

PLACE-BASED IDENTITY IN
NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO ANISHINAABE LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Place-based identity for Indigenous peoples in the land currently known as Canada, although foundational to many Indigenous land ethics, has been fraught by colonial processes of displacement, reserve designation, and racism. Definitions of home and belonging are often complicated by colonial divisions of urban and reserve spaces, and racist stereotypes that work to dispossess urban Indigenous lands. Moreover, settler amnesia problematically quells settler responsibility and guilt, while more damagingly attempting to remove Indigenous story from the land. This process of tearing story from land is discursive and ideological colonization. This dissertation examines the role of Indigenous literature in reuniting story and land, reasserting Indigenous presence, practicing place-based resurgence, and ultimately imagining and supporting decolonial futurities. Through a relational regional theoretical framework merged with elements of literary nationalism, I examine Anishinaabe literature from Northwestern Ontario, namely stories of Great Lynx, Mishipeshu, and works by Al Hunter, George Kenny, Ruby Slipperjack, and Richard Wagamese, to explore representations and methods of Anishinaabe relationship and connection to land. I theorize that an interaction between both physical land and the discursive space of stories encompasses an Anishinaabe sense of place and enacts Anishinaabe ways of being by studying these works as they broadly reflect the four aspects of self as represented by an Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel. Ultimately, by reclaiming both physical place and discursive space, land and story, the Anishinaabeg generate a definition of home rooted in the physical place of sacred fires and maintained and transported through migrations and transmotion: a mobile, adaptive, resilient, sovereign, resurgent, and grounded place-based identity.

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DEDICATION

For Adam

“Where we love is home. Home that our feet may leave – but not our hearts.”

- Oliver Wendell Holmes

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Introduction

There once was a residential school in Thunder Bay, Ontario, St. Joseph's Boarding School, four blocks away from the house my great-great grandfather, William Brooks, built in 1909, when he, his wife, Isabella, and their eight children immigrated from England; the house in which my great-grandmother, William's daughter Daisy Rapley and her husband, Louis, lived and raised my grandmother, Clarice Charlton, and her brother Brooks; the house in which my great uncle Brooks' daughter, Kate Rapley, now lives: 234 North Norah St. My family's settlement story took place four blocks away for four generations and none of them knew that there was a residential school sharing the same land, even though they were neighbours down the street. I only became aware of St. Joseph's Residential School in the early stages of my research for this dissertation, when I read in the introduction to Norval Morrisseau's *Legends of My People* that he had gone to residential school in Thunder Bay for two years. I did a double take as I read this, not just because I was unaware that Morrisseau had such a close connection to my hometown, but because I had not heard that Thunder Bay even had a residential school: I had never heard this story.

Thunder Bay is located on the northwest shore of Lake Superior in Robinson-Superior Treaty territory, and it is home to the highest proportion of urban Indigenous people of any major city in Canada (12.7% of 121,621 including immediate surrounding areas; Statistics Canada). It also had the highest reported hate-crime rates in the country in 2015, including one-third of the hate crimes in Canada against Indigenous peoples (Leber). Tanya Talaga in her recent national bestseller *Seven Fallen Feathers: Racism, Death, and Hard Truths in a Northern City*, describes Thunder Bay as having "always been a city of two faces," a white face and a red face (3). Knowing this deeply divided history and current reality of the city, I had always assumed that there must have been a residential school nearby or that there were surrounding schools for more remote First Nations, but this was the first time that it struck me that I had never heard any particulars about such a school.

I started with a quick Google search that at the time did not avail many results, and then I began to ask my family. No one had heard of it. I even got a few "I don't think we had one of *those* schools," as if Thunder Bay was somehow morally above such a thing: a "not in my

backyard” sentiment. Then my Grandma Clarice mentioned something about an orphanage for girls that had many Indigenous orphans. I at first assumed that this must have been a different place altogether and kept up my search. I eventually found an actual source in the Shingwauk Residential School Archive housed through Algoma University, available online. There it was: St. Joseph’s Residential School, first established in 1870 on the mission grounds at Fort William First Nation, moved in 1907 to amalgamate with a Catholic orphanage on the corner of Franklin and Arthur streets – four blocks away from 234 North Norah. I went back to my family with the name and location: “That was a residential school? We were always told it was an orphanage.” My Great Aunt Elinor, Brooks’s wife, recounted that she had taken piano lessons there from the nuns and one day had met a young Indigenous girl who was scrubbing the stairs as Elinor waited for her lesson to start. My Aunt, being of similar age to the girl, began talking to her. When the nun came in, she harshly scolded the girl – “Don’t ever talk to them” (meaning the white children who came in for piano lessons) – and violently dragged her away, “laying into her,” as Elinor described. My Aunt was around ten years old at the time and yet this memory still haunts her 70 years later. She felt guilty for initiating conversation and getting the girl in trouble. My Aunt entered the building on a weekly basis and yet was still told that it was just an orphanage. Granted the two were combined in 1907 and the school operated as both orphanage and school, but my Great Aunt was taking piano lessons in the 1940s, the residential school remained open until 1964, was not torn down until 1966, and yet the narrative told of that place omitted stories of the school.

My family was not an anomaly. Lakehead University Student Lexie Solomon from Fort William First Nation who recently did a poster project on the residential school that was displayed in City Hall, found through her research that “Many people assume this was just an orphanage, but it was actually a residential school. [...] That was one common thing that people were saying. They were surprised that it wasn’t an orphanage” (Garrick). Sixty years of having a residential school in the middle of the city and the surrounding settler population of Thunder Bay did not acknowledge that it even existed. Even more disturbingly, there are settlers in Thunder Bay who continue to deny its existence, despite facts, records, and testimonies. Denying that St. Joseph’s was a residential school and reasserting that it was only an orphanage serving underprivileged children provides fuel for further racist attacks on current Indigenous populations, as the school is framed as another undeserved “hand-out” that has gone

unappreciated.¹ Erasing the stories of Indigenous experience at the school actively participates in processes of settler colonialism that seek to justify denying Indigenous peoples' presence on and rights to land. Stripping the place of its Indigenous stories is an act of ideological dispossession.

The settler eradication of Thunder Bay's residential school stories shook me. Just that slight change in nomenclature, residential school to orphanage, completely erases the colonial indoctrination and cultural genocide enacted at this school. It hushes up the fact that these children were forcibly removed and kidnapped from home in order to be assimilated and to "kill the Indian in them" – a racist agenda of the Canadian Government to gain more control over Indigenous lands and take away Indigenous rights (Goeman 28). It is now easy for the settlers of Thunder Bay to see the news stories about residential schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, even to be taught about them in school, but to say, "well that happened somewhere *else* to *other* people." Without recognition of what happened down the street in the place my family and I call home, without recognition that our neighbours went there, the school's history and its intergenerational trauma are conveniently erased by settler amnesia.

Settler amnesia is invested in erasing Indigenous story from the land. In Thunder Bay it runs so deep that it's common to hear someone mutter, or worse, yell, "go back to where you came from" towards members of the Indigenous population (usually meaning to one of the many surrounding rural reserves). Ironic, right? Settlers who benefit from the displacement of Indigenous peoples from their homelands onto reserves and reside on stolen Indigenous land tell Indigenous people to go back where they came from. Or maybe it makes perfect sense as a blatant expression of ongoing colonial violence that continues to dispossess Anishinaabe people from their traditional territory and lands. I do not want to tell a white story of being shocked by knowledge that most Anishinaabeg in Thunder Bay have known and lived for years – it does not shock me, it fuels me. Something so close to home brings a responsibility on my shoulders to act,

¹ A recent "Letter to the Editor" published in Thunder Bay's local paper, *The Chronicle Journal*, insists that the school was known as "The Orphanage," and only "may have become known as a residential school" in recent years. In doing so, it denies the systematic removal of children from their homes and forced assimilation policies of the Canadian Government that were enacted at the school. It also ignorantly claims, "We must also remember that everything was given without expectation of either remuneration or even a thank-you." Published online, this piece was also a catalyst for further racist comments (Metzler).

to educate myself and others as much as I can, to listen to, acknowledge, respect, and understand the stories of the place I grew up in. I take an initial lead from Paulette Regan in *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*, in which she states,

Perhaps we, as non-Indigenous people, can begin by asking ourselves some troubling questions. How is it that we know nothing about this history? What does the persistence of such invisibility in the face of the living presence of survivors tell us about our relationship with Indigenous peoples? What does our historical amnesia reveal about our continuing complicity in denying, erasing, and forgetting this part of our own history as colonizers while pathologizing the colonized? (6)

Truth-telling, as Regan advocates for, is a necessary part of confronting Canada's settler colonialism and reinscribing Indigenous story on the land.

The land St. Joseph's Boarding School sat on is still owned by the Catholic Church and is now the site of a provincially funded Catholic elementary school, Pope John Paul II. Just within the last year Indigenous resource teacher Tesa Fiddler with artist Elliot Doxtater-Wynn in collaboration with a Grade 7 class created a multi-panel mural to be displayed on the outside of the school that tells the story of the site's residential school legacy. Now each year, as part of the national Orange Shirt Day, folks gather at City Hall and walk to the site of the old school (Hadley, Talaga 11). Projects such as this reconnect the city and the land it sits on with stories of Indigenous presence that have been erased by ongoing settler colonialism. I believe that reuniting Indigenous story and land in this way has resurgent and decolonizing potential, and directly combats settler amnesia. With this project, I seek to combat the settler amnesia in my own community by foregrounding Indigenous presence in Northwestern Ontario and reasserting Anishinaabe place-based identity and belonging in this territory by analyzing the role of Anishinaabe stories and literature in connection to land.

Theoretical Framework

I centre this study on Anishinaabe stories of place, land, and identity as a necessary counter-narrative to my family's settler story of Indigenous erasure in Thunder Bay. Thunder Bay is located on Anishinaabe land and the majority of its urban Indigenous population is Anishinaabe. Anishinaabe communities stretch from the Great Lakes to the Plains on both sides

of the Canadian/United States border and have described themselves by using the specific and shared names “Ojibwa, Ojibwe, Chippewa, Ojibway, Saulteaux, Mississauga, Nipissing, Potawatomi, and Odawa (and others)” (Doerfler, Sinclair, and Stark xvii). Anishinaabe people live in both urban and rural communities throughout North America and have continued to practice place-based storied knowledges that construct and define land through an “intimate spiritual, emotional, and physical relationship to it” (Simpson *As We Have Always Done* 23). Disconnecting Anishinaabe and Indigenous story from urban places contributes to an Anishinaabe place-based identity that has often been fraught with expectations of “returning to the land” in order to truly establish a sense of belonging and home (remnants of which are entrenched in the “go back to where you came from” settler sentiments in Thunder Bay and even in my own initial assumption that the residential school must have been rurally located). This expectation, in turn, positions the urban centre as home’s extreme opposite, an ugly place of oppression, assimilation, and contamination. However, more than 50% of Indigenous peoples in Canada live in urban areas and roughly 78% of Native American peoples live off reservation (Adams 4, Norris 18). For many, returning to a rural, pristine land base is a privilege they cannot or do not desire to access.

I seek to understand further Anishinaabe connections to land and place-based practices of homemaking to reconcile the dualism between being land-based and living a contemporary urban life, and to reunite Anishinaabe story with the land specifically within a Northwestern Ontario context. Settler colonialism and its employment of reserve designations and racism have often disrupted Indigenous attempts to find home and a sense of place through dispossession, dislocation, and displacement, all tactics used to create placelessness in order to control land. For some Anishinaabeg the result is what Richard Wagamese has labeled in his novel *Keeper’n Me* “havin’ the old slidey foot”: a restlessness or not being able to find “somewhere to be” (21). However, in the face of these challenges to an Anishinaabe sense of place, storytelling plays an important role in establishing relations to place and identifying a sense of home. I analyze how works of Anishinaabe literature from Northwestern Ontario, specifically stories of Great Lynx, Mishipeshu, and the contemporary works of Al Hunter, George Kenny, Ruby Slipperjack, and Richard Wagamese, represent complex and various connections to land through spiritual protocols, emotional affect, spatial cognition, and physical work. I discuss the literature’s depictions of home and connections to the land, and I identify the interrelation between physical

land and discursive space (stories or space defined through language) that informs place-based identity. In other words, I argue that the complex interplay between physical and discursive space provides a medium through which place-based identity can be produced beyond the division of urban and reserve places. My dissertation asks the research questions: In a Canadian (specifically Northwestern Ontario) context where many Indigenous (specifically Anishinaabe) people are displaced onto reserve, live in urban centres, live in urban reserves, and/or move between urban and rural reserve communities, how is land-based identity maintained? How does Anishinaabe literature re-imagine the relationship between physical and discursive space where simultaneous negotiations of urban and reserve-based connections to place can enact Anishinaabe “ways of being”?² What is literature’s role in establishing, negotiating, and maintaining connection to land and place-based identity? And what is the potential of literature to reunite land and story in support of processes of decolonization?

I use one specific area of land, Northwestern Ontario, as my dissertation’s organizing centre because of my own personal connection to and sense of belonging within the region. This is where I grew up and the place I call home, and it is important for me to understand and interrogate my position there as a white settler. Northwestern Ontario is comprised of the Kenora, Rainy River, and Thunder Bay census division districts, and spans north and west of Lake Superior to Hudson’s Bay just east of the mouth of James Bay and to the Manitoba provincial border. It is home to sixty-five Anishinaabe and Cree First Nations. While many critics have discussed what an ethical theoretical framework of Indigenous literary criticism should look like, whether it be Literary Nationalism, tribal-specific, intertribalism, communitism, or intellectual history based, I have chosen a regional approach to delineate the focus of my study (Womack, Acoose, Brooks, Weaver, Warrior). Tol Foster and Lisa Brooks both suggest the appropriateness of relational regionalism as a theoretical framework for exploring issues of Indigenous literature and identity through the arbitrary demarcation of regional boundaries, as opposed to those limited according to purely national, communal, or historical boundaries. Relational regionalism is the examination of “the particularities and relationships within specific regions, as well as the applications of the problems and concerns of a ‘given region’ to issues

² In studying Anishinaabe belonging and sense of place, I find it appropriate to invoke what Daniel Heath Justice has defined as “ways of being”: a pluralized, yet unified enactment of identity (*Our Fire Survives the Storm* 12). Anishinaabe “ways of being” allow for an individual to have multiple and shifting forms of identity, while acknowledging a collective strength.

that are ‘unresolved in the larger world and therefore of national and cosmopolitan interest’” (Brooks qting. Foster, “Digging at the Roots” 250). Relational regionalism attends to particular places and historical contexts, actively acknowledging dissent and multiplicity in issues of Indigenous identity, while still relating to larger national concerns. By focusing on various relationships within a region, relational regionalism can attend to difference, while acknowledging significant intersections and commonalities among peoples and literatures. Relational regionalism differs from the regionalism of early American and Canadian settler communities, both of which have been judged nostalgic and uncritical for attempting to take a geographical microcosm as representative of the whole in order to glorify that region (Foster 272, see discussion of Canadian regionalism in Fiamengo 241-50). Relational regionalism instead attends to networks of relationships that connect people and texts within the specified region. As Foster claims, by focusing on specific relationships instead of tribal identity, for instance, “this regional impulse celebrates adaptation by communities and assumes that there is little that is culturally pure in this way” (273). While Foster’s application of relational regionalism seeks to highlight dissent and difference within regions, my work synthesizes ideas through this framework and addresses multiple particularities and individual relationships to land specifically. To the best of my knowledge, a regional study of Indigenous literature has not yet been conducted in Canada.

I also acknowledge and intend the overt arbitrariness of delineating these regional borders: they are colonial and not necessarily applicable to the Anishinaabeg. In this division, I align my choice with Foster’s statement that “relational regionalism accepts the constructedness and contingency of the notion of a region in both time and space” (273). Anishinaabe territory is vast and defies provincial and national borders, and instead of delineating the scope of my project by determining the merit of some literatures over others, or drawing borders between gender, genre, urban/reserve/rural, traditional/contemporary (time period), individual communities etc., focusing on this specific region allows for an examination of intersections and relationships among each of these categories. I find it particularly appropriate to draw upon region in the context of land-based identity as it privileges the place of land within Indigenous, and specifically Anishinaabe ways of being from this particular geographical area.

I have chosen Hunter, Kenny, Slipperjack, and Wagamese as the major published, creative literary voices of the Northwestern Ontario region in an attempt to conduct a regional

survey of Indigenous literature. Each of these authors was born in and is a member of a Northwestern Ontario First Nation; however, their work is not necessarily set in the region. I decided on these parameters as I am interested in both the physicality of place, and the ways people stretch, wander, and move in and out of the region, while still feeling at home. For example, as discussed in Chapter 3, George Kenny, who is from Lac Seul First Nation, sets many of his urban poems in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Toronto, Ontario, but they are still heavily influenced by his lived experience as an Anishinaabe person from Northwestern Ontario who has moved away. Richard Wagamese, as outlined in more detail in Chapter 5, has lived across Canada and sets his novels throughout Canada and the United States; however, being from and moving away from Wabaseemoong First Nation in Northwestern Ontario influences his continued contemplations and representations of home and place. I believe drawing boundaries between authors who have moved out of the region or write about settings outside of the region has the potential to restrict movement and lines of identity, which risks reinforcing colonial delimitation of Indigenous land and identity. Instead, I hope to allow for Indigenous movement and mobility, while still acknowledging Indigenous rootedness and connection to physical land.

Because all four authors are Anishinaabe, I have also drawn upon theories of literary nationalism, particularly in their recognition of the importance of a text's situatedness within and inextricability from its cultural and Indigenous national contexts and traditions;³ however, I acknowledge that Cree and Métis peoples also inhabit and are from the region, and should be included in such a study if published works by them become available. I also recognize that I am sure to have missed some lesser known, newly published, or unpublished authors, and those works of art and storytelling that do not fall within the strict purview of "literature"⁴ (although I

³ I refer to Indigenous literary nationalism as initially conceived by Daniel Heath Justice, Robert Warrior, Craig Womack, and Jace Weaver. In particular, I align my work with its emphasis on Indigenous "resistance movements against colonialism, confront[ing] racism, discuss[ing] sovereignty and Native nationalism, seek[ing] connections between literature and liberation struggles, and finally, root[ing] literature in land and culture" (Womack 11). I do not see this influence as contrary to a relational regional approach, because as Foster reiterates, "I see the connection of the tribal and the regional to be acts pursuing the same project of knowing ourselves and the world" (270).

⁴ Since starting this dissertation, I have identified a few newer works published by emerging authors in the region that I could not include in this study at this time, but hope to in the future: Nathan Adler's *Wrist* (2016), Ma-Nee Chacaby's *A Two-Spirit Journey* (2016), Liz Howard's *Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent* (2015), Wab Kinew's *The Reason You Walk* (2015), and Jennifer Storm's *Deadly Loyalties* (2007) and *Fire Starters* (2016).

do address other forms of Anishinaabe literary production in Chapter 1, alongside a critical discussion of the problematic and colonial parameters of “literature”). To date, relatively little critical work has been conducted on Hunter, Kenny, Slipperjack, and Wagamese. No critical work has discussed Hunter’s poetry, and Emma LaRoque and Renate Eigenbrod only briefly discuss Kenny’s poetry in their early monographs, commenting on its representation of Indigenous experience and humanity (*When the Other is Me* and *Travelling Knowledges*). Analyses of Slipperjack are somewhat more numerous, particularly at the time her work was first published; however, the majority of it explores elements of “Nativity” in Slipperjack’s writings through a dated framework of difference (Bowerbank and Wawia, Eigenbrod *Travelling Knowledges*, Fee, Horne, Hoy, LaRoque, Salat). Wagamese, although the most prolific, well-known, and now nationally celebrated of the four authors, surprisingly has had much less critical treatment than his contemporaries such as Thomas King and Tomson Highway, arguably and problematically due to his less traditionally Western academic or postmodern style of writing (examples of criticism include Acoose, Balzer, Kaye, Eigenbrod “Diasporic Longing,” Episkew, McKegney and Phillips, Robinson). I find it necessary to counter this colonially biased hierarchization by continuing scholarship on Wagamese and promoting further scholarly engagement with his oeuvre. Further, no other study has put these four authors in dialogue with one another to look at a Northwestern Ontario body of Indigenous literary production. Including them in my dissertation will help to fill the knowledge gap surrounding their work and contribute to the discipline’s current conversation about the role of Indigenous literature in identity formation and the enactment of ways of being.

Theoretical and Contextual Background

In order to effectively discuss issues of Anishinaabe place-based identity, I must first emphasize a definition of Indigenous land that is not contained or delineated by colonially imposed borders or divisions of urban, rural, and reserve. Many of the now dated literary studies of Indigenous connection to land and definitions of home have operated under a reserve land-based/displaced dichotomy that emphasizes returning to a home reserve in order to find a “true” home (most influenced by Bevis). Since the 1980s, much of the scholarship within Urban Indigenous Studies refutes this dichotomy, stressing the importance of continued Indigenous presence, survivance, resilience, and sovereignty within urban environments (Thrush 112-13,

Fixico, Lobo and Peters, Lawrence, Ramirez, Forte, Peters and Anderson, Martinez, Sage and Ono, Furlan). Furthermore, to reify the reserve as a true, singular home is to replicate settler colonial tactics of displacement. Mishuana Goeman in “From Place to Territories and Back Again: Centering Storied Land in the Discussion of Indigenous Nation-Building,” astutely summarizes the tactic of reservation designation in the United States, which can be similarly applied to the Canadian reserve system: “Colonial constructions of the reservation pictured the reservation system as a panoptic space from which to watch the restless Native, ration resources, and discipline bodies” (28), and through this watching, rationing, and disciplining gain more total control over land. Renate Eigenbrod in “Diasporic Longings: (Re)Figurations of Home and Homelessness in Richard Wagamese’s Work” describes the conundrum of home on the reserve:

In contemporary Aboriginal writing, ‘home’ is sometimes identified as the reserve (while immigrant [settler colonial] society frequently conflates the two); however, the reserve is already a consequence of dispossession. [...] On the other hand, for better or for worse, reserves have become home for many Aboriginal peoples by necessity. [...] The history of dispossession that created reserves in the first place, and is continued by resource exploitation of the traditional land base surrounding the reserves, taints the sense of home and makes it a diasporic place. (137-38)

Although the reserve is home for some out of necessity and is potentially, but not always, still located in their traditional territory, home on the reserve is also necessarily tainted by dispossession and settler colonialism, just as much as urban environments are. And not all Indigenous people even have a reserve to return to, including non-status, Métis and Inuit peoples.

In recognizing that reserve designation is a colonial tactic for control and forced dependency in order to steal more land, attempting to define a singular home on the reserve for Indigenous peoples simply replicates this tactic by determining a specific place and saying “you belong here.” I hope my work instead reaffirms Indigenous presence and belonging anywhere in Canada, as all of Canada is Indigenous land. I align my definition of land with Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s call in *As We Have Always Done* to

Put aside visions of ‘back to the land,’ and just think land – some of it is wild, some of it is urban, a lot of it is ecologically devastated. Everyday acts of resurgence are taking place as they always have, on both individual and collective scales on Indigenous lands

irrespective of whether those lands are urban, rural, or reserve. Every piece of North America is Indigenous land [...]. (195)

Simpson's call echoes Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's statement in their seminal work "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" that "Urban land (indeed all land) is Native land" (23). Although urban, rural, and reserve designations can affect the ways in which place-based identity is maintained, they do not restrict or delineate land and home for Indigenous peoples.

The prominent presence of place in Indigenous storytelling and the importance of the land in Indigenous identity formation have been well established by many Indigenous literature theorists such as N. Scott Momaday, Gerald Vizenor, Basil Johnston, Les Schweninger, Thomas King, Robert Nelson, Paula Gunn Allen, and Jeanette Armstrong. Schweninger in *Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Responses to the Land* points out that critics Momaday, Deloria, and Vizenor rely on the power of story to create a land ethic: a moral awareness of ecology and interconnectedness with the land (218, Callicott and Nelson 121). In an Anishinaabe-specific context, J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson in *American Indian Environmental Ethics: An Ojibwa Case Study* discuss how this land ethic is directly linked to traditional Anishinaabe narratives. They align the land ethic of the Anishinaabeg with Aldo Leopold's original definition of the term in 1949: the land ethic "enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land" (qtd. in Callicott and Nelson 123). Leopold also argues that "all ethics so far evolved rest upon a single promise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts" (123). Therefore, the land ethic is the acknowledgment and respect of the interconnectedness of all human and non-human entities together within a community. Ultimately, an ethical regard for the land contributes to Pimadaziwin (or mino-bimaadiziwin), living the good life or having happiness, through the recognition of the inherent connection between human health and environmental health (Callicott and Nelson 131).

This notion of a land ethic, however, along with more generalized conceptions of Indigenous connection to land, has been the site of debate surrounding concerns of romanticized stereotypes and overgeneralizations of Indigenous peoples as "nature lovers or as children of the wild who worship a Mother Earth Goddess" (Schweninger 2). These stereotypes are not only misleading and inaccurate, but relegate Indigenous peoples to the past enmeshed in racist tropes of the Noble Savage and Dying Indian, providing mainstream society an "escape mechanism"

that forgoes contemporary responsibility to the environment (Schweninger 15, Furlan 20, Martinez, Sage, and Ono xvii). Schweninger outlines this debate, concluding that contemporary American Indian writers “carefully balance a resistance to reductive stereotyping and a firm belief [...] that there is such a thing as a meaningful and useful contemporary American Indian land ethic” (15). I strive to maintain this careful balance, being aware of the potential for problematic overgeneralization, while still examining the meaningful and useful particularities of representations of connections to land.

Instead of relying on the Western conservationist terminology of land ethic, Sean Kicummah Teuton in *Red Land Red Power: Grounding Knowledge in the American Indian Novel* has labeled this Indigenous awareness of and interdependence on the land “geoidentity,” a term that highlights how the land mutually constitutes self-understanding (46). Teuton is careful to avoid appealing to essentialist understandings of place and self as something waiting to be uncovered, in tribal realist terms asking the question, “How do we explain the Indigenous relationship with the land without appealing to spiritual concepts which are often mystified yet fundamental to that relationship?” (48). Teuton grounds this relationship in the integral role of storytelling: in the process of establishing geoidentity “[m]any Indigenous people [...] understand themselves and their attachment to land through tribal stories about the history of that land, contained in the oral tradition” (44). The integral role of storytelling in attachment to land has been theorized to the same extent and by many of the same literary theorists as the importance of land to identity formation. Just as identity has been theorized as story (by King in *The Truth About Stories* most recognizably), land is part and parcel of this process and triad: identity, land, and story.

Most often cited by historians, anthropologists, and literary scholars alike in discussions of a sense of place, Keith H. Basso in *Wisdom Sits in Places* recognizes the connection between story and land through his concept of place-making or place-worlds. Place-making consists of the processes of remembering and imagining, prompted by a questioning of what happened here (4-5). He contends, “If place-making is a way of constructing the past, a venerable means of *doing* human history, it is also a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities. We *are*, in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine” (7). In connecting place-worlds to identity, reminiscent of King’s “the truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (*The Truth About Stories* 2), Basso links (his)story, land, and identity. He goes on to

remark on the “discursive fashion” of discussing place-worlds, and on place-making as a form of “narrative art” (7, 33), emphasizing the significance of expression and representation of place-worlds and connections to place. He states,

Relationships to places may also find expression through the agencies of myth, prayer, music, dance, art, architecture, and, in many communities, recurrent forms of religious and political ritual. Thus represented and enacted – daily, monthly, seasonally, annually – places and their meanings are continually woven into the fabric of social life, anchoring it to features of the landscape and blanketing it with layers of significance. (109-10)

Basso outlines the role of discursive practices as imbricating place and its significance into both social life and landscape features through their representations and enactments. My interest lies in examining how Anishinaabe literature and narrative practices of Northwestern Ontario represent and enact these place-worlds and connections to land, and thus contribute to a sense of belonging.

Following Basso’s lead, Goeman explains regarding Indigenous connection to land that “maintaining these spatial relationships is one of the most important components of identity. Indigenous Nations claim land through a *discursive* communal sharing and land is not only given meaning through consensus of claiming territory, but also through *narrative practices*. It is invested in meaning and identity or identities” (24, emphasis added). Goeman emphasizes the interconnectedness of land, story, and identity, while also highlighting the importance of maintaining these relationships through discursive and narrative practices. I focus on these narrative practices and discourse, what I term discursive space, or in short, story, to analyze how they maintain and connect identity to land, ultimately producing place-based identity.

Discursive space is informed by human intellectual practices, both broader social practices and individual conceptual ones. On its most basic level it is space that is informed by, given meaning through, or related to discourse, or saturated, filled or imbued with discourse. Some examples of discursive space are written narrative, oral stories, prayer, and ceremony. In the context of this dissertation, I use discursive space as synonymous to a definition of Anishinaabe stories of the land in their broadest sense, aligning with King’s reference to Gerald Vizenor’s insight, “You can’t understand the world without telling a story” (qtd. in King, *The Truth About Stories* 32) and Armstrong’s wisdom, “I am a listener to the language’s stories, and when my words form I am merely retelling the same stories in different patterns” (Armstrong

146). Stories in this way shape identity and belonging, and are language and discourse. As Doerfler asserts, “we create ourselves with stories” (xx). My work looks specifically at how discursive space or story represents and constructs relations to land and how it ultimately maintains these relationships. Applying Goeman’s assertion that “unpacking and thinking about land, means to understand the physical in relation to the concepts of place, territory, and home, concepts given significant meaning through language” (23), I examine how physical land is related to discursive concepts of place, territory, and home. I argue that Anishinaabe discursive space creates a sense of place apart from the land and can negotiate multiple places, while maintaining an ecological awareness and relationship to physical land in accordance with traditional Anishinaabe conceptions of a land ethic and maintaining the balance of *mino-bimaadiziwin*. In so doing, I reveal an alternative to the land-based/displaced dichotomy found in much scholarship on Indigenous literature and look toward transportable definitions of home.

A focus on discursive space as connected to but separate from physical land affords movement and mobility and resists the containment and displacement of the reserve system. Once a connection to land is given an ideological or, as Basso puts it, a symbolic aspect, place-based identity has the potential to become portable:

For landscapes are always available to their seasoned inhabitants in more than material terms. Landscapes are available in symbolic terms as well, and so, chiefly through the manifold agencies of speech, they can be ‘detached’ from their fixed spatial moorings and transformed into instruments of thought and vehicles of purposive behavior. Thus transformed, landscapes and the places that fill them become tools for the imagination, expressive means for accomplishing verbal deeds, and also, of course, eminently portable possessions to which individuals can maintain deep and abiding attachments, regardless of where they travel. (75)

“Manifold agencies of speech” and “verbal deeds,” as components of discursive space, allow for “seasoned inhabitants” to carry places with them and maintain attachment even while travelling. In other words, a storied sense of place is not only restricted to physical landscape or location, but also moves to and is maintained in outside locales.

Discursive space not only includes traditional oral stories and historical knowledge or verbal speech, but also all forms of writing in both Indigenous and colonial languages. In *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*, Brooks looks at the way writing is

a tool for mapping what she terms “Native space.” She defines “Native space” as “a network of relations and waterways containing many different groups of people as well as animal, plant, and rock beings that was sustained through the constant transformative ‘being’ of its inhabitants” (3).⁵ Brooks’s definition of “Native space” delineates a direct connection to physical land. However, although she recognizes the existence of multiple relations within Native space, she does not make a distinction between discursive space and physical land, but sees a synthesis of relations and written mappings that results in her notion of “the common pot.” The common pot is “the conceptualization of a cooperative, interdependent Native environment [that] emerges from within Native space” and was “evoked [...] more frequently by Native writers as colonial control over Native lands increased (3). She maintains the instrumental role writing and language play in reconstructing and maintaining the common pot and the Native Space it nourishes, particularly in the face of colonization (xxvii). She states, “Indigenous writing, like corn, emerged from within Native space out of a great need. Native languages contain the map of the common pot, but writing in English is the means through which its boundaries have been maintained, asserted, and reclaimed” (254). Brooks acknowledges the potential of writing in English to uphold and feed Native space. While this theory is productive for arguments of sovereignty and relationality, and for establishing the integral role of writing in maintaining Indigenous connection to land, without separating discursive and physical spaces it does not account for transportable notions of home and belonging. Within Native space intellectual traditions are inextricably linked to the land. By disentangling the relationship between discursive space and physical land, I hope to further Brooks’s work by expanding its applicability to the movement and growth of contemporary Indigenous populations.

Examining discursive and physical space individually also becomes imperative in the context of settler colonialism. As soon as humans think or articulate anything about land it is always already informed by discourse, but it is necessary to separate the two because of the impact of removal and dislocation from land on a sense of belonging – in other words, because of the tearing apart of story and land as a tactic of settler colonialism to remove Indigenous peoples from the land. This removal is not only physical, but also ideological. As Tuck and Yang explain,

⁵ The term “Native Space” has also been used by Barnd and Martinez, Sage, and Ono.

Within settler colonialism, the most important concern is land/water/air/subterranean earth (land, for shorthand, in this article). Land is what is most valuable, contested, required. This is because the settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence. This violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation. (5)

The ongoing processes of settler colonialism motivated solely by control of land seek to disrupt Indigenous relationships to land, not only through physical removal, but also through violence against story and identity, epistemologically, ontologically, and cosmologically. In a recent conference presentation entitled “Terristory and Narrative Nullius: Theorizing Cultural Belonging in Indigenous Storying” at the 2018 Indigenous Literary Studies Association’s annual gathering, Warren Cariou asked “whether the distinction between story and land is itself part of the colonial process of commodification and separation that has disrupted so much of Indigenous culture and philosophy” (2). Goeman takes this questioning one step further, maintaining, “The sectioning of land into discrete territories to fit the interest of the nation-state depends on discursively denying indigenous peoples’ relationships to the land” (31-32). Settler colonialism co-opts discursive space in order to further deny Indigenous relationship to land. I would agree and add that disentangling and understanding the relationship between land and story can begin the process of reuniting them and reclaiming land identity.

Reuniting land and story reclaims land ideologically and has the potential to be in service of efforts of decolonization as an act of direct resistance to colonial tearing apart and separation of land and story. Goeman asserts, “Necessary to decolonization is reclaiming land physically and ideologically” (26). She particularly emphasizes the need to reclaim storied understandings and definitions of land in order to counter settler definitions of territory and ownership that have insidiously become the legal language of land claims:

While priority in Indigenous Studies and communities is rightly given to the reclaiming and protection of material land, it is also important to reclaim the narrative connections to places as well – or to repair our relationships with the land and each other. The land remains in place so to speak. It is our narrative relationship to the land that has been impacted through the “echoes” of colonial discourse. (27)

Reclaiming narrative connections to land generatively refuses colonial discourse and, in turn, colonial dispossession of lands through the disruption of Indigenous ideological relationships to land. Goeman advocates for “Recognizing a connection to land beyond property or facile definitions of limited territory and turning to cultural practices [as] part of ‘a radical alternative to the structural and psycho-affective facets of colonial domination’” (Goeman 31, qting. Coulthard). Drawing on Glen Sean Coulthard’s work in *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Goeman places reclaiming narrative connections to land within a framework of refusing settler-state recognition of Indigenous land, which only seeks to uphold the land as “dead space that contains ‘different’ people” (31). Reclaiming narrative connections and refusing settler discursive space “generates indigenous community belonging and holds back settling transgressors” (25). Repudiating recognition from the settler state for land rights and sovereignty, Coulthard argues, centres Indigenous nation-building in grounded normativity: a procedural, lived, and engaged nation and place-based ethical framework of internal and grounded intelligence and ethics (Coulthard 60).

This type of generative refusal centred in grounded normativity is an integral part of Indigenous resurgence practices as theorized by Coulthard, Jeff Corntassel and Cheryl Bryce, and Simpson, among others. Resurgence comes from an inward-looking focus and presencing of everyday place-based acts, practices, and lived realities of Indigenous people, and reasserts Indigenous agency (Elliot 70). Resurgence avoids oppositional frameworks that inevitably reinforce or can be co-opted by settler discourses to maintain and uphold the status quo of the settler state. Resurgence enacted through everyday place-based practices works outside of these oppositional frameworks and, with regards to land, is rooted in attachment as opposed to possession. According to Simpson, in Anishinaabe thought, the opposite of dispossession of land is not possession, but connection. Refusing dispossession through connection generates the alternative to capitalist, white supremacist and heteropatriarchal settler state control beyond the structures of that control (*As We Have Always Done* 185, 227). Resurgence, then, is a matter of reclaiming or taking back space by actively maintaining land-based practices, instead of waiting for land to be given back from settler colonial governments (242). With my work, I seek to support the reclaiming of Indigenous narrative, ideological, and symbolic – in other words discursive – connections to land and to recognize resurgent Indigenous place-based practices of attachment that exist outside of colonial processes. In this way, I do not focus on legal land

claims or land repatriation per se, but on place-based resurgent narrative practices and discursive spaces, which are, according to Goeman, a necessary part of decolonization efforts.

I employ the term decolonization carefully and contingently. Both Goeman and Natchee Blu Barnd use the term decolonization and see the reuniting of land, story, and identity as holding decolonizing potential. Barnd maintains in *Native Space: Geographic Strategies to Unsettle Settler Colonialism*, that

indigeneity and space are mutually bound frameworks, and yet they are in need of attention given the urgent context of settler colonialism. By focusing on the fundamental relationship between indigeneity and space, I contend that we can better recognize the decolonizing possibilities and actualities of indigenous geographies. (2)

Seeing indigeneity as bound in story, I read Barnd's statement as in support of an examination of the relationship between story and land, the discursive and the physical, indigeneity and space, in order to recognize the decolonizing possibilities of what he terms Indigenous geographies, in other words, Native space. Neither Goeman nor Barnd directly states that reclaiming or focusing on these two types of space is decolonizing, but they do state that this work can provisionally and potentially support or lay the groundwork for such efforts. I follow their lead and intend decolonizing potentialities for this work.

Although I support resurgent practices that reclaim land both physically and discursively, I understand that my work is not decolonizing in and of itself. This work does not repatriate or physically return land and, therefore, cannot be decolonizing. As explained by Tuck and Yang, "decolonization in a settler context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted; that is, *all* of the land, and not just symbolically" (7). Although I hope my work recognizes "how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted," symbolically, ideologically, and discursively, I am not physically returning land, and as a white settler am still complicit in and benefit from settler colonial structures and processes. My solidarity to decolonizing efforts is incommensurable with the position, power, and privilege

I currently hold and is necessarily only contingent in so far as it can be taken up strategically to support decolonization efforts.⁶

Ethical Positioning

As a white settler scholar I am unceasingly critical of my own position within the Indigenous Literature field and in Canada more broadly. I commit to continually asking myself, how does my work benefit Indigenous peoples and what space am I taking up? The answers to these questions are necessarily in flux, responsive, and accountable to Indigenous scholars and communities from whom I take my lead. I am kin to my brother, Kai Meekis, who is a member of Sandy Lake First Nation and have been claimed as kin, sister, and auntie by close Indigenous friends, but this kinship resides in these individual relationships, responsibilities, and obligations, and I cannot claim an overall kinship to Indigenous peoples.⁷ I have also been gifted the relationship of being an ally by individual friends and colleagues, but again, allyship is an individual responsibility and accountably that I strive my best to maintain in all aspects of my work, not a label or position that I can claim generally.⁸ I also conduct myself as a respectful guest when invited to traditional territory or to participate in events, but recognize that as a settler I was not invited to be on these lands and therefore cannot claim to be a guest here more generally.⁹

⁶ I follow here “an ethic of incommensurability” as outlined by Tuck and Yang following Fanon’s lead, “which guides moves that unsettle innocence, [and] stands in contrast to aims of reconciliation, which motivate settler moves to innocence” (35).

⁷ At the 2018 Indigenous Literary Studies Association’s Annual Conference at First Nations University in Regina, Saskatchewan, Keavy Martin’s presentation “Treating As Buffalo: Kinship Observances and Appropriations” sparked compelling conversation about the cooption of kinship by settlers and the dangers of its overwhelming emotional response. Martin highlighted concerns of complacency and inaction that can come from appropriating kinship as a settler move to innocence that emotionally quells guilt, but is ultimately damaging toward decolonizing efforts.

⁸ I employ the term ally in accordance with Sam McKegney’s work on allyship in *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School*: “Most importantly, the non-Native ally must recognize and act out of a sense of responsibility to Indigenous communities in general and specifically to those whose creative work is being analyzed” (45).

⁹ I draw upon Allison Hargreaves’s exploration of guest/visitor positioning in her contribution to *Learn, Teach, Challenge: Approaching Indigenous Literatures*, “‘The lake is the people and life that come to it’: Location as Critical Practice.” Hargreaves underscores the importance of locating the self in Indigenous territory, an act that carries political responsibilities. She explains, “location is about trying to understand myself as a guest with a specific relation to treaty history,

In my own explorations of what an ethical position looks like for a white settler, I have thought about the position of neighbour. “Neighbour” is a term that Wagemese frequently puts forth as an ideal relationship between all people living in Canada. He states, “we’re all neighbours. That’s the plain and simple truth of it” and “this work [land claims and treaty rights] requires us to come together” (*One Native Life* 36). Being neighbours means “we share things. We help each other. We learn each other’s stories [...]” and we participate in “straight-talk, for an earnest leaning-over-the-back-fence kind of talk between neighbours [...]” (*One Native Life* 214, 36). Although a seemingly simple concept, being a good neighbour takes a lifetime of conversations, ethical engagement, humility, respect, and commitment to real and individual relationships as part of a concerted effort to decolonize and reindigenize the places everyone on this land calls home. It is also grounded in land, and has the potential to account for true nation-to-nation relationships that are founded in equality and mutual respect, recognizing the autonomy of Indigenous nations as opposed to paternalistic policy that only serves to control. The position of neighbour is more in line with Indigenous concepts of land connection, care, and sharing. Hunter, in the poem “Shake the Feathers” from his collection *Spirit Horses*, uses the term to ruminate over what being in relationship with all elements on the land looks like: “Walking through the woods, encountering the same hawk, the same animals, the same, quiet, blue heron, reminds me and causes me to ponder the notion of being a neighbour, a friend, a relative, sharing the same piece of land, drinking of the same water day after day, sleeping under the same expanse of sky night after night, dreaming. Dreaming” (61). Being able to recognize that we live on this land together, drink the same water, and sleep under the same stars creates a sense of shared responsibility to take care of the land and each other. As part of my research, I have been conducting my own homework in an effort to confront settler amnesia and understand the Indigenous stories and histories of the place I call home, Thunder Bay, Ontario, that in many cases have been erased by settler colonialism and racism, including the residential school history I began with. Anishinaabe stories of land formations, non-human inhabitants, reserve designations, residential schools, and contemporary activism help me understand my sense of place and position as a settler and neighbour in my own community.

to historic relations of diplomacy, and to conceptions of territory and nation that precede my ancestors’ arrival here” (110).

But being a neighbour is not good enough. Before being able to enter into good relationship and neighbourly friendship, settler Canadians must accept the terms on which they currently inhabit this land. Canadians have a long history of being terrible neighbours to Indigenous peoples, and although the concept of neighbourliness presents certain parameters for being in good relationship with one another, it does not directly confront the structures and processes of settler colonialism and has the potential, much like concepts of kinship or allyship, to be co-opted as a move to settler innocence and in turn, used to uphold the status quo of the settler state. Being a neighbour also relies on an understanding of equal ownership (you have your property and I have mine), which is not the present reality in Canada between Indigenous and settler inhabitants. I believe that before or at least alongside settler populations being good neighbours, settlers must first/also be good tenants, particularly those of us living in treaty territory.¹⁰ Tenantship provides a Euro-western framework for placing ourselves in Canada that does not rely on the benevolent or reconciliatory extension of relationship from Indigenous peoples. I envisage three basic rules for being a good tenant that, although seemingly simple and common sense, are rules Canada has broken and continues repeatedly to break:

1. Pay your rent. Since the signing of each of the treaties in Canada, the colonial government has failed to provide the agreed-upon recompense for the lease of land. Rent can and should also be raised and renegotiated to match inflation rates and as it suits the landlords and owners (Indigenous Nations).
2. Do not damage property. This includes destroying the environment, building infrastructure, and/or resource extraction not approved or sanctioned by the landlords.
3. Do not steal. This not only relates to resource extraction, but also includes the stealing of children to residential schools, culture, stories, art, intellectual property (traditional knowledge), and ceremonies.

I feel confident as a seasoned tenant with many years of student rental living experience that these three golden rules are fairly universal and straightforward, and yet somehow Canada has broken and continues to break every single one. Underlying the position of tenant is first and foremost acknowledging Indigenous title to the land and accepting the possibility that settler Canadians can be evicted for breaking any one of these aforementioned rules. As I am not

¹⁰ For those living on unceded territories, being a good tenant means accepting that the terms on which one stays there have not yet been negotiated and will only be determined by the Indigenous nations of that land.

trained in politics or law, I cannot pretend to know how these rules would be implemented or enforced, or prescribe the particular terms for each Nations' rental/lease agreements. These terms are to be determined by Indigenous Nations themselves. But I hope that proposing this positioning for settler Canadians assists in imagining a decolonial future. I think many settler Canadians easily dismiss the potential for true decolonization – that is the full repatriation of land – because of fear, but at the same time the impossibility that all settler Canadians will be forced to leave the country (which arguably also stems from deep anxiety about colonial control of land). We as settler Canadians first need to imagine this possibility and recognize the incommensurability of our position here, but perhaps also recognize the potential that we will be permitted to stay as immigrants, provided that we can follow the rules. All people living in this land currently called Canada may even be able to be good neighbours to one another.

Chapter Breakdown

Within this dissertation, each chapter offers a particular aspect of and alternative method for establishing relationship to land. As Margaret Noodin in her recent publication *Bawaajimo: A Dialect of Dreams in Anishinaabe Language and Literature* states,

we find there is no magical, predictable method of becoming “one with nature.” Not only is there no single, pantribal approach, there is not even a single way that nature will affect members of one gender or one generation let alone one tribe. [...] Each person must find her (or his) own way to belong to this earth [...]. (57)

While allowing for the multiplicity, individuality, and complexity that Noodin highlights in finding belonging to the earth, representations of these various aspects and methods are still productive sites of analysis in determining the role of discursive space in defining a sense of place and home. Although there may not be a universal or singular way to connect with place, the possibilities of employing discursive space to negotiate multiple types of connection to land are worth detailing.

Each of my chapters is roughly organized according to an author and element of connection to land, either spiritual through knowledge and protocol, emotional through reading affect, mental through spatial cognition, or physical through work on the land. These four aspects of connection broadly reflect teachings of an Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel and together generate a definition of connection to land that is holistic and embodied. Although connection can be

found through each of these aspects, in alignment with teachings of the Medicine Wheel, they cannot be completely separated from each other, but are interconnected pieces of the whole. As D'Arcy Rheault explains in *Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin (The Way of the Good Life): An Examination of Anishinaabe Philosophy, Ethics and Traditional Knowledge*, "The four aspects [spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental] intersect at the centre where the 'self' is whole. These are artificial divisions of the interconnected reality of each person" (164). He further elucidates, "the wheel conceptually divides what is interconnected in Creation. It allows a person the ability to grasp the utter complexity of Creation in small, manageable pieces so that they can begin to reflect on various aspects, and then move to the next" (143). I have attempted to discuss the complexity of Anishinaabe connection to land through analysis of these manageable pieces by dividing my chapters into these four aspects of being. However, an ideal connection and interconnection to land contains the engagement of all four quadrants of being.

My reliance on the Medicine Wheel in this chapter organization is not intended to be prescriptive or used as an applied methodology, and the four aspects are purely elements that emerged as dominant modes of a holistic connection from my readings of each author's work. I acknowledge that there are also numerous teachings and understandings of the Medicine Wheel, none of which I have personally received from an Anishinaabe Elder and therefore, do not delve into detail about Medicine Wheel teachings in general. Going forward, in order to draw a more concrete correlation between my theories of Anishinaabe connection to land and the Medicine Wheel, I would find it necessary to connect with local community members and Elders willing to provide guidance in this regard. I rely upon, instead, Rheault's work and Wagamese's descriptions and depictions of these teachings in his writings. Although delineating my chapters as they roughly correspond to aspects of the Medicine Wheel may appear orderly and straightforward, this organization also elides some of the complexity of each author's representation of connection to land as I focus on only one predominant method, when in many cases all are present in holistic relationships to land.

The first chapter of my dissertation, "Difficult Kinships: Spiritual Knowledge and Protocol in Relationship to Mishipeshu," corresponding to the spiritual aspect of the Medicine Wheel, analyzes traditional Anishinaabe conceptions of the land as expressed through literary representations of the Great Lynx, Mishipeshu. Through a literary history of Northwestern Ontario representations of Mishipeshu in pictographs, Midewiwin birch bark scrolls, written

records of oral stories, and contemporary stories, I interrogate the concept of kinship as a way of defining connection and relationship to land. Daniel Heath Justice, among many others, claims that “the tribal web of kinship rights and responsibilities [...] link[s] the People, the land, and the cosmos together in an ongoing and dynamic system of mutually affecting relationships” (“Go Away Water” 151). Although an interconnected and interdependent ecological awareness of the type Justice suggests remains integral to understanding one’s sense of place, the extension of kinship to malevolent, unpredictable, and overly powerful entities such as Mishipeshu is challenging. A relationship to Mishipeshu as controller and representative of dangerous waters inevitably must be based on careful negotiations, utmost respect, knowledge of protocols and expected behaviours, and in some instances complete avoidance. Relationship to Mishipeshu and, in turn, the physical bodies of water he resides in as a part of the land, is defined by the spiritual knowledge, protocols, and respect taught through his stories.

The second chapter, “Feeling Home: Reading Affect in the Poetry of Al Hunter,” corresponding to the emotional aspect of the Medicine Wheel, begins my discussion of published contemporary literary voices of Northwestern Ontario with an examination of the work of poet Al Hunter (*Days of Obsidian*, *Days of Grace*, *Spirit Horses*, *The Recklessness of Love*, *Beautiful Razor*). Hunter’s poetry contemplates a connection to land based not necessarily upon set knowledge or practices, but on the ability to listen to the land and feel its presence. I situate this chapter alongside the research of Keith Basso, and Jeanette Armstrong’s seminal essay “Land Speaking,” in order to theorize a relationship to place based on the ability to read the stories embedded in the land and hear the stories the land tells as part of a reciprocal communication expressed through feeling and sensation. Although any attempt to retell or explain these stories inevitably is shaped by discourse, I determine how affect theory may illuminate the inexplicable feelings of connection to physical land apart from discursive space. Contrary to focusing on human intellectual practices, affect theory is “grounded in movements or flashes of somatic activity rather than causal narratives of their origins and end points” (Figlerowicz 4), and as Mark Rifkin suggests in his work on *The Erotics of Sovereignty*, has the potential to address modes of placemaking through individual and collective sensations. I critically assess the specificities of feeling, sensation, and emotional attachment to the land in Northwestern Ontario in this chapter.

The third chapter, “Intellectual Wondering and Wandering: Spatial Cognition in the Work of George Kenny,” corresponding to the mental aspect of the Medicine Wheel, begins to assess colonial separations of urban and reserve places by tracing George Kenny’s representations of the process of finding a sense of place when moving between reserve and urban environments (*Indians Don’t Cry, October Stranger*). Kenny’s work explores the paradox of necessary dislocation to urban centres and the navigation of racist settler society once there, but foregrounds an individual intellectual process of wondering that brings agency and presence to his place in the city. In alignment with more recent Urban Indigenous Studies scholarship, I interpret Kenny’s representation of negative experience of urban centres, not as reinforcing colonial expectations and stereotypes of unbelonging in the city, but as asserting his experience of resisting these expectations and negotiating how to see himself in those places. Kenny explores a cognitive place-based identity by representing his own discursive intellectual processes and struggles in connecting to physical land in both urban and rural settings, and in turn deconstructs and resists easy colonial discursive dichotomies of the urban as non-Indigenous and the rural as Indigenous place.

Following this discussion of movement between reserve and urban places, my fourth chapter, “Homemaking: Resurgent Place-based Work in Ruby Slipperjack’s Novels,” corresponding to the physical aspect of the Medicine Wheel, examines the fiction of Ruby Slipperjack and her depictions of fluid mobility and movement between multiple types of places (*Honour the Sun, Silent Words, Weesquachak and the Lost Ones*.) I explore how Slipperjack’s work complicates limiting and potentially regressive definitions of an original or singular home on the land by representing movement and blurred divisions between various reserve, urban, and rural communities as well as colonially contaminated, imperfect home-places across traditional Anishinaabe territory in Northwestern Ontario. In alignment with more recent scholarship by Simpson, Corntassel and Bryce, and Coulthard, I foreground my analysis of Slipperjack’s work in Indigenous presence, decolonization, and resurgence, shifting definitions of home from those that reinforce colonially imposed reserve boundaries and restrict Indigenous mobility to those centred in “daily existence[s] conditioned by place-based practices” (Corntassel and Bryce 153). Slipperjack’s novels recount these daily existences, re-inscribing various forms of embodied, physical, and daily place-based practices that occur in spite of the damaging effects and consequences of settler colonialism. I argue that her work exposes the difficult reality of being

physically present on the land and demonstrates the hard work required of a subsistence-based relationship to land. Through her novels, Slipperjack re-envisioned homecoming as homemaking: a cumulative and ongoing process that actively establishes relationship to land through physical presence and embodied place-based work, and reclaims Indigenous presence and belonging.

Serving as a gathering of all aspects of the Medicine Wheel, my last chapter, “Carrying Home: Transportable Stories and Land in Richard Wagamese’s Novels,” looks at Wagamese’s representations of holistic connections to land that contain both elements of land and story. I argue that throughout his writings, Wagamese expresses a transportable definition of home that includes both interaction with physical place and discursive understandings of belonging. I apply Russell West-Pavlov’s theory of literary DieXis to describe the complex chiasmic interplay between physical land and discursive place in Wagamese’s representations of relationship to land. Through close readings of Wagamese’s two penultimate novels,¹¹ *Indian Horse* and *Medicine Walk*, I trace how he represents mirrored journeys of finding and carrying home through reconnecting land and story. Wagamese contributes to a larger discursive space that reconceptualizes and redefines notions of Indigenous home by representing the method of this process of reuniting land and story.

Finally, in my conclusion, I theorize an Anishinaabe place-based identity and home that is grounded in teachings of the Medicine Wheel and traditional/historical migrations. These concepts encompass the movement and transportability that discursive space affords Anishinaabe connection to land, and the landmarks and resting places that provide physical connection to land. I conclude by gesturing to future postdoctoral work that further explores the role of Anishinaabe literature as a larger discursive space that helps establish and maintain connections to land for its Indigenous readers. By conducting community-based research in the form of book clubs in a variety of Anishinaabe communities in Thunder Bay and its surrounding area, I plan to examine how Anishinaabe participants read, engage with, and use the literature in their own understandings of place-based identity.

Focusing on both discursive and physical space, on both story and land, holds decolonizing potential and reinforces Indigenous belonging and presence. As Barnd reiterates,

¹¹ Wagamese’s unfinished final novel, *Starlight*, was posthumously published on August 14, 2018, one month before this dissertation’s submission date and, therefore, is not included.

Indigenous geographies proclaim 'we are still here' in a most grounded way. In the context of a settler colonial world, they serve as a reminder of presence despite centuries of material, philosophical, and social structures founded on producing Native absence. (1)

The literary voices and representations from Northwestern Ontario reclaim these Indigenous geographies and reassert Anishinaabe presence and belonging.

1 Difficult Kinships: Spiritual Knowledge and Protocol in Relationship to Mishipeshu

Stories hold the histories and spiritual presences of places, just as the places in turn hold stories and memory. For Anishinaabeg, stories define human relationship and connection to certain places by teaching appropriate behaviours, protocols, and a moral code, collectively described by Callicott and Nelson and others as a land ethic. Many critics, including myself and most notably Daniel Heath Justice in “Go Away Water!”, have found it useful to describe an Indigenous relationship to land through terms of kinship. Kinship includes active rights and responsibilities and affords the complexity and messiness of relationship that a romanticized or essentialized notion of connection to land does not.¹² Kinship is a participatory form of relationship that, if not with direct blood relatives, involves extending familial responsibilities and obligations to non-family and/or non-human entities. But how exactly is each entity in a particular ecology considered kin? What are the individual participatory practices that enact kinship? And how are these practices known and learned? Asking these questions is necessary in order to avoid similar pitfalls of the over-generalization and romanticization of an affinity to land when applying the concept of kinship to this connection.

In Northwestern Ontario Anishinaabe territory there is one entity who is “never called a grandfather for he does not help humans” (Smith, *Island of the Anishnaabeg* 121): Mishipeshu. This Great Underwater Lynx/sea serpent lives in “bad” lakes (Smith, “Landscape as Narrative” 65) and most notably in Northwestern Ontario’s Lake Superior, “the center of Anishinaabewakiing, or Anishinaabe country, [...] the life-giving *gaming*, the ‘vast-water’” (Noodin 1). Mishipeshu is feared and dangerous, and he has been described as malevolent and unpredictable. Anishinaabe scholar Melissa K. Nelson describes him as “a Water spirit. Panther serpent. Horned snake. Underwater Lynx. Water Keeper. Lake Guardian. River Protector. Storm Maker. Child Taker. Copper Medicine Maker” (217). How is kinship extended to such an uncontrollable and ambiguous being? And how might this extension change the definition of “doing” kinship?

¹² See discussion in the introduction about the dangers of such an overgeneralized view of Indigenous connection to land.

Few Indigenous literary scholars have written about Mishipeshu, especially in comparison to other popularized Anishinaabe Manidoog like the “trickster” Nanabush and cannibalistic Windigo (see discussions in *Troubling Tricksters* and Mishipeshu’s conspicuous absence in Basil Johnston’s work except for a very short story he collected and translated from Sam Ozawamik in *The Bear-Walker and Other Stories*). Perhaps, this absence is because of Mishipeshu’s more ambiguous and dangerous role, as well as his historical relegation as taboo, particularly in later characterizations of him as Maji-Manidoo or the evil Manidoo, which were closely aligned with the Devil through Christian influence (Smith, *Island of the Anishinaabeg* 104). The few mentions of him in scholarship have been in reference to his characterization in Anishinaabe author Louise Erdrich’s novels.¹³ Victoria Brehm in “The Metamorphoses of an Ojibwa Manido,” in a similar way to the structure of this chapter, traces his presence in traditional oral stories, Midewiwin practices, and Erdrich’s work in order to show the redefinition of his role by various storytellers as a sign of “the enduring and sustaining power of cultural tradition” (699). I find it more productive to conduct a regionally specific literary history of Mishipeshu in relation to conceptualizations of kinship to the land.

By conducting a literary history of Mishipeshu and close reading various textual representations of the stories of Mishipeshu from Northwestern Ontario in the form of pictographs, Midewiwin birch bark scrolls, recorded oral stories, and contemporary manifestations, I examine the complexities and the “bad things” that are encompassed within a kinship relationship to Mishipeshu and, in turn, expand and redefine notions of kinship to land. I argue that what is missing from current conceptions and scholarship of kinship to the land is a relationship to the uncontrollable and powerful, the fearsome and the dangerous. Kinship to Mishipeshu is maintained through traditional spiritual knowledge, protocol, and humility, and teaches how to be in relationship with something more powerful than humans and beyond human control. He explains and frames the place of extreme trauma and loss within a larger balance of the land and interconnected ecosystem. Mishipeshu teaches how to respect and take caution around dangerous waters, and in turn establishes a human relationship to those places. He teaches reciprocal responsibility as those who offer gifts to him and stay out of his way may receive plentiful fish and safe passage over water. He also establishes relationships to power as

¹³ Erdrich is a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians based in Belcourt, North Dakota, and currently lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and is therefore, outside the regional purview of my dissertation.

an enforcer of balanced relationships and an arbiter of kinship to land. Kinship to land and water, which includes beings like Mishipeshu, must be actively negotiated through understandings of these types of particular and individual relationships and protocols in order to maintain and keep a balanced network of kinship relations.

The study of kinship as a societal structure in Indigenous communities started in the field of anthropology in the mid- to late 1800s (Peletz 344). As the theories progressed and found their way into the fields of Native Studies, sociology, and literary criticism, with the extension of kinship terms to non-blood relatives and to other-than-human entities, many scholars acknowledged that Indigenous peoples are connected through kinship to the land and the cosmos. Raymond DeMallie in his contribution to *Studying Native America*, “Kinship: the Foundation for Native American Society,” states that “there is more to kinship than social relationships among family or tribal members, for in virtually every American Indian society kinship is culturally defined to include the relationship of human beings to all other forms of existence in a vast web of cosmic interrelationship in which humans stand at the bottom or on the periphery” (306). Thomas King expresses similar sentiments with reference to the axiom “all my relations”:

“All my relations” is at first a reminder of who we are and of our relationship with both our family and our relatives. It also reminds us of the extended relationships we share with all human beings. But the relationships that Native people see go further, the web of kinship extending to the animals, to the birds, to the fish, to the plants, to all the animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined. (*All My Relations* ix)

Both King and Demaille express the importance of a web of kinship bonds that extend beyond familial blood relations to humans and other-than-humans in an Indigenous context. More recently, Daniel Heath Justice in his work on kinship criticism refers to the same “tribal web of kinship rights and responsibilities that link the People, the land, and the cosmos together in an ongoing and dynamic system of mutually affecting relationships” (“Go Away Water!” 151). Kinship is an integral concept in understanding societal structures, nationhood, and peoplehood, and in ensuring active participation in living, dynamic, and reciprocal rights and responsibilities to and in Indigenous communities. Justice adds significantly to the notion of kinship by stressing its necessary adaptability, complexity, diversity, and messiness. As he summarizes, “It’s what we do for family” (167). So what happens when family is malevolent, hurtful, or perhaps even murderous, as is the case with Mishipeshu?

Even though much scholarship has been conducted on the specificities and particularities of human-to-human kinship systems in Indigenous societies, kinship to the land has not been explicated or interrogated to the same extent. In the field of anthropology, Enrique Salmón proposes an Indigenous “Kincentric Ecology,” which “pertains to the manner in which indigenous people view themselves as part of an extended ecological family that shares ancestry and origins. It is an awareness that life in any environment is viable only when humans view the life surrounding them as kin. The kin, or relatives, include all the natural elements of an ecosystem” (“Kincentric Ecology” 1332). This type of ecological interconnectedness speaks to the many kinship terms that are often applied to various natural and spiritual elements. For example, in an Anishinaabe context, Cary Miller in *Ogimaag: Anishinaabeg Leadership 1760-1845* explains, “Their use of kinship terms indicates respect and intimacy with the divine and reveals the Anishinaabe belief that manidoog communities have the same social construction as those of humans, as demonstrated in their oral tradition” (27).¹⁴ She goes on to explain that the Anishinaabeg use two levels of kinship terms to signal the respect and love given to family members: the first level to indicate similarity, and the second respect for greater spiritual power: “The terms brothers and sisters referred to the animals and plants of the natural world and their manidoog” (27), whereas the second level of spirit beings are addressed as “grandmothers and grandfathers. [...] The Anishinaabe language thus supports a world view teeming not only with living, sentient beings but also with relatives who communicate with people on an intimate level” (28). These kinship terms recognize shared personhood and familial ties with both physical and spiritual presences in the environment, and demonstrate an interconnected ecology of relatives.

Anishinaabe scholar Winona LaDuke outlines the importance of many of these kin terms in her understanding of “All Our Relations”:

Native American teachings describe the relations all around – animals, fish, trees, and rocks – as our brothers, sisters, uncles, and grandpas. Our relations to each other, our prayers whispered across generations to our relatives, are what bind our cultures together.

¹⁴ See Miller’s discussion of the inaccuracy of translating the concept of *manidoog* into the English word *spirit*. She gestures to Basil Johnston’s translation instead of “spiritual, mystical, supernatural, godlike, or spiritlike, quiddity, essence [...] not just in the context of manitou beings. Manitou refers to [...] the unseen realities of individual beings and places and events that are beyond human understanding but are still clearly real” (qtd. in Miller 7).

The protection, teachings, and gifts of our relatives have for generations preserved our families. These relations are honored in ceremony, song, story, and life that keeps traditions close – to buffalo, sturgeon, salmon, turtles, bears, wolves, and panthers. These are our older relatives – the ones who came before and taught us how to live. (2)

LaDuke not only labels these relations with specific kin terms, but also outlines how those terms translate into the binding of culture and preservation of families. For LaDuke, her relatives teach how to live and ensure the continuance of each generation.

Kinship terms of relatives are also found in the Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag or the totemic or clan system. As Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair states in his dissertation, “Nindoodemag Bagijiganan: A History of Anishinaabeg Narrative,”

principles found in the Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag, the totemic system[,] [a]rticulat[e] the specific and interconnected ways circles of Anishinaabeg relationality operate[.]

Anishinaabeg Nindoodemag is formed through two concepts, enawendiwin (strands connecting all parts of creation) and waawiyeyaag (interwoven systems of circularity).

These come together to construct nindinawemaganidog (all of my relations), a law found in traditional expressions like treaties, birchbark, and beadwork and contemporary forms like poetry, paintings, and novels. (ii)

Through Nindoodemag, Anishinaabeg establish other-than-human relational networks that connect all parts of creation. In this way, kinship interweaves all parts of creation and is present in all elements of a relationship to land.

Imbuing the land with kinship defines and ensures stewardship and care for the ecosystem as a whole. The concept of kinship realizes the interconnected relationship between human health and environmental health, and delineates the practical responsibilities of this larger societal structure. As DeMallie states, “Kinship terms delineate specific patterns of cooperation and relatedness for particular societies. More than labels, kin terms are inextricably linked with patterns of behavior, attitudes, and emotions. In this way they provide a normative structure within which individuals act as they go about their daily lives” (324). Sam McKegney in “Indigenous Environmental Ethics and the Limits of Cultural Evolutionary Thinking” also stresses how kinship structures within the environment are linked to behaviour and attitudes, maintaining, “The rational and balanced individual is necessarily awake to her or his immersion within ecosystemic networks that function according to reciprocal responsibilities” (307).

Kinship delineates these reciprocal responsibilities toward the land and, as Justice reinforces, that relationship “is something that’s *done* more than something that simply *is*” (“Go Away Water!” 150). Justice goes on to explain,

While the land herself is of central concern to most indigenous epistemologies, we don’t know her outside of our relationship(s) to her (or to the other peoples who depend on her for survival). We often call her Mother; we – like the Animal-people and Tree-people – are her kindred, and ours is a relationship of reciprocity. She gives life and sustenance to us; we (ideally) give her respect, honor, and care. Beyond the earth itself are our relationships with other spirit-beings and peoples, all of which depend on attentive engagement; as Kimberly Blaeser (Anishinaabe) indicates, kinship on the microcosm level gives evidence of the health and significance of the macrocosm: “Perhaps we rejoice at the smallest encounter of relatedness because it signals the greater.” (162-63)

Justice details the “doing” of kinship as relational reciprocity and attentive engagement that is directly linked to respect, honour, and care, and reflective of greater human and environmental health.

The significance and integral role kinship plays in the normative structure of most Indigenous societies and their relationships to the environment is undeniable; however, I am interested in those dangerous natural elements that are not assigned direct kinship terms, such as Mishipeshu, or Windigo, for that matter. Neither is considered “brother” or “grandfather” and neither are ancestral clan doodemag. Theresa Smith, in *The Island of the Anishinaabeg: Thunderers and Water Monsters in the Traditional Ojibwe Life-World*, outlines that she found through her fieldwork with Manitoulin Island Anishinaabe First Nations that “While *matci-manitouk* like the windigo and Mishebeshu share in a fundamental peoplehood with humans, they are not family members. Their defiance of ordinary rules of behavior between kinfolk and friends is an indication of their fundamental strangeness and malevolence” (121). Smith argues that Mishipeshu is not family and breaks the expected behaviours of kinship obligations; however, he is extended “peoplehood.” Although Smith refers to a belief that Mishipeshu is a person, I connect this extension of likeness to an understanding of collective peoplehood that recognizes Mishipeshu’s role in an interconnected relationality. Justice defines peoplehood as “the relational system that keeps the people in balance with one another, with other peoples and realities, and with the world” (“Go Away Water!” 152), aligning this extension with degrees of

kinship. In an Anishinaabe-specific context, Miller recognizes the extension of peoplehood to other-than-human entities in the environment: “The Anishinaabeg understood themselves to be part of a populous world in which the spiritual definition of personhood extended far beyond the human sphere to animals, birds, plants, natural forces, and all manner of life” (Miller 8).

Combining this definition and extension of peoplehood with Smith’s acknowledgment of personhood in Mishipeshu, I argue that a relationship to Mishipeshu exists within a network of balanced kinship relations, even if he is not directly referred to as grandfather or brother. He is an element of creation, of the cosmos, of the land, and as such, is a relation.

A relationship to Mishipeshu is also often reciprocal (in his control of waters and fish, he can grant safe passage and plentiful food, as well as spiritual power if given the proper respect, protocol, and offerings) and most definitely requires attentive engagement, even if that engagement is in the form of knowing where he resides and avoiding those places. As Smith states, “Mishebeshu also responds to respect. But his relational demands [...] are terrifyingly huge, [...] so huge that sometimes one must, eventually give up a human life (even one’s own) in order to appease him” (“Landscape as Narrative” 65-66). However, Smith’s perhaps inadvertent pessimism fails to recognize or extend Anishinaabe kinship bonds to Mishipeshu. Even though he is not given kinship titles and is unpredictable and at times murderous, Mishipeshu is still a relation in an interconnected web of creation. These relational demands are terrifyingly huge, but his relationality and personhood are still present and a relationship to him still demands a certain set of active responsibilities and obligations. If kinship is defined expansively as the interconnection between all elements of creation, how is kinship extended and maintained to Mishipeshu? How is this relationship defined? What does it mean to have a kinship bond to an entity that could take away your child or drown you with one unpredictable swish of his tail? I argue that Mishipeshu represents Anishinaabe conceptions of power, and that through humility, respect, protocol, traditional knowledge, avoidance, and continual engagement and negotiation through a sometimes physical struggle and perseverance, a relationship to Mishipeshu teaches humility and maintains balanced kinship bonds to the land through powerful consequences and punishments. Kinship needs to include the hurtful, fearful, forced, and dangerous relationships found with the land. Without careful attentiveness to particular and various types of kinship bonds, I worry that the concept of “kinship to the land” can fall into the trap of overgeneralizations and romanticizations that divorce connection to the land from a true

awareness of an individual place and each of its inhabitants, human, other-than-human, animate, inanimate etc. As Smith states, “it would be wrong to give the impression that the Anishnaabe cosmos was or is some kind of enchanted fairyland. While it is en-souled reality, not all souls are good, not all persons are to be trusted” (61). Justice similarly warns, “In order to explore ethical criticism, we have to be prepared for complexity and eschew simplistic explanations that do little to illuminate the world and much to obscure it” (“Go Away Water!” 154). The land includes dangerous and fearful elements that are interacted with in specific and individual ways and require knowledge and protocol taught through traditional Anishinaabe stories. The land necessarily is imbued with this power in order for Anishinaabeg to truly respect and be humbled by the places they live.

Mishipeshu exists as both an entity and presence on the land as well as within the stories told about him. Anishinaabeg develop a relationship with Mishipeshu through the discursive space of stories. Stories are how one can know Mishipeshu and know how to behave around him and the waters he inhabits. The discursive space of Mishipeshu is so closely related to his being that strict seasonal protocols about not telling his stories or mentioning his name in summer are often observed, because of, as Smith observes, “the belief that if lakes were free of ice, then Mishibeshu might visit the storytellers. Since to speak someone’s name was to conjure that person, one had to be very careful not to invite an unwanted presence” (52). For this reason some of these stories are dangerous, just as Mishipeshu is himself.

I discuss these stories with utmost respect and an openness to continue to learn and be told how to treat them properly. I have tried my best to maintain protocols that I have become aware of so far by not giving oral presentations of this work in the summer months; however, the parameters of publication of this dissertation cannot prevent the information from being shared at a specific time of year. I also acknowledge that my access to these stories has been gained through Euro-western academic research and not through Anishinaabe permissions. This research would greatly benefit from and should be verified through community work in the Northwestern Ontario region, which I intend to continue to pursue throughout my career.¹⁵

¹⁵ I will begin this further research through SSHRC-funded post-doctoral community-based research in Thunder Bay, Ontario, following this doctoral project. I will be exploring Anishinaabe reading practices, but also beginning to develop the relationships necessary to continue this type of storywork in the region.

Stories of Mishipeshu appear in many different forms, including, as I have mentioned, in pictographs and birch bark scrolls. I find it imperative to study these representations as literary forms and to include them within a literary history of Mishipeshu because of recent scholarship on the importance of these items as early forms of literacies. Scholars such as Craig Womack in *Red on Red*, Lisa Brooks in *The Common Pot* (xx-xxii), and Anishinaabe writers Louise Erdrich in *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* and Gerald Vizenor in *Fugitive Poses* and *Summer in the Spring* have stressed the importance of studying these early forms of literary production and ensuring that they are regarded as such instead of so-called primitive drawings or pictures. Birgit Brander Rasmussen sums up the imperative to study and acknowledge these other forms of writing in *Queequeg's Coffin: Indigenous Literacies and Early American Literature*:

Indigenous literary traditions have been documented across the Americas. These writings are diverse and range from Mayan pictoglyphs to Haudenosaunee wampum, from Ojibwe birch bark scrolls to Incan quipus. This literature has largely remained outside the purview of American [and Canadian] literary studies because writing often has been defined primarily as alphabetism. But that equation is flawed, as a number of scholars have demonstrated. During the colonial process, literary became a signifier, as well as the 'sine quo non,' of civilization, and 'writing' became a crucial dividing line between colonized and colonizer. [...] As long as literary scholars continue to think about writing predominately as the alphabetic system used by Europeans, we uphold that legacy by defining other forms of recording knowledge and narrative out of existence. (3)

Defining writing as alphabetism not only excludes Indigenous literary traditions, but also upholds and continues the process of colonial subjugation. As Rasmussen continues, "the equation between alphabetism and writing maintains the colonial mythology of a meeting between 'civilized' and 'savage' peoples, marked respectively by literacy and its absence" (4). To exclude early literacies from a literary history of Mishipeshu would be to maintain unfounded justifications for colonization. Fitzgerald and Wyss in "Land and Literacy: The Textualities of Native Studies" expand on this imperative by commenting on the intertextual and interdisciplinary value of these early texts to redefine Indigenous history, underscore the importance of personal expression, and complement alphabetic texts (275). In the following literary history of Mishipeshu, I hope to highlight the intersections and connections between these various forms of textual representation and trace how they complement one another.

When delineating forms of writing and text, I also find it appropriate to consider the intention of the writer and/or reader. In the case of Anishinaabe pictographs and birch bark scrolls, the pictorial representations they contain are meant to convey or invoke story, history, instructions, and in some cases song. Referred to as pictomyths by Gerald Vizenor, these representations “can generally be interpreted as ‘picture writing,’ as in rock art, birch-bark scrolls, and other symbolic writing on stone, bark, hide, and bone. These are known as visual memory aids or mnemonic devices to visually symbolize complex mythical, historical, and ecological knowledge. The Ojibwe excelled at this type of oral/written communication” (M. K. Nelson 219). Grace Rajnovich, in her fittingly titled book *Reading Rock Art: Interpreting the Indian Rock Paintings of the Canadian Shield*, presents a similar view of pictographs as ‘picture writing’ and stresses this distinction by quoting J.W. Powell, who in 1881 wrote of rock art that “from it can be written one of the most interesting chapters in the early history of mankind” (qtd. in Rajnovich 10). Erdrich corroborates this comparison by drawing connections between the Anishinaabemowin (the Anishinaabe language) word for books, maazina’iganan, and the very similar word for rock paintings, mazinapikiniganan. Erdrich puts it most straightforwardly when she says, “Yes, I figure books have been written around here ever since someone had the idea of biting or even writing on birchbark with a sharpened stick. Books are nothing all that new. People have probably been writing books in North America since at least 2000 B.C.” (5). As a literary scholar, I attempt here to document and read just some of Mishipeshu’s books.

Reading these books, however, comes with some inherent issues and complexities. Just as Helen Hoy asked “How should I read these?”, I question my own white settler position and access to these materials and their contexts. Many of the sources I draw upon were collected by outsider anthropologists under the problematic auspices of preserving a dying a culture. Beyond this inaccurate intent, the circumstances of the anthropologists’ collection of these materials and knowledge are in some cases not fully known, and the conditions of their access are questionable. Their interpretive conclusions have also been scrutinized as holding the potential to perpetuate colonialist biases and oppressive structures of dominance. Instead of avoiding these texts altogether, I attempt to balance their merit and necessary inclusion as forms of literacies in literary studies with the risks of misconstruction by applying methods of reading “along the archival grain” as outlined by Ann Laura Stoler in *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Extrapolating from Levi-Strauss’s vision of anthropology as

attending to what is “not written,” Stoler advocates for not simply attempting to find hidden messages between the lines (attempting to read through the colonial frameworks and biases of the outsider author), but to read and trace these colonial frameworks, common senses, and anxieties in order to realize how they shape and influence the archival material. In this way, she distinguishes between what is simply “not written” from what could not be written, because it did not fit colonial structures and agendas (3).

I have tried to read especially dated anthropological texts with this method in mind, privileging Indigenous/Anishinaabe voices and interpretations that appear within these texts, and corroborating information with Anishinaabe-authored sources where possible. I have also attempted to separate the settler colonial motivations of anthropologists from the material they gathered. For example, the two most classic examples of Boasian anthropology I draw upon are the works of Selwyn Dewdney and Ruth Landes, both of whom have been interrogated for their motivations and accuracy. Michael Angel in *Preserving the Sacred* comments on Dewdney’s attempt at interpreting James Red Sky’s birch bark scrolls, “Although he did come up with a number of very creative interpretations, which have some general applications, he became too enmeshed in trying to explain the fine points of individual charts, which were meant to be specifically used as mnemonic records of local Midewiwin ceremonies” (169). I have been wary of these “creative interpretations” as they maintain an exaggerated mysticism and exoticism. In this sense the “archival grain” is tied up in “dying Indian” discourses that serve to justify colonization and notions of primitivism or at least absolute “difference,” whether consciously intended or not. Ruth Landes’s work has been thoroughly scrutinized in “Fatal Errors: Ruth Landes and the Creation of the ‘Atomistic Ojibwa,’” as framed by a need to prove Anishinaabe “absence of political structure; hostility in interpersonal relations; absence of large-scale organization and co-operation; fragmented communication networks; and anxiety, anomie, alienation and irrational behaviour” (Lovisek, Holzkamm, and Waisberg 135). Lovisek, Holzkamm, and Waisberg in consultation with Manitou Rapids community members and Elders found Landes’s work inadequate, inaccurate, and distorted, because of this overarching impetus to prove atomism (141). Atomism also supports colonization efforts as it attempts to prove a lack of pre-contact structured communities, land title, political organization, or civilization. While keeping these settler colonial motivations in mind, I do my best to avoid perpetuating these

distortions not only in the work of Dewdney and Landes, but also in secondary settler texts that rely heavily upon them (such as Angel, Brehm, Smith, and Rajnovich).

Maintaining my regional focus, I have chosen published primary sources and texts from Northwestern Ontario; however, they are relatively few in comparison to other Anishinaabe regions, especially within research conducted by Anishinaabe scholars. To counter this scarcity and further corroborate interpretations, I use more recent and reputable secondary sources from outside the region. This approach does not dismantle my rationale for a relational regional approach, but strengthens it by imitating Anishinaabe social structures. As Sinclair outlines in his dissertation, even though Anishinaabeg are divided into distinct bands across various regions, they still maintain, as Vizenor calls it, a “common tribal consciousness” (29-30). Sinclair details this separate but interconnected structure that aligns with Justice’s structures of Kinship: “While migration, movement, and change continues to occur – along with adoptions of new allegiances and communities – there remains a long-standing, complex, and living sense of connectedness” (30). I feel that my selection of sources attends to both the situatedness of these texts in Northwestern Ontario and their connectedness to larger Anishinaabe territory.

The first type of Northwestern Ontario primary literary text, pictomyth, or picture writing I examine is pictographs or rock art¹⁶. Mishipeshu is frequently depicted on cliffs at the edge of lakes that he inhabits. These pictographs act as both a warning sign and marker of Mishipeshu’s location, serving as a mnemonic device for the stories and teachings about him and as an offering site to place gifts for safe passage, plentiful fish, and sometimes healing power (Morriseau 26-

¹⁶ Much of previous study of pictographs has focused on when, who, and how they were created. But as Brehm notes in reference to the Agawa Mishipeshu panel, “Scholars cannot positively identify the medium or binder the artist of this rock painting used; they cannot date the painting with any certainty or discover exactly how it was done” (677). Instead, I find it more productive to trace discursive and storied Anishinaabe beliefs about how pictographs came to be. Norval Morriseau in *Legends of My People the Great Ojibway* shares his grandfather’s account of how these pictographs were painted on the rock, contradicting claims that red ochre was used, and suggesting instead that it was the blood of the writer:

In all the lakes where rock paintings are found the Ojibway put sacred signs on the face of the cliffs. I was told by my grandfather that the sacred markings we see on the cliff walls were put there by the power of the Indian who executed them, that he did not use any sacred onaman sand [red ochre] as was claimed, but his actual fingers. From the fingers sprang out red matter that was so powerful and so sacred that it will remain always without fading. (19)

There are also sources claiming pictographs are the work of Maymaygwayshi, the little people (Rajnovich 68, Norder 397).

28). He is often depicted underneath peopled canoes and alongside his relative underwater serpents. This positioning demonstrates his direct connection to those travelling by canoe and the potential danger or alternatively guidance he possesses. These pictographs place Mishipeshu and his stories, literally painting them onto the land and the locations he inhabits and maintaining a direct physical connection between story and land.¹⁷

Although some pictograph sites have faded, there are a few that have been identified as Mishipeshu by anthropologists in the Northwestern Ontario region. The first I would like to discuss is located on Barbara Lake, approximately 70 kilometres northwest of Nipigon, Ontario, and depicts two Mishipeshus facing each other with what has been interpreted as whirlpools for tails (Rajnovich 104, Dewdney and Kidd 142-43). In the mid-nineteen sixties Dewdney recorded this site, stating in *Indian Rock Paintings of the Great Lakes*, “my chief interest centred on the pair of animals facing each other, the one on the left apparently intended to be a reversal of the one on the right” (Dewdney and Kidd 142). Rajnovich in her complementary work to Dewdney and Kidd’s, *Reading Rock Art*, connects this drawing to a story about two women in a canoe who battle Mishipeshu (which I will discuss later in the chapter), because of the spiraled tails both figures have. Rajnovich relates, “Mishipizheu came up at the canoe from a whirlpool, a form of spiral, a sign for medicine and the path to the manitou’s presence” (104). Accounts of Mishipeshu’s ability to whip up dangerous waters and storms with his tail are widespread (Smith 100, 102). This image also depicts a canoe above the underwater lynxes, representing a relationship to humans and, potentially, their ability or inability to cross over the water. Two figures painted together are common as Mishipeshu can be both singular and multiple. As Smith states, “Like the rough water, Mishebeshu, who is one and many, will always return” (101), adding to his sinister and fearsome characterization. Mishipeshu is also facing outwards, a common stance for him in pictographs. Rajnovich comments, “Unlike other manitous portrayed in profile, Mishipizheu is often drawn facing outward, looking straight at the viewer, and the reason for this may be contained in a story collected by Le Jeune in 1634 from the Montaignais at Quebec who said an evil Manitou protects those it looks upon” (105). The Barbara Lake

¹⁷ In this iteration of this research I have not included photographs or renderings of the pictographs, because of ethical concerns over taking pictures of them. Elders at Lac La Croix First Nation have asked officials in Quetico Provincial Park to stop visitors from taking pictures of sites as a matter of cultural protocol (Norder 396). As my work continues, I will include these images if I am able to receive individual Anishinaabe community permissions to do so.

Mishipeshu pictograph conveys stories and teachings about his ability to control the waters and the dangers of crossing the lake as well as his spiritual power.

The second rock painting is located on what is now known as Darkwater Lake (formerly known as Darky Lake) in Quetico Provincial Park. Even from its colonial name, this lake appears to be prime Mishipeshu habitat. Smith relates that Mishipeshu often inhabits what are known as “bad lakes”:

The bad lakes seem to be distinguished less by frequency of monster sightings than by their own physical characteristics. These characteristics may include: dark or oddly-coloured water; relative inaccessibility; great depth or extreme differences in depth; a lack of fish; frequency of rough water conditions; and the presence of whirlpools, strong currents, and undertows. This last set of characteristics, frequently responsible for boating accidents and drownings, is an indication that the monster is present, perhaps hunting Anishinaabeg. (115)

Aptly named, Darkwater Lake has very dark and murky water and is deceptively deep – ideal Mishipeshu habitat.

Dewdney labels this image a potential Mishipizhiw, whereas Rajnovich identifies it as a horned snake or Ginebik (Dewdney and Kidd 35-36, Rajnovich 36-7). The discrepancy here is understandable as Mishipeshu is frequently depicted as a serpent “in traditional pictographs, mide scrolls, and contemporary artwork [...] often resembling an elongated lizard with a spined back, a huge tail, and horns” (Smith 106), and his “form blends with Snake and with other water creatures” (Rajnovich 106). This slippage also coincides with the fact that “All snakes, it is said, were originally derived from him” (Smith 106). Mishipeshu is again positioned underneath a number of canoes, showing the direct relationship to travel over water and the danger that lurks beneath. Interestingly, this painting also includes a drawing of a moose. I read a connection drawn between Mishipeshu and land animals, similar to what Melissa K. Nelson illustrates in “The Hydromythology of the Anishinaabeg: Will Mishipizhu Survive Climate Change, or Is He Creating It?”: “Mishipizhu is a protector of natural resources and a mediator between the water, land, and sky beings” (213). Because of the integral role of water in climate control and life survival, Mishipeshu holds an immense amount of power by controlling and being associated with waterways. As Nelson states, “*all* animals of course (including us), whether bear or wolf, hawk or lynx, dragonfly or hummingbird, [or moose?], depend on water for drinking” (220).

Nelson also comments on the importance of wild rice, manomin, as a staple food of the Anishinaabeg and its connection to the water it grows in. There appears to be a plant depicted in this painting, perhaps a wild rice plant or at the very least food for the moose. I believe that this image draws attention to this close interrelationship and interdependence between plant, land animal, human, and the underwater manidoo. Taken in a more menacing light, Mishipeshu also appears to encircle each of these elements, arguably exerting power or control over all them.

Mishipeshu's power to drown is demonstrated in two more pictograph sites in Whitefish Bay on Lake of the Woods. At the first site, labeled by Dewdney as the Blindfold site, is "a monstrous form beneath two upturned canoes [that] suggests the sinister Mishipizhiw" (Dewdney and Kidd 48). The upturned canoes represent the potential peril of crossing the waters and the ability of Mishipeshu to flip canoes along with their paddlers. However, the location of this "sinister" depiction along with numerous other figures was and most likely still is a place for offerings. As Dewdney recalls, as a boy exploring the site "it was the offerings I saw on the ledge below that stayed in my memory" (48). Another site in the same bay, at Sioux Narrows Site Face II and III, represents two similar images of a serpent form of Mishipeshu drowning someone (50-51). More recent offerings were found at this site. As Dewdney states, on returning to the site two years after his initial recording of it, "since my last visit someone had placed some clothing, a bundle of sticks, and tobacco on the rocks at the base" (51). After "enquiries of the local Ojibwe," Dewdney's colleague Bill Fadden "was told that these bundles were placed on the rocks with clothing and tobacco when someone was sick, different colours being placed on the sticks for different illnesses" (51).

Offerings and gifts to Mishipeshu are often left for him at his pictograph sites. Norval Morriveau describes a pictograph of Mishipeshu as an offering site on Lake Nipigon:

My ancestor, my great-great-grandfather four generations ago, whose name was Little Grouse, had a medicine dream concerning an offering rock where the water demigod Misshipeshu, in the form of a huge cat, spoke to him and advised him to put on the rock a sacred sign made out of onaman, the Ojibway sacred sand. It was in the summer, and the water demigod helped my great-great-grandfather to put its sign on the walls of the cliffs. From then on, until thirty years ago, Indians of that area offered gifts to Misshipeshu.
(26)

Morriseau's account not only confirms that the pictograph is a sign for the offering rock, but also suggests that Mishipeshu himself is literate and takes part in the drawing or writing of this sign.¹⁸ Unfortunately, Dewdney did not record this pictograph on Lake Nipigon; however, he does make mention of Echo Rock on the northwest shore of Lake Nipigon, "a great mass of granite that pyramids up from the shore, the drops sheer to the lake" (Dewdney and Kidd 78). He describes, "The pictographs are weathered almost to the disappearing point either by ice action or by exfoliation" (78). This weathering could account for why a pictograph of Mishipeshu was not recorded or was no longer present in 1959. Morriseau provides an alternative explanation: "Now the offering rock is bare, for the water god Misshipeshu moved away" (28). All three of these pictographs signal offering sites teaching where to offer gifts, to whom, and why (or the consequences of not giving offerings).

Morriseau goes on to describe the types of offerings that were given:

Ojibway Indians of Lake Nipigon had an offering rock erected to this huge cat. Offerings of copper pails were thrown into the water and black dogs as well as white dogs, decorated in the very best, were offered alive to the water god for it to eat. In the time of the early traders, traps, guns and firewater, as well as great amounts of tobacco, were also put into the water. This was done once a year around June, in order not to offend the water god and to bring good luck to all those who believed in these offerings. Canoes formed a circle at the offering rock, as these rites took place on the water. (27)

The intricacies and adaptable iterations of these offerings (i.e. modern tools and other trade items) are obviously not prescribed by the writing of the pictograph itself; however, reading the pictograph and knowing the appropriate behaviours and protocols for this site was and perhaps for some still is an integral part of knowing that place and moving within and interacting with that landscape (i.e. boating across the water, fishing etc.).

The final pictograph I would like to mention is probably one of the most iconic of all pictographs and arguably "the most famous image of aboriginal art in Canada" (Conway 23): the Mishipeshu at Agawa Rock in Lake Superior Provincial Park, Ontario. Technically, this site is

¹⁸ Ruth Landes also records this from her work in Mantiou Rapids, Ontario: "The Ojibwa often mentioned to me wonderful 'rock paintings' that they had seen in their woodlands, which they considered manito, and not the work of human hands. They regarded the locations as manito-charged and so left tobacco at every passing" (*Ojibwa Religion* 227).

just outside of the Northwestern Ontario region; however, it is much too significant and well-known not to mention here. Most significantly, it is one of the few pictographs that has a recorded Anishinaabe oral history of approximately when it was painted and by whom. Local Ojibwe elders of the area identified leader and *Wabeno*¹⁹ Shingwauk as the painter of the main Mishipeshu panel. Thor Conway, who interviewed Elder Fred Pine of Garden River First Nation and descendent of Shingwauk about the origin of the painting, states that “the vital association between Shingwauk and the Michipeshu group has been difficult to fully document because Fred Pine felt unsettled about the event one hundred and fifty years after it occurred” (96). Despite this difficulty, Conway provides the following brief narrative from Pine’s account:

Apparently, Shingwauk went to Agawa on a vision quest to gather fresh power. He called forth Michipeshu, the guardian spirit of the underworld and minerals, especially copper. Shingwauk then completed his fast, finished rituals which included rock art, and then lead [sic] his warriors in a revolt against the copper miners at Mamainse. (96)²⁰

Pine’s history exposes yet another purpose of pictographs as part of ritual, in which the act of writing is used to gather power from Mishipeshu. This act coincides directly with many Indigenous beliefs about the power of language to bring into being certain realities or presences, further connecting pictographs to a form of written language and literacy.

Pictographs of Mishipeshu act as signposts marking his place in certain lakes and waters. They also act as a warning for those crossing the waters of his potentially dangerous presence, and mark where certain protocols of gift giving and offerings need to take place in order to obtain safe passage. The writing of pictographs can also be a part of ceremony itself to call upon Mishipeshu’s power and guidance. In order to read these signs, one must know the stories and teachings associated with them. Pictographs act as a continual reminder and mnemonic device of this knowledge and the appropriate behaviour necessary to inhabit or travel through those places

¹⁹ According to Conway, “A *Wabeno* specialized in the regulation of the natural order on earth, fertility, and the reincarnation of souls by studying the many stars, the moon and the sun” (92).

²⁰ Mamie Migwans told Theresa Smith another version of the writing of the Agawa Mishipeshu, stating, “It’s said that they used Mishibeshu’s blood after they killed him. The Thunderbirds, they killed him. They used the blood to paint all those pictures” (101). This account again attributes other-than-human origins of pictographs, this time to the Thunderbirds.

where he is present. Pictographs outline a relationship to the land by teaching respect, responsibility, and proper behaviour.

Apart from focusing on each individual site and attempting to determine precise meanings, more recent rock art research has shifted to focus “not only at questions of symbolic and compositional meaning” but also to examine “broader contexts of the creation of these places and the embedded nature of these locations as part of the social and sacred landscape of a people or peoples” (Norder 386). Anthropologist John Norder conducted fieldwork on pictographs in Lake of the Woods in 2005 and found that

these sites were specialized in function and socially restricted in terms of who could make them. Furthermore, the knowledge concerning the specific meanings of the sites may or may not have been shared among members of the larger community depending on additional social conventions. As such, the act of creation and specific meanings of these places on the landscape are not necessarily the enduring aspects maintained in social memory. Consideration of these sites within a different context, that of user/caretaker [as opposed to a maker/meaning context], presents a more realistic recognition of the social processes associated with these sites and their maintenance as part of community identity and memory. (387)

While reading the specific meanings of each site is important in so far as they encompass stories, teachings, and protocols, those meanings may not have been or are not now accessible to the larger community and, therefore, the social processes associated with the site are in most cases what endure and contribute to place-based identity. In many cases the individual meaning of images and symbols or who made them is unknown by community members, but the site’s social significance of being sacred and a place for offerings is still maintained. As Norder continues, “These sites are remembered as places of engagement between people and spirits, and remain within social memory as places of power where contemporary First Nations peoples can still go to in order to pray and re-engage with these spirits through these places” (398).

If pictographs are interpreted as texts, Norder’s observations inadvertently correspond to Julie Cruikshank’s notion of the social life of stories or examining what stories do. Rather than focusing on authorship or particular interpretations, Norder sees the importance of social significance and community engagement in the use of these texts. Considering both Norder and Cruikshank, I argue that pictographs of Mishipeshu retain their social significance through the

“doing” of kinship to these places by this active engagement of prayer and offerings. As Norder concludes, “the importance of the rock art sites lies not in its creation, but in the places that they mark and the actions they inspire for subsequent generations who continue to understand how to listen, learn and engage with the landscape through this process of remembering the forgotten” (398). Although Mishipeshu holds dangerous power, pictographs, through both their individual meaning and their placement, teach kinship and relational practices of active engagement with him and the land he lives in.

Practices of engagement with Mishipeshu are also held within Midewiwin birch bark scrolls, another type of text, early literacy, and picture writing. The Midewiwin or Grand Medicine Society is “the traditional religious organization of the Anishinaabe people” (Miller 11), and birchbark scrolls (mitewikwass; Vennum 753) record a vast number of songs, stories, and rituals associated with the society (Miller 162). In studying these texts, I have been conscious of the fact that “historically and today many aspects of the Midewiwin are considered protected knowledge not to be disbursed to the uninitiated” (Miller 11). These texts are extremely sacred and, as explained above, my access to them is tenuous in so far as it only granted through published anthropological research. Because of this, I have intentionally not included any information regarding ritual or ceremonial practices and have chosen not to seek out nor do I have access to scrolls currently in use by any Mide lodges.²¹ Ethical interpretation of individual scrolls is also complicated by the fact that scrolls are only truly known and understood by their initiated owners. As Ruth Landes comments, “The particular message on a scroll is generally useless [...] unless each figure is labeled or otherwise translated by the knowing owner, usually the scroll’s maker” (*Ojibwa Religion* 224). However, nineteenth-century Anishinaabe minister George Copway said of the pictographic writing used in the scrolls that it contained more than 200 figures and “could be read accurately by persons from distant villages who had been educated in reading pictographs” (Miller 162). I do not see these conditions as necessarily contradictory, but another example of an Anishinaabe sensibility of interconnection between the individual and the collective. As I am neither an author nor owner of, nor traditionally educated in reading these pictographs, I rely on interpretations from Anishinaabe informants and scholars as much as possible. I have selected representations of Mishipeshu in

²¹ Congruent with my use of pictographs, I have also not included images of the scrolls, because I have not yet been granted community permissions.

what have been termed by Dewdney in *The Sacred Scrolls of the Southern Ojibway* as Migration Charts and Master Scrolls collected in Northwestern Ontario.²²

Migration charts or scrolls map the interwoven story of both the origin/creation of Midewiwin practices and the historical migration of Anishinaabeg from the east to the west end of Lake Superior (Vennum 753). Although found in many iterations, the origin story in its most basic form follows the travels of Otter, sometimes Makwa (bear) or Mikiss (sacred cowry shell), as s/he brings the means for a healthy, good life from Gichi-Manidoo (the Great Spirit) through the teachings and Mide initiations of Nanabush to the Anishinaabeg, guiding them along the water route, and establishing a Midewiwin lodge at each resting place along the journey (Vennum 755-6, Bellfy xxxiv-xxxvii). As James Red Sky²³ as interpreted by Dewdney explains, the charts are “solely concerned with the agent’s mission to bring the Midéwiwin to the people, *wherever they may be found*” (59).

What distinguishes Migration scrolls from Master scrolls is the “definite pictographic clues as to bodies of water and routes which, though varying in a number of details, display remarkable consistency” (Dewdney 60). The two migration charts that I have identified from the region recorded by Dewdney are one owned by Red Sky (62-63) and the other by a descendent of a Mide shaman from Lake of the Woods, Ontario (60-61). Both represent Leech Lake as their westernmost point and, moving eastward, match precisely the water route to Lake Superior and more vaguely the eastern route beyond. In each scroll, what appear to be two forms of Mishipeshu are written on either side of what Dewdney has identified as the St. Louis River, east of the sacred portage. On the north side both represent a spined, and in the former horned, serpent. However, on the south side of the river in the Lake of the Woods scroll a figure with a

²² Frances Densmore in *Chippewa Music* recorded songs that include Mishipeshu; however, her collection was primarily in Northern Minnesota and, as such, outside of the purview of my analysis.

²³ Red Sky was a prominent master of the Midewiwin traditions born in 1899 in the Shoal Lake area, which straddles my regional boundary. After attending missionary school and fighting in World War I, Red Sky returned home to study Midewiwin traditions under his Uncle Baldhead Red Sky (Peshkwaykandip) and serve his community (Sinclair and Cariou 104, Dewdney 23). Through his apprenticeship with his uncle, Red Sky was initiated to carry the birch bark scrolls of Powassan, who was Grand Shaman and signee of Treaties 131 and 132 (1873). In 1960, Red Sky was also ordained an elder in the Presbyterian Church, which he believed did not conflict with his Midewiwin teachings (Dewdney 23).

clubbed tail is depicted, whereas Red Sky's scroll depicts what appears most distinctively to be a legged, long-tailed, and horned Mishipeshu. Without the interpretation of these figures from the initiates of the scrolls, there is no accurate way to read these figures as Mishipeshu. However, many of Mishipeshu's distinguishing features are present (clubbed tail, horns, and spines in particular), and his close relationship if not synonymicity with the horned serpent, as well as his association with water, suggest his potential presence in these migration charts. Considering the charts as maps of the area, these figures could represent water hazards or rapids on the St. Louis River. Their positioning could also indicate a warning or caution about entering Lake Superior, where Mishipeshu is a well-known inhabitant. Putting the Migration charts in conjunction with the Master Scrolls, however, suggests that these Mishipeshus are potential guardians of the lake, watching over the gateway into it. Thomas Vennum in "Ojibwa Origin-Migration Songs of the Mitewiwin" describes Lake Superior as a metaphor for a large mitewikan or Mide lodge (784). Applying this metaphor, Mishipeshu can be read as guarding the entrance to the Lake Superior lodge, much like he does in the Master scrolls.

The two Master scrolls from the region I identify in Dewdney's work are from Red Sky and another collected by A. Peterson in Emo, Ontario. Master scrolls outline the ceremonial practices and songs of the Midewiwin. These two scrolls similar to most Master scrolls depict horned figures around the fourth-degree lodge. As Dewdney explains, "The most obvious examples of threat to the initiate were the snake-like forms, swelling into menacing shapes that become double-headed, horned monsters blocking the fourth Midewegun. Only the combined rites of candidates and priests reinforced by the supportive manitos were able to force these snake-monsters to arch their backs and allow the candidate to pass safely under" (94-5). These blocking manidoog, presumably closely related to Mishipeshu, can be seen in the Emo Scroll. Theresa Smith outlines the significance of Mishipeshu as a blocking manidoo in Master scrolls: "When depicted as a serpent in the mide scrolls, Mishibeshu is often placed at the entrance of the midewegun or lodge. His role here is normally that of an obstacle under which an initiate must pass in order to reach a higher mide degree. [...] The successful entrance into these higher degrees would seem to entail an entry into the medicine realm of Mishebeshu" (107). Ruth Landes also describes Mishipeshu's role at the entrance to each degree lodge, stating, "The Great Lion seemed to supervise the door-tending at all grades. [...] Lion assisted each keeper by blowing fiery breaths across the threshold" (*Ojibwa Religion* 145). However, Red Sky's scroll

“magnif[ies] the protective role of the fourth degree supernaturals” (Dewdney 95-6), by representing two figures on either side of the fourth-degree lodge, almost encircling it. At first glance these two figures bear striking resemblance to Mishipeshu. Dewdney compares this scroll to one found in Leech Lake, the Walker Scroll, and comments of the above figure that “from the obvious conversion of the ‘Great Lion’ in the Walker Scroll into the Buffalo (‘mighty on the prairie,’ said Red Sky, ‘he owns everything’) we can conclude that Red Sky’s scroll came later” (96). Red Sky interprets the figure below the lodge as “God watching over the Midéwegun. He has two heads to signify that he is watching over both entrances” (Dewdney 96). Red Sky presents an arguable evolution of Mishipeshu, perhaps through Christian or prairie influence, or because he did not want to share the easily misinterpreted, ambivalent aspects of the fourth-degree guardians, similar to Fred Pine’s reluctance to share Shingwauk’s association with Mishipeshu. Attempting to separate which aspects of Red Sky’s interpretation are “traditional” and which are “Christianized” is also problematic, putting these two discourses in a “pure versus tainted” framework and searching for an imaginary “authentic” (Womack 65). However, the evolution of Mishipeshu into God seems plausible in a Christian context in which power is dichotomized into good and evil. As Angel comments on the Christian influence in Red Sky’s versions of Midewiwin narratives. “[...] Gichi-Manidoo and Maji-Manidoo had begun to share a role with the Thunderbirds and Mishibizhii in being forces of good and evil. As a result, Red Sky’s narrative emphasized the duality of good and evil. Moreover, the Christian concept of sin, which manifested itself in the doing of evil, was evident in his stories” (170). In this dualist context it would make sense that Mishipeshu as guardian of the fourth-degree lodge would not be associated with evil, but with “God” and goodness, if he could only be one or the other, even though in the narratives he becomes Maji-Manidoo and evil.

Representations in both Migration charts and Master scrolls highlight the ambiguous role Mishipeshu holds in the Midewiwin. These scrolls represent his position as both a sinister obstacle and protective guardian, and outline the Midewiwin and an Anishinaabe relationship to power. Cary Miller in *Ogimaag* explains that in Midewiwin theology,

power in and of itself was understood to be good or bad only in its uses. Some manidoog had reputations for often conferring gifts that the individual could use to harm others, but these were always balanced by powerful gifts of healing as well. In essence, healing and

harm were seen as two sides of the same coin – to be able to accomplish one implied the ability to accomplish the other. (153)

Due to this ambivalent quality of power, many outsider researchers have misinterpreted or overemphasized Mishipeshu's power in Midewiwin texts as carrying perverse, corrupting, or evil potential without acknowledging its corresponding healing balance. However, by reading through a context of Anishinaabe beliefs of balanced power and along the colonial archival grain separating out colonial motivations to promote exoticism and primitivism, I include these outsider sources as records of Indigenous voices that are worth being heard and not erased. I also contend that these sources contain traces of the difficulties of negotiating Mishipeshu's ambivalent power and, ultimately, the difficulties of maintaining kinship to him. For example, Smith outlines the potential danger in accepting the power of the higher degree lodges: "Although Mishebeshu may not have been solely or even directly responsible for the transformation of healers into malignant sorcerers, his symbolic appearance at the door to higher – and more dangerously seductive – degrees is consonant with his role as a dark power in the Anishinaabe world" (109). Angel describes a similar risk of "bad" medicine associated with Mishipeshu: "Underwater Panthers imparted some of their knowledge of medicines (which were mainly obtained from plants) to humans as part of the Midewiwin"; however, "the underlying problem was that with increased [Midewiwin] power came the temptation to use it in ways that caused harm to others" (161). Referencing Dewdney's research, Brehm further purports this risk of corruption when she states, "When [Mide] absorbed [Mishipeshu's] power into the rites, they put it at the command of the highest degree candidates, and it was often perverted by sorcery, vegetable poisons, conjuring, visionary shamanism. [...] [W]hen the Midé shamans achieved the apex of authority they became amoral manidog, feared by the members of the society they were supposed to cure" (691). Mishipeshu's potential for great harm and "perversion" does not prevent him from being one of, if not the highest status of manidoog as "the highest status was awarded to manidog who were most feared" (680). Keeping Miller's assertions about Midewiwin beliefs of power in mind, Smith, Angel, and Brehm, along with Landes and Dewdney as their source material, risk falling back upon concepts of dualistic good and evil, as well as exoticizations, in describing Mishipeshu's power, even while purporting to resist Christian dichotomization. However, they do illuminate his deeply conflicted and morally

ambiguous position as well as the direct association with great power in the Midewiwin as represented in birch bark scrolls.

These early literacies and picture writings outline protocols and behaviours necessary for a relationship to and the terms of an active kinship engagement with Mishipeshu. As mentioned, they also act as mnemonic devices, recalling various stories of Mishipeshu and his exploits. These stories provide in further detail the reasons and traditional knowledge behind the need for these precautions. One such story from the Northwestern Ontario region entitled “Now Great Lynx” and recorded by Fox anthropologist William Jones in 1904 tells of Mishipeshu’s malicious and ambivalent behaviour and inexplicable actions. Jones recorded this story in Fort William (now part of Thunder Bay), Ontario, from Chief John Pinesi (Penessi, Penassie, surname abbreviated from Kagige Pinasi – “Forever-Bird,” 1833-1910) of the Bull-Head totem and about whom Jones describes,

no name is better spoken of or more widely known by the Canadian Ojibwas than that of this fine, old man. [...] He knows the Ojibwas from Manitoulin Island to the Sault, and all that live along the north shore of Lake Superior to Grand Marais. He has been among those who live on Rainy River, Lake of the Woods, and those who live on the height of land; but he is more familiar with the Ojibwas that inhabit the shore country between Kanustiquia River and the Sault, for it was in this vast region that lay the scenes and experiences of his life, from childhood to old age. (*Ojibwa Texts – Part I*, xvii)

This story takes place at Rosspott known in the story as “Shallow-Water,” which is approximately 185 kilometers up the north shore of Lake Superior from Thunder Bay (Overholt and Callicott 27, 135 n27). Pinesi recounts one of the most well known tales of Mishipeshu and his encounter with some women in a canoe. The women are threatened by Mishipeshu and his control of the water surrounding their canoe, and one of the women with the help of the Thunderbirds hits Mishipeshu’s tail with her paddle, cutting it in two. Pinesi’s version confirms associations of Mishipeshu with moving water or “where the current is swift” and the practice of gift giving in order appease the dangerous water and the creature within it: “The people feared it; and that was the reason of their practice of sometimes throwing offerings to it into the water, even tobacco” (Overholt and Callicott 87).

Pinesi opens his telling by referring to Mishipeshu as simply “something” and “it,” shrouding him in mystery and emphasizing the fear of the unknown felt by the people (Overholt

and Callicott 87). The woman who strikes Mishipeshu explains that she fasted as a child to receive the Thunderers' war-club, giving her paddle the power to sever Mishipeshu's tail and allow the two women to escape. This detail corresponds with understandings of the Thunderers or Animikeeg as Mishipeshu's only successful and antithetical adversaries (Brehm 680). Pinesi adds, following the main action of the episode, "Now, one of the women was seized by Great-Lynx. Therefore she it was who had told at home that Great-Lynx was continually harassing people" (Overholt and Callicott 87). The causal relationship is slightly skewed here, producing an arguable interpretation that the woman was seized and then released to tell her community of the danger. However, comparing this version to Maggie Wilson's account recorded by Ruth Landes in the early 1930s in Emo (*Ojibwa Woman* vii), the woman's complaining may have been the reason for the attack and she may have been the eventual fatality. Wilson recounts, "The girl that was sitting in the middle of the canoe said (sacrilegious) things that she should not have said (about water supernaturals). The other girls that were with her tried to stop her because they were afraid (of supernatural retribution). Shortly after this, the water started to run, and there was foam all over it" (211). Immediately after Mishipeshu's tail is struck, "the (guilty) girl was drawn down into the water (in punishment for her sacrilegious boasting) by the end of the tail that was sticking up" (211). It is unclear whether the added descriptions in parentheses are attributed to Wilson, her daughter Janet, or Landes as some of what she calls her only minor edits (vii). The added comments do, however, align almost too nicely with Landes's grouping of this tale with what she terms boasting stories as evidence of her conclusion that "not only shamans but some ordinary people have tendencies toward megalomania" and "false claim[s] to supernatural power," for which "a fitting punishment is given by the supernatural whose power has been invoked falsely" (210). As previously mentioned, one should be critical of Landes's interpretive conclusions here and her settler motivations behind purporting atomism in Anishinaabe societies (Lovisek, Holzkamm, and Waisberg 141). However, comparing the two versions suggests that the girl's "sacrilegious boasting" (Landes *Ojibwa Woman* 211) may have simply been her telling the other women that "Great-Lynx was continually harassing people" (Overholt and Callicott 87). The distinction is an important one; the Wilson/Landes version is a cautionary tale of the guilty girl's "sacrilegious boasting" and her arguably just punishment, whereas Pinesi's version presents a more ambiguous and much less didactic lesson about the

fickle nature and danger of Mishipeshu and how he is not to be talked about, particularly while canoeing on open water.

The lack of causality in Mishipeshu's actions is even more pronounced in the second half of Pinesi's version, none of which is mentioned in the Wilson/Landes account. Moving up the North shore of Lake Superior to Sault Ste. Marie, Mishipeshu steals a baby in its cradleboard from the village. Not only does Mishipeshu commit this vicious act, but also he will not concede to multiple prayers and offerings: "Even though the people made offerings in the hope that Great-Lynx might set the child free, even though for a long while they besought him with prayers, yet he would not let it go" (87). The repetition of "even though" highlights the irrationality of Mishipeshu's actions and the fact that he is not to be appeased "even" through the proper rites. This repetition and emphasis continues after the people attempt to dig into his den: "It was true that even then they spoke kindly to Great-Lynx, yet he would not let the child go" (87). "Even then," after giving offerings, prayers, and kind words, the people have no other choice but to slay Mishipeshu: "Therefore let us dig to where he is, that we may kill him" (87).

These failed attempts at appeasement represent the most significant contrast between the two versions of the story. In the Landes version, the "guilty" girl faces direct punishment for not showing proper respect to Mishipeshu by speaking ill of him, whereas in Pinesi's version, Mishipeshu takes the child in spite of people showing proper respect through offerings, prayers, and kind words. Not only does Mishipeshu not give back the child, but also he "must have slain it": "By and by out came the cradle-board floating on the water, together with the child that was bound to it. And when they caught hold of the cradle-board, they observed that the child had a hole crushed into its head" (87). No justification is given for Mishipeshu's heinous actions and he even disobeys his own kinship obligations to "the master of the Great-Lynxes": "And though the master of the Great-Lynxes would always speak to his son, saying, 'Do not plague the people,' yet he would never listen to his father" (87). This additional exchange between Mishipeshu kin speaks to the fact that Mishipeshus are multiple and have their own families, a further extension of personhood. However, this particular son Mishipeshu does not follow the kinship obligations to his father, not to mention any fulfillment of kinship obligations to the people. Mishipeshu symbolically cuts off kinship and the succession of future generations through the murder of the child. As retribution, the people continue to dig after him and slay this Mishipeshu. As a continued reminder of these events and placing this story into the present and

onto the land, Pinesi concludes, “[o]nly not long ago was seen the place where the people had once dug the hole; (it is) over toward the Big-Knife country over by the Sault” (88). Both the Wilson and Pinesi versions tell of Mishipeshu’s violent and malevolent behaviour with slightly different justifications for his actions. However, excluding Landes’s suspect parenthetical commentary, both versions represent Mishipeshu as dangerous and unreasonable to a certain extent. The only cause for his violence is in this case women not respecting his power by speaking his name and perhaps bringing him into being (Smith 52).

In *Legends of My People The Great Ojibway*, Morrisseau also tells similar tales of Mishipeshu stealing and killing small children. One in particular is set by Lake Superior where a couple leaves their child in its cradleboard by their canoe and Mishipeshu takes her/him. The couple prays to the Thunderbirds who destroy his cave and then Mishipeshu himself with lightning. The couple “fell into a coma” and “[w]hen they awoke later they found their child’s cradle floating on the surface of the water, their child dead with two holes in his head, and Mishipeshu’s head floating around, the rest of his body having been eaten” (31). While the number of holes varies, the very specific repeated detail of holes in the child’s head is striking. He tells a second version of this story as well by Luke Nanakonagos, placed near Agawa Rock, which concludes, “On the waters of Lake Superior, by the shore, an empty cradle was seen floating and beside it two small dead cubs. So ends this legend” (32). The graphic nature of Mishipeshu’s violence in killing children is extreme and disturbing, particularly when considering that it does not appear to be retribution or reasonable punishment for improper behaviour. In this sense, Mishipeshu represents the irrational and uncontrollable elements of the environment, in these cases, perhaps the power of Lake Superior’s waves to sweep away unwatched nearby children. However, in Pinesi, Morrisseau, and Nanakonagos’s versions Mishipeshu also pays the ultimate price for his actions – in the first two his own life, and in Nanakonagos’s version “two small dead cubs.” Taking some interpretive license, I argue that Morrisseau implies that these cubs are Mishipeshu’s offspring. Accepting this inference, I read within these stories teachings about the potential of extreme violence and trauma, but also a kind of retributive balance. As Mishipeshu disobeys his kinship obligations to his father by not listening to him, he loses his life, and as he severs kinship lines by killing children, he loses his life or those of his own children. These stories situate Mishipeshu within kinship networks of their own, extending personhood to them even in narratives of irrational, extreme harm to

humans. Mishipeshu's punishment for breaking kinship bonds establishes an unsettling reciprocity and connection between his action and human actions (and often the Thunderbirds in an interconnected ecology).

Mishipeshu's kinship to humans is also represented in his role in creation. Morrisseau recounts another well-known story of Mishipeshu and his role in the Great Flood. Nanabush kills a medicine-man frog and wears his skin into the lodges of the water gods, where he finds "the great water god Misshipeshu badly wounded and in pain" (20). Dressed as the medicine man, Nanabush is asked by the other water gods to remove an arrow from inside Mishipeshu – the source of his wound. Instead of healing Mishipeshu, the disguised Nanabush pushes the arrow farther in and kills him. When the other water gods find out that it was Nanabush who had killed Mishipeshu, it "made them mad and they put a flood upon the earth" (20). Nanabush ends up saving the animals by making "a huge raft to save them all" (20). Although Morrisseau's iteration of this story ends with analogs to Noah and the Flood, other versions of this story continue to more clearly draw a connection between Mishipeshu's primordial flood and the resulting creation of humans (Smith 184). In either case, Mishipeshu's role in the creation story of the Anishinaabeg intimately binds his presence to human existence, further supporting "that there may be a rather unsettling kinship between the monsters and the Anishnaabeg" (Smith 184).

Kinship to Mishipeshu continues to be negotiated and represented in contemporary art and Anishinaabe life. Anishinaabe filmmaker Michelle Derosier in her film *The Grandfather Drum* tells the story of the Anishinaabek people of the Upper Berens River and the drum Mishomis Naamiwin built with the power of the Thunderbirds. Mishipeshu's presence haunts the community's surrounding waters throughout the film, foreshadowing, representing, and causing sickness in the village. Derosier emphasizes his malevolent presence and influence by giving him red eyes, accompanied by a red sky in shots of him, and a resulting red filter that is cast over shots of the village. At first the Grandfather drum is able to heal the village and even restore life, but once the Canadian government's settler colonialism brings sickness, the Church, the Indian Agent, banning of spiritual practices, residential schools, and addiction, also represented by interspersed shots of Mishipeshu, the drum is put away in the Red Lake Museum by the Elders of the community until the community is ready for it. Derosier is careful to explain his apparent menacing presence in the opening lines of the film: the Anishinaabeg are "deeply connected to

place. This connection goes far beyond the physical world and transcends into the skyworld and the underworld where powerful and mystical beings have always lived. Connection, balance, and respect between all worlds was necessary for it was this very balance that maintained life” (Opening voiceover in *The Grandfather Drum*). Instead of positioning Mishipeshu as merely an evil force in the world causing sickness, Derosier emphasizes the necessary “connection, balance, and respect” maintained between the physical, sky, and underwater worlds. Mishipeshu is just as much connected to the Anishinaabeg as he is a negative force, and in so being, requires the respect deserved of a balanced kinship relationship. What forces these relationships out of balance in this case are the processes of settler colonialism.

Kinship to Mishipeshu and his continued presence in Northwestern Ontario has also more recently been negotiated in how he manifests in a series of tragic Anishinaabe youth deaths in Thunder Bay. Between 2000 and 2018 there were nine Indigenous youth deaths in Thunder Bay, six of whom were students at Dennis Franklin Cromarty, a First Nations high school administered by the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council for students from 24 remote First Nations in Northwestern Ontario, and seven of whom were found dead in river tributaries of Lake Superior. A coroner’s inquest in 2015 was largely inconclusive for most of the youth’s deaths, but provided 145 recommendations. One of those deaths was that of Norval Morriseau’s grandson, and Christian Morriseau’s son, Kyle Morriseau from Keewaywin First Nation. In a CBC report, Christian shared that after years of grieving, he “realized [his] son did not die in vain, he made a spiritual sacrifice” (Porter) to Mishipeshu. This is the ultimate kinship obligation to enact. Seeing Mishipeshu as taking Kyle’s life, Christian explained, has been the “best medicine I can give myself right now.” Christian has come to the understanding that “Kyle allowed his life to be taken [...] so that people would come to understand the struggles all First Nations students face, and make the changes necessary to keep them safe” (Porter). In Tanya Talaga’s account of the events of Kyle’s death, she quotes Christian recalling after identifying his son’s body, “We took some tobacco and when we laid that tobacco we said, ‘Miigwetch. Thank you.’ That is it. It was not easy to thank the river for taking my son” (264). Christian continued to maintain his relationship to the water through the offering of tobacco even after it had taken his son’s life. This selfless belief in the interconnectedness and balance of all things provided solace and peace for Christian and gave meaning to Kyle’s death.

Kinship to Mishipeshu is not easy. His power and unpredictable behaviour embodies fear of the unknown, and commands humble and unquestioning respect. Negotiating relationship to him involves learning his stories and understanding the capacity of his power, following protocol by not mentioning his name and giving him offerings, avoiding the lakes he inhabits when possible, and being prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice when asking for or receiving his help. His manifestations in each of the literary texts I have analyzed also help maintain kinship as they contain these integral teachings. Smith concludes about Mishipeshu that he is “clearly a kind of cosmic bully who both disrupts waters and uses his power to torment humans. As the person responsible for the primordial Deluge, he is evil inasmuch as he is the paradigmatic unbalancer of the world. Mishebeshu is not, however, the source of all evil or even misfortune, merely a person possessed of great power and malevolent will” (106). Although Mishipeshu may hold the potential for evil and malevolent will as such an “unbalancer,” he also and contradictorily is the enforcer of overall balance in the environment. As Brehm states, “In his role as guardian of resources he is immortal, reappearing to punish anyone who attempts to upset the balance of eco-social relations” (683-4). Melissa K. Nelson moderates the extremes of Mishipeshu’s behaviour in Smith and Brehm’s conclusions by foregrounding, “For Anishinaabeg, Mishipizhu has always been a guardian of waters and keeper of balance between the water spirits, land creatures, and sky beings. [...] Mishipizhu has traditionally controlled the well-being of natural resources, especially fish and those others living in and around the waters” (224). In this way, “his power is ambivalent, indeterminate; therefore Ojibwe must constantly be wary and cautious and make proper offerings for safety and long-term balance” (221-22). Representations and manifestations of Mishipeshu carry teachings about the underlying importance of balance to all of creation in kinship relationships and within that balance the negotiation of power. Miller in her examinations of power in Anishinaabe worldview states, “beliefs in the unequal distribution of power and deceptive nature of apparent form encouraged each individual to treat all others with respect” (22). The tremendous respect and humility required of a kinship relationship to Mishipeshu reminds Anishinaabeg of “a complete inversion of the sense of human domination over the natural world presented in Western religion and philosophy” (Miller 23). Concepts of kinship to the land need to include Mishipeshu and unpredictable, uncontrollable entities like him.

Kinship to land is not necessarily loving or harmonious, but actively negotiated and continually and individually maintained through proper knowledge, respect, and protocol as carried and taught in stories that position Mishipeshu within a larger interconnectedness and system of reciprocity and balance. In attending to this kinship it may also be important to take Melissa K. Nelson's advice and "just ask Mishipizhu himself and listen" (229), encouraging an attentive awareness and adaptability. Conceptions of kinship to the land need to attend to specific and particularly difficult relationships in order to encompass the participatory responsibilities necessary to maintaining a spiritual connection to land through knowledge and protocol. Negotiating a relationship to Mishipeshu through both his storied and discursive understandings, and his physical presence on the land establishes an active Anishinaabe attachment to land and place-based identity.

2 Feeling Home: Reading Affect in the Poetry of Al Hunter

As discussed in the previous chapter, an Anishinaabe connection to land and resulting place-based identity can be given shape by the expected behaviours, obligations, and active engagements of kinship that are contained within and prescribed by traditional knowledges, early literacies, and stories. However, this chapter explores a type of connection to land that exists beyond these discourses. I argue that there is a part of a connection to land that cannot be prescribed by language. I believe this type of connection holds potential for place-based practices to occur even when those stories and traditional discourses are inaccessible, because of colonial cultural genocide and white erasure of some Indigenous traditions. In conjunction with the importance of various forms of discourse in connection to land, I explore whether there is *something else* to that connection that Anishinaabe literary practice attempts to capture, but that ultimately exceeds the boundaries of linguistic definition. Home, as the culmination of place-based identity, can be described through stories and memories, recognitions of safety, familiar activities, and sometimes even good food, but there is something else about home that exists beyond these descriptions and materialities: the feeling of attachment. Attachment to land is individual and multiple; however, by recognizing affect as an Anishinaabe practice of awareness, of listening, reading, and learning from the land, that attends to those feelings of attachment and establishes the feeling of home, the *sense* in an Anishinaabe sense of place begins to emerge. Looking at affect cannot only give name to the nameless but also accounts for an integrated sense of belonging in a landscape. Each affective attachment, if listened and attended to, establishes a relationality that cultivates this sense of belonging. This type of embodied attachment outside of discourse also generates a strong sense of self-determined identity and by extension sovereign peoplehood, as theorized by Mark Rifkin. Feeling connected to and being aware of these extra-lingual force-encounters provides great potential for individual and collective connection and re-connection to land by simply cultivating these practices of Anishinaabe listening to and reading the land.

Connection to land through affect is realized in the poetry of Al Hunter. Hunter is Anishinaabe from Manitou Rapids, Rainy River First Nation in Northwestern Ontario. He has published four collections of poetry, one collaboratively published with three other poets called

Days of Obsidian, *Days of Grace* (1994), and three individually: *Spirit Horses* (2001), *The Recklessness of Love* (2008), and *Beautiful Razor* (2012). Hunter is also an active community worker, serving as Chief, teacher, land claim negotiator, and environmental activist to his home community. As a member of the Caribou Clan his “roles and responsibilities include reconciliation, peacemaking, and the preservation of artistic, creative traditions of the Anishinaabeg” (book jacket biography *Beautiful Razor* and *The Recklessness of Love*). Hunter’s poetry comes from an intentional and dedicated life lived on the land of his community and nation. Louise Erdrich describes his poems as “healing songs for the earth and the human spirit. For the sake of the moon, for the sake of our hearts, I am glad he is writing” (book jacket of *Spirit Horses*). Even within this brief book jacket blurb, Erdrich draws a direct connection between the moon and “our hearts,” imbuing the significance of Hunter’s poetry with an emotional and ultimately healing connection to the earth and the moon. Her brief description speaks to an embodied and emotional interconnected ecology found within his poems. I believe this intensely embodied and emotional quality has partially been responsible for the noted absence of critical scholarship on Hunter’s poetry. Feelings and affect have been historically valued below intellect and critical thinking in the academy, along with an unwillingness to engage with concepts difficult to describe through concrete language. In order to counter this lack, I explore the potential of affect theory to illuminate and describe the ways in which this embodied emotional connection to land is established and maintained through Hunter’s poetry.

Instead of focusing on human intellectual practices or discourse, affect theory is “grounded in movements or flashes of mental or somatic activity rather than causal narratives of their origins and end points,” according to Marta Figlerowicz in her introduction to the “Affect Theory Dossier” (4). Hunter gives an example of this type of activity in relation to land in his poem “April Rising” (*Spirit Horses* 65), in which recognitions of air, ground, water, sound and timbre cumulate in “A sense of urgency and anticipation [that] pulses through me like water breaking through ice” (65). The elements of the woods compel the speaker to walk “in the midst of trees and the sounds and smells of this waking season” (65), but without narrative cause, the speaker perceives merely “a sense of urgency and anticipation.” I argue that Hunter describes this mental and somatic activity to represent an affective awareness of the woods: one based not in knowing the stories of the land, but in feeling and sensing the land. Affect theory accounts for those emotions and responses that are beyond words or outside language. Affects exceed

intellectual intention and have the potential to express elements of the subconscious and its relationship to the conscious self (Figlerowicz 6). As Margaret Wetherell states in “Affect and Discourse – What’s the Problem?” “one of the distinguishing aspects of affect scholarship is that it emphasizes processes *beyond, below and past* discourse. Affect is formulated as a kind of ‘extra-discursive’ event” (350). Blackman and Venn in their introduction to *Body & Society*’s special issue on affect, maintain that what has been termed the ‘turn to affect’ across the humanities and social sciences, has created, along with a “heightened interest in the non-verbal, non-conscious dimensions of experience[,] a reengagement with sensation, memory, perception, attention and listening” (8), or a type of “embodied immersion,” as Wetherell describes (350). Affect theory, then, is not only concerned with what is beyond discourse, but also the practices of attentiveness to and awareness of those affects. As Wetherell continues, “Indeed, the turn to affect opens up crucial questions about meaning-making practices, the articulation of the somatic with these, and issues about how the speaking subject makes sense of and communicates affect” (353). Blackman and Venn go on to rhetorically ask, “If much of what passes as experience occurs in this realm [of affect], how then can we model the psychic and sensory apparatuses that afford specific kinds of embodied knowing?” (8). I take cues from Wetherell and Blackman and Venn to explore in this chapter Hunter’s representation or modelling of these apparatuses and meaning-making practices that attune to an affective and embodied connection to the land. How does Hunter articulate, make sense of, and communicate these affective attachments, and in turn, exemplify methods of embodied knowing of and belonging to the land?

One of the biggest obstacles and limitations of focusing on affect and that which is outside of discourse is that as soon as one attempts to describe affect, it is always already conceived of and defined through discourse. This has been part of a more recent debate in affect theory studies, as scholars have taken issue with the complete separation of affect and discourse. Wetherell discusses this debate in detail and argues, “it is not surprising that the turn to affect is [initially] correlated with a turn away from discourse methods” (352), because “many areas of discursive research are not well suited to either notice or investigate embodiment” (353). However, this complete and even temporal divide in affect theory²⁴ does not account for the pervasiveness of discourse or a type of feedback that occurs between affect and discourse in the

²⁴ Affect supposedly occurs before cognition and discursive meaning-making, most notably as theorized by Massumi in his seminal work on affect theory, “Autonomy of Affect.”

moment it is experienced (355). Wetherell maintains, “Any initial bodily hit [of affect], in other words, is always already occurring within an ongoing stream of meaning-making or semiosis” (355). In other words, it is nearly impossible to account for affect outside of its relation to discourse.

The interrelation between affect and discourse in an Anishinaabe context has been described by Lawrence Gross in *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being* through his theory of storytelling as a form of discourse that includes affective response in the hearts of Anishinaabeg (155). Gross theorizes that an emotional investment in stories results in stories being written on the hearts of the Anishinaabeg (157), stressing an embodied emotional response to story as part and parcel of storytelling: “There is an affective element to the [storytelling] tradition as well involving the heart. This is the heart of Anishinaabe storytelling. The stories are written on the heart of the Anishinaabe people” (164). Through the metaphor of “writing on the heart,” Gross brings together both affective and discursive elements of storytelling.

In an effort to do the same, I examine the poetry of Hunter as an obvious form of discourse and its interrelation to affective responses to the land. Similar to Gross’s summations about storytelling, I look at the ways that Hunter’s poetry represents affective and emotional embodied connection to land, and at the same time forms an apparatus for making meaning of such affective responses and establishing such connections. Poetic and/or figurative language holds potential for expressing affect, capturing extra-discursive and somatic activity, and for delineating practices of attentiveness to and awareness of those affects. This interrelation between affect and discourse is in essence somewhat paradoxical – using discourse to explain what is by definition extra-discursive. Hunter explores this impasse in his poem “In Neah Bay” (*Spirit Horses* 10). He begins, “To say that there are words to describe the feelings of the ocean would be to / lie. To / use a language that would describe one ounce of ocean wave would be to / speak the / tongue yet to be spoken. There are no words” (10). He highlights the limits of language to fully encompass the somatic impression of the ocean, and yet, paradoxically, in writing a poem he does attempt “to speak [this] tongue yet to be spoken.” Hunter describes this impasse in order to draw attention to those elements necessarily absent in writing: the voice of the ocean or, as I will discuss, the land speaking. The creative potential of poetics allows Hunter to represent discursively an affective connection to place.

One reoccurring poetic device Hunter employs to demonstrate the limits of language in communicating affect is repetition. Many of Hunter's poems include repetition to represent an overflow or excess beyond language. For example, "I Have Been to War" (*The Recklessness of Love* 27-35) is structured around a series of anaphoras, lines beginning with the same sequence of words. The poem begins with repetitions of "I have" and "They have" at the beginning of each line and moves through stanzas with each line beginning "I know," "my [...] place," "where are you," etc. These series of repetitions not only create affective movement and rhythm, and a potential allusion to Anishinaabe song structure, but also gesture toward the incapacity of words to fully encompass the speaker's sentiment. With each repetition the meaning changes slightly and is destabilized. Full repetition of lines and phrases achieves a similar effect throughout the poem. "I have" and "I have been" are repeated numerous times without a subsequent subject complement in an attempt to capture a reality of experience that has been warped by trauma.

This poetic device exposes another boundary of language: the ability to express trauma (another kind of affect), that which cannot be said or explained in words. Hunter speaks of connection to land through similar strategies of repetition. He repeats the environmental elements birds, trees, clouds, sky, winds, earth, and water in an anaphoristic structure in four stanzas throughout the poem, beginning with "I know" each element (28), then "where are you," to each element (29), and ending with two similar stanzas that begin with "beyond," and add more descriptive adjectives to each element, i.e. "bird's wings" and trees as "outstretched fingers" (33, 35). This progression demonstrates a move toward healing and integrating traumatic experience, while maintaining a repetitive structure that relies not solely on words' direct signification, but also on their affective impact in relation to their context. The poem resolves by emphasizing connection rather than precise understanding or explication of the trauma: "I" shifts to "we," and Hunter repeats "beyond" to acknowledge something greater than the speaker, than the elements of the environment, and than his understanding that affords healing and "singing" (another allusion to song in the poem). I argue that Hunter gestures towards affective connection to land and connection in general through his use of extra-discursive signification in repetition.

Furthering this gesture toward affective connection, Hunter more concretely reiterates the significance of the heart and a heart connection to the earth. He employs the heart as an embodied symbol of emotional and affective connection. The final line of Part VI of his poem,

“Letter mailed, Posthumously” (*Spirit Horses* 13-16), which ends “The longest journey is from the head to the heart” (15), recognizes the distinction between a cognitive awareness, represented by the head, versus a feeling or emotional awareness, represented by the heart, and the difficulty but necessity of navigating from one to the other. This embodiment and emotional or heart awareness is also extended to a connection to the land. In his poem “Recent Visitors” (*Spirit Horses* 59), Hunter draws a very explicit connection between “Shoreline, tree line, waterline, skyline, heart line,” making direct parallels between earth, plant, water, sky, and emotional paths: an interconnected ecology. The poem also refers to “glimpsing moments out of the corners of my eyes” of “something, someone [that] requires my attention,” something/someone that the speaker is “not quick enough to see” (repeated three times). Hunter suggests the need for a larger awareness of the connection between these lines – the need to align shore, tree, water, and the sky with the heart.

I connect Hunter’s expression of heart awareness and alignment to Gross’s conception of Anishinaabe storytelling:

the stories the Anishinaabeg tell are written on the land of the people and also written on the hearts of the people. In other words, the Anishinaabeg become emotionally invested not only in the stories, that is, having the stories written on their hearts, but also become sincerely attached to the non-human relatives and places celebrated in their stories. (157)

The stories, in Hunter’s case, are his poems in both their ability to produce an affective response and attachment to land, and also demonstrate that heart connection. More specifically, Gross’s image of heartstrings aligns nicely with Hunter’s use of heartlines in “Recent Visitors.” Gross explains that through storytelling and living on the land, Anishinaabeg “develop heartstrings that connect them to the earth and all natural elements” (166). He goes on to explain that this connection of heartstrings “is not some abstract connection, but can involve strong feelings of physical connection. One is connected to the land and to the elements of the natural world in a very literal manner” (164). I believe affect as an embodied sensation affords the concrete reality of this connection that a purely emotional connection may not.

Heart connection is fully realized in Hunter’s poem “The Spirit of Creation” (*Spirit Horses* 32). The poem connects the life force of creation which “pulsates in time” to the “heartbeats of those who listen with their hearts,” elevating emotional awareness and attentiveness to be “in time with” and sustain the “spirit of creation.” Hunter describes this

emotional awareness as the act of being a “heart listener.” He uses the physicality of these pulsating hearts keeping time with creation to demonstrate connection to the earth as “The earth’s heart is your heart,” not just similar to your heart but one and the same. A connection with the earth, then, is emotional, but also of the same body: truly an embodied interconnection.

Positioning a heart connection as embodied or consistent with a body connection to land offers a definition of affective connection to land as an emotional embodied attachment. Mark Rifkin in *The Erotics of Sovereignty* takes this type of attachment as constitutive of sovereignty. He argues that affect or Raymond William’s concept of “structures of feeling” has the potential to address modes of place-making that are formed through individual and collective experiences of erotics. Rifkin uses the term erotics to encompass not only “sensations of pleasure,” (39) but all “quotidian” (32), “emotional” (27), and “embodied sensations and sensitivities” (34). He argues, “attending to erotics [...] allows for a commitment to Indigenous collectivity and placemaking [...] not officially deemed political, and the imagination of alternative kinds of Indigenous being to those literalized/normalized through Indian policy [...]” (39). Detailing the specificities of feeling and sensation as points of connection to the land provides an alternative affect-driven narrative of place-based identity to those grounded in public discourses of politics and ownership, and instead privileges Indigenous individual and collective experiences, the body, relationships, and ultimately the feeling of belonging. I align the political potential of emotional, embodied affect with the Indigenous resurgent practices outlined in my Introduction. Similar to placing resurgent practices outside of structures of domination, “an Indigenous structure of feeling can refer to sensations of belonging to place and peoplehood excluded from settler governance but that remain present, most viscerally in the affective lives of Native people” (Rifkin 3). While acknowledging the political potential and imperative of affect in its relation to self-determination and sovereignty, I am focused more on the specifics of affective quotidian place-making practices in this chapter. The significance of Rifkin in relation to Hunter, then, is his theories about “attending to quotidian kinds of embodiment and feeling” (4) in relationships to land. In this way, I am interested in how Hunter represents emotional, embodied connection to land in individual and collective experiences.

In “The Spirit of Creation” Hunter’s use of a generalized second-person singular and plural “you” pulls this emotional, embodied connection out of a single individual experience or feeling into a collective one and, arguably, even further into a collective responsibility to be heart

listeners: “You are a heart listener / The earth’s heart is your heart” (32). This dual positioning of individual feeling and collective experience typifies what Rifkin describes as the dual reference of structures of feeling: “The kinds of feeling characterized as personal [or individual] can refer not only to forms of experience that lie at the edge of conscious awareness [affect] but also to those associated with entire social configurations that lie outside or challenge the parameters of existing structures of domination” (3). By using a dual-positioned pronoun, Hunter affirms individual and collective sensations as necessary to ways of being and belonging.

Hunter also explores sensation and belonging to land through poems about romantic and erotic love. In many instances in his collection *Beautiful Razor: Love Poems and Other Lies*, he equates romantic love with a connection to land using an extended metaphor. I align Hunter’s explorations of love with what Rifkin terms “the potential for intimacy and pleasure as means for (re)imagining and (re)connecting to place” (33). In “Promises to Keep” Hunter equates romantic commitment with responsibility to various elements in the environment. After the repeated elegiac refrain, “We had some / Promises to keep,” he describes shared equal and balanced tasks: “You kept one wing / I kept the other / So we would share the sky forever,” “You held the moon / I held the sun / To guide us through darkness and the light,” “You kept the water / I kept the fire,” “You held the rainbow / I held the northern lights,” and “You held me / I held you / To keep away the cold, to hold in the warmth” (*Beautiful Razor* 10). Although these tasks potentially correspond to various Anishinaabe feminine and masculine roles and associations, each task, no matter its gendered aspect, aligns a human-to-human intimacy and commitment with a human-to-land intimacy and commitment. Hunter concludes the poem by eliminating assigning the tasks to either “you” or “I,” and simply lists mutual promises “To stand on the earth / To hold up the sky / To remember the stars / To honour the moon / To praise the sun” (10). Human intimacy and love is expressed through these responsibilities to elements of the land and is used to establish or (re)imagine (re)connections to place. In a mirrored way, Hunter’s poem “Broken Vows” represents a failed human romantic relationship and its broken vows as “Let(ing) the moon tumble down,” “the stars fall,” and “the sun burn out” (*Beautiful Razor* 27). The breaking of romantic commitment is signalled by the failure to fulfill obligations to the environment, specifically those to the moon, stars, and sun. The repeated “Broken vows / Broken vows” are “Tumbling down *with* the moon / Falling *with* the stars / Burning *with* the sun” (27,

emphasis added). Romantic or potentially marital commitment to a human partner is aligned *with* responsibilities and connections to the land.

In his most straightforward and succinct demonstration, Hunter equates elements of land with romantic love by using the metaphors of rain as love and earth as a lover in his poem “The Rain Fell”: “The rain was love / You were the earth. / The rain fell, as did I” (*Beautiful Razor* 4). The act of falling in love is likened to the rain’s relationship to the earth: one of hydration or nourishment, along with the obvious word play on the idiom “falling” in love. Hunter employs metaphor to highlight similarity and relationship, but also to capture an affective quality that exists beyond the signification of language. Rifkin comments on this capacity of metaphor, referring to the work of Paul Ricoeur in *The Rule of Metaphor*. Rifkin remarks, metaphor “bespeaks a kind of reality that cannot be addressed in ordinary language. The designation of a statement as figurative, then, can indicate less its status as merely imaginary (as opposed to real) than its effort to register something in being that available discourses do not count as part of reality” (17). Applying this assertion, I perceive Hunter’s expression of romantic love through the metaphor vehicles of rain and earth, as not merely an imaginary comparison, but as speaking to something (a real affect) that “available discourses do not count as part of reality.”

Hunter employs metaphor not only to describe the affective reality of romantic love and its association with land, but also to represent the earth as a body. Earth as body speaks to an affective connection and reality not currently signified in concrete or ordinary language. In his poem “Clear Cut” (*Spirit Horses* 36), Hunter viscerally describes this connection to the earth by detailing the effects of logging on the environment as earth-mutilation, and in turn, self-mutilation, where the earth and the body are so closely entwined that they become one. Similar to the heart symbol, the metaphor of earth as body demonstrates an affective relationship; however, the slippage between the figurative metaphor and reality is tangible. By using metaphor, Hunter is able to express the affective reality of clear cutting and provide an alternative narrative of the effects/affects of colonial timber resource extraction. Clear cutting becomes bodily harm, exploiting a vulnerable body by laying it open and stripping it. Cutting “clear down to the bones of the earth” *is* cutting “clear down to the bones of my ancestors” (36). Scars are both lines of clear-cut boreal forest and bleeding flesh wounds. Not only have loggers cut wounds, but they have also destroyed the “healing canopy of trees,” stripping away what holds the potential to close those wounds. The affective connection between the trees and the

body exceeds the reality delineated by limiting colonial discourses of “promise and plunder” (36) which fail to recognize or comprehend the full extent of their impact on the environment, including impacts on humans. By representing and being attentive to this painful affective connection to land, Hunter expresses an alternative relationship to place that is outside of colonial discourses of resource development and extraction.

Metaphor and figurative language are commonly used to describe affective connections to place, especially in an Indigenous context. Keith Basso in *Wisdom Sits in Places* maintains, “since spatial conceptions, like temporal ones, are so often found expressed in figurative language, this is almost certain to lead to a consideration of metaphor” (68). His consideration of metaphor underscores “implicit cultural assumptions” (68) of beliefs and worldviews necessary to understand figurative spatial conceptions. One of the many implicit cultural assumptions apparent in Hunter’s poetry is the extension of personhood, as an extension of kinship and interconnected reciprocal responsibility. The figurative language and type of metaphor most directly used by Hunter to demonstrate this extension of personhood is personification. Similar to his use of metaphor, Hunter’s use of personification reflects a similarity to and relationship beyond what can be described in concrete language. Callicott and Nelson in their analysis of the stories collected by William Jones comment on the common use of personification in oral Anishinaabe storytelling traditions, noting that each story contains the personification of nonhuman beings. Personification, in other words the extension of personhood, is not merely a narrative device, but is an integrated part of a worldview that is indicative of a close relationship to land. Callicott and Nelson also comment on the rootedness of this extension of personhood within Anishinaabemowin, where many animals, plants, manidoog, minerals, other elements of the environment (thunder, sun, moon), and stories themselves are classified as and assigned animate status: “As William Jones notes, even the stories themselves – as well as the other-than-human characters in them – are animate persons!” (104). Personification reflects the animate status of these entities within the language, while at the same time extending personhood and in turn, reciprocal relationship.

Personification, then, works in two ways: it both describes an element of reality not signified through ordinary language (an implicit cultural understanding of the extension of personhood) and brings human aspects of those other-than-human entities into being. Rifkin discusses this dual effect of metaphor by referring to the work of Chris Bracken in *Magical*

Criticism alongside that of Ricoeur. Bracken sees metaphor as “harbor[ing] a stock of actualizing energy” (qtd. in Rifkin 15) and “help[ing] constitute material phenomena” (15). As Rifkin sums up, “metaphor can be seen both as magically transforming the immaterial into the material and as bearing the impression of what already exists but has remained unacknowledged in ordinary language,” in other words, “mark[ing both] the potential [and] the actual” (17). Hunter’s poem “Egress” (*Spirit Horses* 62) exemplifies this dual purpose of personification in its extension of personhood to elements of the environment (the actual) and contemplation on what those elements may communicate as persons (the potential). Hunter personifies sumacs raging, various species of birds calling and gathering, and the moon grinning. However, the speaker questions how to interpret these personified affects, asking “An early winter? Early snows?” and responds with “The sky curtains the truth” (62), another instance of personification, but one that stresses the inevitability of not fully grasping the affects’ meaning, only being aware of their potential. Hunter’s use of personification highlights an affect-driven slippage between the actual and potential, which I argue is a prominent component of affective connection to land. He represents an acknowledgement and awareness of that which exists outside of language, and simultaneously an acceptance of and humility in not knowing it fully.

Metaphor in poetry has the ability to represent affect because of its ability to express something outside of ordinary language, while also bringing into being a new potential relationship or connection, similar to affect itself. Ricoeur concludes that through its use of metaphor, poetic discourse shakes “the distinction between discovering and creating and between finding and projecting,” and articulates “our primordial belonging to a world... which at once precedes us and receives the imprint of our works” (361-62). Ricoeur’s extension of metaphor to express “our primordial belonging to a world” by blurring the distinctions between discovering/creating and finding/projecting describes the processes of affect as theorized by recent affect scholars. But what constitutes this primordial belonging and how does affect contribute to this attachment?

Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth in their introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader* highlight the in-between and accumulative qualities of affect as it manifests in intensities and resonances that pass from body to body. They explain, “affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or

variations between these intensities and resonances themselves” (1). Affect circulates, shuttles between, and accumulates on bodies, worlds, and the passages between them. As Gregg and Seigworth continue, “Affect is born in *in-between-ness* and resides as accumulative *beside-ness*.” (2). Hunter’s poem “The Bird Who Was Afraid to Fly” (*Beautiful Razor* 17) contains aspects of this affect accumulation, in its exploration of notions of home and connection to place. Hunter uses the metaphor of a nest to describe the ambiguous accumulative objects that comprise place. In the poem, the bird chooses to “leav[e] the only place / He ever felt like a bird” (17), which connects the nest place directly to identity and qualities of individual birdness, and by extension collective bird-hood. This place “bec[omes] cluttered with every bit of detritus / The wind blew in / Bits of cloth and feathers and fallen leaves / The hoarded dust of years / Over-accumulated wounds” (17). This clutter has attached or sticks to the nest carried there by the force of the wind, and is not only physical “bits,” but also bodily wounds, again taking on a figurative but affective dimension. The nest becomes, as Gregg and Seigworth define, “a palimpsest of force-encounters” as “affect accumulates across both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness” (2). These bits and wounds connect the bird to the nest as integral parts of the only place he has known to be a bird (relatedness), and also interrupt relatedness by inflicting those wounds and restricting flight through fear. Hunter also describes “deserting birds” who have already left the nest, presumably other bird relatives, another interruption of relatedness. The poem ends optimistically when the bird can finally release his negative affective attachment to the nest, “Look[ing] back one more time / At the only place / He ever felt like a bird” and flying away (*Beautiful Razor* 17). The figurative levels of this poem are two-fold: the accumulated bits and dust are metaphors for wounds and excessive restrictive affects, and the personified bird and his nest are representative of human attachments to home. Affects in this case are not positive or associated with feelings of love or protection, emotions commonly associated with home. However, the accumulation of affect drives the bird to mature and journey to leave the nest. The baby bird arguably becomes more bird-like once he flies, even though up until he leaves the nest, it has been all that has defined him as a bird.

I align Hunter’s representation of affect in this poem and others to Deleuze’s reflection on Spinoza’s work (considered one of the initial theorizations of affect), specifically in his delineation of the ways in which affect holds the potential to both compose and decompose bodies through force-encounters:

When a body “encounters” another body, or an idea another idea, it happens that the two relations sometimes combine to form a more powerful whole, and sometimes one decomposes the other, destroying the cohesion of its parts [...] according to complex laws. The order of causes is therefore an order of composition and decomposition of relations, which infinitely affects all of nature. (19)

Places and land as bodies in relation to other human bodies, therefore, compose and decompose each other through complex laws of relationality. Furthering Gregg and Seigworth’s evocation of relatedness and interruptions of relatedness, composition and decomposition describes the power of affect to bring into being and breakdown being through relationality. Hunter explores and describes these lines of relatedness in his poem “Passages” (*Spirit Horses* 43). His speaker contemplates, “I have been concerning myself with passages of late, passages of light, of shadow, of love, of hate” (43), and “Passages of hearts and minds and bodies and spirits – celestial and bruised” (43). Hunter’s choice of the word passages connotes the kind of affect-laden, in-between relatedness outlined by Gregg and Seigworth. The description of these passages as both “celestial and bruised” corresponds with a notion of affect that is both composing and decomposing. “Celestial” has connotations of divine creation, whereas bruised infers harm and breaking. Passages as affect are assigned both goodness and hurt and facilitate deep connection through the process of mutual composition and decomposition.

This process overall is one of becoming: of being made and unmade, of continual making and unmaking. As Gregg and Seigworth maintain,

affect is integral to a body’s perpetual *becoming* (always becoming otherwise, however subtly, than what it already is), pulled beyond its seeming surface-boundedness by way of its relation to, indeed its composition through, the forces of encounter. With affect, a body is as much outside itself as in itself – webbed in its relations – until ultimately such form distinctions cease to matter. (3)

Bodies perpetually are formed and reformed (composed) through various force encounters within their web of relatedness. I align this perpetual becoming through relationality with Daniel Heath Justice’s theories of kinship, particularly his emphasis on a web of relations “that link the People, the land, and the cosmos together in an ongoing and dynamic system of mutually *affecting* relationships” (“Go Away Water!” 151, emphasis added). However, Justice rightly not only acknowledges these relationships, but stresses the importance of the “recognition” of these

kinship interconnections, which “returns us to the physical realm of the participatory” (151) and includes active “rights and responsibilities” (151). Putting Justice’s theories of active kinship responsibility into conversation with the influence of affect, I theorize a method of attending to affect through participatory practices of listening or reading the land as demonstrated in Hunter’s poetry.

I associate these participatory practices with a type of land consciousness. Enrique Salmón uses this term in *Eating the Landscape: American Indian Stories of Food, Identity, and Resilience* to encompass a recognition of the “cultural histories [that] speak the language of the land” (30). To further define land consciousness as a listening and reading practice of the language of the land, I relate this term to a Deleuzian conception of consciousness. Influenced by Nietzsche, Deleuze theorizes that consciousness “appears as the continual awareness of this passage from greater to lesser, or from lesser to greater” (21). The “passages” he refers to, similar to those ruminated on by Hunter, are those connecting lines of relationality that either compose (greaten) or decompose (lessen) bodies through their force encounters with each other. Embedding Deleuze’s conception of consciousness into Indigenous philosophies of relationality to the land, I theorize a type of land consciousness that maintains awareness of those passages of affective encounter with various elements of the land that either compose or decompose human bodies. Aspects of such a theory resonate with Anishinaabe philosophies of the interconnection between land health and human health, and the need for balanced ecosystems of which humans are a part. However, Deleuze assigns relative and partial goodness and badness to composition and decomposition, which I argue does not align with Indigenous and Anishinaabe worldviews of balance. Composition and decomposition, in an Anishinaabe context, take on the same metaphoric, figurative/literal slippage discussed above: bodies are figuratively composed by the land’s bodies, minds, and thoughts (elements) that add to their essence, and decomposed by those aspects that challenge their essence, while at the same time bodies are literally composed of and decomposed by the land in balanced life cycles. In this way, Anishinaabeg are always already connected to land through affect; however, a land consciousness maintains this connection by practicing an awareness of relationality and the passages of affect – the “recognition” of kinship interconnections, to synthesize with Justice’s work.

Hunter’s poetry represents these affective connections to land through poetic discourse, but also demonstrates and encourages an aware practice of reading or listening to the land, a type

of land consciousness, by modeling apparatuses of making meaning of affect. Necessary to emotional embodied connection to land is not merely the existence of affect, but one's ability to be aware of that affect and situate oneself amongst and in relation to those force-encounters, intensities, and resonances. The first step in establishing a land listening practice is recognizing the ability of the land to speak. Basso has most notably drawn attention to the placement and containment of memory and stories within the land; however, his conclusion, heavily influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre, that "places may seem to speak [but] [...] express only what their animators enable them to say" (108), does not account for Anishinaabe and other Indigenous beliefs that the land and most of its elements are animators themselves (both as they are assigned as such within Anishinaabemowin grammar and as personified in stories). If the land is a speaking animator (or multiple animators in an interconnected web of relations), then, in maintaining relations to land, one must learn how to listen.

What does this practice of listening to affect entail? J. Edward Chamberlin in his published lecture *Living Language and Dead Reckoning: Navigating Oral and Written Traditions*, advocates for "a history of the cognitive and affective dynamics of listening, [and] its navigational principles" (22). He draws a distinction between hearing and listening, emphasizing the necessary active and learned qualities of listening practices, drawing parallels more akin to reading practices:

This kind of listening does not come naturally. *Hearing* comes naturally, just as seeing does. But listening is like reading. We learn how to do it, just as we learn how to distinguish music from noise; and we also learn that this distinction is, like writing scripts, culturally specific. But the process is universal. And so is the difference between listening for the letter and listening for the spirit. It's something like the difference between the teller and the tale. (24-25)

Chamberlain's distinction between listening for the letter and listening for the spirit, if incorporated into a land listening practice, recognizes a spirit or personhood in land elements, and his comparison between teller and tale affords agency to the land as teller or speaker. I find his differentiation between listening and hearing reminiscent of recent discussions of listening versus witnessing that have risen out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (Coupal, Nock). Michif Iskwew Samantha Nock, in an influential blog post commenting on the need to honour and hold

Indigenous women's stories in the context of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, writes,

Too often we think that the act of listening is equal to the act of witnessing. Listening is passive. We can listen, however your ability to listen lets you, while making to-do lists in our heads, thinking of what we are going to have for dinner, or what we are going to say next. When we witness a story we are not only present physically, but emotionally and spiritually, to hold this story in our hearts. When someone tells us their story, that story becomes a part of us. When you witness someone's story, be it a comedy or a tragedy, you are carrying a part of that person with you now. You have entered a very specific and powerful relationship that exists between the storyteller and the witness. ("Being a Witness")

I draw a parallel between Chamberlain's definition of listening and Nock's description of witnessing (and his "hearing" to her "listening"). Nock's description of witnessing not only involves active and holistic presence, but also affective response. Witnessing a story involves holding it "in our hearts" just as Gross describes heart connection in an Anishinaabe context. A story "becomes a part of us," as it composes bodies and as a part of the teller is carried within the listener/witness in a Deleuzian sense. This "very specific and powerful relationship," I argue, exists between Anishinaabeg and the land and is maintained through physical, emotional, and spiritual presence: an awareness practice of listening.

Hunter's poetry represents these listening practices and in particular repeatedly contemplates listening to songs of the land. In Hunter's lyric poem "Dance of the Trees" (*Spirit Horses* 69), the speaker meditates on the beginning of winter and listens to the rhythms and songs of the land that arise from the "pitch of silence":

Rhythms of a different sort reverberate and hum in muted songs of death, songs of death without the wails of mourning. Instead, a stream of welcoming songs grows steadily with each passing moon of winter. [...] The trees shake and shiver vulnerably like bones in a rhythmic dissertation. With the wind compose a mesmerizing symphony of breath and bone and light. (69)

Being aware of reverberating and humming rhythms in the environment, closely coincides with Gregg and Seigworth's description of affect as resonances, and the songs and symphony are more than just heard, but listened to, because they are determined to be music as opposed to

noise (à la Chamberlin). Hunter also uses references to both composition and decomposition: the trees “with the wind compose a mesmerizing symphony,” while the death songs permeate the air. However, unlike Deleuze, Hunter does not ascribe goodness or badness to these songs or resonances of affect. Songs of death are “without the wails of mourning” and instead become “welcoming songs,” suggesting a positive transition into an after-life. The composed symphony is of “breath,” “bone,” and “light,” bringing together elements of both life and death: the breath of life, the skeletal bones of the trees that signal a seasonal death and decomposition, and an all-encompassing goodness of light. Hunter positions both composition and decomposition as cumulative, transitional forces of becoming. Significantly, all of this music plays in the “pitch of silence,” signalling yet another figurative/literal slippage in Hunter’s work. This oxymoronic locution (“pitch” indicating sound and silence the lack of sound) gestures toward affect as a type of silent music, which still requires attentive listening. Hunter represents affect as not just an extra-discursive sensation, but also perhaps as an extra-auditory music.

Listening to affect as a participatory practice maintains a relationship to land that recognizes deep interconnection and processes of becoming. As Kathleen Stewart in her afterword to *The Affect Theory Reader* states, affect is “a sharpening of attention to the expressivity of something coming into existence [...] a gathering place of accumulative dispositions. [...] Affect is the commonplace, labor-intensive process of sensing modes of living as they come into being” (340). Affect and practices of being attentive to or sensing affect blend together here; however, Stewart underscores the active participatory practices of affect, the “sharpening of attention” and “labor-intensive process[es]” that can reaffirm affective connections to land. To be able to sense all modes of living as they come into being in an environment through relatedness is to understand one’s place in that environment.

Listening to the land speak has most notably been theorized in Indigenous literary study by Syilx Okanagan scholar and author Jeanette Armstrong in her influential work “Land Speaking.” Although most references to her work focus on the importance and rootedness of N’silxchn and other Indigenous languages in the land, I would like to emphasize Armstrong’s philosophy of the land’s voice and the importance of listening to the land speak. She states,

All my elders say that it is land that holds all knowledge of life and death and is a constant teacher. It is said in Okanagan that the land constantly speaks. It is constantly communicating. Not to learn its language is to die. We survived and thrived by listening

intently to its teachings – to its language – and then inventing human words to retell its stories to our succeeding generations. It is the land that speaks N’silxchn through the generations of our ancestors to us. It is N’silxchn, the old land/mother spirit of the Okanagan People, which surrounds me in its *primal wordlessness*. (142, emphasis added)

Armstrong stresses the necessity of listening to the land speak as a matter of life and death. She recognizes the knowledge and teachings the land holds and expresses its language as a “primal wordlessness.” I interpret this land language as a language of affect, an extra-discursive and perhaps even sometimes extra-auditory language. Armstrong continues,

The language spoken by the land, which is interpreted by the Okanagan into words, carries parts of its ongoing reality. The land as language surrounds us completely, just like the physical reality of it surrounds us. Within that vast speaking, both externally and internally, we as human beings are an inextricable part – though a minute part – of the land language. (144)

Armstrong describes the land language, or what I have interpreted as affect, as carrying parts of the land’s ongoing reality, which surrounds and inextricably binds Okanagan peoples but also more generally Indigenous peoples to land. This conceptualization recognizes the relatedness and interconnection between the land and Indigenous peoples, and not only that Indigenous peoples are composed by the land, but that they make up and compose both internally and externally a minute part of the land language itself. Ascribing land a language (another example of the now familiar metaphor slippage), also avoids some of the previously discussed challenges of affect theory and an impetus to attempt to fully separate affect from discourse. If land speaks, has language, and tells stories perhaps instead of sensing something outside of discourse, attentive listening to the land involves a kind of translation or, as Armstrong puts it, an “inveni[on of] human words to retell its stories.”

Hunter uses poetic language to translate and invent new ways of communicating land affect/language. His poem “Equinox II” (*Spirit Horses* 58) represents heart connection, embodied sensation, resonances, and relatedness. It exemplifies a method of listening, and being attentive to and aware of each of the aspects of affect. The poem reflects on the spring equinox, another transitional and seasonal time of change. Hunter identifies the place and relatedness of crows, air, winds, stars and constellations, the sky and water people, winged ones, the sun, the northern lights, trees, and roots. Each entity awaits a communication of change:

Somewhere the signal has been given
Notification has been served
A message has been sent to the sky people
The water people have sensed the vibrations
Winged ones have seen the semaphores (58)

Hunter invokes land language by using “signal,” “notification,” and “message” to describe how each entity knows that spring is coming. His word choice of “vibrations” and “semaphores,” similar to the music allusions in “Dance of the Trees,” further suggests an extra-auditory but ultimately silent musical language that compels attention. Lastly, Hunter evokes a heart connection to the trees (and more widely to the affects of the land) when he writes,

The trees have begun to shiver inside
Awakening the synapses
Freeing the jugular
The heart vein. (58)

His syntax affords a slippage between a personification of the trees’ synapses and jugular, and the nervous system and heart vein of the speaker. Both readings reinforce an embodied sensation and heart connection as part of a relationship to land. In giving land language, “Equinox II” models an apparatus for making meaning of affect and listening/reading land language.

Hunter’s poetry represents affect and affective listening practices in order to express and maintain Anishinaabe belonging and attachment to land. His poem “Portrait of a Pipe Maker” (*The Recklessness of Love* 46-47) uses literary devices of repetition, metaphor, and personification not only to represent extra-discursive affects but also to envision belonging and self-actualization through affective attachment and interconnection to the land. Pronoun shifts in the poem signal a connection between individual and collective experiences and sensations much as in “The Spirit of Creation,” but also a turn inward as Hunter switches from referring to “he” (either referring to an other, potentially Bob Morris to whom the poem is dedicated, or to the speaker in the third person) to “you” (again with a similar dual referent) and finally, to “I” in a repetition of the first stanza that replaces “he” with “I.” This subtle shift in pronoun use represents a progressive process of self-awareness and actualization that, I argue, comes out of feeling an affective connection to land. This affective connection involves the extension of personhood and interconnection to a black bear as the speaker recounts, he “saw his reflection in

the eyes / of a black bear / finally shook hands with the man / and accepted his gifts” (46). The bear and the man compose each other through ambiguous syntax, and in the stanza’s repetition the gifts become “my” gifts instead of “his” gifts, further confusing the distinction between bear and man, and between who is giving and who is receiving gifts. This slippage acknowledges a close relatedness between bear and man. In a second instance of personification, the speaker expresses, “I will be the eagle praying at dawn....” (46), drawing attention to an even closer interconnectedness between the man and the eagle. Hunter also invokes relatedness and participatory reciprocal relationship when the speaker states, “you have held the moon in your hands,” using metaphor to bring connection to the moon into the physical realm of responsibility and care.

Land language is represented as two-way communication as the speaker is “speaking with stones”; however, beyond simple communication Hunter recognizes a co-compositional relationship between man and stone, and a constitutive process of becoming as the speaker declares, “I am here / I am in this stone.” Hunter’s use of a deictic “here” and the speaker’s position *in* the stone actively places and situates him on the land. This becoming develops into one of belonging. The speaker then exclaims,

I am the voice of water
A diver of words
lift me to the sky
to the winds
to the earth
to all things living (46)

Recalling “On Neah Bay,” Hunter is not only attempting to give voice to the ocean, but his speaker is “the voice of the water.” Through an attentive practice of listening to, interpreting, and translating land language onto paper in the form of poetry he becomes a part of language – just as Armstrong maintains that Indigenous peoples are an inextricable part of the land and its language. “A diver of words” reiterates an immersion in water (similar to his placement in stone) and again underscores an active physical realm of the participatory in his diving for land language. Being lifted into the sky, winds, earth, and all living things through the processes of being attentive to affect and using the apparatus of poetry to make meaning of those affects

(inventing human words to retell the land's stories) situates the speaker within a web of relations and provides him with a sense of belonging, a sense of place, a place-based identity.

Through attentiveness and translation, listening and retelling affect produces belonging. Gregg and Seigworth contend, "Affect marks a body's *belonging* to a world of encounters or; a world's belonging to a body of encounters" (2). As most widely accepted by theorists of affect, affective encounters place bodies within relatedness and become

a form of relation as a rhythm, a fold, a timing, a habit, a contour, or a shape [which] comes to mark the passages of intensities (whether dimming or accentuating) in body-to-body/world-body mutual imbrication. It is this relationality [...] that persists, in adjacency and duration, alongside the affects and bodies that gather up in motley, always more-than-human collectivity. (13)

Affect marks and produces relations in a "more-than-human collectivity," which includes all elements of the land. Bodies and worlds are mutually imbricated in relation to one another through the passages of affect. Lauren Berlant, whose work focuses on the affective components of belonging, states in an interview with the journal *Qui Parle*, "one can't intend an affect, [but] one can become attentive to the nimbus of affects whose dynamics move along and make worlds, situations, and environments. In attending to, representing, and standing for these alternative modes of being, we seek to provide new infrastructures for extending their potential to new planes of convergence" (qtd. in Figlerowicz 13). I argue that Hunter attends to, represents, and stands for land affects through his poetry and in doing so, provides new infrastructures for understanding and maintaining Anishinaabe affective connections and belonging to land. Most importantly, affective connections are meant to be actively attended to and maintained through daily practices. Despite my attempts to analyze the intricacies of affect, its representation and listening/reading models within Hunter's poetry,

these affective moments – at once all-powerful and powerless – do not arise in order to be deciphered or decoded or delineated but, rather, must be nurtured (often smuggled in or, at other times, through the direct application of pressure) into lived practices of the everyday as perpetually finer-grained postures for collective inhabitation [...], the shimmering relays between the everyday and affect and how these come to constitute ever new and enlarged potentials for belonging. (Gregg and Seigworth 21)

Attending to, nurturing, and maintaining affective connection to land takes place in lived everyday practices of attentiveness, listening, and retelling. Hunter's poetry in its retelling of land language participates in the process of land consciousness and, along with the affects it represents, produces "ever new and enlarged potentials for belonging."

Hunter symbolizes and culminates this affective connection and belonging through multiple references to feathers and gossamer threads throughout his work. "Whispering feathers fall / like fading songs" ("Feather Poem" *Spirit Horses* 11), hummingbirds deliver "Tiny reassuring flutters [that] echo in my inner ear. Signals of something coming. Someone on the edge of contact. The hypnotic flutter of a thousand tiny feathers echo in my inner ear" ("Hummingbirds" *Spirit Horses* 52), and "Feathers" on winds, in willows, on waters, and in skies "finding their way to here / to there / to you / to me" ("Feathers" *The Recklessness of Love* 17). Feathers whisper songs, echo signals, and pass between places and people, just as affect is a form of land language that exists in in-betweenness and relatedness. Feathers also "give life," "provide protection," and "listen" ("Letter Mailed, Posthumously" *Spirit Horses* 13), just as affect composes bodies, constitutes belonging, and requires attentiveness. Nests as representative of home places are "Woven of tenderness and gossamer / Tiny fingers of light / Touched upon / A feather of yours / Love / Left behind / Still whispering inside of me" ("Nanokaasii," *Beautiful Razor* 34). Home is the accumulation of gossamers: affective passages of attachment that are embodied (fingers) and emotional (love). As Hunter expresses through repetition in "Out of the Gallows," "gossamer threads keep me here [...] bound to this earth" (*The Recklessness of Love* 45).

Hunter's poetry provides an understanding of embodied emotional connection to land that is maintained through being attentive to its affects and reading the land. The practice of reading the land is integral to an Anishinaabe sense of place as it establishes relatedness and forms attachment to all elements in an interconnected ecology. This affective connection is a vital component of resurgent place-based practices, because it requires only physical presence on the land or, as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson puts it, is an effect of simply placing "Bodies on the land" (*As We Have Always Done* 236).

3 Intellectual Wandering: Cognitive Sense of Place in the Work of George Kenny

Sunset on Portage (from the bus depot)

the Winnipeg sun dies
lastly

on the blue logo

of the Bank of Montreal

Fluorescent and neon lights,
man's creation

supplants

God's technology.

- George Kenny (1977)

The above poem “Sunset on Portage (from the bus depot)” is set in Winnipeg and offers a description of what has been termed by space and place theorists and environmental psychologists as a cognitive connection to place: mentally seeing, placing, and situating oneself in one’s day-to-day physical setting (Proshansky 157). George Kenny not only physically describes the setting of the poem, but also provides a specific perspective in this short snapshot, commenting that the “fluorescent and neon lights” of the Bank of Montreal sign constitute “man’s creation / supplant[ing] / God’s technology” (*Indians Don’t Cry* 120). Kenny situates this poem very specifically, even with a directional point of view. He provides clear cognitive descriptors of where the speaker is and ends with a profound statement of belief. He cleverly flips expectations by pairing “technology” with “God” and “creation” with “man,” subtly subverting easy judgment against the city. His word choice of “supplant” complicates negative connotations as well, as if the lights were merely taking over for the sun. However, the sun is still replaced and dies as perhaps a comment on the unnaturalness of the city. Kenny offers a

nuanced view of the Winnipeg horizon that represents the complexity of finding belonging in the city that is a concern of much of his work.

Anishinaabe poet and playwright Kenny began his writing career alongside authors like Maria Campbell, Basil Johnston, Rita Joe, and Daniel David Moses in the late 1970s and early 1980s as part of an Indigenous literary resurgence that helped to gain recognition for Indigenous Literature as a field of study in Canada. Like many of his contemporaries, Kenny was taken away from his community of Kejik Bay, part of Lac Seul First Nation, at age six to attend Pelican Indian Residential School in Sioux Lookout, and eventually moved to Toronto in the late 1970s to be a writer. While there, he published *Indians Don't Cry* in 1977, a collection of poetry and short stories, which one year later was adapted into the play *October Stranger*, considered the first full-length Indigenous play about contemporary Indigenous people. After a series of moves between large and small cities, Kenny eventually went back to the small town close to his reserve, Sioux Lookout, and has not published any more creative work, besides the republication of his collection two years ago encouraged and supported by the late Renate Eigenbrod.

As mentioned in the introduction, Kenny's work has received little critical attention, particularly in contemporary scholarship. This may be due to his representations of difficult, fraught, and uncomfortable experiences of attempts to place himself in the city. Analyzing negative experience in the city is complex, and often results in retreats into silence and a disjunction between the critical and creative literature about urban indigeneity. Literary representations of negative experiences do not necessarily clearly or straightforwardly resist colonial stereotypes and discourses of Indigenous unbelonging in the city. They are not celebratory; they are not easy to hear. However, I do not believe that those experiences should be erased, silenced, or avoided in critical analyses. Similar to scholarship in cultural studies by Rey Chow (*Ethics Beyond Idealism*), I find it important to engage with Kenny's poetry and its portrayal of conflicted experiences in the city in order to avoid idealizing all Indigenous urbanity. While still recognizing the political capital, influence, and necessity of positive representations of urban experience, I instead in this chapter privilege a myriad of Indigenous narratives and agencies within the urban environment.

Since the 1980s Urban Indigenous Studies has worked against colonial discourses of difference and assimilation that attempt to displace and distance Indigenous peoples and identities from urban centres and environments (Thrush 112-13, Peters and Anderson 2-5).

Evelyn Peters and Chris Anderson in their introduction to *Indigenous in the City* state, “The association of ‘authentic’ Indigenous identities with non-urban locations positions urban Indigenous cultures and lifeways as in-authentic and less legitimate” (1). Many scholars celebrate positive and resilient urban Indigenous experience and stress the need to counteract these assumptions of inauthenticity in the city (or being a “bad Indian”) that stem from colonial and popular stereotypes that Indigenous peoples “only exist in a romanticized past and are geographically restricted to rural reservations” (Martinez, Sage, and Ono xvi). Renya Ramirez in *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* theorizes that urban Indigenous peoples still maintain a connection to tribal lands through a hub consciousness that “includes the subjective experience of feeling connected to tribe, to urban spaces, and to Native peoples within the diaspora, [...] other Indigenous cultural and national formations,” and facilitates the bridging of differences “so that Native peoples can organize for social change” (11). Laura M. Furlan in *Indigenous Cities: Urban Indian Fiction and the Histories of Relocation*, on the other hand, critiques the rootedness of Indigenous identity in tribal lands associates this connection with colonial fantasies of the noble savage that further oppress and restrict Indigenous people and identity. She promotes instead traditional values of movement and mobility (8-9). This vein of scholarship is constructive and necessary work to support current Indigenous urban communities and improve urban Indigenous realities. I support the political and ethical imperative to de-emphasize negative experience in the city in order to counter these colonially imposed stereotypes that uphold reserve designation and other processes of settler colonialism by supporting a colonially imposed urban/reserve binary (Simpson *As We Have Always Done* 80-81).

I also situate this chapter amongst theories of Indigenous resurgence and a reclaiming of Indigenous presence in the city, no matter the form. Peters and Anderson point out, “The creation of Indigenous “homelands” outside of cities is in itself a colonial invention” (7-8). Simply put, Indigenous peoples do and always have belonged in the city; urban centres are located on Indigenous land, and therefore, Indigenous people belong there. Moving to the city does not separate Indigenous people from the land and place-based identity; colonial discourse, institutions, and racisms are what have the potential to disrupt a sense of belonging in the city. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson in *As We Have Always Done* consolidates these impacts as attacks on Indigenous presence: “All Canadian cities are on Indigenous lands. Indigenous

presence is attacked in all geographies” (173). Simpson positions resurgence as an effective mode to combat these attacks:

The beauty of culturally inherent resurgence is that it challenges settler colonial dissections of our territories and our bodies into reserve/city or rural/urban dichotomies. [...] We have found ways to connect to the land and our stories and to live our intelligences no matter how urban or how destroyed our homelands have become. (173)

Finding ways to connect to land in cities then becomes disrupted only, if at all, as a result of colonization, not through questions of civilization, assimilation, authenticity, or belonging. Urban land-based practices continue to flourish and reinforce Indigenous resistance and resurgence in urban areas. However, amongst contemporary celebrations and affirmations of urban Indigenous traditions and ways of being, I find it necessary to reflect on those experiences of un-belonging and disjunction particularly as represented in earlier literary productions, like that of Kenny, in order to expose a sometimes fraught history of self-making and place-making in the city. By sharing negative experiences of the urban through literature and exposing attacks on Indigenous presence, Kenny’s representations of his process to connect to land, stories, and his Anishinaabe intelligence in the city is an expression of resistance and resurgence.

Part of acknowledging and reinforcing Indigenous presence on the land is to give agency to the complexity of Indigenous voices and experiences. Kenny’s published representations of his experiences in city environments are challenging to read, because of their depictions of alcoholism, poverty, homelessness, racism, and elements of unbelonging. But the agency and resistance in their presence and expression are worthy of study. Kenny exposes the racism he and other Indigenous peoples face in cities, the economic struggles of fellow Indigenous people in urban areas, and the disruption of his own identity and connection to place as a result of the cognitive imperialism that ruptures his connection to land and community. By representing his struggle, Kenny exposes the colonial context of his experience and resists drunken or city Indian stereotypes. Analyzing these nuanced and difficult explorations can give agency to Kenny’s individual intellectual process – not just a product of his environment, but of a thinking, working, feeling, complex person who is neither out of place nor at home in the city, but is constantly negotiating his sense of place and enacting relationship to land. As Robert Warrior states, “Indigenous agents of history express their agency through their ideas. Persistence is thus, and always will be, an intellectual act” (“Intellectual History” 98). I argue that through a process of

intellectual wandering, Kenny demonstrates a cognitive connection to land in the movement between rural and urban settings, and in turn deconstructs and resists stereotypical colonial dichotomies of the urban as non-Indigenous and the rural as Indigenous place.

In exploring this intellectual act, I find it appropriate to apply what spatial theorist Harold Proshansky has termed a cognitive-descriptive sense of place, because it attends to the mental process of making sense of oneself in relation to place that is so prevalent in Kenny's work. This process starts in his representations in some of his short fiction and his play of leaving a childhood home on the reserve and mentally juggling conflicting expectations, pressures, and stereotypes of where home should be and what being Indigenous should look like once there. Shifting to city settings, Kenny's poetic representations of urban experience expose a still conflicted and tense intellectual process of combating and negotiating colonially imposed binaries between urban as white and professional space and reserve as relegated Indigenous space. Kenny interrogates the internalization of this dichotomy in the form of cognitive imperialism, and reveals its resulting oxymoronic figuring of the Indigenous self as stranger in the city. As a counterpoint to these struggles, Kenny emphasizes the importance of relationship and connection in many of his poems that feature particular people in his life. This focus on interconnectedness and individual meaning making in Kenny's work can be aligned both with Anishinaabe epistemologies and what I theorize as a process of intellectual wandering. I argue that through this process and space of complex struggle and wandering, Kenny establishes what Warrior terms intellectual sovereignty, which only gains definition and articulation through the critical reflection of that struggle in his creative work (*Tribal Secrets* 98).

Intellectual or cognitive connection to place holds particular value in Kenny's work, because of how clearly it aligns with descriptive elements of his reflections on place and place-based identity. A cognitive connection to place is how humans think about, recognize, determine where they are in, and remember a physical place. Proshansky in "The City and Self-Identity" outlines a cognitive-descriptive dimension to sense of place as

all the things people know about, recall, believe in, and expect to experience with regard to their day-to-day physical setting. [...] These are substantive or content aspects of the person's place-identity, including not just images and memories of spaces and places, but conceptions and beliefs about size, distance, color, and other physical attributes. Conscious beliefs and expectations about how, where, and why one uses

physical settings are also part of the structure. (157)

A cognitive-descriptive dimension to a sense of place is the mental process used to situate oneself and conceptualize place. This process involves day-to-day experiences, images, and beliefs and expectations of a place's use. In many ways, cognitive sense of place is the most basic way of getting to know a place: the process of determining what it looks like, what it is for, and what to think of the place. Cognitive connection to place plays an important role in much of Kenny's work as he represents this intellectual process in his movements from reserve to urban places.

Much of Kenny's short fiction is set on reserve, but narrates the decision to leave home. Kenny recurrently exposes what Renate Eigenbrod describes as "the whole notion of having to choose between two different worlds if one wants to realize one's potential [which] was introduced through colonization [and] made all so-called choices into dilemmas" (*Travelling Knowledges* 29). Choosing between unfavourable alternatives and attempting to work within this colonially imposed spatial binary of reserve and urban, Kenny's characters develop complex mental practices and comparisons to help them decide where to be. Through this process many of his characters reflect on their place and create a form of cognitive space, that is, as E. Relph defines it, "the abstract construct of space derived from the identification of space as an object for reflection and the attempt to develop theories about it" (24). The complicated thought process of deciding to leave triggers the formation of this contemplative space, where characters evaluate their sense of belonging at home and in future unknown environments.

Kenny's protagonist Elizabeth Commanda in "Summer Dawn on Loon Lake" contemplates a cognitive connection to place, pre-empted by her decision not to return home on a fictional reserve again, when she is home for the summer from school in Thunder Bay. The short story is heavily punctuated with descriptions of the contemplative reflections of Elizabeth (or Lizzie as she is known on the reserve) about the land. The organizing action of the story is Lizzie watching the sunrise: "The skyline of the east was all different shades of red, from bright pink to soft lavender" (*Indians Don't Cry* 66). Lizzie's observations could be considered anticipatory nostalgia for a connection to land and wilderness, particularly as the story ends, "Summer dawn on Loon Lake would always be a cherished memory" (72). However, Kenny subtly represents a more complex intellectual process at play in Lizzie's reflections. The narrator observes, "she enjoyed *even more* the little black-marked grey and white chickadees flitting from bough to

bough among the bushes and evergreens” (66, emphasis added). Lizzie has an increased sense of appreciation for the birds, because she has the perspective of not having seen them after having left her community and then returning. She reflects, “It felt a lot different each day still” (66), recognizing the effect being away has had on her connection to this place, not an explicit positive or negative change, but just difference.

Kenny also represents the move away from home as a catalyst for a shift in or broadening of perspective in relation to land connection in Lizzie’s creative writing. He includes a poem that Lizzie has written for her English Composition class in Thunder Bay, exemplifying a discursive space that connects her back to Loon Lake and her Grandfather Josh. In the poem, through the use of metaphor, Lizzie draws an explicit connection between the Lake and her Grandfather. Opening the poem, she compares the dawn to “a glass mirror” that “reflect[s] [her grandfather’s] smiling face upon / the waters” (68). She figuratively describes how her grandfather literally sees himself in the land/water. To close the poem she compares the “freshness of dawn” to “his / kind word / on Loon Lake” (68). Not only does he see himself in the Lake but also his words are a part of the landscape. I argue that Lizzie exemplifies her grandfather’s physical and discursive connection to land in this poem. The poem, however, is written in the city away from Loon Lake. Grandfather Josh is also now in an old folk’s home in Winnipeg. Lizzie is only able to have this perspective and develop this connection away from home.

Kenny also more explicitly represents what prevents Lizzie from staying home. He describes, “for the education she was receiving made her reject the too-limited life offered in the village. She wanted to see other parts of the country, even maybe visit another land, another continent. Why? She was not even sure of that,” but “there had to be more for herself” (70). Even though Kenny signals that education is the reason for her being unsatisfied with life on the reserve, he is careful not to present education as an assimilatory process. When Lizzie’s brother, Henry, derides her for her choice to not come back by saying, “I was wondering when you would get to be a white woman for sure...”, she emphatically answers, “I’m not though...”, reaffirming her Anishinaabe identity that includes her desire to leave. Kenny exposes the influence of Henry’s internalization of colonial discourses of the urban as assimilatory, but ultimately rejects these expectations by reasserting Lizzie’s Indigeneity. Henry concedes and supports Lizzie’s decision by stating, “you have to do what you want” (72). Kenny represents the difficult intellectual process that Lizzie goes through in order to decide that she wants to leave. She still

holds a connection to the land (perhaps one that is even more enhanced because of her time away) and a close relationship with her family, but knows that she wants more.

Kenny's play *October Stranger* tells a similar narrative of a young man, John, deciding to leave his childhood reserve and become a writer in Toronto; however, in this play, Kenny further elucidates and complicates the binary of staying versus leaving. The play is set primarily on a floatplane dock, a liminal space of transition between the reserve and the city. From this in-between space, John weighs each life path he feels has been presented to him. Each character represents a specific set of stereotypes and expectations of Indigenous identity both on and off reserve. Ida, John's love interest in the play, represents a traditional choice, wanting John to stay on the reserve, take the Band Administrator's job, get married, and live a life like his parents, having a family, taking care of relations, and trapping. Ida sees the city as a place of difference and assimilation, representing the colonially imposed urban/reserve binary. When John suggests that Ida, her mother and his father move with him to the city, Ida does not feel that they would be comfortable there: "And you know how different the city is from our home here in Lac Seul. [...] A city is so big and no one knows one another. [...] They would end up living the rest of their lives like the white people there" (7-8). Ida idolizes the reserve life that John's parents have lived as she recites and mimes with John a home scene of his parents reminiscent of Kenny's poem "How He Served" (9-10), and she has internalized colonial divisions of urban/reserve, associating the city with assimilation and whiteness. Ida represents a certain ideal and option of reserve life for John. But after hearing Ida's case he states, "I want to be a writer – No Ida, my father and I, we live in two different worlds. [...] I wish it wasn't that way, but it is..." (13). Even though John and his father are on and from the same reserve, they "live in two different worlds," a fairly non-specific way of stating what appears to be an indescribable impasse in John's desire to move to the city. Through the character of Ida, Kenny exposes the colonially imposed dilemma of negotiating urban/reserve divisions and their stereotyped and damaging expectations of in/authenticity and un/traditional ways of living.

But Ida as representing this stock perspective is not the only option Kenny provides. Josh is a fellow artist, a painter who stays in Lac Seul but continues to practice his art. John and Josh have an aesthetically pleasing interchange that blends poetry and painting of a wilderness scene on the reserve, offering the possibility of a land-based art practice. In the end, Josh ends up staying on the reserve, but is still able to practice his craft. The character of Liz advocates for

John to become a professional in the city. She questions whether being a Band Administrator will be “enough of a challenge for you?” (20). She asks, “What about your dreams of becoming a professional writer? You can’t become one out here” (20), and continues, “The city is where you belong. It’s the best place for you to accomplish what you feel you must do. To write” (26-27). After John suggests that he could “be a writer here,” she responds, “You better get wise to yourself. You won’t be happy here and you know it” (27). She is reminiscent of a Pauline Johnson character, performing seemingly very traditional poetry and storytelling in “full traditional Indian dress” (42): “I also tell traditional stories and legends since I believe it is important to present our past, the richness of our culture and history” (47). As a counterpoint to Josh, Liz romanticizes reserve life and the wilderness in her performances even though she advocates for living in the city.

Kenny also represents an activist and political perspective and option through the character of Paul. Paul is an “AIM Indian” and dresses in pantribal garb, including a necklace of turquoise (which turns out to be glass) and bear claws (that are not real) (40-41). He is represented as the dancer in Kenny’s poem “Rain Dance,” but as he finishes his performance, Ida and Josh criticize that he performs “Into the security of pocketbooks [...] of the enriching Americans” (44-45). While Kenny’s portrayal of Paul critiques his opportunism and pandering, Paul at the same time has a clear and honourable desire to make positive change for Indigenous peoples: “I want to do something about the problems of our people today and not just talk about it” (47-48).

Liz, Paul, and John end up leaving for Toronto, while Ida and Josh stay behind. The play ends with all of the characters reciting sections of Kenny’s poem “I Don’t Know This October Stranger,” a decidedly conflicted portrayal of experience in the city, as will be discussed below. After representing all of these various options, the play ends with the ominous stage direction “John is swallowed up by the crowd” (77). Kenny represents a complex thought process of deciding whether to leave the reserve with a multitude of choices/types of Indigenous identity both in the city and on the reserve. The play does not include much narrative development or action, but each character symbolizes a part of John’s thought process. This intense contemplation does not resolve when he is finally in Toronto at the end of the play. However, Kenny gives credence to and space for this intellectual process. He dedicates his play to “migrating Native people,” neither reserve nor city Indigenous people, but those still moving. He

exposes the types of discourse that put pressure on and constrict Indigenous identity through his trope-like characters, and reaffirms individual Indigenous expression by having John conclude that “I am my own man. My dad always says I should make up my own mind” (65), “I have to leave. I must try. [...] I’ve got to prove myself out in the city” (70), and “I am my own man. I’m in control of my own destiny” (71). Kenny stresses an individual intellectual process of figuring out what is best for oneself.

Circling back to the beginning of the play, in the stage directions John first comes on stage with a briefcase: “He walks about the stage, pauses periodically, reflecting various moods. John notices a manuscript lying on the dock. He smiles as he flips through it. Then he exits” (2). Presumably in a meta-theatrical moment, John is reflecting on the script of the play he is in or at least the manuscript of another writing accomplishment. He is back on the dock of the reserve, but the brief smile reflects a contentedness and resolve towards the final product of John/Kenny’s intellectual struggles and process, and movements: the play itself.

Kenny’s representation of Josh’s individual intellectual processes follows Anishinaabe ways of learning and knowing. In *Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin (The Way of the Good Life): An Examination of Anishinaabe Philosophy, Ethics and Traditional Knowledge*, D’Arcy Rheault asserts that “Kendaaswin is the way of learning, the way of gathering knowledge. To understand and experience any kind of knowledge the Anishinaabeg first internalize it within their minds. Then they feel the knowledge internally, through reflection, and externally, through observation” (73). He emphasizes a mental process of internalizing surrounding experiences and then processing them through individual reflection and observation. Similarly, Simpson in *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, in relation to learning Anishinaabe intelligence and knowledge from Creation Stories, explains, “We are responsible for finding our own meanings, for shifting those meanings through time and space, for coming to our own meaningful way of being in the world. We are each responsible for being present in our own lives and engaged in our own realities” (43). She continues, “it is highly personal. All Nishnaabeg people are theorists in the sense that they hold responsibilities to making meaning for their own creation and their own life” (43). Simpson’s focus on individual meaning making and presence in lived realities as practices of Anishinaabe intelligence aligns with Kenny’s representations of the individual and intellectual struggle of finding where to be.

In many of Kenny's "reserve" narratives he explores the intellectual struggles of wanting more in life than what is available on reserve. He represents the introspective considerations and influences in deciding between commitments to family and to community, between a more traditional way of life and the constructed professionalism and strangeness of the city that includes the opportunity to be a writer. Although much of Kenny's work does not resolve this conflict, his writing exposes the complexities behind the decision to leave and ultimately redefine home.

Kenny's experiences of moving away also influenced much of his urban-based poetry. He repeatedly represents an attempt to find a sense of place in the city; however, the resulting identification is in many cases uncomfortable and disjunctive. Many of his urban poems are place-based in that they are structured around a place, through their title and setting; however, they lack descriptions of a personal sense of place or connection to the land, and instead represent painful alienation and estrangement. Much of this disjunction and resulting estrangement comes from Kenny's attempts to reconcile the colonially imposed dualism between being a writer (associated with living in the city and disconnection) versus being home (living in his reserve community and being with relations) that he is forced to work within. Kenny's poetry represents a conflicted process of specifically cognitive or mental connection to place in the city. This conflict stems from the processes of cognitive imperialism as discussed by Indigenous theorists such as Marie Battiste and Simpson, which place Eurocentric thought as the superior and universal cognitive framework: a tool of colonization that attempts to erase Anishinaabe epistemologies and ways of knowing. With a conflicted cognitive sense of place, Kenny articulates un-belonging and disjunction to the point where he describes his speaker as a stranger (a recurrent motif in Kenny's poems, short stories, and play) – the ultimate disconnection and disassociation of self.

While complicating a strict divide between urban and rural/reserve places, I find it necessary to analyze the effects and consequences of this dichotomous colonial discourse on Kenny's experiences in the city as they are represented in his poetry. I also feel that it is important to situate particularly Kenny's urban poems in their historical as well as physical contexts. Some of Kenny's representations of urban struggles and assumptions may seem problematic or seem to reinforce limiting stereotypes in a contemporary reading; however, put in their historical and physical contexts his depictions are extremely progressive and lay the

groundwork for contemporary resistance and resurgence. Kenny exposes the historical racism and colonial discourses that disrupt his cognitive connection to place in the various cities he lives in. Most of his urban poems are structured around a very specific place in the city and an attempt to create a cognitive attachment there. However, each poem also exposes an element of cognitive imperialism that disrupts this attempt. Much of this disruption is uncomfortable and troubling, and in some instances seemingly succumbs to colonial expectations of being “out of place” in the city.

One poem that most distressingly does this is “Rubbie at Central Park” (*Indians Don’t Cry* 4). “Rubbie at Central Park” is set and structured around a very specific place, but starkly lacks cognitive expectations and beliefs of that place. Kenny unsettles racist expectations in his ironic use of the term “Rubbie” in the title of this poem, leaving the word’s connotation ambiguous as it can describe either the drinker or the drink itself. He resolves the problematic conflation of the drink and drinker by specifically defining “rubbie” as rubbing alcohol in the second stanza; however, he does not fully combat the stereotypes associated with this term as he continues to employ it without offering a more positive or accurate alternative to describe the people in the park. He attempts to dislodge the stereotypes associated with the term at the risk of reinforcing them. The poem proceeds very specifically, locating “the green beauty of Central Park / between Edmonton and Carlton streets” (4) – both colonial names of significant fur trading posts, bastions of the beginnings of colonization – situating street names as part of a colonial mapping and delineation of space. The specificity of colour and location are elements of a cognitive description of place (even if influenced by a colonial framework); however, the poem undermines expectations of this beautiful park by juxtaposing it with an uncomfortably detached, removed, and depersonalized description of “some of Winnipeg’s / thirty thousand Indians” (4). Outside of two small hints of an empathetic understanding when Kenny describes that they “find acceptance” and “start forgetting” (4) with the Rubbie, personal beliefs in or expectations of the place or the Indigenous people there are coldly absent from the poem.

Kenny is providing a snapshot of Winnipeg’s Central Park in the 1970s. Neighbourhoods just north of Central Park (Logan, West Alexander, and Centennial) were the poorest in the city, averaging one-fifth of personal yearly incomes in the aptly named Tuxedo Neighbourhood, Winnipeg’s richest (Lorch 15). They also had the highest concentration of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous people made up only 2% of Winnipeg’s population in 1971, but had just experienced

the largest average annual growth rate from 1961 at 35.7%, only surpassed by the previous ten years' 41.5 % growth rate (Peters 57). Kenny came to Winnipeg following a relatively new and fast influx of Indigenous people to the city and mostly to the low-income areas directly surrounding Central Park. A report conducted by the Council on Rural Development in 1978 presents a consensus in "Interviews on the Migration of Native Peoples to Winnipeg, Manitoba," that racism prevented Indigenous people from obtaining housing and employment in the city and that Winnipeg's core neighbourhood was where the majority of Indigenous people lived at the time.

Kenny chooses to write a poem about one of the most socio-economically burdened locations in Winnipeg, and tries to situate himself in relation to it. He comments on an Indigenous place in the city, exposing racism and the complexity of Indigenous lived experience there. Kenny presents a harsh reality in a stark and distanced tone. The second stanza describes, using a third-person omniscient perspective, "Rubbie, while eventually / to burn a hole through the drinker's / intestines [...] is as good as any brand of whiskey" (4). Kenny's use of this impersonal point of view distances the human subject with a double effect: it removes the action from the drinker, potentially removing blame or responsibility, but also it dehumanizes and objectifies the drinker as the object in the sentence who is acted upon. This distanced perspective also mimics Western scientific language, a potentially conflicting colonial cognitive framework. Kenny's word choice for the Indigenous people in the poem also contributes to this dehumanization and objectification. The "some of Winnipeg's / thirty thousand Indians" become a generalized "drinker" and eventually, the indefinite pronoun "one" (4). His use of third person removes a self-identified speaker and instead, the only clear point of view is that of a generalized "personnel man at the Bay or any other employment office" in the final stanza: "oh oh, a wino, look at his / scarred face / and said a sorry he didn't mean" (4). This point of view is hurtfully judgmental and dismissive, further dehumanizing the Indigenous people in the poem and exposing a racist settler expectation of the people in the park. Kenny confronts and resists colonial expectations of the park and the people there by writing these perceptions down and exposing them, but also uncomfortably leaves absent a personal or Indigenous understanding of the place and people. Colonial and racist expectations of the park replace Kenny's own expectations and beliefs, distancing him from the park and any point of connection there and ultimately, erasing himself.

“I Don’t Know This October Stranger” (*Indians Don’t Cry* 52-55) exhibits a full disassociation from the self as represented by the concept of the Indigenous self as stranger. The ultimate result of a lack of sense of place or place-identity and incongruity in cognitive descriptions is disassociation of the self. In the poem, the speaker Kenny imagines can no longer recognize himself. He details very basic day-to-day activities: waking up in the morning to an alarm, getting dressed, washing his face, combing his hair, and going to work. All of these actions and images form a cognitive description of his place, right down to the specific details of the street name, Eglinton (another colonial name), where his “2nd story office” is located, as is the colour of his suit and tie. The poem reads like a list of everything the speaker can recall around him in an attempt to recognize himself in the same space – a task he, arguably, cannot complete. The title refrain “I Don’t Know This October Stranger” echoes throughout the poem, reinforcing a continual attempt to know, but not being able to know or recognize himself in Toronto. The only thing he sees is “the exact image of a man I swear / I once knew,” a distant memory in another place: “the backforests of northwestern / Ontario” (52). This self-disassociation is very similar to what James Sakej Youngblood Henderson has described as the cognitive legacy of Eurocentrism and the impact of not including Indigenous epistemologies in education: “When most professors describe the ‘world,’ they describe artificial Eurocentric contexts and ignore Aboriginal worldviews, knowledge, and thought. For most Aboriginal students the realization of their invisibility is similar to looking into a lake and not seeing their images. They become alien in their own eyes, unable to recognize themselves in the reflections and shadows of the world” (59). This is also similar to what Adrienne Rich has described as psychic disequilibrium, “as if you looked in a mirror and saw nothing” (199). The colonial cognitive framework eclipses a familiar image of the self and likewise a sense of place, because it does not acknowledge or include Indigenous/Anishinaabe ways of knowing place. All that remains are unfamiliar images and shadows of strangers.

Kenny also represents the impact of cognitive imperialism as it contributes to the dichotomization of the city as the place to be a writer versus the reserve as the place for interconnection and kinship. He describes writing in the city “as if Chaucer himself was kicking / him along” (“I Don’t Know this October Stranger” 54). The violent kicking by Chaucer, ironically the symbol of a Western written tradition even though he was an orator, represents a colonial framework and an expectation that in order to be a “good” writer and be published, the

speaker needs to be in his office in the city. Kenny expresses that being published is necessarily at odds with love and family, as the speaker must leave behind “a love of three years” and his “14-year-old sister” to “migrate[] south” (54). I do not believe that these two things necessarily have to be at odds, and the desire to become published is not a negative in the least, but the juxtaposition of the two in the poem exposes the speaker’s inner conflict and mental process.

“Kenora Bus Depot” (*Indians Don't Cry* 126-29) also expresses inner conflict in an attempt to find mental connection to place. Although this poem carries many similarities to “Rubbie at Central Park,” through its slight differences Kenny explores the potential of a conflicted sense of place to produce a kind of cognitive shift. The first-person speaker is more present in this poem than in “Rubbie at Central Park,” even though the poem is similarly structured around a very specific place. Also unlike “Rubbie,” the speaker almost immediately establishes beliefs about the “grey-haired man” and recognizes that he “could have been my grandfather” by “his wind-torn cheekbones” and “cotton green pants” (126). The speaker attempts to identify with the man, even extending kinship to him through a connection to his grandfather, but he instead at first admonishes himself for being “a man, sober ego walking in distaste / past the drunkards in the snow” (126). I’d like to suggest that this line intimates what Simpson has described as “shame,” the “insidious and infectious part of the cognitive imperialism that was aimed at convincing us that we were a weak and defeated people, and that there was no point in resisting or resurging” (*Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back* 14). Shame of alcohol consumption in particular plays a role in the speaker’s initial perceived disconnection from the grey-haired man. In the third stanza, Kenny presents a clash of values: the speaker’s grandfather “died without / ever having tasted a drop of rum, or / rye or wine” in direct contrast to the “grey-haired man, staggering behind / the Kenora Bus Depot” (126). But the speaker questions both the veracity of his grandfather’s sobriety and, in turn, his own value judgment against the man: “(so my father told me, and if I can’t / believe him, who can I trust?)” (126). I argue that the speaker’s cognitive framework of beliefs is confronted and put in flux here. The physical cognitive descriptors of the man in the bus depot match the expectations the speaker has of his grandfather but not the beliefs and associated values he has previously had of alcohol. The difference between the “wind-torn cheekbones” and the “green cotton pants” of the man in the bus depot and the “facelines for weather’s rain / or snow and the baggy trousers of [his] grandfather” is that the latter “were worn in dignity, in sobriety / by choice” (126). The realities

of the speaker's new setting destabilize former value judgments. He expresses that he "wanted to believe / when the older men and women sitting, / mourn for the 'old days'" (128), implying that he cannot fully believe their stories and he questions the nostalgia associated with the "old days" that may eclipse the impetus to move forward and realize connections. He struggles with the internalization of Main Street Indian stereotypes, as Emma LaRoque points out in *When the Other is Me* (107), both within himself and his father, and the old people (presumably back home on the reserve). However, Kenny demonstrates a cognitive shift in the fourth stanza, when the speaker must "step down off [his] sober ego / and pick up, for [his] grandfather" (128). He ends up extending kinship to the man, expresses empathy ("a grey defeated man"), and puts aside his previous judgments and sober ego. In this case his cognitive conflict is not necessarily negative, but arguably exposes other insidious elements of cognitive imperialism that have been internalized in the speaker's previous values and beliefs, as well as those of his family and community, of the shame of alcoholism. What seems to be a day-to-day experience and setting, walking past the bus depot, exposes the speaker's struggle to reconcile the image of the man and the memories of his grandfather with the expectations and values of dignity and sobriety. This struggle or split can be seen as what W.B. Dubois has labeled "double consciousness" or more suitably what Gregory Cajete describes, in his language Tewa, as *pin geh heh*, split mind/head. He explains, "As a result of colonization, Indigenous people are in many ways acting like the pin geh heh. We lead lives of paradoxical conflict and contrast. [...] Being torn between two ways of living and looking at life is a place of great confusion, but it can also be a place of great compassion and creativity" (186-87). "Kenora Bus Depot" exemplifies this type of compassion that comes from confusion and conflict, and helps realize an element of interconnectedness: a main tenet of many Anishinaabe ways of knowing (Rheault 16). While still being attentive to the impacts of cognitive imperialism to a sense of place in the city, Kenny's work expresses compassion and creativity, which in turn becomes a form of resistance to those very same structures of imperialism.

The importance of compassion and interconnectedness is also highlighted in many of Kenny's poems that feature particular people in his life, in many cases intentionally blurring the distinction between poet and speaker. This focus crosses urban and rural boundaries and offers a road through these colonial dichotomies. Kenny reaffirms Anishinaabe epistemologies of relationship and interconnectedness by finding connection to individuals throughout his

journeys. Similar to “Kenora Bus Depot,” Kenny extends compassion and works through conflict in his poem “News Girl” (*Indians Don’t Cry* 186-87). Beginning like many of his place-based urban poems, the speaker/Kenny describes, “Every weeknight, I walk south / to College Street from 564 Spadina” (186), setting the poem with precise cognitive descriptors. However, the focus more quickly switches to “an Indian girl with / thin, broken-nailed fingers feverously / clutching a cigarette” selling newspapers, who propositions the speaker “to take home” “her thin and wasted-looking / body” (186). Although Kenny does not present a positive or celebratory image of the girl, he is not dismissive of her nor does he victimize her. This interaction with her prompts the speaker’s own intellectual questioning of and internal reflection on his previous actions toward women: “I have not been a good man, I have / found evil coming from me in my / prior experiences with women” (186). She catalyzes inner conflict for him and confronts his expectations and beliefs about women. In contrast to “I Don’t Know this October Stranger,” the speaker is very present in this poem and these expectations and beliefs are very much a part of his connection to the girl. This girl “remind[s] him of one of [his] sisters,” (186) much like Kenny’s association in “Kenora Bus Stop” of the old man with the speaker’s grandfather. Kenny also represents a similar extension of compassion: “I gave the News Girl 50 dollars / to help her on her way” (186). The speaker contemplates the effectiveness of his compassionate action, preferring to “offer a lot of different / endings for this narration” (186) that emphasize positive outcomes; however, he admits, “I don’t know what happened to that / News Girl / though I feel a sad sort of wonder” (187). The poem ends in wonder: not necessarily in affirmative action or hopelessness, but in thinking and imagining.

This wondering is not restricted to community members in the city. Kenny’s poem “Broken, I Knew a Man” (*Indians Don’t Cry* 116-17) details a similar encounter with “a man, from the reserve, who / greeted the summer sun from the ditches” (116). Starting with the title of the poem, Kenny foregrounds ambiguity and self-reflection by using “broken” as a squinting modifier, describing both or either “I” or the “man.” Although he recalls this man’s poverty and alcoholism, the speaker also states, “his soul was like the open pages of / Layton’s best works, always penned in truth, / no matter how dirty or whisky- / soaked” (116). Kenny’s allusion to Canadian poet Irving Layton here is much different than his encounter with Chaucer in “I Don’t Know This October Stranger,” although Layton is another symbol of the Western literary tradition. Instead of kicking him along, Layton, who famously declared that the “poet has a

public function as a prophet” (Bennett and Brown 461), enhances the speaker’s perceptions of the man, elevating him to prophetic standing. Although the speaker does not condone this man’s dependence on alcohol (he refuses to give him the “two bucks” for “cheap wine”), he does see the humanity and beauty of his soul. As Emma LaRoque has noted of this type of portrayal in Kenny’s poems, “if reconstructing our humanity sometimes appears as extreme romanticization or as provocative, it is in contrapuntal reaction to extreme dehumanization” (107). LaRocque “understands this emphasis on Indigenous people’s humanity as a counter narrative to the colonial discourse of dehumanization and, as such, a form of resistance writing” (107). Kenny is particularly provocative at the end of the poem, where we read alongside the speaker the newspaper heading, “INDIAN KILLED BY FREIGHT TRAIN IN HUDSON” (116). By reproducing this headline, Kenny recreates a discursive fragment of the type of dehumanization LaRoque refers to. The man is reduced to “Indian” and it is even left ambiguous, although can be assumed, that the man of the poem is the person who has been killed. The only conclusion Kenny leaves the reader is the speaker’s reflection, “and I wondered, who will be next / to greet, broken, the summer sun” (116). Kenny again ends with wondering, questioning a cycle of brokenness.

By crossing urban and rural boundaries, wandering and wondering through conflict and dispossession in both environments, Kenny avoids reinforcing colonial discourses of unbelonging in the city. Instead, he foregrounds personal wondering: an individual intellectual process of working through the challenges of community and sense of place. The flipside of this wondering process is numerous poems that highlight the invaluable strength and warmth that Kenny finds in his community relations. He has a few tribute poems to significant community figures: “Folk Hero: Gerald Bannatyne,” “To: My Friend, the Painter,” and “Note to Carl Ray from George Kenny.” He also displays deep commitment and connection to family members and kin with poems that celebrate his parents and son: “How He Served,” “Death Bird,” “Legacy,” “Mahkwa (bear),” and “Picture of my Father.” LaRoque has commented on some of these poems as “emotional sketches of his family’s cultural cohesion, hard work, beliefs, and achievements” (107). Although most of these poems do not focus on a sense of place per se, they contribute to Kenny’s process of intellectual wondering as he evaluates and accumulates the various experiences and connections of his life. Tellingly, in his poem “How He Served” (*Indians Don’t Cry* 34-35) Kenny praises his father’s attentiveness to his mother in a very touching description

of day-to-day routine: “every dawn, he brought his woman / some portion of his journey” (34). Kenny’s use of “journey” encompasses not simply physical movement (both his Mother and Father lived most of their lives on the reserve), but an individual life path, a portion of which is gifted to his wife. Kenny repeats, “how he served was by his journey” (34), valuing his father’s commitment. This journey can be associated with Anishinaabe values of mino-bimaadiziwin or the path/journey of the good life.

Mino-bimaadiziwin is procedural, a constant effort to live well. Much of this journey necessarily is individual and cognitive. As Simpson explains, “Indigenous thought can only be learned through the personal; this is because our greatest influence is on ourselves, and because living in a good way is an incredible disruption of the colonial metanarrative in and of itself. In a system requiring presence, the only way to learn is to live and demonstrate those teachings through a personal embodiment of mino bimaadiziwin” (*Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back* 41-42). In this way, Indigenous thought and cognition, simply in its presence and intention toward mino-bimaadiziwin, disrupts restrictive and fixing colonial discourse. Kenny’s thoughts and journeys through wondering and wandering exemplify his attempts to live well, and his continued physical and intellectual presence within the various types of places he represents disrupts colonial metanarratives and combats cognitive imperialism.

Kenny’s work is resurgent because he consummately reinforces his intellectual process, affirming the presence of Indigenous and Anishinaabe thought. As Simpson states, “Part of being Indigenous in the 21st century is that regardless of where or how we have grown up, we’ve all been bathed in a vat of cognitive imperialism, perpetuating the idea that Indigenous Peoples were not, and are not, thinking peoples – an insidious mechanism to promote neo-assimilation and obfuscate the historic atrocities of colonialism” (*Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back* 32). Kenny represents the effects and internalized shame associated with cognitive imperialism in many of his poems as detailed above, but in doing so, he critiques and analyzes that imperialism while continually foregrounding his own thinking process. His intellectual wondering and wandering enact intellectual sovereignty as he continually presents this individual thinking process of living within and interrogating colonial structures. Warrior describes the impact that this kind of work can have, particularly on future generations of Indigenous intellectuals:

The fact is, I love reading and charting the ways indigenous intellectuals have risen to the challenge of responding to the hardships that they and their communities face.

Those responses have sometimes been misguided, but I almost always find something worth considering in my encounters with the work of Native writers and scholars. More, I find fulfillment in understanding myself as connected to that work, however flawed. That, in the end, is what keeps me on these trade routes – my sense that I have something to learn about my own intellectual challenges by paying attention to the tracks and traces of my fellow travellers, past, present, and future. (*People and the Word* 187)

Following the tracks and traces of Kenny's wandering journey asserts intellectual sovereignty and Anishinaabe thought and presence. Although Kenny's depictions are not all celebratory, they represent his attempt to re-establish a process of being and living within both urban and rural settings against the backdrop of harmful colonial influences. Although Kenny does not appear to establish a sense of place, belonging, or home through this early work, the creative and intellectual expression of his journeys through writing exemplifies a process of being. As Simpson advocates, "In essence, we need to not just figure out who we are; we need to re-establish the process by which we live who we are within the current context we find ourselves" (*Dancing on Our Turtle's Back* 17). Kenny's work continually negotiates the current contexts his characters and speakers find themselves in, establishing a cognitive process through which to place themselves, live well, and make meaning of the world around them. Most importantly, simply through this cognitive process he enacts an Anishinaabe way of being. Kimberly Blaeser has commented on a similar exploration in Simon Ortiz's poetry, stating, "Thus in the literal, and in the literary journey which recounts it, the passage finds meaning in continuance, simple going on, the process of the journey, the process of being" ("Sacred Journey Circles" 94).

Kenny describes the time of his travels and the time his published work details as his "wandering years, collecting experiences" in his newest book dedication to his Father and Mother, and he thanks his father for not "rebuking" him for them (*Indians Don't Cry v*). Although these wandering years could be seen as lost years or years of unbelonging, I see them, as represented in his creative work, to be years that establish a process of intellectual being that simply in its presence and in its going-on combats colonial discourses that restrict a sense of place for Indigenous people. Kenny works his way through Anishinaabe territory, wandering across colonial boundaries of urban and rural, redetermining and reclaiming Anishinaabe intellectual space wherever he goes.

4 Homemaking: Resurgent Place-Based Work in Ruby Slipperjack's Novels

In a 1990 interview with Hartmut Lutz, Anishinaabe author, teacher, and community worker Ruby Slipperjack shared, “The land, rocks, trees are part of our history, a part of us. They live longer than we do. If you stay in one place, a tree will watch you crawl, run, walk, shuffle, and eventually see your children also complete the cycle behind you” (Lutz 207). She acknowledged the close and integral relationship the Anishinaabeg have with the land, but also emphasized being in the physical presence of a tree, “in one place,” for life. Although her focus on “staying” potentially restricts Indigenous mobility, Slipperjack immediately contrasts it by speaking of life’s movements, crawling, running, walking, and shuffling in the present and future generations, offering a more figurative and expansive definition of “one place.” It seems that this tree can see for quite some distance. Slipperjack’s emphasis both on physical presence on the land and on life’s movements exemplifies elements of more recent scholarship on embodied resurgent practices. Scholars such as Leanne Betasomasake Simpson, Jeff Corntassel and Cheryl Bryce, and Glen Coulthard have shifted discussions of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination from rights-based, state-acknowledgement, and recognition discourses to those centred in “everyday practices of resurgence and decolonization” (Corntassel and Bryce 153). As Simpson states in *As We Have Always Done*, with regards to her Radical Resurgence Project, “it isn’t radical or even resurgence, it’s just Indigenous life as it has always unfolded” (247). It is the crawling, running, walking, and shuffling of life as it has always been done. Embodied resurgence begins as “a daily existence conditioned by place-based practices” (153), according to Corntassel and Bryce, or can be understood through Simpson’s emphasis on simply “Bodies on the land” (236). With resurgence in mind, I interpret Slipperjack’s account as a daily existence of place-based practice – being physically present on the land, while it watches Anishinaabe life unfold.

A member of Eabametoong First Nation, Slipperjack spent much of childhood in the bush of Northwestern Ontario around Whitewater Lake. Similar to the experiences of her female characters Owl and Janine, Slipperjack left home to attend Shingwauk Residential School in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario; high school in Thunder Bay, Ontario; and university, obtaining a B.A., B.Ed., and M.Ed. from Lakehead University and a Ph.D. from the University of Western

Ontario. She currently lives in Thunder Bay, recently retiring from a career as a professor in the Indigenous Learning Department at Lakehead University. Her novels heavily draw upon her experiences of moving between reserve, rural, and urban communities, and her lived daily existences of being Anishinaabe in Northwestern Ontario.

Slipperjack's novels recount these daily existences, not only representing the unfolding of Anishinaabe life for her characters, but also re-inscribing various forms of embodied physical daily place-based practices that occur in spite of the damaging effects and consequences of settler colonialism. Slipperjack is invested not in settler or state recognition, but in the ways her characters navigate through their lives and territory and establish individual ways of being Anishinaabeg through daily place-based practices, regardless of colonial impacts and in multiple and complex homes. Through her novels *Honour the Sun*, *Silent Words*, and *Weesquachak and the Lost Ones*, Slipperjack complicates facile and limiting definitions of an original or singular home in the bush by representing movement and blurred divisions between various reserve, urban, and rural communities as well as colonially contaminated, imperfect home-places within traditional Anishinaabe territory in Northwestern Ontario. I argue that her work exposes the difficult reality of being physically present on the land and demonstrates the hard work required of an activity and subsistence-based relationship to land. She also explores what it means to be in the physical presence of ambiguous and sometimes dangerous stories in attempts to find home. Through her novels, Slipperjack re-envisioning homecoming as homemaking, a cumulative and ongoing process through which her characters' physical presence and embodied place-based practices actively establish their relationships to place. Home, in Slipperjack's work, is in constant flux and redefinition, shifting and re-centring itself, and is found simply, as Anishinaabekwe scholar Lindsay Keegitah Borrows has put it, in "the balance we live within" (398).

Much of the existing and now somewhat dated scholarship on Slipperjack comments on her vivid depictions of the Northwestern Ontario landscape and the rootedness of her novels in the land. Penny Petrone writes that *Honour the Sun* "is rich with a sense of place. One suspects that only an autobiographical source could have given such life to the narrative" (143), and Jennifer David similarly observes, "The land is a silent character in the works of Ruby Slipperjack, a presence that shapes and gives meaning to the others who people her novels and short stories. Her fiction is alive with a deeply felt sense of place, and with relationships that link

her characters—and their author—to the land” (25). Both Petrone and David recognize a “rich” and “deeply felt sense of place” within Slipperjack’s work, but fail to clarify what constitutes this sense of place. How does the land shape and give meaning to the characters? How are characters and the author linked in relationship to the land? And why is a sense of place and connection to the land important? Without culturally or character specific details to describe and closely read the particulars of this connection to land, critics risk coming to vague and at times culturally insensitive conclusions, such as that of M.F. Salat in “Other Words, Other Worlds: Of Ruby Slipperjack.” Of *Honour the Sun* he writes, “Throughout the novel the principal characters’ close affinity with the natural world is deliberately brought out to underline the Native ways for the Native readers to recognize and re-acquire” (78). As Renate Eigenbrod astutely critiques, Salat does not position his analysis within a specific culture or community, “but within the colonial discourse of an Indian/White binary” (*Travelling Knowledges* 58). Although driven by good intentions of cultural revival, Salat’s praise of Slipperjack’s “characters’ close affinity with the natural world” as simply “the Native way,” alienates further exploration or understanding of the concept, and places it within an essentialist colonial discourse of “the other.” Vague, idealized statements espousing the “importance” of land such as these, although praising Slipperjack’s work, risk falling into stereotype and overgeneralization of an innate or essential Indigenous connection to land.

In conjunction with the general importance of land, critics have also commonly been concerned with trying to define Slipperjack’s novels as homing plots, either “coming home,” “leaving home,” or “homing out” stories (LaRocque, Eigenbrod *Travelling Knowledges*, Bowerbank). Originally theorized by William Bevis in “Native American Novels: Homing In,” homing plots were a main focus of literary analyses of Indigenous writings, particularly in the late 1990s and early 2000s, that idealize writing home as a form of recovery and healing. As Bevis defines, homing plots involve “coming home, staying put, contracting, even what we call ‘regressing’ to a place, a past where one has been before [as] not only the primary story, [but] a primary mode of knowledge and a primary good” (582). Nancy Van Styvendale in her dissertation “The Im/possibility of Recovery in Native North American Literatures” does an excellent job of critiquing the consequences and complexities contained within this simplistic theory through discussions of regression as restrictive to multiple homing temporalities, the importance of Indigenous wandering and mobility traditions, and the political and nationalist

investments in recuperating the importance of the reserve and ancestral homelands. Returning to an original homeland becomes endlessly complex, both in its definition and in the realities of returning.

Slipperjack's work provides productive ground for examining these complexities of homing and demonstrates that embodied place-based resurgence can take place even in imperfect home places. Her novels are set within the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, but her characters all come home, leave home, and create homes, moving between various reserve, urban, and rural communities. This movement deconstructs singular definitions of home and complicates easy binaries between urban and reserve settings. The small rural towns along the CN rail line where the majority of her characters, and Slipperjack herself, are from resist signification as either urban or reserve and therefore circumvent facile definitions of traditional or non-traditional spaces. Slipperjack also interrogates the reification of a singular original home by representing imperfect homes that can hurt rather than heal characters. Close reliance on and relationship to the land does not prevent the rural and reserve communities in her novels from experiencing the toxic effects of colonialism that result in alcoholism and abuse. Her main characters often escape home and even find temporary refuge in residential school in *Honour the Sun*, in neighbouring communities along the railway in *Silent Words*, and in the city in *Weesquachak and the Lost Ones*. Owl in *Honour the Sun* looks forward to attending residential school and eventually leaves her community to live in the city at the same time her family leaves. Danny in *Silent Words* also must leave his childhood home to escape abuse and "wanders" to make relations in neighbouring communities. And Janine in *Weesquachak and the Lost Ones* finds an escape and relief in the city of Thunder Bay before making a rural home on Clay Lake.

Owl's journey to escape home in *Honour the Sun* begins when she tries desperately to connect with the land in order to seek refuge from the effects of alcoholism on her community: "During a loud drinking party, I listen to the spring rain falling softly against the window pane. During the loud arguments of belligerent drunks, I strain to hear the wind in the trees outside the cabin and shut everyone out. [...] I look over the land and feel peaceful and happy" (185). Although connection to the land can bring her peace and happiness, Owl struggles to maintain it. As she remarks, "Nature is friendly and true while our own kind tears us and leaves us bleeding inside, all in the same space of time" (39). A relationship with the land cannot keep her at home. Eventually Owl must leave to attend residential school, but because of the sickness of her

community, the school provides a desirable way out. She comments in anticipation of the move, “I’m scared but also looking forward to leaving home. I hate it at home now. I have nowhere else to go. I feel like Mom doesn’t want me around anymore” (189). Emma LaRocque in *When the Other is Me* observes, “What closes in on Owl is her own home and community,” and she “finds in residential schooling an avenue of escape from an intolerable homelife and community” (150). Counter to both positive narratives of homecoming and negative narratives of residential school, Slipperjack exposes the multiplicity and complexity of Indigenous experience in rural homeplaces in *Honour the Sun* that counter reifications of original or true homes on reserve.

Most explicitly in her novel *Silent Words*, Slipperjack presents a story of “homing out.” Eigenbrod describes *Honour the Sun* as a coming home novel, but in contrast *Silent Words* as a leaving home novel (*Travelling Knowledges* 47). She comments, for Danny “There is no easy answer to the question of where he comes from because the home from which he tries to escape is contaminated by abuse and no longer the original home out in the bush” (46). Bowerbank and Wawia in “Wild Lessons: Native Ecological Wisdom in Ruby Slipperjack’s Fiction,” however, describe *Silent Words* as a coming home novel: “the boy runs away from the counterfeit home and eventually recovers a true home” (231). Both Eigenbrod and Bowerbank and Wawia attempt to define a singular, “original,” or “true” home, but disagree as to whether Danny is coming to or going from it. I would like to further complicate definitions of “the original home out in the bush” and “a true home,” both of which, I argue, Slipperjack does not provide in the text. Early in the novel, Danny romanticizes and dreams about an “original home in the bush”: “I wish I was back home! No. Not the house where Dad was. I mean home when Mama, Dad, and I lived in our trapper’s shack. Why did they have to move into town? Everything would have been all right if we had just stayed at our cabin” (*Silent Words* 35). Danny wishes for a kind of regressive homing and begins to assign negative aspects of his home life to the move away from the trapper’s shack and into town. Danny also sees the negative effects of moving in his father’s behaviour: “I remembered how gentle and happy my father was when we were in the bush. Then when we moved to the reserve, he was never home. When he did come home, he was always irritable and angry, and then, when Mama left, he started hitting me. Then we moved to town. Things got worse. [...] The father I knew was gone” (95). Although these passages seem to support an urban versus rural binary, Slipperjack complicates this binary by distinguishing between bush and reserve and emphasizing the negative influence of colonialism on reserve. The

urban “town,” in this case, is also an extremely small rural community on the CN rail line. I believe what Slipperjack is tracking is not the contaminating influence of the urban, but of the colonial, which insidiously permeates every facet of her characters’ lives.

Contrary to an idealization of a home in the bush, which has the potential to reinforce a reserve/urban binary, Slipperjack exposes Danny’s wish for his past home to be unattainable. Danny remembers very little of his “original” home and admits that he has difficulty recalling places, and therefore his original connection to them: “I guess I was too small to remember the rides with Mama and Dad—what they felt like, or what the places looked like” (75). Although Danny idealizes his early childhood home and family, he does not recall an established, real connection to place and the land, and must learn that connection on his progressive journeys throughout the rest of the novel.

Slipperjack exposes the inaccuracy of a reserve/urban binary and the complexities of staying home in *Weesquachak and the Lost Ones* when Janine chooses to move to the city. In a conversation with her friend Linda in Thunder Bay, Janine confesses,

I don’t have a home anymore. I have nowhere to go, I mean I don’t belong anywhere. I feel like I’m trapped when I am at Mom’s and I need to escape. I am terrified that one day I may never be able to leave there. So, when I come to the city, I feel such a relief that I can disappear and they can’t find me. Because, I like who I am when I am here. I am independent and I want to be on my own. (26)

In opposition to colonial discourses of unbelonging in the city, Slipperjack emphasizes Janine’s feelings of relief, anonymity, and independence in the city. Her mother’s home feels like a trap and a place of unbelonging. Slipperjack symbolizes Janine’s negative feelings associated with her original familial home through a reoccurring dream of a suffocating black cloud, which only comes to her when she is back in her home community (18, 27). Far from an ideal home in the bush, Janine’s childhood home on reserve is imperfect and harmful.

Contrary to early scholarship and colonial binaries of reserve/urban, Slipperjack tracks, not the contaminating influence of the urban – a common, problematic discourse that restricts Indigenous mobility and reinforces colonial divisions of land and Indigenous displacements – but the pervasiveness of the colonial itself, which can insidiously affect all types of places in her characters’ lives. By blurring distinctions between urban/reserve places and representing imperfect home-places, Slipperjack enacts Simpson’s call to “Put aside visions of ‘back to the

land,' and just think land – some of it is wild, some of it is urban, a lot of it is ecologically devastated. Everyday acts of resurgence are taking place as they always have, on both individual and collective scales on Indigenous lands irrespective of whether those lands are urban, rural, or reserve. Every piece of North America is Indigenous land [...]” (*As We Have Always Done* 195). Slipperjack presents a type of “homing,” but from within numerous home-places of Northwestern Ontario. Her regional focus deconstructs simple dichotomies of urban/reserve life and questions attachment to a singular geographic location as home. Complicating the simplicity of the need to “come home” by presenting imperfect home-places, Slipperjack undermines idealistic perceptions of Indigenous rural life and realistically portrays the struggles of her characters to cumulatively create home through their life experiences in Anishinaabe territory, proving that one does not have to “come home” in order to practice embodied resurgence.

The importance and presence of the land in these home-places is realized by Slipperjack’s characters through difficult and constant action and practice, and everyday reliance on the land for survival. Although not contemplated regularly or at all, appreciation and respect for the land come out of a relationship built on this reliance and on the daily rights and responsibilities characters must maintain. However, Slipperjack does not idealize this relationship or skip over any gritty details. As Bowerbank and Wawia comment, “For Slipperjack, the home in the woods is not an oasis, a sweet refuge from the cold, unsafe world of work. Neither is it a sentimental return to the Never-never land of commodified ‘Indian’ legends” (230). Each of Slipperjack’s novels depicts the difficult and constant work of place-based practices, including berry picking, fishing, hauling water, gathering wood, snaring rabbits, and hunting. For example, in *Honour the Sun*, Slipperjack is careful not to valorize Owl’s way of life. As Emma LaRocque has noted of *Honour the Sun*, “[...] Owl practically lives outdoors. Her family’s life generally revolves around the outdoors whether playing, working, or travelling” (150); however, this constant time outdoors is far from idyllic. After a long canoe paddle, ten-year-old, Owl exasperatedly describes the work of berry picking:

[W]e amble toward the railway tracks where the berries hang in thick clumps. The heat shimmers off the steel tracks. It is very hot here. I can feel the sweat on my neck already. [...] It’s so hot and that sun just beats down on my head. [...] I’m hungry. It seems like hours and my neck is stiff. I’ve filled my cup so many times, I’ve lost count. (20-21)

Although her playful chapter title “Blueberry Days” may ironically suggest it, Slipperjack does not paint an idyllic picture of berry picking. Owl complains of being hot, sweaty, and hungry, and of a stiff neck, and the mundane repetition of her task is emphasized by her losing count of the number of cups she has filled. Slipperjack does not shy away from emphasizing the physical impact this work has on Owl’s body. Berry picking is not glorified, but enacted – it’s just done as a place-based practice.

Place-based practices also include hunting and recognizing certain rights and responsibilities in relationship to animals in Slipperjack’s novels. In both *Honour the Sun* and *Silent Words*, Owl and Danny learn to hunt through trial and mostly error. Slipperjack, encouraging respectful hunting practices by poor example, represents Owl’s first attempts at hunting to expose the messiness and graphic reality of killing an animal. Owl and her friend Freddy catch a partridge, after numerous misses, by slipping a rabbit snare around its neck using a long pole. Slipperjack depicts the incident as frenzied and chaotic:

Oh look, the loop has slipped over the partridge’s head! Immediately, the pole comes down with the partridge and Freddy pounces on it! Wings thunder and beat frantically all over Freddy’s arms and face. With feathers flying all around him, he does a dance and whoops and shouts while I laugh and clap my hands in delight. I’ve never seen anything like that. (144)

Slipperjack shows the inexperience of the two children in their hunting endeavor through their previous failed attempts and this comical, if not clumsy final scene. Even Owl, although finding it funny, realizes that this is not the usual way of hunting partridge: she has “never seen anything like that.” Owl’s surprise and delight is quickly replaced not by a feeling of guilt, but by the stark observation of almost hyper-real details of the bird’s dead body: “The wings are still now. [...] Blood is dripping from the beak. I take it and feel the warmth under the feathers which I start plucking. [...] The partridge skin is ripping, shucks” (144-45). These graphic details highlight the trauma to both hunter and hunted involved in hunting and the effects of the children’s inexperience. Slipperjack does not idealize or spiritualize the act in any way, on the one hand exposing the children’s technique as “wrong,” and on the other hand displaying an uneasy reality of hunting on the land.

Employing a similar strategy, Slipperjack echoes Owl’s first partridge hunt in *Silent Words* when Danny kills his first duck. After having caught the duck in a snare by the river,

wrestling with it “amidst flying feathers, slaps to the face, and scratches to the hands” (153), attempting to twist its neck, rinsing sand from his eye, and trying to figure out how to cook it, “[s]uddenly the duck start[s] thrashing around again!”:

I pounced on it and tried to wring its neck a second time. It was like trying to twist a piece of rubber hose. I finally got the idea to put it against the rock, and I stomped on the neck with my shoes, but the duck kept sliding off. So I got another rock and pounded the neck until I made darn sure it was no longer alive. I examined the duck. There wasn't much left of the neck. I had almost severed it in two. The skin hung in shreds. (154)

Slipperjack mimics the language of *Honour the Sun*, describing both Danny and Freddy as “pounc[ing]” with “feathers flying.” However, the most striking similarity between the two scenes is Owl's observation of the dead partridge and Danny's “examin[ation of] the duck.” Both narrators take a moment to look at their spoils (in both meanings of the term). Slipperjack includes these gruesome, very physical and visceral details as a teaching regarding respect and the responsibilities of proper hunting – a learning by poor example of sorts. Specifically within an Anishinaabe context, hunting rights commonly include “never abus[ing] [animals] by taking more than [...] needed for the present, nor insult[ing] them through ridicule or blasphemy, nor tortur[ing] them in any fashion” (Martin 74), rules that each of the three children break. These physical and visceral details also recognize the inherent physical violence and sacrifice involved in hunting. Owl and Danny both observe their kills and begin to realize the teaching of Mr. Old Indian in *Silent Words* that to honour the Earth you must understand that it's alive (55). By observing the death of these animals, the children come to understand the life they need to end in order to survive in a very physical way. These learning experiences of hunting do not immediately lend themselves to a traditional Anishinaabe environmental ethic, in which, as Simpson reiterates in *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, “individuals could only take as much as they needed [and] no part of the animal could be wasted [to] ensure that there would be plenty of food to sustain both [human and animal] parties in the future” (112). However, the children come to this realization through their physical interaction with animals, body to body.

Janine's domestic work in *Weesquachak and the Lost Ones* establishes an ostinato throughout the novel as her relationship ups and downs with Freddy are punctuated by physical chores. After fighting with Freddy, Janine spitefully attempts to put up a clothesline:

After I'd had a cup of tea, I went back outside and looked up at the pine tree. [...] I climbed that tree quite high until I was sure that no amount of slack would drag the clothes down. [...] It was as I tugged the bottom wire through the pulley that my foot slipped off the lower branch. I was slammed against the tree so hard I lost my breath. I gasped and hung on tight with both hands to the branch until the pain receded from my side. (106)

Janine's work, in the presence of the watchful eye of this tree, is difficult and painful (and later on in the novel potentially causes problems with her pregnancy). Freddy then gets angry with her for attempting to put up the clothesline herself in a very relatable back and forth argument. Angrily putting up this clothesline becomes a part of her negotiating life and building a home with Freddy. Physical work and interaction with the land in this instance, and in many others throughout the novel, allow Janine to "work through" her issues with Freddie, pun intended. Slipperjack is careful not to represent stereotyped or essentialized notions of a subsistence-based life on the land and, instead, humorously portrays the hardships and difficulties of these physical daily practices.

As previously mentioned, regular contemplation of or reflection on relationship to land rarely occurs in Slipperjack's work as rights and responsibilities are expected to be enacted through work instead. In *Honour the Sun*, Owl is repeatedly scolded for daydreaming when she takes a moment to reflect on the land. Throughout the novel family members must tell Owl "I'm talking to you" (81, 122, 158) in order to get her attention. Owl reflects, "The bay is absolutely calm. With the birds twirping and flies buzzing, it is so peaceful. 'Get out of the way, will you?' Barbara marches by me with her arms stretched down by buckets full of berries" (23). Owl's observation of calmness and peacefulness is humorously juxtaposed against her sister Barbara's hard work and effort in carrying the heavy load of berries. Barbara does not have the time to contemplate peacefulness, and Owl is considered idle for doing so. Owl's daydreaming becomes comedic as she is kicked and tripped over, continually oblivious to her family's yells and attempts to get her attention. Her mother in particular chides her for her daydreaming: "How many times do I have to talk to you before you hear me?" (57), and "I'm telling you, girl, your daydreaming will get you into trouble one of these days" (59). Contrary to a common western literary tradition of lyrical contemplation of the land, Owl's contemplation is by no means encouraged by her family and often gets her into trouble.

Even when Owl is contemplating traditional stories about the land, her family sees it as childish and distracted. Watching her mother, Owl describes,

“She looks like the girl in the moon. That’s a story she told us once about a girl who went out to get water at night and she was not supposed to look at the moon. But she stopped and looked at the moon anyway because she thought the moon was so handsome. The moon came down and took her away and there she was to stay for ever and ever, on the moon, with her pail still in her hand...

“I’m talking to you! When are you ever going to stop your daydreaming?”

Barbara yells at me in exasperation. (122)

Slipperjack interrupts Owl’s musings on this traditional story, showing that it may be an important teaching for the reader to understand, but not one that her characters (or members of her community) would normally stop and think about. Barbara considers Owl’s behaviour to be immature and frustrating. Slipperjack also uses ellipses to further emphasize the absent-mindedness and dawdling thoughts of Owl: “Anyway, it’s almost spring now. You can smell it in the air. The snow is getting soft, the birds are singing everywhere, the wind blows warmly from the south... . ‘Owl! I’m talking to you!’ That’s Mom, yelling at me through the door” (158). Through the use of ellipses, Owl’s thoughts and the flow of reading about her thoughts are interrupted by Mom’s voice, dropped in without narrativization. Reflection and contemplation of the land are gently mocked through young Owl’s foibles, as they interrupt the work that needs to be done for survival. Slipperjack employs this technique to allow the reader to experience the landscape of Northwestern Ontario, while maintaining the reality of an activity-based connection to land that for the most part excludes the explicit conceptualization of a relationship to the earth, but instead enacts this relationship through work.

Although not idealized in Slipperjack’s novels, physical work and activity on the land encompass an Anishinaabe embodied daily existence. She describes very little contemplation or reflection on the land’s significance, but demonstrates relationship through physical action and interaction. Applying Simpson’s concept of embodied resurgence, I argue that Slipperjack’s characters enact their relationship to land by “untying their canoes.” As Simpson expresses,

Embodiment compels us to untie our canoes – to not just think about our canoes or write about our canoes but to actually untie them, get in, and begin the voyage. Embodiment also allows us to act now [...] with Indigenous presence. These acts reinforce a strong

sense of individual self-determination and freedom and allow individuals to choose practices that are meaningful to them in the context of their own realities and lives. (193) *Honour the Sun*, *Silent Words*, and *Weesquachak and the Lost Ones* reinforce Indigenous presence in Anishinaabe territory through embodied physical interaction with the land. Slipperjack's characters carry self-determination and freedom in their practice of these daily existences. In this way, Slipperjack presents stories of homemaking, not simply home coming or home leaving. This homemaking includes physical activity and place-based practices, but is also built from the accumulation of each of her characters' life experiences. Slipperjack reiterates a cumulative and procedural approach to homing, in direct contrast to regressive concepts of homing.

In *Honour the Sun*, Owl connects to land through everyday activity, but must leave her childhood home and figure out how to maintain a relationship to land. One of the only recurring and continuous conceptualizations of a relationship to an element of the land for Owl is her Mother's refrain of "Honour the Sun, child, just as it comes over the horizon, Honour the Sun, that it may bless you come another day..." (211). At the end of the novel, just as Owl is leaving to live in the city and is contemplating her abandoned childhood cabin, the Medicine Man reminds her that the sun is always constant in her life: "The sun is always up there even when you can't see it" (211). The sun becomes a constant physical presence that centres her daily experiences. Owl at first sees the old cabin as looking "cold and lonely" (211), but the Medicine Man reassures her, "Even its logs get warmed by the sun and who's to say that your voices don't still echo deep within" (211). His teaching physically connects the sun to her childhood home, and places her family's voices within its walls. This notion establishes a physical connection back to this place, even if Owl no longer lives there. In maintaining a relationship to the sun, Owl is reassured of her place in the world. Owl comes and goes from home, but the sun is "always up there." As LaRocque writes, "the value of 'honouring the sun' [...] will stay with her no matter where she travels" (150). In this way, *Honour the Sun* reclaims a progressive narrative of leaving home, while still maintaining a physical attachment to it and centring belonging within the constancy of the sun.

Danny in *Silent Words* eventually makes a new home alongside his father by learning how to live off the land; however, he cannot regress to a past idyllic home-place, but only build from all of his experiences of imperfect homes and loss. Through these journeys Danny recovers

a connection to place and land, but not what would be classified as a singular “true home.” Instead, I support Van Styvendale’s analysis that *Slipperjack* represents the im/possibility of recovering home, because “a sense of something missing is inextricable from the protagonist’s homecoming” (2). After running away from his abusive home, Danny is taken in by a number of families along the CN rail line that each help him establish a connection to the land and sense of place-based identity in the larger region. Expanding the geographic location of home allows Danny to learn the bush of Northwestern Ontario through land-based activities and teachings from the people he meets along the way. By the middle of the novel, Danny finds a sense of true belonging and arguably, “home” out on the land, with Ol’ Jim. He states, “I wished then that we could stay there forever and forget where we came from and where we are going. I wanted this place and time to never end” (137). If anywhere in the novel, I would argue that Danny “recovers a true home” here; however, *Slipperjack* does not end Danny’s journey here. Ol’ Jim meets up with his own son Hog (Danny’s nickname for him), and Danny must go back to town. Danny is reunited with his father, but finds out that his mother has died and that his initial search for his old home with her is impossible. Even reuniting with his “healed” father is complicated by traumatic flashbacks of Danny’s abusive step-mother. Distraught from mistakenly thinking that she is still with his father, Danny unknowingly shoots him, confining him to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Recalling Van Styvendale’s analysis, loss and many things “missing” are inextricable from Danny’s homecoming. Danny does have a home by the Epilogue of the novel (he builds his own cabin next to his father’s and Billy’s), but it is not an original home in the bush, a trapper’s cabin with his mother and father, or necessarily the recovery of a true home. Instead, Danny builds and makes his own new home. *Slipperjack* presents a story of homemaking, not simply coming or leaving. This home includes reestablishing an activity-based connection to land, but is also built from the reality of all of Danny’s life experiences. The almost haunting last lines of the novel reiterate a cumulative approaching to homing, in contrast to a regressive concept of homecoming: “You can’t escape the silent words of your memory. They grow on you, layer after layer, year after year, documenting you from beginning to end, from the core to the surface. I built my cabin with silent words” (250). Although there has been scholarship on the importance of silent words in *Slipperjack*’s work as “an integral part of Native expression” (book jacket; see also Horne, Hoy), they signify more deeply in these concluding words as experiences and emotions that are left unsaid, but that still contribute to Danny’s new

home and sense of self. Slipperjack asserts Danny's agency and active role in building his cabin both literally and figuratively with these silent words that he is not able nor even tries to escape from. He neither goes back to nor finds his new home, but it grows from him and is a part of him "from the core to the surface."

Janine and Freddy in *Weesquachak and the Lost Ones* finally, after many trials and tribulations and through physical work, build a home together in spite of Weesquachak's best attempts to interfere. Their journey is by no means regressive and involves multiple moves among town, city, reserve, and bush. Janine's process of homemaking also grapples with the place and significance of discourse, of both words and writing, in her conception of home. Similar to Danny's reflection on silent words, Janine's final lines in the novel make a distinction between the writing and book reading she has been interested in and something outside of discourse, a "deeper knowledge": "As I stood there looking at the work he had put into this place, at each loving detail, I knew that words had their place and deeper knowledge was better left unsaid" (203). Although both silent words and unsaid deeper knowledge align with concepts of embodied affect, I argue that Janine is also questioning the efficacy and role of words and discourse in creating a home in contrast to the physical work previously discussed.

In conjunction with the critical attention paid to "homing in plots," many scholars have emphasized the need for or impetus of Indigenous authors to "write home," alluding to a discursive power that allows authors—and in turn their readers—to recover home through their writing (for a full discussion see Van Styvendale's dissertation chapter "Locating Recovery"). Eigenbrod addresses this impulse in Slipperjack's work, aligning both *Honour the Sun* and *Silent Words* with Harmut Lutz's comment on Lee Maracle's novels, that "they 'document a determination to write 'home'' rather than to 'write back,' as postcolonial critics describe the literature of colonized peoples" (*Travelling Knowledges* 12). Similarly to "homing plots," the concept of writing home also has the potential to perpetuate regressive and static notions of a home in the bush that restrict mobility and uphold colonial urban/rural binaries. In a way that circumvents these pitfalls, Slipperjack is "writing home" as she represents her characters' physical, cumulative, and procedural homemaking practices. However, she is also careful not to suggest that homemaking can be accomplished solely through writing by representing its

potentially damaging effects²⁵ in *Weesquachak and the Lost Ones*. In this way, she demonstrates that homemaking cannot take place through solely discursive means without embodied place-based daily work on the land.

Contrary to many critics' call for recovery through writing, Slipperjack represents her main character Janine's process of writing as exacerbating negative reactions and, in turn, causing greater conflict between her and her partner, Freddy, inevitably restricting her ability to establish a home with him. At first Janine's writings seem to be an outlet for her; however, when she writes in her notepad she describes it as a time to "feel sorry" for herself (18). She begins writing on the train to Port Arthur with fairly surface comments about the journey that day, but when it begins to rain her writing quickly turns into an outlet for her feelings of loneliness. She contemplates, "I could feel sorry for myself for awhile. What can I write?" (18). Slipperjack's use of the word "could" suggests a certain amount of agency in Janine's choice to dwell on her "heavy cloak of loneliness" and "suffocating misery and desperation" (18). The hyperbolic language of her writings in contrast to her more methodical and measured narrative voice in the novel also suggests exaggerated creative license. Janine next writes when she "realized [she] was feeling sorry for [her]self" (35), angrily recording her experiences of racism at various stores in the city. Janine recalls, "I put the paper and pencil down on the night table and I slowly started to giggle. I was just trying to make myself feel better about what happened tonight" (35). She immediately undermines the vehement emotion of her work and admits that she was "just trying to make [her]self feel better." She exposes her writing as disjunctive to and amplified above her real emotions. Later in the novel her writing comes to haunt her when Freddy finds her notes. While a black bear is outside of her cabin, Janine writes "down what [she is] feeling at that moment": "my loneliness, my fear, my feeling of total abandonment, and my hope for my child that we would leave this place once it was born" (93). When Freddy reads these in-the-moment writings he is angry and later hurt. In his anger he burns her notes and throws a pot of stew on

²⁵ In her dissertation, Van Styvendale problematizes the purely restorative results of writing home; as she explains, "writing about dislocation and the loss of home/land is a mode of recovery, I argue, but one that cannot help but reiterate the wound from which it works to recover" (25). Van Styvendale speaks to a certain amount of re-traumatization when revisiting the loss of home in writing even as it is simultaneously a site of recovery. Although Slipperjack's characterization of Janine's writing process does not directly address past wounds and a potential for re-traumatization, I believe this is an important potential negative effect of writing to keep in mind when analyzing Janine's struggles with writing in the novel, one that provides necessary nuance to purely positive conceptions of writing home.

the floor, where Janine slips and falls causing her to bleed and threatening her pregnancy (93). Freddy uses the notes to fuel his jealousy and suspicions that “maybe the baby wasn’t his anyway!” (102). Janine’s journaling does not provide the recovery or healing of a home. I argue that Janine’s writing provides a metanarrative to the novel that warns against assumptions of the therapeutic and purely positive benefits of writing and exposes the need for land-based practice and connection in establishing/creating a home.

Not only has writing home been valorized as a powerful tool for homecoming, but also and maybe more significantly so have stories. In *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times*, Neal McLeod advocates for the process of coming home through stories: “Coming home through stories involves the attempt to recover collective memory and to reconnect to the territory of our ancestors” (71), where “word-arrows have transformative power and can help Indigenous people come home” (67). Although McLeod underscores the importance of discursive space in connection to land, he focuses more on a temporal or spiritual homecoming than on a physical connection to land. However, I argue that it is important and possible to re-imbue storied home with physical spatiality and presence in spite of exile, by centring the process on homemaking and moving away from singular definitions of home and homelands. Slipperjack, in contrast to McLeod, is careful to place stories on the land, and not detach them from their physical rootedness and presence. She represents resurgent relationships to story that are embodied and physical.²⁶

Together with physical work, Slipperjack represents the influence of being in the physical presence of stories. She re-imbues the interaction between stories and homemaking with a rootedness in physical place and represents their function within material reality. In their discussion of Anishinaabe stories, “The Story is a Living Being: Companionship with Stories in Anishinaabeg,” Eva Marie Garrouette and Kathleen Delores Westcott distinguish that “the story does not exist apart from, but in intense interaction with other aspects of reality” (73). They connect stories to processes of creation, not bound to specific moments in time: “Story affects the fundamental reality in which creation happens – is always happening because the mythical

²⁶ McLeod’s work featured more prominently in this project before his domestic assault conviction became public. While I have been influenced by his work, I have chosen to lessen his visible contribution here in solidarity with those harmed and women and Two-Spirit peoples who continue to stand against patriarchal and colonial violence.

moment of origin is not subject to the rules of temporality” (74). Stories not only exist in mental or even spiritual (mythical) planes in Anishinaabe life, but also interact with and maintain physical presence in material reality and are not restricted by temporality.

Slipperjack recognizes the material reality of stories in their role in connecting her characters to land. Danny in *Silent Words* establishes a relationship to land partially through the discourse of land-based stories told to him by Ol’Jim. While canoeing through the Northwestern Ontario landscape, Ol’Jim points out various sacred and historical places and their stories. Ol’Jim tells Danny the story of the Memegwesiwag (sometimes referred to as little people) and the rock cliff they inhabit. He ends his teaching by saying, “so we must remember to leave something when we travel past the homes of these people because they are our relatives” (98). By telling their story, Ol’Jim shows Danny his kinship relationship to the Memegwesiwag and his responsibility to respect their home. Ol’Jim also tells the story of “Magic Rock” as they pass by it, explaining its historical significance as a place of crossing for “Native people [who] travelled through here [...] many, many generations back” (118). The rock “watched people go by from the other side of the shore over there” (118). This story establishes a relationship to “Magic Rock,” but also to the Indigenous history and significance of the place. Danny is also shown where burial grounds are and learns certain protocols around sacred places. He is not to point at a pyramid of sacred rocks, because “a big wind will come and swamp us. We will drown in the middle of the lake” (157). By learning the stories of the land, Danny knows to respect and understand his responsibilities to those places. The stories are contained within those places (wisdom sits in those places, as Basso would define); they have a physical presence there. By learning to interact with the material reality and creative potential of those stories, Danny establishes and maintains a relationship to those places. As Slipperjack has said, “Stories are the land’s memories” (interview with David 25).

Within Slipperjack’s work there is little if any temporal separation between her characters and traditional stories. Particularly in *Weesquachak and the Lost Ones*, stories exist in the same physical space as characters and are not posited as part of a historical collective memory, but in everyday interaction. For example, as shown above, Danny is taught stories on the land and as connected to the physical places where they happened and are still happening (i.e. the continued existence of Memegwesiwag). Slipperjack also confronts a purely positive, singular, idealized view of the presence of stories by depicting their dark, dangerous, and potentially damaging

effects alongside their more positive ones. As King states, “Stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous” (*The Truth About Stories* 9). Weesquachak in *Weesquachak and the Lost Ones* emotionally and physically terrorizes Janine and Freddy. Weesquachak’s narrative voice interjects throughout the novel, and he tampers and meddles, disrupting Janine’s attempts to make a new home. Weesquachak is motivated by revenge and the need to be noticed and recognized:

They forgot about me. Their children never even heard of me. The adults don’t remember anymore. The old have no one to listen but I...I will not be forgotten! I will make them know that I still exist. I will make them know me again. I exist. I am here, always have been—right among them. (7)

Weesquachak wants to make his presence known, and has many tricks up his sleeve in order to do so. He shape-shifts into various men, women, and animals that come between Janine and Freddy. He claims he wants to make Janine his “own wife” (57) and revels in his attempts to dissuade Freddy from trusting her: “Ha ha ha! I am thoroughly enjoying this! [...] Do you want to see how quickly a man can go crazy?” (102). Although Weesquachak’s antics seem playful at first, the tone of his narrative and his actions quickly become vindictive and hurtful: “I’ve got her now! She’s mine! You see, I took care of Fred. I took that baby too. I want her all to myself. All to myself. All to myself. All to myself...” (121). In spite of Weesquachak’s best efforts, Janine and Fred keep coming back to each other, eventually convincing Weesquachak to let them be together. He remarks, “They just don’t give up do they? My little lost ones are trying to make it home. Maybe in a little while...” (194). Weesquachak’s use of the phrase “make it home” introduces a dual meaning, invoking an impetus both to return home and to make a home together. I argue that this ambiguity figures into Slipperjack’s representations of homemaking practices. Never giving up control, when Janine and Fred do make a home at the end of the novel, Weesquachak claims, “They should thank me that they have found each other” (202). Weesquachak is a figure from traditional stories, but also a physical presence in both Janine and Fred’s lives. He is not benevolent, and prevents the characters from making a home at first, putting obstacles, distractions, and hurt in their way.

In line with much of the recent criticism of celebration and overgeneralized use of tricksters and tricksterism (see *Troubling Tricksters* edited by Deanna Reder and Linda M. Morra for a comprehensive overview), Slipperjack’s Anishinaabe-specific Weesquachak is neither

purely good nor purely evil and cannot be classified through an oral story tradition in which her characters can easily come home. He reinforces that story and discursive space can often encompass negativity and hurt, along with positive connection and establishment of relationship to land. Although stories are a part of the process of Slipperjack's characters making new homes, it is the cumulative experience of interacting with the ever presence of those stories, and working with and through them, that allows her characters to make home.

I align Slipperjack's representation of Weesquachak with Simpson's descriptions of the brilliance of Nanabush. Simpson connects the physical presence of Nanabush on the land with processes of creation, much like Garrouette and Westcott, and to practices of resurgence by demonstrating how Nanabush teaches critical thinking for moving in colonized spaces:

[...] Nanabush comes with inevitable contradictions held within the lives of the occupied. Nanabush also continually shows us what happens when we are not responsible for our own baggage or trauma or emotional responses. The brilliance of Nanabush is that Nanabush stories the land with a sharp criticality necessary for moving through the realm of the colonized into the dreamed reality of the decolonized, and for navigating the lived reality of having to engage with both at the same time. (*As We Have Always Done* 163-64)

Applying Nanabush's role to Slipperjack's representation of Weesquachak, his trials and tribulations represent the inevitable contradictions of colonized life, and he forces Janine and Freddy to work through their own traumatic and emotional baggage. His presence on the land teaches a sharp criticality and Anishinaabe intelligence for navigating the reality of engaging both the structures and processes of colonialism and the possibilities of decolonized futurities. Weesquachak encourages and teaches an adaptive, resilient, productive, intelligent, and disciplined method of homemaking (even if through what sometimes appear as nefarious means). Physical interaction with storied presences on the land, like Janine and Freddy's encounters with Weesquachak, are an integral part of a physical connection to land.

Through representations of mobility between various types of space within Anishinaabe territory, imperfect home places, the hard work of place-based practices, and living with the physical presence of stories, Slipperjack's novels represent a physical connection to land that enacts embodied resurgence. As Simpson states, "It is this present, this presence, that will create flight paths out of colonialism and into magnificent unfolding of Indigenous place-based

resurgences and nationhoods” (*As We Have Always Done* 193). Anishinaabe physical presence and daily existence expresses individual and self-determined ways of being Anishinaabeg. Foregrounding these individual flight paths, Slipperjack’s novels provide rich and practical examples of what embodied resurgence looks like.²⁷

Homemaking through physical activity and place-based practices positions Indigenous bodies on the land, and reclaims a process of homing that is neither regressive nor geographically restrictive, while establishing and maintaining a physical and spatial connection to land. This type of homing aligns with Borrows’s description of the role of Nanabush in the lives of the Anishinaabeg, in “On the Road Home: Stories and Reflections from Neyaashiinigiming”:

We live his stories, and they place, displace, and replace us. Nanabush teaches and teases us as we live and learn his ways. In so doing, we seemingly lose our center—who we thought we were as Anishinaabeg: “the good people.” Thus, when we come home, we realize we are also leaving home. Old centers are lost and new ones re-formed. We feel comfortable for awhile and then another story comes along and the cycle begins again.

This is the balance we live within. (397-98)

Borrows refers to the ambiguous and changing nature of Nanabush, much like Weesquachak in Slipperjack’s novel. I see this nature reflected in how Slipperjack represents her characters’ journeys to make home. As they “come home” to a place, they also leave homes. Homes are “lost and new ones re-formed.” Most importantly, Slipperjack’s characters attempt to find a centre and sense of home through “balance” within, taking the total of their experiences of place-based practice and continuing to make home. Borrows states that this “balance requires being aware of the healing and harm found within stories” and, echoing similar widely-known sentiments of Jeanette Armstrong and Thomas King, “we are stories” (398). Each physical story and experience, whether it heals or harms, is a part of Slipperjack’s characters and how they connect with the land and continue to make home.

²⁷ I would like to add that these are by no means the only examples or even the “ideal” examples of resurgent physical work or active place-based practices, particularly within an urban environment. When I refer to a physical connection to land through activity, I envision these activities as including everything from hunting and gathering to backyard gardening to smashing up concrete with a sledgehammer. Following Simpson’s lead, the definition of these practices comes from what is meaningful in Indigenous individual and collective contexts and realities, whatever they may be.

5 Carrying Home: Transportable Stories and Land in Richard Wagamese's Novels

To run across your people's territory is to feel the energy of time and culture and history with each planting of the foot. It's to inhale the breath of ancestors and family and loved ones long gone. It's to exhale the effects of the world and enter a place of peace. The raccoons and the beautiful fox that cross your path are brothers and sisters and the land itself a reminder of eternal truth – that home is a truth you carry inside yourself and always will be. Ojibway country. A powerful place to run and be....

- Richard Wagamese, Facebook Post July 26, 2014²⁸

As the most established and prolific author of the four I discuss in this dissertation, Richard Wagamese also most consistently returns to issues of land, belonging, and home throughout his novels, poetry, and non-fiction works. In particular he repeatedly defines conceptions of home, much as he does in the above Facebook post. This post outlines many of the elements of home that are elaborated on in his larger works. Wagamese stresses the importance of physical presence on the land, “run[ing]” across Anishinaabe territory and “planting” each foot; feeling energy, time, culture, and history; breathing in a spiritual awareness of ancestral presences; and recognizing others in the same place and path, situating himself within a network of relations that includes animals. Cumulatively, a connection to land brings the truth that home is “carr[ied] inside yourself and always will be.” But how does one carry the truth of home within?

Wagamese, originally from Wabaseemoong First Nation, was adopted out at an early age, first to various foster homes in Northwestern Ontario, and later to St. Catharines, Ontario. After a period of homelessness in Toronto, Ontario, Wagamese returned to his reserve and was able to reconnect with members of his family. However, he soon moved to pursue a writing career, first in journalism in Calgary, Alberta, and later in creative writing, settling just outside of Kamloops, British Columbia. His multiple journeys to find and establish home places throughout his life

²⁸ This post is only one of eighteen that I collected from his Facebook page that reiterated a definition of home. It was clearly a concept of great importance to him and that he spent his life defining, redefining, and finding not only through his novels, but also his non-fiction, poetry, journalism work, rapid read novellas, and social media posts.

almost certainly are reflected in his many ruminations over the meaning of home and its location within. Wagamese sadly passed away during the writing of this dissertation on March 10, 2017, hopefully finding another home resting place. I'd like to dedicate this chapter to him in honour of the beauty, knowledge, and stories that he gifted the world.

Much like Slipperjack's work, Wagamese's first novel *Keeper'n Me* has been praised by critics such as Janice Acoose, Geraldine Balzer, David Brundage, and Mareike Neuhaus as a "coming home" narrative that emphasizes the importance of returning to the land and home reserve in order to learn traditional teachings and identify within an Indigenous community. Loosely based on the events of Wagamese's own early life, *Keeper'n Me* tells the story of a young man who goes through the Child Welfare system and incarceration, but eventually returns to his birth family and reserve to learn traditional Anishinaabe ways and teachings from his grandfather's friend, Keeper. As Acoose observes in her dissertation "Minjimendaamowinon Anishinaabe: Reading and Righting All Our Relations in Written English," "Garnet learns that the land is sacred because Keeper's *Midewiwin* teachings conceptualize the land as an original Mother [...] [and] that if he disconnects from the Earth, he'll lose himself" (214). Even though Acoose praises Wagamese for enacting survivance and adaptability within the novel, physically returning to the land, family, and traditional teachings is not necessarily the ideal or only way to find a sense of home, place, and belonging, and Wagamese's subsequent novels exemplify this through their multiple settings and contexts, on and off home reserves, in urban environments, residential schools, farms, and rodeo rings, and through diverse plotlines.

The only study of this oeuvre of novels has been undertaken by Renate Eigenbrod in "Diasporic Longings: (Re)Figurations of Home and Homelessness in Richard Wagamese's Work," in which through analyses framed by notions of diaspora she looks at a "thematic cohesiveness" in his novels. Eigenbrod concludes, "His novels reimagine family and home through different versions of adoption and relationships with the land" (145). Recognizing this same thematic cohesiveness and an almost obsessive repetition of definitions of home and belonging throughout his novels, I continue from Eigenbrod's focus on diaspora and displacement, and detail the components of land-based identity and belonging that emerge in Wagamese's last two novels, *Indian Horse* and *Medicine Walk*, both of which were published

after Eigenbrod's article.²⁹ While she traces a "*longing* to return, not to a specific home or the past, but to a connectedness with values and beliefs that emanate from an ancestral homeland and a pre-colonial past" (149-50, emphasis added), I examine the ways in which Wagamese instead represents and almost prescribes the precise conditions to reclaim that connectedness. This slight argumentative shift further highlights the necessary focus on "transformation" instead of Indigenous dispossession that Eigenbrod alludes to at the end of her article. In part this reflects my own political impetus to focus on resurgent practices, but also follows a trajectory in Wagamese's work that over time develops a method of reclaiming belonging. Viewing the two novels as a "how to" for land-based connection illuminates their potential in establishing and maintaining relationships to land for readers and the role they play in enacting Anishinaabe presence and ways of being.

Wagamese's novels expose the complexities of home and, I argue, represent the interaction between an Anishinaabe connection to physical land and to discursive or storied space in order to find a sense of place and belonging. In other words, the reciprocal interplay between land and story mutually constitutes home in his work. But how do these two differing types of space interact and contribute to an ultimate conceptualization of home, and how does it apply to those going through their own homing journeys? *Indian Horse* and *Medicine Walk* mirror each other in depicting this interaction and the conditions necessary to reclaim a sense of place. *Indian Horse* is set in rural Northwestern Ontario and documents the impact of residential school and hockey on main character Saul Indian Horse. Saul's dispossession begins with a physical removal from land, whereas Frank's dispossession in *Medicine Walk* begins with a separation from his history, the stories of how he and his biological family came to be. *Medicine Walk* follows Frank's journey to take his father into the bush to die and be buried as a warrior, while grappling with his abandonment as a child. Even though they seemingly reclaim opposite elements of home (land vs. story), each novel includes an almost identical reflection on what home and connection to land constitutes: something that involves a physical return to the land, but is ultimately maintained through story and carried within. Revisiting or returning to places of their pasts, both physically and through story, maintains the connection of Wagamese's characters to the land. Physical place and discursive space become interconnected as they

²⁹ Since the writing of this chapter Wagamese's last novel *Starlight* has been published posthumously.

contribute equally to the process of carrying home within. By representing both types of space, Wagamese produces a transportable definition of home and healing, which focuses on the process of homing, and the relationships and connections built along the way.

As outlined in the introduction, theories of Indigenous and Anishinaabe story are all-encompassing. Stories, in the words of Wagamese's character Becka in *Medicine Walk*, are "all we are in the end" (103), or as in *Ragged Company*, "make the world go round" (126). Stories include anything constituted by and described through language: dreams, visions, presences, songs, history, writing – which can also be labeled as discursive space. In their introductory conversation to *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies*, Niigaanwewidam Sinclair discusses with Jill Doerfler and Heidi Stark the significance of stories to the Anishinaabeg:

Stories actualize the infinite connections that make up Anishinaabeg culture and community, not only individually and amongst our varied communities, but with non-Anishinaabeg, with animals and plants and manitous and *zhaaganashag* and all of creation. Stories are strands that connect Anishinaabeg with everything around us, across space, time, and geography. They are gifts. ("Bagijige" xxiii)

Stories actualize connections and constitute strands of relationship to land and the rest of creation. Story and land are intimately enmeshed; however, I argue, it is important to separate discursive space from physical land, because of the dual effects of colonialism on both physical and ideological exile and displacement. Colonial genocide is not only physical, but insidiously mental, emotional, and spiritual (Tuck and Yang 5). Displacement from land is not simply physical removal, but a tearing apart of relationship and interconnection that is defined through story. As Wagamese describes it through Saul's experience of being forced to attend residential school, "the tearing away of the bush and my people was like ripped flesh in my belly. Every time I moved or was forced to speak, it roared its incredible pain" (*Indian Horse* 48). By using the metaphor of being physically attached to and then torn apart resulting in "ripped flesh in my belly," Wagamese alludes to a connection to Mother Earth through an umbilical cord, which has been ripped from Saul's "belly." Not only does Saul express a direct kinship relationship to land, he feels the pain of this rending within his physical body and the discursive space of language each time he moves (physical) and speaks (discursive, which also refers to the colonization of discursive space through the violent imposition of the English language and the attempted erasure of Anishinaabemowin). While these two types of space may emerge from discussions of

dispossession and displacement, their role in establishing and maintaining connections to land and home places becomes a reclaiming and is resurgent.

In a conference paper “Terristory and Narrative Nullius: Theorizing Cultural Belonging in Indigenous Storytelling” presented at the 2018 Indigenous Literary Studies Association annual gathering at First Nations University in Regina, Saskatchewan, Warren Cariou shared the term terristory to represent the relationship between these two spaces of story and land as not separate but united, “of the same [...] action, relation, energy, location” (2).³⁰ Cariou further argues that the separation and rending of story and land is itself a process of colonialism that disrupts Indigenous culture and philosophy. For Cariou, finding or maintaining terristory within a colonial context is a mode of survivance and persistence of Indigenous presence and vitality. I find terristory to be an extremely productive theoretical term for examining the interplay between land and story, and one that foregrounds their inextricability and interconnectedness. It also provides an ethical precondition that ideally land and story are one, part and parcel of the same relation as reflected in the various stories embedded in the land, and that to further separate them has the potential to reinscribe colonial processes. I believe Wagamese’s work is reacting against this colonial separation of land and story, however, and demonstrates the process and necessary conditions of reuniting these two spaces.

In order to make sense of the relationship between land and story, I apply Russell West-Pavlov’s theory of literary deiXis to an understanding of land and home. In *Spaces of Fiction/Fictions of Space: Postcolonial Place and Literary DeiXis*, West-Pavlov writes of the term ‘literary deiXis’ that it “acknowledges the work done by humans in moulding space, but foregrounds the prior enabling work undertaken by space itself” (6). He takes as his book’s overarching metaphor the linguistic term deixis, which refers to words that “anchor utterances in the concrete place of enunciation (‘here’, ‘there’, ‘this table’)” (2). By adding a capital X to deixis, West-Pavlov visually represents the crossing figure of a chiasmus (also represented in his title “Spaces of Fiction/Fictions of Space”). The chiasmus “models a relationship of reciprocity which [...] can be found to hold between language and space” (3). Therefore, through the literary term deiXis, West-Pavlov seeks to represent “a mode of two-way, reciprocal interaction between language and space in literary texts” (3). Based in this fairly complex linguistic theory, West-

³⁰ Cariou acknowledged that he shares his use of the term terristory with fellow ILSA member and scholar Sarah Henzi.

Pavlov's work emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature (much like a land ethic), and how it is reflected in literary representations of space particularly in Indigenous and postcolonial writing. He acknowledges that "non-human actors (elements such as water, air, gases, minerals, plants, and animals) have their own complex and dynamic practices which co-create space equally configured by human actors" (8). Literary *deixis* affords a similar agency to non-human entities as an Anishinaabe land ethic.

I distinguish my application of West-Pavlov's theory to Wagamese's work by expanding it to include not only literary representations, but also all discursive spaces or stories. This includes any space that is informed by a framework of knowledge or discourse. Therefore, discursive spaces reciprocally interact with physical places, as do literary representations of place. While stories contribute to a sense of home and belonging, connection to physical land is the "prior enabling work" which in various ways is then reciprocally maintained by the discursive space. Establishing a sense of home and belonging through stories paradoxically relies on a connection to physical land, whether or not the individual inhabits that land. *Indian Horse* and *Medicine Walk* represent their main characters' journeys to reconnect land and story, synthesizing how stories tell the land and how the land tells stories to produce a transportable but spatially rooted sense of place and home.

In *Indian Horse*, Wagamese presents many different discursive spaces that enable Saul to conceptualize the land, the first of these being traditional Anishinaabe stories. Wagamese begins the novel with the story of how the first Indian Horse came to Anishinaabe territory and how Saul obtained his family name. The story that Saul heard "so many times as a boy that it became real to [him]" (4) delineates an ideal relationship to the land. The story begins by acknowledging the *manidoog*, the water spirits, *Maymaygwayseeuk*, and Saul's great-grandfather *Shabogeesick*'s ability to listen to the land: "because he spent so much time on the land, it told him things, spoke to him of mysteries and teachings. [...] The land called to him one day and he walked off without a word to anyone. No one worried. It was something he did all the time" (4-5). Wagamese presents *Shabogeesick* as having an ideal relationship to the land, which includes direct contact and affective communication. The horse's teaching in the story responds to a similar concern about loss due to colonialism:

A great change will come. It will come with the speed of lightning and it will scorch all our lives. [...] The change that comes our way will come in many forms. [...]

But we must learn to ride each one of these horses of change. It is what the future asks of us and our survival depends on it. That is the spirit teaching of the Horse. (7).

The need to survive and adapt to change emerges as the over-arching theme of the entire novel, and part of this survival is finding a way to conceive of land and home after they have been lost. When Saul can identify as an Indian Horse through the game of hockey, he carries the story and history of that name with him, along with its teachings about listening to the land.

Frank in *Medicine Walk*, on the other hand, has not had the story of his name become real to him as a boy. He does not receive this discursive understanding of place through the history of his name until his father, Eldon, tells him where their last name, Starlight, comes from:

“Starlight’s a teacher’s name. [...] Jimmy said Starlight was the name given to them that got teachin’s from Star People. Long ago. Way back. Legend goes that they come outta the stars on a night like this. Clear night. Sat with the people and told ’em stuff. Stories mostly, about the way of things.

“The wisest ones got taught more. Our people. Starlights. We’re meant to be teachers and storytellers. They say nights like this bring them teachin’s and stories back and that’s when they oughta be passed on again.

“I like that story. Makes sense to me how I wanna be out here so much. Under the stars.” (159)

Eldon admits to not knowing this history, either, indicating at least a two-generational colonial removal from the discursive understanding and belonging it brings. This story carries teachings about the need to learn stories and pass them on to future generations through an ironic metanarrative. Just as both Eldon and Frank have lost the history of their name, the responsibility of that namesake is to ensure that stories and teachings like those of the Starlight name are not lost. Finally hearing this history, Frank is able to connect its discursive understanding to his experience of being out on the land, and it “makes sense” to him why he has appreciated being out under the stars. In this instance, Frank is able to reunite his experience of physically being on the land with the story of his name, which produces a sense of belonging, a sense of “mak[ing]” sense. As Eldon shortly after comments, “The stars are in us” (167): the physical stars and the story of the Starlight name make up a part of the father and son’s identity.

Just as Saul must reclaim the physical place of the history of his name and Frank the history of his name in connection to his sense of place on the land, Wagamese also explores the

dual discursive and physical significance of pictographs in each novel. In *Indian Horse*, Shabogeesik's story mourns the loss of "teaching rocks where the Old Ones drew stories on the stone": "No one knows where that place is today. Of all the things that would die in the change to come, the way to that sacred place was perhaps the most grievous loss" (6). However, Saul is still told the story of the stone's significance as a sacred place where people were called "when something vital needed to be shared" (6). The stories and discursive space of these pictographs have been carried through the "horses of change," but the physical location is separate from it.

In *Medicine Walk*, the opposite is true. Frank finds the location of pictographs, but has no storied understanding why they are there or what they mean, and only knows that the place is sacred because the old man, Bunky, tells him. He decides it is important to take his father there on their walk:

"There's a place just up this face worth seeing [...].

"I've been goin' there a long time. It changes. Maybe because I got older. Got more sense now. I don't know. It's just special," the kid said. "There's signs up there. Symbols. Painted right into the rock. When the old man took me there the first time he said it was sacred because no one can ever figure out how come the paintings never faded. They been there a powerful long time." (66)

Frank repeats his capacity for "sense" similar to how the story of Starlight makes sense to him. His use of the term again encompasses an aspect of reassurance and belonging. He knows the place is sacred, special, and powerful, but because of his separation from his father and biological family, and further generational impacts of settler colonialism, he does not have cultural knowledge of its use or meaning, as the stones have in *Indian Horse*. However, Frank knows the physical location and maintains a connection to the site by visiting it, bringing his father there, and developing an awareness practice that allows him to understand that "out here things just come all on their own sometimes" (66). Although both representations of pictographs seemingly exhibit the type of "longing" Eigenbrod highlights (for the location of the pictographs in *Indian Horse* and for the history and cultural significance of them in *Medicine Walk*), in either case Wagamese does not discredit the value of these places to a sense of belonging. Both boys are able to establish and maintain relationships to these sites even if they can only access half of their territory.

Wagamese's novels each represent elements of land and story, and the need for both in reclaiming a full sense of belonging and the ability to carry home within. He repeatedly describes the land as most keenly felt through the soles of feet (for example see *For Joshua* 214, *Keeper'n Me* 224, 262). When Frank describes this feeling, he associates the land with a sense of realness, similar to Saul's description of the story of Indian Horse: "They'd take the horses and cross the field and plod up the ridge and by the time they were down the other side the land became what the old man called 'real.' To the kid, real meant quiet, open, and free before he learned to call it predictable and knowable" (32). To be real, in this case, is associated with freedom and familiarity: two significant aspects of belonging. Wagamese continues, "To say he loved [the land] was a word beyond him then but he came to know the feeling" (32). Coming to know the feeling of the land encompasses both a cognitive and affective connection, a knowing and a feeling. Frank cognitively recognizes his place on the land, identifying his relation to the sun, the rain, the smell, the ground he sleeps on, a bear, an eagle, and the water (32). His relationship to the land is also defined by his physical activity:

When [Frank] stood out on the land he could feel it. It lay in the sense of being hollow and serene like he felt after he shot the buck. It was in the sure heft of the gun in the crook of his arm and the knowledge that he could take what he needed and use it. Most of all, it was in the process of tracking game, letting himself slip out of the bounds of what he knew of earth, and outward into something larger, more complex and simple all at once. [...] The kid went to the land. It was all he needed. The gun anchored him there. It was how he came to understand the value of living things, by his ability to remove them. Taking life was a solemn thing. Life was the centre of the mystery. The gun was his measure. His hand on the velvet flank of the deer. A cry born of a loss he slowly came to understand was part of him forever. (38-39)

Frank compares his feeling of the land with the feeling of hunting, the physical weight of the gun, the knowledge and confidence of self-reliance, the process of tracking, and a recognition of his place in the world through his interconnectedness to the living things around him. Much like Owl and Freddy and Danny in Slipperjack's novels, Frank gains an understanding of relatedness and connection to land through the activity and work of hunting.

Wagamese emphasizes embodied physical presence in feeling the land and a Deleuzian element of composition through a recognition of interconnection in Frank's taking of life when

hunting, as the deer's cry of loss becomes "part of him forever." This feeling of the land also includes affect as something that exists beyond language, similar to Hunter's representations in his poetry. Frank's feeling of the land is described as having "no word for that. Asked to explain it, he wouldn't have been able to, but he understood how it felt against his ribs when he breathed night air filled with the tang of spruce gum and rich, wet spoil of bog. That particular magic that existed beyond words, beyond time, schools, plans, lofty thinking, and someone else's idea of what mattered" (38). Again, Wagamese stresses an embodied affect describing how the land "felt against his ribs." But more significantly he refers to a "particular magic that existed beyond words," a "primordial wordlessness" as Jeanette Armstrong describes it. Frank's feeling of the land exists outside of discourse; however, simply by being and hunting on the land, he accesses cognitive, physical, and affective connections that establish a sense of belonging.

While Frank feels the land through physical presence and interaction, Saul receives Shabogeesick's ability to listen to the land through the stories from his grandmother, Naomi, and Saul's own gift as a seer. Naomi's stories of the past and teachings about Anishinaabe medicine allow Saul to listen to the land in his own way as a child:

Naomi told me stories of the old days. Told me about my grandfather and the medicine ways he carried. Good medicine. Powerful, Ojibway medicine. The river wound serpentine, radiant in the light of the northern moon. In its curling wash I sometimes thought I could hear songs sung in Ojibway. Honour songs, raising me above the hurt of my brother's absence. That voice sustained me, as did the firm, warm hand of Naomi on the thin blade of my shoulder. (12)

Saul is able to hear songs from the river, which are comforting to him and help him through the absence of his brother; the songs are what "sustain[]" him alongside the strength and comfort he receives from Naomi. Hearing these songs in Anishinaabemowin, Saul develops a listening practice of the land's language, as Armstrong defines it. While Frank can be aware of the feeling of land beyond words, Saul attributes human words and discourse to the land, much as Armstrong theorizes that human words are invented to retell the land's stories (142). By hearing stories from his grandmother, Saul is able to listen to the land and understand its songs as honour songs and medicine. He is able to connect to the river spiritually through those teachings and that understanding. Through the discursive space that the stories create, Saul is sustained and finds comfort.

Wagamese presents vision and the gift of seeing as another discursive space that enables Saul to conceptualize physical place. Saul adapts his great-grandfather Shabogeesick's ability to listen to the land through his own gift as a seer. His visions begin at God's Lake when the land seems to call out his name: "I heard my name. It was whispered so softly, I thought at first I'd imagined it" (22). Hearing his name triggers a vision of his ancestors being killed by a collapsing cliff. This vision allows Saul to feel a sense of belonging at God's Lake. As he explains, "I knew now why God's Lake belonged to our family: because part of our family had died there, and their spirits still spoke from the trees. Somehow, knowing that was a comfort to me" (25). Saul's vision of his ancestors reassures him of his sense of place at God's Lake through a spiritual and ancestral connection. His vision is the discursive space that allows him to understand his connection to the land.

Each boy establishes and maintains a connection to land – through physical presence for Frank and through discursive space for Saul. Each connection allows them to overcome hardship and build resiliency, to a certain extent. Frank's hurtful relationship with his absentee and alcoholic father is tempered by his time on the land. After receiving letters from his father with promises of Christmas visits, feasts, trees, and lavish presents, Frank compares this promised extravagance to his usual Christmases with the old man: "the biggest part of it was the long hike the old man and he always took. [...] [I]n that cold and barren-feeling world, the kid came to know Christmas as a time when the land and its emptiness were perfect. [...] The land sleeping" (137). Christmas is defined through a sense of place: a recognition and appreciation of the perfection of land even in its coldness, barrenness, emptiness, and sleep. When his father fails to show up for Christmas, even though Frank is very upset, mostly at himself for getting his hopes up, he finds comfort in returning to the old man's farm: "By the time they got back to the farm he was beyond it, ready for the return to his predictable life, the feel of the woodstove heat on his face comforting and real" (139). Wagamese repeats the words "predictable," "the feel of," and "real" from the previous descriptions of Frank's reflections on the land, emphasizing tangible constancy and comfort when he is physically at home on the old man's farm and on the land. This constancy affords Frank a degree of resiliency and strength and allows him to cope with the unreliability of his father. Over time, however, this resiliency also makes him "hard" – Eldon comments, "You're hard, Frank. You get that way being out here so much?" (168) – and when on the journey with his father, he searches for and longs to know the family stories that were

kept from him. One evening after Eldon has fallen asleep, “the kid watche[s] him, studying his face and trying to see beyond what he thought he knew of the man, the history that was etched there, the stories, the travels” (50). Frank searches for stories, the discursive space of his father and his history – another element of belonging outside of a connection and rootedness in physical place.

Similarly, Saul’s discursive gift as a seer affords him a certain amount of resiliency and adaptability, but ultimately cannot fully constitute a sense of home. Wagamese represents the ability of Saul’s visions to be transferred to the game of hockey in order to create a sense of belonging. After watching his first game at St. Jerome’s residential school, Saul can see the spaces of play: “The lines. [...] They create space. The space you have to move into to make it happen,” and he sees “not just the physical properties of the game and the action but the intent” (58). He likens this vision to the gift his great-grandfather has: “The world spoke to him. It told him where to look. Shabogeesick’s gift had been passed on to me. There’s no other explanation for how I was able to see this foreign game so completely right away” (58). Saul brings the discursive space of his visions to the game and because he can see the spaces and the intent of hockey, he eventually feels at home within it even while attending residential school: “I was a small boy with outsized skates, and in the world that hockey had created I found a new home” (72). Saul is able to feel at home in the game until racism from other players and fans takes his vision away: “There was no joy in the game now, no vision. [...] The game was me alone” (176). Without his vision, Saul is “alone” and no longer feels a sense of place within the game. Saul’s vision alone cannot reclaim a sense of belonging. For both boys the colonial tearing apart of land and story have left them with something inextricably missing from their sense of home. Although both receive strength and connection, through physical and discursive understandings of place respectively, neither alone can establish a sense of place beyond the impacts of settler colonialism.

Wagamese continues in the novels to take his characters on journeys to reclaim the physical place or discursive space missing from their lives. Frank regains a discursive understanding of his place through the stories his father tells him along their walk. He learns about his name, his family, and the reasons his father has not been able to raise him. After hearing some of these stories, Frank at first has a difficult time integrating them into his sense of self:

The night and his father's story had drained him and he needed the feel of the land at his feet and the sounds of it to quell the clamour in his head. His father. He thought about what Becka had said and worked at finding some pattern to the shards and pieces of history he'd been allowed to carry now. They jangled and knocked around inside him. It felt like jamming the wrong piece into a picture puzzle. Like frustration alone could make it fit the pattern. (106)

Because of the trauma of tearing away story from land through processes of colonialism – from Eldon's father being killed in World War II, to being abused by his white step-father, to killing his best friend, Jimmy, in the Korean War, to losing Frank's mother in childbirth, and the resulting alcoholism as a method of coping – Eldon's stories are painful, and the act of reuniting them with the land on the walk and with Frank's sense of place is difficult. "Shards of history" "jangle[] and knock[]" inside of Frank trying to find their place within the "pattern" of his identity and life. The process of reconnecting and learning these stories is frustrating, but eventually it transforms Frank's hardness into emotion and tears: "Family. The story of him etched in blood and tears and departures sudden as the snapping of bone. When the tears came they were sudden as that. He let himself cry and the feeling of it scared him. The release uncontained, erupting over him" (223). Although a painful process, Frank experiences release as he reconciles himself to "the story of him."

Saul's journey to reconnect land and story, on the other hand, involves revisiting locations from his childhood and reconciling with his past in order to realize a sense of home and belonging that he carries within him. This journey starts after Saul is sent to rehab at the New Dawn Centre for alcoholism, where he is asked to tell his stories in order to "live at peace" (3). Saul sees this journey as an attempt to regain his gift of seeing, the discursive space that previously allowed him to feel a sense of belonging: "Our medicine people would call me a seer. [...] It left me years ago, and the loss of that gift has been my greatest sorrow. Sometimes it feels as though I have spent my entire life on a trek to rediscover it" (3). Saul's rediscovery, however, consists not only of telling his stories. An integral part of his journey includes physically returning to the places of his childhood.

Saul returns to God's Lake, where he is finally able to reclaim his ability as a seer. As he walks along the shore of the lake,

I closed my eyes, close to weeping, and I heard my name whispered. I opened my eyes to see a flotilla of canoes gliding toward the shore. [...] My people. And there was Shabogeesick himself, paddling solo in a birch bark canoe. (204-05)

Physically returning to God's Lake allows Saul to listen to the land and see a vision of the family members he has lost. Besides gaining back his ability as a seer, in this vision Saul also receives an invaluable message from Shabogeesick: "You have come to learn to carry this place within you. This place of beginnings and endings" (205). Wagamese presents this lesson as central to the novel. By returning to the physical place of God's Lake, Saul does the "prior enabling work" (West-Pavlov 6) in order to "carry this place within [him]" (Wagamese 205), bringing together both land and story – physical and discursive spaces. But his journey to find home does not end there; Saul must also physically return to the site of the residential school, regain and reclaim memories of his sexual abuse while there, and continue to heal the discursive space of his childhood through therapy treatment. Wagamese demonstrates Saul is able to keep home, carry the land of his childhood within him, and find home in the game of hockey again, because he both physically revisits the land and works to heal his storied understanding of it.

Frank in *Medicine Walk* receives an almost identical vision at the conclusion of the novel that unites his prior knowledge of the land with the newly learned stories of his family.

Wagamese describes,

He closed his eyes for a moment and when he looked down into the valley again he thought he could see the ghostly shapes of people riding horses through the trees. They angled east into the valley with dogs strewn out in ragged lines ahead and behind them and children running after them waving sticks, the shouts of them riding the wind to the rim of the ridge. [...] He watched them ride into the swale and ease the horses to the water while the dogs and children ran in the rough grass. The men and women on horseback dismounted and their shouts came to him laden with hope and good humour. He raised a hand to the idea of his father and mother and a line of people he had never known, then mounted the horse and rode back through the glimmer to the farm where the old man waited, a deck of cards on the scarred and battered table. (246)

After reconnecting to the discursive space of his history and family, Frank is able to see a positive vision of ancestors riding horses on the land, with whom he connects the presence of his father, mother, and an entire family tree. Returning to the comfort and predictability of the old

man and his deck of cards, Frank carries a home that encompasses both physical presence and storied understanding.

Wagamese presents a complex and multifaceted conceptualization of home, which includes reciprocal interplay between physical place and discursive space in order to reunite land and story. In his suggestion that one must carry the place of home within, Wagamese allows for the possibility that one can keep home and maintain a sense of belonging and security without staying put. This notion of carrying home is repeated in almost all of his novels: “‘home’ began to mean [...] [s]omething I could take with me wherever I went” (*Keeper’n Me* 259); “[Home]’s just belonging. A critical and luminant joining to the heartbeat of Creation” (*A Quality of Light* 322); “home is a truth you carry within yourself. It’s belonging, regardless” (*Ragged Company* 358); and “home [is] a feeling you carr[y] inside you” (*Dream Wheels* 166). Defining home in this way allows for movement and mobility, while still maintaining a physical and embodied presence on the land. It unites these two elements in an act that holds decolonizing potential as it reclaims ideological and physical connection to land. Saul in *Indian Horse* is able to define for himself what home constitutes: “I wondered how people could live with things set in place, fixed, their places determined by the power of the recollection they contained, the memories they held. It was what made a home, I believed; the things we keep, the sum of us” (208). “The sum of us” as home contains both the physical “fixed” place and the discursive space of “the power of recollection” and “memories.”

Indian Horse and *Medicine Walk* contribute to a larger discursive space that reconceptualizes and redefines notions of home, which reunite land and story. Eigenbrod comments that Wagamese’s work redefines home as “a quest and cultural identity[,] a becoming rather than something already in place” (“Diasporic Longings” 140). This becoming, I argue, holds potential for Indigenous and Anishinaabe readers to identify with and follow Wagamese’s method of reclaiming land and story as mutually constitutive components of home and belonging.

Conclusion: Recentring at the Fire: Reuniting Anishinaabe Land and Story

For the Anishinaabeg, connection to land occurs in multiple and individual ways, but ultimately is made up of the interaction between land and story in order to establish a sense of place and home. Each chapter of this dissertation has detailed one potential method of connection whether that be spiritual through knowledge and protocol, emotional through the ability to listen to and read affect, mental through cognitive recognition of self in an environment, or physical through work and activity-based interaction with the land. Roughly corresponding to the four aspects of self as represented by an Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel, each type of connection encompasses only one element of an interconnected whole and full relationship to land. Although I understand that there are multiple teachings and understandings of the Medicine Wheel, I will take a cue from Richard Wagamese's use and sharing of his own Medicine Wheel teachings in much of both his fiction and non-fiction work. Wagamese stresses not only the teachings of each of the four cardinal directions, but also of the journey through the seven directions of an Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel: East, South, West, North, Up, Down and Inside. The East is the direction of the physical and the teaching of humility, the South of the emotional and the teaching of trust, the West of the mental and the teaching of introspection, and the North of the spiritual and the teaching of wisdom; up and down are the motions of everyday life, and inside is the place of truth (*Keeper'n Me* 306-07, *For Joshua* 21-22, *One Story, One Song* 5, *Ragged Company* 294). On this journey, as D'Arcy Rheault explains, "a person goes to each of the six outward directions to find a new Teaching, either actually or symbolically. [...] Gradually, a person returns to the *nisaway'aying* (centre), the seventh direction, to reflect on the Teachings and integrate those lessons into his or her life" (144). Although this journey is commonly and ultimately associated with living a good life or finding *mino-bimaadiziwin*, it is also a journey to find home and belonging. Wagamese makes this association explicit in *For Joshua* when sharing his teachings from John:

"A Medicine Wheel is like a map," he said.

"To lead me where?" I asked.

"To where you live."

"You mean my home?"

“Yes. Where you live. Your insides. The Medicine Wheel acts like a guide to take you there. [...] [T]he Medicine Wheel is one of the greatest tools our people have to help us find out individual truths.” (21)

Not only does the Medicine Wheel represent teachings and lessons, but also it is a map to find home inside, to find individual truth. Integrating teachings from each type of engagement with the land brings holistic connection and belonging.

Visualizing the Medicine Wheel as a map, I argue, places it within transmotion, as Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor has defined the term in *Fugitive Poses*, because the wheel is a form of virtual cartography that maps Anishinaabe presence and ways of being. As Vizenor further explains, “Maps are pictures, and some native pictures are stories, visual memories, the source of directions, and a virtual sense of presence. [...] Mappery is virtual, the creation of base line representations” (170). Vizenor differentiates virtual from concrete cartography in order for these maps to carry and encompass stories, memories, and presence – in other words, transmotion: “Native memories, stories of totemic creation, shamanic visions, burial markers, medicine pictures, the hunt, love, war, and songs, are the transmotion of virtual cartography” (170). Although Vizenor defines transmotion in multiple and purposefully ambiguous ways, he captures a quality of movement within Anishinaabe discursive space. In an ironic nod to Alfred Korzybski, Vizenor states, “‘The map is not the territory,’ but the territory is the map, and that chiastic inversion, an elusive connotation of semantics, secreted but never erased virtual cartography” (170). But in comparing this somewhat flippant chiastic play, reminiscent of Literary DieXis as detailed in Chapter 5, perhaps the map is the territory and the territory is the map. Visualizing the interconnection between land and story or territory and map reunites the two types of spaces, physical and discursive, and reestablishes Anishinaabe presence in Anishinaabe territory. In her discussions of Vizenor’s transmotion, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, in *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, perhaps inadvertently reasserts territory into his definition. In response to Vizenor’s claim that “transmotion, that sense of native motion and an active presence, is *sui generis* sovereignty” (*Fugitive Poses* 15), Simpson states, “While Nishnaabeg sovereignty was *sui generis*, it was also territorial. Nishnaabeg people were not wandering around vast expanses of land. While boundaries around that land were much more fluid than that of modern states, there was a territory that was defined by Nishnaabeg language, philosophy, way of life, and political culture” (89). Although not direct in her analysis, I believe

Simpson is critiquing Vizenor's claim that "Native sovereignty is the right of motion, and transmotion is personal, reciprocal, the source of survivance, *but not territorial*" (182, emphasis added). In Simpson's analysis sovereignty is both transmotion and territory – the discursive and the physical. Vizenor does not wholly dismiss the idea of land as he uses maps and virtual cartography as metaphors for and carriers of Indigenous presence; however, Simpson is correct in reasserting the importance and significance of physical land and territory in discussions of sovereignty in particular, and of belonging and ways of being more generally.

Although I have brought together and introduced various and seemingly disparate terminology (transmotion, mapping, virtual cartography, territory, sovereignty) and perhaps downplayed their differences in order to make a succinct point, I conceive of these concepts as interconnected. Observing the relationship between maps, as holders of discursive space in the form of transmotion and territory, and physical land, as formative to belonging, home, and ultimately sovereignty, supports my previous chapter's assertion that the interplay between discursive and physical space has the potential to constitute a transportable sense of place and home.

Wagamese's teaching of the Medicine Wheel, when aligned with Vizenor's ideas about transmotion, corresponds to notions of a transportable home, partially because of an emphasis on movement and journeys, but also because he describes it as something that is carried within – just like land: "You can use the Wheel and its teachings anywhere. It's inside you where all truth is. [...] [Y]ou can walk the Wheel anywhere" (*For Joshua* 22). Although the wheel is a map home, it can be used and followed anywhere, and resides inside. Similar to carrying a map while travelling, the Medicine Wheel as virtual cartography is transportable and contained within.

Yet, walking the seven directions and their teachings also contains a more physical referent and place in Wagamese's description of the fires located in each direction. In *Keeper'n Me*, Garnet shares his teachings about these fires by way of the Medicine Wheel in his description of "the night I started home" (307):

The old ones say that there's a fire for each one of them directions. A fire where the travelers sit when they reach it. Warm themselves. Rest. Reflect on the journey. Gather with the old ones who sit by that fire forever, waiting for the stragglers, the lonesome and the afraid.

Travel each direction, you learn to see and hear and feel more. Sit by each of those fires and gather our strength.” (306)

Each direction is rooted in a singular fire place: a place of rest and temporary stasis. The journey is not just wandering, but has physical stops along the way that the map leads one to. Garnet also learns that once he travels the seventh direction, inside, he will arrive at the seventh fire:

The place of truth. The warmest fire. The fire that chases out the darkness. You gather there with all the travelers who made that journey too and you are alone no more. There’s feasting and celebration. Great stories told and you learn that you gotta keep that fire going on accounta there’s more to come. There’s always more to come. Travelers who are gonna need a guide because we’re all tourists really. And you never get a map until you reach that seventh fire. (307)

Wagamese introduces an element of cyclicity here, both in terms of guiding future travellers and in his assertion that one does not receive a map until the journey is complete. While potentially contradictory to his statement in *For Joshua* that the Medicine Wheel is the map and a tool for the Anishinaabeg to find home, not receiving a map until after getting to the seventh fire gestures toward the procedural, experiential, and sometimes cyclical nature of the journey and the complex interplay between the discursive map (that is at times known and at times unknown) and the journey. This journey for an individual truth of home or sense of belonging is not linear, but cyclical. Wagamese’s character One for the Dead in *Ragged Company* describes “the Wheel, turning and turning, spinning on forever, relentlessly, moving us inch by inch sometimes, always in the direction of home, in the direction we all want to go, regardless” (294). I am reminded here of Lindsay Keegitah Borrows’s image of the continuously recentred home through balance as discussed in Chapter 4. The journey is procedural and experiential, forever turning and recentring.

The journey through the Medicine Wheel to home contains movement but also rootedness in the location of the fires in each direction. It is not aimless wandering, but geographically placed – a map with destinations in each direction, a territorial transmotion. Renate Eigenbrod in *Travelling Knowledges* explores a similar concept in her discussions of routes and roots, and the rhetoric of mobility. She claims, “rootedness and movement culturally complement each other” (24). She makes a comparison to Braidotti’s interpretation of a Deleuze and Guattarian nomadic rhizome that has horizontal roots: “a non-static, yet rooted or anchored,

consciousness” (35). Eigenbrod is referring to a larger envisioning of Indigenous identity as a whole, but this image is also applicable to a conception of connection to land that affords movement and non-stasis without removing the significance of territory. The nomadic rhizome also encompasses the web-like interconnections and relationships between all beings, the land, and the cosmos that is so central to many Indigenous and specifically Anishinaabe land ethics.

Whether to label it virtual cartography, transmotion and territory, or a rooted and routed nomadic rhizome, the Medicine Wheel acts as a discursive space that is rooted in the physical places of the directional fires. If the Medicine Wheel is the map to a personal and individual home and belonging, I argue that the Great Anishinaabe Migration or the Seven Fires Prophecy, Niizhwaaso-ishkoden Ningaanaajimowin, is that of the collective. This story tells of the migration of the Anishinaabeg from the Atlantic Ocean to settle around the Great Lakes and further West. Beginning in 600-700 AD in the Waabinaakii Confederacy, seven prophets came to the Anishinaabeg and foretold the coming of the white man and encroaching colonization. Each prophet described a different time period represented by a fire, each located at various stopping points along the journey west. Miigiss, a shell that was gifted to the Anishinaabeg by the first prophet, led the migration. Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair in his dissertation “Nindoodemag Bagijiganan: A History of Anishinaabeg Narrative” summarizes the significance of the Migration story to the Anishinaabeg by stating,

It is a narrative community creation, building, and protection – a story that articulates and fosters a collective sense of Anishinaabe. It is an autonomous narrative, describing the pre-contact and post-contact existence of Anishinaabeg on a self-determined trajectory. It describes who the Anishinaabeg are, where they have come from, where they are going. It also echoes the definition [...] of a collective of Anishinaabeg communities that maintain connections with one another despite great geographical distance and time.
(181)

The story not only narrates a collective history, but also unites geographically dispersed communities and maintains an Anishinaabeg collective identity.

Simpson also speaks of the significance of this narrative to Anishinaabe collective, political and sovereign identity:

This mobilization [through migration] is the reason we survived the most dangerous and oppressive parts of the colonial regime, because it stretched us to a greater degree to learn

how to flourish in a greater diversity of environments. [...] This was the political strategy of our ancestors. The Seven Fires Prophecy told them of the coming genocide. (*Dancing on Our Turtle's Back* 88)

Simpson places the story within a history of resurgence, adaptability, and survivance in which movement and mobility were tactics against colonialism. This is not a story of loss, removal, or displacement, but of strength, perseverance, and collective identity.

Scott Lyons in *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* remarks when writing about the Seven Fires Prophecy, “If anything can be considered an enduring value for Ojibwe people, it has got to be migration” (3). Migration is “a primary cultural value” (4) of the Anishinaabeg in opposition to William Bevis’s notion of singular homecoming to the land as of “primary good.” Lyons goes on to explain,

Migration produced a sense of movement and diversity as worthy values unto themselves; stagnation was always impossible in a people on the move. Yet the Great Migration also speaks of *home*. There was always a destination in view, oh yes, but the wondrous thing is, it kept changing! [...] Home is a stopping point, for there is no sense in the migration story that there will only be one home for only one people forever. (4)

Just like the Medicine Wheel, the Great Migration produces a sense of movement and mobility, while at the same time maintaining a rootedness in place through stopping points. In the case of Migration, these stopping point are literal locations on the land and not only virtual cartography. This journey is even physically mapped out in Midewiwin Migration scrolls as discussed in Chapter 1. Lyons continues on to align “this faith in migration as a value” with Vizenor’s transmotion, emphasizing motion and active presence. However, much as Simpson critiques the removal of territory from Vizenor’s theory, I argue that Vizenor’s analysis of scrolls and pictographs lacks a connection to physical land and the actual places they map or are located. Instead, he relegates these discourses to the realm of the virtual. He states, “The *anishinaabe* song pictures, stories, and the *midewiwin* scrolls, or the sacred documents of the great healers, were incised on birch bark, and cedar; other pictomyths were painted on cragged rocks. The virtual cartography of the *midewiwin*, incised on birch bark, is the depiction of animals and water spirits in a ceremonial center” (*Fugitive Poses* 172). Although he refers to the physical materials of birch bark, cedar, and rock that these maps are written on, Vizenor still maintains that these forms of literature are virtual. I want to know more about those cragged rocks, where they are,

and why they were chosen. As I detail in Chapter 1, the meaning and interpretation of pictographs in particular is heavily reliant on the location of their physical placement on the land, sometimes as a warning sign or offering site. The Migration scrolls are maps that physically place each of the seven fires on sacred and community sites. Stories and discourse and by extension transmotion, though non-static, mobile, migratory, adaptive, etc., are also embedded in the land.

Theorists have taken up migration and its connection to home as a metaphor for the ways in which stories establish, reconnect to, or find home. Kimberly Blaeser introduces the idea that “stories keep us migrating home” in her collection *Stories Migrating Home*, in which she contends, “By centering us in a network of relationships, stories assure the survival of our spirits. Stories keep us migrating home” (3). Inspired by Blaeser’s title, Dylan A.T. Miner in his contribution to *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies*, “Stories as *Mshkiki*: Reflections on the Healing and Migratory Practices of *Minwaaajimo*,” looks at storytelling “as a medicinal practice tied to the strength of the earth” (322) that allows one to migrate home through stories. He contends, “To decolonize, one must migrate home through stories. [...] These stories, as a form of strengthening the earth, serve as cartographic devices that lead us through the landscape of an ever-urbanizing Anishinaabewaki” (330). Although Miner imbues stories with a more grounded sense of the earth’s strength and omits a “virtual” qualifier in his description of stories as cartographic, similarly to Vizenor, he disconnects land and story. He notes, “The symbology of migration, although embedded in the landscape, is like-wise inherent when our stories migrate home” (330). Stories are only “like-wise” inherent in migration as they are to their embeddedness in the land, instead of being one and the same or mutually constitutive parts of an interconnected system. Reconnecting land and story throughout Anishinaabe territory has the potential to avoid dichotomizing urban and reserve places. Although the “ever-urbanizing Anishinaabewaki” of which Miner speaks of has been stripped of much of its embedded visual symbology (sacred sites, stones, markings, pictographs, etc.) through more immediate processes of colonization, the embeddedness of story in urban environments is still there. As Warren Cariou points out in his ILSA conference presentation, “It is entirely possible to experience territory within a colonial context, and the persistence of territory in such conditions is in fact a sign of continued Indigenous presence and vitality” (9).

I see migration, both collective through the Seven Fires Prophecy and individual through Medicine Wheel teachings, as necessarily rooted in Anishinaabe land. Stories of migration are marked by landscape points, connections to actual places and stories embedded in the land. They contain movement and mobility, but also connect back to the places that have come before and recentre at each stopping point. Utilizing migration as a concept in this way presents a definition of home that is far less restrictive than singular definitions of back to the land, and allows for transmotion, adaptation, and mobility. If concepts of home contain both elements of land and of story, then methods of homing are multiple and individual.

What might those methods look like? How can Anishinaabeg reclaim those stories in the land, and reconnect their territory? They can reclaim family history and return to remembered places as in Wagamese's work. They can gather stories of sacred sites from Elders and re-story the landscape through community mapping projects, learning spiritual knowledge and protocol. They can reclaim presence through Anishinaabe symbology in the form of graffiti art or murals, a way for individuals to cognitively recognize Anishinaabe presence in the city. They can simply be on the land physically and listen for its affect, learning to read it. Simpson sees being physically on the land and engaging in land-based practices as a way of generating discursive theory, because "The land itself is a coded representations of Nishnaabewin that is visible to those who live within Nishnaabewin but is opaque to those who do not. [...] Being on the land is a highly intellectual practice that is a living interaction between heart, mind, and movement" (*As We Have Always Done* 215). The land is coded with stories, and with the grounded normativity of the Anishinaabeg. Learning to read and recognize these codes reunites land and story and reclaims Indigenous presence through resurgent and decolonial processes.

As I continue my research, I am most interested in exploring the ways contemporary Anishinaabeg are reconnecting land and story and reasserting Indigenous presence in the region. In a future SSHRC-funded post-doctoral research project entitled "Reading Belonging: Northwestern Ontario Anishinaabe Readers and Literature" and supervised by Dr. Warren Cariou at the University of Manitoba, I hope to further study the potential of Northwestern Ontario Anishinaabe literature to establish, negotiate, and maintain connections to land and a sense of place and belonging.

This future work was first inspired by Indigenous literary criticism's long touted importance of community-engaged and community-based scholarship, particularly concerning

the ethics of representation and the responsibility of both author and critic to the Indigenous communities and nations they represent and reflect upon. This dominant theoretical imperative, often called an Indigenous literary nationalist approach, has prompted the use of various culturally appropriate analytic tools, and has situated texts within their tribal historical and cultural contexts; however, as of yet, no work has incorporated real systematic engagement with Indigenous readers of the literature. My next project seeks to fill this significant gap in the scholarship, and address for the first time the connection between contemporary Indigenous literature and contemporary Indigenous readers of that literature. I propose to continue the work of this dissertation by testing my theorization of the role of literature in place-based identity and exploring its application in contemporary Anishinaabe connections to land by talking to Anishinaabe people and determining how they use literature in their relationships to place. This follows an ethical imperative of my work and the field as a whole to practice literary analyses with and for communities. In order to avoid theoretical abstraction and maintain ethical accountability (particularly as a white settler scholar), I plan to conduct book clubs in Northwestern Ontario, primarily out of Thunder Bay, with a variety of Anishinaabe communities (university, urban, reserve, and rural). In doing so, I will address the research questions: How are Anishinaabe people reading, interpreting, and using or applying texts in their relationships to land? And what effect does the literature have on contemporary Anishinaabe understandings of place and land? In other words, I plan to research what the application of this literature is in relation to the Anishinaabeg's relationships to land and how it informs place-based identities.

These research questions fall within the concerns of a vein of literary criticism called applied literary studies. A more popularized field of study in Germany and promoted by the Canadian Applied Literature Association (CALA), applied literary studies is concerned with the roles and functions of literature as it pertains to human well-being and consciousness in the public realm. As Ivan Rabinowitz discusses in "Filipendula Literaria: Applied Literary Studies," applied literary studies considers the perceptual, ethical, and aesthetic changes that a reader comes to understand and accommodate while reading – where reading becomes an act of reflexive consciousness. Reader-response criticism, which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as part of a postmodern shift away from new critical forms of analyses, was a precursor to applied literary studies. Made popular by theorists such as Stanley Fish and Wolfgang Iser, reader-response attempts to debunk the myth of the objective text by arguing that a text's meaning

cannot be disentangled from the reading process. Applied literary studies moves beyond the postmodern infinities of individual reading responses and seeks to determine not only the aesthetic and individual effects/affects of a text on a particular reader, but also the larger “real world” ethical, sociological, cultural, pedagogical, activist, and therapeutic effects and applications. It asks the questions: what are the larger impacts of literature? And what does literature do?

Jo-Ann Episkenew in her groundbreaking analysis *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing* explores the necessary application of Indigenous literature as a form of healing and social-justice, labeling Indigenous literature *as* applied literature. Her work greatly influenced CALA and launched a new direction in Indigenous literary criticism that focuses on its effects beyond the text and onto the material world. Although her work initiated productive questioning about the universal healing qualities of texts, the efficacy of empathy in active decolonization efforts, and the interpretive value of assuming a generalized singular reader response (see Bidwell “What Stories Do,” Hargreaves “These Shared Truths,” and Justice “Literature, Healing, and the Transformational Imaginary”), it is unparalleled in its shift to look beyond the aesthetic value of literature and toward the importance of placing and deeply rooting Indigenous literature within its cultural and socio-political contexts and applications.

In “What Stories Do: A Response to Episkenew,” my current supervisor Dr. Bidwell questions the validity of presuming the response of a general reader (in the case of Episkenew’s work, one who is highly educated and professional). Both in her critique and in her own dissertation work, Bidwell has called for practical studies on reader reception of Indigenous literature. She recommends a study of actual reading practices of non-professional readers, as so far there have been no studies of Indigenous literature readers. My work is directly inspired by this call and gap in the research. Instead of speculating on the importance of Northwestern Ontario literature to Anishinaabe conceptions of place, I intend to study how a variety of different readers are reading and using this literature. Influenced by an applied literary studies approach, I had initially intended to include community voices and perspectives in my dissertation, but knowing the importance of establishing good relationships and partnerships and responding to community interests I decided that such community-based work was beyond the

scope of this dissertation. The post-doctoral fellowship allows me the time and support to do this work.

Just as Wagamese demonstrates methods for reuniting land and story, I hope that my return to Thunder Bay, to the land where the stories of my work take place, will unite and root this research with and in place. I also feel that physically being there will more effectively combat settler amnesia and reclaim Indigenous presence in the region. I hope that facilitating connection to physical land through literature and discursive space will support place-based resurgent and decolonial futurities in Thunder Bay and elsewhere.

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