PERSPECTIVES ON INDIGENOUS-BASED PROGRAMS: THE MISHK-ODEWENDAM CLASSROOM

by

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Abstract

The Mishk-Ode-Wendam classroom program was created to assist First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit students who live with an addiction or mental health condition to assist them to obtain their high school diploma. The classroom focuses on supporting their learning by incorporating their cultural values and its connectedness to the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical well-being realms of knowledge. This thesis focused on a program evaluation of the Mishk-Ode-Wendam classroom program and presents findings gathered from three Sharing Circles and three individual interviews with a total of seven participants participating in the Sharing Circles and three participants were individually interviewed. Key themes emerged from the findings that were classified under strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Keywords:

Sharing Circles, Cultural values, Indigenous-based programs

Acknowledgments

To the Mishko community, we did it! Also, to my supportive family, friends, and my committee members, for always pushing me and supporting me through this whole journey. Especially my mother, father and grandfather; *amour pour toujours*

Table of Contents

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Poster

Appendix B: Consent form for the students participating in the Sharing Circle

Appendix C: Consent form for the students participating in individual interviews

Appendix D: Consent form for the key stakeholders

Appendix E: Questionnaire for students

Appendix F: Questionnaire for the key stakeholders

Appendix G: Sharing Circles protocols

Appendix H: List of counseling services

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Mishk-Ode-Wendam classroom located at the Shkagamik-kwe Health
Centre, in Sudbury, Ontario, was created for First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit students
who live with an addiction or a mental health condition to assist them to obtain their high
school diploma. The Shkagamik-kwe Health Centre focuses on supporting student
learning by incorporating their cultural values and its connectedness to the spiritual,
emotional, mental, and physical well-being realms of knowledge. This thesis focused on
a program evaluation of the Mishk-Ode-Wendam classroom program. The literature
review includes setting the colonial context of imposed education systems such as the
effects of residential schools and the sixties scoop, Indigenizing the academy,
Indigenous-based programs and culturally responsive pedagogies. The information
gathered from the three Sharing Circles of a total of seven participants and three
individual interviews from the Indigenous youth and members of the interdisciplinary
team involved with the program and observations were drawn to identify key themes that
are important to keeping this program effective.

Rationale

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program
by:

a) interviewing users of the program (i.e. Indigenous youth) and those

stakeholders who have a close liaison with the program (i.e. Key stakeholders at

the Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre, Elders, Clinicians, School Board) and,

 b) examining and synthesizing relevant materials such as the section program

report and observations in the classroom.

This research was framed by an Indigenous methodology (Smith, 2002).

Therefore the way this research was conceived, designed and conducted was cognizant of

ensuring that Indigenous worldviews and meaningful interactions with the Indigenous

community were integrated and endorsed throughout the research journey. In an

Indigenous methodology, the findings must be beneficial to the community. An outcome

of this research is to present the key findings to the developers of the Mishk-Ode-

Wendam program to assist them with the development, content and delivery of their

program for Indigenous youth.

This research involved the collection of information from program reports, the

program developers, the Elders and other key stakeholders who were key contributors to

this program. This also included eliciting information from program materials,

developer's notes and proposals, promotional posters and websites for example. One of

the outcome goals is to provide to the Mishk-Ode-Wendam a synthesized summary of the

experiences and perspectives of the students and key stakeholders of the program, that

can be used to form an evaluative representation to the Ministry of Education who funds

the program. Essentially, with the results, the information can be provided to help

prioritize, give feedback, identify key issues, and can be a source for strategic funding.

As the Shkagamik-kwe Health Centre is also a provider and stakeholder for the Mishk-

Ode-Wendam program, it is hoped that the findings will complement their service as an Indigenous health center who cater to youth. Ultimately this research approach offers an opportunity for Indigenous youth of the program to reflect upon their learning. This gives them an opportunity to have a greater say by asking questions about improvements and identifying strengths about their experience on the program. Importantly, I sought to find out what students value about being and learning in such an Indigenous-based program.

Permission of the Data

In the first instance, I negotiated with the developers of Mishk-Ode-Wendam program that I would use the data to assist me to complete my master's thesis. They agreed. However, it is important to me that the key data of this research is co-shared with the program because I want it to succeed. This stance is aligned with the Tri-council Policy Statement of Ethical Conduct for Research involving humans, which discusses a code of ownership of, control of, access of, and possession of data (OCAP). It acknowledges the participants as active members in the research process from the beginning to the end (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2014). The draft findings were brought to the key stakeholders for their perusal and endorsement. They then added or removed sections that were of their own if they felt it was misinterpreted or needed correction.

Situating Self

Linklater (2014) states, that "Indigenous research tells us to locate ourselves in our research. First, we write about our own stories and share our position in the world before we write about the world" (p. 11).

I start off my research with a personal story so that the reader will be able to understand where I am coming from in regards to my research journey. I would like to acknowledge my French Métis roots, as this is how I was raised in my practice and traditions. As I began my high school journey I felt like the history of Indigenous peoples was excluded from the curriculum. I feel it is important to bring back this component in high school classrooms because for me it is important for all to know the real history of Canada.

After I graduated from high school, I went straight to university to study psychology. I wanted to understand the human brain and development. As I progressed into my undergraduate studies, the topic of mental health became of particular interest to me and that is when I started volunteering to carry out a placement in my fourth year at the Mishk-Ode-Wendam classroom at the community center part of the Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre, Sudbury. The Shkagamik-kwe Health Centre is a holistic center that incorporates Western and Traditional medicines for First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples. I was initially interested in Mishk-Ode-Wendam classroom because of the mental health and addiction aspect being that it was relevant to my undergraduate degree in psychology. However, my interest in the incorporation of the Indigenous identity aspect grew as I came to learn more about traditional teachings and how this impacted the students. In my view, this program not only decolonizes, it helps support the students

with their Indigenous identity. This is in stark contrast to my high school experience. The Mishk-Ode-Wendam students learn the value of their traditional teachings as well as have the support to help them achieve a high school diploma. In situating myself with the program, I am also positioning why this topic is important to me.

The Mishk-Ode-Wendam alternative classroom focuses on re-incorporating, contributing, and including the Indigenous cultural component that has been hidden or has been forced to be forgotten in mainstream schools. This classroom also focuses on the individual and helping them succeed by including all the elements of their culture, which is so important. In this period of their lives, youth try to find themselves and form an identity. Assisting Indigenous youth with this component in the classroom can help build up their identity which has been hidden due to colonization and assimilation (Battiste, 1998).

I situate myself as an insider in this research because I have been volunteering within the classroom, I am aware that I must remain reflexive. As Smith (2012) states: "The critical issue with insider research is the constant need for reflexivity" p.138). Constantly thinking and reflecting on your own work as well as being critical is important in research. I did just that, I consistently analyzed and reflected on my depth of understanding during my research process. My grandfather always taught me that the best way to help and support a community is going into the community itself, asking them and working alongside and with them. In following along with my grandfather's wisdom and teachings, I have done just that. I engaged with the Mishk-Ode-Wendam classroom, the administrators, teachers and students for two years when I did my voluntary placement. Being a volunteer within the classroom I was fully immersed but being a researcher also

meant being at arm's length. This was important for community partnership and participatory research and in line with conducting Indigenous research.

The Mishk-Ode-Wendam Classroom

The Mishk-Ode-Wendam is a classroom program for high school students that combine treatment and healing methods for Indigenous youth through the formal educational system provided by the Sudbury Rainbow District School Board (RDSB) (RDSB, 2013). This program is unique in the sense that it is in the urban setting and consists Indigenous teachers and resources support workers for 18 Indigenous youth that live with a mental health condition or addiction. This program ties with the Shkagamik-Kwe Health Center that gives the students accessibility to their staffing resources. They also teach through traditional teachings, Indigenous history and in the Ojibway language that is Indigenous language to this area.

The classroom was given its name by the Elder Gloria Oshkabewisens from the Shkagamik-kwe Health Center, who accepted an offering of sacred tobacco for a name. The offering of sacred tobacco is a traditional Indigenous practice to the Anishinaabe of the territory where this research took place. The word Mishk means the connection to your mind, Ode is the word for the heart and adding Wendam to the end of something represents a way of living through. Therefore, this title has the meaning of living through the connection of the heart and the mind or connecting the heart and the mind (Elder Gloria Oshkabewisens, 2013).

This classroom is located in Sudbury at the Shkagamik-kwe Health Centre. The Mishk-Ode-Wendam classroom first opened its doors in 2013 to the Sudbury-Manitoulin district. The Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre also provides a well-balanced mixture of

Western and Traditional medicines that are easily accessible for the students. This service is important because many of the Indigenous youth have a mental health condition or addiction and it makes it easier for them to have the relevant health services available to them. In fact, the health center is central for holistic health, in that students are exposed to health and traditional programs as well as Elders, which complements their learning from the classroom.

The Mishk-Ode-Wendam classroom is organized by a multi-disciplinary team, which includes Rainbow District School Board staff such as teachers, principals, and educational assistants, as well as the Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre staff members such as Elders, Youth Workers and Youth Outreach Workers that help support this classroom. The students learn Indigenous traditional teachings combined with a western educational curriculum aimed at the high school level. The goal of the classroom is to develop healthy and balanced lifestyles for those youth living with a mental health condition or addiction. Therefore, the classroom is based in an environment where Indigenous teachings, education and clinical access are easily accessible.

Battiste (2002) describes Indigenous-based programs as a pedagogical challenge when talking about the Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy, as typically Canadian education is centered on Western ideologies. She states that the "pedagogical challenge of Canadian education is not just reducing the distance between Eurocentric thinking and Aboriginal ways of knowing but engaging decolonized minds and hearts" (Battiste, 2002, p. 22). Essentially, this is what the program is doing; its purpose is to connect the mind with the heart in a way to decolonize education and incorporate an educational system that supports their Indigenous students.

Terminology

Before going into depth with the literature, it is important to define a few terms and concepts that will be commonly used throughout this document. In this research, Indigenous peoples and First peoples represent what the government defines as First Nation, Métis and/Inuit peoples of Canada. Throughout this research I will be using the term Indigenous to encompass First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. However, depending on the literature and the participants themselves other terms may be used such as Aboriginal, Native, Native American and Indian.

The term colonization is defined by Young (2001) as cited in Chilisa (2012) "as the subjugation of one group by another" (p. 9). Colonization was and continues to be brutally imposed by government officials throughout the world; for example in Canada, United States, New Zealand and Australia that resulted in an invasion by the West: France, Britain, Spain, Germany, Italy, Russia and the United states and gave rise to loss of territory of the Indigenous peoples as well as loss of political, social, and economic systems led by external governing bodies. Additionally, colonization resulted in a loss of control, and ownership of Indigenous knowledge systems, beliefs, and behaviours (Chilisa, 2012).

The term decolonizing will be defined in this document as "undoing and bringing back the reparation of the rights to Indigenous land and life" (Tuck, 2012, p. 1). Another term that is drawn upon, is the concept Indigenizing the academy as this also directly relates to my research as I am studying an Indigenous-based educational program. Tuck and Yang (2012) situate "Indigenizing the academy" as honouring those programs who incorporate and empower Indigenous teaching and educators into the curricula (p. 22).

Review of the Literature

For this literature review peer-reviewed articles and book chapters that had

common topics of Indigenous or culturally-based programs from Canada, the United

States and New Zealand were used to help shape this review. From this process, key

themes that were common amongst the literature that have impacted Indigenous based

education are discussed. The themes will be described under the following headings:

- Colonial Context of Imposed Education Systems:

  o Imposition of Indian Residential Schools,

  o Sixties Scoop,

- Indigenizing the Academy,

- Indigenous-based programs and

- Culturally responsive pedagogies.

This literature review discusses the impacts colonization has had on Indigenous

knowledge and traditional teachings. It will also discuss different methods of resilience

by Indigenous communities and what they have done in the mainstream educational

system.

Colonial Context of Imposed Education System

The concept of education and schools was brought up early in the 17th century

when the French colonized the New France in Canada. The children were expected to

work because the family relied on them economically (Gaffield, 2015). The families

taught the children basic needs such as religion, reading and writing. The girls would

learn housework tasks and the boys were taught apprentice-trade jobs. At the time, families were small and dispersed so priests opened littes schools to teach children catechism, mathematics, science and other subjects (Gaffield, 2015). Education started to become more important and many religious orders organized schools to teach catechism, reading, writing and arithmetic such as the Jésuites, The Récollets, the Ursulines and the Congregation of the Notre Dame. The Collèges des Jésuites was established in 1635 providing education in such things as classical studies. In the late 1700s, the British Conquest formed other schools throughout Canada (Gaffield, 2015).

Imposition of Indian Residential Schools

In Canada, Christian Missionaries set up Indian Residential Schools (aided by the Canadian government) to colonize and assimilate Indigenous peoples (Battiste, 2002). These Indian residential schools became a main component of colonization during the 19th century, because the principal intent was to remove Indigenous children from their homes and impose on them European values and traditions (Smith, 2009). The removal of Indigenous children without the community and family's consent created turmoil as they had lost their central value: children. The children's health was also impacted in these types of schools. Children were not afforded adequate healthcare to prevent them from catching diseases such as tuberculosis and the flu while they were in these boarding schools. Some of these types of diseases resulted in children dying while in educational care. It seemed that the governing bodies did not want to take responsibility for providing proper health care (Maaka & Andersen, 2006). Proper health care and looking after children is directly linked to education as it is part of their well-being. Essentially, it can

be noted that the education of Indigenous children has been highly impacted by colonization.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) says that it is important to write about our history so we know how to change it. In Canada, there were 139 Indian Residential Schools that were government-funded, church-run schools across the country schooling some 150,000 Indigenous children. These schools started operations in the 1940s and the last one closed its doors in 1996 (Government of Canada, 2016; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), 2015). The main purpose of residential schools was to remove Indigenous children from their homes and put them into the public school system, as the governments believed this was the best form of education in order to eliminate parental involvement, education and cultural components in the Indigenous children's learning (TRC, 2015). These schools also had the intention to assimilate the children to christianity. Furthermore, the intention of these schools was to train the Indigenous peoples into lower socio-economical working classes and not provide them with hiring educational opportunities (Agnes, 1996). In both Canada and the United States, these schools had cases where the children were abused and for the most part the perpetrators were not brought to justice (Agnes, 1996; Smith, 2009). This not only had a great impact on the students of these schools lives and livelihood, this form of government assimilation and effects of residential schools was proven to cause intergenerational trauma (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014). The European colonists and the case of boarding schools had the principal intent of removing children from their homes and forcing them to adopt European values and traditions (Smith, 2009). This created a loss of history, culture and identity that continues to have an effect today (Bombay, Matheson,

12

& Anisman, 2014). Finally, this resulted in negative relationships between the Europeans and Indigenous peoples as they were known for colonizing and developing the land while trying to abolish culture that was not their own (Smith, 2012). Hence the mistrust of successive generations toward the education system today. Cote-Meek (2014) highlights the fact that Indigenous peoples are faced with oppression and racism every day in the educational systems and institutions. Sadly, not much has changed from the early vestiges of the early education systems. The practice of Indigenous children apprehension and putting them in Church run schools is still fresh in the minds of Indigenous communities.

Sixties Scoop

At the same time that the residential schools ran, the government of Canada started another parallel effort to colonize Indigenous peoples: the case of the Sixties Scoop. Through this process, Indigenous children were apprehended and placed into non-Indigenous homes. This ran from the mid 1960s to the late 1980s as the government intended to scoop up the Indigenous children to put them into middle-class European families so that they would attend public schools (60's Scoop | Chiefs of Ontario, 2017; University of British Columbia, 2009). It has been estimated that nearly 16,000 Indigenous children were forcibly adopted into the child welfare system, which resulted in a loss of their cultural identity, connection with family, history and status (60's Scoop | Chiefs of Ontario, 2017). This concept of child apprehension created an over representation of Indigenous children in the Canadian welfare system, which unfortunately continues to exist today (Trocmé, Knoke & Blackstock, 2004).

It was not until the 1970s that communities in northern Ontario challenged this overrepresentation of children in the welfare system. There was great concern for the

removing of children because the Sixties Scoop resulted in culture, knowledge and identity loss (University of British Columbia, 2009). In 1990, the Northern and Indian Affairs office created their own Child Welfare system and had money to fund it (Kina Gbezhgomi Child & Family Services, 2017). This gave power to the First Nations people to have control of their children.

Despite the creation of Child and Family services like Kina Gbezhgomi there still exists tenets of Indigenous child welfare apprehension and Indigenous peoples are trying to turn this situation by creating their own Indigenous programs and services. For example, the Indigenous Social Work program at Laurentian University was set up to train social workers to work with Indigenous individuals, families and communities. This undergraduate degree creates opportunities for trained social workers to develop their capabilities to improve the state of the Indigenous child welfare system (Alcoze & Mawhinney, 1988). Specifically, it is clearly stated that the social workers during the sixty scoop lacked culturally appropriate work practices to their approach when dealing with child welfare cases. This program trains students to learn both traditional teachings and social work practices for communities, band offices and or other urban child welfare organizations.

Indigenizing the Academy

One area that has been commonly brought up in the literature is the concept of "Indigenizing" education or the academy. This topic has become a focus point of discussion by many authors such as Cote-Meek (2012); Tuck & Yang (2012) and Battiste (2002). Both Cote-Meek (2012) and Battiste (2002) highlight that a critical step for decolonizing the curricula is about empowering and Indigenizing the academy. Battiste

14

(1998) cites concrete examples such as hiring Indigenous teachers, adopting traditional teachings into the curricula and teaching Indigenous history (Battiste, 1998; 2002). Tuck and Yang (2012) state that decolonizing the academy means to create space for Indigenous education by incorporating Indigenous history in the text books as well as traditional teachings and methods of learning in the educational system. Bringing back Indigenous teachings is creating a basis of belief rooted in the land and life (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Essentially, the purpose of Indigenizing education is to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and teachings into the classroom. This also involves land-based teachings and working closely with community leaders and elders who are knowledgeable in Indigenous areas. As mentioned previously, the Mishk-Ode-Wendam classroom is an Indigenous-based program rooted in Indigenous knowledge, skills and culture. It encompasses a teaching pedagogy that stimulates learning that is culturally relevant. This is what the Mishk-Ode-Wendam does; it gives the students access to cultural resources as well as supporting their learning through traditional teachings. The Indigenous social work program at Laurentian University could be viewed as another example of Indigenizing education where the program was developed by the community, has all Indigenous faculty and is situated within an academic institute.

The need for Indigenization in the mainstream education is pertinent for many reasons, in which it is a first step for decolonization and to create a culturally safe atmosphere for Indigenous students.

Indigenous-based Programs

Indigenous education is viewed as an important step for reconciliation (TRC, 2015). The TRC encourages communities, schools and institutes to ensure Indigenous knowledge and teachings are incorporated into their curricula. Below are some examples of the Indigenous-based programs that I reviewed.

Culturally responsive schooling was first cited in the Meriam Report in 1928 (Meriam et al. 1928; Mckinley, Brayboy & Castagno, 2009). The Meriam report examined the government policies of schooling and highlighted the need for Indigenous teachers, culture and languages to be re-incorporated into the schools (Mckinley et al. 2009). Lipka, Hogan, Webster, Yanez, Adams, Clark, and Lacy, (2005) found that culturally based programs were limited in indicating if academic performance was successful (p. 368). Using an ethnographic approach and through insider/outsider researchers with Yup'ik Elders and teachers who taught elementary school students, Lipka et al. (2005) developed a culturally based math curriculum that was community involved and based on cultural knowledge and norms. They found that a "third space" of Elder knowledge and teachings was critical and complimentary to learning about Western mathematics (p. 382). Further, that the Elder teachings supported cultural knowledge and self-determination of Indigenous learning. This program demonstrated that students felt connected with their community, supported in their cultural identity and became proud owners of their knowledge (Lipka et al., 2005).

Kitchen & Hudson (2013) conducted a series of interviews based on the experiences of teachers who taught in an Aboriginal Bachelor of Education program. This program was developed through a "university-community partnership" (p. 144) and

utilized a culturally sensitive teaching methodology to bridge educational gaps between Indigenous and mainstream education. They found that the importance of relationships such as a "relational knowing" (p. 154) that is built between students, teachers and the community is a critical piece of the curriculum. Another major finding was that building self-identity and cultural identity was an important factor. Finally, the researchers found that teaching through language and culture were important ways of teaching in this culturally based degree as it met the needs of the students in order for them to achieve academically.

Moeke-Pickering (2010) carried out two case studies on similar Indigenous-based programs in the mainstream post-secondary educational system running in separate countries. She looked at the Bachelors of Indigenous Social Work (ISW) program at Laurentian University, in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada and the Te Whiuwhiu o te Hau Maori Counselling program which is based at the Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTEC) in Hamilton, Aotearoa, New Zealand. The Te Whiuwhiu o te Hau Maori Counselling program is a counseling program that aims to train counselors through traditional teachings and knowledge as well as counseling practice. Both these programs situated decolonization in the educational atmosphere and provided an analysis for inclusive social change. Moeke-Pickering (2010) found that both programs strengthened the student's Indigenous identities as well as helped them develop professional and relevant practices for communities and families. Another key theme from her research was that the students that completed these programs were able to make positive changes within their personal lives, families and in their community. However, both programs found the impacts of racism and colonization in the mainstream educational system

17

challenging. For instance, both their programs were considered second rate by the mainstream academia because they were Indigenous-based. Importantly, community input into their programs were critical given the communities informed them and kept their programs up-to-date about key pertinent issues.

It can be observed from the above Indigenous-based programs that traditional teachings and knowledge as well as community input is vital for them. Importantly, for the students they not only develop a strengthened Indigenous identity they also succeed in learning Western based education. The following section examines a method of teaching, called culturally responsive pedagogy, that provides insight into Indigenous teaching approaches.

Cultural Pedagogies

A concept that is discussed commonly in the literature is a culturally responsive pedagogy or teaching. This concept focuses on teaching in a way that is student centered in particular focusing on the students' personal and cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments (Gay, 2000). Vavrus (2008) states that "a culturally responsive teaching acknowledges and infuses the culture of the students into the school curriculum and makes meaningful connections with community cultures" (p. 49). Essentially, Vavrus addresses how the public system has failed to support the cultural needs for students in their education. Gay (2000) found that a culturally responsive pedagogy involves teaching the student "through personal and cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments" (p. 27). Likewise, Cammarota and Romero (2009) observed that when there was a strong foundation of relationships between teachers and students the students were successful in

their educational learning. Cote-Meek (2014), in her book entitled *Colonized Classrooms: Racism, Trauma and Resistance in Post-Secondary Education*, states that being emotionally responsive is an important aspect for teaching at the post-secondary level especially with students who face racism and oppression. She calls this teaching approach a "holistic pedagogical approach" (p. 164). Franklin (2016) also found in her research that those teachers who implemented a culturally responsive pedagogy in their classroom found that their students participated and responded well to this form of pedagogy and were able to connect with them more. Similarly, in Franklin's (2016) research, parents stated that a culturally responsive pedagogy worked for teachers as well, in that the teachers did care more for their children's success and prepared them for what was to come after elementary school such as high school, college and university.

Kanu (2002) found that First Nation students in the public school system were more receptive to Aboriginal approaches when these were enhanced in the classroom in the formal educational system. Kanu (2002) identified that storytelling, learning through: observation, imitation, scaffolding, visual sensory modes, community support and learning methods were also effective. However, he did find that those students who faced racism were more likely to return to schools on the reservation. The author suggests that the child might have difficulty learning when the teacher is not sensitive to their needs, therefore, cultural socialization and knowledge in the classroom are important for students. Further, Kanu (2002) recommends that supportive classroom environments, an accepting classroom environment and cultural mediators are vital to educational outcomes.

Another program that is responsive to one's culture and language has been evaluated by Savage, Hindle, Meyer, Hynds, Penetito and Sleeter, (2011) and it is named the Kotahitanga program. This program utilizes Maori cultural aspirations. Savage et al.'s (2011) research found that students felt they succeeded more through traditional teachings; that they were proud that the Maori culture and identity was brought into the school rather than left aside before entering their day of learning. They highlighted how Maori knowledge improved teachings and learning relationships. It also showed that the students who were taught their culture were more successful in their schoolwork. However, these students too were faced with racism from peers and teachers.

McCarthy and Lee (2014) coined an approach called CSRP, which stands for culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy. The CSRP approach consists of three components: an expression of Indigenous education sovereignty, the need to reclaim and revitalize what has been disrupted and displaced by colonization and recognizes the need for community-based accountability. This approach was designed to address the socio-historical and contemporary context of Native American Schooling (p. 103). They found that linguistic knowledge, cultural continuity and relationships based on respect and reciprocity were vital to a cultural responsive pedagogy. They observed that the goals of the CSRP were accomplished when the teachers taught the Native languages and offered strands of bilingual education for different groups of learners at the other schools. To add, they found these reconciled differences in which students found a connectedness to their community.

In summary, the literature reviewed identified that colonization disrupted Indigenous education. Mainstream educational systems that do not incorporate

20

Indigenous-based programs and pedagogies minimize Indigenous teachings and fail Indigenous students from completing their education. It is noted by many authors, that Indigenous-based programs and culturally responsive teaching pedagogies utilized in the classroom have been effective in education despite the impacts of oppression and racism. There is still a large mistrust toward education and as a form of resistance there is now an increase of Indigenous based-programs such as the Mishk-Ode-Wendam and the current program I am enrolled in, which is the Master of Indigenous Relations program at Laurentian University.

The information elicited from this literature review is important for my research on the Mishk-Ode-Wendam classroom as it provides a political and cultural context for why this program was developed and why it is needed.

Indigenous Education as a Human Rights Issue

As noted earlier, colonization was a major impediment on Indigenous education and still is. An act of resistance against this imposition is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Specifically in Article 14 it positions Indigenous education as a human rights issue. Article 14 states that:

"1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.

3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living

outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language" (UNDRIP, 2007, p.7).

This article declares that it is a violation of human rights to remove Indigenous education from a child. This is what the governing bodies in Canada were doing when they imposed the Indian Residential Schools system and Sixties Scoop welfare Act. They were removing children from their homes and forcing them into the mainstream education system. This subject of education has been a matter of contention for Indigenous Peoples in Canada. There have been detrimental effects on Indigenous peoples, culture and language since assimilation. Reincorporating Indigenous knowledge and teachings is one of the calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC 2015, p.2-3). Essentially the TRC is advocating that an essential method of decolonization and a vital step towards reconciliation is to restore Indigenous teachings into education programs. It is important to highlight that Indigenous Peoples themselves know what is needed for Indigenous education contexts.

As previously highlighted, certain forms of government assimilative processes such as the implementation of Indian residential schools and the Sixties Scoop are viewed as main components of colonization. In 2015, to counter further impacts of ongoing colonization, the TRC recommended 94 Calls to Action as steps towards reconciliation with the government of Canada and Indigenous peoples (TRC, 2015). To some extent, the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program was developed to counter the impact of colonization and to restore Indigenous traditions and worldviews in education (Rainbow District School Board, 2013). Given the history of ongoing colonization and the impact that this has had, I thought it was important that an Indigenous methodology be used to frame this

research. In my view this would ensure that the vision and values of the Mishk-Ode-

Wendam community are represented appropriately throughout this research project.

Chapter 3

Methodology

An Indigenous Methodology

An Indigenous methodology as described by Smith (2012) incorporates what is meaningful for communities, situates a strong Indigenous identity, draws together literature that speaks to the Indigenous condition at the local, national and global levels and develops ideas and resources that would assist the development of Indigenous peoples (p. xi). Further, Smith (2012) states that an Indigenous research agenda is a way to bring about "social justice" (p. 120). A key principle in a social justice research agenda that Smith (2012) recommends as being important is the principle of "Revitalizing and Regenerating" (p. 148). This principle fits within my project as my research aims to evaluate how the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program revitalizes and regenerates Indigenous teachings and pedagogies.

With respect to what is a methodology, a research methodology is a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed, while a research method is a "technique for gathering evidence" (Smith, 2012, p.144). Therefore, an Indigenous research methodology must be applicable to Indigenous development and what is meaningful for Indigenous communities. Utilizing Indigenous research methodologies is important for this research in that the promotion and support of Indigenous communities must be kept at the forefront of the research design and process.

Decolonizing is the method of undoing the colonial state (Fanon, 1967; Moeke-Pickering, 2010). Fanon (1967) posits that colonization gives power to Eurocentric thought in education. Hence, decolonization is viewed as re-centering the Indigenous

worldview as important in an educational context (Fanon, 1967; Moeke-Pickering, 2010; Smith, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Therefore, a decolonizing framework includes an understanding of the impact of colonization and legitimizes Indigenous worldviews (Fanon, 1967; Smith, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012). For this research, it is also important to understand the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program in its natural state, to observe the relevant communities and what they value and also gain insight into how this program copes in a colonization context.

Using a decolonizing framework also means it provides you with an internal reference checklist such as being careful and mindful to create space in the research process for traditional ceremony such as giving tobacco and sharing circles as well as being open to elder teachings (Battiste, 2002; Cote-Meek, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Therefore, this research followed a decolonizing theoretical framework.

A metaphor that I have chosen to draw upon to situate a decolonizing theoretical framework is entitled "enabling the autumn seed" which is a teaching by Dr. Marie Battiste a well-known author and teacher of decolonizing education (Battiste, 1998, p.16). This metaphor served as an overall guide for this research. Battiste (1998) describes the autumn seed framework as re-incorporating Indigenous knowledge and culture into the education system, which she likened to enabling the autumn seed. As stated previously, Indigenous cultures, knowledge and languages have been subject to assimilation and omitted by the mainstream educational system. To change this, Indigenous knowledges and cultures need to be re-incorporated into the educational system. Battiste (2002) quotes the former President of Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Eber Hampton, who noted that:

25

The Europeans took our land, ours lives, our children like the winter snow takes the grass. The loss is painful but the seed lives in spite of the snow. In the fall of the year, the grass dies and drops its seed to lie hidden under the snow. Perhaps the snow thinks the seed has vanished, but it lives on hidden, or blowing in the wind, or clinging to the pant's leg of progress. How does the acorn unfold the oak? Deep inside itself it knows – and we are not different. We know deep inside ourselves the pattern of life (p. 28).

Colonization, metaphorically speaking in the seeds growth terms continues to covet the growth of Indigenous education like a blanket. The Western education is the winter blanket trying to cover up Indigenous knowledge and it is observed that the stages of growth of a seed framework will unveil those seeds that have vanished or lay dormant.

This research aims to be a voice for Indigenous education; therefore, this incorporates Smith's principle of "*Representing"* which spans both the notion of representation as a political concept and representation as a form of voice and expression. In the political sense, colonialism specifically excluded Indigenous peoples from any form of decision making" (Smith, 2012, p. 151-152). Drawing on Battiste's (1998) autumn seed framework, this is to be a voice on behalf of my research drawing on the principles of growth of a seed. It can be described as feeding the seed for the student learning in the educational system. They are trying to grow in their learning in order to get their high school diploma and seeing this as an approach that is holistic in nature. Reviewing the literature on Indigenous education assisted to follow the seed in the earth like the photo below illustrates.

Figure 1: Growth of a Seed (Todd's Seeds, 2013)

The seed alone in the earth is the beginning of it all. As my literature review revealed, Indigenous teachings and cultural pedagogies have been an effective teaching model to follow (Kanu, 2002; McCarty & Lee 2014; Savage et al. 2011). For the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program, it can be noted that the seed is starting to grow as it is being fed by traditional teachings and cultural pedagogy in the classroom. Therefore, this research also seeks to identify those cultural perspectives that are espoused by the developers, elders and educators (Franklin, 2016).

As McCarty and Lee (2014) discovered in their results, by incorporating an Indigenous cultural pedagogy they are trying to revive the language that has been lost and revitalized by their community. A teacher from that study described this type of cultural pedagogy as: "Sustaining the Seeds. Someone planted the seed for me to start learning my language, or something did that for me, and I'm excited to have the opportunity to try and do that for these students" (McCarty & Lee, 2014, p. 107). We can observe imaginatively how teaching the language in the culturally responsive classroom has regenerated the seed.

Battiste (1998) discusses the need to incorporate the seed from an Indigenous worldview into education and the educational system. She discusses the obstacles and the

appearance of colonization, how Aboriginal education has never really been equal, and how Indigenous students are affected by the mainstream educational system. Battiste (1998) acknowledges that some Western education institutes are beginning to incorporate decolonizing methods in the education system such as hiring Aboriginal educators and reincorporating the language in the classroom. She also discusses how communities have been taking control of their children's education. For example, the M'ikmaq took back control of their education by implementing the Mi'kmaq Education Act (1998). This activity of revitalization and regenerating is where we see the seed starting to grow through incorporating Indigenous aspects of education in the ground, which feeds the seed. Hence, this is attempting to remove what is inhibiting this autumn seeds growth. Moreover, including Indigenous teachings and a cultural pedagogy in the education regime can help the students sustain and grow strong in their culture and in their education.

This research will continue to look metaphorically at the growth of the seed as it is observed through the lens of the Mishk-Ode-Wendam classroom program. In regard to the research framework on this topic, I will be following the development of the Indigenous student (seed) and educational components as its soil and be able to ascertain what aspects of the program help students to grow.

Smith (2012) reflects on the importance on insider research and highlights that: "Insider researchers need to build particular sorts of research-based support systems and relationships with their community" (Smith, 2012, p.139). As the researcher is both an insider and an outsider it was important to ensure that both of these identities were formed in order for a positive research relationship. This positionality helps build proper

community partnerships with the Mishk-Ode community it ensures they were updated throughout the growth of the research path (Brown, 2005; Kanu, 2002) as this is pertinent for a decolonial framework. Engaging the community throughout the research process as well as indicating what outcomes are expected is important. Brown (2005) had the experience that no one from her community participated in her research and found it may be due to the fact that no one would directly benefit from the research itself or was not part of the sample of the population. Looking at this via an Indigenous worldview lens, a meeting with three key stakeholders and directors of the program was done early on in the project, to ensure they are part of the development of the goals and processes so that this research is beneficial for them, the students and for myself. They are the ones who created the program and know what is best for this type of research. Kanu (2002) states that good research is one that gains mutual respect and trusting relationships with "the research participants long before the research began" (p. 103). I immersed myself in the classroom so that the students and teachers would not only come to know me, but also see that I had their interest and the program at heart. I also hoped that the students would come to know me in my other role as a researcher and that part of the research is conducive to contributing to the evaluation of an Indigenous-based program. To add, I wanted the students to know the questions I wanted to pose to them ahead of time. The purpose was to increase their sense of control in this research. As mentioned previously, the students had the right to withdraw at any time, and/or could choose not to respond to certain questions that they did not feel comfortable answering.

To conclude, following the framework of the autumn seed can help illustrate how Indigenous teachings and a culturally responsive pedagogy has impacted the classroom.

This methodology corresponds with Smith's (2012) revitalizing and representing principle. The seed framework can redefine success through a decolonizing lens by unfolding a cultural pedagogy that helps the student flourish in their education journey. Finally, I hope to at the least expose the Western blanket that is covering Indigenous knowledge, language and culture. The current research will draw from the Mishk-Ode community engagement alongside observations and recordings to draw together the findings.

Research Design

The recruitment method was through word of mouth, snowball sampling, through the letter of invitation and through posters. In order to have a heterogenous sample I aimed to have six faculty or staff members, eight current students and two graduated or previously attended students. Participants who were at least 14 years of age or older where invited to take part in the Sharing Circles or individual interviews. In Ontario there is no age of consent. As long as the child or adolescent is capable of consenting meaning that they understand and appreciate the relevance of the decision being made they can sign without parental consent (CHEO Research Institute, 2016).

As previously mentioned a total of ten participants were recorded via Sharing Circles or individual interviews for this thesis. There was Sharing Circles done for the students and others were done for the key stakeholders in so that there were no power imbalances. There was one Sharing Circle done with two students, and another preferred to be interviewed individually. As for the key stakeholders there were two separate Sharing Circles conducted. One day there was a sharing circle for three of the key stakeholders and another day for two others. Finally, two preferred to be interviewed

individually. The indication of what titles the participant's hold was chosen not to be divulged due to the small sample size and to protect anonymity. Some of the participants hold certain positions that are distinct and individual in program, therefore, only indicating the total number of participants is identified.

A poster (Appendix A) was emailed by the administrative assistant to the superintendent of the Schools for special needs of the Rainbow School Board, who distributed these to students and stakeholders who were involved with the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program. This poster (Appendix A) was also displayed in areas which were frequented by students that are in the program and in areas where the students frequently see posters in regard to the community center from the Shkagamik-Kwe Health Center, such as the entrance to the community center and both classrooms. In order to reach previous students, the administrative assistant contacted them via email. Key stakeholders were also recruited via email and by posters displayed at the main office for the administrators as they do not frequent the community center. Their offices were located in the Rainbow District School Board office at 69 Young St. Sudbury, Ontario. Lastly, I offered to do brief recruitment presentations with the students as another way to recruit potential participants. I believed that the one on one recruitment approach was more informal and students might have more opportunities to ask questions than via an email or a poster. Students and key stakeholders who were interested in participating were invited to contact me in person or via their teacher for the students. The poster which was used as a letter of invitation as well and Consent Forms (Appendix B) were given to potential participants. The invitations and the consent forms both outlined the aim and purpose of the research, participants' role within the research, and the fact that their

participation is voluntary and lastly their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. By participating in the research, they are helping engage in the program strengths and weaknesses in order to help improve or make changes to the program.

Method

All 10 participants that participated in either Sharing Circles or individual interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using pseudonyms unless participants wished their name to be used. The researcher chose to use an Indigenous research methodology to gather information from a set of shared voices and knowledge from the community (Smith, 2012). Hence, there were three Sharing Circles that were facilitated by the researcher in order to collect data and to ensure that participants' cultural views and perspectives were respected (Hart, 1997; Lavallee, 2009; Lavallee & Poole, 2010). Sharing Circles provide a safe space for the participants and are considered a most culturally appropriate way when working with Indigenous peoples (Hart, 1997). Also, it incorporates community participation and knowledge (Dudemain, 1995; Hart, 1997; Restoule, 2006). To add, people who have a mental condition or addiction who share similar experiences, when in a Sharing Circle, found it as a method of healing and felt like they were more understood (Hart, 1997, Hunter, 2004; Lavallee & Poole, 2010; Nabigon et al. 2009). Sharing Circles give the participants an opportunity to answer meaningfully alongside people who share similar experiences making them feel comfortable and understood (Dudemain, 1995; Hart, 1997, Hunter, 2004; Lavallee & Poole, 2010; Nabigon et al. 2009; Restoule, 2006). Compared to focus groups, Sharing Circles differ as Sharing Circles are spiritual and acknowledge the Creator as part of the process (Lavallée, 2009; Nabigon et al., 1999). In this situation, the Sharing Circles were

32

utilized to gather information concerning the Indigenous-based program. During the Sharing Circles it was made clear to the participants that they were not participating in a ceremony as the facilitator was not qualified to perform ceremonies.

Participants

The participants for this research consisted of 10 individuals (2 males and 8 females) involved with the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program. Participants consisted of teachers, educators and/or students. Two were of non-Indigenous ancestry and eight were of Indigenous ancestry. The participants were interviewed based on their availability and preference, three Sharing Circles and three individual interviews were conducted. The Sharing Circles and the individual interviews were conducted from June to November 2017.

Procedures

Prior to the research, the researcher sought teachings and guidance from a trusted Elder who worked at Laurentian University. The purpose was to receive training in facilitating Sharing Circles for research as opposed to facilitating healing circles. It was important for me to situate to participants that this was a research Sharing Circle only and that there were Elders and Counsellors available for those who chose to use them. During the Sharing Circles it was made clear to the participants that they were not participating in a ceremony and the facilitator was not qualified to perform a ceremony. The purpose of the Sharing Circle was primarily to open discussion for people who share similar experiences that attend or are in contact with the program. For those students who did not choose the Sharing Circle, when it was requested, individual interviews were conducted. All who participated in the Sharing Circles and Individual Interviews were given the

same semi-structured questions (Appendix E).

Despite the teachings the facilitator received in regard to the Sharing Circle the only significant ceremonial elements that were used included protocols of respect, active listening, acceptance, and confidentiality (Appendix G) and at the end of the session if needed a list of counseling services was shared (Appendix H). If individuals were unavailable to participate in the Sharing Circles or felt more comfortable discussing the questions alone with the researcher individual interviews were arranged (Appendix D). Conducting individual interviews allows participants to share their experiences in which will reflect their reality (Lambert et al., 2008). This gives the participants the opportunity to give details on their thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and knowledge on a phenomenon (Lambert & Loiselle 2008). Also, incorporating individual interviews with focus groups is a strong method of triangulation that adds knowledge to a phenomenon and convergence of characteristics that enhance trustworthiness of the data (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). As already mentioned, focus groups can be comparable to Sharing Circles as they both are a group people assembling and sharing their experiences. However, in this thesis the circles were used to gather information from people that are in contact with the same classroom program. In comparison to focus groups, many Sharing Circles Indigenous people consider the Creator alongside the process (Lavallée, 2009; Nabigon et al., 1999).

All interviews were carried out at the school, school board office and/or at Laurentian University. The researcher brought food for participants to eat before, during or after their Sharing Circles. This is done in order to provide a welcoming and neutral space that allowed for participants to be more comfortable with the researcher. Also, breakfast and

lunch are provided to students when they attend the center therefore, this is something they are used to doing during class time. Consent forms were distributed, explained and signed. Once the transcripts were transcribed, all participants were provided with an opportunity to edit their interviews. Only one participant asked for her transcript to be corrected, which was edited and inputted back into this thesis. The rest were fine with their transcripts

When I received approval from everyone I began the process of data analysis. The data analysis and findings follow in the next section.

Chapter 4

Analysis, Findings, Discussion

Data Analysis

The data collected was primarily from three Sharing Circles and from three individual interviews. Data analysis began with observations in the classroom, the interviews, listening and participating in the Sharing Circles and then transcribing the audio recordings. This data analysis was a continual process that was ongoing in this research approach. This process ensures to add to the data found and provides validity to the findings (Lamber & Loiselle, 2008). Data analysis was an iterative process, in other words I read and re-read the transcripts and linked what I was finding with the observations and the literature I reviewed. Continual reflections and iterations add data richness to the data analysis (Lamber & Loiselle, 2008).

For this research, a phenomenological approach was used for the steps of analysis as it incorporates mixtures of data collection such as interviews and observations (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2012) describes a phenomenological study as a "common meaning for several individuals of their live experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 76). This pairs well with data collected from Sharing Circles as all the participants had shared experiences with the Indigenous-based program. To add, this research drew data from a heterogeneous sample, which is typically from 10 individuals (Creswell, 2012). The phenomenological approach to data analysis systematically draws data from the first and second questions by highlighting "significant statements, sentences, or quotes to provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon" (p. 82). This process is also called horizonalization by Moustakas (1994). Essentially, it requires

grouping the same key words into themes in which they are central to their sentences that all share similar structural meaning. The researcher then creates a "cluster of meanings" (p. 82) from these significant statements. This method of analysis ties well with Smith's (2012) social justice research agenda "revitalizing and regenerating" as it also represents bringing forward meaningful statements from the program that can include rejuvenating culture-based teachings. These "clusters" are then tied to a "structural description" and then defined by the essence of these statements (p. 82). For instance, this phase involved reviewing the coded data and organizing them into clusters. Clusters were then organized under the 4 principles of a SWOT structural description: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as these were the questions that were posed to the participants. I then used these clusters to find meaningful patterns from the data. For example, the theme relationships is categorized under the strengths of the program and defined afterwards as the forte of the program that commits students to continuing their studies.

It is important to note, that the preliminary findings were brought back to the participants and shown their answers to ensure validity and meaning of the "cluster". If anything was not transcribed properly with misrepresentation of the cluster meaning it was changed then and incorporated into this current copy. This method of triangulation ensures trustworthiness of the participants and community participatory action (Smith, 2012).

Findings

Before the analysis, four major structural themes were chosen from the semi-structured questionnaire. These consisted of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Then sub-themes emerged under each of the four main themes. Within that, sub-themes that

emerged within these categories were selected. These sub-themes were chosen based on similar sentence meaning and common words that the participants shared of their experiences and insights with the program.

The first major structural theme was the "Strengths" of the program that participants shared. The sub-themes that emerged within Strengths theme are: relationships, holistic health, culturally-safe space, land-based activities and support.

The second theme is where "Weaknesses" of the program were identified, those that seem to make differences in the programs function. The sub-themes that emerged included team communication and knowledge about policies.

The third theme of "Opportunities" included what participants identified as a potential new initiative or a potential new way to strengthen an existing initiative. The sub-theme that emerged in this section was strengthening the transitional program.

Lastly, the theme "Threats" centered on organizational considerations. The sub-themes that emerged include limited staffing not adequate to address all the students teaching needs, small setting impacts as well restricted scheduling of activities.

A list of the themes and sub-themes are outlined in the box below to make it easier to view at a glance.

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
- Relationships	- Team communication
- Holistic Health	- Knowledge about policies
- Culturally safe space	
- Land-based activities	
- Support	

Opportunities:	Threats:
- Strengthening the Transitional program	- Limited staffing - Small setting impacts - Restricted scheduling activities

In the sections that follow the themes and sub-themes are discussed as well as stories of the experiences of the participants from the Sharing Circles and individual interviews.

Strengths

The strengths of the program included relationships, the holistic health, culturally safe spaces, land-based teachings and the energy and the support everyone shared and received. These elements seemed essential to maintaining a successful program and were critical for the students learning and success.

Relationships

It seems establishing a good foundational relationship is key to the success for the students and the program. All participants shared that close ties with the teachers was a critical support for student engagement and learning. Participant 1 described that the relationship and the comfort with the teacher must come first before the students' academic success.

Participant 1: Small setting is important for this group of students. I mean the staff is very caring and skilled in being able to make relationships with the kids. Our focus is establishing those relationships more. I think with a lot of our kids establishing that relationship comes first before they can succeed.

Then participant 3 discusses the connectivity to the cultural identity once those

relationships are built.

     Participant 3: For a lot of them it is beneficial because of the relationship

     building. Once they've built that closeness and others will find a cultural piece too

     because there are those attitudes they are real. Some students come from

     Indigenous communities and coming into the city and Sudbury there is still that

     sort of distinct us and them kind of feel that non-Aboriginal school they're going

     to. So coming here it does satisfy that need in them that they are connecting to a

     place that is Aboriginal based.

Likewise, participant 6 describes that for them being more present in the classroom they

get approached more, and the students feel more comfortable approaching them.

     Participant 6: The relationships I guess you could say are really different

     compared to regular school than here. They get really attached and they feel really

     comfortable now, like to talk to you and to let you know what's going on like

     with personal stuff. Like for me now being like last year when I first started I was

     only here for a little bit because my office was still downstairs and I was running

     another program. So I was only up here once and a while. You know students

     would see me come and go. But now since I'm up here full time they see me more

     often. I sit out there more and they're feeling more comfortable they're coming to

     see me now and asking questions and mentioning personal stuff.

As for participant 2, they described the students as being withdrawn in the mainstream school system, that the system failed them and talked about their flaws rather than their individual successes.

> Participant 2: I mean if you don't build those relationships, which was the case these kids were at one point at a high school of hundreds of kids and they were non-attenders because we hear that in our initial meetings: Why are you interested in this program? And sometimes it's them and sometimes its parents like: I just did not go to school. And there would be some that didn't go because they didn't have a choice, they were suspended on a regular basis or they just were withdrawn, they didn't connect with the teacher. Whereas here we are often able to with a challenging group of students celebrate their successes, talk about the things they do well instead of zeroing in on okay well this is what you did wrong and this is why you're not going to be able to come.

Participant 2 shared that the space is a strength for connections.

> Participant 2: Resources exactly. We have small group of students. A reasonably large staff for that small group of students. We certainly have the space. You know. Like things we have a kitchen, being so close to a health center. Those are amazing resources.

Whereas participant 10 discusses the environment the students have and how accepting it is to finish their studies. The focus, however, is again on the one to one relationship with teachers.

> Participant 10: I like the one on one working environment with the teachers. It is easy to get stuff done.

From the information collected, a key strength is forming and maintaining relationships. This is a pertinent stepping-stone in both the educational success for the students and the teachers that work there. Relationship building is an important aspect to establish before going forward in the academic part of learning. Building trustworthiness and closeness is an important value as individuals and as a group. I also noticed the connections between teachers and students as a key observation whenever I was present in the classroom. Meaningful relationships between teachers and students are important to build in order for the student's academic success (Cammarota & Romero (2009); Kitchen & Hudson (2013); McCarthy & Lee (2014); Savage et al. (2011); Smith (2012).

Holistic Health

The participants also mentioned that wellbeing is an important factor in order to support the students throughout their learning in the program. As Cote-Meek (2014) posits, teachers and other people in contact with Indigenous students need to be emotionally responsive to the students' overall wellbeing and calls this "holistic pedagogical approaches" (p. 164). This was raised by most of the participants who shared that the holistic wellbeing of the students in the program was paramount. Further, that this was an important step toward the student's healing and learning. Participant 5 discusses the positive energy the center emits and how it has supported her during a time in need of healing in her life.

> Participant 5: I was transitioning into a new phase in my life because of my
> situation because my partner had to go into long term care so I had to readjust my
> life in a new way, which was difficult to do at first. I needed to fully renew that
> spark in my life and find balance in my spirituality. So the Shkagamik-kwe then

asked me to join the multidisciplinary team and I found it came at the right time to also strengthen my well-being. Prayer was answered to accept the position.

Participant 6 shares:

> Participant 6: I think that's one of the main things we focus with our students. Like they're here for an education and the main focus is making sure their well-being is okay. Especially that a lot of them come in here with mental health issues. We want to focus on that and make sure they're okay first.

Similarly, Participant 1 said:

> Participant 1: Setting the education aside they must ensure that their well-being is balanced. You know the concept of the whole child versus math, so we see them as that because we are able to establish those relationships, so we see them as the whole child. You hear about a lot of their struggles at home and outside of school. And their health struggles we have time to help them with those things as far as maybe directing them to professionals that are going to help them with those specific things and that's also where of course the health centre comes in and we have that assistance with their physical health, mental health and also their spiritual and cultural wellbeing.

Then, participant 8 discusses how the center acknowledges the imbalances of their well-being and opens an environment for trustworthiness.

> Participant 8: I like how its open and I can feel the trust here. You know I can talk about anything to the teachers and they won't judge you.

Access to the Shkagamik-Kwe Health Center was raised as being a supporting feature of the program in so that this partnership with the classroom was chosen primarily as it ties

with the healing nature of this program. Shkagamik-kwe is the Indigenous health care

centre to the area and ties traditional and Western methods of healing. Participant 6 goes

on to describe the importance of this accessibility and connectedness.

> Participant 6: Well getting the services from Shkagamik-Kwe like access to the
>
> nurse practitioners, the traditional program they have access to the Elders, mental
>
> and youth worker. There is so much extra services that they can get from here.

As a student, Participant 9 shared how accessible it is to receiving health care.

Participant 9: Yeah let's say I needed a doctor's appointment or something. Like this just

happened last week and she got me booked in.

> From the participant insights above, it can be interpreted that the importance of

holistic health and balancing the student's wellbeing is an important strength of the

program (Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Franklin, 2016; Gay, 2000; Kanu, 2002; Vavrus,

2008). It is also advantageous that the students can gain access to all of the medical and

traditional resources of Shkagamik-Kwe Health Center. This access is also vital for

holistic healing for students.

Culturally-Safe Space

> Most participants discussed the environment of the center to be a comfortable

space that supports identity, culture and their learning.

As for Participant 4 she describes the space as safe and engaging. That she is welcomed

to practice and be supported culturally.

> Participant 4: Yes it's a safe place, its engaged.

Participant 6 also describes how the environment is a culturally safe place for them.

Participant 6: This environment is different. Yeah that safe environment, cultural safe for them.

Participant 7 then replies that it is a feeling when entering the organization that emits the safe space.

Participant 7: That is so true and so important. It makes me think I went to a meeting at a post-secondary institution and honestly I walked in and nobody was even right there. But I felt totally intimidated to walk in that environment whereas this environment gives me a good feeling.

Participant 6 identifies that the environment is culturally-safe because it is in an Indigenous-based program and an Indigenous-based organization.

Participant 6: I'm just thinking of another good success for this school is that it is actually in an Aboriginal organization. It's just not put somewhere. It's just that comfort or that feeling you get when you walk into this building knowing that it's you and the way its run.

Participant 3 describes how some students may not be ready for the cultural piece, but they are comfortable being part of the whole picture when an activity is going on in the classroom.

Participant 3: I think its individual, some students really gravitate towards that cultural piece and other students are not quite ready for it. You know maybe they've had some negative experiences and so they're not ready to embrace that. But they're still comfortable having it at a distance. You know what I mean? Some students might not join us at the table when we are doing a particular cultural activity but they may mention it later. Or talk about or tell you what their

connection to it is but I mean most of our students are very respectful especially

when we have an Elder come in you know when we talk about their particular

knowledge base. They're very respectful and I think they do look up to that

person they might not want to be particularly engaged but again its that small

base, that relationship, again I think is you know good. Some of our students are

quite ready for it I think.

The participants perceive that having a culturally-safe space environment is a key

strength that supports the students in their learning and being open to engage with

cultural teachings.

Land-based Activities

The participants also discussed the importance of the land-based activities and

teachings that are offered. Participants expressed the importance of these activities for the

students' well-being.

Participant 9 discussed how their land-based studies activities contribute towards a high

school credit.

Participant 9: Well they mark us on everything we do. Let's say we went on a

field trip to the territory and it involved let's say Native studies or something.

They give us a little bit of a mark for that.

As for Participant 4 they discuss how learning outside the classroom keeps it engaging

for students and a chance to participate.

Participant 4: There are lots of opportunities to learn outside of the classroom in

regards to field trips that they take. They go out a lot. They do a lot of excursions

that focus around learning and experiencing the land. So that connects them to

46

their culture and traditions. So I think the learning we are able to provide outside of the classroom keeps them engaged and wanting to be there to finish.

Participant 6 states how traditional activities, especially with the land teaches the youth the importance of their traditions.

> Participant 6: There are certain things with land-based activities and especially with Indigenous kids like getting them on the land and teaching them how to do their traditional activities such as hunting, all stuff like that that they should be learning.

Then participant 7 added the essence of the connections to the land and culture.

> Participant 7: and yeah that's definitely the basic of connections to land based learning opportunities and the cultural connections.

As for participant 10 they stated it is essential to visit new locations.

> Participant 10: Yeah I like getting out of town and going to different places.

For this program, land-based activities and teachings are essential. As described above, not only are these activities a strength of the program they provide a key connection to the traditional teachings.

It can be observed that land-based activities were drawn from the results primarily because this program acknowledges traditional teachings and learning's.

Support

The importance of support was commonly discussed by the participants. Support was obtained through staff members, student support and teacher-student support. Participant 1 discusses how the administration supports the people directly involved with the program by trusting their judgment and respecting their decision-making.

Participant 1: They 100% support us. If we think that is a smart call, which we don't think it is sometimes or if we think that would affect our kids negatively they would say no that's fine. I feel like they trust us and do give us a lot of decision-making in that respect.

Participant 4 also provided insight about the support they received as workers in the program.

Participant 4: Oh I think it's very strong, very strong because of the circle of people I work with. I've never seen such happy and content people. You know, I'm sure they have their own challenges but you know they are very professional. I needed that kind of energy coming from them even the younger ones. Yeah the younger employees. And I thought wow I'm glad the Creator sent me here. I need these people.

Even the students acknowledged the support they received.

Participant 9: They are very supportive with anything that we need. Let's say a student doesn't have much food at home they would always have food at the school for students if they don't have much at home. I think it's really nice too. They're really nice, very friendly.

As for Participant 4 she discussed the support students can get individually with their education because of the smaller classroom size.

Participant 4: It is a small student teacher ratio right. So there is 9 or 10 kids per classroom, a teacher, an educational assistant plus there's the clinicians that work at the centre and their staff as well. So there is lots of adult support and more opportunity for individual support because of the classroom size.

48

Students and stakeholders state that support is viewed by all as being an important strength for success in the program. Experiences of support are experienced within the classroom, from teachers and from administration. One participant nicely described support like a circle. The circle is an appropriate summation given that the program is Indigenous-based and the circle is an important cultural teaching that others have also written about (Hart, 1997, Hunter, 2004; Lavallee & Poole, 2010; Nabigon et al. 2009).

In summary, strengths of the program are represented by the sub-themes relationships, holistic health, culturally safe spaces, land-based activities and support.

Weaknesses

In an evaluation, insights into weaknesses can help an organization or group identify potential areas to improve on. According to the participants communication and knowledge about policies are expressed as needs for improvement of the program.

Team Communication

Communication is vital to all organizations. There were two types of communication improvements that were expressed by participants: regular meetings where information is shared, and knowledge sharing about policies. The importance of having regular meetings between the teachers and the organization was expressed.

> Participant 1: I think communication for me is our weakness. I think we don't have enough team meetings with both groups where we review, reflect, discuss and brainstorm about how we can reach each kid and often it can be specifically focused on one kid and what can we do. We all come from an educational background.

Participant 2 agreed and added that the two groups should have the same entity.

49

Participant 2: Like more of a cohesive point of view. Two different entities

working together is always a challenge. We should all have an understanding of

each other's points of view and needs and how we all as a group can benefit the

program, which would benefit the students.

Participant 4 describes that communication is also important for organizing timetables, so

they are not being rushed to and from places as well as giving or receiving feedback

about challenges or concerns.

Participant 4: I know there are urgencies and emergencies but sometimes I'm not

putting blame on anybody because everyone is busy but sometimes I'm rushed

here and there last minute. Too often it can be challenging as well for me. It's

because we need to think about a plan a little bit of what we're going to talk

about. You know I can't claim to know everything.

It was commonly discussed that proper communication to be a strong asset to the team

building in order to maintain a successful program.

Knowledge about policies

Another type of communication that was expressed was information sharing, such

as knowing about policies, rules and regulations especially when it comes to cultural

activities or daily outings.

As Participant 2 discusses knowing more about legal aspects and how these limit certain

activities is an important communication tool.

Participant 2: Well I think weaknesses lie there. My thought would be you know

we have so many restrictions in our society with rules and regulations.

Limitations around legal pieces, which prevent us sometimes being able to jump

on to opportunities. Because you know sometimes opportunities arise and because we don't have a piece of paper signed because it involves you know me having to take someone in my car. Those kind of things that are just part of our society legally that prevent us sometimes. But those do prevent us from doing maybe some of those pieces that we would maybe take the opportunity to do maybe in the moments notice. And not only cultural pieces but other pieces too you know we might say oh you know there's something going on in this community but we got to get there and we don't have a ride and legally I can't take you in my car so you know I'm not going to do that. So those legal pieces they do prevent us from doing some things.

Similarly, Participant 6 shared that some policies in the School Board restricted them from doing their traditional land-based learning.

Participant 6: There are certain things with land-based activities and especially with Indigenous kids like getting them on the land and teaching them how to do their traditional activities such as hunting that they should be learning. That is a big no with the School Board but for hunting you have to have guns!

The weakness associated with regular communication between team meetings is easily fixable, so is training staff on rules and regulations. However, School Board policies are beyond the control of the program. As one participant noted, there is room for improvement of understanding when it comes to land-based activities. It should be noted that none of the three students cited any weaknesses. It can be perceived that there is none or they didn't feel that they could share in this particular project. Perhaps the program developers might view this as an opportunity for students to complete regular

51

evaluations (oral or written) so that they can share their vision and experiences to the teachers and the organization.

Opportunities

Opportunities in an evaluation give insight into what are possible or potential new initiatives. Participants talked about the importance of the transitional program and where it can be strengthened.

Strengthening the Transition program

The program, as a whole, helps transition students to achieve their personal goals with the school or for jobs. Participant 7 provides insight into transition planning.

> Participant 7: Part of the mandate with the Board is to help with transition planning with the kids. But I mean whether it ends up sometimes the program isn't a good fit for them or you know they just need a change. You know we've done all what we can for them. We can transition them to N'Swagamok, Barrydowne or whatever or into maybe getting a job. So that they are ready for new transitions whatever it may be.

Transition planning is labour-intensive as there are a lot of networking aspects as well as one on one student meetings to ensure that students are prepared emotionally and skilled to move on to work or further studies. Participant 7 shared the intensity of the work involved in transition planning.

> Participant 7: The teachers and other workers will work very hard to make sure the students have the supports they need to move on. Connecting with people, programs, resources as well as making a few short visits.

Participant 1 shared how students are reintegrated back into school once the student is ready to move on from the program.

Participant 1: It is nice to see that when we see a student missing those aspects and we are happily and willingly to reintegrate them when they are ready. Like we could sense a little of that social interaction of peers, so now she is returning into the regular school system where that will be available to her on a daily basis.

The transition part of the program is a critical mandate for this program. It is also vital for the students as it prepares them for life, returning to school, careers and or it empowers them to make decisions about their future. Increasing staff and resources will assist to strengthen the transition program.

Threats

Threats in an evaluation give insight into what factors might negatively affect a program or organization. This section provides examples about what participants perceive to be a threat to the success of this program. In which are the following: limited staffing, small group setting impact and restrictions on scheduling.

Limited Staffing

Since the program has started, it has gone from four teachers that had direct teaching with the youth down to 3 teachers. Participants mentioned the challenges they had with losing one teacher compared to the years before. Participant 3 mentions the teaching opportunities that could happen with extra staff on site.

Participant 3: I think one of the benefits of having a couple more people on staff or an extra teacher even is that we are able to do now a few more things because a

lot of times we require 2 staff you know to go to some places. One person can

stay behind and run the boat.

Participant 3 then states how the teachers try to utilize workers from the health center

since the loss of a teaching staff member.

Participant 3: Well for that type of idea you know making sure there is 2 bodies

going to the gym or 2 bodies going on the field trip. Of course it made it a lot

easier and now we have to do a lot more planning making sure that we have those

things well thought out depending on where we are going. You know we do

utilize the worker from the Shkagamik-Kwe staff you know she's one of those

bodies if we need her sometimes.

Participant 8 views the challenge of having one less teacher to help support and teach the

class.

Participant 8: Like there is not many teachers and there are many kids. Like if

they are already helping a kid you can't just walk up to them for help.

Participant 9 states it is easier to manage activities as well.

Participant 9: An extra teacher would be good because when a teacher goes out

two have to stay in the school. So one teacher is left all alone taking all the kids

out wherever. An extra teacher would be good.

Then Participant 6 discusses how they can take advantage of more teachers in order to do

more home visits.

Participant 6: There are 4 of us and there always has to be 2 people here. So now

that I'm here with them full time just recently me and another worker she's like

well let's go do a home visit and try to get the students back in. So we went out

54

like twice already and once I went with the other worker. It's good to do a home

visit. If we haven't seen that student in a while and we have no contact. No phone

contact.

Participant 2 speaks to the importance of individual attention in the classroom.

Participant 2: Individualization, I guess that's a success. Right. Which is very

difficult to do in a large school when you have 3 classes each with 30 kids it's

pretty hard to individualize. To be able to deal with each student on an individual

basis and meet all their needs is important.

Participant 2 also recommended that an Indigenous support worker be available to ensure

that the students transition from the small class to the wider High School experience.

Participant 2: I mean we would really have to get out there outside the box to do

those things and you know sometimes because our students struggle in school I

guess with an Aboriginal support worker you can get them involved in some of

those activities.

As mentioned previously, transition planning, traditional activities, one on one setting of

personal goals, holistic health as well as teaching are important aspects of the program.

Adequate staffing is essential to carry out these aspects and students and teachers

expressed that they could benefit with that extra staff member always on site.

Small Setting Impacts

Although the small classroom setting and teacher to student ratio is conducive to

one on one personal learning experiences for Indigenous students, it may also

inadvertently mean that these students would not gain large group opportunities that they

may receive if they were in the High School program. Participant 2 mentions certain

opportunities one may have in a larger high school such as sports, social events or even courses and how this is something the program cannot provide.

> Participant 2: I look at it as far as the students and this kind of came up with our student that graduated from grade 8 who is missing out. I know it is difficult for the students to do these things but missing out on some of the larger things that happen in a large high school such as social events, some of the teams, some of the arts or drama or things that happen in a larger school we are not able to provide.

For the program, it can be hard to try to imitate a mainstream school system setting. On the one hand, the students like the small class size but on the other hand, some may benefit from the social events offered by the high school. This part in essence relates to the previous sub-theme of transitioning. The point of transitioning is to send off students to the post-secondary; however, with limited access to the bigger schooling opportunities this is limiting as well.

Restricted Scheduling Activities

Other issues that arose from participants were about scheduling that affected the programs running or functioning. For instance, Participant 3 discussed scheduling conflicts with important resources such as Elders.

> Participant 3: Yeah the Elder is there now but I think they are pretty scheduled too I think.

Participant 6 shared how they integrated their activities so that it fits in with others.

> Participant 6: Like we have Elders that come in every Wednesday at 12 o'clock. And every Thursdays at 10 the Nutritional Program comes over.

Likewise, Participant 2 found that work time schedules can often limit access to resources.

> Participant 2: That Elder has invited us to go down and so has many Elders. Well that's fantastic except our schedule is from this time to that time and this is what time I'm paid to be here.

However, Participant 6 shared how the youth optimized activities when scheduled events were limited such as the gym.

> Participant 6: Another good thing to talk about too is when sporadically the worker would take them to the gym. Just whenever, and just recently they asked for a set time 12 o'clock everyday and that's working out good. Like yesterday there was 5 kids going to the gym. And they all know now 12 o'clock is gym time. So having those certain time schedules is important.

Lastly, participant 7 mentions that sometimes having a schedule and structure for the students is very important.

> Participant 7: So structure where you need it works.

Limited staff, restricted scheduling and small setting impacts were highlighted as potential threats; however, bringing awareness to these issues can be helpful for those who have the power to make changes.

The following section will discuss the findings and present the conclusions from this research.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this thesis was to evaluate the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program to find out what were the key factors that affect this program.

As a recap, I have reinserted the box that reflects the main themes and sub-themes that arose from the data analysis.

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
- Relationships - Holistic Health - Culturally safe space - Land-based activities - Support	- Team communication - Knowledge about policies
Opportunities:	Threats:
- Strengthening the Transitional program	- Limited staffing - Small setting impacts - Restricted scheduling activities

With respect to strengths, relationships emerged as a key theme for this program as this was discussed throughout the Sharing Circles and interviews. Relationships are an important value to acknowledge between teachers, the students, the elders, the Indigenous program content and the traditional resources since this is contributing to their successes in education. Others have also cited the importance of relationships (Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Kitchen & Hudson, 2013; McCarthy & Lee, 2014; Savage et al. 2011; Smith, 2012). For example, McCarthy & Lee (2014) discussed the importance of building the relationships with the community. Most certainly, as a researcher, relationships with the community you are researching are very important. This is an

important process in an Indigenous methodology as well as community participatory action (Brown, 2005; Kanu, 2002; Smith, 2012).

Other strengths that emerged from the participants were the importance of holistic health, culturally-safe space, the land-based activities and support. These are examples of Indigenous teachings that are incorporated within this program. They are not only integral but are valued. Traditional teachings intertwined with holistic health activities are important to distinguish as they are important for one's personal health and wellbeing (Cote-Meek, 2014).

Also, the findings suggest that traditional teachings, land-based knowledge and adequate supports connect Indigenous youth to their worldviews concerning history and cultural traditions. Kanu, 2002; McCarthy & Lee, 2014; Savage et al., 2014 indicate this importance as well indicating meaningful connectedness with one's relationship with their teachers, culture and their respective community.

In terms of opportunities, the main theme that emerged centered on growth and development of the program. Based on the findings the program could consider the importance of strengthening the transition phases from student back to the high school or onto career pathways. Having more staff could assist with transition activities and affords the students more time with reflecting on where they want to go or what they want to achieve with their education. Battiste (2002) talks a lot about strengthening an Indigenous identity, not only in terms of their culture but also in terms of them being a student having a right to education. In my assessment, this pathway is critical as well given that the program has a goal to foster students to complete their high school diploma.

The last two themes weaknesses and threats of the program included communication, knowledge about policies, scheduling, small staff and a small high school setting are items that can be addressed as future improvements for the program going forward. These changes are minimal and doable.

Finally, one of the most important things to acknowledge is the Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centres' Indigenous Community partnership with the Rainbow District School Board's program is a great step towards reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is an organized agreement with Indian Residential School survivors (TRC, 2015). These are steps the government must take in order to reconcile with Indigenous peoples in Canada from historical events to prevent future mistreatment of Indigenous children in education (TRC, 2015). It is important to highlight that one of the calls to action is in regard to education. In that section, it states that an important step to reconcile with Indigenous peoples of Canada is to incorporate Indigenous history in the school curriculum and adopt traditional teachings in school programming. The Mishk-Ode-Wendam program addresses the TRC (2015) essentially as it is an Indigenous-based high school educating youth on Indigenous history and through traditional teachings and knowledge (RDS, 2013). It is hoped that the thesis findings can assist the program to sustain funding and increase resources.

Limitations

It is important to highlight limitations of a research study as it can always be improved. Firstly, this study only looked at one program in this area. Therefore, it cannot be representative of all alternative education programs for Indigenous youth living with a mental health condition or addiction.

Also, I only interviewed three students and this can be considered a very small representation of the students who are enrolled in this program. Two reasons can be attributed to this. Firstly, by the time I interviewed participants, it was at the end of the school year and some of the students had already moved on. Secondly, Indigenous students may have felt obligated to their program and their culture and may not have wanted to jeopardize their program in any way. Although every effort was made by myself, the developers and teachers to reach out to them to suggest otherwise, only three came forward. Likewise, the reach of the 10 participants may still be considered small. At best, I tried to ensure that all the key persons were interviewed.

Future Research

The purpose of this research was to interview people involved with an Indigenous-based program in order to understand peoples' experiences and perspectives about the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program. Future studies could look into comparing two programs like this one that are similar but in separate locations and compare the similarities and differences of each program as Moeke-Pickering (2010) did. In addition, interviews are only conducted with current students and immediate stakeholders. One could conduct parent surveys such as Franklin (2016) did to evaluate the impact of these type of alternative programs. Also, surveys with students and key stakeholders may have also been important especially for individual interviews. This might have minimized some of the participants from feeling exposed by qualitative questioning where they could have been identified.

Conclusion

Indigenous-based programming gives a chance for reconciliation between Indigenous educators and High School Boards. Importantly, it provides an opportunity for youth to learn their culture and traditions. The literature reviewed demonstrates evidence that there is a connection between learning one's culture and strengthening identity and wellbeing (Cote-Meek, 2012; Moeke-Pickering, 2010). This program is unique as it is the only one in northern Ontario.

This research demonstrates the importance of a program being connected to an Indigenous organization such as the Shkagamik-Kwe Health Center, which provides pertinent resources. As well, this research highlights the importance of this program being linked to the High School as it provides students with a range of experiences with their peers as well as activities in that setting. In summary, this combination of support is a great strength for the program, and especially for the students. Importantly, the teachers assist with the transition of the student between their personal life goals and education. As highlighted in the findings, this is a critical piece in the student's life. Having one on one advice and guidance, sharing healing and traditional journeys with their peers in the program, empowers them to make choices that are right for them. Teachers and elders are critical at this time of their learning, so it is important that the program receive and maintain the necessary resources to continue this vital program.

Some recommendations based on this program would be primarily augmenting the number of teachers that are accessible to the students. This would help all around with maintaining the success of the program as accessing the teachers and building a trustworthy relationship is primarily important. Another is to incorporate an Indigenous

superintendent into the mainstream educational system. This is an observation drawn and there seems to be no Indigenous worldview in the primary stakeholders of youth's education in the school board. This is important not only to Indigenize the academy but also incorporate Indigenous worldviews in decision making for the youths education. It is only important to have this representation if there is an Indigenous classroom that is available to the youth.

Finally, this research had an important impact on my life. During my stay in the classroom I was going through a rough chapter in my life. I lost an important family member that really valued culture and traditions. Through this experience I was able to learn many traditions, teachings for myself and with my own Métis identity. It is now my turn to take on this responsibility of accepting this knowledge and hopefully passing it down for the generations to come. Like the autumn seed I have grown and flourished throughout this research process and continuing this is by completing this thesis. As did the students, they grew holistically in their own personal learning and healing during their stay within the program. I hope that this thesis is brought to the world to inform researchers of the amazing impacts of the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program, its developers, teachers, Elders and students as well as recommend Indigenous alternative programming.

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Wright, A. L., Wahoush, O., Ballantyne, M., Gabel, C., & Jack, S. M. (2016). Qualitative

    health research involving indigenous peoples: Culturally appropriate data collection

    methods. *The Qualitative Report*, *21*(12), 2230-2245.

APPENDIX A

Poster

I am seeking individuals who are involved with the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program:

PURPOSE:
● Gather information from you the students, developers, teachers, Elders, etc… to evaluate and understand the effects of the program

PROCESS:
● Your permission to share your experiences and perspectives about the program either in a Sharing Circle or in an individual interview
● All information about you or what you say remains confidential
● All agreements, demographic and audio-recorded interviews will be stored on an encrypted Google Drive account
● A name that you choose will be used rather then your actual name
● The Sharing Circle or interview could take up to 2 hours
● If at any time there is information that is given about you or someone that is at risk confidentiality cannot be held and the researcher may have a duty to report to the relevant authorities if a participant discloses any reasonable risk of abuse, neglect or harm to a child or threat to harm another person
● If at any time you would like to stop the Sharing Circle or interview you can withdraw at any time and any information that you have given will be destroyed
● If at any time you feel distressed a Youth Counsellor or support staff member will be available to help you

REMEMBER:
● Your participation is completely voluntary: it is up to you
● Individual results will not be given. This is about the program as a whole
● If you change your mind about participating let the secretary know

If interested or have any questions please contact:

Michelle Graham,
mgraham@laurentian.ca or
by phone 705-675-1151*5066.

Should you have any further queries about this research, please feel free to contact my Supervisor,
Dr. Taima Moeke-Pickering,
phone 1-800-461-4030 ext 5083 or

email her at tmoekepickering@laurentian.ca.

Also, if you have any questions concerning the ethical conduct of this research, please contact:

Research Ethics Office
Laurentian University,
Sudbury Ontario
Telephone: 705-675-1151 * 3213 /* 2436
Toll Free: 1-800-461-4030
Email: ethics@laurentian.ca

Consent form – Students participating in the Sharing Circles

PERSPECTIVES ON INDIGENOUS-BASED PROGRAMS: THE MISHK-ODE-WENDAM CLASSROOM PROGRAM

Michelle Graham
Laurentian University,
Sudbury, Ontario

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. This research helps to build a better understanding of the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program. This research assists to determine certain factors that affect the program. The role that you will play in this research includes: 1) completion of a *Demographic Questionnaire*; and 2) participation in an audio-recorded *Sharing Circle* about the program, which will take place in the classroom and could last approximately 2 hours.

Confidentiality is very important and personal information (name and identifiers) will not be shared in any written documentation. Due to the nature of Sharing Circles, confidentiality cannot be fully guaranteed. To add, the researcher may have a duty to report to the relevant authorities if a participant discloses any reasonable risk of abuse, neglect or harm to a child or threat to harm another person. However, if a student feels discomfort at any point during the research they can take a break, pass on a particular question or withdraw at anytime without consequence. All sharing circles will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and only I will have access to the tapes.   Additionally, a support staff member and Aboriginal counsellor will be available to assist you if you request support. Also, I will provide you with a list of external counselling services should you require it.

This Consent Form also seeks your permission to use the information you provide to be used in this research. Remember, participation is completely voluntary, if you wish to withdraw at any time you can and the information you provide will be deleted and not used.

The results of this study will be kept for 7 years in an encrypted password protected file on Google Drive. The potential benefits of this research will be useful to the developers of this program as well as contribute to scholarly articles about Indigenous-based programs with youth.

If you have any questions please contact:

Michelle Graham, Laurentian University
Email: mgraham@laurentian.ca or by phone 705-675-1151*5066

Supervisor:

Dr. Taima Moeke-Pickering
tmoekepickering@laurentian.ca
705-675-1151 ext. 5083
1-800-461-4030 ext. 5083

If you have any questions concerning the ethical conduct of this research, please contact:
Research Ethics Office
Laurentian University,
Sudbury Ontario
Telephone: 705-675-1151 * 3213 /* 2436
Toll Free: 1-800-461-4030
Email: ethics@laurentian.ca

I have read, and agree to participate in this study.

Name:

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Print Name   Signature   Date

I consent to be audio-recorded   [   ] initial
I would like to receive a summary of the research findings   [   ] initial

APPENDIX C

Consent form – Students participating in an individual interview

PERSPECTIVES ON INDIGENOUS-BASED PROGRAMS: THE MISHK-ODE-
WENDAM CLASSROOM PROGRAM

Michelle Graham
Laurentian University,
Sudbury, Ontario

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. This research helps to build a better understanding of the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program. This research assists to determine certain factors that affect the program. The role that your child will play in this research includes: 1) completion of a *Demographic Questionnaire*; and 2) participation in an individual interview that could take approximately half an hour to complete.

Confidentiality is very important and personal information (name and identifiers) will not be shared in any written documentation. To add, the researcher may have a duty to report to the relevant authorities if a participant discloses any reasonable risk of abuse, neglect or harm to a child or threat to harm another person. However, if your child feels discomfort at any point during the research they can take a break, pass on a particular question or withdraw at anytime without consequence. Additionally, a support staff member and Aboriginal counsellor will be available to assist you if you request support. Also I will provide you with a list of external counselling services should you request it.

This Consent Form also seeks your permission to use the information you provide to be used in this research. Remember, participation is completely voluntary, if you wish to withdraw at any time you can and the information will be deleted and not used.

The results of this study will be kept for 7 years in an encrypted password protected file on Google Drive. The potential benefits of this research will be useful to the developers of this program as well as contribute to scholarly articles about Indigenous-based programs with youth.

If you have any questions please contact:

Michelle Graham, Laurentian University
Email: mgraham@laurentian.ca or by phone 705-675-1151*5066

Supervisor:
Dr. Taima Moeke-Pickering
tmoekepickering@laurentian.ca
705-675-1151 ext. 5083
1-800-461-4030 ext. 5083

If you have any questions concerning the ethical conduct of this research, please contact:
Research Ethics Office
Laurentian University,
Sudbury Ontario
Telephone: 705-675-1151 * 3213 /* 2436
Toll Free: 1-800-461-4030
Email: ethics@laurentian.ca

I have read, and agree to participate in this study.

Name:

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Print Name   Signature   Date

I consent to participate in an individual interview   [   ] initial
I would like to receive a summary of the research findings   [   ] initial

APPENDIX D

Consent form – Key Stakeholders

PERSPECTIVES ON INDIGENOUS-BASED PROGRAMS: THE MISHK-ODE-
WENDAM CLASSROOM PROGRAM

Michelle Graham
Laurentian University,
Sudbury, Ontario

Thank you for choosing to participate in this research. This research helps to build a better understanding of the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program. This research assists to determine certain factors that affect the program. Your role in this research includes: 1) completion of a *Demographic Questionnaire*; and 2) participation in an audio-recorded *Sharing Circle* about the program, which will take place at the Mishk-Ode-Wendam room and could last approximately 2 hours.

Confidentiality is very important and personal information (name and identifiers) will not be shared in any written documentation. Due to the nature of Sharing Circles, confidentiality cannot be fully guaranteed. To add, the researcher may have a duty to report to the relevant authorities if a participant discloses any reasonable risk of abuse, neglect or harm to a child or threat to harm another person. However, if you feel discomfort at any point during the research you can take a break, pass on a particular question or withdraw at anytime without consequence. All sharing circles will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and only I will have access to the tapes. Additionally, you will be provided with a list of external counselling services should you require it. Should you choose not to participate in a Sharing Circle, you can choose to be individually interviewed. This involves completing a questionnaire and would take up to half an hour of your time. All Circles and interviews will be conducted at the Mishk-Ode-Wendam classroom.

This Consent Form also seeks your permission to use the information you provide to be used in this research. Remember, participation is completely voluntary, if you wish to withdraw at any time you can and the information you provide will be deleted and not used.

The results of this study will be kept for 7 years in an encrypted password protected file on Google Drive. The potential benefits of this research will be useful to the developers of this program as well as contribute to scholarly articles about Indigenous-based programs with youth.

If you have any questions please contact:

Michelle Graham, Laurentian University
Email: mgraham@laurentian.ca or by phone 705-675-1151*5066

76

Supervisor:
Dr. Taima Moeke-Pickering
tmoekepickering@laurentian.ca
705-675-1151 ext. 5083
1-800-461-4030 ext. 5083

If you have any questions concerning the ethical conduct of this research, please contact:
Research Ethics Office
Laurentian University,
Sudbury Ontario
Telephone: 705-675-1151 * 3213 /* 2436
Toll Free: 1-800-461-4030
Email: ethics@laurentian.ca

I have read, and agree to participate in this study

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Print Name   Participant's Signature   Date

I consent to being audio-recorded   [   ] initial
I would like to receive a summary of the research findings   [   ] initial

APPENDIX E

LaurentianUniversity
Université**Laurentienne**

Questionnaire – Students

PART 1: Demographics

All answers are voluntary, Please complete as much of the questionnaire as possible.

Make up a name for yourself that will be used in my research: _____

Age: _____

Gender: _____

What is your families' ancestry?: _____

How did you find out about the program?: _____

When did you enrol in the program?: _____

What high school were you in before?: _____

PART 2: Program

1.   How did you find out about the program?

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2.   What do you believe are the strengths of the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program?

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3.   What are the weaknesses?

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4.   How could the program be improved?

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6. Name the support services that you might have used. This could include; the educative assistant, the culture coordinator, programs through the Shkagamik-Kwe or the community centre, the youth counsellor, Elders, teachers, superintendents, culture classes, etc…

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7. Describe strengths/improvements for the support services you received.

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7. Do you have any other comments you wish to make?

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Chi-Miigwech!
Merci beaucoup!
Thank you very much!

APPENDIX F

LaurentianUniversity
UniversitéLaurentienne

Questionnaire – Key Stakeholders (EAs, Teachers, Principal, Superintendent, etc…)

PART 1: Demographics

All answers are voluntary. Please complete as much of the questionnaire as possible.

Make up a name for yourself that will be used in my research: _____

Gender: _____

What is your families' ancestry?: _____

What is your involvement with the program?: _____

How did you find out about the program?: _____

PART 2: Program

1.   How did you find out about the program?

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2.   What do you believe are the strengths of the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program?

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3.   What are the weaknesses?

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4.   How could the program be improved?

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6. Describe the support that you provide to the program. This could include; the educative assistant, the culture coordinator, programs through the Shkagamik-Kwe or the community centre, the youth counsellor, Elders, teachers, superintendents, culture classes, etc…

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7. Describe strengths/improvements for the support services you provided.

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7. Do you have any other comments you wish to make?

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Chi-Miigwech!
Merci beaucoup!
Thank you very much!

Sharing Circle Protocols

PERSPECTIVES ON INDIGENOUS-BASED PROGRAMS: THE MISHK-ODE-WENDAM CLASSROOM PROGRAM

Michelle Graham
Laurentian University,
Sudbury, Ontario

In this context, the Sharing Circle will be used as a process of data collection, where individuals will share their knowledge based on a set of questions posed by the facilitator/researcher in a circle in one of the classrooms. Prior to commencement, protocols of the Circle will be explained by the facilitator, which will be reinforced if needed. Participants will respond to a series of questions, which will be posed one at a time. Going clockwise, each individual will have an opportunity to respond or pass. Once an individual has either finished speaking or passed, the following participant will be provided the same opportunity to either respond or pass. This process will continue until all members of the Circle have replied to each of the questions. This process should take 2 hours of your time depending on how much each individual wishes to share. To ensure accuracy of the information collected, the Circle will be audio-recorded. For those who choose not to be recorded, your information will be deleted from the transcript.

Protocols of the Circle:

• This is a Sharing Circle, which is being used to share your experiences, and knowledge about the Mishk-Ode-Wendam program.

• Sharing circles are used to promote active listening, patience, self-expression, trust and most of all respect (Stevenson, 1999).

• Sharing circles recognize the Creator and our Ancestors as part of the process (Stevenson, 1999; Nabigon et. al. 1999; Lavallée 2009).

• Sharing circles provide a safe environment to share, without interruption, or judgement (Stevenson,1999; Lavallée, 2009)

• To ensure confidentiality of the Sharing Circle, which is based on trust and respect; we ask all participants to **respect that what is said in the circle, stays in the circle**.

<u>Sharing Circle Questions</u>

Hello, my name is Michelle Graham. I am interested in learning about this alternative high school program that is

    culturally based.

Here is a little story about myself. I went to a French Catholic high school where my Métis roots were pushed aside.

    I did not have the opportunity you folks have using Aboriginal teachings and learning in this type of school

    environment. I would like to know what makes this program work for you.

So here are my questions.

- Please describe how you feel about the program?
o Any examples?
- Is there anything special about the program that you really like? Discuss things that you like and why.
- What are the weaknesses about this program? What are these things specifically?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Participants are thanked for sharing their knowledge, for respecting the sacredness of the Circle and are invited to take part in a small meal and to socialize with the members of the group.

    Lastly before departing, they are provided with a package which includes copies of Letter

    of Invitation (Appendix A), Posters (A), Consent Forms (Appendix B-D), list of

    accessing counselling resources (Appendix H), additionally the youth counsellor and

    other counselling services were accessible on that specific day for the participants at the

    Shkagamik-kwe Health Centre.

APPENDIX H

List of Counselling services

Kids Help Phone

1-800-6668-6868

Mental Health Helpline

1-866-531-8475

Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre
161 Applegrove St., Sudbury, ON
705-675-1596

N'Swakamok Native Friendship Centre
110 Elm St, Sudbury, ON
705-674-2128

Sudbury Counseling Centre
260 Cedar Street
Sudbury ON P3B 1M7

Phone: 705-524-9629
Fax: 705-524-1530
Email: info@counsellingccs.com

Crisis Intervention Services
127 Cedar St, Sudbury

705-675-4760 (24 hour hotline—365 days/year)
Toll free: 1-877-841-1101
Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. (no appointment necessary) 7 days per week

Health Sciences North

41 Ramsey Lake Road, Sudbury
705-523-7100

Mobile Crisis Team can visit you in the community at a safe location.
Call to arrange an outreach visit:
705-675-4760 (24 hour hotline- 365 days/year)
Toll free: 1-877-841-1101