LAND AS BODY:
INDIGENOUS WOMXN'S* LEADERSHIP, LAND-BASED WELLNESS AND EMBODIED GOVERNANCE

by

ERYNNE M. GILPIN
Master of Arts, The University of Victoria, 2014
Bachelor of Arts, Western University, 2012

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the School of INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

© Erynne M. Gilpin, 2020
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part,
by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

SUPERVISORY COMMITEE

Land as Body:
Indigenous Womxn's Leadership, Land-Based Wellness and
Embodied Governance

by

Erynne M. Gilpin
Master of Arts, The University of Victoria, 2014
Bachelor of Arts, Western University, 2012

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Charlotte Loppie, School of Public Health and Social Policy
Supervisor

Dr. Jeff Corntassel, Indigenous Studies, Indigenous Governance
Departmental Member

Dr. Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, Political Science, Indigenous Governance
Departmental Member

ABSTRACT

As many Indigenous voices and teachings reveal, individual practices of leadership are an everyday commitment to cultural resurgence and actualize within the personal spaces of the home, kitchen table, garden, birth-room and familial relations. Individual enactments of leadership are further determined by personal sense of agency derived from feelings of personal wellness, community well-being, relational balance and alignment of the mental, spiritual, emotional and physical selves. Healthy environments, including territories that encompass Land and Water, are essential for overall community wellness. This dissertation examines emergent themes of Indigenous wellness, governance and gender to broaden current definitions of Indigenous governance and leadership towards a gendered, storied and embodied understanding. Countering the notion that governance and wellness are separate entities within the field of Indigenous Governance, this paper draws the Indigenous body into focus as a crucial site for self-determination in what I define as *embodied governance*. In doing so, we situate the Indigenous body within a self-determination framework that brings together critical Indigenous studies, Indigenous governance and culturally grounded wellness practices. Utilizing narrative inquiry, storytelling methods, relationship based models of accountability, this research project included the guided conversations of 17 self-identified Indigenous Womxn between 21-60 years of age from 10 different Nations, to explore: definitions of leadership in their everyday lives, the conditions for their personal wellness and community well-being, and finally, how these notions are predicated upon meaningful relationship to Land/Waters. My research defines wellness and well-being within the Cree-Michif framework of Miyo-Pimatisiwin (personal wellness, self-care, healing, internal balance) and Miyo-Wîchêtowin (care for others, accountability and belonging, kinship, relational governance, external balance). These concepts inform what I define as an *embodied governance* framework of self-determination to engage in ongoing efforts of personal, community, Land/Water-based healing for the purpose of protecting the future of generations to come. The final analysis celebrates and honours on-the-ground practices of embodied governance by focusing on rooted examples of creative resurgence, Land-Water based healing practices and a focus on an emergent theme of embodied birth and reproductive governance. These learnings support that determinants of individual leadership must be supported by a sense of personal wellness contained by relationship to Land and Waters. The dissertation begins with a critical examination of the colonial underpinnings that sabotage community healing, wellness and traditions of governance as derived by relationship to home Lands and Waters. In this way, I aim to interrupt the predominant trope of the Indigenous body or community as continuously in crisis. Instead, this paper situates Indigenous healing practices as radical sites of governance. This dissertation argues for the reconsideration of self-determination as embodied governance, which begins with the body as a site of regeneration, resurgence and renewal.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE ……..……..……. i
SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE …….……..… ii
ABSTRACT …… iii
CONTENTS …… iv
A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY: *WOMXN* ……..…. v
LIST OF FIGURES …….…… vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: WÂHKITOWIN ……. vii
DEDICATION……. …… viii
GREETINGS AND THANKS……..…..…… ix
SELF-LOCATION …… x
INTENTION ……..… xi
CO-RESEARCHERS …… xii

INTRODUCTION:
CHAPTER OUTLINES …….. 1

CHAPTER ONE:
INDIGENOUS RESURGENCE, GOVERNANCE AND LAND-BASED WELLNESS: BEYOND COLONIAL IMAGINARY…… 22

CHAPTER TWO-
INDIGENOUS RESEARCH: LAND, BODY AND BEYOND
Research Ethics, Protocol and Practice ……..……..….. 41

CHAPTER THREE:
LEARNINGS | KIHEWINI
Methods, Learnings and Discussion…….……. 66

CHAPTER FOUR:
LAND AS BODY: EMBODIED FUTURISMS CONSTELLATIONS OF INTER-BEING AND INTER-BECOMING
Emerging themes, learnings and possibilities ……..…104

CONCLUSION| EKOSI……..……122

BIBLIOGRAPHY……..…….127

FOOTNOTES……..…… 137

LIST OF FIGURES

1.0 *Kihewini Model of of Indigenous Womxn's Wellness and Embodied Governance* ……*pp. 81*

2.0 *Land-Based Model of of Indigenous Womxn's Wellness and Embodied Governance, Gilpin* ……*pp. 82*

APPENDIX

1.0 *Community Learning Basket: Storied Handbook*

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY: *WOMXN*

The spelling of "Womxn" is to acknowledge the diverse and fluid intersections of ancestry, gender, sexualities, non-binary and queer experiences of every person who identifies with the feminine spirit. This includes all self-identifying 'women', girls, two-spirit, trans, queer, non-binary and queer community members. Within the emerging field of thought and practice of *Queer Indigineity*, as described by Cree scholar Billy-Ray Belcourt, the use non-binary and queer terminology is grounded in community leadership and claims towards collective determination and vibrant futurity. All research co-researchers identify with this term and felt strongly that the use of this spelling was a supplementary apparatus for personal liberation and self-actualization beyond hetero-patriarchal norms imposed by the English language. Across the 17 co-researchers interviewed, five co-researchers identified as queer and two co-researchers identified as Two-Spirit. The intention with the terminology of Womxn is to make more space for more bodies, more experiences, more fluidity and more relationship. There will never be one single term, specifically in the English language which will capture the complexity, intersectionality and abundance of identity. The use of this term represents ongoing learning within the Spirit of Tatawâw and will shape-shift and grow as learning continues beyond this research project. Tatawâw! *There is room for you here.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: WÂHKITOWIN

"We are not in relationships, we are the relationships we hold and are a part of"
-Shawn Wilson, Opaskwayak Cree

Kinanâskomitin to those who have not only offered me supervisor and guidance in my scholarship, but who have also offered moral support, emotional care and spiritual guidance. To May Sam, for supporting me through the passing of my grandmother and for offering solace and peace in your love, prayers and friendship. To Myrna Crossley and Beangka Elliott and your family, for allowing me into your home, hearts and kitchens and for laughing and loving on the Land. To Mary Hayes, for your unconditional compassion, guidance and teachings. The First People's House & LE'NONET, thank you for your shelter, friendship and care. To Qwul'sih'yah'maht, Robina Thomas, for holding space and protecting space for Indigenous womxn within the academy and in all forms of self-determined leadership. To Russ Johnston, Estrella Whetung, Mick and Carla Scow and the cubs, for teaching me that friendship is unconditional, love is pure and laughter is healing. Thank you for walking with me through this program, I walk with you. To Lindsay Delaronde, co-creating embodied resistance, stories and visions through death, birth and beyond. To Jarrett Martineau, ostesimâw, thank you for your mentorship, ceremony and for being family. To Our loving and abundant community. To my Supervisory Committee: Charlotte Loppie, for teaching me that love, respect and kindness build Nations. Thank you for being my heart in this work, I could not have done this without you. To Noelani Goodyear Ka'opua, for your teachings of Aloha, mentorship and guidance across Oceans and for inviting me into the Ea of your Ohana with Hina, La'i, Moku and Imai. I am honoured to have you to look up to. Jeff and Leila Corntassel, for inviting me into your family and inspiring me to always defend the Land and Protect the Sacred.

Hiy Hiy

To my partner, Kl. Peruzzo, for embarking this journey with me. For believing that a life worth living is one that honours truth, integrity and spiritual becoming; Gratidão. To my Parents, Michelle and Paul Gilpin; for being my home territories. There will never be words to express my deepest gratitude and love for you. For your unconditional support, loving encouragement and profound belief in my truth. You are my Sacred and I belong to you.

DEDICATION

For my Grandmothers
Irene Chartrand and Sharon Stanley

and

For you,

my sister Emilee Gilpin, for teaching me relationship.
For teaching me purpose and belonging.
For teaching me that Spirit exists in two bodies.
Kisâhkitin.

NITATAMINAN:
In Greetings and Thanks

Kisemanito
li kourawch miyinawn
paray chee itayhtamawk
kwayesh kapimouhtayhk
marsee hiy hiy chee itwayak ka kishcheetayimoyak
Nitataminan

Ayis Kiyehewini Pimatisiwin
Sayweyimenan mena ota mamawai kayayahk
Meyinan, muskawisewin mena ayimesewin
Ta natohtamahk menata nahehtamahk
Meyinan asumena ta wapahatamahk
Sakastewini mena ka nanskomitinan

Hiy Hiy anaskomitinanan

A prayer gifted by my Great Uncle Ted Chartrand

SELF-LOCATION

To all our relations, I love you and the Lands and Waters that raised our peoples. My sister once introduced herself as someone who was *not born Indigenous but of Indigenous ancestry.* This way of introduction allows for me to situate myself in the work of Indigenous wellness research and leadership from a place of humility, accountability, and ongoing critical reflection. I am a mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous person of Saulteaux-Cree Métis [The Pás Manitoba, Treaty 5 territory], Celtic and Filipina ancestry. Although I acknowledge my kinship to our Saulteaux, Cree and Métis relatives, we grew up outside of our ancestral territories, cultural circles, community governance traditions, languages and ceremonies. I grew up on, and am thankful to, the Anishinaabe and Iroquois territories of the Munsee-Delaware, Chippewa of the Thames and Oneida Nations, in Southwestern Ontario (Komoka, Ontario).

It wasn't until my early adult years, did I begin to gain critical tools necessary to understand the implications of intergenerational racist, sexist, heteronormative colonial violence within our families, our homes and upon our bodies. As a family, we began to learn how to interrogate systems of violence culpable of severing us from our birthright to a loving relationship to Land, identity and belonging. As someone of mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous ancestry, I am required to acknowledge my light-skin passing privileges and other embodiments of inherited power, and to best commit to work that my relatives should not need to take on the burden of doing: the education of settler-state Canadians and resistance to colonial violence enacted upon Indigenous Lands and bodies. I, a cis-gender female (she/her) queer feminist, am accountable to take on responsibilities of educating and correcting colonial histories and curriculum, while also responsible to engage in loving resurgence of our own cultures, languages and governance practices. As a member of the Indigenous Diaspora, or someone who was *not born Indigenous but of Indigenous ancestry*, as a Birth-worker (doula), educator and community wellness activist, I am required to check my mind, body and emotions as I engage in the careful work to return, reclaim and resurge my body, mind, heart and spirit within my own conscious Indigeneity. The convergence of identities, accountabilities and privileges housed in my body allows for me to explore the ways in which our bodies are living and breathing acts of governance, resistance and resurgence. A resurgence of kinship to land-based genealogies, prayers and dignity. It is from here that I engage in my own research and enter into a critical examination of Land as Body: Indigenous Womxn's Leadership, Land-Based Wellness and Embodied Governance.

Chartrand, Stanely, Stephens, Guevara, Desjarlais, Gaudry, Campbell, Ledoux, Neepinak, Rattlesnake, Moosetail, Napakisik, Otayatch, Kwiwtait, Isakikapu, Ducharme, Delaronde, Makakons, Missiabet, Kamikok and all of the other names which carry our bloodlines.

Kisâhkitin.

When the last tree is cut, the last fish is caught, and the last river is polluted; when to breathe the air is sickening, you will realize, too late, that wealth is not in bank accounts and that you can't eat money.

- Plains Cree Prophecy as told by Alanis Obomsawin

INTENTION

This is for the Land and the Waters.
For all life who lives in the Salt and Sweet Waters.
For all four-legged, winged-ones and creatures of this planet.
For all medicine and herbal plants.
For all plants and fruits which gift us with nutrients.
For the trees.
For the wildflowers.
For the four directions of the wind.
For the thunders and lightenings.
For the stars and the moon.
For the sun.
For all womxn[1] who embody the power to re-align healing in all sentient and planetary bodies.
For the Old Ones and knowledge keepers.
For the babies being born.
For the forgotten ones.
This is for you.
For a planet thrown out of balance,
our life giver Kâ wee ooma aski
we see you, we hear you, we love you.

We journey back to protect what is sacred and defend vibrant futurity.

1 In text terminology

AYIS KIHEWINI PIMATISIWIN

To the knowledge keepers, leaders, co-researchers and kin who participated in this research. This belongs to you. Thank you for your time, trust, care and energy. Ayis Kihewini Pimatisiwin: *Your Breath is the Breath of Life.*

Holly Grosbeck | Anishinaabe
Sagaate Jessica Day | Anishinaabe Finnish & English
Cheryl Henhawke | Seneca Mohawk
Shayli Thompson | Lyackson/ Le'eyqsun
Chastity | Nuu Chah Nulth
Angela Cooper Poundmaker | Nehiyaw
Estrella Whetung | Anishinaabe/Lucbanin
Sherri Pooyak | Nehiyaw
Ashleigh Thompson | Anishinaabe
Megan McKenna | Secwépemc
Shelby Blackjack | Northern Tutchone
Chantelle Blackjack | Northern Tutchone
Lianne Charlie | Northern Tutchone
Rebecca Watts | Inuit
Tiffany Joseph | W̱SÁNEĆ / Sk̲wx̲wú7mesh Úxwumixw
Lindsay Delaronde | Mohawk
Beangka Elliott | W̱SÁNEĆ/Lekgwungen
Emilee Gilpin | Nehiyaw-Michif

LAND AS BODY:
INDIGENOUS WOMXN'S* LEADERSHIP, LAND-BASED WELLNESS AND EMBODIED GOVERNANCE

INTRODUCTION:

The wellness of our peoples depends on the wellness of the Lands and Waters. Wellness depends on meaningful and consensual relationships to the Lands and Waters that raise us and our families. Despite ongoing colonial violence enacted upon Indigenous territories and waters *(unconsensual extractive industries - pipe-lines, fish-farms, tanker traffic and mono-culture agriculture)*, our bodies *(structural racism within distal spheres of public health, removal of Indigenous womxn from positions of authority)* and our spirits *(euro-centric dominant, capitalistic, settler-state values systems which prioritize self-interest, lateral violence, competition, merit and individualism),* Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island and around the world are reclaiming culturally-grounded embodiments of wellness, healing and governance. We reclaim kinship to one another by reclaiming our kinship to the Land and Waters.

Within Canadian-state imaginary, Indigenous bodies are often perceived as in *crisis* - health crisis, economic crisis, political crisis. However, Canadian systems of education, governance and health-care very often fail to contextualize Indigenous wellness in relationship to hundreds of years of colonialism, including more recently broken relationships, treaties, and promises to uphold and acknowledge the inherit, constitutionally protected and international rights of Indigenous peoples. Within the era of reconciliatory relational frameworks and centralized focus on Indigenous inclusivity, Indigenous political, social and cultural governance re-define, re-claim and re-enact responsibility-centred relations within cultural contexts and place-based systems. Gaudry and Lorenz' seminal work, "Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian Academy" (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018) describe post-Truth and Reconciliation initiations of

Indigenization across higher learning Institutions. Outlined in three specific spheres of *Indigenization as Inclusion, Reconciliation Indigenization* and finally *Decolonial Indigenization*, the authors describe the distinct differentiations from which Indigenous communities and scholars experience non-Indigenous approaches to post-TRC relations. Their analysis demonstrates that relational frameworks grounded in ideals of inclusion and or reconciliation are inept and or incompatible with efforts to harness meaningful decolonial relational practice.

Implementing new relations through the framework offered by post-TRC mandates, recommendations and goals limit the ongoing personal and collective manifestations of embodied governance as enacted Indigenous womxn themselves. Gaudry and Lorenz problematize the concept of inclusion within the context of Indigenization and for the purpose of this research, I extend their analysis towards my own understanding and thinking of governance concepts, practice and meaning. The above mentioned analysis is further reflected in Coulthard's exemplary work of Red Skin, White Masks (2014), in which he interrogates reconciliatory and recognitionist relational frameworks within a context of Nationhood and inter-National governance. Coulthard argues that, "instead of ushering in an era of peaceful coexistence grounded on the ideal of reciprocity or mutual recognition, the politics of recognition in its contemporary liberal form promises to reproduce the very configuration of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous people's demands for the recognition have historically sought to transcend" (p. 3). Coulthard's analysis examines the changing tools of state power, from genocidal assimilationist policy, practice and protocol, to an emergent socio-politique based on land-claims settlements through a framework of *recognition.* The use of relational framing based on aspirational values of reconciliation, inclusion and recognition, do not consider

Indigenous individuals, communities and kinship networks within a place-based context of inter-belonging and inter-governance. Coulthard further interrogates Settler-colonial assumptions and relational practice to Land and Waters by outlining Marxist influence of *primitive accumulation* and the influence of these principle in Settler-Colonial Land-relations. An important and imminent critique of Settler-Colonial Land-relations is offered in his analysis of settler colonialism an entity that is " territorially acquisitive in perpetuity" (152) and describes the short-comings settler-colonial relational values within post-TRC implementation.

In Gaudry and Lorenz' analysis of Indigenization within efforts of Indigenous knowledge mobilization, and place-based reproductions of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, along with Coulthard's meaningful cross-examination of settler-colonial Land-Relations and political framings of *Recognition*, all authors identify the pathways towards Indigenous governance, resurgence and personal self-determination. Gaudry and Lorenz offer a meaningful engagement with the concept of Decolonial Indigenization and Coulthard regards Indigenous liberatory political capacity through a lens of resurgence and revitalization. Both approaches to Indigenous governance situate the Land as the authority and determinant of effective and efficient political, personal and inter-related governance. Land-centred approaches to Indigenous knowledge and political governance, described in these works, provide a context from which, we as Indigenous scholars may take up their learnings and critically apply them to our own place-based context, knowledge systems and every day acts of governance. When the Land is centred as the keystone to governance practice and relational integrity, our shared work opens up new spaces for creative and inter-determined relationships based on responsibility, kinship and belonging; extending first and foremost from Land (place) and into the relational networks which define our places of

governance. Coulthard confronts settler-colonial epistemologies and ontologies predicated on objectifying efforts to reduce the Land as Material; which in turn erase Land as relation. The erasure of Land within a relational sense, enables material power dynamics which reflect normalizations and naturalized relations of power-dominance and hierarchy. Kinship circles extend out and forward from the diverse nexuses of place-based knowledge systems embedded in home-territory and water relations. When Land/Water relations are considered as pillars of and determinants to governance practice and wellness leadership, then efforts of resurgence and decolonial pedagogy carry forward traditional political, social, cultural values and land-language knowledge. Land-as kin, within resurgence and decolonial practice has the capacity to ground personal and collective enactments of governance and bolster Nation-building through reproductive cultural, kincentric and future relations.

Land-Based Research Lens: Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wichetowin.

Extended from relationship to Land and Waters are also culturally-grounded governance protocols, encoded with all of the information we need to live a *good life*. The Cree-Michif ethos of Miyo-Pimatisiwin is a way to understand "living a good life" or "walking in a good way". It describes how our overall sense of wellbeing encompasses our mental, physical, emotional and spiritual realities. Miyo-Pimatisiwin is the lens used to explore and define wellness within this research body. Experiences of personal wellness in relation to others (relational) is what grounds the Cree-Michif teaching of Miyo-Wîchêtowin, "to be in good relations, balanced relations" with the world around us. Miyo-Wîchêtowin offers a lens by which I engage in thinking and inquiring about the concept of *governance* within this research collection. When applied to a political discourse, Indigenous frameworks, such as Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wîchêtowin, describe

systems of governance defined by the pursuit of balance, responsibility, awareness and accountability. When Indigenous communities are able to live out their governance systems, which seek to protect "expansive systems of interdependent relations covering the land and animals, past and future generations as well as other people and communities" (Coulthard, 2010, p. 82), they are able to achieve "complete health through harmony with the Creator, family, community and nature" (Long and Fox, 1996, pp. 4).

This research project aims to offer meaningful insights into the conditions necessary for Indigenous womxn to experience a sense of personal wellness, so that they can take up their birth-rite responsibilities for the good of all relations. Indigenous womxn's leadership is crucial to the health and wellbeing of communities, so-called countries and the planet itself. Indigenous womxn must experience a personal and meaningful sense of wellbeing, in relation to their kinship networks, Spirit and Land/Waters. Their participation in relationship networks is a form of every day governance, necessary to the restoration of balance in all life. Indigenous womxn are the past - present and future. This work aims to critically examine the ways in which I, as kin, community-researcher, birth-helper, educator, friend, ally and learner can support Indigenous womxn's self-actualization in the realms of Land/Water-based wellness, leadership and embodied governance. Within my research, I employ Cree-Michif cultural lenses which inform my interpretive, relational and reflective processes. This research defines wellness through the lens of Cree-Michif teaching Miyo-Pimatisiwin (balance, personal wellness, self-care, healing, internal balance) and defines governance and through the Cree-Michif lens of Miyo-Wîchêtowin (relationship, enactment or action of balance, care for others, accountability and belonging, kinship, relational governance, external balance).

Miyo-Pimatisiwin promotes a heightened consciousness of our inter-being and inter-becoming within relational networks (kin, families, relatives and beyond). In relation to the ethics of Miyo-Wîchêtowin, our research employs an anti-colonial/anti-oppressive approach which informs the thinking of, relationship to and co-creation with research questions, findings, approaches and methods. These pedagogies recognize that in order to explore the deeply interwoven teachings embedded within everyday acts of wellness and governance of Indigenous womxn, it is necessary to describe colonial projections embedded in shared histories, ongoing relationships and conceptions of health. When applied to a political discourse, Indigenous frameworks, such as Miyo-Pimatisiwin, find a system of governance premised on balanced relations and relational accountability, within all facets of social life. Colonial values and power-relations reproduce within cognitive, material and emotional realms of social and relational interaction. In my own understanding of colonial projection, I regard colonization as a process of severing of relationship and conscious inter-belonging to Self, one another, Spirit and the Land/ Waters (place-knowledge, cosmology, ceremonial protocol). Conscious interconnectivity is what constitutes many Indigenous peoples social, ceremonial, economic, knowledge and relations governance values and practice. Nuu-chah-nulth scholar, hereditary Chief and author Dr. Richard Atleo (Nuu-chah-nulth) shares his own teachings of "heshook-ish tsawalk", or "everything is one" in his book Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview" (2004). By positioning himself deeply in his own cultural teachings of Tsawalk, Atleo explores the ways in which Tsawalk provides a framework of relationships between the physical and spiritual. In this way, my own dissertation argues and place forward a framework of decolonization which is meant to disrupt colonial enterprise and embolden efforts towards Indigenous resurgence based on cosmologies of

connection. Colonial infrastructure and systems of wellness and governance have much to learn from the diverse array of Indigenous approaches to community wellbeing. It is from this place of cultural knowledge that we as co-researchers engage with shared inquiries and aspirations to co-define our own pathways towards experiences of wellness and governance practice. The goal of this research is to offer an engendered and Land-based comprehensive definition of Indigenous governance and advocate for wellness practices, which emerge from collaborative visions and teachings offered by the research co-researchers. In this way, Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wîchêtowin offer definitions of wellness and governance as interwoven pathways towards a more intimate experience of Indigenous self-actualization on both personal and collective levels. The ideals of harmony and balance serve as the foundation for Indigenous healing traditions and leadership practice, as viable pathways to self-governance and decolonization. Experiences of personal healing and wellness are interdependent to the experiences and relationships with the world around us. Kin-centric relationships situate individual bodies within larger constellations of belonging, accountability and connection. In this research collection, co-researchers offer insights which help define personal enactments of self-determination and expressed self-actualization within experiences of wellness and leadership governance. Learnings gained describe how Indigenous bodies (minds, hearts, spirits and physical bodies) are direct extensions of home Lands/Waters, necessitating an analysis of governance of Land and governance of body. I discern that, in the same ways that governance is enacted on Indigenous Lands and Waters, Indigenous bodies as extensions of homelands, are viable sites for self-defined determination, healing authority and Indigenous imaginaries. Final learnings inform a framework of what I describe as *embodied governance.* Through the lens of embodied relationship to Land/Water,

embodied experiences of wellness and relationship, embodied enactments of personal self-determination, leadership and governance, myself along with co-researchers weave together disciplines of Indigenous wellness, governance and gender analyses towards a wholistic definition of Indigenous womxn's leadership, wellness and embodied governance. These frameworks work to expand definitions of community leadership and Land/Water-based wellness and propel Indigenous womxn's leadership to the forefront of National sensibilities regarding relationship to self, others, Spirit and Land/Waters. We, researcher and co-researchers, examine and renew our understandings of land and body governance, through a framework of Embodied Governance; a practice which centres reproductions and rebirth of community culture, ceremony and protocol, while resisting extraction and emphasizing regeneration, resurgence, re-storying, restoration and renewal. We focus on the body as a crucial site for self-determination and the Indigenous body as a site of cultural renewal and regeneration.

The wellness of our communities can not be divorced from the health of the Land and Waters and self-determined Indigenous womxn's leadership is necessary to restore balance amongst all relations. This research defines wellness through the lens of Cree-Michif teaching Miyo-Pimatisiwin (balance, personal wellness, self-care, healing, internal balance) and defines governance and through the Cree-Michif lens of Miyo-Wîchêtowin (relationship, enactment or action of balance, care for others, accountability and belonging, kinship, relational governance, external balance). In this research project entitled, Land as Body: Indigenous Womxn's Leadership, Land-based Wellness and Embodied Governance, I examine the interconnectivities between Miyo-Pimatiwisin (wellness) and Miyo-Wîchêtowin (relational governance), leaning towards a more holistic understanding of how these experiences are determined by relationship

to the Land and Waters, providing pathways towards Indigenous Womxn's embodied governance. Indigenous leadership protocols and Wellness practices will be examined within an intersectional lens of Indigenous governance towards a deeper understanding of personal experiences of everyday governance of and relationship to Self, Others, Spirit and Land/Water kinship. Through the articulation of a reclaimed ethics of Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wîchêtowin, as defined by co-researchers, our learnings aim to enhance efforts towards regenerative community wellness, governance & leadership in reclaimed kinship to Land and Waters.

Womxn: Shapeshifting Terminology and Indigenous Feminist Land-based Queerisms

While existing research continues to explore the links between governance and health, the leadership potential of womxn is not fully acknowledged, even though Indigenous governance traditions are predicated on the central role of womxn and their diverse abilities to give-life. In *Mothers of the Nations: Indigenous Mothering as Global Resistance, Reclaiming and Recovery* (2014), authors Anderson, Lavell-Harvard and Memee present diverse articulations of how the notion of life-giver is taken up by Indigenous womxn. Cherokee poet and knowledge keeper Marilou Awiakta, is quoted in saying that the framework of life-giver challenges engendered notions of reproduction, birth and family-orientation by acknowledging that "the gender capable of being life is not separated from power to sustain it" (qtd. pp 171). In this way, Awiakta recognizes that all individuals express multi-faceted and intersectional enactments of reproduction and life-creation, through their own determined socio-cultural responsibilities and Land relations.

In my own research, I understand the concept of embodied governance as the actual

transmission of traditional knowledge in a contemporary interpretation of everyday actions and grounded in visions and/or political imaginaries of futures to come. If we determine Land/Water relations at the core of contemporary traditional governance, personal practice and collective political imagination, then we are better able to situate settler-colonial state constructs at the periphery of Indigenous governance end embodied experiences of wellness and cultural strength. Embodied in place, in relationship and in expression, governance on, with and for the Land/ Waters as kin-relations folds in past, present and future place-based knowledge in a movement of relational governance protocol and practice.

An emphasis on futurity within this context is also described as intergenerational responsibility and accountability; a conscious recognition that actions made in the present are informed by ancestral knowledge and or teachings, and have implications which impact the lives of generations to come. Through this awareness, we have the ability to employ actions which consider and centre the outcomes of social, economic, political, health and social realities for generations to come, strengthening cultural resurgence, Land/Water-based wellness and political self-determination. The fertile grounds of Indigenous governance scholarship and inquiry inform the ways in which I envision and understand my own learnings and enactments of governance. The limitations of my own realizations, conceptions and understandings are limited by my stage in learning my own language. As I learn my own language, I have come to consider language as an expression of place-Land-Water and perhaps even emotive instances. In Tanana Athabascan Dian Million's foundational work "Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History", she expresses that emotions, often regarded as non-quantifiable entities of an "ethereal existence" within academic research. Additionally, emotions have been charged with feminine

notions of gender, expression and belonging, further segregating their authority and significance within academic inquiry and analysis of social-constructs and political emancipation. Million goes on to say that emotions "come from a body, rather than being about a body… they are part of our culture and have a socio-relational aspect…emotions are engaged, deeply social and rational…they can be managed…emotions connect with social agency…" (2009, pp 21). She goes on say that "therefore, without a concept of emotion, cultural analysis is insufficient…the emotional realm is a public realm [and] once emotions are accepted into sociology, the divisions between private and public, the micro and macro break down", which lead to a deeper analysis of "the social structure itself is both "medium and outcome" of "emotionally embodied practices" (2009, pp 21). In the same way that Million describes emotions as expressions of the body, perhaps in a similar way, language is furthermore an expression and or an entity from the Land as Body. If the Land//Waters chose to self-express, would they do so through the Languages of our peoples? If the Land chose to tell a story, wouldn't it be through the Land-languages gifted directed to our communities? Without a more in-depth and felt grasp of my own language in my own learning, I am left with an incomplete analysis of the ways in which I consider the intersections of Indigenous governance and wellness practice. In the same way that Million asserts, without a meaningful contemplation of the role of emotions within a cultural analysis, I recognize my own limitations in my own analysis without a full grasp of the language which carries my own cultural teachings, governance practice and wellness protocols.

As language is relational and place-based, the cultural teachings and practices which architect my own framework and analysis; specifically, that of Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wîchêtowin, derive ongoing meaning and understanding as I carry and hold ongoing

relationships with Language carriers. As an active learner of the Nehiyaw language, I gain bit by bit insight into the complexities and profundity of my own cultural laws, governance and wellness practices. My own conceptions of embodied governance and Land-Water-centred wellness reflect where I am in learning of my own language. At this point, I am not at a place where I can carry and or reproduce my language forward, and therefore am not able to integrate emergent and recent Language-Learnings in my ongoing analysis. Such an example is with the terminology of Womxn. I am not in a place in my own Language-Learnings to replace the term and indicator Womxn, with a more cohesive and expansive term from the Nehiyaw language. I am committed to learn more about gendered nuances within the Nehiyaw-language so that I may expand beyond my own cognitive limitations of how I speak about, promote and gender my own community work and research practice. In their work entitled, N'tacimonwin inna nah': Our Coming In Stories, Opaswayak Cree scholar and community leader Alex Wilson instates that,

> "The Swampy Cree dialect of our community has no word for homosexual and no gender specific pronouns. Rather than dividing the world into female and male, or making linguistic distinctions based on sexual characteristics or anatomy, we distinguish between what is animal and what is inanimate. Living creatures, animate objects, and actions are understood to have a spiritual purpose (Ahenakew). Out language and culture are rooted in this fundamental truth: that every living creature and everything that acts in and not his world is spiritually meaningful " (Wilson 2008, pp1).

Furthermore, contributions from Queer Indigenous theorists and visionaries such as Cree scholar and author Billy-Ray Belcourt and Cree-Saulteaux-Métis writer and scholar Lindsay Nixon, remind our communities that Indigenous futurity cannot be divorced from Queer kin-ship accountabilities. Because "We are a Land-Based People" (qtd. in Anderson et al., 2014, p. 181), critical discourse within Land-based governance relations and wellness must reflect

intersectional feminist and decolonial Queer expressions of relationship, reproduction and kin-centric governance. By utilizing the term *Womxn*, our research attempts to by-step the limitations of gendered-binarized terminology and locate our analysis within contributions of Indigenous Queer feminist thought and relations. In this way, we locate our shared learnings-thoughts and storied narratives on the Land and within our own self-expressed relationship to place. Just as the Land teaches us that a tree cannot be divorced from their place within the soil, we must interrogate the imposition of binarizing expressions of governance, relationship and identity within our analysis.

Throughout this work, I have attempted to take up the words of Haunani-Kay Trask who says, "to know my history, I have had to put away my books and return to the land" (qtd in Anderson et al., 2014, p. 181). As I walk on and with the Land/Waters, I witness ever-unfolding and shapeshifting embodiments of self/shared-expression of being and life. The Land reproduces life-force, and cares for life through interconnected energy and relation. The Land teaches me about my own every-unfolding self and imaginaries of how I reproduce cultural-life through relational responsibilities and care. I understand my own intersectional expressions of self, gender, relationship and belonging through observing the complex manifestations of Land-based reproduction. I learn that binaries do not exist, just as the tree is not separate from their roots, from their soil, and everything surrounding its experience with life; I am not separated from my kin-centric belonging to my own home Lands and Waters, place-based accountabilities and family relations. Along with the co-researchers of this project, our shared interactions recognize the term *womxn* as an opportunity to self-identify within the realm of self-expression and life-giving frameworks. Our shared inquiry explores notions of how governance, gender and

embodied experiences of wellness are shaped by Land-based relations and cultural futurity (reproduction).

Centering embodied notions and experiences of personal and shared governance provides diverse and multi-faceted opportunities for us to redefine power relations to Land and Waters as determined by our own ongoing critical interpretations of cultural law and place-based knowledge systems. Centering embodied notions and experiences of personal and shared governance provides diverse and multi-faceted opportunities for us to redefine power relations to Land and Waters as determined by our own ongoing critical interpretations of cultural law and place-based knowledge systems.

CHAPTER OUTLINES:

The first chapter, entitled *Indigenous Resurgence, Governance and Land-Based Wellness: Beyond Colonial Imaginary* will briefly dissect the logic, assumptions and values of colonial projects and how they inform Canadian socio-consciousness and settler-state mentalities. This research project begins with an examination of the interconnectivities *(and discrepancies or gaps)* between the fields of Indigenous Governance and Indigenous Wellness (Health) Research, to highlight the conditions necessary to promote personal wellness and collective well-being, grounded in culturally-defined relationships to Land, Water and governance systems. It will identify colonial mechanisms, which normalize the values complicit in historical and ongoing structural beliefs systems and euro-centric world-views, endowed with white-supremacist racism and gendered sexualized violence. It will then extend this interrogation into the arena of Indigenous Feminist and Queer theory and practice in order to determine the implications of

multidimensional colonial power-relations and center Indigenous Queer and feminist resurgence leadership within efforts towards regenerative community wellness and personal healing.

The chapter entitled *Indigenous Research: Land, Body and Beyond,* introduces the research project entitled: Land as Body: An Examination of Indigenous Womxn's Leadership, Land-Based Wellness and Embodied Governance. The first section outlines the research project's objectives and design, based on the exclusive use of Indigenous research methodologies of 1) Relationship 2) Accountability 3) Language and Cultural Protocol and 4) Land/Water-based learning. The remaining sections of this chapter review the research framework, including objectives, questions and design, as well as detail ethical considerations, relational protocol and community-led practice. The final section involves a collaborative discussion, with co-researchers as co-researchers, as we examine the interconnectivities of experienced wellness and governance practice. Together, we draw out the teachings/findings, from a narrative thematic analysis of the storied-interviews/guided conversations, to identify learnings gained from this project. The next chapter, *Learnings | Kihewini: Methods, Learnings and Discussion* identifies four domains, defined in this research as Kihewini or central intersections, which reflect major shared themes of insight offered by the co-researchers, and furthermore describe my own central learnings. The four domains presented describe pathways towards co-creative experiences of Indigenous womxn's wellness, leadership and what we co-define as *embodied governance.* These learnings include: 1) Spirit and Culture *(personal sense of balance, alignment of emotional, mental, physical and spiritual bodies)*, 2) Creative Resurgence *(self-actualization and personal vitality)*, 3) Relational Accountability *(Social and Spiritual belonging and*

accountability to relational networks) and finally 4) Kitaskînaw î pî kiskinohâmakoya. Sâkihito-maskihiy î pî kiskinimâkoya *(Relationship to Land and Water, Informs who we are as a People).*

The final chapter, entitled, *Land as Body: Embodied Futurity in Constellations of Inter-being and Inter-becoming,* presents a framework of governance practices and wellness experiences, which aims to broaden current definitions of political leadership towards an engendered description, defined by lived, felt, and embodied experiences and knowledges. It will draw upon Dian Million's teachings of Felt Theory and Dr. Yellowbird's call to decolonize the mind, and situate the Indigenous womxn's body as fertile grounds for self-determination, cultural resurgence and sacred landscapes for vibrant governance, as determined through self-agency and visionary. It will attempt to minimize the distance between political governance, wellness and healing practices. It will describe the connection between wellness and healing traditions, within contemporary political leadership. It will politicize conceptions of wellness and advocate for womxn's leadership within societal, economic, climactic and spiritual landscapes necessary for global futurisms. Through the lens of Embodied Governance, this chapter will reveal emergent possibilities of embodied governance which transcend the life-line of this research collection and describe pathways of re-imagined Indigenous embodied futurity.

CHAPTER ONE

INDIGENOUS RESURGENCE, GOVERNANCE AND LAND-BASED WELLNESS: BEYOND COLONIAL IMAGINARY

> *From which point does my Grandmother's language become my language? At which point does my Grandfather's language become my language? Do I claim my language or does my language claim me?*

In a chapter entitled, "Conversations with North American Indians" Abenaki filmmaker and activist Alanis Obomsawin includes a famous, yet unidentified Indigenous quote saying, "it is not until the last tree has been cut, the last river poisoned and last fish caught, will we realize that we cannot eat money" (qtd. in Osborne, 1972). Disconnection from Land and Waters has thrown our societal, cultural, political and health systems out of balance. The wellbeing of our communities depends on the wellbeing of our Lands and Waters, and through a framework of Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wîchêtowin, a more complex and multi-dimensional approach to leadership governance and wellness practice is required to restore, reclaim and renew relational values to Land, Waters and all relations. This chapter will offer a brief analysis of the colonial underpinnings which contribute to Indigenous womxn's experiences of wellness and governance today. It will examine contributing factors which define the logic, practice and value systems of colonial violence and describe impacts on Indigenous womxn's leadership and governance in Canada. Through the problematization of colonial manifestations on our natural world, social-economic systems and physical bodies, this chapter concludes with a call for significant Indigenous womxn's leadership in the journey up and out of colonial reality and into the beyond.

We are the first generation of Indigenous scholars with access to a written formalized assemblage of international Indigenous literature, scholarship and political theory. The seminal

contributions of the preceding generation of Indigenous scholars, activists and political theorists, deeply inform the ideological frameworks and the material practice of Indigenous political, intellectual and cultural resurgence. This chapter examines five specific features of scholarship on resurgence, which contributes to evolving interrogation of colonial legacies and practices of decolonization and concludes with a significant engagement with Indigenous Feminist and Queer inquiry. The analysis begins with an interrogation, as defined by decolonial scholarship, of five principal components, which fuel colonial projects within material, socio-political and ethereal landscapes. The analysis includes an examination of: *the creation of a colonized subject, internalized and material reproductions of racism, normalization, naturalization and consumption of violence,* as well as *land as material.* The chapter will then focus on specific contributions to Indigenous scholarship, and how these insights inform contemporary efforts of decolonization with regard to Land, culture and Nationhood. It will then extend this analysis towards the arenas of Indigenous wellness, healing and community health; shifting focus away from Indigenous governance and resurgence theories and highlighting embodied experiences of culturally-grounded resistance and community-defined resurgence as viable pathways of decolonial futurisms. Diverse and long-standing inherited impacts of material and spiritual colonial relational values have insidious implications, from societal and material abstractions to personal intimacies. Corpora of decolonial literature and investigation identify the ways that colonial practice and projects contort societal and individual mental, physical and emotional experiences towards heternormative, euro-centric, racialized, gendered, and positivist understandings of the world and the relationships we inhibit. Innately a violent process (Fanon, 1961: iviii), colonialism is the visceral severing of relationship to self, others, spirit and the land.

The specific objectives of colonialism include the acquisition of territory, consolidation of power and the normalization of dominance-over, based on race, gender and often spiritual beliefs (Fanon, 1967; Sunseri, 2011; Coulthard, 2014). These pursuits expose the goals of colonial architects to gain material wealth, as well as control, profit and prosper from Indigenous bodies. The intellectual justifications of colonial land-theft constitute a dogmatic ethno-politique, which establishes racialized, gendered and social hierarchies within socio-systemic and individual bodies (Trask, 1993; Coulthard, 2010). The creation of the colonized subject, as a cog in the colonial state machine, was necessary in order to supplement the colonial desire of perpetuity: land resource extraction, power dominance, hetero-patriarchy and cognitive imperialism based on white-supremacy (Fanon, 1967; Memmi, 1991; Alfred, 2005; Freire, 2006). Memmi (1991) explains how the colonizer and colonized enter into a non-consensual relationship, predicated on power, dominance and violent slave-logic. The nature of relationships between the colonized and the colonizer assume dynamics defined by subject/object, superior/inferior, pure/impure and human/sub-human, lending into imposed cultural norms which contaminate the inner-psyche of the colonized subject (Fanon, 1967; Memmi, 1991). In what Robert Allen Warrior describes as a "dance of dependence", the colonial system locates the colonized and her home territories as an intravenous blood supply for the colonizer (Warrior, 1995). The colonizer cannot survive without the colonized; yet the colonized must free themselves of the captive mindset, which subconsciously normalizes their captivity (Fanon, 1967; Thiong'o, 1986; Chilisa, 2011). Racism is the central-most feature of colonial function and liberation from racialized imperialism is a core aim described within decolonial theory and liberatory praxis. Colonial racism can be understood within a four step process: the categorization of difference (creation of the *other*,

aesthetic, linguistic and so forth), the implementation of hierarchy within a spectrum of difference (placing the colonizer at top supremacy), the prescription of absolutism through the logic of sub-humanity (including epistemic or cognitive imperialism within knowledge production and social validity) and finally, exploiting these differences with gendered violence, aggression and social privilege (Fanon, 1967; Adams,1975; Memmi, 1991; Trask, 1999). The normalization of these processes is what constitutes the mechanisms for furthered production of colonial state dominance, as the main purpose of imperialism is to normalize the abnormal (Goodyear-Kaopua; 2014).

Whether it be what Audra Simpson calls the "normalized crisis" of Missing and Murdered Women and Girls, a global economy premised on the non-consensual pillage and rape of the Land, or large-scale food systems dependent on enslaved migrant-workers and de-sanctified animal life, violence is a normalized entity within dominant global colonial social, political and economic realities. The naturalization of violence and racism as *that which is normal* prevents meaningful resistance to colonial agendas. Normalization of violence also extends to the internal psyche, through the de-historization of colonized subjects. Indeed, the most accessible way to mystify the totality as an autonomous being is to strip them of their history (Alfred, 2005; Memmi, 1999). There is value in ongoing interrogation of the insidious nature of colonialism within the personal, political, material (body/land), and the ethereal (psyche/intimacies) bodies. Within this history of Canadian colonial legacies, Hunt states "the violent reconstruction of Indigenous identities as inherently savage, more than radicalized and sexualized, but categorically Other, within the broad discourse of Western identity- is rendered invisible through its naturalization" (Hunt, 2013, p. 4). Within the context of Canadian state

colonialism, the implementation of the Indian Act in 1876 materialized colonial inventions about Indigenous communities based on racist and sexist stereotypes, which promoted social values that "Indigenous people are inferior to Europeans and that women are inferior to men" (Hunt, 2013, 22). Within the context of Indigenous as colonized, the proliferate images which "allow settlers and colonizers to deny them their rights and their humanity" (Belcourt, 2015; Hunt, 2013). This erasure of gendered, sexual, and self-determined embodiments of fluidity is premised on the imposition of heterosexual patriarchal gender norms, expectations and societal bounds. Indigenous womxn carry cultural memories and political visions which constitute the relational backbone of contemporary Indigenous governance. Where the inter-sections of feminist-queer and Land-based leadership have been recognized, within disciplines of health and wellness and political governance, it has been narrowly examined within constricted state notions of political change, negating the contributions that womxn-centred Indigenous leadership brings to the well-being, cultural strength and political sovereignty of families, communities and nations (Alfred 2005, Kuokkanen 2014, Sunseri 2011, Suzack 2011). The effects of colonialism in the lives of Indigenous womxn translate into higher rates of physical gendered violence on the female body; Indigenous womxn are five times more likely to die as a result of violence than non-Indigenous womxn (Halseth 2013, NWAC 2002, Ladner 2009, Stout 2001). Yet, while missing and murdered womxn, and the families affected, bear the scars of marginalization and violence, Indigenous womxn continue to demonstrate resilience, in ways that counter colonial damage (Jiménez-Altamirano 2013, RCAP 1996 section 3, Simpson 2011). Existing scholarship does not address the correlations between violence against Indigenous womxn and their political participation. It has yet to be determined what the specific impact of systemic, colonial violence

and marginalization is on womxn's participatory role in Indigenous resurgence (Alfred 2005, Anderson 2011, Coulthard 2014, LaDuke 2005, Maracle 1996, Simpson 2011). This leads into a discussion of colonial logic, described by allocation of Land and Waters as purely material.

Just as gendered violence is the racist objectification of Indigenous womxn, colonial land ownership is an objectification of Indigenous territories. When the land and waters are stripped of their economic, social, political and physical autonomy, aggressive dominance is easily facilitated and employs colonial imperialism in the form of neoliberal global capitalism (Hartd & Negri, 2009; Walker, 2011; Goodyear-Kaopua et al., 2013; Altamirano- Jiménez, 2013). While colonialism is known to mutate form, transform, and shape-shift (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005), the underlying values remain the same. The objectification of the land as the universal life-giver, enables a colonial relationship based on self-interest, merit, competition and individualism. These values reflect the neo-face of colonial imperialism, predicated on what Coulthard defines as a process of "territorially acquisitive [of Land and Waters] in perpetuity" (2014, p.152) "undermining of self-determining authorities" (2014, p.152). Contrasting world-views, which depict values of how relationship should be governed, constitute the crux of conflict between colonial state agencies and Indigenous Nations across the globe. When Land is disassembled and related to as material or resource, how then can world-views which regard 'Land as relative' be reconciled within the fields of political governance and international treaty making? When grounded in relationship with our traditional territories, it is possible to access what Martinez calls our "moral landscape" in which each particular landscape offers teachings of relationship, to guide our cognitive understanding of accountability and responsibility (qtd. in Nelson, 2008). However, Indigenous knowledge, which preserves a reciprocal, respectful and renewable

relationship to the land, stands as a barrier to projects of colonial enterprise. Definitions of meaningful and inclusive Indigenous leadership must be expanded in order to acknowledge how Indigenous womxn are at the core of governance models and practices (Anderson 2011, Maracle 1988, Simpson 2011) and to address the significant gap that currently exists in the analysis of womxn's roles and their perspectives on Indigenous governance (Anderson 2000, Coulthard 2014, Fraser & Kenny 2012, Tully 2014). Beyond a lack of understanding of how Indigenous womxn's insights transform governance models, there are systemic barriers to their meaningful participation and ongoing enactments of kinship to Land and Waters.

Aski | *Land*

In her work *Indigenous Encounters with Neoliberalism,* Zapotec scholar Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez asks, "what effect does the global articulation of indigeneity have on Indigenous places?" (p. 3); how do global articulations of Indigeneity affect the ways in which we govern our bodies, births and health practice? Within the context of neoliberalism, Altamirano-Jiménez reminds us that when "relationships and interactions are subsumed within the process of neoliberalism" [through processes of re-regulation and liberalization], territories become property and relations to territories are commodities" (p. 2). Patterns of commodification are further applied to the Indigenous body and the ways in which we experience these bodies in space and time; specifically, in how we care for ourselves. When applied to mainstream education, political and health-care systems, neoliberalism subjugates technology to a cost-value and drastically alters the relationship between educator-learner, leader-community, care-giver and care-receiver, and changes the ways we understand *healing*. Sunseri assesses the gendered

implications of colonial dominance through legalized land-theft, as enabled by the institutionalization of the Indian Act. The 1876 installation of the *Indian Act, Chapter 29 section (1)(b)* states that, when Indigenous womxn marry a non-Indigenous counterpart, they lose their Native status; therefore, they are excluded from politically recognized positions of power and dispossessed from their Land-based community authority (Sunseri, 2011, pp. 164). Relationship to Land is understood as value systems passed down by knowledge keepers as well as the authorities of community governance and care. Entire systems of governance within social, economic, political and spiritual/wellness practice require a purposeful comprehension of traditions and enacted relationship with the Land. McGuire asserts that "Land-based knowledge is practiced knowledge, knowledge that is used on the land. This becomes tied to the personal identity, spiritual development of people, and their overall relationships with others (McGuire (Kishebakabaykwe), 2010, p. 7). The prominence of relationship to Land is further asserted in the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in the statement:

> The spiritual aspect [of traditional knowledge] is integral to the cosmological and ethical beliefs of Indigenous societies… the second feature of traditional knowledge is its practical basis: traditional explanations of the environmental phenomena are based on cumulative, collective experience, tested over centuries by people who require a sophisticated and practical knowledge of the land on which they depended for every aspect of life (qtd. Tagalik, 2010, p. 2).

The personal and collective commitment to decolonization requires an ongoing interrogation, dissection and examination of historical and present-day projections of colonialism(s). It requires meaningful cultural and spiritual resurgence, grounded in relationship to Land and Waters. By re-centering the work of the above-mentioned theorists, within the landscape of contemporary Indigenous resurgence and traditional governance, we can begin to

advance our thought and practice towards the cultivation of an insurgent Indigenous political consciousness. The analysis mentioned above does not offer a complete assessment of colonial and neo-colonial underpinnings, but highlights major themes presented within decolonial literature.

Other pillars of colonial material and supra-structural practice include forced religious practice and epistemic and ontological imperialism. These systems play out across the production of knowledge, food-systems, medical and heath- care practices, Land/Water management, and dictate world-views of global politics and relationship frameworks, perpetuating cultural norms which privilege hetero-patriarchal dominance. While the described features listed above are not meant as a comprehensive assessment of the foundational elements of literature on resurgence, colonization-decolonization, postmodernism, theories of liberation and transformation, they articulate central pieces of a colonial code, which informs efforts of decolonized Indigenous cultural and political consciousness. Just as Fanon discusses the implications of internalizing the colonial mentality at the individual level, Val Napoleon regards the deployment of individual self-determination and decolonization as the foundation for achieving collective freedom (2005). Indigenous inquiry and praxis within fields of education and wellness assert that leadership and self-determination for our communities is a way up and out of colonialism. Indigenous responses to colonial violence offer a necessary critique and anti-oppressive approach to reimagining systems of value; grounded in ancestral knowledge and dedicated to the wellbeing of future generations. All life, all creative vitality, all dreams, all becomings and all cycles of renewal come from and return to the Land and her Waters. The Land provides ontological frameworks necessary for understanding good relationships based on respect, consent and reciprocal

accountability (Coulthard, 2010). These values constitute Indigenous conceptions of good-relationship to self, others, spirit and the land as employed by systems of good governance and community-led wellness. This section extends the assessment of colonial dominance from the socio-political arena and examines the colonial underpinnings that sever Indigenous Governance from Community Wellness and healing, as well as how such division contributes to crises in communities. According to Kiera Ladner, "While community wellness and healing are intricately tied to contemporary demands for self-government, there is very little written that addresses the relationship between self-determination and communities in crisis..." (2009, p. 88) What are some of the important linkages being made between Indigenous wellness, governance, and gender? How then can some of the existing gaps in the existing research in this area be filled?

Niyaw | *Body*

Land and waters inform Indigenous ontologies, relationships and healing. Separation from the land causes a severing of relationship to culture, language and ancestral knowledge, which can lead to physical and mental illness (Stewart 2017, Stout 2001, Tagalik 2010, Yellowbird 2018).. However, these are neither linear relationships nor discrete issues, as they are often addressed in research. Rather, these elements of governance and healing are recursive, cyclical and regenerative; each one informing the other. For example, Canada's Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996) defined healing as, "Personal and societal recovery from the lasting effects of oppression and systemic racism experienced over generations. Many Aboriginal people are suffering, not simply from specific diseases and social problems, but also from depression of spirit, resulting from more than 200 years of dismantling of their cultures, language, identities and self-respect" (p. 474). Certainly, there are widespread

and diverse crises within Indigenous communities, such as the violent loss of countless womxn and girls, suicide epidemics among youth, intergenerational trauma from residential schools, inexcusable lack of access to clean water and many other untold stories of loss, disconnection and hopelessness. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) called for an understanding of the gaps in Indigenous health, as a result of previous government policies. In contrast, community leaders, knowledge keepers and researchers identify political and health disparities as direct consequences of the colonial undermining of traditional governance systems and the de-sanctification of Water, and loss of Land (Lawless et al. 2015).

My own understanding of Indigenous governance can be understood as the simultaneous interrogation of contemporary colonialism(s), along with a resurgence of traditional economic, social, political and spiritual governance systems, which reflect the values and language of a subjective community. The interlocking features of colonial power establish a hierarchy of dominance within western social, economic and political institutions. Saulteaux-Cree Medical Doctor, Researcher and Community-leader, Dr. Marcia Anderson-De Coteau shares that

> "from a population health perspective, the mechanisms from which these gaps are created are largely through the entrenchment of poverty, chronic underfunding of education and child welfare, inadequate and overcrowded housing and other such social and economic policy choices. It would be fair to say however, that the health care system has been complicit in the maintenance of these gaps and at times an active contributor through multi levels of racism" (De Coteau, 00:02:26 - 00:02:53).

Colonial logic is predicated on white supremacist and patriarchal conduct, so that those regarded as inferior, whether by their race, gender or class, experience vast inequities in their social, political and economic circumstances (Halseth 2013). These conditions are defined by

community health researcher Dr. Charlotte Loppie as proximal (interpersonal, direct relationship), intermediate (social, community), and distal (systemic, societal, historical and/or institutional) determinants of health (2009). Loppie explains that, "the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age are responsible for most of the health inequities that have persisted and widened within and between countries" (p. 2). Seminal research by Michael J. Chandler and Christopher Lalonde's (1998) revealed that Indigenous community health (measured by youth suicide) was a function of the degree of autonomy/self-government. Laurence J. Kirmayer's use of land-based healing methodologies (2009) and Alfred's proposal of a decolonized framework based on "one warrior at a time" (2005) also contribute to discourse which locates Indigenous healing traditions at the heart of Indigenous governance methodologies and praxis. How do we understand the drastic health discrepancies between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in Canada? How are we to fulfil governance responsibilities if we are faced with health challenges which do not allow us to thrive? When situating the individual self or body as a site of determination and therefore governance, each individual is given the opportunity to reflect critically about the ways in which they can uphold their own unique responsibilities and gifts within larger efforts of community wellbeing and governance.

Land-based Wellness: Miyo-Pimatisiwin Aski

The severance of Indigenous political traditions from healing practices has colonial roots and along with the jeopardized ability to self-govern, is the impacted ability to self-heal. Predicated on western philosophies of positivism, empiricism, and cartesian inquiry, colonial western health-care practice, services and wellness traditions employ methods which uphold the production of knowledge and systems of evaluation and ranking of knowledge according to

standards of western scientific inquiry, assumed as superior and absolute (Anderson-De Coteau 2016; Deloria, 2006; McGuire, 2010; Mundel, 2010; Tagalik, 2010; Chilisa, 2012). The predominant Western approach to health is effectively inept at supporting meaningful, useful and regenerative wellness within Indigenous communities. Its prescriptive approach does not holistically address the root causes of illness, within the minds and bodies of our people; therefore, contributing to narrowly defined illness and health paradigms while ultimately perpetuating colonial violence (Hirch, 2011; Hunt, 2013). The cartesian approach has also been applied to social and political landscapes, in attempts to divide and dissect society from its natural power of interconnectivity. However, Deloria reminds us that, "the scientific world brings new evidence to light which highlights the innate ways we are interconnected to the natural" (2006). There are numerous and multidimensional ways to transmit knowledge about health, bodies and governance. Leanne Simpson (Anishinaabe) (2004), among others, notes that the responsibilities of Indigenous scholars should transcend the mere documentation of knowledge and locate our physical bodies on the land (Alfred 2005; Corntassel 2012; Salmón 2012). When we as researchers are situated on our home territories, or in the territories of the communities we serve or are students of, we have access and therefore *responsibilities*, to community protocol. Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene) (2010) describes how land occupies an ontological framework for how we engage in relationship with the world around us. He counters colonial and neoliberal assumptions that land is exclusively material, and reminds us that it is constitutive to who we are. It is this conception of identity that grounds Indigenous knowledge and relational protocol. Indigenous scholars including Wilson (2018) and Alfred (2005) advise against allowing for colonization to be the only story that influences Indigenous

life. The specific objectives of decolonization and Indigenous resurgence theory and practice can be defined by the material and spiritual protection of homeland territories and kinship to Land and Waters, conscious re-orientation of the self and collective within language, the revitalization of a cultural corpal and the reconnection of relationship to identity (self), community (others), self-aware becoming (spirituality) and regenerative wellness (Maracle, 1988; Grande, 2004; Alfred, 2005; Simpson, 2005; Absolon, 2011; Chilisa, 2011). Resurgence theory constitutes theoretical imaginaries which transcend colonial control structural power-relations and value systems and can be enacted through everyday acts of reclaimed culturally-grounded Indigenous relations to Self, Other, Spirit and and the Land/Waters. In *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices* (Corntassel, 2018), Indigenous scholars, community members and artists share reflections upon how they enact Everyday Resurgence in their own lives. According to the stories and knowledge shared by voices of resurgence outlined in this collection, resurgence is expressed and experienced through a multitude of diverse and multifaceted ways including: language revitalization, traditional food systems, parenting, every day acts of love, conscious dream-time and other exemplary instances. The voices of this collection articulate that while resurgence is an essential political theory within collections of Indigenous governance, it is also an everyday act which can be defined differently by each individual. A renewed understanding of governance as an everyday action, choice or ethic of how we care for ourselves and others enhances our ability to confront ongoing projections of colonialism and position ourselves from a place of mental clarity, physical strength and emotional courage. Manuel reminds us that, "it is necessary to heal ourselves with our own medicine. This is integral in self-determination and insurgent healing" (1974: 106). Just as Indigenous research methodologies require a heightened

commitment to community accountability, Indigenous healing and wellness methodologies also require accountability to the needs, protocols, experiences and traditional governance of the Indigenous communities involved (Gomes et al., 2013). Accountability requires intensive and ongoing self-reflection, of the caregiver or community, and ultimately prioritizes the needs, language, cultural protocols and knowledge of the community, "if it is to be counted as Indigenous" (Wilson, 2009, 42). Models of healing and wellness governance must incorporate the wisdom of local elders, heed the voices of ancestral knowledge and be centred around the experience of Indigenous youth (Carson et al, 2007; Gomes et al. 2013; Reimagining Attawapiskat 2017). The relationships which constitute healing and wellness practice must be grounded in trust, respect and reciprocity. Healthy relationships are necessary in order to actualize models of healing and wellness governance. Linda Smith reminds us that, "right relationship and research involves a complex decolonizing process that involved reconciling settler and native relations", including a commitment to anti-colonial imperialism, as well as transformative relationships between colonizer and the colonized (Gomes et al. 2013: 1). This is essential in the delivery of safe, effective and regenerative wellness and healing practice, as it aims to ultimately, "cultivate a reciprocal, responsible relationship as a means to making right relationships and providing access to culturally appropriate health systems" (Gomes et al., 2013: 1). This means that health-care institutions not only make space for Indigenous healing knowledge and technologies, but mandate the space for Indigenous health-care practitioners and anti-racist education for non-Indigenous care givers. Cultural relevance is another pillar of healing traditions as governance. Establishing culture as a central component in the way we engage in healing and wellness practice, contributes to enhanced access to health care services,

improved outcomes, and honours the dignity and value of Indigenous knowledge and worldview (Hirch 2011; Gomes et al. 2013; Halseth 2013). Hammerschlag reminds us that, "healing promotes the idea of bringing together many forces to best utilize the powers that promote health" (qtd. in McCormik, 1997, p. 2), and culture is a crucial power towards regenerative wellness and self-determination. The erasure and criminalization of Indigenous cultural, political and ceremonial protocols are direct attacks on Indigenous self-determination and expressed kinship relationship. Indigenous womxn reproduce cultural memories and political visions, through diverse social, political, familial and cultural responsibilities, which constitute the relational backbone of contemporary Indigenous governance (Kuokkanen 2014, Lavell-Harvard & Cornier 2006, Simpson 2010, Starblanket 2018, Sunseri 2011, Wilson 2008). Thus, the final element of Indigenous wellness and healing as governance is womxn's felt, expressed and experienced Land/Water-based leadership. Through the lived experiences, voices and resilience of Indigenous womxn, we discover meaningful and authentic healing and growth.

Within many Indigenous cultures, womxn are thought to embody an intimate relationship to water and are therefore accountable to take care of and uphold relationship to water. As a result of conversations with Elders and community knowledge holders, Indigenous scholars such as Kim Anderson (2000, 2011), Leanne Simpson (2011), Lee Maracle (1998) and Lawless (2018) share stories and reflections centered on the unique relationship and responsibilities that Indigenous womxn have with and to water. Womxn's bodies are intimately interconnected with water, as it passes through with new life in childbirth, and shares the cycles of the moon with our own cyclical menstruation cycles (Anderson, 2000). In Cree, the word for water, Nipiy, can also mean *life*. Cree-Métis Elder, Tom McCallum explains, that to say "death" we actually can say

“Nipiyani” or “return to the water”. Water is the life force of all relations, and it is the thread which interconnects our beings, destinies and futures. Water is the foundation of good health. It possesses healing properties which connect us to constellations of connection with all of Creation. These ideals are not restricted to colonial gendered notions of femaleness or gender binaries, but rather require a personal commitment from *all* community members to protect and pass on cultural teachings to future generations. All people have the ability to carry culture. This connection between physical and cultural reproduction is crucial for the advancement for intergenerational knowledge and reproductive justice (NYSHN 2016; Hoover et *al*. 2012). In upholding these responsibilities, womxn have the opportunity to inspire a relational accountability to the land and water, and challenge younger generations to reflect about the ways that our ancestors protected the lands and waters. It has been well established that vibrant and healthy Indigenous womxn constitute the grounds for thriving and politically autonomous nations (Alfred 2005, Kuokkanen 2014, Simpson 2011, Sunseri 2011, Suzack 2011). However, where womxn centred Indigenous leadership has been recognized, it has been narrowly examined within constricted state-centred notions of political change; negating the as yet untapped contributions that womxn centred Indigenous leadership can give to healing and wellness methods within families, communities and nations (Hajer 2003, Kuokkanen 2014; Sunseri 2011; Suzack 2011).

The Land is Queer[2]

The Land Loves me
I love the Land
The Land is Queer
and so am I.

Relating the Land as Body and Body as Land is a way to deepen our understanding of kin-centric responsibilities to one another as all relations. This means transcending gender-binary thought, practice and world-view and the full reclamation of kinship as a space for all womxn, men, queer, Two-Spirit, Trans and gender-variant relatives. This reminds me of Alex Wilson's contemplative teachings which affirm that "when you're on the land, all the socially constructed hierarchies around gender, around sexual orientation, around race, or around class disappear. The land engenders itself and we engender it" (qtd. in Laing M. & Wilson, A. 2008, pp. 134). The application of queering relations through an Indigenous feminist lens has the capacity to enact Tatawâw (make more space) within fields of Indigenous Governance and better equip researchers with the tools required to identity and interrogate reproductions of gender-binaries, hierarchical and embodied power-relations.

The Land is Queer and so am I. The Waters are Queer and so am I. The cosmos are Queer and so am I. My body pulls up and out of the Lands which house my ancestors, and my breath returns to the space that our Languages come from. Perhaps the most powerful teaching that

---

[2] *Maybe it is time to consider The Land/Waters beyond the gender binaries which define her as "Mother Earth" and instead take guidance from Queer Indigenists who remind us that Life-giver is a term applicable to all bodies and experiences: When Queerness is applied to Land and Water perhaps the complexity, interconnectivity's and fluidity of all life-beings can be more fully understood and revered by our human species. Queer futurity must be applied to all facets of life, inter-being and promote an inter-becoming grounded in the absolute multiplicities of Land as Body and Body as Land.*

articulates my own understandings and inter-belonging to Land as Body is Wilson's assertion that "Body sovereignty is inseparable from sovereignty over our lands and waters. It means that we are reclaiming and returning to traditional understandings of our bodies as connected to land.... It does not mean understanding that our traditional cosmology, like all aspects of creation, was not and it not fixed. It is fluid, flexible, and constantly recreating itself" (2008, pp 134). Through centring Land-Water based relations in our own self-becomings, we can better dismantle binarizing identities which are meant to further sever our inter-belongings to Land-Waters and our place-based knowledge systems.

Regulation over our homelands and waters, extends into further regulation of Indigenous womxn's bodies, and Indigenous Queer-Feminist scholars enact Tatawâw (make more space) for resurgence models which reflect inter-webs of governance and place within our emergent cosmologies of balance, healing and imaginary. While delving into literature, thought, practice and scholarship of Indigenous governance and wellness, it seems as though the English word *Queer* is the only term which meaningfully describes the body of the Land and Waters. Queerness, as inter-being and experience, is innately an inclusionary practice, which creates more space for more possibilities of experience and self-actualization. Queerness is abundance; an open door; a statement of welcoming: Tatawâw: *there is room for you here.* I cannot think of another English term, which in my own reflections, describes the abundant life-giving force of the Land or Waters. Even describing the Earth as *Mother Earth* feels inadequate in the attempt to capture the full embodiment of sovereignty, love and sacredness of the Land and Waters. Nixon teaches us that Queer ethics are transformation at a relational level (2016) and relationships are what constitute the backbone of community governance, regenerative wellbeing and vibrant

futurisms. Perhaps frameworks that Queer our understanding of the complexity of kin-centric accountabilities and relationships to one another can also deepen our understanding of Land as Body. Queer teachings, among others, provide the linguistic tools necessary to de-quip the English-speaking world-view (mind) from colonial mechanics of hetero-patriarchal value-norms and better equip us with the means necessary to interrogate reproductions of toxic masculinities, lateral violence and systemic misogyny; both institutional systems and inter-personal relations (Lander 2008; Wilson 2008) .

As echoed in the introductory pages, this research project employs the spelling of "Womxn" is to acknowledge the diverse and fluid intersections of ancestry, gender, sexualities, non-binary and queer experiences of every person who identifies with the feminine, as expressed through self-determined enactments of identity, relationality, governance and self-imaginary. This includes all self-identifying 'womxn', girls, two-spirit, trans, queer, non-binary and queer community members. Within the emerging field of thought and practice of *Queer Indigineity*, as described by Cree scholar Billy-Ray Belcourt, the use non-binary and queer terminology is grounded in community leadership and claims towards collective determination and vibrant futurity. All research co-researchers identify with this term and felt strongly that the use of this spelling was a positive tool for personal liberation and self-actualization beyond hetero-patriarchal norms imposed by the English language. Across the 17 co-researchers interviewed, five co-researchers identified as queer and two co-researchers identified as Two-Spirit.

The intention with the terminology of Womxn is to make more space for more bodies, more experiences, more fluidity and more relationship. There will never be one single term, specifically in the English language which will capture the complexity, intersectionality and

abundance of identity. English language indicators of gender, relationality, identity often reproduce relational separation, reflective of Cartesian western philosophies and epistemologies ranking or hierarchy of power-relations. In my own use of the term *Womxn*, I aim towards language indicators which reflects the principle of Tatawâw (making space for more peoples, belonging, welcome) however relate to Kim TallBear's reflections about English language indicators, specifically those which attempt to express the gendered and queerisms of our embodied experiences (2008, 2013, 2015). TallBear contemplates upon terminology such as 'genderqueer' and 'cisgendered' relations, reflecting upon the shifting value, perception and meaning of these terms over time and space: "As I try to write this, I engage in essentially nonsensical conceptual time travel with categories that will lose their integrity if I try to teleport them back or forward in time. So much has gone dormant - will go dormant. So much has been imposed onto Indigenous peoples, both heteronormative settler sexuality categories and now also "queer categories" (153, 2008).

While our own Land-languages reflect relationality in a fluid sense, reflective of multidimensional relations and interconnections simultaneously manifesting through body and space, scholars like TallBear caution the use of English language indicators which reproduce understanding that identity "constituted once and unchanging" (160, 2008). The term *womxn* represents the place of my own learning and commitment to learn my own language within the ongoing maturation of my own personal, academic and spiritual self-becoming. I am aware that it does not fully enact tatawâw for those who may identify beyond feminine-masculine identities. My intention is to enact tatawâw for those who wish to express personal governance within a framework of embodied life-givers, as well as protect and nourish the space for feminine-kin

within the context of Indigenous queer imaginary and Land-based realtions. Rather than examining queering relations through a western-academic lens and English epistemology, it is essential to draw upon the expertise and guidance of Indigenous Queer scholars which remember us that sexual, intimate, kin-centric and inter-belonging relations can be understood as "a way of being that … directly and intentionally mediates social relations across the family, clan, Puebla, tribe, and other forms of relations including other-than-human persons' (Short qtd in TallBear, pp 160, 2008).

In this way, sexuality and emergent relations reflective of Tatawâw emerge from a place that reflects power-sharing, co-creative inter-being and Indigenized power-relations, which TallBear considers 'capable of healing' (160, 2008). Re-thinking and interrogating colonial power relations requires the dismantling of our own internal perceptions of who we are in relation to ourselves, one another, Spirit and the Land & Waters. How I myself, self-identity in relationship to my body and embodied expressions of governance, kinship and care grounded in our own place-base languages and epistemologies. Recognizing the heteronormative and patriarchal implications of English-speaking ontologies and epistemological, when applied to gendered terms, these colonial assumptions reproduce in language.

In the context of this dissertation, I recognize my own limitations in the terms I use to examine Land-Water-governance-wellness relations and expressions with the co-researchers I work with. As a learner of my own language, and not in the context of Nehiyaw and Métis Land-bases, I am limited in my own understanding and cognitive expansion of how Nehiyaw terms may better suit for terminology referring to Womxn and those who identity with feminine spiritual responsibilities. The term Womxn, is a grass-roots community-led strategy used to

centre and acknowledge intricate intersections of race, identity, gender, sexuality and expression in embodied notions of the feminine. The use of the spelling of Womxn in my own learnings is my attempt to step out of linear heteronormative, colonial misogynistic gendered imaginaries and step into my own web of action-based relations and responsibility kin-networks. In Alex Wilson's article, Our Coming In Stories: Cree Identity, Body Sovereignty and Gender Self-Determination, they cite a personal communication with someone who recognizes the complex nuances of English terminology when discussing the multidimensional realities of Indigenous Queer relations. For them identity is "evolving or changing, and the term two-spirit is a placeholder until something comes along that more accurate fits the full continuum of who we are in the contemporary context" (Dylan Rose qtd. in Wilson 2015). Perhaps, the term *Womxn* is also a place-holder in my own learning and thinking through Indigenous Embodied Governance. A place-holder until I may one day reach the maturity and humility to deepen my own learning of the Nehiyaw and Michif languages, cosmologies and relational laws within the context of Queering Relations and Land-based kinship feminisms. The use of the term *Womxn* reminds me that my learning and relations are ongoing beyond the bounds of this research project.

As a learner in this work, it is meaningful to pull upon Indigenous feminist theorists and scholarship in order to critically self-reflect upon not only the ways my body is a site of convergence but the ways in which these convergences influence my relations and action-based accountabilities. I myself, self-identify as a cis-gendered [female] queer-feminist in chosen relationship with a cis-male mixed Cafuzo-Indigenous [Kayapo-Marijonal] life-partner. As a hetero-normative presenting couple, our own gendered relationship does not outwardly express our own intimate engendered identities and sexualities. Nor does it perform our co-creative

mindful commitment to disrupt colonial heteronormative relationality, normalized patriarchy, gender-binaries and white-supremacy. My cis-gendered privilege, emboldened by my mixed-ancestral light-skinned body, equips me with the ability to pass through a multitude of societal spaces with relative ease. My own intimate expressions of self-determinations in my gender, sexuality, language learning and spirituality informs not only how I interrogate colonialist values in my own life, but also how I enact relational accountability to dismantle colonialist power-relations through systems of structural, institutional and intimate relational networks. The site of my own intimate self-becoming is contained within the context of my own emergent kinship to my husband; and our relational context is deeply influenced by settler-state control, borders and surveillance. As an Inter-National Indigenous family, my partner and I are limited to the ways we are able to express kinship to one another, as we are required to engage with colonial borders and complex systems of immigration and citizenship. The paradox of our own intimate commitment to decolonial love, place-based resurgence and diasporic contemplations (we both live away from our homelands) with the requirements to validate our familial status to State-immigration industry plays out in our every day lives. Anderson recognizes that "one of the biggest targets of colonialism was the Indigenous family" (qtd. in TallBear 2008, 148) and as we co-create our own relational accountabilities in our own home, we often consider how our own kinship to our own homelands determines how we enact decolonial relationality in our own family relations. Just as Leanne Simpson asserts that "the family is the microcosm of the Nation" (145, 2011), our own family is a site of our own co-creative decolonial imaginary, reclaimed kinship and familial resurgence. Our intimate contemplative efforts within our own family's decolonial practice is an attempt to co-create our own engendered kinship to one another and enact accountabilities to the

Lands we are visitors to. How can we support and care for the kinship enacted by the W̱SÁNEĆ, Songhees and Esquimalt Nations to their homelands and waters? How can our own family's governance stretch beyond our own kitchen table and manifest in relationship to the Lands/ Watesr we live on and those who carry the knowledge of these places?

These inquires, among others reflect the significant work offered in Kim TallBear's article, *Making Love and Relations Beyond Settler Sex and Family* (2008). In this essay, TallBear contemplates the limitations of relational kinship within colonial relational reproductions of gender-binary, monogamy and intimate family life. TallBear states that centring conceptions of Land-Kin-Relations, shifts focus from heteronormative relationships and coupling, and "recogniz(es) possibilities of other kinds of intimacies, not focused on biological reproduction and making population, but care-taking precious kin that come to us in diverse ways- in an important step to unsettled settler sex and family" (154, 2008). Contributions from Indigenous Feminist theorists such as Kim TallBear and Kim Anderson, call for a more nuanced approach to Indigenous governance, leadership and embodiments which consider a gendered critique of colonialism and familial power-relations. TallBear regards decolonization as a shared collective choice which actively and opening opposes "a system of compulsory settler sexuality and family that continues building a nation upon Indigenous genocide and that marks Indigenous and other marginalized relations as deviant. This includes opposing norms and policies that reward normative kinship ties over other forms of kinship obligation" (152, 2008).

As kin-centric people, it is necessary to regard our own cultural traditions and Language knowledge system in order to review and resurge our own self-determined relationship within our familial and outward relational networks. From an Indigenous feminist critical lens, TallBear

and Anderson focus on the ways in which colonial power-relations located men as the gatekeepers to the ways in which Indigenous womxn and queer community members related to, maintained and enacted access and kinship to Land and Waters. In Kim Anderson's "Affirmations of an Indigenous Feminist" she states that "our traditional societies had been sustained by strong kin relations in which womxn had significant authority. There was no such thing as a single mother, because Native womxn and their children lived and worked in extended kin networks" (82, 2013). Indigenous feminist scholars and queer theorists dig up the medicines required to not only cease the reproductions of colonial power-relations, but to also foster and nourish meaningful self and collective culturally-grounded resurgence traditions. These voices, like Anderson, argue for "a dialogue about how Indigenous feminist thought can help us re-create a world that validates life in all its forms", beyond divisive and colonial conceptions of gender, relationality and family-life, but in ways which are "much more engaged with ways of honouring and nurturing life – all life" (82, 2013).

In this dissertation, I regard the interconnectivities of Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wichetowin as profoundly interconnected entities and expressions, enacted through yehewin (shared life-force-breath), like inter-constellational bodies or strands of a spider's web of life. A beautiful entity, complex, whole and fluid. My own analysis of embodied governance is profoundly influenced and shaped by the teachings of Indigenous feminist and queer scholars and translators of their own world-views, languages and teachings into the world of English-academe. In their article N'tacimowin inna nah': Our Coming In Stories, Opaskwayak Cree scholar Alex Wilson further distinguishes the contributions that Indigenous feminist analytics have on governance theory and practice in saying "Feminist researchers have examined ways in

which cultural contractions of the self are produced (Gever), the multilayered texture of identity for womxn of colour (Lewis), and conscious community identity as a liberation strategy (Robinson and Ward, Salazar)" (193, 2008). In Decolonizing Feminism in the North, Rauna Koukkanen further explains that "Indigenous feminism recognizes the collective dimension of self-determination as well as nation-building as a feminist struggle in ways that post-colonial feminists do not consider. Post-colonial feminists do not attend to the question of building their own communities and including everybody in that process because they do not have the same need for nation-building…nation-building in terms of Indigenous people's own ideas about rebuilding their societies and communities" (279, 2015). Koukkanen's seminal work in decolonizing feminist approaches to Indigenous governance through re-centring place-based Indigenous feminist principles recognizes that emergent bodies of Indigenous feminism enacts "theoretical intervention(s) located at the intersection of Indigenous peoples' political struggles for decolonization and self-determination, and Indigenous womxn's engagement in issues of gender equality and social justice, in both Indigenous and non-indigenous contexts" (275, 2015). Land as Body: Indigenous Womxn's Leadership, Land-based Wellness and Embodied governance does not seek to identify, differentiate and categorize diverse expressions of wellness and governance, rather our work attempt to draw out strands of knowledge, experience and stories in order to illuminate the larger web of interconnection and life-sharing. Indigenous feminist theory, approaches and teachings examine the intersections of gender, race, identity and expression within the context of governance, Nationhood and liberatory praxis (Green, 2017, Suzack, 2010).

An important contribution to Indigenous Feminism and Governance is Cree/Saulteaux scholar Gina Starblanket's examination of the limits, bounds and determinants of the Indigenous "community" from an Indigenous feminist perspective. Starblanket interrogates the ways in which notions of womxn as "keepers of culture" (p. 6, 2018) implicate their own multidimensional identities and Nation-hood building projects within the confines and "territorial bounds of the community" (6, 2018). Starblanket critiques unquestioned notions of community within the context of diverse and multidimensional Indigenous expressions of governance have the danger to reproduce gendered assumptions of governance and belonging, which have a specific implication in the lives of Indigenous womxn, girls, and LGTBQI people. Starblanket asserts that Indigenous feminist analyses situates researchers in ways which better understand individuals in multidimensional relationships to others and places along a temporal continuum of past, present and future relations.

Starblanket's invaluable contributions to Indigenous political and social governance scholarship embolden emerging efforts with Indigenous feminist discourse and practice through processes which interrogate ways "in which patriarchy, misogyny and cis-heternormativity intersect with other power relations to form the broad terrain of colonialism" (1). Indigenous feminist and queer theorist scholars (Anderson, 2011, Belcourt, 2019, Green, 2017, Hunt, 2018, Simpson, 2019, Wilson, 2015, TallBear, 2008, Starblanket & Stark, 2018, Suzack, 2010) and relational leaders draw into focus the need to focus on conceptions, practice and experiences of governance, wellness and leadership through a lend which accounts for complex multidimensional layers of identity, relationality and felt-expression. These scholars demonstrate the need to interrogate the reproduction of colonialist values premised upon gendered, cis-

heteronormative and patriarchal conduct and system value. In her critique, Starblanket calls for feminist approaches which include "critical inquiry into the meaningful of nationalist belonging, and how gender and sexuality intersect with forms of identification based on cultural traditions" (10). The creation and imposition of gendered, relational and community boundaries undermines Indigenous epistemologies which consider relational belonging through interconnected, interdependent and inter-related systems of governance. The integrity of energy emanated from these inter-relational networks is what determines relational governance protocol to self, others, other than/more-than-human and Land-Water kin relations. Contributions to queering and feminizing Indigenous research, governance and political emancipation from visionary scholars such as Gina Starblanket, Sarah Hunt and Alex Wilson equip emergent scholars and community-based researchers with comprehensive analytical tools necessary to dismantle power relations embedded within colonial constructs. Furthermore, their efforts equip emergent scholarship and resurgence-based initiatives with meaningful approaches which consider complex inter-relational kinship amongst human, non-human and Land/Water-kin relations.

In my own analysis, the teachings offered by scholars such as Alex Wilson, Sarah Hunt, Leanne Simpson, Kim TallBear, Gina Starblanket, Ruana Kuokkanen, Kim Anderson and others, define decolonial projects which set colonial enterprise at the periphery and centre our own place-based cosmologies at the heart of kin-centric resurgence imaginaries. Their efforts describe decolonial projections through a multidimensional approach which 1) interrogates and examines shape-shifting embodiments of colonial values in both theoretical and material manifestations of everyday Indigenous Life 2) informs interventionist efforts to cease reproductions of colonial

values and power-relations and 3) enact Tatawâw (make more space) for Indigenous resurgence emancipatory practice grounded in place-based knowledge, language, cosmology and inter-being relations (family, kin, non-humans, Land/Waters).

Embodied governance within this lens provides an opportunity for our governance as expression to not only refuse colonial imposition and social conduct, but also step forward and reclaim our inter-web of relations and relational accountability. In this way, we even shift beyond recognizing *who is my kin, how we are related and how we define our relationality,* and seriously contemplate how I *care* for my kin. TallBear encourages us to consider "focusing on actual states of relation- on being in good relation- with, making kin-and with less monitoring and regulation of categories, might that spur more just interactions?" (2008, pp. 161).

The purpose of this research project is to offer insights into the conditions necessary for Indigenous womxn to experience a sense of personal wellness so that they can in turn take up their birth-rite responsibilities for the good of all relations. I am committed to the belief that Indigenous womxn's leadership is crucial for the very future and spiritual integrity of global life itself. First and foremost, Indigenous womxn must experience a personal and meaningful sense of wellbeing in relation to their kinship networks, Spirit and Land/Waters. Their participation in relationship networks is a form of every day governance which is necessary to not only restore balance amongst, but to transform the futurity of All Relations world-wide. Indigenous womxn are the past - present and future. My personal inquiry in this work is to critically examine the ways in which I, as kin, community-researcher, birth-helper, educator, friend, ally and learner can support Indigenous womxn's self-actualization in the realms of Land/Water-based wellness, self-determined leadership and embodied governance. Within my research, I employ Cree-Michif

cultural lenses which inform my interpretive, relational and reflective processes. This research defines wellness through the lens of Cree-Michif teaching Miyo-Pimatisiwin (balance, personal wellness, self-care, healing, internal balance) and furthermore defines governance and through the Cree-Michif lens of Miyo-Wîchêtowin (relationship, enactment or action of balance, care for others, accountability and belonging, kinship, relational governance, external balance).

Miyo-Pimatisiwin promotes a heightened consciousness of our inter-being and inter-becoming within relational networks (kin, families, relatives and beyond). In relation to the ethics of Miyo-Wîchêtowin, our research employs an Anti-colonial/oppressive approach which informs the thinking of, relationship to and co-creation with research questions, findings, approaches and methods. These pedagogies recognize that in order to explore the deeply interwoven teachings embedded within everyday acts of wellness and governance of Indigenous womxn, it is necessary to first and foremost describe colonial projections embedded in shared histories and impacting our every day lives. When applied to a political discourse, Indigenous frameworks, such as Miyo-Pimatisiwin, find a system of governance premised on balanced relations and relational accountability within all facets of social life.

Nuu-chah-nulth scholar, hereditary Chief and author Dr. Richard Atleo (Nuu-chah-nulth) who shares his own teachings of "heshook-ish tsawalk", or "everything is one" in his book Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview" (2004). By positioning himself deeply in his own cultural teachings of Tsawalk, Atleo explores the ways in which Tsawalk provides a framework of relationships between the physical and spiritual. Western systems of health and healing have much to learn from the diverse array of Indigenous approaches to community wellbeing. It is from this place of cultural knowledge that we as co-researchers engage with shared inquiries and

aspirations to co-define our own pathways towards intimately determined experiences of wellness and governance practice. The goal of this research is to offer a more gender-informed, comprehensive definition of Indigenous governance and advocate for wellness practices, which emerge from collaborative visions and teachings offered by the research co-researchers.

CHAPTER TWO

INDIGENOUS RESEARCH: LAND, BODY AND BEYOND

Research, once defined as "inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism" and "one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" (Smith 2012, xi), is now charged with new meaning, which has the contrasting capacity to offer "a way out of colonialism" (Smith 2012, xii). How can a tool engineered from the architects of colonialism, for the purposes of maintaining power relations, provide a viable pathway of decolonization and Indigenous resurgence? What compromises are made when decolonial approaches use conventionally colonial tools? Ultimately, can the Master's tools dismantle the Master's house (Lourde qtd. in Hale, 2006)? I will offer a brief examination of colonial research, and the ways in which Indigenous research methodologies respond within the larger framework of decolonization and radical insurgency. I will examine four central components of an Indigenous research approach and expose the resonance of their utility within efforts towards decolonization and Indigenous resurgence. These include the notions of*: accountability and relational accountability, self-location, language* and *community protocol.* Flowing from these observations, I will conclude with a discussion of the emancipatory possibilities of insurgent research in relation to resurgent Indigenous political consciousness. The second section will introduce the research project entitled: *Land as Body: An Examination of Indigenous Womxn's*

Leadership, Land-Based Wellness and Embodied Governance. I will begin with a brief outline of Indigenous Research methodologies used to guide the research design with focus on four specific features: 1) Relationship 2) Accountability 3) Language and Cultural Protocol and 4) Land/ Water-based learning. I will then move into the applied research process, methods and structure, including an introduction of the co-researchers.

Colonial paradigms self-justify through the production of economic, social, political and intellectual value. Hales describes colonial knowledge as "hegemonic", based exclusively on a "Eurocentric criteria of knowledge validation" (2006, p. 19); therefore situating itself as a dogmatic entity fit to discern what knowledge is of value, and what is not. Colonial research and the production of knowledge has been used to validate the exclusion of Indigenous experience, governance values and knowledge authority to the margins of what is to be considered verified and trusted knowledge. Research relations predicated within colonial constructs have the danger to reproduce power-relations reflective of extraction, dominance and control. Without implementing conscious decolonial approach to research, research can serve as a tool to silence and enact cognitive imperialism within the psyche of practitioners, students within academic realms of knowledge production (Hale 2008, Wilson 2009, Smith 2012) . Knowing very well that silence is one of colonialism's most powerful forms of assault (Million, 2009), Chilisa reminds us that, beyond the absolute dismissal or erasure of Indigenous ontological, epistemic, and axiological knowledges, colonial researchers are also credited with the blatant theft of Indigenous knowledge (2011). Western researchers are cultured with neoliberal capital values, which include self-interest, merit, competition and individualism within educational institutions, and replicate those values in their personal academic enterprise. Corntassel and Gaudry (2014)

discuss the mechanics of what they call extractive research, employed for the sole curiosity, academic prestige and ego of the researcher. This approach dislocates the researcher from the context, values and socio-political realities within the communities themselves. Baptistte and Youngblood (2000) describe colonial knowledge as a "cognitive imperialism" that takes on many shapes and assumes diverse forms. Cognitive, or colonial, imperialism not only infiltrates the minutiae of our internal self, but also actualizes in the abstract material infrastructure of institutional society (Memmi, 1965; Fanon, 1967; Tully, 1995; Grande, 2004; Alfred, 2005, 2009; Tengan, 2005). Structurally imposed hierarchies, based on race, gender and class, and legitimized dogma produced for colonial logic, are what justify genocidal policies such as "Kill the Indian, Save the Man" or "Kill the Indian in the Child" (refs).

Grande articulates that cognitive and intellectual emancipations, which transgress colonial logic, ground revolutionary pedagogy (2009). It is from this position that Indigenous communities equip themselves with the tools necessary to protect Indigenous knowledge from colonial extraction and infiltrate the academy in order to take back our histories, correct colonial intellectual hegemony and establish what Grande calls "spiritually vibrant, intellectually challenging and politically operative schools for both Indian and non-Indian students" (2009, p. 3). Corntassel and Gaudry articulate a framework of Indigenous research methodology within context of Indigenous resurgence practice, describing a framework premised on the use of research for the specific purpose of political emancipation and liberatory praxis (2014). Their notion of insurgency, within this specific context, maintains that research must employ an Indigenous worldview, warrant exclusive responsibility to Indigenous communities, and engage in land-based action, in order to advance the specific claims of each unique community or

collective. When applied to Indigenous notions of healing and wellness, these methodologies become charged with political meaning and provide the basis for transformative praxis. Embedded within a logic of decolonization, community wellness is capable of providing the means towards what Corntassel describes as, "cultural restoration and resurgence of Indigenous knowledges which link the struggles of Indigenous freedom to the everyday acts of all peoples to restore sustainable relationship to land and resources" (2012, p.98). The concept of insurgent healing provides the basis for decolonized healing practices and traditions, for the purpose of regenerative health and culturally determined community wellness. As many Indigenous voices and teachings reveal, individual practices of leadership, within political, social, cultural and wellness realms of being, are an everyday commitment to cultural resurgence and actualize within the personal spaces of the home, kitchen table, garden, birth-room, workplace and relationships (Corntassel et. al 2018). Individual enactments of leadership are further determined by a personal sense of agency derived from feelings of personal wellness, community well-being, relational balance and alignment of the mental, spiritual, emotional and physical selves. Healthy environments, including territories that encompass Land and Water, are essential for overall community wellness (Hirch 2011; Gomes et al. 2013; Halseth 2013). Today, we have access to a generation of Indigenous scholars, who have worked diligently to "Indigenize the Academy" (Ottman, 2013). They have informed a discourse of Indigenous research methodologies, which suggests that there are five central components, which contribute to the utility of research as a meaningful tool for cultural wellness, political and social emancipation. The first of these qualities are the concepts of accountability in general and relational accountability in particular.

Relational Accountability: Wâhkitowin

If colonialism is the aggressive severance of relationship and meaningful connection to self, one another, spirit and the Land, Indigenous research methods offer relational protocols which uphold relational integrity, accountability, language and community-ownership. Indigenous conceptions of personal and relational accountability, jettison colonial priorities which situate power in the academy and allocate highest authority to the hands and knowledge of the co-researchers or community. Indigenous knowledge systems uphold a deep regard for the intricate interconnectivities amongst all relations and are intimately grounded in the place of home territories (McGuire, 2010; Mundel, 2010; Hirch, 2011; Simpson, 2011; Gomes et al. 2013). In their article *Indigenous Information Literacy: Nêhiyaw Kinship Enabling Self-Care in Research,* Cree-Métis scholar and librarian Jessi Loyer identifies that critical Indigenization within activist and academic spheres require a meaningful relationship to Land, a "rigorous understanding of relationality" which she describes as "defined roles in how we are related to each other" and "reciprocity (who we are accountable to and responsible for)" (144, 2018). Loyer calls on a ethics of relationship building grounded in Indigenous relational governance practice, law and protocol within research, informational literacy and inter-personal relations if it is to be counted as Indigenized. The Nêhiyaw (Cree) and Michif (Métis) law of Wâhkôhtowin or Wahkootawin, provides a framework for interconnectivity in relational networks of integrity, accountability and responsibility based on kinship and inter-belonging. The Wâhkôhtowin or Wahkootawin relational framework provides a kinship model for which individuals can self-determine their own agency, integrity, wellbeing and care in their relations to *All Relations.*

Within Wâhkôhtowin or Wahkootawin law is defined by relationality, kinship and the quality of relations within individual and or collective networks of inter-being and inter-becoming. Relationality and kinship within this framework extend beyond human relations and also recognize and bring in responsibilities and honour interconnectivities to plant, animal, Spiritual and unseen Nations. To employ a sense of *good relations* to *all relations* is defined in Nehiyaw-Michif law as Miyo-Wîchêtowin; and situates the *who* we are related to with the *how* we are accountable *to*, responsible *for* and care for these relations. Miyo-Wîchêtowin is a governance model of interconnectedness and is an action-based governance practice. Wâhkôhtowin as law and Miyo-Wîchêtowin as governance, relationality and kinship are the two defining values which can only exist through conscious connection, claimed kinship and inter-belonging to People (who) , Place (Land/Waters) and Practice (Culture/Accountability/Responsibility). From a Nehiyaw-Michif perspective, relational teachings carried through Wâhkôhtowin and Miyo-Wîchêtowin are derived from direct and meaningful relationship to Land. Loyer further asserts this in their article by quoting Saulteux-Cree-Métis scholar, activist and artistic Lindsay Nixon, who says "we must liberate both land and life by actively honouring our responsibilities to kinship in this moment, fostering good relations within all creation in our intentions and actions" (152, 2018). The act of honouring life and the Land is a practice which enacts active relationality to *All Relations.* Personal and collective relationships to Land, story, community, time and space are defined by kin-centric notions of belonging and inter-relational enactments of accountability.

While Indigenous ontology (worldview) and epistemology (ways of knowing) are defined subjectively by the values, protocols and experiences of each group, most often Indigenous

perceptions of reality are situated within a relationship paradigm, which predicates relational accountability (Wilson, 2011). Wilson notes that Indigenous research methods require intensive and ongoing self-reflection, and ultimately prioritize the needs, language, cultural protocols and knowledge of the community, "if it is to be counted as Indigenous" (p. 42). Research embedded in a framework of accountability and relational accountability requires total commitment from the researcher. It is a paradigm which transcends temporal constraints and is effectively dependent upon the integrity of relationships between the researcher and co-researcher/s. A strong sense of identity, purpose and courage are essential for the researchers themselves, as they commit to a moral praxis and ethico-politics derived from and for the purpose of Indigenous liberation (Coulthard, 2012; 2014). The purpose of this research project was to examine diverse dimensions of wellbeing among Indigenous womxn and determine how they affect meaningful community leadership, cultural resurgence and relationship to Land. The research examines how diverse conceptions of wellness and wellbeing inform their practices of leadership and embodied governance on home Lands/Waters as well as their own physical, emotional, mental and spiritual bodies. As applied to research, Wâhkôhtowin and Miyo-Wîchêtowin laws and governance practices accounts for the kinship circles of people, place and practice of all researchers; as well as identifies emergent kinship relations amongst all participants of the research body itself. In the case of *Land as Body: Indigenous Womxn's Leadership, Land-based Wellness and Embodied Governance, our shared research* situates the individual and collective bodies as sites of personal governance, intimate resurgence and collective regenerative wellness. Existing scholarship within Indigenous governance does not address the direct correlations between political leadership or agency and the conditions necessary for significant and regenerative personal

healing and community well-being. This research employs a strength-based approach, rather than a deficit oriented view, to identify ways in which Indigenous womxn are already exercising political leadership in their communities. This work aims to broaden current definitions of Indigenous governance and position womxn-centred Indigenous leadership within Miyo-Pimatisiwn (the good life, wellness, healing and well-being practices), as integral to our movement towards cultural and political regeneration centred on principles of Wâhkôhtowin and Miyo-Wîchêtowin (Fraser 2011, Tuck 2009). This framework was essential in ensuring ongoing accountability to each of the co-researcher before, during and after the research phases. The teaching of Miyo-Wîchêtowin upholds Wakitoowin, which is a belief system of interconnectivity based upon kinship and relationship. This framework was essential in ensuring ongoing accountability to each of the co-researchers before, during and after the distinct research phases. Employing the teachings of Miyo-Wîchêtowin and the belief system of Wakitoowin, I locate myself, as researcher, in a place of central accountability to all others. It was my responsibility and privilege to ensure that each individual experienced a feeling of meaningful participation, respect and reciprocity throughout the entire process; and so, I often checked-in individually and thank each co-researcher for their time and energy.

Embodied Story: The Stories We Come From and Become

Conceptions of identity, protocol and relational accountability are passed on through storytelling and storied research methodologies. For Shawn Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree), storied research methodologies provide avenues to "inform our resistance and centre our narrative but also translate information" (Wilson, 2001, p. 98). The stories that come from diverse landscapes

encode the information necessary to enact social protocols, which constitute the integrity of systems of governance. Beyond the colonial imaginary, or story, Indigenous communities and scholars alike utilize storytelling methods as avenues of emancipatory mental liberation. Each individual who encounters a story is held responsible to interpret the meaning, locating the listener in a situation of agency and furthermore, action. The stories we tell and are told manufacture the 'imaginatives' of political possibility and relational protocol. For Corntassel, Chaw-win-is (Nuu-Chah-Nulth) and T'lakwadzi (Kwakwaka'wakw), storytelling is a "starting point for renewing Indigenous family and community responsibilities in the ongoing struggle for Indigenous justice and freedom" (2009, p. 4) and provides a pathway to imagine beyond colonial relationships and transform power. Storytelling methodologies allow for individuals to create their own meaning, and when stories are shared and embedded in living histories of a people and place, they provide the space necessary for communities to co-create their ways into the future, informed by cultural values and land/water-based knowledges (Chilisa, 2012, Mucina 2019). The languages that carry storied teachings encode the fabric of Indigenous epistemological and ontological unfoldings of relationships and the emergence of political and cultural governance. During each step of this research, co-researcher had complete agency to decide if they wanted to participate or not, and all information regarding the research project was optional and by invitation. The number one priority was that each individual experienced a sense of safety, comfort and personal agency within the space. In our group circle, a W̱SÁNEĆ community member grounded our shared reflections in SENĆOŦEN language and place-based knowledge protocols reflective of the territories we explored the research on. Throughout the research phases, I also contained each individual conversation and each group research circle within a

gifting protocol reflective of my own cultural teachings and practices. This included individual gifts (tobacco ties, hand-made beaded gifts, and wellness baskets with gift certificates and other items intended for "self-care").

Miyo-Wîchêtowin, good governance/balance/accountability, informs a research framework which works with, for and belongs to co-researchers. This relational accountability extends into an accountability to the co-researchers wellness, well-being and relational networks extending to their languages, cultural protocols and home Lands/Waters. I established relational accountability by ensuring that I knew co-researchers within a community context before meeting them in an academic context; so that they might know me based on my community accountabilities first and foremost. For Indigenous communities, we are accountable to introduce ourselves from with a relational network: who we are, where we were raised, our traditional or ancestral territories, our families names, community roles or responsibilities, our languages and clear intentions with what, why and how we participate in research. This protocol reflects the practice of Wâhkitowin (who we are related to, to be in relationship, kinship and belonging). Within the larger practice of Miyo-Wîchêtowin (what defines balanced, good or healthy relationships, we must first and foremost self-locate within who makes up our social fabric of Wâhkitowin). By locating myself within my kin-networks and community accountabilities, I am practicing an ethics of transparency, care and vulnerability which fosters relationships built on time, trust and process. These relationships define the integrity and quality of learnings as co-created by co-researchers.

Self-Location

For Indigenous communities, we are accountable to introduce ourselves from with a relational network: who we are, where we were raised, our traditional or ancestral territories, our families' names, community roles or responsibilities, our languages and clear intentions with what, why and how we participate in research. This protocol reflects the practice of Wâhkitowin: who we are related to, to be in relationship, kinship and belonging. Within the larger practice of Miyo-Wîchêtowin, what defines balanced, good or healthy relationships, we must first and foremost self-locate within who makes up our social fabric of Wâhkitowin. By locating myself within my kin-networks and community accountabilities, I am practicing an ethic of transparency, care and vulnerability, which fosters relationships built on time, trust and process. These relationships define the integrity and quality of learnings as co-created by co-researchers.

While the concept of self-location is considered antithetical and even forbidden within western, positivist research paradigms, it is a prerequisite within the gestation, employment and dissemination of Indigenous research projects. Given that from an Indigenous research methods approach, "we are not *in* relationships, but rather *are* the relationships we hold and are a part of" (Wilson, 2011, p. 80), Indigenous research paradigms prioritize self-location and reference to experience in order to integrate the above-mentioned practices of accountability and relational accountability. Within the context of this research project, I understood the role of my own self-location in relation to the co-researchers' experiences with the research itself. Recognizing that reflections based upon wellbeing, barriers to personal healing and governance can require vulnerability and honesty, I made sure that I articulated my intentions, aspirations and hopes for the research project and my own personal history as well. While I did employ self-location in the writing of my final dissertation, I am conscious and concise in the ways that I ensure an honest

self-location regarding questions about *who I am, where I come from, who I am accountable to, why I am doing this research, what are my hopes, and what will I do with it,* to each individual co-researcher.

The commitment for researchers to self-locate in relationship to the Indigenous community establishes unprecedented sites for transformation and state-accountability within the larger context of colonial imperialism. In the Cree-Michif language, the subject is always paired with an active verb. If I pronounce "I", it is embedded with an action of some sort; the "I" does not stand without action. Just as Scow defines research as the actual "re-searching" of oneself, in relating to, participating with, and coming to understand our place within creation and how this practice informs everyday relations (2018, p. 40), the Cree word Pikiswiw describes a "remembering of self as one returns" (personal oral teaching). This is not unlike Gravelling's understanding of knowing, as a process of "self-in-relation" (1998), Smith's notion of right relationship (2012), or Simpson's conception of self-return and indigenization (2011). The active remembrance and connection to our ancestry, location within the colonial spectrum, assumed privileges, and conscious awareness of who we are becoming, are required within Indigenous research paradigms (Absolon, 2011; Smith, 2012). Simpson (2004), among others, notes that the responsibilities of Indigenous scholars should transcend the mere documentation of knowledge and locate our physical bodies on the land (Alfred, 2005; Corntassel, 2012; Salmón, 2012). When we as researchers, are situated on our home territories, or in the territories of the communities we serve or are students of, we have access and therefore, responsibility to community protocol.

Kovach acknowledges existent methodological discrimination within the western academic landscape and calls for the bolstering of courage among researchers who employ self-location within their methodologies. Simpson does this through grounding her own research in the teachings of her Anishnaabe elders (2011), while Absolon does this through structuring her own understanding of Indigenous research methodologies in the flower-stem model (2011). Each guided conversation took place first and foremost within relationship with the co-researcher and a clear self-location of myself within research. Why am I involved in this work? Who am I accountable to? What is it that I am seeking to learn? How do I define research myself? How do I hope to serve community in this work? This allowed for myself the time and space to introduce myself first and foremost within a community and cultural context, before that of a researcher. Through prioritizing my own self-location, where I come from (my home territories), how I was raised, what my roles and responsibilities are to community, ceremonial protocol and my own thoughts, protocols and practice within research, I ensured that the relationship with each co-researcher was defined by the guiding principles of Wâhkitowin; relationship, kinship and accountability. I would first meet with each co-researcher to introduce myself, my family names and community (if they already did not know), and talk to them about my research. I would describe my intentions and what brought me into the world of Indigenous Wellness and Governance research and education. I would then invite them to participate as a co-researcher and describe to them the content, questions and inquires I had in mind. This building of relationship, trust and time together is part of the research process. I was also guided by Kovach's call for researchers to breathe their own lives, experiences and culture into the research, with the objective to fuse epistemology with emancipatory methodology (2009). I did

this by ensuring that the guided conversations occurred in spaces determined by each individual themselves. They were asked to choose a place, ideally outdoors and on the Land/Water, or other location in which they felt comfortable and a "sense of peace".

Living Language

This project was predicated on the exclusive prioritization of local Indigenous knowledge, grounded in local language. Language, within the context of Indigenous research methodology, carries two primary requirements. The first is that, if and when possible, the researcher must employ (with permission and guidance from the community), researcher's local language grounded in their home territories. Language is what knits together Indigenous cultural, spiritual and political theory and practice. Language survives only if and when the carriers of language embody good relations with themselves, with one another and with the Land (Trask, 1993; Silva, 2004; Simpson, 2005; Goodyear-Kaopua et al, 2014). I am conscious of my own disconnection from the Cree-Michif language, and recognize my position as an emerging researcher, to fully employ and engage with the language of my family. The current realities of globalization have forced contemporary Indigenous scholars to engage in creative ways of contention, and learning a language far from my kin and home territory can be an exhaustive and unnatural experience. However, because language transcends the cognitive and also employs an emotional conception, I know that it is possible to continue to learn and utilize the Cree-Michif language in Pikiswiw as re-search and research.

The second requirement of how language is employed within Indigenous research methodology is that is it accessible and applicable on community levels. Sandoval reminds us that "if we do not fundamentally transform the language of politics, our struggles will be

destined to reinforce and reproduce the very structures of oppression they intend to resist" (qtd. in Hales, 2006, p. 17). Academic jargon is a colonial mechanism used to establish social hierarchies and cultivate a culture of pretentious elitism (Smith, 2012).

Seminal projects such as *A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land and Sovereignty* center community voices, and write in a language that is accessible to Indigenous community members from within and outside of the academy. While this proved a challenge in the actual writing my own dissertation, I aim to do this in a community-learning basket and short visual-film. Through the production of diverse forms of research productions in the community-learning handbook and visual film-narrative, I am able to move beyond the confines of a single written presentation of research, and ensure a multitude of knowledge mobilization. The commitment to produce and create multi-disciplinary translations of our shared research is a central and integral pillar of both the formation of the written dissertation and efforts within knowledge mobilization and return of knowledge to co-researchers. A multitude of final research mobilization resources (written, visual and audio/oral) ensures that the co-researchers have full and ongoing access to their own contributions, knowledge and reflections; along with the ability to engage with them in both written, visual and oral methods. Diverse methods of presenting research (written, visual and oral), ensures that I, as researcher, uphold multidimensional accountabilities to Institutional, academic and community realms of governance. As a language learner myself, this is a place to attempt to reclaim my own language and employ the words I learn through accessible research products. Open access literature is an essential component of the evolution of Indigenous political consciousness.

Mi'kmaq scholar, Fred Metallic defended his PhD dissertation in his own language (2009) and his impact resounded among Indigenous academies around the world. While still an Indigenous body within a colonial institution, Metallic's seminal contribution is premised first and foremost upon his relationship to his own community and Nation. He successfully subverted colonial interjection in the assembly and dissemination of his culture's knowledge, demonstrating a language's capacity to undermine colonial power as well as contribute to the values of cultural resurgence, which are the ideals of insurgent research and protection of Indigenous knowledge. Grounded in community, Metallic demonstrates how, what Alfred & Corntassel (2005) call "Indigenous Intelligentsia" can provide a viable pathway of cultural resurgence and knowledge guardianship. Language ensures that the knowledge stays within the community itself, and is ultimately used for the purpose of their own political, social and economic wellbeing. I have attempted to do this by asking co-researchers and co-researchers about the ways they believe the findings of this research can be returned to them and their communities in a way that feels meaningful and impactful. These conversations have helped guide my own reflections and commitment to translate my Doctoral work into diverse forms; including film and a community learning basket/handbook.

Honouring Community Protocol

It is a primary responsibility of researchers to adhere to community protocol and if possible, have it take precedent over other authority; including that of academic institutions. If this is not possible, the researcher must take their lead from community partners in re-determining how the research project can be best suited to support ongoing community initiatives, wellness practices and community-led research practice. Within western academia, it

can sometimes feel that we are meant to recognize authority through a veil of elitism or prestige; which for many of us causes for us to shape shift ourselves into replications of western academic conduct deemed palpable to their standards. Within Indigenous communities, we observe authority with those who have amassed a collective regard of honour, accumulated through their personal commitment to the collective. Indigenous research pedagogies require a commitment to the adherence of wisdom, moral praxis and relational accountability as taught and demonstrated by Elders (Archibald, 2008; Denzin, 2008; Irlbacher-Fox, 2009; Tagalik, 2010; Jacob, 2013). As we "heed the voices of our ancestors" (Alfred, 2005, p. xii), we naturally uphold the integrity of Indigenous knowledge and liberate our ways of knowing and being from racist colonial assumptions of devaluation and free them from the realm of alternativity.

This research was guided by ongoing conversations and checking-in with co-researchers, through conversations embedded in relationships in which co-researchers knew me from a community-setting before knowing me within a research-setting, and my commitment to translate all research developments to the co-researchers throughout the final analysis and development of the final research body. Through the adherence to the authority of our own communities, we establish Indigenous knowledge as default and utilize our academic achievements to fill in gaps within western knowledge, or alternatively, utilize western knowledge paradigms to simply supplement our own ways of knowing. I have demonstrated this through prioritizing Indigenous research and relational scholarship in each stage of my research development and inquiry. Furthermore, my research goals aim to acknowledge, yet not exhaust, interrogations with state-violence upon Indigenous bodies and re-allocate research efforts and energies to strength-based community-led insights, approaches and alternatives. Indigenous

knowledge within research frameworks employs the values of respect, reciprocity, renewal and responsibility (Wilson, 2009; Stark 2010). When led by Indigenous values, relationship, land-based language and community protocol, Indigenous research methodologies constitute a viable resource for decolonial ideologies and material praxis. Indigenous authors have contributed to a growing body of literature within the realms of resurgence, colonization-decolonization, and transformative learning discourse. Ultimately, Indigenous research methodologies uphold a witnessing of story for the purpose of honouring legacy and reclaiming dignity (Smith 2012, Mucina 2011, 2019).

The co-researchers of this project are from 10 different Nations and each individual has their own relationship to their Indigenous language, homeland and protocols. It was necessary for me to learn about each of these before I engaged in my first conversations with them; so that I could be accountable to the context from which we were conversing and could ground their teachings within their own personal context and storied-landscape. I encouraged each co-researcher to use their own words and experiences and did not ask or suggest translation into English, as the language itself carried their own intended meanings. Stories, although breathed into the oral landscape, also take shape in the visual world of our own imaginations, visionaries and personal forms of self-expression. While I provided the tools, materials, technical support and direction from co-researchers (for example, to produce a mixed-media production), the process itself was determined by each of the individuals.

Methodology

Through this dissertation, I aim to broaden current definitions of Indigenous governance and leadership towards a gendered, storied and embodied understanding. To that end, I examined

the conditions necessary for Indigenous womxn to experience Miyo-Pimatisiwin (internal balance, wellness, healing) within their larger location and participation in every day acts of Miyo-Wîchêtowin (good relations, governance). To do this, I asked questions like: *What are the interconnectivites between Land/Water-based wellness and governance? How can Indigenous womxn's leadership contribute to real societal change? How do you define leadership and governance? How does your wellness contribute to your experiences with leadership?*

Within an overarching conceptual framework, I prioritized Indigenous ways of knowing through oral frameworks and felt theory (Million 2009, Mucina 2011). My research model prioritized oral-based knowledge as the keystone of the methodology which supports the belief that individuals and communities gain knowledge, examine, interpret and understand lived experience through oral stories (Clandinin & Connelly 1999, 1994; Riessman 1990). The use of narrative inquiry supports Indigenous methodology frameworks, which prioritize language as a central component of Indigenous research practice, and upholds value in the oral-narrative traditions, which carry forth teachings of governance across time and space. Indigenous scholarship and communities alike, assert that story-telling is a viable community-led governance practice, which is at the core of knowledge translation and cultural regeneration (Archibald 2008, Kovach 2009, Salmón 2012, Simpson 2011, Walker 2011). Ultimately, narrative approach upholds conceptions of "relational methodology" in which epistemological implications of Indigenous knowing influence knowledge production, sharing and meaning, within an academic context (Barton 2004, p. 519). Furthermore, it situates all co-researchers in a relationship which acknowledges research products as collaborative, co-creative and co-representative. A final component of the overarching conceptual design of this project employs

the values and worldview described by felt theories, which center Indigenous womxn's lived experiences, multilayered emotional knowledges, felt pain, grief and hope as important conductors within overall scholarship within the field of Indigenous Governance and beyond (Million, 2009).

Just as this dissertation engages with conceptual decolonial frameworks premised on kincentric relationality and inter-being, seminal scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith urge efforts towards self-determined knowledge production as a process which reproduces Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies and relational governance extended through human-non-human-physical and spirit relations (2013). Reaching again into Starblanket's work on Indigenous Feminist Research methods, a significant learning gained from her work is found in her deep considerations in the ways in which Indigenous knowledge production can transcend institutional bounds and take up multi-dimensional space within the academe. Starblanket and Smith assert research methods that equip researchers with the means to examine a multitude of Indigenist expressions and do-away with simplistic and reductionist methods which curtain Indigenous diversities into a single assimilationist body. In order to reify Indigenous peoples multidimensional and fluid engagement with identity and relationality, researchers are required to employ relationally-accountable methods which come from, return to and are co-created with research participants, communities and knowledge-holders themselves. Therefore, this research should aim to draw out contemporary enactments of leadership within all sites of community governance, not just the sites of interest to the popular view. Within this research inquiry, I have conceptualized Indigenous Governance as Miyo-Wîchêtowin, and Indigenous Wellness/Health Research as Miyo-Pimatisiwin. The application of an Indigenous lens to inquiries about

everyday experiences of wellness and governance supports the notion that personal experiences are situated within a larger network of inter-being: self, family, kin, Nation, Land/Waters, and beyond. Therefore, this research was co-defined and co-created through relationship with co-researchers, as we explored the nuances, interconnectivities and multi-layers of Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wîchêtowin within an expansive framework of *being well in relation to All Relations*; and furthermore, how this experience is inter-related to Land/Waters. My learnings from this project will advance current understandings of Indigenous governance in a manner that holds both theoretical and practical promise; specifically, in the areas of social policy, health-care practice and community-led wellness initiatives.

Co-researchers

Utilizing narrative inquiry, storytelling methods and relationship-based models of accountability, I engaged in guided conversations with 17 self-identified Indigenous Womxn between 21-60 years of age from 10 different Nations, across a vast spectrum of community work and personally defined leadership, to explore definitions of leadership in their everyday lives, the conditions for their personal wellness and community well-being and finally, how these notions are predicated on meaningful relationship to Land/Waters. The learnings I gained from these womxn, have been used to construct a more comprehensive definition of Indigenous governance.

Co-researchers were self-identified Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) womxn who are actively involved in diverse sites of community governance such as: health care and healing, wellness traditions, cultural knowledge carrier, youth-care and youth programming, Land-based youth programs, Traditional Medicines Educator, Visual Arts and Performance,

Birth-care and practice, Band Council, Academia, and Child Psychology and Therapy, Journalism and media, and more. Indigenous womxn who participated in the study met the following criteria: (a) self-identified as Indigenous to Canada (b) 18 years of age and over (c) interested in participating in this project. In this research project, I have identified co-researchers as co-researchers, acknowledging that my research learnings belong to each individual co-researcher and the co-researcher collective themselves. Overall, 17 co-researchers from across 10 different Nations, agreed to a guided conversation, which lasted between one-to-two hours; nine of the original co-researchers also attended a sharing circle in which we explored questions through self-directed film, photography, drawing and poetry. We conducted these reflections independently and then shared with one another in a final circle. Ethical Approval: The University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board (see Ethics Certificate – Appendix 1) granted ethical approval for this research. All procedures related to free and informed consent, shared teachings & knowledge, are protected with utmost confidentiality and ongoing consent.

Procedure

Phase 1: Outreach- Each co-researcher was identified by friends, family or their Nation as a leader in community wellness, well-being and governance. I reached out personally to individuals through publicly accessible means and invited them to join the study. After an initial conversation, if they expressed interest, I provided them with the research outline and consent form.

Phase 2: Gifting Protocol- At the time of the guided conversation, I greeted each co-researcher with a small pouch of tobacco, a personal thank you card and a hand-made beaded

gift, which I made in preparation for our time together. This process proved to be the most important for my own sense of accountability and respect as a researcher. The gift of tobacco comes from my own cultural teachings and represents reciprocity and fertility or regeneration of thought, reflections, relationship and energies of creative vitality. During the time I spent beading earrings, a medicine bag or necklace for the co-researchers, I reflected on the work of each individual and prepared myself through a form of intentional mindfulness. During the final stages of writing, I sent my dissertation to each of the co-researchers for their review, insights, edits and/or choice to opt out of the project. Once given permission by the co-researchers, I brought the research collection forward to my academic committee.

Phase 3: Land-based Guided Conversations - In preparation for our conversation, I asked each co-researcher to choose a place on the Land or Waters, if possible. Each co-researcher decided on a place and space which felt good for them to enter into a discussion about *wellness, well-being, healing, leadership and embodied governance.* A few co-researchers chose to go for a walk around a lake or to meet in a garden. Another co-researcher invited me to join them for a Cold-Water Bath ceremony at sunrise, after which we made a fire and had our "talk". Another co-researcher invited me into her home and we made dinner and after putting her kids to bed, we sat together at her kitchen table. One co-researcher invited me to travel with her to a spot out by the Ocean to spend the day together. With co-researcher's permission, guided conversation were audio-taped and guiding questions included (but are not limited to):

1. *How do you define wellness? When do you feel well?*

2. *What new insights into Indigenous womxn's leadership can be gained from looking specifically at their role in land-based wellness and cultural practices?*
3. *What are significant barriers for Indigenous womxn to embody a meaningful personal sense of wellbeing and therefore limiting their experiences of political resurgence?*
4. *How do Indigenous womxn define leadership and the conditions necessary to embody these conceptions?*
5. *What are the relations between wellness and governance?*
6. *How do you envision every day acts of governance?*
7. *What specific roles do Indigenous womxn have in bridging scholarship and practice within the fields of Indigenous Governance and Land-based Wellness practices?*

Phase 4: Transcription, Preliminary Reflections and Analysis – Prior to analysis, I transcribed each guided conversation verbatim, which allowed me time to reflect on our conversations. During this process, I would note major themes in each conversation and later returned to the transcript to engage in thematic analysis. This phase can be described as eight steps:

1. Initial review of the taped conversations to ensure recording quality and completeness.
2. Re-listening to the tapes while transcribing the conversations.
3. Reading the transcripts, along with re-listening to the corresponding tapes.
4. Identifying significant quotes and/or teachings on each transcript through conceptual coding. Organizing the transcript into thematic groupings with conceptual coding.
5. A preliminary assessment of common themes emerging from the conversations.
6. The refinement of themes through the use of NVIVO software; marking most used-terminologies into domains.
7. I used the Kihewini framework to organize central themes of wellness, healing and governance.

Phase 5: Collaborative Research Circle: Visual Media and Arts-based Component - All co-researchers were invited to participate in a subsequent process (over the phone or Skype if they wished), so that I could share the learnings I had gleaned from our conversations. Several co-researchers expressed an interest in reflecting on these themes through arts-based methods. I also felt that it was important to have a shared circle so that the teachings, learnings and wisdom shared by co-researchers would return to the collective co-researchers in a relationship-based way. The circle provided a space for co-researchers to hear one another, to reflect together and to share our emerging understandings of wellness, leadership and embodied governance in relation to Land/Waters. Listening to the needs of the co-researchers, I facilitated a collaborative Research Circle, which included nine of the 17 co-researchers. The overarching theme of knowledge translation through oral frameworks is contained within research designs based on conceptual theory and practice of Indigenous relationality and storied narratives (Mucina, 2011, Wilson 2008, Smith 2012). Social constructivism accounts for individual experience and knowledge in relationship to larger socio-cultural contexts and the languages which govern these social landscapes (Rogoff, 1990). In this circle, we shared shared? learnings and reflections based on the themes I had generated and then fashioned them into individual, yet co-creative, representations of artistic exploration of personal experiences of healing and wellness; including photography, poetry and film.

The final sharing and reflection circle included seven phases:

1. The opening of the Research Circle in cultural protocol, starting with land protocols and opening prayers by those from W̱SÁNEĆ territory - in their language. This stage was important as it grounded the circle to the lands and languages where we gathered.

2. The circle began with brief introductions in which each co-researcher included "I feel my best when…." into their introduction.
3. I provided a summary of my preliminary learnings based on conversations with each of the co-researchers and shared what I had discovered as major themes across the conversations.
4. I reintroduced reflection questions on wellness, well-being, leadership and embodied governance and asked each individual to craft a statement or phrase which represented what Land-based wellness means to them. They were encouraged to be as specific or as abstract as they wished and to use their own words and languages.
5. I asked each co-researcher to choose a visual representation of this statement to be depicted through film, art and or photography. They each chose a visual representation of their statement (e.g., running water, breathing, a portrait, a drawing or an image of something that represented personal well-being).
6. With their direction, I worked with each co-researcher to film or capture this visual.
7. The final stage will be to edit and post-produce a small film narrative, which will offer a visual representation of the domains presented at the Research Circle, and perhaps draw out additional or new themes from secondary reflection through narrative analysis. It was essential for me to employ mixed-media narrative methods in order to uphold the true voices of each co-researcher as co-researchers within the overall project. The circle was not for the purpose of data collection; but rather to continue and honour relationships within the research project.

Phase 6: Preliminary Sharing - Each co-researcher was given a summary of final learnings and copy of the dissertation for their consideration, review and input. Each co-researcher has full agency to leave the research project at any time, and as communicated through the consent form, the knowledge, teachings and learnings shared from the project belong to each individual themselves. I offered to edit the project if deemed necessary by the co-researchers; this did not occur.

Phase 7: Knowledge Mobilization- A Return to Community, A Return to Land. The learnings I have gained from my time with the co-researchers, have been drafted into a final thesis and will be further shared through a visual narrative (i.e. film). The written and visual narratives will also be translated into a community learning basket, including a framework for facilitating Wellness and Leadership workshops across diverse community spaces and equip community members with tools to facilitate Land-based wellness practice in their own spaces and landscapes. The final research products reflect accountabilities derived from the principles of Indigenous research and ensure community access to the products of research that is grounded in localized protocols, languages and relationships.

CHAPTER THREE:
LEARNINGS | KIHEWINI

As many Indigenous voices and teachings reveal, individual practices of leadership are an everyday commitment to cultural resurgence and actualize within the personal spaces of the home, kitchen table, garden, birth-room, workplace and relationships. Individual enactments of leadership are further determined by personal sense of agency derived from feelings of personal wellness, community well-being, relational balance and alignment of the mental, spiritual, emotional and physical selves. Healthy environments, including territories that encompass Land and Water, are essential for overall community wellness. This dissertation examines emergent themes of Indigenous wellness, governance and gender to broaden current definitions of Indigenous governance and leadership towards a gendered, storied and embodied understanding. Countering the notion that governance and wellness are separate entities within the field of Indigenous Governance, this paper draws the Indigenous body into focus as a crucial site for

self-determination in what I define as *embodied governance*. In doing so, we situate the Indigenous body within a self-determination framework that brings together critical Indigenous studies, Indigenous governance and culturally grounded wellness practices. Utilizing narrative inquiry, storytelling methods, relationship based models of accountability, this research project included guided conversation with 17 self-identified Indigenous Womxn between 21-60 years of age from 10 different Nations, to explore: definitions of leadership in their everyday lives, the conditions for their personal wellness and community well-being, and finally, how these notions are predicated upon meaningful relationship to Land/Waters. Weaving together shared conceptions of Land-based wellness, individual understandings of everyday leadership and the shared, lived and felt experiences of Indigineity, the author situates the body as a site of governance, self-determination and cultural agency. My research defines wellness and well-being within the Cree-Michif framework of Miyo-Pimatisiwin (personal wellness, self-care, healing, internal balance) and Miyo-Wîchêtowin (care for others, accountability and belonging, kinship, relational governance, external balance). These concepts inform what I define as an *embodied governance* framework of self-determination to engage in ongoing efforts of personal, community, Land/Water-based healing for the purpose of protecting the future of generations to come. The final analysis celebrates and honours on-the-ground practices of embodied governance by focusing on rooted examples of creative resurgence, Land-Water based healing practices and a focus on an emergent theme of embodied birth and reproductive governance.

These learnings support that determinants of individual leadership must be supported by a sense of personal wellness contained by relationship to Land and Waters. The dissertation begins with a critical examination of the colonial underpinnings that sabotage community healing,

wellness and traditions of governance as derived by relationship to home Lands and Waters. In doing so, our research aims to interrupt the predominant trope of the Indigenous body or community as continuously in crisis. This paper situates Indigenous healing practices as radical sites of governance. The research argues for the reconsideration of self-determination as embodied governance, which begins with the body as a site of regeneration, resurgence and renewal.

Intentions

Shared learnings from a collaborative Indigenous methods qualitative study that examined narratives of leadership, wellbeing and relationship to Land/Water of Indigenous Womxn.

Design

Community-based study conducted within the context of Indigenous cultural protocols, relational accountability and ongoing consent.

Methodology and Methods

Relationship-based Indigenous research methodology. Qualitative, semi-structured narrative dialogues with 17 co-researchers from across 10 different Nations. One-to-two guided conversations, 1-3 hours per individual, and a final, four-hour group research circle with nine co-researchers. All co-researchers self-identify as Indigenous Womxn, five identify as queer and one as two-spirit. Conversations were explored using a thematic approach.

Learnings

An overarching theme of embodied governance (embodied practices of leadership and wellness), with four domains: 1) Spirit and Culture (sense of personal balance and alignment of

mental, spiritual, physical and emotional bodies), 2) Creative Resurgence (self-actualization and vitality), 3) Relational Accountability (belonging and accountability to others) and 4) Kitaskînaw î pî kiskinohamâkoya. Sâkihito-maskihkiy î pî kiskinohamâkoya (Relationship to Land/Water).

Conclusions

The teachings gained from the co-researchers are presented a model format intended for practical community use in the development of culturally-grounded curriculum within the fields of leadership, governance, Land-based learning and community-led health-care social policy. Wellness promotion model to be used as community learning basket (visual handbook) offered to each of the co-researchers and their communities, educational resource to incite learnings for educators and health care practitioners within the context of Indigenous health and social policy; including recommendations for cultural protocol within wellness services.

By providing space for deeper reflection and oral projections of their own experiences, this research serves as not only a tool to highlight Indigenous womxn's experience within the academic landscape, but also as a supplementary resource for self-determined expression, actualization and meaningful representation. Central themes produced through narrative reflection and representation differed from those expressed through oral guided conversations, and it became clear that experience, knowledge and self-expression requires more than one venue of articulation in order to assume purposeful representations of each individual's reflection. While oral guided conversations allow for others to examine and assess diverse themes presented through the data collection phase, the production of visual narrative bodies allows for those who encounter research to instead *bear witness* to the community-driven narratives. The act of bearing witness challenges extractive research and storytelling processes,

and replaces them with meaningful opportunities for co-creation of alternative narratives. Situated as a research mechanism, mixed-media storytelling can prove highly effective in the essential representation of experience, knowledge and voice of the co-researcher (Mullin 2003, Mucina 2011, Reimagining Attawapiskat, 2017). Regarding the co-researcher as co-creator within the context of research, challenges processes of extractive research which designate the 'subject' (researcher) in a position of authority and often regards the co-researcher as the 'object' of study and therefore secondary position of agency within the research (Smith, 2012). To ensure that research is embedded within frameworks, practices and values considered "Indigenous methods", it is necessary to use research methods as a tool to restore balance in how we tell stories, share knowledge and produce theories regarding the lives, bodies and governance of Indigenous womxn and their communities.

The following section presents the learnings I have acquired as a result of my time with the co-researchers. The model reveals four overarching conceptual groupings, described as domains or Kihewini. The term "meta-theme" is described by Tesch (1987) as a categorical representation of a totality or phenomenon being examined in research (p. 231). When applied to an Indigenous framework, it is helpful to identify points of intersectionality and relationship, rather than a dichotomy or categorical separation. The term "Meta-Themes" while ubiquitous within qualitative research, does not resonate at a community-level of inquiry, learning and knowledge translation, so I have chosen to use the term "domains". I have also included a personal visual representation of the totality of my learnings from this research collection (See Figure 1). These visual representations help organize and clarify the interdependent concepts. When applied to my own research, my first attempt to visualize domains within "Indigenous

Wellness, Leadership and Embodied Governance" is found in Figure 1. While the generation of domains is a useful method to identify and articulate the specificities of Miyo-Pimatisiwin/Miyo-Wichetowin; it falls short when translated to Indigenous language-based knowledge transference grounded in relationship to Land/Waters. When applied to relationship to Land and Waters, the final model which best represents my learnings is reflected in Figure 2. This visual model is used to represent the Cree-Michif notion of Kihewini. Kihewini as a meta-physical concept that describes infinite life-flow, in energy form, knowledge transference, and or physical breath, between relations, place and purpose. It is an ethereal entity that captures the essence of the learnings shared by co-researchers and is defined by the following characteristics: inter-dimensional, felt, infinite, story, water, memory, interconnectivity, shared life force, unseen. The representative model of Kihewini does not categorize, dichotomize and/or neatly organize data within an analysis of conclusive findings. Rather, it is a compelling representation of Indigenous critical inquiry into the unknown and/or exploration of knowledge through emergent thought and relational practice as a living, breathing reality; premised upon the integrity of inter-being past, present and future.

The visualizations of Figure One & Two support my own understanding of how Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wichetowin are interrelated and interdependent. They also demonstrate that Indigenous research often includes visual representations, which reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and relationship. Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wichetowin, as applied within the context of wellness and governance, cannot be applied to a linear model, methodology or research framework. Rather, the models represent the full complexity, holism and inter-relational dynamics of Indigenous knowledge acquisition, critical reflection and transference. A Kihewini

model illustrates the intrinsic interrelatedness of Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wîchêtowin, guiding research questions and relationships. Furthermore, it provides an meaningful framework, grounded in Indigenous research methods; specifically, self-location and language.

Kihewini is a pathway which authentically represents my own lens of inquiry, thought and practice within my overall investigation of Indigenous womxn's experience of Miyo-Pimatisiwin in their contributions towards Miyo-Wichetowin; situated in kin-centric relationship to Land and Waters. The domains illustrated by Kihewini include: 1) Spirit and Culture (personal sense of balance, alignment of emotional, mental, physical and spiritual bodies), 2) Creative Resurgence (self-actualization, expression and personal vitality), 3) Relational Accountability (Social and Spiritual belonging and accountability to relational networks) and finally 4) Kitaskînaw î pî kiskinohâmakoya. Sâkihito-maskihiy î pî kiskinimâkoya (Relationship to Land and Water). Readers are encouraged to draw upon the Kihewini visuals, while exploring the four domains described by the learnings I have acquired from the co-researchers. They are not presented in any particular order, and as demonstrated in the Kihewini visual, inform one another in a constant state of inter-being and relatedness. The subtitles are used to help clarify the focus of each learning; however, this section can also be explored as a final holistic learning, rather than sub-categorized findings.

Figure 1: Kihewini Model of Indigenous Womxn's Wellness and Embodied Governance

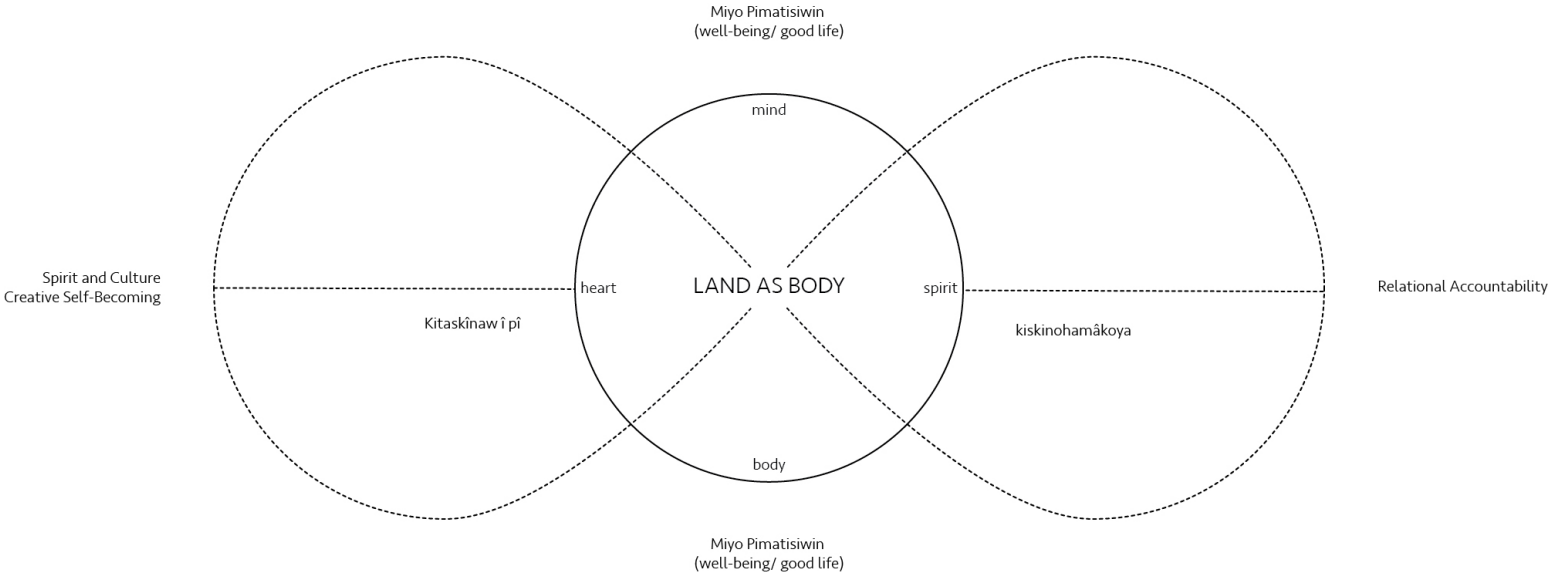

Figure 2: Land-Based Model of Indigenous Womxn's Wellness and Embodied Governance

1. Kitaskînaw î pî kiskinohamâkoya
2. Spirit and Culture
3. Creative Self-Becoming
4. Relational Accountability
……..
5. Cosmology and Language
6. Material Base: Land and Water
7. Diversity (self-actualization)
8. Ancestor | Memory | Story

**Kihewini - interconnected life force (sacred)

Spirit and Culture

Many co-researchers described the significance of Land/Water-based experiences of spirit and culture within their own personal well-being and everyday acts of governance within larger relational networks. Many of the co-researchers echo the teaching that meaningful connection to Land and Waters is accessed through ceremony. In my own life, ceremonial pratice, intention and experience are what makes my own kinship to Land/Waters meaningful, tangible and sacred. Co-researchers assert that the reverence and sacred connection gifted through ceremonial commitments flows back into their own embodiments/experiences within relational-networks; ultimately informing their own ethics of Miyo-Pimatisiwin (self-care, wellness, internal balance) and Miyo-Wîchêtowin (care for others, relational governance, external balance). In her reflections upon ceremonial governance on Land and Waters, Sherri Pooyak shares how,

> "going to ceremony means to be on the Land. That is wellness, going to ceremony and being really grounded in that and doing what I need to do for that day. Whether that's smudging or making a little offering for the ones that I missed seeing or actually going to our ceremonies that we have in the summertime; it can be any of those things that contributes to my well-being. As a Cree person, we can actually go back to say this is a culture this is where I come from this is my Land".

Ashleigh Thompson (Anishinaabe) further acknowledges the interdependence of personal experience in ceremony to the ways that she enacts governance in her everyday relations. She shares that she prioritizes,

> "making sure that I give myself time for the physical ceremony and when I am on my moon time to take care extra care myself to make sure that I am not over exerting myself to make sure that I'm feeding myself in really good ways, whether that be you know through physical sustenance or through how I relate to people and

> making sure that I'm giving myself those kinds of things. To celebrate that connection that I have to to Creation".

The reflections on well-being in relationship to Land through ceremony reveal that personal experiences of wellness reflect feelings of connection and relationship to the world around them. This is further reflected in reflections shared by Emilee Gilpin (Nehiyaw-Michif);

> "when I am in ceremony, many of our ceremonies in the prairies, or across different peoples, like Ojibwe, Cree or Haudenosaunee have ceremonies like the Full Moon or fasting ceremonies that are very connected to our non-human relatives. And I felt that spiritual nourishment has been really good grounding and bringing me back and also just lessening that focus on self. Like that's kind of the intent of some ceremonies or just the natural thing that happens and they're very connected to you know full moon connect to the moon connected to water. You know that fasting ceremony connected to. That, you know having that space to find gratitude again for the land for water and for all of Creators like gifts of sustenance. And then I've also felt a sense of well-being when I'm in a more prayerful state. And I find not truly being able to access a more prayerful state when I am in non-human spaces, not urban spaces. So, you know quieter spaces. Yeah when I'm like I'm speaking about ceremony as well not just water but also fire as well, has always been an essential part and ceremony on the Land. And these teachings give a place for you to let go, a place to find strength in the ways that I've been taught, to use medicines to work through certain things."

Just as preparation and prioritization of personal healing and participation in ceremony nourishes individual experiences of well-being, the co-researchers assert that ceremonies enact teachings, learnings and values, which extend into accountabilities and Miyo-Wîchêtowin with All Relations. If Miyo-Pimatisiwin provides a space to explore personal wellness, balance and culturally defined values and Miyo-Wîchêtowin offers a pathway towards enacting Miyo-Pimatisiwin amongst relational kinship networks of accountability, leadership and governance, then Kitaskînaw î pî kiskinohamâkoya. Sâkihito-maskihkiy î pî kiskinohamâkoya provides the physical place to embody these teachings, interactions, and to experience interconnectivity in a

way that honours sacred connection and ceremonial protocol. However, co-researchers did not always differentiate between concepts of wellness and governance, and would often reflect upon these topics through a lens of intersectionality or inter-being. In this way, co-researchers express how experiences of wellness and or well-being converge with personal determination within expressions of governance or leadership. This is not to say that wellbeing is a determinant of how well we govern ourselves in space and in relationship to others, but rather, they are living entities which flow into one another and extend from Self-Others-Spirit-Land/Waters. When asked how Spirit and Culture informs personal wellness and everyday acts of felt or embodied governance, several co-researchers talked about a personal sense of balance, alignment of emotional, mental, spiritual and physical bodies. For these womxn, culture is the active participation in a shared expression of belonging to self, others and Spirit. Co-researcher Lindsay Delaronde (Mohawk) eloquently reinforces this teaching in her reflection below:

> "We do absolutely have a physical experience, we do absolutely have and emotional experience, a spiritual experience and a mental experience…and we need to understand how we live through each quadrant. And the Soul runs it all. The Great Spirit, the Great Spirit. Life only wants more life. Life force is a concept of wholeness, because when you understand that everything exists and there has to be multiple types of trees, of birds, or landscapes or people, the soul as an entity needs to understand itself. In all of these ways. That's how complex the soul is. It needs me, it needs you, it needs that golden eagle on that tree, perched. Because this is the way that it sees itself. This is the power of spirit….its endless."

When asked about personal well-being and wellness, co-researchers also spoke about their personal sense of balance within the context of cultural wellbeing, with a focus on spiritual wellbeing. While many talked about wellbeing as a state of physical wellness, the majority consistently regarded their overall mental, physical and emotional health as being first and

foremost grounded in a sense of spiritual well-being. Spirit was often described within the context of their own culture. One co-researcher shared,

> "Wellness has a bunch of different components, but I think for me that my main focus of wellness has to do with my inner wellbeing. So how my Spirit feels. And whats going on for my spirit at the time. So, you know, for example I may have a roof over my head and I may have access to food and be really safe and secure that way, but if I am no spiritually feeling satisfied or well than I don't really feel like I actually have wellbeing. It kind of just depends on the way that you, or how you focus what well-being means to you. And for me wellbeing is spiritual first." (Jessica Day, Anishinaabe).

Another co-researcher recognized that the overall well-being of her physical, emotional and mental self was dependent upon her spiritual well-being; she identified wellness

> "… as your spiritual, emotional, physical and mental stability or sense of well-being, is how those parts of one's self are connected or in alignment. How and if they're nourished, whether they are expanding, and giving life, and whether the Soul is nourished. Or whether they are out of balance, starved, abused or undernourished. And I think that our well-being, is being connected to all of those parts of ourselves, because I have learned that those are all intimately and inherently connected. When would you say you feel at your best. I feel at my best when these four parts of myself are balanced, but most importantly when I am spiritually nourished" (Emilee Gilpin, Nehiyaw-Michif).

Others shared that it is this connection that flows from Sacred Creation, through the Land/Waters and into our bodies, that constitutes our belonging to Creation itself; as shared by Estrella:

> "Wellness and identity and connection to who you are as a person in the world is that despite all these things all these barriers all these struggles that. Spiritual connection that your spirit has to the universe can never be severed." (Estrella Whetung, Anishinaabe/ Lucbanin)

Whetung further shares that,

> "knowledge comes through through spiritual relationships how ways of knowing are embodied through spiritual relationships, and for Anishinaabe teachings this - is

> like this umbilical cord that connects you to creation, and even any kind of physical severance can never separate you from where you come from".

The connection of self to the world around us was repeatedly described as "sacred" or meaningful. Angela Poundmaker Cooper reflected upon her experiences in foster care and then adoption into a non-Indigenous family. She shared her own emerging understanding of personal wellness as,

> "very physical and spiritual to me. I feel like I'm in a relationship with God and I feel if I want to hear from him I go outside and also, it's a place for me to let go of everything all the garbage I've been picking up and carrying it because it's like it's almost like a detox or you just had to be forced to breathe in goodness in life. Like there's your sense you come back to being in Sensorial, you come back to being simple and like that's when everything else falls away and you're like well what matters. And it's like oh it's sacredness."

When spiritual conceptions are understood as a sense of belonging and sacredness, it is necessary to identify the ways in which colonial dominance works to sever these connections and therefore displace Indigenous womxn from a larger spiritual network of governance. A significant learning gained from these reflections is the role of mindful, conscious and calm internal mental states when enacting Miyo-Wîchêtowin. Many co-researchers defined the experiences of Miyo-Pimatisiwin as a product of spiritual and or cultural practice. They identified the importance of this experience in the contribution of making Miyo-Wîchêtowin in governance relations and definitions of leadership. Shelby Blackjack (Tutchone) shares that,

> "You need a clear head to make decisions that are impacting thousands or hundreds of people or two people. If you're a leader in your family then you need to be aware of that. You in your leadership and in every case they see every day. It's one of the ways that you act leadership in your everyday life".

Co-researcher Emilee Gilpin (Nehiyaw-Michif) also contributes an important teaching in her reflection leadership as something that requires,

> "a spirit of doing good and creating change in a good way. We can go through our day feeling distracted and this can lead to feelings of disconnection. For me, this is definitely real and it's important but it's not something that we can just do. It's something that takes a lot of work and it's very related to the present moment. And it's very related to actually taking the steps necessary to *be still* and quiet, and enter a more natural organic state. So in terms of defining leadership, which is hard, I don't know. But I know how I feel when I am clear, and that happens for me when I am on the Land and in cold Water."

The significance of *Spirit and Culture* as a domain of embodied or felt wellness and governance is reflected in Jacobs (2013) assessment that, in order to enact authentic resurgence models of liberatory praxis, Indigenous communities need to "strengthen our ceremonies. We need to go back to the old ways of living healthier, being more in touch with the Land. All life is sacred" (p. 85). When the Spirit is nourished, womxn's vitality and healing resounds out into the emotional, physical and mental bodies of the individual. A meaningful spiritual foundation constitutes the groundwork for regenerative wellness and strength at the community level. Most often, co-researchers associated their experiences of clear mind with spiritual and or cultural practice. They also identified the importance of mindfulness, clarity, consciousness within community leadership and their own embodied governance. Many co-researchers spoke about the need to make space for spirituality within wellness practices and often stressed the crisis of spiritual absence within health-care services and community governance practices. When asked about significant barriers to achieving personal wellness, Chippewa Anishinaabe co-researcher Holly Groseback identifies spiritual violence as an explicit mechanism of colonial dominance. In her reflections she shares,

> "I think a lot of times for First Nations people you know that child was taken right out of the equation. I think a lot of like First Nations people aren't well, they were taken out of community and put into a system that just really destroyed them spiritually."

Colonial violence is predicated on the undermining of Indigenous experiences of Spiritual Governance *(cultural ceremony, community ceremonial practice, personal and private experiences with the sacred)*. Many co-researchers connected their own experiences of disconnection to culture and spirit as a significant barrier to access Miyo-Pimatisiwin (personal wellness) and (Miyo-Wîchêtowin) leadership. Northern Tutchone co-researcher, Chantelle Blackjack shares,

> "I think that process of revitalization in many areas for First Nations are fraught with difficulties and challenges because so many people are disconnected. You really have to tread carefully and respectfully. But, it is a piece of the puzzle that's going to empower and help First Nations decolonize or Indigenize, or whatever needs to happen to come back to a more whole entity or body. I realize that we all have our different strengths and if people can recognize where their strengths lie they can be a part of that rebuilding in their area and I want to understand and respect others who are have their strength in other areas like health and education and not place one in front of the other. All of these pieces had a part traditionally and First Nations and indigenous cultures they look differently than they do now".

Blackjack identifies that efforts towards revitalization further provides a pathway towards meaningful re-connection to collective efforts towards Indigenization and strength-based community building. Within a framework of revitalization, individuals and communities draw upon cultural knowledge and memory to actualize every day acts of reclaimed connection and shared community resurgence. An additional common reflection offered by co-researchers is the direct and/or shared inter-being of Spirituality and culture. Many of the co-researchers did not separate the two: to attain spiritual wellness requires access to culture and cultural practice

requires an understanding of the sacred. Co-researcher Shayli Thomas (Le'eyqsun/Lyackson) asserts that,

> "if you're missing that connection to culture, the spirituality is also disconnected"

Each co-researcher held a different set of cultural norms and teachings, yet many of the co-researchers shared a sense of personal pride and purpose when they discussed their own relationship to reclaiming or embodying their own cultures and spiritual practice. Nehiyaw co-researcher Sheri Pooyak shares,

> "I look at my little grandchild, and I think, you come from a family that is very grounded in culture, but also you come from a very educated family- nobody can ever tell you that you are dumb or you can't do it. you know people that in this very western society, that honours hierarchy of credentials- you know somebody that works in that world, and that comes home and is no different than anybody else."

Another co-researcher shared their thoughts about culture as an ongoing form of self-discovery and roadmap towards self-acceptance and spiritual belonging. They shared,

> "I used to really think that culture, there was a right and wrong way and that you know, Ojibwes did it this way and Crees did it this way and Lekwungen did it this way and yes we all have different ways of doing things and being, and our expressions of who we are - are so different and that is so beautiful! There is so much strength and beauty in our difference and how we express our individuality and...I also have to recognize that it's not a comparative thing and I'm not less Ojibwa because I didn't do X Y or Z. I used to actually put parameters around what it means to be Indigenous and if I didn't fit in those parameters then i would not accept myself as Indigenous, when it's such a huge part of my life, and it's something I am so proud of; so, it's like you're almost self-limiting" (Sagaate Jessica Day, Anishinaabe)

Day goes on to acknowledge that they experience passing light-skinned privilege, which allows them to walk through Indigenous and non-indigenous spaces without experiencing direct racialized discrimination. In this statement, they acknowledge that those who cannot conceal

their Indigenous identity under the veil of ambiguity, experience realities of violence perpetrated on their bodies in a more direct way. They go on to share,

> "So, I'm always in that dance of being in between. I get that cliché of "in between worlds" 'cause I am! The way I feel inside and express my individuality is only something a select few people get to see. There are different layers of identity and different layers we express our identity. So, embodying culture is still something that I am working towards but is also something that I've let go of of being right and wrong and there are certain ways that people do things and that's beautiful because thats their teachings. And I can learn from those teachings and I can create my own teachings".

Another co-research shared that it is through her spiritual connection to Creator and Creation that she discovers her own culture in what feels like an authentic and protected way; outside of the traumas inflicted on her and her family through colonial violence. Her reflections uphold the jingle dress as a spiritually significant symbol and culturally grounded practice of spiritual wellness. She eloquently describes how the jingle-dress is a site of convergence and or intersections of her own self-becoming, spirituality and cultural governance. These intersections provide a pathway to which she enacts self-determined spiritual wellness and relationality to her own cultural teachings and dream-world knowledge. She shares:

> **"**In Ojibwe, the jingle dress is a healing dress, traditionally, it's like more than just a powwow dress. It started with an old man and his granddaughter was really sick and he really wanted to help. They didn't know how. So, one night this jingle dress came to him in a dream and a bunch of women were wearing it and dancing to the dance and wearing the prayer. They were able to heal his granddaughter. And so, when he woke up with the dream, he shared that dream and made the dress with his wife and they were able to heal his granddaughter in real life not just the dream world. So, I was taught by one of my Ojibwe Elders, who also taught us that a traditional Ojibwe woman only dances to go once they have that dream. So, one day, I actually had a dream of a jingle dress of my own, which was purple pink and white. I was really like happy. I had always wanted to dance jingle but I never learned to do it like the right way where you did dream.

So, like to leave the Mino bimadiziwin, which is leading the good life in Ojibwe, which means leading the good life. Or living the right way. And being well yourself. So, a part of that means living a traditional life, which is not to do drugs or alcohol, and going to ceremony and embodying the seven teachings. It wasn't until, I had parts of that figured out: I went to ceremony, I tried to live a life of the seven teachings, but like the the one big part of me that was on while I think was like my mental and physical aspect which drugs alcohol I think affected me way more than I realized. So, I completely cut that out of my life too and felt like I was truly living Mino Bimadiziwin, that the dress came to me. So, I really truly believed like if I hadn't healed my my spirit that way I probably would have never gotten the dress because I really feel like you have to be well healed yourself before you can help others be well and healed. So that's a long story but, I think it just really illustrates the point that to be a leader and to help others you have to first help yourself" (Ashleigh Thompson, Anishinaabe).

Creative Self-Becoming
(Conscious Indigineity and creative self-actualization, Vitality)

"It's through creative expression that I learn, and I learn, and I learn.
And that's another thing that's been taken away; creative expression. I mean in the educational field, it's been beaten out of us…. like algebra, what's algebra do?
What about applied creative expression, cause applied means that it does function on your own journey, has relevance to your own learnings,

We think it's so simple but, do you remember the sun rising in the morning?
Do you remember that there is grass here and roots below?
Yeah, it's so simple, whats the constellation up there?

Do you know?
Do you know the planet ruling our solar system right now? And our present walk?
And it's to show other people, this is how to live a simple life….
… and Creation is made on vibration, so how important is music, how important is our own balancing and our …. positive expression? It's individual, it's collective, it's Universal" (Cheryl Henhawke, Mohawk)

Recovery from colonial dominance requires the resurgence of traditional healing methods (displaced through colonial processes), which demands "a focus on health, wellbeing and

resilience draws attention to creative solutions to life challenges" (Kirmayer, 2009, xiv). Creativity, as described by many of the co-researchers, is the life force that surges out of relationship to the Spiritual (through culture, ceremony and phenomenon) and takes root in the body through expression, creation and articulation of self through externalizing the internal. The powerful opening reflection from Mohawk co-researcher Cheryl Henhawke situates co-researcher' experiences of wellness and governance of their own physical body within a cosmology of connection and belonging. She goes on to describe how her wellness is inextricably linked to her ability to self-express and create. She shares in her reflection, that wellness to her is the experience of *"Connection with the Universe through creative expression. So that includes, visual arts, music, moving body… it's a way of life"* .

The ability to make one's own story come to life, is an act of personal agency and self-actualization often described as a mode to experience wellness and governance by many of the co-researchers. Alfred and Corntassel (2005) remind us that, "there is a danger in allowing colonization to be the only story of Indigenous lives. It must be recognized that colonialism is a narrative in which the Settler's power is the fundamental reference and assumption, inherently limiting Indigenous freedom and imposing a view of the world that is but an outcome or perspective on the power" (2005, p. 4). Today, those who are at the tip of the arrow of Indigenous Education, Research Methods and Indigenized learning practice recognize the gravity of experiences of individual potentiality in their own expressions of being. This includes educators such as Alex Wilson, Michelle Pidgeon, Noelania Goodyear-Ka'opua, Jo-Ann Archibald and countless others who enact Tatawâw for the next generations of Indigenous learners, theorists, community researchers and visionaries. Verna Kirkness recounts the

importance of Indigenous education in experiences of creative-self becoming and meaningful relationship to personal potential in stating that unless and Indigenous person "learns about the forces and the history of [their] people, the values, the customs, the language [they] will never really know [themselves] or [their] potential as a human being" (Pidgeon, Munoz, Kirkness, & Archibald, 2013, p. 28). This notion was reflected in the powerful words of another co-researcher, Lindsay Delaronde (Mohawk) who shares,

> "Governance is about my agency. First Personal Agency, and having a choice of where I locate myself - where I locate myself within myself, within my internal landscape, within my family structure, I have to have a personal governance. But I also have to share those belief systems in a community oriented group consciousness."

Another co-researcher further shares her experiences with creative expression and self-actualization through her own journey to make her first jingle dress. She shared that she often felt bound by the limitations of societal norms, as dictated by systems of colonial dominance, and felt a new sense of freedom in being her own agent of creative expression.

> "I remember thinking like, how interested I was in learning about making a dress and the right way to do it: how many jingles are on the dress? What's the right way to make one? what colours should i use? and it was this whole exciting world of self-expression - how you express yourself culturally and I remember asking all these different ways to make dresses and she said, 'you know what you make the dress however you want to make it! You can have squiggles, you can have lines, you can have five rows, three rows, waterier you want, because it's your prayer, it's your dress and there is no wrong way to do that' and I was like WOW! How beautiful that idea that there is no wrong way to be yourself. In those colonial mentalities around right and wrong and punishment, it's very difficult to swing against because it's such a norm in the way that we function as a society" (Jessica Day, Anishinaabe).

Self-actualization, creative expression and cultural resurgence can be understood as pathways of emancipatory liberation in physical, mental, emotional and spiritual realms of being. There is no one true definition of this, as it will shape shift depending on the individual and the

individual in relationship to the outer world. In their article, *In their Own Words: First Nations Girls' Resilience as Reflected Through their Understandings of Health* (2013), Chad et al. describe meaning, as interpreted by different individuals, as "shaped and inform by culture and societal norms but also a site of sovereignty and individual expression or interpretation social body and individual body [implications of each on one another]" (p. 3). When individuals experience a sense of personal agency, rather than isolation and or immobility, they are able to engage with co-creative processes, which make meaning in their own life, experiences and stories they tell the world. Co-researchers asserted the ability to explore, express and imagine themselves in inter-being/becoming. The idea of inter-becoming, or becoming something new together, opens a space for Indigenous womxn to manifest new realities beyond their past and access Miyo-Pimatisiwin in their own manifestations of Miyo-Wîchêtowin. Lindsay Delaronde shares the powerful statement,

> "We need to be attracted by things and propelled by desire, not pain all of the time, so, where do we really cultivate desire, and my Art practice has given me my life. My Art has saved my Life. Saved me. Saved my life".

The notion of creative Self-becoming does not reject and or push away the past, rather it pulls on creative interpretations of the past in order to inform present day manifestations of what could be. Co-researcher Lianne Charlie (Tutchone) recognizes the importance of ancestral guidance in daily acts of Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wîchêtowin. She says,

> "We have to sort of think of these ways is how can we sort of prioritize our ancestral values and principles and have these seems to be guiding our day to day. Day to day interactions decisions all these things. And I feel like if that were the case, one the collective level or first nation level across the nations we would be moving in perhaps slightly different direction"

Creative self-becoming situates the subject at the center of their own unfolding and requires for a self-expression, which transcends colonial imaginary in material and socio-landscapes and produces futurisms defined by projecting the self into time and space as determined by each individual themselves. As an active agent of creation, the use of creative vision as a form of resurgence is a deeper practice of personal self-actualization within the context of decolonization and making Indigenous meaning. Not only is creative self-becoming a way to resist, re-act and destruct against colonial violence, it also provides pathways for imaging beyond the confines of the colonial story. A pathway to reclaim our mental, physical, emotional and spiritual bodies and project them into new possibilities, kinship networks and futures of inter-being.

Relational Accountability
(Belonging, Purpose/Responsibility)

Everything is relationship.
(Rebecca Watts, Inuit)

Co-researchers described their personal wellness as being interdependent with the well-being of their families and communities. In the article, *Self-determination in Indigenous health: A comprehensive perspective*, Hirch et al (2011) declare that an Indigenous "view on health is one of harmony, a state of balance and equilibrium within a person's body, psyche and relationship with others" (p. 13). They go on to describe "Ill health [as] a sign of imbalance in any of these relationships and the healer is to restore that balance seeing the disease in a wider personal social and cosmic context" (p. 13). Many of the co-researchers demonstrated these values and beliefs in their shared knowledge and teachings based on personal healing/wellness

and community well-being and governance. One co-researcher currently experiencing housing insecurity shared that

> "Wellbeing is taking care of yourself. Waking up in the morning, having a shower every day, brushing your teeth, flossing, getting where you need to go and leadership is taking care of others." (Destiny, Nuu-Chah-Nulth).

Another co-researcher grounds their reflections of leadership and inter-being wellness on their own culturally-grounded models of leadership. Estrella Whetung defines leadership as a multi-faceted system of diverse responsibilities denied by their Clan systems. They share,

> "Leadership is the way of taking on the ideas and motivations of the people that you are representing and trying to carry those forward in an action based kind of way. The measurement of a good leader is someone who can have a synchronicity between their theoretical underpinnings or their thoughts and ideas and their actions. In terms of leaders in communities, well where I'm from, that may not always be someone who's within a governance structure sometimes like some of the top leaders historically have been people who work in education or different kinds of things. Different and different roles different responsibilities depending on what clan you were from. I absolutely believe in nurturing."

While experiences of personal healing, spiritual connection and self-actualization or expression define individual experiences of wellness, co-researchers identified that how these experiences inform relationship to others through expressions of governance. Personal experiences of wellness contribute to meaningful relational accountability, care and connection to others. This is reflected in Holly Groseback's reflections which describe how her own experiences of wellness are interdependent to the wellness of her relations. She shares,

> "I feel at my best when I'm surrounded by my family when we're outside. When we are spending time playing together. Well-being for me and my family is about having a healthy childhood, you know being brought up in the space for you to be your authentic self like, who you are. Like who you've grown up to be is respected.

> The thing is, we as human beings, we need that community. We really need a healthy community. We are social beings, we are spiritual beings and we need that energy from everyone else" (Chippewa Anishinaabe).

Another co-researcher described her ability to feel accepted and loved through the experience of authentic healthy relationship. Through her experiences of safety, acceptance and belonging, she shares that she was able to explore self-expression and her own meaningful representations of governance in her culture, artwork, and life. She shares,

> "When I think about governance and body governance and relationship or how people interact with each other, I think about when I was there, on the Land, and allowed to do what I needed to do …I was just finally free (Lianne Charlie, Northern Tutchone).

While many co-researchers described how their personal experiences of Miyo-Pimatisiwin (wellness) were often interconnected with the integrity of Wâhkitowin (relationships) in their lives, they also identified barriers to feeling connected due to colonial violence and inherited disconnection. According to co-researchers, personal wellness, positive mental state, and the conditions to self-actualize requires belonging within a social and cultural network of inter-being, and disconnection from these relationships is at the root of personal suffering. One co-researcher shared the pain of lateral violence in her community and acknowledged this as a direct product of colonialism,

> "What I think is at the root of community un-wellness is so much lateral violence in our communities and people who aren't, you know…it's hard because I come from a super tiny community. And like we're only 200 members and a good chunk of us are down and Lummi in Washington we've got people on the mainland. And just you know it's so easy t o gossip when it's such a tiny community and to try and pull each other down because I think part of that is being separated from each other and not having like a home base where we can you know be together all the time" (Shayli Robinson,Le'eyqsun/Lyackson)

A significant reflection offered by Jessica Day describes how colonial dominance has distorted Indigenous world-views of relationship and relationally to one that employs dominance, violence and the explicit destruction of Indigenous value systems. She acknowledges the impacts that imposed colonial power has on the individual lives of Indigenous womxn, and reflects on how these relationships are further duplicated between Indigenous Nations and the Canadian State. She shared,

> "Well I think about a relationship like just in between people and in personnel and how they say a basic requirement to having a good relationship is consent. It's like all these unspoken treaties. But when you look at the relationship between nations you the Canadian State is an abuser. It's an abuser. It is like it used to lead. There's no one to say it's power down it's controlling all those things you know how do you get back how do you get to a healthy relationship. That's never been so you want to get reconciliation to what you don't like".

Holly Groseback (Chippewa Anishinaabe) also reflects on how state relationships imposed through histories of colonial legacies have morphed material relations on the ground, in community and family life.

> "I think it's important to locate myself in the time that we're in, in our world. Because community is something different than what it's ever been, community involves family and close relationships and here we find ourselves in this new millennium, this period of time where our relationships have been severed".

Toxic relations were described repeatedly by co-researchers as those without a foundation of respect, trust or feelings of safety. These relationships proved to be significant barriers to personal wellness and to the ability to construct a sense of personal confidence and acceptance; as echoed by Sherri Pooyak (Nehiyaw):

> "Because we are a relationship-based people, toxic relationships are what creates barriers to my own health. It's the toxic relationships, like it's the people that are jealous and the people who say stuff or think like 'oh, you're so much better than us', but I've never

> acted that way. These kind of people stand in your way when you are growing you know like when you're trying to move forward where in your career or your life, you know they step in the way. Or they don't promote you … you know do all those things stand in my way bully me don't support me when I needed them they have it. And they're like you know all of that stuff" .

Pooyak further shares reflections, which help identify the remedy for toxic relationships. She says:

> *"*I'm always trying to support people and promote them and move them forward. And you know…because I know, for me, that's so important and valuable to have somebody to stand with them and I'm so relationship-focused, so being respectful having that underlying layer of respect in all your relationships is absolutely important"

Pooyak's ability and decision to support relationships based on respect and reciprocity enhances her own experiences of personal Miyo-pimatisiwin within her own contributions to foster the overall integrity of Miyo-Wîchêtowin. The ability, choice and courage to enact integrity and respect to all of our relations requires a personal commitment and belief in the sacredness of interconnection, as taught by our cultures. When we are well, we can better take care of others in our lives, just as described by co-researcher Rebecca Watts (Inuit):

> *"*If you're not like mentally stable and those relationships aren't going to be stable and then I don't think that there's time in the work that I do to be unstable or like spread like toxic or unhealthy especially like if you're around like young minds and stuff like that and they're so like they are like sponges they taken so much from me and it's not fair to children".

Integrity, belonging and accountability to relationships are essential components in the achievement of personal wellness, community well-being and vibrant governance. Another co-researcher shares that, through her experience of being a sister, she has formed her own relational framework, which is required for living out values of accountability, reciprocity and respect. She shared,

> *"*I only know this world through the lens of being a younger sister like, that's also important to identify myself as a sister. When I identify who I am I identify myself the way that I know this world and have known this world in this life cycle has been of a sister. And it's been in relationship in that way as well. And that's taught me about sisterhood through all my life. It's taught me about reciprocal relationship and taught me about responsibility to other. It's taught me how to know myself through the reflection of another. My spirit is shared and connected. So I know the world in that way. And everything that I have spoken about is grounded that is being an essential foundational part of who I am and where I'm speaking from" (Emilee Gilpin, Nehiyaw-Michif).

Co-researchers like Gilpin, describe how their own relationality to kin-circles are what inform their own relational accountabilities and governance in the world around them. For Gilpin, her own understandings of relational accountability and inter-belonging extends from her own location as a sister, and from this point of inter-belonging, extends relationality through outer spheres of familial, social and cultural relations. For Gilpin, her identity as a sister is what informs how she relates to and cares for extended kin beyond her own sisterhood. Many co-researchers identified the importance of an ethic of care within their kinship and relational networks; specifically, in their experiences of Miyo-Pimatisiwin. Co-researcher Whetung further articulates how Miyo-Wîchêtowin requires an action-based mode of practice, which nurtures Miyo-Pimatisiwin for others, beyond self. They share,

> "my grandmother's clan is one of the two leadership clans. There's always this sense of balance in terms of responsibility. We have two leadership clans not one. So, if there's any sort of dispute, it can be mitigated. 'Cause from Anishinaabe thinking, and how I grew up, the more ideas the better. Much better than just one idea, or way of thinking, because if you have a multiplicity of different kinds of ideas you have more to choose from. You have more ideas generated there's more different kinds of ways of thinking and that's very much so encouraged. So, maybe you're not going to agree with every single one of those ideas but you can source the bits and pieces that you like from each and

> make something amazing. In terms of governance that is how it connects us and it should be encouraged to have a big imagination"

Whetung, among others, highlights an important teaching which asserts that because Miyo-Pimatiwisin and Miyo-Wîchêtowin are interconnected through Kihewini, our experiences of wellness and governance are interconnected and interrelated. These experiences are not defined by external definitions of governance, leadership or authority but self-define through living and being in relationship to one another. Co-researchers describe how relationship to others informs ethical relational governance protocol within their own everyday relationships. Co-researcher Shelby Blackjack (Tutchone) describes this notion through her reflections of Motherhood to her daughter Ruby. She shares,

> "I have to carry myself knowing that decisions I make can impact people. I know that decisions I make can impact my family can impact Ruby. Having a child is amazing as she watches everything you do and she's impacted by everything you do. So how we wake up and how we interact in the morning sets the tone for the day when Ruby is going to have a good day or not. And I check in with her by knowing if she's what her emotions are like by doing this next and if she's in a good mood she does the things if not if something's wrong. She won't do it. She'll turn her head".

Blackjack highlights an incredible teaching that governance is not a level of relationship or interaction that only exists within socially defined political spheres (Institutional levels, Band Council) but rather plays out in the home, at the kitchen table. From this place, leadership must reflect an ethic of self-in relationship to-others and uphold models which reflect shared accountability, care and well-being. They go on to share that diversity of leadership models and actualization of self is an important and sacred attribute when applied to Indigenous governance. Blackjack continues to explain that everyday acts of culturally-guided governance informs the ways in which her daughter will conceptualize, imagine and visualize leadership in her own life.

She explains the impact of witnessing Indigenous womxn take up and step into leadership positions in all spaces of society. While Miyo-Wîchêtowin manifests at the kitchen table, it extends into political spheres that go beyond the home and into multi-levels. She observes,

> "Right now we have more Indigenous women in leadership than we've ever had in my life. We have indigenous women in the legislature. We have indigenous women sitting in as Chiefs we have them sitting at all different tables. It's amazing amazing time for for young Indigenous womxn to see that and to have role models who are healthy. They're still speaking. And that's huge because we've never heard their voices before. So that's a huge thing for me to hear that".

Blackjack, among others, discusses the importance of having visual representations of leadership across all tables of community governance; at home, at legislature, at Band Council, or otherwise. Her teachings demonstrate the fluid interconnection between her own everyday acts of governance at the kitchen table with her daughter Ruby; and how these interactions and experiences inform Ruby's self-actualization in her own self-actualizations of governance as she grows through life. In the first three sections, I have described womxn's reflections on inter-human attributes, which contribute to consequential experiences of Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wîchêtowin. In the next, and final section, I will focus on the role of the Land and Waters in the enactments of wellness governance and introduce the concept of *embodied governance.*

Kitaskînaw î pî kiskinohâmakoya. Sâkihito-maskihiy î pî kiskinimâkoya
(Relationship to Land and Water).

When I go to the trees.
When I am with the trees, they tell me I am worthy.
And that I have a place and that I belong.
and that I am beautiful.
(Cheryl Henhawke, Mohawk)

The Nehiyawwewin-Michif title of this section can be translated as *Our knowledge as a people (who relate to one another) comes from the land*. How we relate to the land determines how we relate to one another. We know that our genealogy extends into the Land and in turn, extends into one another. When asked about personal wellness, community well-being and leadership, the co-researchers recognized that they could not separate their personal wellness, and therefore ability to uphold leadership roles, from their relationship to Lands and Waters. Within Western, non-Indigenous literature about dimensions of wellness, scholars recognize that a healthy *environment* is one of many determinants of health. However, as described by the co-researchers of this project, Indigenous world-views determine personal wellness and collective wellbeing as being absolutely predicated on meaningful relationships to healthy Lands and Waters.

Spirit and Culture, creative self-becoming and relational accountability have all been described as central features of relevant personal wellness and every day enactments of governance. Just as each conversation was situated on the Land/Waters, each co-researcher also centred their reflections in relation to Land and Water. Indigenous scholarship, literature and community knowledge keepers also centre assertions that relationship to Land and Water create the context for Indigenous communities to explore their own experiences of personal strength, cultural integrity and embodied governance. This is further reflected in the last Kihewini domain - Kitaskînaw î pî kiskinohâmakoya. Sâkihito-maskihiy î pî kiskinimâkoya.

Many co-researchers expressed feelings of peace, wellbeing and love when they spent time in their homelands and waters or just out on the Land. Nehiyaw co-researcher Angela Poundmaker Cooper shared learnings about how wellness, for her, is connection to Land. She

explains how multi-dimensional experiences of personal wellbeing can be accessed through these connections:

> "It's about the connection to Land. But for me, it plays a big part in wellness, So how I get to be physically mentally and emotionally well is by at least being outside and connecting to the like nature at least once a week away - away from the urban noise and city life, I try to go out in Nature because I notice that If I get too caught up in city life I kind of become more stressed or anxious, and then not only does it mean to me like mentally healthy and well to be on the land but physically I'm usually doing something outside whether it be climbing or hiking or running".

When asked about relationship to Land and Waters, another co-researcher shared the profound implications of her own family's intimate belonging to the Lands that raised her and her People. She acknowledged this connection as sacred and as a constant reminder to give thanks and embody feelings of gratitude in her daily life. She shared,

> "you know and I fly over the mountains and I can cry- I get so touched, being able to see what the mother earth has created and being so connected to that! And I am so thankful to see what she has accomplished and created- and that I get to walk around on it…and it goes back to being thankful every day- I get to wake up and walk around on her, So, when I am praying, I don't get people to stand, when i am in ceremony- it's a very colonial concept- because when we are in ceremony we sit and we are close to the earth- if anything we should be sitting on the ground" (Sherri Pooyak).

Co-researcher Beangka Elliott (W̱SÁNEĆ) shared how her relationship to Land and Waters informs her relationship to self, others and grounds her sense of connection to life beyond herself. She shares how,

> "since I was a child, up until now, I've always known there to be a connection to Land and Waters. Our elders have always told us that we are connected to the Land and we

> come from the Land and the trees are our family. The animals are our family, and they were humans first and then transformed into the cedar tree. It was our cousins who turned into our salmon and I see the Land and the water, and the winds as our family. Our relationships, and my relationship is a family connection - the winds, we have our grandfather wind, we refer to it in a familial sense, and I've always had a strong need to protect the land because I view it as our family. I've always done land based activities or I've always tried to be involved in things that protect the Land - whether its protesting or restoring the lands or working on the lands keeping the lands healthy, it feels like i am taking care of my family when I do that".

Elliott defines how her relationship to Land/Waters informs her governance practice and ethics as a Land-defender. She defines her relational belonging to Lands-Waters within a kincentric model and from this place, describes her commitment to protect the Lands and Waters as a sacred responsibility. Lindsay Delaronde (Mohawk) shares a teaching, which locates kinship to a larger culturally-grounded system of beliefs, values and governance. She says:

> "when I think of embodied governance, being born a Native person, you are born with a belief system. And thats the belief system is embodied. Through the way that I see the world. And I really needs to understand that nobody in actuality sees the world through my eyes. Similar experiences but never, never through my eyes. What could be very powerful, because our independence and possibility of interdependence and working together and being cooperative exists in that. And it also pushes us towards conflict, which both are useful for".

Relationship to Land/waters determines how each individual expresses personal governance. Just as Noelani Goodyear-Ka'opua reminds us that personal and collective efforts towards self-determination cannot be divorced from the ability to feed ourselves (2009), co-researcher Estrella Whetung (Anishinaabe/Lucbanin) defines their own relationship to Land and Waters through the physical connection to food systems, sustenance and self-determination. They share how their ability to feed her family is also,

> "a sacred responsibility. You could have no money but as long as you could grow that means that you could feed and feed your family and community. So, **t**hrough having that relationship with my mom's parents growing up. They really taught me like how to grow food and how to grow medicines and. All those kinds of things like I'm in I'm an urban kid. Like don't mistake that I didn't grow up in the bush or anything like that. Completely urbanized kid. But my grandparents wanted to make sure that I knew how to take care of myself. That I knew I had fundamentally had to feed myself from the earth".

Some co-researchers described how their own reclamation to Land/Waters provides a pathway to enact personal governance (miyo-wichêtowin) in their own embodiments and experiences of personal healing and collective relational accountability. Co-researcher Tiffany Joseph (W̱SÁNEĆ / Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw), shares how their own personal relationship to Land and Waters is the foundation of their experiences of wellness and furthermore determinant for how they enact Miyo-Wîchêtowin in their community, family and Nation(s). They share,

> "My barrier [to being well] is sometimes not knowing how to deal with my emotions in a good way, but that's why I have been going out on the Land is to pray. I know that I can't find the answers until I come out on the Land and to the Water. My parents didn't teach me ways to get through my emotions, they escaped, so I am trying to do something new: but I am reclaiming it, from something that was taken from me and my parents. And I am reclaiming it in the Land and the Water- and I really emphasize Water …. being out in cold water, knowing that I am safe, I will survive and I am strong." (Tiffany Joseph, W̱SÁNEĆ / Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw)

This teaching is further supported by the reflections offered by co-researcher Emilee Gilpin (Nehiyaw-Michif) as she shares the pain she experiences from not having been raised in her ancestral homelands and the spiritual displacement she feels from that dispossession. She shared,

> "I think I embody many worlds, which is both a gift and a curse. Sometimes it feels like I think I embody that displacement. You know of not really having a home land and waters that I am living on every day and connected to it. Like upholding my own responsibilities too. And that's not a good or bad thing, it just is what it is. But I definitely feel that

> within myself that sense of confusion and displacement. And you know seeking, and journeying, constant. Like I said that's both a gift and a curse. I can walk through many worlds. I can carry messages. I can humble myself. You know I can veil my head. I can sit down and I can take off my shoes. I can kneel. I can lay. I can drum. I can sing. I can learn. You know that's many different gifts. But I embody that. And that's my journey and that's my story and that's the story of my family and my sisters and that's in me it's a part of every fibre of who I am".

She goes on to acknowledge the importance of reclaiming her own relationship to Land and Waters and acknowledges their spiritual authority in her life,

> "the land is in the waters like, it's even a strange thing to just like categorize. Just like medicines and non-human life. And all of our relatives and just like those two words which we often are forced to do in the English language. But I mean, we *are* Nipiy (water), we come from nipiy and we can relate in so many ways to her. The constant flow the constant giving the life-giving aspect to the life giving energy. You know, all the different forms that she presents herself in and exists in. So, it's only natural that I feel like got home in bodies of water. That water's very cleansing. It's healing. Forgiving. Powerful. You know can also take life away. Can be very intimidating. Like I think there are just so many lessons. In water and in the land like. Whether we're talking about being around non-human beings like animal relatives or whether we're talking about witnessing the beauty of nature like witnessing the colour or the expansiveness the vastness the immensity. Whether we're in awe of the wisdom, and reverence or complexity"

This co-researcher describes feelings of internal displacement caused by the dispossession to her homelands and waters. Her learnings resonate with those within the Indigenous Diaspora; those of Indigenous ancestry raised outside of cultural contexts. Inuit co-researcher Rebecca Watts further shares that, through her own commitment to reclaim relationship to Land, she has reclaimed relationship to her kin. She shares,

> "My dad isn't good at verbalizing love but you can really, really see how much he loves me when he's teaching me stuff. So, it is (the Land) really important for the relationship for me and my father. It's really it makes me feel full of love like out on the ice, like I'm out ice fishing or going out walking with my best friend from home.

> And like we're going out snowshoeing and just like it feels good. Returning home may bring up like a lot of social issues and stuff like that, but when it comes to spending time with care and my dad like out on land and like hunting or walking or just like being outside it's it makes you makes me feel a lot of like it makes me feel whole again I'm not like disjointed or crazy".

Co-researchers describe how relationship to Land informs ethical relational governance protocol within their own everyday relationships. The teaching shared by W̱SÁNEĆ/Lekwungen co-researcher Beangka Elliot described how her cultural teachings regards the Land and Waters as familial relations or kin. In this way, she recognizes that she belongs to the Land/Waters in the same way that she belongs to her family, Nation and community. Her conscious belonging and kinship to these networks provides a pathway for her to embody her own teachings through the ways she enacts governance in her everyday relationships to self and others. She says:

> "Self-love and acceptance is rooted in everyday acts of consent. The Land is sacred. So, you are sacred. When we learn that we are from the Land we can learn how the Land teaches us consent and how consent from Land teaches us relationship to self and others. In this way, we are fully embodied in culture (worldview) in teachings with medicine, plants. Respect for Land, place and context; on the land is consent work, how do we honour the land (prayer humility gift song) lack of consent for lands translates to lack of consent on Indigenous bodies."

Elliott offers a framework to enact everyday acts of consent as ethics within relational accountability. When asked about what ways relationship to Land/Water feels most meaningful, many co-researchers reflected on the roles that ceremony has in their lives. Sherri Pooyak explains how her sense of belonging to her homelands is what constitutes her overall sense of belonging and internal wellness. She also acknowledges that this is not the case for others and that her experiences of wellness offered through relational belonging to Land/Waters creates a pathway for her to support the experiences of Miyo-Pimatisiwin for others. She says,

> "I realize that this is complex for somebody who is really finding their identity. From here, I ask, 'how am I going to interact with the world?'. We have a concept that we are a communal people and that our worldview has always been about community, but from this place, I think about the individual [self] here, how am I going to be in the world?"

Through this reflection, she describes how her own relationship to Land is what grounds their interactions, values and relational governance with others; especially those who feel disconnection from Land/Water kinship. Reclaimed kinship to Land/Waters allows for reclaimed relationship and belonging to others. Within a wellness, leadership and governance framework, co-researcher Megan McKenna (Secwépemc) shares that, taking care of others is what defines leadership. She says,

> "I mean, it is important to focus on our differences as strengths, what we can offer to one another. Whether it's personal relationships, friendships, political or whatever; in our governance, the goal is to see well-being as a part of how we experience leadership and politics"

Through her direct articulation of wellness and governance as interconnected and interdependent expressions of self and relationship, McKenna expresses the need to imagine leadership through a lens of strength and shared experiences of wellbeing. She goes on to share,

> "I picture leadership in a little diagram with the person [leader] standing at the back of the line. But with their hands out like rainbows and stars coming out, and the people all going in one direction; going in the direction of their strengths. So, I think in my mind that leadership is encouraging and supporting positive movement in a direction of the individual strengths".

Lianne Charlie (Northern Tutchone) goes on to remind us that, "what good leadership looks like in our families and our communities, may not be those formal governing bodies". This definition is incredibly significant, as it opens a space for us to reflect upon the nuances of leadership, governance, colonial governance, Indigenous governance, everyday acts of leadership, embodied

governance and the interconnectivities and or contradictions within the terminology used to express governance, leadership and relationship. This is further supported by Shayli Robinson (Le'eyqsun Lyackson) in her interrogation with the term leadership as applied to her own embodied experiences of governance as a Lyackson community member. She states,

> "Leadership is a tricky one because there are so many definitions of it out there right. And trying to find one that's all encompassing is hard. But I think leadership is you know being in a position of power. But like not seeing it as power, but seeing it as your duty and you're there for a reason. And not just climbing your own way up to leadership like being elevated by the people around you wanting you to leave. So, I think that's really important. That might go back to my hereditary Chieftain roots. So, I think leadership is being elevated by your people whether it's your nation or a community project or something like the people who are involved elevated to lead them".

When asked how Robinson enacts leadership, she responds by saying:

> "I listen to my family".

For co-researchers like Charlie and Robinson, leadership is a term that simply helps describe the type of accountability one may have to a larger network of kin, centric or relational responsibilities. As applied to Miyo-Wîchêtowin, perhaps leadership can be visualized as a pathway towards self-actualization and participation in the overall collective experiences of Miyo-Pimatisiwin. Indigenous ontology and epistemology grounds knowledge interpretation, transference and the ability to make meaning of phenomenon through frameworks of relationship and interbeing. Opaskwayak Cree Researcher Shawn Wilson asserts that "reality is relationships or sets of relationships" (p. 15) and that "we are not in relationships, we are the relationships we hold and are a part of" (p. 80). When applied to personal wellness and conceptions of self-care, the wellness of an individual is suspended in a larger constellation of inter-being. Therefore, the

overall well-being of the collective determines the wellness of the individual, and the wellness of an individual either nourishes or hinders the overall well-being of the collective.

The shared knowledge from within this collection, describes diverse pathways towards self-defined efforts of personal and collective inter-becoming. Joseph, Gilpin and Watts, among other co-reserachers, express how the Land enables relationship building among those in their personal life, and also creates feelings of belonging and internal peace. How can the relationship to Land and Waters be quantified in order to describe the fundamental importance these relationships have to the overall wellbeing and cultural integrity of Indigenous womxn? Where can the wisdoms and embodied teachings of Indigenous womxn address discrepancies in how Indigenous womxn express personal wellness (Miyo-Pimatisiwin) and shared relational governance (Miyo-wichêtowin) within everyday acts of resurgence within personal, spiritual and Land/Water-based relations? How can these insights fortify collective measures in the reclamation of kin-centric inter-belonging to Land/Waters, especially when Indigenous womxn often face tensions within colonial constructs defined by Manuel as the "struggle between two ideals of the earth-commodification and life source (Manuel, 1974, p. 6). How can the learnings above also inform embodied experiences of wellness and relational wellbeing especially when "the current system(s) does not allow us to define the process of our own healing" (Goodyear-Ka'opua, 2014, p.178)? Kanaka Maoli scholar Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua also states "schools and educational systems that encourage our young people to fall in love with Ãina (the land)" (00:7:16-00:10:30). Similarly, in her piece entitled *I am not a Nation State,* Anishinaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson describes her deep wishes to have her "great grandchildren to be able to fall in love with every piece of our territory" (2011, p. 147). Falling in love is a beautiful and

creative journey. It requires patience, effort, time and sometimes sacrifice. Both Goodyear-Ka'õpua and Simpson describe how love is born a creative force which inspires song, poetry, language and dance. A relationship based on love inspires accountability, trust and abundance. Many of our songs, poems and stories proclaim the love and rapture we have for the land. Engaging with the Land as as Kã wee coma aski, Original Life-Giver, we recognize her as the embodiment of abundance. Revitalizing air, invigorating fires, soothing waters and rich earth surround us with plentitude. In constant giving, the earth gives life and abundance as love. The blueprints for peace technologies are encoded in individual strands of grass, and stories which provide purpose and meaning for our lives imprinted on mountain faces. Everything we need to live a good life is in and from the earth. The renewal of our understanding of love as action is necessary in the integrity of our efforts towards vibrant Indigenous resurgence. To practice love is a daily commitment available to us in every single moment, and one place we each can manifest this practice is in our immediate relationships of our family; or those we belong to/with (Gilpin, 2018).

The reflections shared in the preceding chapter demonstrate Indigenous womxn's wisdom within the articulation of conditions necessary for Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wîchêtowin, which transcend the imaginary and expectations of state-defined relationships based on values of *reconciliation* and prioritize conditions necessary for *transformation* of relationships across socio-political, economic and spiritual spheres of governance. Spirit and Culture, Creative Self-Becoming, Relational Accountability and Kinship to Land/Waters (Kitaskînaw î pî kiskinohâmakoya. Sâkihito-maskihiy î pî kiskinimâkoya). These shared teachings and embodiments demonstrate governance protocols, which recognize life in complex systems of

inter-being and inter-becoming and situate Indigenous womxn's embodied governance as a loving emancipatory pathway towards healing relationship to self, to others, to Spirit and the Land.

CHAPTER FOUR:
LAND AS BODY: EMBODIED FUTURITY IN CONSTELLATIONS OF INTER-BEING AND INTER-BECOMING

Water is the first midwife. Land the first life-giver. Our bodies are extensions of our homelands and our blood extensions of our home-waters. We govern our bodies - our bodies in relationship on our homelands - as sovereign systems of inter-being and inter-becoming. Our bodies are sites of governance. The dream world extends into our imaginaries of what we are and what we can be; in relationship to self, to one another, to Spirit and to Place. Networks of inter-being/becomings grounded in kinship to land-body and water-blood ancestry -genealogy-cosmologies - Creation Stories. When we talk about Land-based practice, this does not just mean learning outside of western your wall classroom settings, but rather creates space for the learner to engage with knowledge, teachings, protocol, relationship from a place of integrated relationship. To step out of the classroom is to step back and witness the individual learner, body, as situated within an entire constellation body.

A constellation of kinship situates the learning practice within Institutional confines, determined knowledge validation, language and performance as dictated by Euro-centric scientific norms; it is to … block out the entire night sky, save the light of one star. On single celestial body. From isolating this star-body, deriving meaning, value and information about its singular existence, past and hypothesized outcomes; separate from its inter-being, place and purpose within the constellation.

When classroom, hospital, legal walls are dismantled - and the wind can move through space freely, and the learner can attune their land-body to place- then the sky is unveiled, revealing the past, present and becoming of that single perceived celestial body belongs to the constellation, belongs to the galaxy, belongs to the cosmos. Are we not the single celestial body? Are our families not the constellations? Are our communities not the galaxies and Cosmos the Place? The movement, tension, harmony and energy which moves between celestial land-bodies

as sacred. As intentional. As ancestral prayer- transcending time/space reality and shape-shifting into emergent futurisms - felt - not said - sung - not written. Integrated knowing, like the ocean knows the shoreline, like the fern holds to rock face, like the ocean spray knows the salmon, and the arrow knows the adler, the fasting lodge knows the willow and the paddle knows the maple. We pull back to move forward - paddle - we pull back to move forward - paddle - towards integrated knowings contained in restful circles of kin - in restful places of belonging and accountability to homelands - waters- bodies and blood of the places we occupy/learn/are introduced to/come from. The complexity of this practice can not be contained through cognitive logic - it is a complexity that belongs to an unseen - to the beyond - to the places where -

even if for a single moment,

in the lodge, the fast, the naming, the dream, the silence…

it is known.

The water is the first midwife. The Land the first life-giver. The birthing body is a celestial light -contained and kept in the tides, pulls, wakes and Place within the constellation - the galaxy - the cosmos. This is where you belong. This is what we mean when we talk about family. Kin. Community. When you remove my body from the Land, you remove my place in the constellation - In my self-becoming, I am supported loved and held accountable by the inter-being of my place. The most sacred of these place-bodies are those of the youngest and newest light. The born light that emerges out of the dark sky - a new celestial body - a new star - expanding the constellation - expanding the meaning - the direction - the inter-becoming of the entire night sky. It is not the constellation who tells the new light how to self-become, but rather that new born body - who guides the path forward - into new possibility - new kinship - and new emergent embodiments of inter-being

in

through

with

relationship

to Place[3]

---

[3] Forth-coming: Gilpin, Erynne M. (2020). "Land-based Indigenous research pedagogy as applied to community family health practice". In *We Raise our Hands: Land-Based Indigenous Pedagogies., Special issue of the International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies.* The University of Victoria. Eds., S. de Finney & M. Kaur Mucina, S. Wright Cardinal.

It is clear from the teachings shared by the co-researchers, that personal wellness and community well-being are woven into the fabric and, furthermore determine the integrity, of individual and community governance practices. These findings clearly show that Indigenous paradigms of governance and political agency can no longer be divorced from discourse and personal experiences of wellness, well-being, health and healing. Braided together as inseparable entities, the experiences of individual healing, community strength and governance practices form a breathing relationship, which extends out of meaningful relationship to Land and Waters. Each of the four domains of Kihewini represents a channel through which individual and community oriented governance practice flows toward Indigenous liberatory praxis and spiritual vitality. They also reflect the spaces between subjective cultural and linguistic group differences and personal experiences of Indigeneity. While these four domains represent the most common themes presented across individual womxn's reflections, they are not all-representing, as Indigenous experience and embodied knowledge throughout time is vast, complex, dynamic and ever-evolving. While presented as four domains, the co-researchers' reflections represent a shared experience, understood through a lens of interconnectivity, inter-being and inter-belonging. One domain cannot be severed from another; rather these experiences, knowledges and voices breathe through the inter-related domains, in a natural and unconfined manner.

Indigenous experiences of wellness and well-being are confronted with ongoing systemic challenges, emerging from colonial, racist dominance and hetero-patriarchal-prescribed cultural values. For example, Canadian health research and systems uphold a deficit-based lens of assessment and regard illness and depression of spirit as an ailment separate from larger socio-cultural and spiritual realms. Indigenous wellness and Land-based healing practice upholds the

values passed on through generations, which promote circular and ongoing self-becoming through spiritual guidance and notions of holistic well-being (Gilpin, E. & Wiebe S. 2019). Mussel (2005) writes that understanding the world through a holistic paradigm means individual experiences are seen as absolutely interdependent and intertwined with the experiences and wellbeing of all our relations. Mussel writes:

> Holistic health is the vision most First Nations peoples articulate as they reflect upon their future. At the personal level this means each member enjoys health and wellness in body, mind, heart and spirit. Within the family context, this means mutual support of each other… From a community perspective, it means leadership committed to whole health, empowerment, sensitivity to interrelatedness of past, present, and future possibilities, and connects between cultures (p. 26).

The co-researchers of this project carry cultural memories and political visions, which constitute the relational backbone of contemporary Indigenous governance (Alfred, 2005, Kuokkanane, 2014; Sunseri, 2011; Suzack, 2011). While it is clear that womxn have been excluded from "constitutional interpretations of power" (Tully, 1995; Fiske, 1996), womxn subvert colonial power through their own contentious creativities, cultural knowledge and self-articulated Indigeneities. This resistance is represented in Maracle's articulation of womxn's leadership through narration, story and art; Simpson's description of womxn leadership through quiet acts of resistance and motherhood paradigms; Anderson's call for womxn's leadership through protecting the rights of water; and Hunt's insights about womxn's leadership through body governance and safe sex work (Maracle, 1988; Anderson, 2011, 2014; Simpson, 2011; Hunt, 2013). The kitchen table paradigm situates these everyday acts of resurgence in the communities, home territories and homes of Indigenous womxn, locating them in optimal positions for meaningful leadership within the context of decolonization and resurgence

(Simpson, 2011; Harjo, 2012). Many Indigenous womxn occupy positions of leadership within areas of community wellness, Land-based culture and body governance.

Given that so many womxn, girls and LGBTQI people and families experience violence against the physical body, Indigenous leadership is exhibited within organized efforts to reclaim, restore and honour the ways in which Indigenous womxn govern their bodies. Just as Alex Wilson asserts "Indigenous sovereignty over out lands is inseparable from sovereignty over our bodies, sexuality and gender self-expression" (2015, pp. 4), Indigenous governance is determined by ongoing expressions of inter-relatedness to Land and Waters and enactments of conscious kinship to Land-Water relations. Furthermore, the prioritization of Land-Water-based healing practices cannot be divorced from political acts of personal emancipation and community liberation from the stronghold of colonial enterprise. Embodied governance is a felt, experienced and co-determined personal expression of wellness and wellbeing, contained in the ways in which Indigenous womxn reproduce kinship and interpret place-based knowledge across a multitude of familial, personal and social spheres.

Wellness flows into governance, which flows back into well-being, which flows into political agency, which flows into healing, which flows into self-determination, which flows into health, which flows into responsibilities, which flows into ceremony, which flows into decolonization, which flows into self-actualization, which flows into community cultural protocol, which flows into embodied governance. All flows from the Land and Waters.

Indigenous Governance within a framework of embodied governance recognizes the interconnectivity's between personal expression of wellness-relationship and collective enactments of place-based efforts of food sovereignty, economic sustenance, revitalized medicines and material management. Indigenous womxn embody their home Lands and Waters, and therefore, the body is Land. Situating Body as Land supports efforts in personal acts of agency within the framework of wellness and well-being as it asks the questions: "If our bodies are extensions of the Land/Waters, how do you embody your governance practices? Of self-determination? Of relationship? Of sexuality? Of Health, healing and well-being?" Recognizing body as a site of governance allows for a personally defined practice of governance determined by each subjective individual. Recognizing the body as Land/Water acknowledges that, in order to uphold respect, sanctity and reverence for the Lands and Waters that raised us, we must also assess our own embodiments in the same regard. A sacred entity to protect, to respect, to love. Situating the discourse of governance within the personal land-scape of the body allows for us to reflect upon our own abilities, gifts and differences and assess how they can best promote our own agency and community responsibilities. In doing so, it counters values imposed through neoliberal capitalist enterprise which promote competition, individual merit, self-interest and hetero-patriarchy.

In their 2003 article, *Embodied Space(s) Anthropological Theories of Body, Space, and Culture*, Low regards the material and conceptual embodiment of space through intersections of

body, space and culture (Low, 1996, 2000). Low claims that "embodied space is the location where human experience and consciousness takes on material and spatial form" and should be included in theoretical pursuit of "phenomenological understandings, spatial orientation, and linguistic dimensions" (p. 9). The notion of "embodied space" is not starkly different from complex Indigenous perceptions of Land or place as embodiments of knowledge systems, governance protocols, memories and ancestral communication. However, I am interested in applying the same analysis of intersectionality upon the Indigenous body; regarding the body as a site for intersection of the material, spatial, cultural and ethereal experience. In recognizing the complex intersections symbolized within the Indigenous body, we can begin to confront Cartesian and categorical systems of social policy and biomedical health care practice, which are unable to account for realities embedded within networks of intersectional interrelatedness.

The reflections offered in this dissertation support the notion that Indigenous mental, spiritual, emotional and physical wellness transcends the confines of time and space, to embody ancestral visionary and cultural protocol encoded with kincentric governance systems, which consciously resound into the unfolding of the next generations. In recognizing the Indigenous body as a site of convergence of political agency and personal wellness practice, each individual is asked to reflect upon their own unique understandings and employments of their own self-determined agency. Because Indigenous womxn have been uniquely excluded from political authority since the rise of the Western-Euro Colonial enterprise, a return to their own embodiment of experience is an act of resurgence. In returning to the body as a site for governance leadership and personal healing, Indigenous womxn reclaim their power in ways which reflect their own unique gifts, tools, means, positions and values. In reclaiming our bodies,

we reclaim cultural responsibilities, which position us in diverse roles of leadership and agency. Embodied governance takes on the form of political activism, of medicinal knowledge-keeping, of language revitalization, of child-care and birth-knowledge, of education and law, of artistic visions and dream-work, of administrative work, of community service, embodiments of all spaces and all practices regardless of place. Embodied governance is determined by the ability to recognize personal bodies as an extension of home-Lands/Waters and to regard these bodies as a sacred site of ancestral love. Embodied governance requires that each body experience a sense of well-being, clarity, strength and purpose within the larger framework of personal wellness and community health. It prioritizes lived and personal experience over theory or policy-based practice employed by State authorities within institutions of education, health care and governance (Gilpin & Wiebe, 2019).

In order to conceive of the notion of self-accountability to the collective, it is essential that Indigenous healing practices are explicitly land-based. Indigenous healing traditions are centered on relationship with the land, and therefore can only exist with a healthy land-base. In 2017, the Women's Earth Alliance and Native Youth Sexual Health Network published a community tool-kit entitled *Violence on the Land, Violence on our Bodies: Building an Indigenous Response to Environmental Violence.* In this report, community authors aimed to employ an Indigenous analysis of environmental impacts and address the direct implications of extractive industry on Indigenous Lands and draw out the ways in which these practices also commit violence upon Indigenous bodies. They state,

> "This work stands upon the foundation of a movement begun by generations of Indigenous peoples who have long recognized the intimate connection between land and

> body. We recognize that there are many individuals, frontline struggles and movement leaders not included here, and acknowledge that this work is not a comprehensive list of all Indigenous led environmental defence activities. Rather, it is intended to provide examples of both the issue and community-based strategies to support a larger movement of Indigenous women and young people taking action from a specific lens of sexual and reproductive health, rights and justice (p. 2)".

By asserting Indigenous frameworks, which recognize interrelatedness and holistic interactions, the co-researchers of this study join with these authors in proclaiming that the Indigenous body cannot be separated from the Indigenous Land; and extractive colonial violence impeded upon Lands and Waters gives permission for continued state violence and disposal of Indigenous bodies. The report calls for community-led solutions as determined by each subjective cultural and linguistic community themselves. At the heart of the report is a recognition of environmental violence as innately gendered as it "disproportionately affects Indigenous women, youth and people who are part of the Two Spirit, LGBTTIQQA [4]community and those who are gender non-conforming (GNC) and non-binary" (p. 6). In acknowledging the gender-based violence within colonial enterprises, a space is created for Indigenous bodies to self-represent and discern their own creative resurgence and relationship to their own bodies and Lands/Waters.

In order to practice healing traditions, our communities must defend our land from outside interests. In centering insurgent healing on the land, we are able to critique ongoing extractive, non-Indigenous practices within the industry of ego and furthermore resurge Indigenous healing traditions for the community, by the community. Indigenous Womxn's personal experiences of healing and wellness cannot exist in isolation from the healing and wellbeing of the collective; extending into kinship networks, plant and animal relations and

---

[4] Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Questioning, Asexual

Land/Water relations. The co-researchers of this study tell us that wellness is encoded in our Land-Language teachings; that Land gives us our knowledge - Kitaskînaw î pî kiskinohâmakoya. The Land gives us our spiritual protocol - Sâkihito-maskihiy î pî kiskinimâkoya. The Land gives us the abundance of means required to live a good life - Miyo-Pimatisiwin. The land gives us our love and care for our Relations - Miyo-Wîchêtowin. A renewed understanding of governance represents an ethic of how we care for ourselves and others, which enhances our ability to confront ongoing projections of colonialism and position ourselves from a place of mental clarity, physical strength and emotional courage. Manuel (1974) also reminded us that, "it is necessary to heal ourselves with our own medicine. This is integral in self-determination and insurgent healing" (p. 106). The politics of distraction (neoliberal capitalist addictions premised on systems of objectification and consumption of self, others, spirit and land-bodies), which take us from the good path, can only be avoided when we have access to a space for mental, physical, emotional and spiritual clarity.

Co-researchers like Estrella Whetung (Anishinaabe/Lucbanin) acknowledge that Indigenous value systems are contained within an understanding of sacred responsibilities to the well-being of all relations. However, we as warrior scholars, researchers, and healers must first recognize that we can only uphold these responsibilities when we ourselves are strong, clear and healthy. This is insurgent healing. This is self-accountability for the betterment of the land and therefore, the collective. It counters new-age and/or shape shifting capitalist industries of elite healing, and grounds our experiences of embodied wellness in intimate relationship to Place-Land-Water-Kinship. Because sovereignty is "not something you ask for" but "something you do" (Willow, 1996), womxn's everyday actions can become everyday acts of sustainable self-

determination, grounded in spiritual connection to our sacred responsibilities. Renowned Tanana Athabascan author and researcher, Dian Million asserts the need to make space within community governance, healing practice and social policy for the *felt* experiences of Indigenous womxn, and the knowledge derived from their own personal analysis and understandings (2008, 2009). Within systems of Western education and health-practice, felt experience and embodied knowledge are deemed subjective and personal; therefore, lacking the weight of authority within these realms of knowledge practice and transference. Her work recognizes the "feminine" traits often associated with concepts of the experiential, emotional or personal in contrast to western knowledge validation premised upon the "masculine" concepts of cognitive, non-emotional and scientific inquiry (2009). She quotes Gillian Bendalow and Simon Williams (2009) who claim that "emotions have an 'ethereal existence' in sociology because Western rationality has excluded them as un-objective forms of knowing and they have been feminized by masculine philosophy and historical culture. Emotions are "'things'" (p. 20).

Her work reminds us that we cannot think our way out of colonial gendered violence, but instead must allow for felt experience and knowledge to inform futures of healing, regenerative health and cultural strength. Because colonial legacies are embedded within relational frameworks, which prioritize hetero-patriarchy, gender-based sexualized violence and eco-politique premised on values of objectification, capital and competition, experiences of Indigenous womxn must be included within efforts towards political emancipation and spiritual liberation if to be considered decolonial. Co-researcher Ashleigh Thompson shares that "it is impossible to decolonize something that is innately colonial", whether it be an educational, social or political institution. It is more helpful to consider the possibilities and imaginaries of

Indigenization as applied to essential embodied governance and reclaim kinship networks. Million, along with co-researchers of this study, call for a reclamation of felt-action, or felt experience of Indigenous womxn, embedded in a language "for communities to address the real multilayered facets of their histories and concerns by insisting on the inclusion of our lived experience, rich with emotional knowledges, of what pain and grief and hope meant or mean now in our pasts and futures" (2009, p. 2).

One may be able to articulate the experience of a trauma, the knowledge gained from a teaching or otherwise; however, it may not fully represent the felt experience embodied by that individual or collective in that space and time. To build a framework of embodied (felt, lived, experienced) governance, grounded in community and centred upon renewal and regeneration, while resisting an extractive approach to resources such as Land and Water, I wish to expand on the analysis of previous chapters, which explored the extractive, settler-colonial context and mentality or colonial governmentality that enable some of the ongoing injustices experienced by Indigenous bodies. Embodiments of felt experience within the framework of governance and community wellness are employed through self-determined actions and relationship, rather than written policy or theory. There is a difference between "Let me explain to you, or let me tell you" and "Let me show you". Million's work on felt theory practice asserts that Indigenous womxn have always and will continue to occupy self-determined positions of governance and healing authority within community and beyond. Their knowledge, as felt, lived and experienced is what carries the essence of Land-Water based governance practice into embodiments of contemporary political protocol and community-led healing. While we have seen that the most effective instalments of colonialism occur through processes such of racism, de-humanization, gendered

violence and disconnection from the land, it is important to note how some of the more perpetual sources of resiliency are grounded in our ability to *feel.* The recognition of our own bodies as sites of ancestral knowledge promotes everyday acts of governance from the inside-out. Million asserts that "we feel our histories as well as think them" (2009, p .3); a sentiment that is evident in the current scholarly discussions concerning the emancipatory possibilities of decolonial love and felt experiences of culture, belonging and kinship (Simpson, 2011; Belcourt, 2015). The ability to feel, to love, and to experience an embodied belonging and/or accountability within a relational network is an emergent yet, not fully tapped, resource within decolonial literature and practice. Felt experiences, within the teaching and learning framework of Miyo-Pimatisiwin include the physical, emotional, spiritual and mental bodies or domains of wellness and governance. As described in the learnings in the section *Spirit and Culture,* co-researchers expressed how experiences of mindfulness, or conscious awareness, can be understood as the ways in which we consciously determine how to move our bodies through space and relationship. This extends into our ability to make choices which are conscious of others and contribute to a comprehensive understanding or felt experience of interconnection of mind, body, heart and spirit within our community governance and wellness practice. If colonialism is predicated upon control, domination and violence against Indigenous bodies and minds, then in contrast, the cultivation of a conscious relationship with our physical and mental bodies is a viable avenue for decolonization and resurgence. In response to Fanon's description of the internalized impact of colonization, Yellowbird (2008) proposes pathways of resurgence, based on a decolonization of the mind. Yellowbird introduces a framework of neuro-decolonization, from which we can begin to clear out the cacophony of colonial voices and detoxify our bodies

so that we can successfully develop an understanding of individual self-determination, "beyond rhetoric to a meaningful and effective political project" (Napoleon, 2005, p.1, Yellowbird, 2008).

The physical detoxification of colonial influence, the mental clarity necessary to *free* the mind, and the spiritual strength essential to the protection of land and knowledge, must be a mindful process. John Mohawk further describes how Indigenous traditional governance "express[es] positive relationships to all others- and to recognize that we are not separate from them" (qtd. in Nelson, 2008). It takes a *clear mind* to discern and exercise, what Alfred describes as a self-conscious traditionalism, embodied ancestral traditions through contemporary settings and identities, in order to "live out our natural power, and fulfill our fullest responsibilities" (Alfred 2005, p. 266). Contemporary colonialism employs a "politics of distraction", which "attempt to disconnect Indigenous people from their collective and individual roles and responsibilities to land, culture, and community" (Corntassel, 2012, p. 600). The Cree-Michif phrase Chee-Itayhtamawk can be translated to "Let us be of One Mind". If experiences of mindfulness, Chee-Itayhtamawk, and clarity contribute to the feelings of connection and belonging to Spirit and culture, then Indigenous governance must centre experiences of wellness, personal healing and community well-being in order to meaningfully reflect and restore regenerative Spiritual practice and connection. While I used the term "mindfulness" in my conversations with co-researchers, we often found that we would return to concepts embodied in our own languages and cultural experiences, with the cultivation of a clear mind. A clear mind, healthy body and calm heart are necessary in our commitment to honour all relations. It is from this place of clearing that Indigenous womxn talk about employing regenerative governance of self and community, in a way which reflects our own values, morals and landscapes. It is only

with an organized mind, calm heart and peaceful clarity that we can establish a meaningful connection with ourselves, others, with spirit and the Land. The ways womxn cared for our minds and bodies are often depoliticized within decolonial discourse; however, the Indigenous body is a site for resistance *(physical)*, politicization *(mental)*, remembrance *(emotional)*, and determination *(spiritual)*. In doing so, we regard the mental body as a site of co-creation, agency and ultimately as a tool towards our shape-shifting phsycial, emotional and spiritual manifestations of the *self*; in relationship to others, Spirit and the Land/Waters.

As many of the co-researchers within this study reveal, individual wellness, community wellbeing and cultural strength all exist within constellations of relationship and conscious interconnectivity to Land and Water. Through these findings, I draw the Indigenous womxn's body into focus as a crucial site of self-determination, cultural resurgence and land-based healing - as *embodied governance*. Within the framework of embodied governance, Indigenous womxn take up leadership roles which assert individual gifts through the enactment of community-grounded responsibilities and relational accountabilities. The embodiments of personally-determined and community supported leadership roles can be expressed through the resurgence of creative expressions of womxn-centered wellness and governance practices. Therefore, I argue for the reconsideration of self-determination as embodied governance, which begins with the body as a site of regeneration, resurgence and renewal. Regenerative health, a wellness practice or experience which resounds throughout generations, requires that Indigenous peoples decide for themselves how to govern their bodies and "promote more life" on their own terms (Simpson, 2011, p. 141). The framework of Land as Body comes from reflections of governance enacted upon our home-territories and waters as well as the recognition that ALL bodies are extensions of

their ancestral homelands. Our bodies are not only extensions of our homelands, but rather we **are** our home Lands and Waters. Our bodies are fertile grounds for experience, embodiment and exploration of our own self-defined acts of governance: in relation to self, to others, to Spirit and the Land.

An embodied governance framework begins with a celebration of womxn and their contributions to self-determining governing systems. It is important to acknowledge the importance of intersectional analysis and centering community within this framework. As Sandy Grande (Quechua) (2004) proclaims, defense of Land translates into defense of Indigenous womxn and knowledge. It is necessary to be more explicit than many of the authors, activists and researchers who have emphasized a number of integral qualities of Indigenous governance and wellness leadership. For example, Million (2009) states that Indigenous womxn are "creating new language for communities to address the real multilayered facets of their histories and concerns by insisting on the inclusion of our lived experience, rich with emotional knowledges, of what pain and grief and hope meant or mean now in our pasts and futures" (p. 53). Million refers to "felt experience as community knowledge", and claims that knowledge is "affective, felt, intuited as well as thought" (p. 57).

In acknowledging this felt knowledge, I raise my hands to co-researchers of this study, who are situated across the back of Turtle Island - from WSÁNEĆ to Chippewa territories, and to their local efforts of womxn-led, Land-centered community wellbeing initiatives, which center the revitalization of Land-knowledge, traditional plant-medicine teachings, birth-work practice, cultural performance and other vibrant acts of everyday governance.

The calls for reproductive justice, queer feminist relational values and co-creative decolonial relations, demands for the right to re-generate and reproduce life across all realms of socio-political individual, collective and Land/Water-realtions, as determined by individual and shared expressions of Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wichêtowin. Yet, efforts to restore and resurge reproductive cultural, social, familial and Land-Water life must move forward with meaningful consideration and emergent contributions of Indigenous queer imaginary and knowledge. TallBear asserts the importance in "recognizing possibilities of other kinds of intimacies - not focused on biological reproduction and making population, but care taking precious kin that come to us in diverse ways- is an important step fo unsettling settler sex and family" (2015, pp.154). In alignment with this discourse, TallBear urges for us to consider reproductive care and experiences through a non-lineal lens represented through temporal representations of "movement forward to something *better,* or movement back to something *purer*" (2015, pp. 153).

Reproductive justice can be defined as "the right to have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and healthy environments - [and] is based on the human right to make personal decisions about one's life, and the obligation of government and society to ensure that the conditions are suitable for implementing one's decisions" (Hoover et al. qtd. in Cidro & Neufield, 2017, pp. 177). As we co-create emergent framworks better suited to define intersectional lens's of Miyo-Pimatisiwin and Miyo-Wichêtowin, we must consider ongoing and unfolding definitions of reproductive experiences of wellness and relational kin-centric governance. As we gain momentum from our Indigi-kin whose physical, intellectual, spiritual

and emotional felt bodies enact tatawâw in the academe and beyond, we co-assert and reimagine action-based kinships which extend from our own embodied governance to Land and Waters .

CONCLUSION | EKOSI

When we remember that we belong to the Land and Waters
We remember that we belong to each other

The Land, Kã wee ooma aski, the *Original Life-Giver,* manifests abundance in every pore of their being. The Waters, the absolute source of life, vitality and possibility, flow from being to being in an interconnected web of intrinsic inter-being. The recognition and further reverence of these interconnectivities, for me, describes *what is sacred.* While learning more about the practice of birth-support, I have begun to recognize that the highest authority in the birth-room belongs to Water. While the Land as body, which houses the new life, contracts, moves, ebbs, flows, shifts, re-arranges and erupts in the act of labor and birth, it is water who works as the midwife/birth-worker. Water is the first midwife and body is the first home-land. As Myrna Laramee shares, Water "is what connects us" and all beings, "when we are in that circle and that women gets up and passes Water…she is creating a spiritual umbilical cord, and without her to do that, we just sit as spiritual entities. The minute she passes that Water from soul to soul, you are attached to that central spiritual connection and you can drink from it" (p. 185). Water is what allows for kinship, what enables inter-being (interconnectivity) and what defines relationships based on values of reciprocity, wellness and creative fluidity. Water is the relative which conducts protocol at the time of birth, and is what truly midwives each of us "Earth Side". Water encodes the instructions we need to care for one another, and give life, whether physically,

culturally, socially and spiritually to our communities and growing Nations. Indigenous womxn's intimate relationships to the Land and Water position them as optimal leaders for Land-based healing and co-determined community governance.

Kinship is relational belonging. Kin-centric relational accountabilities affirm the belief in vibrant Indigenous futurisms (that beyond colonial imagination, undefined, transformative, breathing) through the projection of self and culture into future perpetuity. Sites which encourage diverse and self-actualized embodied governance authority promotes kin-centric integrity relationships necessary for healing futures grounded in relationship to Land and Waters. Land/ Water-based wellness and birth practice not only confronts the extraction of knowledge and bodies from homelands but is absolutely dependent upon relationship to Land as Waters if it is to be counted as meaningful embodied governance and culturally-informed wellness leadership. A resurgence of Indigenous cultural, biological, spiritual reproduction through pregnancy, birth, and childrearing is the foundation for thriving Indigenous Nationhood and embodied governance (Gilpin & Wiebe, 2019). Just as Anishinaabe scholar, writer and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson describes, the "family is the microcosm of the Nation" and birth is the microcosm of the family. Simpson goes on to state that, "by reclaiming pregnancy and birth we are not only physically decolonizing ourselves be we are also providing a decolonized pathway into this world. It is our responsibility to the next generation" (p. 28). In this way, the relational integrity of those present at all sites of reproduction (as defined by each relative) constitutes as teaching grounds for relational accountabilities and inter-being governance: for All Relations. Miyo-Wîchêtowin. It is clear our natural and social world is thrown out of balance. Inter-personal conflict, political extremism, climate crises and normalized political violence are all bi-products

of a world dominated by toxic masculine energies, fear-based and violent tactics of control and power. Indigenous womxn's leadership is necessary to restore balance amongst relation to and with the Land and Waters; in turn restoring balance amongst all relationships across local, international and global realms of life.

EKOSI:

This is what you must remember: the ending of one story is just the beginning of another. This has happened before, after all. People die. Old orders pass. New societies are born. When we say "the world has ended", it's usually a lie, because the planet is just fine.

But this is the way the world ends.
This is the way the world ends.
This is the way the world ends.
For the last time[5]

In the 2011 Brazilian film, *Terra Vermelha*, a final scene depicts Guarani-Kaiowá tribal members confronting farmers and agri-elite Brazilians who encroach on their ancestral Lands through violent force, racist aggression, intimidation and political corruption. In a heated confrontation, the Brazilian farmer desperately explains to the Guarani-Kaiowá peoples that his family has inhabited the property for three generations: stating that the Land belongs to him and his family. He lists off the names of his Father, and his Father before and describes his family's linkage to the land, which he intends to perpetuate through agricultural industry for his own family-use and future generations. In response, the character who portrays the Guarani-Kaiowá leadership listens quietly, then slowly, keeping his eyes locked on the opposition, scoops up a generous handful of the Red Earth they stand on, brings it into his mouth. Through his

[5] Excerpt from Jemisin, N.K. (2015). The Fifth Season: Every Age Must Come to an End. The Broken Earth Trilogy. Orbit. New York

penetrating silence, he slowly chews and then swallows the mound of Red Earth. His refusal to enter into the didactic dance with his counterpart, along with his actions, deem the words of the farmer as insignificant, immature and finite. Resounding through his silence he demonstrates complex and inter-belonging interconnectivities which seem to say: I am the Land. My People are the Land. We are Red Earth. Your claims to this Land are as empty as they would be if you tried to demonstrate your claims to my own body" (Benchis, 2011). I have never witnessed a scene so powerful, so explicit and so profound in film before, and it has stayed with me ever since.

Embodied governance relations extend out from the Land, through felt bodies and into the webs of relational experience to and with one another as kin, allies and community members. Million reminds us that in this way "the nurturing inclusiveness that is often modelled as an ideal in kinship teaches us that we form one another and create social and spiritual relations that we extend and that are extended to us in radiating bursts of affective interrelations that also include nonhuman relations" (2009, p. 180). Through situating our bodies as sites of governance, the very breath that moves through our bodies is a life-force which connects our independent enactments of sovereignty and story, into larger constellations of inter-being, relationship and interconnectivity. The recognition of these interconnectivities, inter-being and inter-becomings are what constitutes the sacred. When the inter-flowing life is acknowledged and revered, shared capacities towards personal healing, collective well-being and spiritual transcendence will be actualized in our own bodies and resound out through time and space; inter-lacing ancestral visionary with future kin-centric becomings. In must begin in our own personal commitment to transcend fear, violence and systems of oppression. It must begin in the mental, physical and

emotional bodies which house our own sacred Spirit, specific gifts and responsibilities to the Collective. It must begin with conscious clarity, compassion and a resounding Love for the Land and Waters: transcending into a love for Our Land (Body) and Waters (Spirit). In recognizing our own personal and ancestral kin-centric belonging to Land/Waters, we are then able to recognize the sacred translation of these embodiments in our own Bodies and Life. This is embodied Governance. This is kinship. This is Land as Body; Water as Life.

Kisemanito
Kinasnâskomitin koyak
Kîsikâw- ê-miyiyan
paray chee itayhtamawk
kwayesh kapimouhtayhk
marsee hiy hiy chee itwayak ka kishcheetayimoyak
Nitataminan

Ayis Kiyehewini Pimatisiwin
Sayweyimenan mena ota mamawai kayayahk
Meyinan, muskawisewin mena ayimesewin
Ta natohtamahk menata nahehtamahk
Meyinan asumena ta wapahatamahk
Sakastewini mena ka nanskomitinan

Hiy Hiy anaskomitinanan

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Absolon, K. (2011). *Kaandossiwin: How we come to know*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood.

Adams, H. (1975). *Prison of grass: Canada From the Native point of view.* Toronto, ON: General.

Adelson, N. (2005). The embodiment of inequity: Health disparities in Aboriginal Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 96 (2): S45-S61.

Ahenakew, F. (1987). *Cree Language Structures: A Cree Approach*. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications

Alfred, T. (2005). *Wasáse: Indigenous pathways of action and freedom*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Alfred, T. & Corntassel, J. (2005). Being Indigenous: Resurgences against contemporary colonialism. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Alfred, T. (2009). *Peace, power, righteousness: An Indigenous manifesto.* (2nd Ed). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Altamirano-Jiménez, I. (2013). *Indigenous encounters with neoliberalism: Place, women and the environment in Canada and Mexico*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Anderson, K. (2000). *A recognition of being: Reconstructing Native womanhood*. Toronto, ON: Sumach Press.

Anderson, K. (2011). *Life stages and Native women: memory, teachings, and story medicine*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Anderson, C. & Peters E. (2011). *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary identities and cultural innovation*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Anderson-De Coteau, M. (2016, April 13). Indigenous knowledge to close gaps in Indigenous health, *TEDxUManitoba* [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IpKjtujtEYI.

Anderson, K. & Lavell-Harvard, D. M. (2014). *Mothers of the Nations: Indigenous mothering as global resistance, reclaiming and recovery.* Bradford, ON: Demeter Press.

Archibald, J. (2008). *Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Atleo, R. (2004). *Tsawalk A Nuu-chah-nulth worldview.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Barton, S. S. (2004). *Narrative inquiry: Locating Aboriginal epistemology in a relational methodology.* Prince George, BC: University of Northern British Columbia. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2003.02935.x

Battiste, M. & Youngblood, H. (2002). Protecting Indigenous knowledge and heritage. *The Journal of Educational Thought (JET)* / Revue de la Pensée Éducative 36(1), 92-94.

Benchis, Marco (2011), *Terra Vermelha* [Film]

Belcourt, B. (2019) *Indigenous Women in Indigenous Canada.* Online Course. University of Alberta. [PDF FILE]: Retrieved: https://pt.coursera.org/lecture/indigenous-canada/billy-ray-belcourt-K1aB7

Blanchet-Cohen, N., McMillan, Z., & Greenwood, M. (2011). Indigenous youth engagement in Canada's health care. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health* 9(1), 87-111.

Bowen, A. et al. (2014). Mood and anxiety problems in perinatal Indigenous women in Australia, New Zealand, and North America (including Hawaii). *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 51(1), 93-111.

Cahill, C. (2007). The personal is political: Developing new subjectivities in a participatory action research process. *Gender, Place and Culture*. 14 (3): 267-292.

Carson, B. et al. (2007). *Social Determinants of Indigenous Health*. Sydney: Allen & Unwind.

Chat et al. (2013). "In their Own Words: First Nations Girls' Resilience as Reflected Through their Understandings of Health" *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*, 11(1):1-15

Clover, D. (2011). Successes and challenges of feminist arts-based participatory methodologies with homeless/street-involved women in Victoria. *Action Research*. 9(12):12-26.

Coulthard, Glen (2010). Place Against Empire: Understanding Indigenous Anti-Colonialism. *Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory, Culture, and Action* (4), 79-83.

Coulthard, Glen. (2014). *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition.* Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Chilisa, Bagele. (2011). *Indigenous Research Methodologies.* Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Chandler, M.J. & Lalonde, C (1998). *Cultural Continuity as a Hedge Against Suicide in Canada's First Nations*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, and T'lakwadzi (2009) Indigenous Storytelling, Truth-telling, and Community Approaches to reconciliation. *English Studies in Canada* 35(1), 137- 159.

Corntassel, J (2012). Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination in *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society.*Vol. 1, No. 1, 2012, pp. 86-101

Corntassel, J (2013). We belong to each other: Resurgent Indigenous Nations. Retrieved from http://nationsrising.org/we-belong-to-each-other-resurgent-indigenous-nations/

Corntassel, Jeff & Adam Gaudry. (2014). *"*Insurgent Education and Indigenous-Centred Research: Opening New Pathways to Community Resurgence*"* in *Learning and Teaching Community-Based Research: Linking Pedagogy to Practice.* University of Toronto Press.

DeVault, M. (1999). *Liberating Method: Feminism and Social Research.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Dyck, I. (1993). Ethnography: a feminist research method? *Canadian Geographer.* Vol. 37. pp. 52-57.

Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y. and Smith, L.T., (Eds.) (2008). *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies.* Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Deloria, Jr., Vine. (1994). *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum.

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

Ermine et al. (2004). *The Ethics of Research Involving Indigenous Peoples: Report of the Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre to the Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics.* Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre.

Fanon, Frantz (1963). *Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.

Fanon, Frantz. (1967). *Black Skin White Masks.* New York: Grove Press.

Freire, P. (2006). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.

Final Report Vol. (2019 1a. Reclaiming Power and Place in *the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.* Retrieved from: https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf

Fisk, J. (1996). The Womb is to the Nation as the Heart is to the Body in *Ethnopolitical Discourses of the Canadian Indigenous Women's Movement.* Studies in Political Economy 51. A Socialist Review. Vol. 51. Issue 1. pp 65-95

Fraser T.N. & Kenny (Ed.s) (2012), *Living Indigenous Leadership Native Narratives on Building Strong Communities*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press. pp. 1-27

Gaudry, A. & Hancock, R. (2013). Decolonizing Métis Pedagogies in Post- Secondary Settings. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*; 35, 1 CBCA . pg. 7.

Goodyear-Ka'opua, Noelani (2009). *Rebuilding the 'Auwai: Connecting Ecology, Economy and Education in Hawaiian Schools.* Political Science. University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

Goodyear-Ka'opua, Noelani (2013, October 28) The enduring power of aloha aIna: Noelani Goodyear Kaopua at TEDxManoa [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUd4KzRekoI&t=13s.

Goodyear-Kaopua, Noelani et al. (2014). *A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land and Sovereignty.* London: Duke University Press.

Grande, Sandy. (2004). *Red Pedagogy*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Gilpin, E. and Wiebe. S. (2019). "Embodied Governance: Community Health, Indigenous Self-Determination and Birth Practices" *Chapter in Bearing the Weight of the World, Exploring Material Embodiment,* Demeter Press.

Gilpin, E. (2018). From a Place of Love. *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices.* International Cry: International Journal of Indigenous Studies. Washington: Daykeeper Press.

Gomes, T., Young. A., & Brown, L. (2013). Indigenous health leadership: Protocols, policy, and practice. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*, 11(3), 565-578.

Gunn Allen, P. (1992) *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Ed. Green, Joyce (2017). *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism. Second Edition.* Black Point: Fernwood Publishing (Canada).

Hajer, M. & Wagenaar, H. (2003). *Deliberative Policy Analysis. Understanding Governance in the Network Society.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hale, Charles R. (2008). Activist Research v. Cultural Critique: Indigenous Land Rights and the Contradictions of Politically Engaged Anthropology. Published by the American Anthropology Association.

Halseth, R. (2013). Aboriginal Women in Canada: Gender, Socio Economic Determinants of Health and Initiatives to Close the Wellness Gap. National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. Prince George: British Colombia.

Harjo, J. (2012). *Crazy Brave: A Memoir.* W. W. Norton & Company.

Hardt, M. & Negri A. (2009). *Commonwealth.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Health Canada (2015). First Nations and Inuit Health Status of First Nations On-Reserve in Atlantic Canada 2015. Ottawa: Government of Canada. pp. 1-96.

Hirch, M. (2011). Self-determination in Indigenous health: A comprehensive perspective. *Fourth World Journa*l, Vol 10(2), pp. 1-30.

Hoover, E. et *al*. (2012). "Indigenous Peoples of North America: Environmental Exposures and Reproductive Justice", *Environmental Health Perspectives.*120(2): pp.1645-1649.

Hunt, S. (2013). Decolonizing Sex Work: Developing an Intersectional Indigenous Approach. In E. Van der Meulen, E.M. Durisin & V. Love. *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy and Research on Sex Work in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Hunt, S. (2018). Embodying Self-Determination: Beyond the Gender Binary. In M. Greenwood , S. Leeuw & N.M. Lindsay (Eds.), *Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' Health, Second Edition: Beyond the Social*. Toronto: CSP Books Inc.

Irlbacher-Fox, S. (2009) *Finding Dahshaa: Self-Government, Social Suffering and Aboriginal Policy in Canada.* Vancouver: UBC Press.

Jacob, M. (2013). *Yakama Rising: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization, Activism and Healing.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Kirmayer & Valaskakis (2009). *Healing Traditions: The Mental Health of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada*, Vancouver: UBC Press

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Kuokkanen, R. (2014) Gendered Violence and Politics in Indigenous Communities, *International Feminist Journal of Politics, DOI (Canada)*: pp 271-288.

Knobblock, I. & Kuokkanen, R. (2015). Decolonizing Feminism in the North: A Conversation with Rauna Kuokkanen, *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 23:4, 275-281

Ladner, K. L. (2009). Understanding the Impact of Self-Determination on Communities in Crisis. *National Aboriginal Health Organization* (NAHO).pp 1-14.

Ladner K. & Simpson, L. (Eds.) (2011). *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back.* Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Press.

Ladner, K. (2009). Gendering Decolonisation, Decolonising Gender. *Paper Presented at the 80th Annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association*. Vancouver: UBC June 2008

LaDuke, W. (2005). *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming*. South End Press.

Laramee, M. (2014). Making Sense of Aboriginal Education in Canadian Public Schools: A Case Study of Four Inner City Elementary Principals and Their Vision of Aboriginal Education. *Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre. First Nations Perspectives* 1, 1 (2008): 57-73

Eds. Lavell-Harvard & Cornier. (2006). *Until our Hearts are on the Ground: Aboriginal Mothering, Oppression, Resistance and Rebirth.* Demeter Press.

Lawless, J., Taylor, D., Marshall, R., Nickerson, E. & Anderson, K. (2015). Meaningful engagement: women, diverse identities and Indigenous water and wastewater responsibilities. *Can. Women's Stud*. 30 (2/3), 81–88

Lawrence, H. P. et al. (2016). Racism and Oral Health Outcomes among Pregnant Canadian Aboriginal Women. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved.* Johns Hopkins University Press. 27(1), pp.178-206.

Loppie, C. and Wien F. (2009). Health Inequalities and Social Determinants of Aboriginal Peoples' Health. *National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (NAHO)*.pp. 1-26

Long, D. A. & Fox, T. (1996). Circles of healing: Illness, healing, and health among Aboriginal people in Canada. *Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues.* Toronto: Harcourt Brace.

Low, Setha M. (2003). *Embodied Space(s) Anthropological Theories of Body, Space, and Culture. Space and Cultur*e. SAGE publishing. Vol. 6 no. 1, pp. 9-18

Loyer, J. (2018). Indigenous information literacy: nêhiyaw kinship enabling self-care in research. In K.P. Nicholson and M. Seale (Eds.), *The Politics of Theory and the Practice of Critical Librarianship.* Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press. pp. 145-156

Lynes, K. (2013). *Prismatic Media, Transnational Circuits: Feminism in a Globalized Present.* Global Cinema Series. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Maracle, Lee. (1988). *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism.* Vancouver: Write-on Press

Manuel & Posluns. (1974). *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality.* New York: Free Press.

McCormick, R. (1997). Healing through interdependence: The role of connecting in First Nations healing practices. Canadian Journal of Counseling, 31(3), 172-184.

Memmi, Albert. (1991). *The Colonizer and the Colonized.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Metallic, Fred. 2017. Decolonizing intellectual traditions: Conducting research and telling our stories in a 'Mi'gmaq way'. *In Methodological challenges in nature-culture and environmental history research*. New York: Routledge. pp. 20–130

McGuire, P. (Kishebakabaykwe). (2010). Exploring resilience and Indigenous ways of knowing. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*, 8(2), pp. 117-131.

McNamara, P. (2009). "Feminist ethnography: storytelling that makes a difference", *Qualitative Social Work*. 8(2). pp.161-177

Million, D. (2008). Felt Theory. *American Quarterly*. Johns Hopkins University Press.Volume 60 Number 2 June 2008. pp. 267-272

Million, D.(2009). Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History. Wicazo Sa Review Vol. 24, No. 2, *Native Feminism.* University of Minnesota Press. pp. 53-76

Mucina, D. (2011) Story as Research Methodology. *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education,* University of Toronto. AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples Volume: 7 issue: 1, page(s): 1-14

Mullin, A. (2003). "Feminist art and the political imagination", *Hypatia.* 18(4). pp. 190-213

Mundel, E. & Chapman, G. (2010). A decolonizing approach to health promotion in Canada: The case of the urban Aboriginal community kitchen garden project. *Health Promotion International.* UBC Press. Vol. 25(2), pp. 166-173.

Mussel, B., Cardiff, K. & White, J. (2004). *The Mental Health and Well-being of Aboriginal Children and Youth: Guidance for New Approaches and Services. Volume 1: Report* Chilliwack, BC: British Columbia Ministry for Children and Family Development pp. 4-50

Napoleon, V. (2005). Aboriginal self-determination: Individual self and collective selves. *Atlantis*, Vol. 29(2), pp. 1-21.

National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2007). *OCAP: Ownership, Control, Access and Possession*. Ottawa, ON: Accessed on January 4th, 2014. Author.http://cahr.uvic.ca/nearbc/documents/2009/FNC-OCAP.pdf

Native Youth Sexual Health Network. (2016). VIOLENCE ON THE LAND, VIOLENCE ON OUR BODIES: Building an Indigenous Response to Environmental Violence. Final Report. *A partnership of Women's Earth Alliance and Native Youth Sexual Health Network. Retrieved on January 3rd, 2018.* http://landbodydefense.org/uploads/files/VLVBReport_2016.pdf

Nelson M. (Ed.) (2008). *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future.* Collective Heritage Institute: Vermont. Bear and Company.

Nixon, L. (2016)"Visual Cultures of Indigenous Futurisms." GUTS Magazine, Retrieved: May 20. gutsmagazine.ca/visual-cultures/.

Nixon, Lindsay (2018) Prairie Families: Cree-Métis-Saulteux Materialities as Indigenous Feminist Materialist Record of Kinship-Based Selfhood. Masters thesis, Concordia University.

NWAC: Native Women's Association of Canada (2002). *Violations of Indigenous Human Rights: Special Rapporteur Investigation* (Canada). Retrieved: http://www.nwac.ca/research/ reports/01-12-02

Osborne, Ralph (1972). Who is the Chairman of This Meeting? C*onversations with North American Indians: A Collection of Essays.* The Neewin Publishing Company, Ltd.

Ottman, J. (2013) Indigenizing the Academy: Confronting 'Contentious Ground'. *Indigenizing the Academy (*2013): pp. 8-25.

Pidgeon, M., Muñoz, M., Kirkness, V. J., & Archibald, J. A. (2013). Indian control of Indian education: Reflections and envisioning the next 40 years. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 36(1).

Reading, C. & Reading, J. (2012). Promising practices in aboriginal community health promotion interventions. *Health Promotion in Canada* (3red.). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Reimagining Attawapiskat, collaborative mixed media storytelling project. Retrieved February10, 2017: www.reimaginingattawapiskat.com.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996). *Bridging the Cultural Divide: A Report on Aboriginal People and Criminal Justice in Canada. Volume 3, Section 3: Health and Healing* [Ottawa]: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996. Retrieved: http://caid.ca RepRoyCommAborigPple.html

Salmón, E. (2012). *Eating the Landscape: American Indian Stories of Food, Identity and Resilience.* University of Arizona Press.

Schwartz-Chea, P. & Yanow, D. (2012). *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes.* New York: Routledge.

Scow, M. (2018) Relentlessly Coastal. *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices.* InternationalCry: International Journal of Indigenous Studies. Washington: Daykeeper Press.

Simpson, L. (2008). *Lighting the Eighth Fire.* Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Press.

Simpson, L. (2010). *This is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades,* Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Press.

Simpson, Leanne. (2011). *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Press.

Smith, L. (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* 2nd edition. London: Zed Books

Starblanket, G. (2018) Complex Accountabilities: Deconstructing “the Community” and Engaging Indigenous Feminist Research Methods. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*: 2018, Vol. 42, No. 4, pp. 1-20.

Starblanket, G., & Kiiwentinepinesiik Stark, H. (2018). Toward a relational paradigm—Four points for consideration: Knowledge, gender, land, and modernity. In Asch, M., Borrows, J., & Tully, J. (Eds.), Resurgence and reconciliation: Indigenous-settler relations and Earth teachings. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Stark, H. (2010) Respect, Responsibility, and Renewal: The Foundations of Anishinaabe Treaty Making with the United States and Canada. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 34:2 pp.145–164.

Stewart et al. (2017). *Indigenous Cultures and Mental Health Counselling: Four Directions for Integration with Counselling Psychology.* New York: Routledge. Taylor and Francis.

Stewart, L. (2008). Promoting Indigenous Mental Health: Cultural perspectives on Healing from Native Counsellors in Canada, University of Toronto. *International Journal of Health Promotion and Education.* Volume 46. Number 2. pp.49-56.

Stout, M. (2001). *Aboriginal Women’s Health Research: Synthesis Project.* Ottawa: Centres of Excellence for Women’s Health.

Sunseri, L. (2011). *Being Again of One Mind: Oneida Women and the Struggle for Decolonization.* Vancouver: UBC Press.

Suzack, C. et al. (2011). *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture.* Vancouver: UBC Press (Canada).

Tagalik, S. (2010). InuIt QaujImajatuQangIt. *The role of Indigenous knowledge in supporting wellness in Inuit communities in Nunavut*. Prince George, BC: National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health.

TallBear, K. (2008). Making Love and Relations Beyond Settler Sex and Family in *Making Kin Not Population*. Edited by Adele E. Clarke and Donna Haraway. Prickly Paradigm Press; Chicago

TallBear, Kim. "Dossier: Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms: An Indigenous Reflection on Working Beyond the Human/Not Human," GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, Vol. 21(2-3), 2015: 230-235.

TallBear, Kim. “Standing With and Speaking as Faith: A Feminist-Indigenous Approach to Inquiry,” Giving Back in Feminist Research, edited by Clare Gupta and Alice Kelly. Invited and in revision. Journal of Research Practice, 2014.

Tengan, T. (2005). Unsettling Ethnography: Tales of an ‘Ōiwi in the Anthropological Slot *in Anthropological Forum* Vol. 15(3): pp. 247-256

Thiongo, N. (1986). *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature.* London: Heinemann.

Trask, H. (1993). *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaii.* University of Hawai’i Press. Honolulu.

Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities. Harvard College: *Harvard Educational Review.* Vol. 79, No. 3, pp. 409-428

Tully, J. (1995). *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an age of diversity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

United Nations. (2008). *United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Geneva. Retrieved: https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

Varcoe et al. (2018). All my relations: experiences and perceptions of Indigenous patients connecting with Indigenous Elders in an inner city primary care partnership for mental health and well-being.. *Research Vulnerable Populations Journal.* May 22. Vol: 190 (20). pp. 608-615

Wilk, P., Maltby, A., & Cooke, M. (2017). Residential schools and the effects on Indigenous health and well-being in Canada—a scoping review. *BMC Public Health, 38.* pp, 8. Retrieved:https://doi.org/10.1186/s40985-017-0055-6

Wilson, A. (2008). N’tacimowin inna nah’: Our coming in stories. *Indigenous Women in Canada: The voices of First Nations, Inuit and Métis women*, 26: 193-199

Wilson, A. (2015). Our Coming In Stories: Cree Identity, Body Sovereignty and Gender Self-Determination, *Journal of Global Indigeneity*, 1(1).

Wilson, Shawn. (2009). *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods.* Halifax: Fernwood Publishing Co., Ltd.

Yellowbird, Michael J. (2018) Decolonizing The Mind: Using Mindfulness Research and Traditional Indigenous Ceremonies to Delete the Neural Networks of Colonialism. Introduction to Building Research Capacity: Historical Trauma and CBPR. [PDF File].

Retrieved: http://www.aihec.org/our-stories/docs/BehavioralHealth/2016/NeurodecolonizationMindfulness_YellowBird.pdf

Endnotes:

1 In text terminology

[i]i *Maybe it is time to consider The Land/Waters beyond the gender binaries which define her as "Mother Earth" and instead take guidance from Queer Indigenists who remind us that Life-giver is a term applicable to all bodies and experiences: When Queerness is applied to Land and Water perhaps the complexity, interconnectivity's and fluidity of all life-beings can be more fully understood and revered by our human species. Queer futurity must be applied to all facets of life, inter-being and promote an inter-becoming grounded in the absolute multiplicities of Land as Body and Body as Land.*

[i]ii Forth-coming: Gilpin, Erynne M. (2020). "Land-based Indigenous research pedagogy as applied to community family health practice". In *We Raise our Hands: Land-Based Indigenous Pedagogies., Special issue of the International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies.* The University of Victoria. Eds., S. de Finney & M. Kaur Mucina, S. Wright Cardinal.

[i]v Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Questioning, Asexual

[v] Excerpt from Jemisin, N.K. (2015). The Fifth Season: Every Age Must Come to an End. The Broken Earth Trilogy. Orbit. New York