and the personal attributes that I really felt comfortable with.

Michael identified the importance of Indigenous colleagues and fellow travelers in academia when he said: “They understand, they will question, they are very respectful, offer suggestions so its talked about as something as useful as opposed to giving me a pat on the head, go do that over there.” (Michael)

I sensed that relationship was important to these people that I interviewed, and it had less to do with what I heard them say than with how I felt upon interacting with them. I left each conversation with a good feeling. I once read a quote by Maya Angelou in which she says (and I paraphrase), people will not remember what you say, but they will remember how you made them feel. I left each conversation feeling as though I was speaking with a good feeling. Laara made a comment that reflects the generosity and kindness of cultural value of relationship and how to implement these values within academic practices such as research, to create space. I believe this summarizes the key message about the significance of relationship:

The relationship is very important, and so I did a lot of follow-up too. Now what I did in terms of making the space, creating the space to reflect our traditions our culture, our ways, our knowledge was before the circle, I would have a mini-feast. I prepared the food myself, whether it was bannock and stew or bannock and chili con carne.(Laara)

It just gives a feeling of miyo-wicêhtowin.

Culture, Language and Tribal Ways of Knowing

What does an Indigenous worldview that holds cultural knowledges entail? As I peruse my notes of quotations from the interviews that I have attempted to thematically group together, I can't help but think that while it is an exercise in fragmenting knowledge and it is this fragmentation of knowledge that is resisted in most Indigenous points of view. Thus I write this section with the caveat that Indigenous knowledges are holistic (thinking, feeling...). As Laara points out:

... what is Indigenous knowledge? Well if you listen to them [Elders] and put into practice what they are saying that's Indigenous and going back to your own way of thinking and recognizing the Cree way of thinking and being as Indigenous knowledge in terms of my upbringing, because I was raised in the north, I was raised on the land, I was raised in the bush. I was raised using tobacco as a sacred item, we tobacco used when we picked medicines we would leave tobacco on the earth. I knew since I was a baby, so it's like some things I learned as an adult, a lot of things I learned as a child.(Laara)

This section is about cultural knowledges, and how participants saw themselves as reclaiming and practicing those ways of knowing, and how this is reflected in their worldview and the epistemology guiding their research. It focuses on language and those knowledges that we receive from Thunderbird. When speaking about cultural knowledges, one area that kept re-emerging is the connection between how we think and how we talk.

It re-occurs to me as I write that that not only you, I, birds and fish are alive, but that tobacco, rocks, air and stars are animate, that there is life and spirit surrounding my everyday that deserves my nod, a gesture of my respect - this is about Cree knowledges. The aliveness of an entity is affirmed each time it is spoken of in Cree; this was an aha moment for me. This is about worldview. No wonder one of the first approaches to erasing a culture lays in attacking the language, as it holds such insight into the knowledges of the distinctive ways of a people. Without language affirming the

knowledge on a daily basis, it becomes easier to lose memory of those knowledges it holds. Milan Kundera, noted novelist and philosopher on cultural evolution, wrote: "The first step in liquidating a people...is to erase its memory...Before long a nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was. The world around it will forget even faster." (in Dyck, 1992, p. 132). Language is so powerful because it reminds us of who we are. In our conversation, Graham pointed out this connection:

...put Maori at the centre of the discussion and the discourse, its positive and proactive. In other word it asserts what we are about. It reflects our cultural epistemology and language, so that's where I have got a bit of difficulty with some people, they are claiming Indigenous theorizing and they have no notion of language-whatsoever, so they are not actually hooked into the deeper meanings of cultural nuances. There is a disconnection. (Graham)

Michael makes the linkage between language and worldview. While not saying that is the only linkage, he does suggest that this is one connection that cannot be overlooked when considering the ways of a culture.

I think that's, I would step back even further, I would go back in terms of looking at, again it's a western concept, worldviews. But using that concept, step back far, and the challenge with bringing out worldviews, to me one of the biggest ones is language overall.

Michael goes on to say that how one learns one's language is an important factor to consider, although of course the point is to engage with one's language however one can. What becomes evident for Indigenous researchers returning to their cultural epistemic roots is that they are saying that language matters. This commitment does not become any clearer than Kathy's comment: "I didn't want to be pulled away into that and kind of become, you know like a white thinker. I am an Anishnabe, I want to be an Anishnabe thinker". (Kathy)

In reflecting upon what it means to be an Anishnabe or an Nêhiyáw thinker or to hold an Anishnabe or Nêhiyáw worldview from a cultural knowledges perspective (and trying not to stereotype), I returned again to this notion that tribal thought tends to view a broader range of knowledges as legitimate. Therefore our (i.e. Anishnabe, Nêhiyáw) daily life as well as our academic life requires a respect for holistic knowledges that include gifts and help from spirit. The other day I was speaking with Jeannine, a friend, colleague and participant of this research about Indigenous research and cultural knowledges. She made an insightful comment when she said that when we prepare ourselves and our research by conducting a sweat or offering tobacco we are evoking the ancestors. Why then, she said, does it surprise us when they show up to help? When we evoke the ancestors, we are asking them to guide us in our learning, and search for knowledge. It just might be that the learning and the quest is not the one we identify as our central inquiry question in our academic research proposals. In reflecting on the nature of this knowledge and how it guided her in her research, Jeannine shared with me this thought during our conversation for this research:

I don't believe in coincidences, and that is what my sister said as soon as we got back to the truck to leave, she says that was no coincidence, and I said I know that was such a gift directly from the Creator, from God, because you know you put the facts together and it doesn't compute from a logical, linear way and the reason that my adopted sister was in the graveyard that day is because it was my father's birthday and I did not remember that, I didn't remember the date of his birthday...(Jeannine)

While we cannot separate this form of knowledge from values, protocols, and personal experience, it was one area that I was interested in exploring in a focused way. Did Indigenous researchers see spirit, Thunderbird, and the ancestors as a component of their worldview? How was this linked to their own cultural epistemic roots, their own

tribal paradigm? Finally, how were they beginning to talk about this in terms of this knowledge coming into their research? While the next section, that relates to “the way” or methodology speaks more specifically to the application of these knowledges within their research in the form of discussions about epistemology, this piece was about the knowledges themselves.

When I asked Graham about his perspective on cultural knowledges, I gave him the example of how I had a specific powerful dream early on in my research journey, and that I knew enough about my culture to not discard the knowledge within that dream – because from a Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin point of view, dreams matter. He answered that:

I just see that as part of Indigenous knowledge, frameworks. You need a way to write them in obviously, but part of the cultural context. I see dreams as being part of oral tradition and there is a space for all of that. Its just another tool that you can use, you can try and mediate it and say its subconscious stuff and all that, but why bother. Its how we interpret it that's important, we are the centre of this. This is our cultural knowledge and so on. Its not either/or, I think we are looking for different forms of knowledge that is equally valid than other knowledge forms. (Graham)

He went on to say that the Maori do not have the same traditional beliefs around dreams:

“Probably if I was from here, I would say that these ideas were given to me from somewhere, and they may well be, but we don't have that kind of tradition, we have dreaming in a different way, but I can accept that.” My discussion with Graham, clarified that if we are using our tribal paradigms in our research, then there needs to be space for the choices that we will *have* to make in accordance with those paradigms. If we chose to use our respective Indigenous knowledge, we must pay respect to the holistic nature of

those knowledges. This includes knowledges that come from spiritual process. It's not really an option. It seems easy, and yet...?

On a more practical level of working with knowledges sources that come from places like dreams, ceremonies, and hunting. I had a good conversation with Michael about the range of Cree knowledges. He said:

So how do I approach it, its a lot of reflection back on my time with Elders, with traditional teachers, in ceremony that is my biggest influence. I do readings on other areas and that, and talk with other people about their experiences, but I approach it more from there [ceremonies] because I want to try and come and understand it the best I can in a way that comes to reflect how we do things. I say ceremonies, because to me I don't hunt so I can't rely on that process, so another key piece for us that reflects our culture is the ceremonies. (Michael)

Relating specifically to his understanding of how knowledges that come in the form of dreams relate to the notion of aspect of our cultural life that have no time, but simply are, Cam shared: "When you dream, you are just sort of dreaming from one to another and because there is no time, you could literally go to the time you were born." In thinking about life choices and personal pathways, Kathy's comment suggests that her worldview encompasses the broader range of knowledges inherent in her culture:

And I don't completely understand why we go through those doorways, or why the universe or the spirits present those doorways, but I think that there are some of us, not all of us are medicine people, not all of us conducts sweats or raindances or sundances, some of use are educators, some of us healers, some of us are a little bit of this and a little bit of that, so I think I can accept that I am an educator. (Kathy)

Individuals spoke about spirit, intuition and the acceptance of cultural knowledges as inclusive of all of the ways we come to know. A component is that they seemed to make space for this form of knowledge and did not discount it. As Jeannine reflected on

the cultural advice given from her Cree colleague: “She said well pray about it, hold your tobacco and see what happens...” In upholding a holistic worldview, the research journey becomes meaningful in ways we cannot even imagine.

An Indigenous mindset with a Decolonizing Aim

From intuitions to critical perspective, the parameters of cultural knowledges were interpreted broadly by participants. The more I read, listened and thought about Indigenous methodologies it occurred to me that there were at least two distinctive ways of approaching Indigenous research from an Indigenous methodologies stand point. There were tribal methodologies which put a specific cultural epistemology, (e.g. Nêhiyaw Kiskêyíhtamowin) at the centre which would then give the guidance for research choices. There were also indigenous methodologies that put decolonization at the centre, largely relying upon critical theory, to guide research choices. Further, there also was a blending of those two approaches comprising an Indigenous mixed methodology approach as it were. The point is that within Indigenous research whether one privileges a western way of knowing (critical theory) or an Indigenous epistemic centering (tribal knowledges), decolonization is still going to be an aspect. At least that was what the Indigenous researchers were consistently saying.

As long as decolonization is a purpose of our education and our research, critical theory will be an allied western conceptual tool for creating change. In relationship to the Maori struggle, Graham stated: “Critical theory has become very important in the Maori struggle in the development of all of this stuff, because it created the space for us to move.” (Graham) In my talk with Graham, the purpose of a decolonizing agenda was to create space in academia, in everyday life, in society for an Indigenous perspective

without it being neglected, shunted aside, mocked or diminished. In one way or another we were all seeking just a little space to breathe. Kathy commented on a decolonizing perspective from the place of our role as educators in affirming the personal: “And even having at a structural level a validation that one of the roles of the educator is to bring validation and help widen that path for other Aboriginal people to be okay with who they are.” (Kathy)

Michael reflected on a decolonizing purpose in relationship to cultural knowledges when I asked him why he was in a PhD program. “I saw how few Indigenous faculty there are, and I saw our own ways and our own knowledges and our understandings, our own views, our ways were for the most part were neglected.”

(Michael) It was not simply about identifying and commenting on Indigenous oppressions, it was about praxis. This was illustrated in Graham’s direction to his graduate students carrying out research and his expectations around creating change. This generally summarizes the sentiments of all of the participants regarding how they saw decolonization fitting into their worldview.

It’s not just the words its actually what you do. So you will often hear me say to people, well what have you done? I will say to students when they come and talk about their thesis, okay let’s cut it in half for a start. The first half I will concede, you can do a critique and talk about the pathology of what’s gone wrong, but the second half has to be what’s going to change, on transformation (Graham)

Given our history as Indigenous people and the politics of our oppression and reclamation, I cannot imagine an Indigenous methodology, at this time, without a decolonizing aim. Cam made the point about the pervasiveness of racism that impacts Indigenous people. “It doesn’t matter how much education you have, you do not have

the same educational or the same work opportunities. People just won't hire you. It doesn't matter what you have." (Cam) While racism continues to exist, it is likely that a decolonizing aim will be a part of many Indigenous people's worldview and theoretical perspective that influences the purpose and function of their research.

Concluding thoughts on Worldview

In writing this chapter, I kept wondering why I am discussing the concept of worldview in a separate section, as I will need to be referencing this research within epistemological choices around research in the next section. It was for several reasons that I focused on an Indigenous worldview or mindset in this specific manner. Firstly, in one of my central inquiry questions, I was asking about a worldview that pertained to their cultural knowledge - how do Indigenous researchers approach cultural (metaphysical) aspects of Indigenous knowledges when making methodological research choices? Secondly, it was becoming evident that this inquiry was about centering Indigenous epistemology in research and how cultural worldviews shape Indigenous research methodologies. Finally, a third reason for discussing worldview in a broad context was to show that the participants' worldviews did not only extend to research, but was a part of their life way. Without Indigenous methodologies that allowed Indigenous researchers to carry out their research congruently with their worldview (if that was their choice), there was a gaping hole in western methodological choices for Indigenous graduate students. It was Little Bear's jagged worldviews colliding; it was Hampton's metaphorical shoe that wasn't fitting. As Indigenous graduate students, researchers and scholars we were left with trying to reconcile our worldview with research methodologies from solely a western paradigm and worldview, and increasingly I was feeling that this

was not good enough. So with tape recorder and pencil in hand, I sought to sketch out the characteristics of an Indigenous methodology from the wisdom of the Indigenous people that were cutting trail in this area.

Perspectives on Ways to Go About Indigenous Research

If you put tribal knowledges at the centre, then the idea is that you will measure all of your research choices against those knowledges. The tribal knowledges, in my case Plains Cree knowledges, offered great guidance in how to make choices in not only research, but generally, in a good way that reflects values, standards, ethics and ways. This became increasingly clear as I was talking with participants and as I was reflecting upon my own research journey. In fact, with my research once I understood that I was privileging Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihitamowin, my methodological conceptual framework began to appear and I could give form and definition to that which I had been doing (or at least attempting to do) but yet I could not name. A tribal methodological approach with a Plains Cree knowledge as its epistemic centre emerged the more I engaged with place, culture, people (a whole range of folks), and spirit; it was a conceptual approach that was born of an attempt to honour a tribal interpretation with its own social constructedness emerging from myself in relationship with my world. It was not surprising then to see that there were common perspectives about the way to go about research from each of our tribal perspectives.

In searching for knowledge, there seemed to be three distinctive phases: a) the desire to access knowledge for some purpose that fits with worldview; b) the way to go about that searching; and c) a way to interpret that knowledge so as to give it back in a

way that is purposeful, helpful and relevant to the community. Searching for knowledge is a process that all cultures have engaged in; it is neither distinctly Indigenous nor western. To me, it is born of an instinctual need much like eating. You are hungry, you find food, and you eat. In terms of research, the difference is that different ideological standpoints or cultural epistemic roots (a.k.a the values) determine how this is done. This chapter references conversations with Indigenous researchers on the instinctual process of seeking knowledge and how their cultural orientations gave them guidance and direction as to the way to seek knowledge. My tribal methodological framework mirrors many of these shared characteristics and I have presented the characteristics in a form that works for my purposes and is only one way of many possible ways to carry out research from a tribal paradigm. However, it is based on the factors that were re-iterated time and again in terms of an Indigenous methodological approach to research. These factors include: way of knowing as epistemic centering; personal commitment; ethical considerations centring around respecting and protecting the knowledges; way of gathering knowledges or methods; making sense or interpreting the knowledges from a tribal, cultural and self-locatedness; and giving back to the community. This section deals with these seven areas.

I will try not to cover ground I have already discussed such as when in the previous chapter I spoke a lot about epistemologies. I will not attempt to repeat that general point, but rather to comment on how it, and the other factors, applies specifically to research. It is important to point out my bias at this point. I believe that worldview is central to get one's head around in terms of methodology, because if you know where your epistemic grounding comes from it will guide you on how to go about the research

(ethics, methods, and so forth). The inclusion of the previous section devoted to worldview was a fairly detailed argument to reflect that point. This section is less detailed and my hope is simply to point out themes that came out of my conversations with the participants.

Tribal Epistemic Positioning (Ways of Knowing)

In an attempt to differentiate this section on ways of knowing from the more general discussion of worldview, it is my aim here to reinvigorate the idea of epistemology and its function specific in research methodologies. In relating to epistemology that underlies the methodology of phenomenology, Max van Manen makes this comment: “How can we pursue the questions of what constitutes (phenomenological) knowledge in such a way that our way of addressing this question may become an example of what the question in the questioning seeks to clarify?” (Van Manen, 2001, p. 46). I re-trace in memory my engagement with this word over the course of this project and have come to see that in many ways this entire inquiry is about epistemology – what we take as “truth” in the world, the values and beliefs around which we shape our lives, and yes what we take for knowledge. It’s not only what question we ask, but how we go about asking it. Van Manen goes on to clarify his point on epistemology in phenomenology research methodology by saying that: “...the question of knowledge always refers us back to our world, to who we are...it is what stands iconically behind the words, the speaking and the language” (Van Manen 2001, p. 46).

My struggle throughout this entire research has been about responding to a simple question: What knowledge are you honouring in your inquiry, Maggie? How are you doing that, and why? This academic sojourn has been a testament to those questions with

all its interpersonal twists and entanglements. I think I have finally figured out that as an Indigenous scholar, one has to be sufficiently decolonized to put tribal knowledges at the centre of one's research. Further, I can have a tribal methodology with a Plains Cree epistemology at the centre in a way that can guide my research in a meaningful way. At this point this does not seem like a mighty revelation yet it certainly has taken time, effort, thought, talking, and energy (and I can't lie some tears). What I know for sure is that this only occurred to me after having spent time with many people including the participants in this research who were saying in one way or another that they either had or were intending to put their respective cultural knowledges at the centre, that they are honouring a tribal epistemic positioning. What did they mean and how did having an Indigenous epistemic centering affect their decisions or planning around research? From my interpretation this is what they seemed to be saying.

In terms of positioning tribal knowledge at the center of Indigenous methodologies, Kathy stated:

I think to me the big question to Indigenous methodology is and I think what's difficult about my dissertation topic, is that on one hand we have to acknowledge that work that exists out there. ... But also we have to find ways to think Anishnabe or think whoever we are and ...to take the risk that that entails to do that and that's really scary." (Kathy)

What Kathy seems to be expressing in this point is that as Indigenous researchers within the academy, we are essentially bringing in knowledges that are still fairly new here.

While we need to honour those who have gone before us, we also are in a position where we need to identify how we bring in our tribal knowledges. It is not so much an issue of engaging with cultural knowledges – many of us are grounded in our respective cultural epistemologies, rather it is a question of how we apply these knowings within an alien

context of the university and within a process, like western research, which poses all sorts of on-going structural risks (e.g. extractiveness) and which demand concessions.

Given the complexities associated with tribal epistemologies in research still we must persist. What does it mean to have a tribal epistemology? From a Maori perspective Graham says: “put Maori at the centre of the discussion and the discourse, it’s positive and proactive. In other words it asserts what we are about.” (Graham) In his dissertation he used an eclectic methodology that integrated critical theory with a Maori positioning, but what did this mean in practice?

“... let me just shift it forward a bit and then say that, so that one part that’s been my sort of academic pursuit of my own research if you like, but also Kaupapa Maori theory is about practice. Its not just the words its actually what you do. So you will often hear me say to people, well what have you done? I will say to students when they come and talk about their thesis, okay lets cut it in half for a start. The first half I will concede, you can do a critique and talk about the pathology of what’s gone wrong, but the second half has to be what’s going to change, on transformation. (Graham)

What this suggests is that there are ways to incorporate tribal epistemologies with a range of theoretical perspectives and methods. The praxis element of Kaupapa Maori research is aided by the theoretical guidance of critical theory which is about social transformation. In this way, an Indigenous researcher has the ability to maintain a tribal epistemic basis even while incorporating tools derived from western epistemologies. This is an important point, as Indigenous methodology within the academy is only recently coming into its own as a systematic research approach. As such it may be that an Indigenous researcher who wants to maintain a tribal way of knowing in their methodology (and can do that) can borrow theoretical tools and methods from western approaches. The key here is to ensure that the integration of the western methodological

tools can pass muster with the knowledges (values, worldview, ethics) of the respective worldview. Jeannine shares her experience of how she saw her methodological choices as integrating an Indigenous worldview but that she used grounded theory as a way of assisting her in interpreting the data. She provided an example of how her tribal epistemology kept her grounded:

“The way that the relationships developed with the participants, as well as the talking circle members, I say it in my survey, but I’ll say it to you verbally as well as that, another thing that I learned that is very different from western approaches is that I was always having a relationship with these people” (Jeannine)

What people seem to be saying is that if the knowledges are at the core, then folks had a way of assessing whether their subsequent research decisions were meeting the expectations of their cultural epistemic roots. Michael succinctly summarized this point when he said: “For the most part I am trying to make it so that all of those ways are going to be the primary, if not the way of informing my research, ... I don’t know the right words, but our own ways or our own cultural knowings is going to be the core” . (Michael)

My resounding concluding remarks about ways of knowing or epistemologies are that if a researcher keeps their tribal knowing at the core, all else should fall into place. The recommendation then is to commit to putting at the core, hub, heart of one’s research, one’s tribal way of knowing. What this looks like in practice – the systems, attitudes, and readiness – for this approach is hard to foresee given that Indigenous epistemologies bring with them a knowledge paradigm that in many ways contests western thought. Nonetheless, for a tribal researcher putting tribal knowledges at the centre couldn’t hurt (lets hope), for my sense is that we only create space by taking space.

So, epistemology??? I guess I can only say it is an on-going inquiry for me as to how it matters within tribal methodologies, but suffice to say it matters.

Indigenous theory involving a Decolonizing Aim

Here is a synopsis of what I believe about the role of theory in research. I believe that theory is different from epistemology in that epistemology is about what knowledge we privilege and what we hold true about how knowledge is constructed and what it entails. My understanding of theory on the other hand is deeply connected to a political positioning that works in conjunction with one's epistemological understanding. In a presentation given by Dr. Graham Smith, he defined Indigenous theory as having the following characteristics: it is located within a culturally contextual site; it is born of an organic process involving the community; the theorist has an understanding of the cultural epistemic foundations of the Indigenous knowledge; it focuses on change; though not universal, it is portable to other sites; it is flexible; it engages with other theoretical positioning (it is not an isolationist theory); it is critical; it is workable for a variety of sites of struggle; and it is user-friendly, people can understand what the theorist is talking about (Smith 2005, p.10).

In conceptualizing my own tribal methodology approach, I have encapsulated my theoretical positioning within epistemology for reasons explained in my methodology chapter. However, were I to shine a light on theory, in and of itself, my stance in relationship to this work is that I value forms of knowledge that are holistic and that this knowledge that I am generating must hold within it a commitment to praxis and social justice for Indigenous people. I have attempted to apply this theoretical lens throughout my research, and this has influenced the questions I have asked, the people I have spoke

with, and the literature I have reviewed. Finally, it had a great influence on what aspects of the conversations I have chosen to privilege (because as researchers we do this all the time when we are typing away at our desks writing up what we think the world should know about our endeavours). So what did the participants have to say about theory? Well, except for Graham they did not speak as much about the role of theory, as they did about how they saw a decolonizing objective being central to their research. In my interpretation this was both about epistemology (in terms of the value of reciprocity), but largely it was about a theoretical positioning bound in a critical theorist approach.

The participants saw a decolonizing aim as being about creating space for an Indigenous way of knowing. In this section, I want to illustrate the different ways in which people were referencing the characteristics of an Indigenous theoretical approach as identified by Graham Smith. To start, Cam shares the organic process of critical self-reflection. While he says that it becomes frustrating at times, is it an integral part of how he interacts with the world. At some point, critical inquiry seems to become innate and inevitably becomes a theoretical positioning in scholastic work.

I find now that I can't read the newspaper, I just sort of skim through I don't want to see because my mind just deconstructs everything very quickly and I just, its frustrating. Or talking about movies,... I just deconstruct everything, my mind is less, I wouldn't say its decolonized, but it's certainly a lot less colonized than it was. I don't know?

Michael talks about using an Indigenous theory as part of methodology which can apply to differing sites of struggle. For theory to work, it needs to be transferable, not universal, but transferable to other sites as Graham Smith indicates. Michael makes this point about Indigenous theory and transferability:

So to me its fairly new, with that said, the important distinctive ways we are approaching research, some we have talked about. The way that we are coming to understand what we have done before, or done in our own cultural context and taken what we can, the core of that, to adapt it into a different context of being academic researchers. (Michael)

Kathy talks about her transformative vision of Indigenous institutions and the role of

Indigenous methodologies and theorizing in attaining that vision:

I think that ultimately by doing this Phd and by doing the dissertations that we are doing we will turn our backs on the academy and that we will fostering out of the frustrations, that we feel, that we will start fostering Indigenous institutions that are based on Indigenous philosophies and Indigenous methodologies where students can actually grow and experiment and explore Indigenous methodologies. (Kathy)

Graham concludes by stressing praxis:

Partly that but I was working politically, ... something like twelve years from the beginning of getting involved with the language, getting political, challenging government on race issues, doing something else in another site, so multiple sites of transformation that were actual projects. That's is incorporated in all of this, doing the work, you have to do that if you are in the theory business. (Graham)

There is an Indigenous theoretical point of view that needs to be identified within our methodological framework. In many ways, this is a place where the western academy best understands what we are saying. They do not all necessarily agree with us, but it's a discourse within a language both cultures are familiar with. It is here where we are able to access some of our strongest allies (Guevera, Gramsci, Fannon, ...). Being able to articulate an Indigenous theoretical positioning within our tribal or Indigenous methodologies is a must, because it is a powerful tool to make the change that we seek if our research is to have meaning for us and our communities.

Inward Knowing and Personal Work in Indigenous and Tribal Methodologies

Plains Cree epistemic knowledges place great value place on knowledge deriving from experience and personal responsibility as it contributes to good relationships with others by identifying one's purpose and their motivations behind actions. From the interviews that I conducted it seemed that these were common values (which are not surprising since the majority of people I interviewed were of Cree ancestry). This section focuses on the characteristics of an Indigenous methodological approach to research which I interpret as falling into the category of personal commitments arising from the values of cultural knowledges or cultural epistemic roots. The principles emerging from the research that I focus on here all require a personal openness to holistic knowledges (specifically those coming from the sacred, Thunderbird, universe) and personal responsibility around that knowledge. In one way or another, the participants discussed the following five principles into the planning or writing of the research as part of their research methodology. While I have spoken about these points earlier in a more general way, the purpose here is to show ways to apply them to a research design.

Self-location or the Prologue in Methodology

Within Indigenous scholarship, which mirrors the practice in communities, one introduces not only their name but their tribal affiliations. This is a form of respect and allows other members of the group to place the speaker – which makes sense when a cultural value centres on relationship, as it is always wise to know an individual's connections. Within research methodology, self-location has become an established component of an Indigenous research methodological approach. This has been

established through writings such as Cam Willet and Kathy Abosolon's work in *Putting Ourselves Forward* (Absolon & Willett, 2005). In speaking about her research, Laara expresses the importance of self-location as a component of her methodology. In locating herself she says: "I was raised in northern Manitoba not on the reserve...I was Cree with Scottish and German ancestry. For me, it's always important to acknowledge those, that part of who I am". (Laara) In Graham Smith's dissertation he wrote an extensive *Prologue* in which he shares who is and where he comes from as a Maori person. In speaking about the *Prologue* he says,

That's right. This is me and I am being truthful in laying out what shapes me and why, my vices and so on are shaped in particular ways because of the incidences in my life, the things that I have experienced. In a sense I am giving it authenticity, because I am saying that I have experience here that is also useful to be counted in this thesis and that's what is important.(Graham)

Within scholarly work using an Indigenous methodology, the *Prologue* has become a place for researchers to put themselves forward right at the beginning. I find the *Prologue* form useful, because it offers researchers, who use an Indigenous approach, space to get self-locating work done. By doing this work upfront, the writing of the research shifts from that of an 'objective accounting' to one where we state our tribal affiliation and influences, and how that will guide our research choices. It is the first part of putting a tribal epistemology at the center, which in my case says that we must acknowledge our own personal stories and how we have come to see the world. Furthermore it is a form of paying due respect to all our relations, a point that cannot be understated.

The Purpose Statement as a component of tribal and/or Indigenous methodologies.

Another aspect that is becoming increasingly common in research following Indigenous methodologies is the ability to identify one's purpose as it relates to academia and as it relates on a deeper personal level. Dr. Eber Hampton's piece on *Memory Comes before Knowledge* (Hampton, 1995) always comes to mind when I think about purpose within an Indigenous research context. In that work, he asks us – what is your motivation and how is that purpose found in your own story? In picking her research topic, Jeannine was employing Indigenous thinking (and methodology) before coming to her topic. She spoke to me of how she struggled with finding the right topic for her research and finally found a topic and purpose in examining the experiences of Indigenous adoptees, an experience she shared. She said, "...Then I decided not to do the topic anymore, and I was struggling to find a topic" and her subsequent decision, "You should be doing this research on adoption, that is who you are, that is your story and that is what you should be contributing, so it was these sort of messages coming to me" (Jeannine). Cam reflected on his purpose for doing PhD research in general and how it was connected to his memory and past "Is it about community for me? I guess but it seems more personal, I was thinking about, as you were talking, and remembering my entire life experience in education, ..." (Cam). As I spoke with everyone, and reflected upon my own purpose, it became evident that the Indigenous research that we were conducting was all about trying to help out. Michael summarizes this point and its connection back to purpose,

I am doing this because we can't all live in teepees forever, I don't mean to be so mean but our realities have changed, and they are going to continue to change... We never had social workers before in our history, but they are here now and I don't think they are going away, so if they are not going away, how do I try make it so that the work you do relates to us as best a possible. (Michael)

Thus, the purpose statement in dissertation is a central part of an Indigenous or tribal methodological approach and seems to require an extended *Purpose Statement* within the introduction of the research. The central questions guiding an Indigenous purpose statement seem to be: Why does this matter to your community? Why does this matter to you? Hopefully there will be congruency between the two – as it seems Indigenous research, at least in the social sciences, tends to be up close and personal for many Indigenous researchers.

Intertwined with self-location and purpose, is the value placed upon experience as a central form of knowledge. This comes into research in a variety of ways. Kathy expressed this in terms of our central mission in life being to work toward decolonizing ourselves, and to honour all of who we are. She cautions of the difficulty of staying true to this value within western institutions. She says,

I didn't want to be seen that I am going down this path that's not the path that we are supposed to be going down in coming back to who we are, which is one of our core missions in decolonizing and in our life is to figure out who are we, and in order to do that you are not going to find that out in a university, in the absence of your peers and your culture.

The message here, I think, is that part of a tribal or Indigenous methodological approach means being aware of your touchstones – be that family, culture, community, place... The reasoning seems to be that if you are aware of these touchstones, they will assist in keeping you on-track with your purpose. For my own experience, I wrote two years worth of journals throughout this research. They were more than research field notes, they were journal of my struggles, dreams, fears, hopes. From a snippet of my 2005 Journal – *Research Notes and Other Things* – I observe:

I am taking Cree, it is my first class today. Walking into the First Nations University there were Indians everywhere with shiny hair flying as both instructors and students race down the hall to class. The instructor is Cree, Plains Cree, he was raised with the language, says he has been teaching here forever. This class is full of young students, not just Indigenous but of a variety of colors and cultural offerings. Though I am comforted as the Instructor reads off the class list – Tootoosis, Starblanket, Cyr – these are names I know. These are the Crees. The Instructor asks who is Cree, we put up our hands. He asks why we do not know our language. He points to me. I say adopted. He nods. It haunts me already. (Thursday, September 7, 2005)

My own experience attests to a seemingly common phenomenon that when we make a personal commitment to our research in a formal way through our methodology (we include it as relevant), then our research moves beyond being a project to an experience. The interpersonal writing, much of which does not show up in this dissertation, but which is charted in my journal (along with family dinners, vibrant dreams, road trip commentaries, and my on and off relationship with french fries and the gym) makes sense of the breadth of my own self-learning as I made my way through this research. It is that which is charted in the journal, not the dissertation that is most deeply *personally* meaningful and enduring. So from a methodology point of view, it seems a good idea to capture in some form these knowings.

Venerating and Protecting Sacred Knowledges

The inclusion of personal engagement with the research is about holistic knowledges. This is likely the one area that we must take the most care with in terms of applying a tribal methodology. There are a couple of factors that need clarification prior to presenting what other participants stated about sacred knowledges. First off, as a Plains Cree woman who is using a tribal methodology with a Plains Cree epistemic

centering, I must acknowledge sacred knowledges – what I have come to call Thunderbird knowledges. This implies a belief that there is mystery in the world, that there is a Creator that assists us, that the sacred lives in the relationships in this world including the cosmos. For me the sacred is about being connected and gaining assistance from spirit so I can be a better, kinder person. Sacred knowledges are intuitive not rational, and as mentioned previously they tend to contest western empiricism. That being said, the sacred is a part of Plains Cree knowledges, and I cannot just hive it off and say that it is too uncomfortable to deal with inside the academy. However, I have a responsibility to protect these knowledges as even the most open minded individual, if steeped in western rationalism, can find a way to mock them. What this boils down to for me, is to be really clear about my ability to protect the knowledges. As mentioned previously, for this dissertation I have used teachings on the sacred which Cree Elders have shared and allowed to be published in existing works. They have made this decision for me, and thus I was not in a place where I had to determine which teaching to include and which not to include – I am not there yet.

I have included some of my own personal experiences that I know were about Thunderbird guiding me. I shared this with people within the academy, and had an incident of it not being fully understood. This was a good teaching for me as it made me much more cautious about how and with whom I share personal, sacred knowledges. On the other hand, I have been fortunate to have a committee with whom I was able to express my personal journey and this has been important, and I believe has implications for supervisors of Indigenous graduate students. My point is that when one accepts the holistic nature of a tribal methodology, the learning becomes deeper, spirit enters and we

need to take care. In these instances, as mentioned earlier, it is critical to know where your grounding comes from because you may need to go home, metaphorically or literally.

So what did the other researchers say about the spiritual world that we inhabit and how does it manifest itself in a personal way in their research. Or more specifically how do we prepare personally to give a nod to Thunderbird when engaging in our research? It seems that there was no one way, but what was consistent is that individuals found portals to allow this knowledge to come through.

In Jeannine's research story, she shared with me that she reached a point where she felt the intuitive need to go home to complete her research. She had hit a wall so to speak. In returning to Manitoba to visit the place where she was raised, Jeannine shared the advice a friend gave her: "She said well pray about it, hold your tobacco and see what happens, and I think your sister needs to go with you." Did Jeannine know that she would need to go home at the start of her journey? Did she incorporate this into her methodology at the beginning? No, but she did ask for assistance from spirit when she began her journey by engaging in a sweat and offering tobacco. As a result the help came to her when she needed it, and she ended up at home visiting the graveyard where her adopted parents lie.

Laara commented on the times that she felt really at a loss as to how to proceed and she would call upon spirit, and an inner energy to see her through. "When you talk about how you work with intuition, because there were many times when I would feel stuck, I would stop then I would smudge, I would pray and then I would get an energy flow. I even smudged my computer." (Laara) When people talked about Thunderbird

coming into their research, it was in relationship to times when they needed grounding, they needed energy, they needed an openness to new knowledges; it was largely about an inward knowing. In this sense it was about personal preparedness and the worldview aspect of methodology, as opposed to the gathering of knowledges in an outward way, (e.g. this was not about people interviewing bears or talking with animal spirits as some individuals who wish to mock Indigenous knowledges may attempt to say). It is about acknowledging a spiritual world and making it explicit that this was a part of their research methodology.

When speaking about this form of knowledge, people also spoke of the need to take care when talking about this form of knowledge in the academy. For example Michael said that, "...so if I am going to write about aspects of the ceremony or incorporate them into teaching and learning, then I worry about that influence and the political ramifications and all those things, so I am really cautious." (Michael) This was a common concern among many of the people over the past two years who I have spoken with about Indigenous methodologies. Nonetheless, we still have to find a way to honor this knowledge, because as I mentioned at the beginning we cannot simply choose to ignore it because it doesn't fit western tastes or comfort, and that's the rub. Which leads us into another certain component of Indigenous methodology – ethics.

Ethical Considerations

Arguably a thesis on Ethical considerations of tribal and/or Indigenous methodologies is much needed to explore the intricate dance between tribal ethics and university ethical procedures in relationship to research. As mentioned earlier, for me tribal ethics is closely entwined with values, most specifically it is about doing respectful

research. In recognition of the disrespectful manner in which universities have historically approached research within Indigenous communities, there have been efforts to rectify this situation. To this end, the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS) in 1998 made the recommendation that there needed to be more development of policy on ethical conduct within Aboriginal Research. This policy would impact those receiving funding through CIHR, NSERC, and SSHRC. As a result, an Aboriginal Ethics Working Group has been charged with the task of developing guidelines for research with Aboriginal peoples. The CIHR ethics office has recently released, in draft form, for consultation the CIHR *Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples*. Among other items, this document discusses ethical space, sacred knowledges, community jurisdiction and approval, partnering of research initiatives, guidelines around individual and collective consent, confidentiality, protection of cultural knowledges, benefit to the community, capacity development, cultural protocol, data collection (including management and storage), and dissemination of the results (CHIRC, 2005). While this document requires more thorough consultation by Indigenous researchers, scholars, graduate student and community members and leadership, it is moving in the right direction. At its most primal, it is about sitting academic institutions (as it is an institutional issue) down and giving them a lesson in respect.

This topic area deserves a dissertation itself, and my conversations with participants did not focus specifically on the ethics of research, yet on the other hand it was all about ethics. In my own experience, the way ethics is dealt with in research deviates from the way I understand ethics from a tribal perspective. Within universities,

ethics is segregated and set apart as the formal process one must go through to get approval to go on with one's human subject research. To me this is about the protecting individuals yes, but it is also about liability and protecting the university. This is fine, I have no qualms here. However, it seems to me that given the university ethics process (and this relates to the dilemma of fragmentation), we tend to think about ethics when we are about to submit our ethical review form, and once we have received approval from the university, there is a sense that we are okay now. From a tribal standpoint, my perspective is that this ethics process is only one small part of our larger, holistic ethical commitment and practice of Indigenous research. How is it that the university, at this present time with barely a scant representation from the Indigenous community on ethics boards, gives us ethical approval for doing our work in a way that meets tribal ethics? I mean most respectfully - how would *they* know? Thus I believe the new Aboriginal Guidelines should be giving us insight and guidance into how we meet tribal ethics, and in the process accommodate the university's ethical needs, as opposed to how do we meet the university's ethical needs and accommodate tribal ethics. My hope is that at the end of the day, if we are following a tribal epistemology with a sense of the values, ethics, and protocols we will know what we need to do ethically from our cultural perspective. The task then is trying to accommodate the university. The difficulty here is that this is not just an issue that centres *only* on individual research responsibility, it is a structural issue that needs to be dealt at an institutional level. This is an institutional predicament; it's a worldview kind of thing. In my conversations with the participants, they spoke to their understanding of tribal ethics and the challenge of serving two masters.

In the beginning of the *Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples*, under the section on ethical space, there is a significant quote that nicely frames the discussion that I had with the individuals I interviewed. While we did not refer to our thoughts on ethical research as creating ethical space, essentially this is what people were talking about. In an effort to define the term, here is the quote on *ethical space*:

Ethical space includes a series of stages of dialogue beginning from the conversations prior to the design of the research, through to the dissemination of results and perhaps even after. The fundamental requirement of the establishment of an ethical space is the ongoing affirmation of this space, a continual questioning of "is this ethical?" The affirmation of this space requires dialogue about intentions, values and assumptions throughout the research process. It offers a valuable means of negotiating norms and understandings and bridging gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies. (CHIRC, 2005, p.12)

So what were some of the participant's reflections upon ethical researching practices that created an ethical space? They ranged from a discussion on the larger values of ethical researching to the practicalities of creating an ethical space. It seemed that people focused on ethics in terms of guardianship of tribal knowledges, maintaining respectful relationships with community, and honouring and protecting one's personal integrity in relationship to the previous two concerns of protecting knowledges and respecting relationships.

On ensuring an on-going relationship with community, and ensuring that people were okay with the research at the pre-research, research, and post-research phase,

Michael had this to say:

So all I can say is that people have to be connected, be part of the community, they have to be prepared to go through that evolving process of regular going back, reviewing and talking and seeing about what can I put in here, what do you think or this is what I

done or prepared for being judged by what you have written and what you have done. (Michael)

Jeannine spoke about the dual accountability relationship she had with the Indigenous community and the university. Having worked in child welfare, the notion of dual accountability and serving two masters was not a new phenomenon to Jeannine. On following a tribal ethic that she describes as instinctive, Jeannine spoke of how she saw her research unfolding.

My intuitive self was saying you need to do things in a good way, you need to have the guidance of Elders, you need to have a community advisory committee that is going to work with you on this and make sure you don't mess up on protocols and approaches and you need to satisfy this university. (Jeannine)

People seemed to be conscious and aware of the two ethics processes, and I would argue that their struggle was how to meet the needs of the university while keeping their tribal perspective as the center, as opposed to centering western ethics.

In terms of the practicalities of ethics – where the rubber hits the road – this is what individuals had to say about issues of confidentiality. In Laara's research, she made this comment about confidentiality:

I used pseudonyms to cover their identity, to protect their identity, and also I never named the schools they were at, I would say school or high school, I actually would just put school and so I was careful in their telling of the story that somebody will not be able to say well that is so and so. (Laara)

Laara evoked the confidentiality provision, however, she indicated that it was difficult given that Indigenous teachers form a small community. Michael commented on confidentiality on a theoretical level as it relates to Cree culture. He said:

One is the confidentiality, when I think that is really quite a foreign term, cause if you think if you're, my understanding of our ways again this back to relationship, everything is about a relationship with others, and respecting and honouring that relationship, or those relationships. So how do you be relationship and respect it and honour it and try to maintain confidentiality, how do you be self-reflective, how do incorporate that, how do you have that aspect be part of you and still have to say that confidentiality and I mean you are not going to talk about where all of this coming from. (Michael)

This has been a reoccurring theme throughout my formal and informal discussions around confidentiality within Indigenous research. In my own case, I was given the choice to allow people to let their names stand (through the UVic ethics process).

Jeannine's experience was different. In relationship to confidentiality she said,

having hind sight and all that I would probably do it differently today, I really admired for example some of the descriptions that you used in your information letter, how you were able to somehow, for example keep the real names of people. That was not a possibility for me (Jeannine)

In my study, I gave participants the opportunity to review and approve the final transcripts and the condensed interviews. I then asked them if they would like to let their names be attributed. It was a resounding yes. For my project, given the individuals I interviewed who are respected Indigenous scholars in the Canadian academic Indigenous community (and are internationally known), it would have been difficult to keep their identity under wraps – especially with all the self-locating we do! Further, my sense was that people wanted to have their name stand, because it was an ethical point for them as a means of standing behind what they say and being accountable to the community. This is only my pre-supposition, but that was the sense I got.

On protecting knowledges, Graham made a strong point that connects purpose with ethics. On bringing in sacred knowledges to the academy, he said:

There is risk, but what I say to my students is this, there are risks and you have to question why you are bringing it in. There is some Indigenous knowledge which is out there, which is public domain in a sense, in our own communities. But there is some knowledge which is regarded as being sacred or restricted, and if its going to cause angst to other if that knowledge is here, then it shouldn't be here... You have to make some decisions as well, take some responsibility about guardianship and why would you put it into the institution, you are just opening it and making it vulnerable. (Graham)

Kathy articulates that it is critical to assess how much cultural knowledge the academy can handle and be ready to draw the line so as to protect the knowledges and our communities. In terms of methodology, she provides a specific example:

if I had said I am doing my PhD and my methodology is my dreams, and in this period of time I am going to go on a fast every year and that fast, is I am going to either, I wouldn't be able to bring a recorder or paper on the fast, but after that I did that or if I had somebody come and visit me and talk to me about my fast... I wouldn't propose it as a methodology within a mainstream setting, because I don't want them to have the power to say that that's not research. (Kathy)

How do we take care here, and how do we exercise our personal agency in maintaining guardianship of the knowledge. I think each one of us has different ways according to the protocols in our community. I know much of Cree knowledge is to be kept sacred, we don't share that much outside of a cultural, oral perspective. However, there has been some information about Cree culture that has been shared and published. I have largely relied upon this. The knowledge that has come to me in a personal way, I have tried to keep private, because as I don't know how much to share at this point and I would rather acknowledge that limitation than put cultural knowledges at risk.

When people were talking to me about the ethical aspects of research, they evoked in me a sense of individuals with deep respect for relationship and all the relations. These values were grounded in their cultural ways of knowing and were kept up close through their own personal integrity as Indigenous people and scholars. Kathy summarizes this point succinctly around the relationship between respect and ethics: “I wouldn’t compromise my integrity or my self-respect as an Anishnabe person to get something that is from an institution, . . . no I don’t have it [e.g. doctorate] and this is why because they wanted me to become this and this is who I am.” (Kathy)

A Commentary on Research Methods Indigenous Style

I understand the methods of research to be one part of a researcher’s overall methodology. It is the ability to align one’s methods with a particular way of knowing (e.g. Cree knowledges). When it comes to Indigenous research methods there seems to be a continuum of ways in which to access information. This continuum stems from inward information that is received from personal, internal experiences that guide our research (e.g. dreams, intuitions), and research that comes to us from outward places and the methods that we use to capture this type of research (e.g. through storytelling, research circles, and talks and conversations). From talking to participants (and reading the rich sources of literature from Indigenous researchers), there is a unique approach to Indigenous methods that are based upon cultural knowledges. While it remains contentious as to what constitutes knowledge (e.g. is it only outward knowledge?) and thus what constitutes ‘appropriate’ research methods (e.g. interviews, focus groups), it is my stance that knowledge comes from a variety of places and likely the more cultural

forms of knowledge will be inclusive of inward knowings that come from ceremonies, dreams, and fasting. It is here where methods meet the sacred, and what is shared needs to be protected. Because methods (be it cultural or otherwise) are concrete, they are vulnerable to being misunderstood or mocked. With this in mind, the people that I interviewed were clear about how much of their methods they were willing to share, and in this instance it was helpful that I had interviewed folks who knew the perils of introducing this form of knowledge, and could regulate and caution. With that proviso, this section is a brief overview of what the participants in this research had to say about methods, the specific ways in which they went about gathering research.

On the significance of inward knowledges as a part of research methods, Kathy had this to say,

I already know what Indigenous methodologies, not in an arrogant way, but some of the methodologies that we need to be doing and that's what we will hear people saying over and over again, in my research in your research, we will hear people say that our methodologies exists in our dreams, in our fast that we traditionally knew that the portal, the doorway, how to get knowledge and that was brought to the people by sharing, by community forums, by sitting in circles and by engaging in ceremony. (Kathy)

Cultural knowledges, the inward knowing, flows naturally if one is coming from a cultural epistemic positioning. In capturing this form of personal knowings (whether to be used specifically in the dissertation or not), I used a journal; however, other options exist. For example, Jeannine used a portfolio to capture her feelings, intuitions and reflections on the process. She said, "I used a portfolio and chronicled the journey of the PhD by using photos and snippets from my journal and all sort of different collections of my stuff." This was a place for her to capture some of her most sacred reflections.

While we need to protect these types of knowledge, Graham is clear that there should be no need to justify them. For example, dreams are a central part of cultural ways of knowing of the Plains Cree – why would I need to ever justify that to western academy? This is what Graham said in terms of this notion:

I just see that as part of Indigenous knowledge, frameworks. You need a way to write them in obviously, but part of the cultural context. I see dreams as being part of oral tradition and there is a space for all of that. It's just another tool that you can use, you can try and mediate it and say its subconscious stuff and all that, but why bother. It's how we interpret it that's important, we are the centre of this. (Graham)

So how do we speak of inward knowing in our research, and how do we begin to see it as a valid process of our coming to know? Michael talks about the use of dream knowledges:

Lets say I dream about a (Cree word) smoke lodge and maybe I will dream about a particular aspect of a smoke lodge, the other may say, you have to go to the smoke lodge. The dream in and of itself has informed me, but the knowledge process is just more than me having that dream, it is more than me taking that dream and talking with an Elder about it, it includes that process of doing whatever I have to do for that dream to become reality. (Michael)

He goes on to say, that he is careful how much he shares, but in our conversation – Cree to Cree – it made perfect sense how dreams would manifest as a form of knowledge as that had been part of my journey. It is quite likely that this form of knowledge mattered to Non-Indigenous researchers; however, the difference was that Indigenous researchers were saying that these teachings counted, thereby legitimizing a more inclusive knowledge center.

Participants identified several distinctive means of gathering outward knowledges that aligned more closely with tribal knowledges. They spoke about engaging in

conversation and talks with people, that through this open structure there was an opportunity for people to share their stories. In terms of outward knowledges, it seemed that people were interested in the stories of others and how the teachings could be found there. Another form of gathering outward knowledges was through research or sharing circles. Laara had this to say about differentiating an Indigenous research circle from a focus group:

So when I was doing the circles, when you ask about the quality difference from the focus group, is that everybody gets a chance for input, everybody has that air time, they can take as long as they want, and I was prepared to be there for a good one, two, three, five hours. (Laara)

The presentation of these stories was another issue in determining how to most adequately reflect the voices and stories of those who shared.

On some of the pragmatics of research I had conversations with people about how they were deciding (or had decided) on who they were going to include in their research.

With respect to choosing participants, Michael made this comment about the particular Indigenous nature of research 'sampling',

I was thinking about the number of interviews to do that won't get overwhelming. I am also thinking that its people I have a relationship with, people I know. For me, talking about Indigenous methodologies, that's important, to know, or to have connection to them some way. All the people I am interviewing, I have either meet, or have some kind of relationship with them. (Michael)

The relationship-based approach to research manifested itself in a special way when it came to selecting people for their research. Earlier, I included a quote by Laara which talked about the importance of trust, and that this was engendered between her and her participants because people knew her and she had a good reputation. Relationship was a central theme that re-emerged and had particular relevance in discussion of methods,

because it was here where people began to make contact with their community and it was here that people needed to have that relationship in place to offset the mistrust of research within the communities. In so many ways, social work practice and research shared a mutual history of untrustworthy conduct in communities. That we were Indigenous researchers (or social workers) was not necessarily going to be enough (though it helped). We had to show that we were approaching this work differently.

In terms of protocol in gathering knowledges, several people of Cree ancestry spoke to the importance of engaging in this interchange in a good way. Michael said, "If an Elder, some of these Elders, I may not just have to approach them with a tobacco cloth, but I may have to approach with a pipe and offering that way..." (Michael). In a similar fashion Laara said,

So those research methodologies that can include methods like the sharing circles for data collection were those that I was most interested in. I thought of the practices that were already evident like one on one interviews, and working with our medicines, such as tobacco. (Laara)

Jeannine gave people a heads up about the use of technology,

I made my apologies for using the technology, but they were very kind and understanding, somehow you have to capture everything that we say, so we are okay with you using the tape recorder. You just do what you need to do to get this information out there and we will work with you in that way. (Jeannine)

Protocols, offerings and giving people a heads-up were about respectfulness and a way of ensuring that the research would be put to use in a way that does not cause harm or create bad feelings. Having consideration of how, given the cultural context, a researcher will respect cultural protocol and inform people of the process is central. This consideration is also important in dealing with how informed consent is going to be dealt with.

Overall, what people seemed to be saying is to make sure that the methods align with the cultural epistemologies and be sure that they are following protocol so as to be done in a good way. The methods are not new – sharing circles, conversations – however; they demand congruency with one’s epistemology, so care needs to be taken in choosing the methods. It is important to point out, that if one is going to mix and match research methodologies (e.g. Indigenous with PAR), it is important to have thorough consideration about methods and to inquire what are you doing and why?

Making Meaning: Indigenous & Tribal Interpretations

In beginning this section, I am reminded of a seminal quote by Dr. Betty Bastien.

She states:

As an educator and researcher, I believe that the time has come to break the cycle of dependency, and to begin research from within the tribal paradigms of indigenous cultures. Research must be designed to explore solutions to problems from within the tribal interpretation. (1999, p.80)

She goes on to say, “Akaaotsisitapi’taopi – to be cognizant and to discern tribal connections, our sacred science, and thus to connect them once again experientially to their ways of knowing” (Bastien, 1999, p.80). She asserts that returning to our tribal core will snap the line of colonialist dependency upon western empiricism and disenfranchise the colonial project. She calls for Indigenous people to engage in an epistemological reckoning, to open ourselves to the full cosmological ontology and to the breadth and sophistication of the conceptual mappings flowing from our tribal knowings. I wonder, as result of colonialism, if we, Indigenous people, have we found ourselves in a politically co-dependent relationship with settler society, and if so, how do we effectively

detach? Further how do we begin to interpret our world, knowledge, solutions from a tribal paradigm if we are enmeshed in a co-dependent relationship with the oppressor?

My sense from Bastien, and others, is that we have to find ways to go back to the core of our values (be they tribal or otherwise) of what is responsible, respectful and kind – and that which is ours not someone else's. While we work toward this end, I do want to acknowledge the movements we, as Indigenous people, have been making toward re-framing our relationship with the oppressor, I know it's not as easy as one day we wake-up and we are colonially detached and fully tribal, it's way more fluid and modestly incremental with "strategic concessions" all over the place – but we are making headway. After all even on a purely pragmatic, psychological level, co-dependency is one wicked little web to disentangle from. So given the need to center, privilege and honour tribal paradigms what does this mean in research practice?

In their writing on anti-oppressive research, Potts and Brown had this to say about the connection between conceptual frameworks and the interpretation of findings in research. "We carry our framework, which is not inherently good or bad, around with us and it is through this framework that we view the data. Making invisible the [conceptual] luggage is an individual and collective process." (Potts & Brown, 2005, p.274). They preface this discussion on "making meaning" of research with their working assumption that interpreting the results of research and presenting the findings of research is about power. When we write, research or otherwise, we make choices about what we will make explicit and what we will exclude in order to send a purposeful message. Potts and Brown argue that we bring this intentionality to our research from day one, and thus it does not magically appear at the phase of presenting our findings, rather it is about

making meaning (and choices) throughout the research through motivations, critical reflection, engagement with others on the research and so forth. Within an Indigenous methodological approach, given our need to relevel purpose and prologue in a way that is contextualized with our life, we are likely to claim our interpretative biases up front. Obviously, ideas shift, but it's a way of being humble, it's also a way of giving a heads up to the reader by saying that this is who I am and these are the places of influence that shape my interpretation of the world, so consider that when reading my work. On a more pragmatic level, Potts and Brown go on to say that making meaning also includes clarity around who the research is going to benefit, and what the implications and responsibilities are around the knowledge that one is constructing. To me this strikes at the ethical core of methodology – it is not enough to take responsibility for one's ideas, but one must take responsibility for how one has come to the ideas. Again it is a matter of *miyo-wîcêhtowin* (“*having or possessing good relations*”) around research.

So what did the participants of this research say? What do they say about interpreting research within an Indigenous methodological framework? They spoke to several areas: applying a tribal lens in interpreting the research; presenting findings in a way that is congruent with community; practicalities of analyzing the data – transcribing, working with themes, and capturing voice; and praxis or benefiting the community (giving back).

In terms of *tribal lens and presenting findings* and the importance of identifying one's “luggage”, Kathy talks about the difficulty that an Indigenous student in graduate research courses encounters. She says:

If we learn our language, the methodology is in learning your language cause then you'll understand what everybody, what the

Elders are talking about because it's in the language. The knowledge is in the language and so the methodology is learning the language and so when I was writing up my methodology and thinking about it, first thing is that is that it has to become Indigenous, but that's a contradiction and kind of a state anguish right off the bat because all the things I've learned about don't come from an Indigenous paradigm in academia...(Kathy)

As Indigenous researchers we bring with us more than a tribal lens, we bring our experiences of the entirety of our being – which for most encompasses a bi-cultural compass. However, if we say we want to use a tribal methodology, so that our interpretations are congruent (as best as possible) with a tribal compass, then we need to commit to finding out what that means (if we do not already know). Once we make that commitment it becomes exceedingly difficult to transverse language (not just tribal or English) but the specific language of research to find a way to express these interpretations in a way that is meaningful. Because language gives form to ideas, it becomes necessary to know your audience. For Indigenous graduate research, there are often not just two audiences, but three with each having its own unique vernacular that the researcher needs to be fluent within. My own experience has been, the Indigenous researcher needs to be able to interpret and present research in a way that makes sense and is meaningful to the general Indigenous community; we must be able to converse in a manner that makes sense to the Non-Indigenous academy; and thirdly, we must, as Indigenous academic researchers, be able to continue to dialogue with each other in our own emerging language (presently this is where I find most comfort). In assisting me with knowledges that came to me from a traditional way, Michael helps me to make my way through understanding tribal knowledge using western research vernacular. He said,

What your talking about when you dreamed about you had to go home, that its political and you have to go home, the knowledge

process, the methodology isn't just the dream, it isn't just your sitting back and coming to understand the dream, but it also comes with what you do with that dream and putting it into reality. (Michael)

Making meaning of our research in a way that gives back necessitates a fluency akin to that found in Michif speakers – speak Cree with the community; English with the academy; and Michif (Cree Creole) with Indigenous researchers. I suppose, at some point, one can choose to disengage from one community or one another, but once we enter into academia and during the time we are there we must traverse these two diverse worlds of thought and language, and as Kathy says, currently, there is not a lot within academia to help us here. Many of us become frustrated with methodology class, or freeze contemplating the methodology chapter of our theses, because it doesn't make sense from a tribal perspective. And when things don't make sense, they tend to sit on shelves – an opus unrealized.

On a practical level, how did these researchers see ways to present their findings in various forms? Kathy indicated that “I think I am going to use video, audio and photographs, talking, ... it feels congruent with the oral and visual component that really is a part of our, how we learn” (Kathy). To capture the experiential, holistic journey of her research Jeannine spoke about how she presented her own personal research story (self-in-research) through the epilogue in her research:

You know the funny thing is, what [name deleted] directed me to do was to write it up as I wrote it in my journal, I wrote it immediately after I went home that day and then added some to my portfolio, my buttons and all that. She said you need to write about this, you need to write about all that, write it as the epilogue, after the whole dissertation is finished and so I did. (Jeannine)

From my own experience, I have been presenting my research to various audiences. I like to think of it as sharing my story through talk, an oral testimony of the experience. Depending upon the audience, I have been asked to converse on differing aspects - the personal, experiential, the technical (methodological), the political... and so forth. From my own personal observations, while I don't mean to generalize, it seems to be that too much head talk and Indigenous people get turned off, too much heart talk and academics get turned off. On a personal level, not enough of either and I get turned off. It's a delicate balance making meaning and presenting findings.

As mentioned earlier, that stories are a form of passing along knowledge is a key tenet of most tribal epistemologies, and many individuals spoke about presenting their findings in story form. Laara had this to say about integrating both a thematic coding approach while also including the stories of the individuals. "So in each of them there is those different stories related to the theme and then after the theme in my closing remarks, I think it was, see this wrapping the circle around the heart of Aboriginal wisdom." (Laara) In this dissertation, I wanted to ensure that individual research stories were presented as much as possible in their own voice and I incorporated a condensed version of the stories as told to me. I also did a thematic coding of the data. This all comes back to presenting findings in a way that is congruent to more than one audience.

On some of the practicalities of *analyzing the data*, such as use of transcripts, capturing voice and working with themes, the participants shared some tips. Laara spoke about the importance of transcribing the data herself as a way of protecting the words of her research participants. "That's why for me it was good for me to transcribe as opposed to somebody else because they might have excluded it because well that's not

part of the participants so they might exclude Elders words,...” (Laara). In terms of grouping the findings into themes, Laara went on to talk about the analytical and instinctual decisions that go on in what can become a very “routine” type of work. She said:

Another theme I would have to go back to that same story and see where that theme, was that theme part of that story. Well, yes because there is a lot of routine work that you end up doing, and back-tracking, moving forward, backtracking, listening again, or maybe its not that theme really, oh no and you look at it and it doesn't fit, it doesn't feel like it fits anymore, so you move it or you don't use it, or put it in another place where it would...(Laara)

I found transcribing the interviews myself to be exceedingly beneficial and powerful. It was a way for me to relive those conversations with people, and to hear the stories again anew. Each time I worked with the transcripts (which was a number of times) I was able to get new teachings from them. I felt much like Laara, I did not want someone who was not part of this conversation to transcribe the data – it was too important to me because the words felt like sacred gifts that I had been entrusted with. In commenting on how the transcription process evoked a powerful aha moment, Jeannine had this to say: “There I was, transcribing tapes and writing, in my head, and not connecting in my heart and my soul, wait a minute this is where it all happened for you Jeannine.” (Jeannine) As she tells us, Jeannine went home to write and make meaning.

Factors such as voice and the use of tape recorders were all discussed. Most of the researchers indicated that even in situations of taping Elders (Jeannine), participants seemed to be okay with this idea. As one of the researchers (Laara) explained to the research participants in her study, by using a tape recorder this is the best way I can ensure that your voice comes through as true as possible without too much of the

researcher's own interpretations. However, most of the researchers still felt some discomfort with this part of the process. In terms of benefiting the community, all of the participants were concerned about the research being meaningful to Indigenous people in some way, and so were taking care with the meaning making and presentation of findings aspects of the research design. It was a common ethic, and people were committed to this critical aspect of their research. Because this was so important, it is a stand alone theme of the next and final section on giving back to the community.

Indigenous and Tribal Research means Giving Back

In the way we do research, giving back to the community encapsulates notions around decolonization, cultural knowledges, ways of being, social action, relevancy, respect, relationships, and ethics. It is huge! Thus it did not enter into these researchers' ethics only at the end, but rather was a consideration throughout. In terms of giving back to the community, the people I interviewed spoke about giving back through their research, and giving back once they had attained their PhD. Giving back to community was centrally integrated into both of these processes. This is what they said in relation to culture, community, education, and purposefulness in picking a topic.

On Culture and Community, Kathy said...

I can't just to do a PhD because I want to wave a doctorate title in front of my name, that doesn't mean anything to me, and it doesn't mean anything in the eyes of my community. It means something to me that I know how to sing the songs in my language. When I go to ceremony and my Elders are saying the ceremonies in Anishnabe that I know what they are talking about. So, the PhD has to be meaningful, it has to help, that there is a purpose in terms of the bigger picture of who we are as Anishnabe. (Kathy)

On Decolonizing Education (and teaching teachers), Cam said...

I deconstruct everything, my mind is less – I wouldn't say its totally decolonized – but, it's certainly a lot less colonized than it was. I don't know? What good does that do? ... I guess there is a benefit in teaching, for the students that are there. It's not just me instructing them to teach the same old colonial curriculum. I don't want my students to go off into Black Lake and teach colonial curriculum. That's not what I am teaching them, I want them to be critical. (Cam)

On Purposefulness in picking a topic that is going to help, Jeannine said...

We were driving to Edmonton and I was trying to compose myself, but what kept occurring to me is, "why are you searching for all these research topics". You should be doing this research on adoption. This is who you are, this is your story and this is what you should be contributing... I got home and called my friend from an agency I worked at right away and said this is what I think I should do...She said, you know that I have been wanting to tell you for a long time now, give your head a shake, why aren't you doing your research on adoption, it needs to be done. We need your help in this area, all the other First Nations do as well. (Jeannine)

These were just some of selected quotations that emerged from the data, but all the participants spoke to the importance of giving back to the community in one way or another. Often, this discussion came right at the beginning in the discussion around purpose.

The notion of relevancy was particularly important here – did the research help and make sense to the community, and could the community make sense of the research? Dissemination of the research is a central issue, and ensuring that the research is made available to community in a manner that is accessible and useful to community is an important consideration. This means ensuring that the research is grounded in the needs of the community, as opposed to the needs of the academy. Graham makes this point:

At the end of the day it belongs to the community, the Maori, and that's why I keep talking about praxis, because when you are critically reflective, you reflect what the people who you are purporting to transform and change, so its not disconnected, you are not over the top, you not theorizing in the academy, the ivory tower, its grounded. (Graham)

Cree Scholar Sid Fiddler comments on the relevancy to community of what is being taught in universities, and this could apply to research practices and instruction. Of social work curricula, he questions: "How can you relate what is being taught to what the hell is happening on the reserve?" (Stalwick, 1986, p. 7). I like this quote because I think that it is fundamentally about relevancy. If a researcher, course developer, educator, and so forth wants to give back to the community, then there has to be a commitment to keeping it meaningful to the community. Given the assimilative processes of post-secondary education (education in general) this takes a certain amount of vigilance, but what I am hearing from the individuals that I interviewed is that this can be done.

Concluding Comments on the Way

My question as to how each researcher saw culture as coming into their methodology gave rise to the following ideas. In brief, touchstones that the Indigenous researchers identified as central in eliciting a cultural approach to research were the following:

- Cultural or tribal epistemic positioning
- Decolonizing Objective to the Research
- Giving Space to the Personal Connection
- Self-location and Prologue

- Purpose Statement
- Personal Critical Reflections
- Venerating and Protecting Sacred Knowledges
- Ethical considerations of a broad nature that encompasses culture
- Seeking Knowledges (Methods) – Inward and Outward
- Cultural or tribal interpretation of knowledge gathered (analyzing the data)
- Giving back to the community in a relevant, meaningful way

The researchers were factoring in these considerations and methods as a means to give space and meaning to a uniquely Indigenous research methodological approach to research.

The Context: It's About Creating Space

We have come to the final question of this inquiry, “What are the challenges that Indigenous researchers face when they attempt to engage their cultural ways of knowing with western research and how did they counter-act these challenges?” While this was not the central question of the research, a conversation about Indigenous methodologies within the academy must, by necessity, accompany a dialogue about creating space. Initially, I was thinking about this in terms of ethical space, but the challenge seemed broader. At the beginning of this paper, I referenced a quote by Vine Deloria Jr. that a central site of struggle for Indigenous people in this century is ideological. In reflecting upon this, I was taken back to the Shawane Dagoiwini Aboriginal Research conference in Winnipeg, June 2005, where Marlene Castellano Brandt presented as a keynote speaker.

She said that the challenge and responsibility for Indigenous research lies with all of us. In speaking specifically about research in the academy she said that Indigenous people must suspend distrust and non-Indigenous people must suspend disbelief. My sense is that it is only in that ideological, political, ethical and sacred space that we will be able to move forward with the exciting proposition of Indigenous and tribal research methodologies. In that protected space, there is an opportunity for a broader range of knowings to not *just* be tolerated, but to be seen as relevant to the construction of knowledge within the social sciences. In my research, I had an opportunity to ask the research participants about the importance of this idea. From their perspective, what factors have worked to create space within the academy for this discourse?

This section is not meant to be exhaustive; it is a brief conversation about the challenges contemporary Indigenous peoples experience in the academy *as graduate researchers*. It is not specific to methodology per se but to the whole experience. Some of the challenges are ideological (e.g. as attempting to carry out their research from a tribal paradigm), or other challenges are practical (e.g. lack of institutional support), and still other challenges are personal (e.g. just a general discomfort with the pragmatics of the practice and presentation of research). These dilemmas are presented under the general heading of *worldviews conflicting*. While the participants offered several options for responding to these challenges there were two areas that people highlighted as holding both a current difficulty and a possibility for resolution. These include: a) the composition of supervisor and committee members and; b) the importance of increasing the number of Indigenous faculty and graduate students in graduate programs (focusing on the PhD level). This is a brief overview of that discussion.

Conflicting Worldviews

Sometimes someone will say something that simply, and eloquently, cuts to the quick. Cam described the problem of Indigenous and western conflicting worldviews in such a way when he said, "...and that's the thing there is these two worlds that we are living in. The one world you are honoured with the eagle feather and the other world you are honoured with the doctoral degree." This whole document has been a testament to the two differing approaches to the world and how these impact research. Jeannine points out that the experience for Indigenous graduate researchers is that they end up serving two masters. She speaks of this in terms of a "dual responsibility":

So, this is an example where there was always a feeling of a dual kind of sense of responsibility and kind of trying to dance between that in making sure that the university was kept over here and satisfied by me using whatever procedures, but that those procedures did not disrespect or interfere or drastically alter what needed to happen over here in a cultural way, and I am sure you have felt the same, or maybe you didn't. (Jeannine)

Jeannine is right. I consistently questioned what I was doing, and if my research would help or hinder. I had a supportive committee, but at the end of the day the choices I made were mine, and I had to make my own choices and live by my own limitations. This was particularly true in exercising personal agency in what knowledges I felt comfortable bringing here. In further support of Jeannine's point, Michael articulates his own experience with being accountable to two worldviews in a PhD process, "Part of the challenge for me is balancing that with, all of that to me is, that reflects how I would approach Elders if I wanted to learn from them. It doesn't reflect what the university expects." (Michael).

The struggle to maintain our cultural epistemic positioning within powerful institutions like universities can be exhausting. Kathy spoke about what she describes as the “internal gymnastics” that Indigenous graduate students must perform. She says:

We talk about decolonization, but we are talking about decolonization in a colonized context of learning and so there's that inherent contradiction in what we are doing. We say we want help our communities but we are not doing it in a community context or in a culturally relevant context and so we have to, right off the get-go, do these internal gymnastics to kind of make that leap and that connection to why we are doing it. ...how does this learning process, or doing a PhD in the academy, support me to become more who I am. The answer is that it doesn't. Because where I have been supported to be who I am and what I know and to actually have that grow is in our lodge. (Kathy)

Kathy suggests that to maintain a sense of cultural and personal integrity as an Indigenous graduate student, it's really important to have grounding outside of this place, because the academy can consume you. I would argue that if one is feeling conflicted as an Indigenous graduate student, however uncomfortable that may be, is a good indicator that you haven't lost yourself.

For an Indigenous student, the risk of being absorbed by western thought once inside the academy is great. Laara made the point of how it is easy to become subsumed by western ways. She said:

So it was with [...] support, saying that you know Laara you've got all of this, these people, read them, ...so that's what I did. Okay that's right, I can build that in, why didn't I know, I should have known, but you get caught up in this very rigid mainstream way of doing things, conventional. You'll see that we are talking about the conventional, with narrative writing, you will see the blend in the way it's written out. (Laara)

Jeannine further articulated this point by saying that, “Yeah, I see what you mean but that is our western mind that is always in the background. That is the other struggle, always having to push it back all the time, that other voice.” (Jeannine). In my own experience, I

found this came out in consistently second guessing myself. I had to keep my audience in mind – Indigenous graduate students – and focus on whether what I was saying would be accessible and helpful to them. If I was confident that I was in alignment with this mission, then that is what would matter. The thing is the doubts keep surfacing, and it's this fear that tends to keep us in our colonial places (so to speak). Fear is a powerful.

Some days the sole task is simply staying true. This point is confirmed by Graham as he articulates the challenges of the merging of these two ways of being, and argues that, as Indigenous people, we have to come to terms with the “politics of truth”. This is what he says.

Fundamentally we are contesting, at the level of knowledge we are contesting, but also we are contesting colonization processes, because basically the interests of the dominant white society at the university has been reproduced, with the structures and so forth. This is the politics of truth, understanding the limits and capacities of what you can do at any site. (Graham)

I believe this is important, because western universities and PhD graduate programs are only one site of struggle, and there are so many other sites. Given that there is only so much personal and collective energy it is critical to pick one's battles wisely, and strategically. From a tactical point of view, I have come to know that a dissertation of three hundred pages begins with several small, well thought out words.

So where are places for strategic engagement in Indigenous PhD graduate experience? According to the individuals in my research, they spoke about the significant role of the Committee supervisor and composition, and the importance of Indigenous faculty and Indigenous graduate student community.

Committee Structure

In exploring why graduate committee membership is an important issue, Michael points to the bottom line in graduate studies: “I am amazed at the power a committee has.” (Michael). The supervisor and committee members have a lot of power in the course of a graduate student’s research – on one end of the continuum, they can create more space than a student knows what to do with, or alternatively they can suck out air like a food preservation vacuum sealer. The folks I spoke with shared some thoughts on committee composition, and the role and impact of supervisors and committee members.

In terms of supervision, the majority of the participants had non-Indigenous supervisors, but they did have Indigenous people on the committee. However, it seemed that the difficulty here was that there was simply not the necessary numbers of Indigenous faculty (in tenured positions acceptable to graduate studies) to fill this need. Cam articulated the rationale for desiring an Indigenous supervisor: “When I think of the committee, I think of somebody, who is an Indigenous person, really should be my supervisor, who knows more about that part than anything because that’s primarily what it is about.” (Cam). On a pragmatic level, Indigenous supervisors (and instructors) are likely able to recognize an Indigenous epistemic centering in a student’s research design and validate the thinking behind those choices. In situations where students are having difficulty expressing their Indigenous epistemic framework, Indigenous supervisors and/or instructors are then well positioned to ask helpful questions that will assist students in clarifying their methodology.

In terms of non-Indigenous committee members, Jeannine stated her supervisor was non-Indigenous, but she said that she chose her supervisor because this individual

was an ally to Indigenous peoples. “My supervisor is not an Indigenous person, but she is very attuned to what needs to happen, she is a very strong ally.” (Jeannine). In my own experience, because I was in an Interdisciplinary studies program, I have two supervisors, both non-Indigenous. However, they were both allies and their scholarship rested largely in research methodologies. Because of their lifelong commitment to creating space for Indigenous people, they were, as in Jeannine’s case, allies.

While even if the supervisor is Indigenous it is important that there is the right match – just being Indigenous is not enough. For example Cam notes his needs of a supervisor, “so I am looking for someone who can stay out of my way just as much as give me guidance” (Cam) . It is likely (given the numbers) that many Indigenous graduate students are currently put in a situation where we do not have this choice and thus we either have to struggle with an Indigenous supervisor that does not fit with our vision or to work with a non-Indigenous person that is on the same page as us, but does not have the cultural background.

Whether or not there was an option for Indigenous graduate students to have an Indigenous supervisor (which says a lot about the current state of affairs on this issue) all of the individuals who were currently enrolled as PhD students at the time of the interview had Indigenous people on their committee. Kathy describes the roles of her Indigenous committee members with regard to where they were particularly helpful in assisting her.

[deleted name] is the one that is getting me through the hoops – she is the one that says you need to do this and don’t worry about that – she kind of the one that is helping me to be a good hoop dancer. So she is really great that way in giving me feedback. [deleted name] is the one who is giving me the cultural, Aboriginal perspective and advice there, then I have a third person who is [deleted name] and

she is Aboriginal too. On my committee, two Aboriginal women, my supervisor is a Non-Aboriginal woman. (Kathy)

From my own experience it has been invaluable to have an Indigenous faculty member on my committee. As well as being an esteemed Indigenous scholar, he is also Plains. This was important to me as I felt that given my topic area – Cree knowledge – he would have an understanding of my culture and frame of reference. When I entered into the realm of Kiskêyihitamowin and did not know how to mediate this knowing with my academic research, he was the one that gave the confidence to keep going, to keep honouring the knowledges.

As more and more Indigenous students are entering into Master and PhD level programs of study, in which research is central, the need for more Indigenous faculty to supervise and sit on committees of Indigenous graduate students is becoming more pressing and urgent. As an Indigenous student, and from several years as an instructor, I believe that having an Indigenous supervisor and/or member on Indigenous graduate committees is simply good pedagogy (and research practice). From this angle, my sense is that Graduate Studies and Senior Administration (in addition to respective academic schools and faculties) has a role in the recruitment, retention and mentoring of Indigenous faculty and as such can become allies in creating space within the academy for Indigenous graduate research. As for our motivations for tackling a PhD, Jeannine pinned the jello to a tree for us when she stated: “I swear on tape, that if I ever get on a PhD committee, and I hope I do in the near future, that’s one of my goals for one of the reasons that I did this is to be able to assist other Indigenous students coming up the ranks.”

Indigenous Faculty & Indigenous Graduate Student Community

In reflecting upon strategies for creating space for diversity within academia, Sherene Razack points out that numbers matter and that “we might consider increasing the numbers as our pre-eminent strategy of difference.”(Razack 2001; Razack 2001). As mentioned above, having a core group of Indigenous faculty and an Indigenous PhD student community in the varied programs within university settings is a necessary strategy for creating space for Indigenous methodologies. In my course of studies I had three Indigenous faculty involved in my program, two whom were coursework instructors and one who is a member of my committee. I could recount the merits of having Indigenous faculty to support Indigenous graduate students; however, that is a paper in and of itself and I will just offer my testimony as an Indigenous graduate student: Indigenous faculty matter. I will note that of the three Indigenous people involved in my program, all were men and I did miss the formal participation of Indigenous women faculty. Having a supportive academic Indigenous graduate student community allows for intriguing discussions around Indigenous research and the presence of community makes graduate work feel less isolating. In fact, the interviews and sharing with other Indigenous people who either had or were in the midst of a PhD program was a gift that kept me going. I did not feel so alone. So what did they have to say about Indigenous faculty and student cohorts?

In terms of choosing a program, Kathy identified the importance of Indigenous faculty and a student cohort as part of her decision to enrol in OISE. She shared with me her experience of researching various schools that could accommodate this need:

Anyways so I didn't really think that there was anything available, I had explored, I was interested in primarily being in an Aboriginal

cohort and going to a university that was developing something with Aboriginal PhD students and I did not want to go through another degree program in isolation and in the absence of Aboriginal curriculum and Aboriginal faculty. (Kathy)

Kathy went on to share that she was able to enrol in her PhD program with a cohort of six other indigenous students. Of this she said: “Plus there were other Aboriginal people in their second and third year, so there was already like...you could frequently look around and you know that you are not alone” (Kathy)

In terms of an Indigenous academic community inside of the university (be it other instructors or students) Michael identified that this was where he received his support. “They understand, they will question, they are very respectful, offer suggestions so its talked about as something as useful as opposed to giving me a pat on the head, go do that over there.” (Michael). Laara, on the other hand spoke about her experience when she was accepted into her PhD program a number of years ago. Her experience references the absence of an Indigenous presence in universities (this was less than twenty years ago); but, also shows that we are coming along. She said:

I got accepted there in applied psychology, this is the old, before Toronto merged their departments. In applied psychology and the area was teaching in a multi-cultural focus. That was the only thing that was closest to what I thought could support Aboriginal perspectives because there was nothing when I went, so I took the courses and came back home and just kind of worked at what can I do with my research. (Laara)

In responding to this need, Graham Smith is currently situated at the UBC on a project – SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement) involving the recruitment of more Indigenous people into PhD programs. The program is “about developing in B.C, 250 Aboriginal doctorates by the year 2010. In New Zealand, the project that we developed called the MAR program, was aimed at developing 500 Maori

PhDs in five years, and we are nearly there with that” (Graham). However, as Graham states this is not about simply numbers, it is about political reclamation. He cautions:

The other important element about this is not just producing a large number of PhD qualified Aboriginals, the program is designed to create a critical mass of Aboriginal leaders, well-credentialed people who have a consciousness about Aboriginals and working for Aboriginal change and transformation. So not just what I call privatized academics. (Graham)

This is about maintaining our tribal epistemic centering, not losing ourselves here, and going back home to help as well as doing what we can inside the university. A tall order, but from those I have spoken with, folks seem more than up to the challenge.

Chapter Summary

On a personal note, while I sit here, on a self-imposed writing retreat (a great strategy that I heard about from Graham Smith), I receive word from a Gitksan friend that she has just been accepted into a PhD program in Toronto within the last two weeks. I have also heard that two more of my Indigenous colleagues have been accepted in Doctoral Programs in Education. This is praxis. Finally, the face of an Anishnabe sister comes to mind, a Master level graduate student who attended one of my workshops in February of 2006 where I presented on this research. She has since been accepted into PhD studies in Law. She said hurry up and get your research finished, I want to read it. This is what this whole journey has been about, through our minds, hearts, bodies and spirits we are pushing the edges here in these western schools, we are taking a little bit of friggin’ space. That’s it, that’s all.

Chapter VIII: Until We Meet Again

In a personal reflection paper that I wrote mid-way through this journey, I was grappling with the breadth of Indigenous ways of knowing and the nature of 'truth'. I wrote:

My brain is fried, though still marvelling about the nature of truth... And I wonder, what are the truths of Indigenous theory? My mind tries to reconcile what I am learning and the soulfulness of Indigenous thought with words like theoretical frameworks, epistemological positionings, conceptual constructs – all of which live large in the academy. It seems to me that attempts to fit Indigenous knowing into the language of paradigmatic models calls for treacherous paddling across a deep, wide abyss. I think of language and contemplate the standard vocabulary surrounding Indigenous thought, that it is spiritual, experiential, relational, and holistic...Yet, I cannot seem to leave it there; perhaps it is the words – spiritual, relational, experiential, holistic – that do not satisfy. Theories and ideas live in the mind, yet transpose into energy within the presence of other beings. Laughing or crying with another is an action involving sharing of mind and heart yet in this connection there is an intangible, but palpable, force. In Indigenous country, our lives and stories are steeped in an organic, tactile relationship with others and the world...I wonder why it is so difficult to capture this 'truth' in words.

I have changed my mind somewhat since then. When I wrote “*perhaps it is the words – spiritual, relational, experiential, holistic – that do not satisfy*”, I was at a point in my journey where I was trying to consider knowledge outside of the realm of cognition. I had not ever considered inward knowing that manifests itself in embodied knowledge, spiritual knowledge, or emotional knowledge as what we do in ‘school’. Opening myself to this possibility threw me for a loop. The only reason I considered this broad range of knowledge was because I started to consider my own cultural knowledge – Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin. The long and short of it is that these words – *spiritual*,

relational, experiential, holistic – satisfy me now, because they are good words and they do what they can to describe experiences that often are outside of the ability of words to define. These words pretty much describe my research experience over these past three years. Has this changed me? Yes. How? I am not sure; I am going to have to sit with this for awhile.

Pragmatically, why did I do this research, and what has been learned? Hopefully, I have articulated my personal reasons for inquiring into Indigenous methodologies and have provided enough of a purpose statement to illustrate my academic curiosity into this topic of study. However, throughout this journey I have been guided by two questions. They are: Will this work assist other Indigenous graduate students in their research methodology courses? Given my *Indigenous Epistemological Framework*, have I kept *Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin* or more generally Indigenous knowledges (not western knowings) at the centre of my research? With the assistance of many, many people I believe that I have made good on this commitment. My hope is that what Indigenous graduate students can see in this work was an honest attempt by one of their contemporaries to find space for her *Nehiyâw* ways of knowing in research design. While my design, the organizational structure and language of epistemology and methods is not new to methodology, it is my attempt to use these tools to centre Cree knowledges. My own experience has been that once I privileged *Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin*, I was compelled to consider a wider range of variables in my research. Further, once I centered my tribal knowledge, the methodology itself was less a formula and more of a *relational* kind of experience.

This research has very much been a process of triangulation, offering a shared perspective of what constitutes an Indigenous or tribal methodology from a variety of angles. The literature review, dissertation review, interviews and conversations, as well as my own experience have appeared in all parts of this document including the methodology section. This being the case, I don't want to try to summarize the report here in the concluding thoughts; rather I would like to offer some points and implications arising from my research.

The first point is around *cultural epistemic roots*. One of the overarching implications of this research is that there are a number of ways to approach Indigenous methodologies resulting in a number of research design options. While an Indigenous methodology can place decolonization at the centre (critical theory), Indigenous researchers are more often recommending that cultural knowledges (i.e. Anishnabe, Souix) be put at the centre. Once cultural knowledges are at the centre, then all choices around research must be measured against that knowing. Researchers must then ask: Does this research choice align with my cultural ways of knowing? By doing this, we are moving away from centering western thought in our research, and moving closer to a tribal paradigm.

Directly related to this point, is the ability to be open to a *holistic, broader range of knowledge* in approaching Indigenous research. This does not mean that all forms (and breadth) of knowledges will come into our research, all that it asks is not to be dismissive of that which we cannot understand in conventional ways. This is about being respectful, but it is also about recognizing that there is only so much that we as humans can know about the world.

A central point that almost all of the Indigenous researchers referenced in one way or another is the importance of *personal preparation*. This is the term that I have used in my methodology, but people speak of this in different ways. This could include self-location, grounding, personal work, ceremonial engagement, self-care, keeping connected, and so forth. It also includes the personal commitment to doing the research in a good way. In my situation I went home to Saskatchewan (which meant having to take a leave from my work, life, and so forth in Victoria). This may also mean making an effort to learn the language (or become familiar with it), there are many ways. Further, this means personal agency in taking responsibility for what cultural knowledges we bring into the academy. There are likely many other responsibilities that I could speak of here, but primarily this is about personal commitment to the research in a way that reflects the expectations of one's tribal knowledges.

A further point that emerges from this research is that Indigenous research *must serve the collective*. I am using that term because I do not want to confuse it with the phrase community-based (i.e. PAR approaches) research. Rather, what individuals were saying is that the researcher ought to know who their community is, and they ought to find a way to share the bounty of their research with the Indigenous community. It needs to be helpful. My own commitment has been to present, write, develop curriculum, and do what I can in terms of my abilities to share my learnings from this research with Indigenous people in general, and Indigenous graduate students in particular. I am compulsive about finishing so it can go out to the universe and be of service.

In line with the point about serving the collective, is the assumption that an Indigenous approach is relational it is a *relationship-based approach to research*. This was apparent from the participants on a number of levels such as who they were asking to participate in their research, and the issues associated with keeping our research respectful. Given the history of research in our communities, the years of extraction and exploitation, we did not want to repeat this. By honouring and practicing the value of good relations, it offers us a safeguard against being exploitive or exploited.

Integral to a relationship-based, tribal centred approach to research, is the centrality of *Indigenous and tribal ethics* guidelines to assist in ensuring that the research is conforming to Indigenous ethical considerations. The creation of *tribal ethics committees* and protocols at a community level will assist both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous researchers in working with a particular geographical community. Tribal ethics committees are exciting because they provide a formal means for community involvement in research, and demand that research is accessible and relevant. However, discussion on Indigenous ethical considerations for research with a non-geographic community continues. This is important work and the dialogue needs to continue.

A point that came up in my conversations with individuals was the need for *Indigenous methods, presentations and interpretations* of the teachings from research that align with Indigenous methodologies. Several of the Indigenous researchers I interviewed, stated that while proposing methods and presentation of their data will (and has) required 'thick' rationale in their proposal statements, they felt this was necessary so that their methods, presentations and interpretations were congruent with the cultural knowledge guiding their research. In other words, people were making research choices

that were in line with tribal epistemologies, even though it was taking a little extra work in their methodology proposal statements.

A final point on Indigenous and tribal methodology, but certainly not the least, is the *decolonizing agenda*. The Indigenous researchers, I engaged with were committed to social change. They understood racism, understood oppression, and understood being othered. They did not want their children, nieces or nephews to experience this same assault. People I interviewed, including myself, knew there was a line in the sand, that racism and discrimination exist and they we are using our abilities, talents and research for social change. This change is about *creating political space* for more conversations, gatherings, writings, and so forth on Indigenous methodologies. If this research helps toward this end, helps to serve the collective good, then its purpose is being served. As Indigenous researchers we are resistance researchers and we are not going away. In the words of Elder Joe Dion, Cree Nation:

The only thing remaining now is the fact that the Indian, like his former standby, the buffalo, has refused to die out. (In Friesen, 1998, p.63)

This concludes this part the work. As Laara mentioned in my conversation with her, sometimes the research doesn't turn out exactly as you had thought it would. True enough, I didn't plan it, but this research became a truly holistic encounter, and it became more than I imagined it could possibly be. Kinanâskomitin

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Appendix I: Introduction Letter to Participants

May 15, 2005

Introduction Letter for Indigenous Research Project

Project Title: An Interdisciplinary Inquiry into the Engagement of Indigenous Ways Of Knowing with Western Social Science Research Methodologies

Tansi (Participant Name):

This is a brief introductory letter to give you some more background on the project. A bit about myself - I am of Saulteaux and Plains Cree ancestry and belong to the Pasqua First Nations – a Saulteaux community located in the Qu'Appelle Valley in southern Saskatchewan. At present, I am enrolled in an Interdisciplinary PhD program in Education and Social Work, and am currently embarking on the research phase of this journey. I also work as a part-time First Nations Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work, University of Victoria. While I have several areas of interest within the area of First Nations issues, my current curiosity focuses on Indigenous approaches to research. My doctoral research centres on an inquiry into how Indigenous people, specifically graduate students within western universities, approach their graduate research and how they grapple with issues of methodology.

I am writing to request your participation in this research study. I am asking for your involvement in this research because of your experience in carrying out Indigenous research at a PhD graduate level. I am interested in your research story including the approach you have taken, the challenges you have encountered, and the insights you would like to pass on to future Indigenous graduate students who are/will be undertaking Indigenous research at this graduate level. This *Introduction letter* is a brief background of my proposed research project including an outline of the guiding questions that I wish to ask of prospective participants.

Background

The motive behind my wish to inquire into the ways in which Indigenous researchers approach research in graduate school arose from my own experience as an Indigenous graduate student. Having the opportunity to take several knowledge construction and research inquiry courses during my coursework for my PhD, I was struck by the difficulty I had in trying to determine which methodology to use for my research. While

there were a number of allied methodologies (such as Participatory Action Research), I found that of the range of methodologies available there were none that spoke specifically to Indigenous ways of knowing. In my research I wanted to capture knowledge sources of a cultural nature (dreams, intuitions) that form my own knowing; however, what I encountered was that there was little room for this type of knowledge to enter in to research designs (even qualitative approaches) that flowed from a western scientific paradigm of which current western methodologies are based. The cultural ways of knowing (which some Indigenous writer's term metaphysical) were either absent in this discussion or categorized as a peripheral aspect of the exoticness of Indigenous culture – and not considered 'real' knowledge. I became increasingly frustrated with the sensation that part of my worldview which figured largely in my construction of knowledge was being dismissed, and I was having difficulty in articulating what I was experiencing. From this place of curiosity, I began to wonder if other Indigenous graduate students experienced this same feeling of something being amiss and how were they able to incorporate the breadth of cultural ways of knowing into their research. Or did they? Further what where some of the general challenges they faced around selecting a methodology and what did they end of deciding upon. As a critical researcher, I was propelled forward by the belief that the more we, the Indigenous research community, speak, write, and act on Indigenous research the more space we create in academia for this important conversation. In searching for increased understanding from my peers on the topic of Indigenous research and keenly interested in their research stories, I arrived at my research inquiry:

How do Indigenous researchers approach research? More specifically, how do Indigenous researchers approach cultural/metaphysical aspects of Indigenous knowledges when making methodological research choices?

How do Indigenous researchers understand their cultural/traditional (metaphysical) knowledges and how do they incorporate this into their research methodology?

What are the challenges that Indigenous researchers face when they attempt to engage their cultural ways of knowing with western research and how did they counter-act these challenges?

I am proposing to ask 6 Indigenous researchers who have carried out (or are contemplating carrying out) human subject research, dealing with an Indigenous inquiry, within their PhD studies. Because I am interested in gaining a Plains Cree perspective (being Plains Cree), I will be approaching 3 Cree researchers to participate in this project. The participants of the project will have a range of experience within Indigenous research and the majority of participants will be researchers in the field of education and social work.

The goal of this research is to carryout 6 in-depth interviews of a 1.5-2 hours duration and ask individuals about their research stories. To assist the interview process I offer the general questions below to guide the discussion – but they are just guide questions, I am

really interested in people's research stories around methodology and what they deem as important to share:

1. How did you approach the issue of research methodology? How do you understand methodology and how does your own Indigenous worldview impact the choices you have made about how to go about research?
2. As an Indigenous researcher, how do you understand an Indigenous approach to research?
3. From your own experience, what do you believe are some of the important and distinctive ways that Indigenous people approach research?
4. How do you see cultural knowings (dreams, synchronistic events, intuitions, connection with place and the sacred) which are part of Indigenous ways of knowing, as coming into your research?
5. Did you attempt to incorporate these cultural knowings into your graduate research and how did you do that?
6. Overall, having the experience of carrying out Indigenous research in the academy, what were some of the challenges, conflicts, politics, and ethical considerations?
7. As an Indigenous researcher, what helped you get through the planning and/or actual graduate research? Could you comment on both personal factors that helped you and structural factors (e.g. a supportive committee)?

Everyone who participates will have an opportunity to review his or her data prior to it being incorporated into my dissertation. While there is a component of this research that will contribute toward the creation of knowledge for its own sake, I hope that this study will have practical application. As an instructor and curriculum developer (with experience in teaching and writing a research course), I am hoping that this work will be useful in a concrete way within research classrooms. If it can assist, in making Indigenous students feel less frustration with current research methodology and inquiry courses it will be a great success. By sharing your insight and experience, I believe this work contributes toward decolonizing the academy.

I thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and I am really looking forward to hearing your research story. My email address is mkovach@uvic.ca, right now I am in transit from Victoria to Saskatchewan so do not have a phone number other than my cell which is 250 888 5587. I will then contact you to arrange a time and place for the interview at your convenience – I was wondering if we could carry out the interview some time while I am in Winnipeg on June 2, 3, 4 – I could arrange to come a day earlier or stay a day later if that works. As per university ethical demands, it would be great if you

could review the attached consent form prior to our interview. I have also attached a brief standardized survey which I hope you will fill-out. I can collect both from you at the time of our interview. Again thank-you for your involvement and I look forward to having a cup of tea/coffee and a chance to talk about Indigenous research with you!

Respectfully,

Margaret (Maggie) Kovach

Appendix II: Survey

Research Survey Research Project: <i>An Interdisciplinary Inquiry into the Engagement of Indigenous Ways of Knowing with Western Social Science Research Methodologies</i>	
** Please respond to the following questions:	
1	Name:
2	Indigenous Affiliation/Identity (this could be nation, urban, Metis):
3	Gender:
4	Program of Study for PhD (doctorate in Education):
5	PhD degree granting University:
6	Current Stage of PhD degree (Completed, Pre-Candidacy, Proposal Phase, Data Collection Phase, Data Analysis Phase):
7	Year completed or anticipated completion of PhD:
8	Research Methodology (used or proposed):
9	Did you have an Indigenous committee member(s) on your committee and was it helpful?
10	What prompted you to enter into PhD studies? (Please identify key influences, experiences or motives)?

11	Can you briefly share what experiences were critical in keeping you moving onward with your PhD research (this can include personal, cultural and previous academic experiences)?
12	From your research experience, how would you describe methodology and do you believe there is an Indigenous methodology?

Appendix III: Consent Form**School of Social Work,*****Participant Consent Form***

University of Victoria,

PO Box 1700 Station C

Victoria, B.C V8W 2Y2

An Interdisciplinary Inquiry into the Engagement of Indigenous Ways Of Knowing with Western Social Science Research

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled Engaging Indigenous Ways of Knowing with Western Social Science Research that is being conducted by Margaret (Maggie) Kovach.

Margaret (Maggie) Kovach is a Graduate Student in the department of Social Work & Education at the University of Victoria and you may contact the following individuals if you have further questions by:

Dr. Budd Hall, Dean (Education)

Phone: 250 721 7757

Email: bhall@uvic.ca

Dr. Leslie Brown, Director (Social Work)

Phone: 250 721 8036

Email: lbrown@uvic.ca

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Interdisciplinary PhD Program. It is being conducted under the co-supervision of Dr. Budd Hall and Dr. Leslie Brown. You may contact my co-supervisors at:

Dr. Budd Hall, Dean (Education)

Phone: 250 721 7757

Email: bhall@uvic.ca

Dr. Leslie Brown, Director (Social Work)

Phone: 250 721 8036

Email: lbrown@uvic.ca

The purpose of this research project is to interview 6 Indigenous researchers who are in the process or have completed their PhD studies and either has, or is intending, to conduct human subject research for the completion of their degree program. The goal of this research is to ask Indigenous researchers to share their experience and insights about how they have approached their research, the way in which they have incorporated their own cultural knowledges and the

way (methods) that they have used in their research. This research seeks to uncover the challenges that Indigenous researchers encounter in carrying out their research activities in an academic environment and to find out how they managed to complete their research given these challenges.

Research of this type is important because it will provide guidance for current and future Indigenous graduate students enrolled in graduate programs in western universities and are seeking to carry out research as part of their degree requirement. This research will assist in establishing that there is a unique approach (methodology) in carrying out Indigenous research and identify not only the characteristics of Indigenous ways of research, but the importance of carving space for this approach in western academic institutions. Additionally, this research is an important contribution to the Indigenous research community in Canada, in that it will add to the on-going conversation about how to carry out Indigenous research in a good way given the exploitive history of western research in Indigenous communities.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are part of the Indigenous research community and have completed or are in the process of completing PhD studies within a western university setting. Because of your research activity through your program of study, you have been identified through scholarly networking within the field of social work and education as an individual who has insight into approaching research from an Indigenous perspective while under the constraints/challenges of western research paradigms.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include:

- 1 interview session for a duration of 1.5 to 2 hours
- 1 short 2 page survey that will be emailed prior to the interview
- The interview questions are open-ended and intended to allow for you to share your research story
- The interviews will be audio-taped with the purpose of transcribing the interview session
- The interview will focus on your experience of carrying out graduate research in a western academic setting and will generally follow the proposed interview questions (please see the accompanying "Interview Questions" document)
- As a participant, you may decline to answer any survey or interview question
- The interview will take place at a mutually agreed upon location that is most convenient to you
- Upon completion of the interview, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcripts and the findings emerging from your interview for final approval before they will be included in the research document

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. The potential benefits of your participation in this research include contributing toward the on-going, necessary conversation among the Indigenous research community of what constitutes an Indigenous methodology (if it even exists). Through this discussion as a community of Indigenous researchers we will be creating space within the academy for the necessary dialogue around methodologies which are more compatible and respectful of our cultures, teaching and ways. Further, you will be assisting future Indigenous graduate students who are struggling to find a research process that allows for Indigenous ways of knowing to emerge.

I have an ethical commitment to ensuring that this research is done in a good/ethical way according to my understanding of the general cultural protocol of Indigenous research. As such it is important for me to indicate that whether or not you agree to participate in the research, it will

not impact our on-going collegial relationship. Please participate in this research only if you freely choose to do so, and if you feel it will in some way benefit the broader Indigenous community. If you have questions about participating or wish to contact my co-supervisor – Dr. Leslie Brown – about your decision to accept or decline involvement in this research please feel free to do so.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or explanations. Please contact me via email (or Leslie Brown) if you no longer wish to participate in the research. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be returned to you and not used in the study.

You have the choice to have your name associated with the research. Should you request that your name not be associated with this research or if you wish to use a pseudonym, your anonymity will be protected by ensuring that all identifying information will be removed from the data. As you may be aware, the Indigenous research/scholarly community in Canada is a small community, and being that recruitment of research participants has emerged from professional networking/recommendations, it is possible that individuals within the Indigenous research community will be able to ascertain the identity of a research participant. You will have an opportunity to review the transcripts and findings from your interview to ensure that you are comfortable with the presentation of the material and that all identifying information is removed from the data. All of the transcripts and finding will be kept in a locked file cabinet and the information that is stored electronically will be accessible through a secure password system. As the sole research for this project, only I will have access to the interviews capture on audio and in transcription form. Upon completion of the research, I will send you a summary of the research via email.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways:

- Dissemination of findings to participants
- Dissemination of findings to Indigenous community (as requested by general Indigenous community)
- Presentation of findings to Indigenous research and scholarly community (classrooms, conferences, guest presentations)
- Publication of this research in either a journal or book format

Upon completion of this research the data from this study will be returned to you (at your request) or be disposed. Individuals you may contact about this study, at any time, include myself or my supervisors identified at the beginning of this consent form. In addition to being able to contact myself (the researcher) and my Supervisors at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix IV: Letter Seeking Permission to Use Transcripts

APPROVAL LETTER FOR FINAL TRANSCRIPTS AND INTERVIEW

Tânisi

I hope this email finds you well! I am happy to report that I have finally completed the transcription our interview earlier this year for thesis. Transcribing our conversation was totally neat because it gave the opportunity to really reflect on what you had to say about Indigenous research, and the importance of your story and input. I am hoping to use the interview data in two places in my thesis. The first appearance would be in a chapter devoted to our conversation. The second place I would use the transcripts would be in a chapter that identifies themes emerging from the interview.

Right now I am at the stage of writing the first chapter that highlights the essence of our conversation. I struggled with how to present the stories, which is so important in an Indigenous methodological approach; because I really wanted to make sure your voice came across. What I decided to do was to take the essence of the interview (with some minimal editing from the raw transcripts) that really spoke to me. I wanted to use the whole interview, but recognized I had to pare it down a bit. I am enclosing both the raw transcripts of the interview and the condensed version of the interview (as it would appear in the dissertation).

I recognize that you are probably really busy, but in order for me to do this in a good way; I want to make sure that you are okay with the raw transcripts and anything that I have written or that appears in the condensed interview. At this point I have also used your name, but would need to know if you are okay with having your name attached. I am hoping to have a draft of this dissertation to my supervisors by the end of December so I was hoping that you would have a chance to look this over in the next little while.

So just to re-cap I would need your approval of the transcripts, your okay to go ahead with the condensed interview (or any changes) and your approval to let your name stand with the interview. If you could email this to me that would be great.

Please don't hesitate to give me a call or email me if you any questions. My phone number is 250 525 1824. I just want to thank-you so much for sharing your knowledge about Indigenous research; this whole process has just been amazing. If you are interested, I would be really happy to share my work with you once it's complete. I look forward to be in touch with you and take care,

Respectfully,
Maggie