

Exploring our roots: Knowledge gathering with the elders

BY

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EXPLORING OUR ROOTS: Knowledge gathering with the elders

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By
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Brandon University
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Exploring our roots: Knowledge gathering with the elders

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In partial fulfillment for the requirements for the degree of

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my mother, whose lessons and teachings, I am still mastering.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the elders who share their personal stories. Your stories are honoured by me. *Giga-waabamin menawaa, meegwetch [I will see you again, thank you]*. I also would like to acknowledge the ancestral lands of my relatives known as Treaty #4 territory.

I would like to acknowledge my parents, especially my mother, who being illiterate in the Western sense, provided our family with sacred experiences, knowledges, and skills to promote mino-bimaadiziwin to both my siblings and me. We continue to pass down the teachings as it is intended, to our own children and grandchildren. Meegwetch, mama and paba.

I would like to acknowledge my thesis committee for guiding and supporting me in this journey. Thank you Dr. Beeman, for your gifts of time, patience, and fruit. Your dedication to the completion of this thesis are appreciated. *Chi-meegwetch*.

Abstract

This qualitative research study explores how four elders stories from Pine Creek First Nation, Manitoba impart knowledge and teachings on mino-bimaadiziwin. Mino-bimaadiziwin is a philosophical principle describing one's journey of walking in a good way through life. This research focuses on the culture, history, knowledge, and teachings of the participant elders as they relate these concepts to mino-bimaadiziwin. The principles of mino-bimaadiziwin knowledge and teachings developed into four themes: ceremony, land, language, and story. These four themes have emerged through this study to integrate Indigenous knowledge and practices into both classroom and land-based learning experiences. The participant elders share knowledge and teachings in open-ended, face-to-face interviews using story. These four identified themes enhance understanding of Indigenous ways in which teachers may use in the learning context. This research study deepens our collective understanding of how elders and Indigenous ways of knowing have an essential role in education models, such as Pine Creek First Nation. Through this research study, elders identify and recommend teaching practices to honour and support mino-bimaadiziwin. Mino-bimaadiziwin can help shape one's identity to support academic success with a balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning.

Glossary

The following definitions are intended to clarify the meaning of words and terms as they are used in this paper:

Aboriginal

In the Constitution Act of 1982, the term Aboriginal refers to all indigenous peoples in Canada, including Indians (status and non-status), Inuit, and Metis peoples. Many Aboriginal peoples prefer the term First Nations over the term Indians (see First Nations).

Elder

Elders, as individuals, are seen to have their own unique strengths and talents. They are acknowledged for this wisdom, expertise in traditional medicines, and healing abilities. There are elders who may hold two titles, elder and knowledge keeper (see Knowledge Keeper).

First Nations

Many Indigenous peoples prefer the term First Nations over the terms Indians, Tribes, and Bands, which are used extensively by the federal, provincial, and territorial governments.

Indigenous

The term Indigenous is appropriate terminology as it refers to the rights laid out in the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous peoples. Alternate terms used to reference Indigenous peoples in Canada include Indian, Inuit, Metis, and Aboriginal. These alternate terms are incorporated in this thesis when citing sources that use them. In this thesis, this word is capitalized when used in reference to the original peoples of Canada.

Indigenous Research Methodology

Within an academic framework, an Indigenous research methodology is used to gather knowledge following an interdisciplinary approach, centering on relationality. It involves acquiring knowledge based on the ancestral, cultural, geographical foundations of Indigenous people using Indigenous paradigms, methods, and ethics.

Knowledge Keeper

A person designated or acknowledged by other Elders of a cultural community as being knowledgeable about the culture, its perspectives and practices. This person is chosen by Aboriginal people(s) to be the “keeper” and teacher of its oral tradition, knowledge, history, and teachings. The significant role of the Knowledge Keeper extends beyond the role of an elder in the community.

Medicine Wheel

The medicine wheel is a circular symbol representing balance, interconnectedness and wholeness. This symbol embodies the intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual teachings and learning experiences. The medicine wheel is important to a variety of Indigenous groups because it can represent many different teachings relating to life, nature, and culture.

Mino-bimaadiziwin

Mino-bimaadiziwin translates to mean “good way of life.” This concept represents the culture, knowledge, practices, and teachings from an Indigenous perspective that honours leading a good life.

Oral narratives

The teachings and knowledge passed on from one generation to the next through the spoken word, including narratives, accounts, songs and dances, stories and legends, history, and laws.

Preface

I spent my childhood in the bush under the guidance of my parents and older siblings. As a family, we would camp, check rabbit snares, and pick berries. My father spent his entire life gaining experience, knowledge, and skills on the land. I always considered our house as his stopover because he returned to the land as often as he could. My mother supported and fostered these same practices in us. They imparted the knowledge they gained from their ancestors about our history, our culture, our practices, and our systems of knowledge. These teachings, from the land, language, and practices are part of our foundation as Anishinabe. These teachings embody Indigenous ways of knowing.

As a teacher, I want to support and foster these teachings with our students in Pine Creek First Nation. Through my experiences and observations in this school, students require more foundational knowledge of their own culture, history, and worldview to shape their identity. Indigenous knowledge, language, and practices are fundamental components to identity. Mino-bimaadiziwin develops by living one's life in a good way that honours the culture, knowledge, practices, and teachings grounded in Indigenous perspective and worldview. I choose to research how mino-bimaadiziwin can help shape one's identity to support academic success with a balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning. This principle is the crux of my research study.

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Chapter One: Setting the Stage for the Study

I've been considering the phrase 'all my relations' for some time now. It's hugely important. It's our saving grace in the end. It points to the truth that we are related, we are all connected, we all belong to each other. The most important word is all. Not just those who look like me, sing like me, dance like me, speak like me, pray like me or behave like me. ALL my relations. It means every person just as it means every blade of grass, rock, mineral and creature. We live because everything else does. If we were to collectively choose to live that teaching the energy of that change of consciousness would heal all of us – and heal the planet. We do it one person, one heart at a time...we are connected, we are the answer. (Wagamese, 2015)

Personal Background

As Indigenous people, we seek a connection when meeting someone for the first time. A common question asked is “who is your dad?” or “who is your mom?” This question is an essential practice in our community. This practice demonstrates relationality (Restoule, Gruner & Metatawabin, 2013; Stanger, Tanaka, Tse & Starr, 2013; Styres, 2012; Wilson, 2008). The phrase by Richard Wagamese above, “we are all connected” supports this concept. This practice illustrates how we understand and are aware of the importance of connection to others. Positioning oneself is significant from a research perspective. My reality encourages relationships. It is essential to reflect on what I am bringing about my own beliefs, perspective, and worldview into this study. In the following introduction, I am situating myself in the research process. I acknowledge who I am, and it is important to identify how my own experiences and perspective shape the research process.

As a young child, my foundational learning began in the bush. We spent many seasons growing there as a family. My English name is Shirley Nepinak, my spirit name is Wabishkaa-Stigwaan-Migizi-Ikwe [White Headed Eagle Woman], and my parents are part of the wolf and the thunderbird clans. I come from a large family, and I have seven sisters and six brothers. We

were incredibly close-knit, and in our daily activities, everyone had a role to play in the family. Hunting and gathering are the two main experiences and teachings I remember the most.

I recall a time when we were out in the forest, picking chokecherries and the grandkids wanted to help. My older brother reached for one of the grandkids and raised him high onto a branch. He instructed my nephew to climb a little further and push the chokecherry tree toward us, all the while hanging on for dear life. My nephew followed the instructions, and the smile on his face showed his pride in being helpful. This practice is an example of the teachings that contribute to our identity as young children (Cajete, 1994). Everyone has a purpose.

Springtime meant fishing and gathering roots and medicine. As spring turned into summer, we waited for the berries. Summer and blueberry patch were synonymous. We would spend weeks at blueberry patch picking berries, surrounded by other families. One of my earliest childhood memories is walking past several campsites to look for my mother or my father. I must have been four or five at the time. They were out picking berries, and my siblings and I were playing at our campsite. I knew I would find one of them eventually. I remember saying hello to our neighbours but what struck me the most about this memory is my feeling of safety. The saying, it takes a village to raise a child, reminds me of my feeling of freedom and safety at that time. The picking of berries took place picked during the day; laughter and story filled the evening. There existed a strong sense of community amongst all the families.

Hunting and trapping were my father's two passions. I can recall my mother telling my sons when you see tiger lilies, that is when you know the deer are ready to hunt. Our father would bring home the offering, and as a family, we all helped. The winter season meant trapping. My dad would be away for many days, even weeks at a time. We would all look forward to his return. As a family, we would partake in the process by helping, observing, or

practicing the art of skinning the furs. These experiences contributed to my development and identity. Throughout these times, the sharing and retelling of stories would occur. The significance and understanding of the life we lived in the bush continues to develop within me today.

As a young girl, I identified as Metis. We lived in a Metis community surrounded by relatives. I knew I had a familial connection to Pine Creek First Nation which separates the two communities by a provincial highway. At that time in my life, I did not understand the policies and practices that divided the connection to my maternal grandmother's Indigenous community.

In my late teens, I understood why we lived in the Metis community of Camperville. My grandmother married a French man. Because of the policies of the time, my koko's [grandmother] Indian status became revoked by marrying a non-Status man. This issue also occurred on my paternal grandmother's side. Both of my kokos attended an Indian residential school. My chooms [grandfather] did not. My grandparents cultivated in their children, a profound connection to the land. Luckily, both of my parents did not attend Indian residential schools. My parents maintained these secure connections to the land. They instilled these teachings into us, and even though they are no longer here in physical form, we continue to carry on their teachings to our children and grandchildren.

A significant memory I continue to carry today happened over thirty years ago. I asked my father what we were (in terms of race or ethnicity). He very quickly responded, "we are Anishinabe." I continue to gain a deeper understanding of my father's response through this journey of the Master of Education program. The term "Anishinabe" means we are people, a person, a human.

In my professional role, I am a high school classroom teacher at Minegoziibe Anishinabe School [Pine Creek People] for fourteen years. I implement the mandated English Language Arts curriculum as developed by the Department of Education through the Government of Manitoba. I integrate Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, philosophies, and teachings in my praxis. I try to honour and practice place-based or land-based learning into lessons. As a high school teaching team, we provide a week-long culture camp, so students immerse in land-based learning. Students camp, pick medicines, spend time with elders, and work together as a community.

The practice of story is significant to my teaching approach. Through story, curricular outcomes enhance student learning. Last year, while teaching Grade 11 Essential Mathematics, one of my students asked, “Well, what story are you going to tell us today?” I looked at her puzzled. She then explained, “I’ve noticed every day you share a little story about what we are learning or how it connects to something about life.” I have reflected many times on the student’s question and observations. I use this style as a teacher. The interweaving of stories occurs through my lesson plans to aid in learning.

As I began this part of the Master’s research study program, I had conflicting ideas about this process. As an Indigenous person, to write a formal thesis based on a Western writing framework felt challenging. The topic I chose is sacred, and I felt uncertainty about its presentation in a formal, written document. I have asked elders to share their stories and honour our practices. I want to share elders stories despite the parameters of a research study or thesis entails. Knowledge gathering with elders is experiential and multidimensional.

Another critical experience involved my son at the age of six. Catechism classes began at school, and I decided that he would not participate. There exist several reasons for my decision. This choice is not to say I did not recognize the importance of having faith and spiritual

teachings in a person's life. As a child, I had no choice in my childhood religious experiences. I felt that my child should be able to choose a religion or faith to practice when older. My son asked me one day after catechism classes started, "What religion do we belong to?" I thought about my answer and replied, "We believe in being good to others, in living a good life." I did not explain the significance of my answer because of his age, and I did not have the words to explain my response fully. This conversation with my son is over ten years old, long before I heard the term *mino-bimaadiziwin*¹ or its connection to our perspective and worldview. When I reflect now on my own response to my child, it reinforces the ancestral connection I carry. I did not quite understand my response when I originally answered him.

My own worldview shapes this research. Bridging Western and Indigenous practices is challenging. My childhood experiences demonstrate the fundamental connection of honouring the land. Therefore, these experiences and teachings shape the approach and the design of the research, the conceptual framework, and the research methodology and ethics.

Introduction to the Study

In Indigenous communities, elders are grandparents, teachers, knowledge keepers, and spiritual advisors. Through a lifetime of observations, experiences, and knowledge gathering, Indigenous elders develop the knowledge, skills, and values that demonstrate *mino-bimaadiziwin*. *Mino-bimaadiziwin* is a philosophical principle of the culture, knowledge, practices, and teachings that honours leading a good life. Elders share knowledge through storytelling, so younger community members gain identity, knowledge, perspective, and worldview (Ball, 2004; Castagano & Brayboy, 2008; Kanu, 2002; McMurchy-Pilkington, Pikiaw

¹ *Mino-bimaadiziwin* has spelling variations, depending on geographic locations and language protocol

& Rongomai 2008; Stonechild, 2016). In pre-contact societies, elders have important roles in the family and community structure (Lyons et al., 2010; Neegan, 2005; Sinclair, 2013).

Before European contact, First Nations, including Pine Creek First Nation, developed their extensive education model. Over the past one hundred and fifty years, this community had the Indian residential school system, the Indian day school system, the independent band-operated educational authority model, and currently the provincial-based education model. It is crucial to understand to learn how these Western education models cause significant changes in communities like Pine Creek First Nation. Indigenous ways of knowing became replaced by Western knowledge theories on education and learning.

At present, the current education model is developed by the Department of Education under the Government of Manitoba. All public schools in Manitoba are mandated to follow the policies, procedures, and curriculum mandated by the Department of Education. Currently, there is no First Nation school system for on-reserve schools. Today, public schools continue to promote Eurocentric perspectives, cultures, and values (Madden, Higgins & Korteweg, 2013; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). In the past twenty years, there have been many initiatives developed to promote a more balanced perspective of Western and Indigenous teaching practices (Manitoba Education, 2019). Universities, educators, and government policymakers are creating partnerships with the Indigenous community. The areas include teacher education programming, teaching strategies, and policy development to improve teaching practices in school classrooms. Saul (2014) suggests that this movement be “led by Indigenous intellectuals and elders” (p. 148). The Canadian Council on Learning’s 2009 report *The State of Aboriginal Learning in Canada: A Holistic Approach to Measuring Success* reflects this development. This report advocates utilizing Aboriginal perspectives for measuring Aboriginal learning in Canada.

Education policies and the assimilation movement influenced Indigenous customs and practices. Many people cannot speak their language or practice their culture or traditions. In pre-colonial times, the integration of knowledge and practices happened in all aspects of daily life. The practice of story is used by Indigenous people to gain knowledge (Archibald, 2008; Battiste, 2013; King, 2003). Both Kanu (2002) and St. Denis (2010) assert the importance of inclusive teaching. There is a clear link between knowing oneself and increased academic success. Today's Western education model does not fully represent Indigenous ways. As students learn about themselves through exploring their knowledge and teachings, they are more likely to successfully navigate their way through a Western education model (Assembly of First Nations, 2012).

School culture can support the principles of encompassing *mino-bimaadiziwin* (Big-Canoe, 2011; Vicaire, 2010). Neegan (2005) recommends that educational institutions' "collaborate and consult with Elders and the community so that Aboriginal worldviews and epistemology can be integrated in producing and the transmitting of knowledge" (p. 13). In recent years, there exists a movement to welcome Elders as knowledge holders in classrooms. Ignas's (2004) research illustrates how Elders became part of the science curriculum development team in meeting the needs of the community involved in the research. This research proposes that "the oral tradition must be respected and viewed by the teacher as a distinctive intellectual tradition-not simply myths and legends" (p. 54). In Chow's (2012) study, elders transfer intergenerational knowledge to youth, the findings indicate high interest and engagement by the youth participants. The elder's role is slowly returning to its original practice, strengthening the circle between Elders and younger generations. Elders can work positively with students in school settings to promote and support *mino-bimaadiziwin* so students can

experience personal, social, and academic achievements. Classroom teachers can work with elders to develop learning experiences where students can achieve mino-bimaadiziwin.

This paper explores how mino-bimaadiziwin can support student learning. The literature indicates that schools with effective methods of integrating Indigenous perspectives into classroom learning experience generate higher student success.

Statement of Problem

The Department of Education, through the Manitoba Government, aims to increase Indigenous perspectives into curriculum and pedagogical practices. In this regard, the Department of Education encourages professional development and classroom resources to educators in classrooms across the province to work toward this objective. Place-based, experiential learning experiences are evident and increasing across the province in recent years. Teaching Indigenous knowledge and using Indigenous practices in the classroom allow students to explore who they are as a person to better understand themselves, whether Indigenous or not.

Schools and school divisions are working to achieve this goal. There is slow growth of learning resources and professional development available to classroom teachers. Current educational trends are moving toward incorporating traditional Indigenous knowledge and practices into the current Eurocentric model of education (Bomberry, 2013; Hansen, 2018; Kitchen & Raynor, 2013; Manitowabi, 2017; McIvor & Parker, 2016). Pine Creek First Nation had an Indian Residential school which operated from 1891 until 1971 (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2007). Minegoziibe Anishinabe School, a nursery to Grade 12 school, in Pine Creek First Nation operates under an educational agreement with Frontier School Division. At present, the school implements the curriculum designed by the Department of Education through the Manitoba Government.

Through these various education models, identity, language, culture, and ways of knowing as Indigenous people lessened. As a result, many students find that their educational experiences make them feel less connected and less engaged with the current education model (Big-Canoe, 2011; Friesen & Krauth, 2012; Neegan, 2005; O'Connor, 2009; Vicaire, 2010).

Through my observations, students experience disconnection to their identity, culture, history, language, and worldview. The following explains these issues further:

The processes of colonization have either outlawed or suppressed Indigenous knowledge systems, especially language and culture, and have contributed significantly to the low levels of educational attainment and high rates of social issues such as suicide, incarceration, unemployment, and family or community separation. (*Accord on Indigenous Education, 2010*)

In response to this problem, this study proposes to research how mino-bimaadiziwin supports students to become more engaged and more successful in the school system. It explores how identity, relationality, ways of knowing, and perspective from elders' stories may contribute to positive learning experiences for students.

This research is significant to educators, parents, community members, and curriculum stakeholders in increasing their knowledge of Indigenous perspectives as it relates to mino bimaadiziwin. Teachers may integrate the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin into their teaching methods to balance Indigenous and Western education models. Thus, in general, this research contributes to the overall benefits of transformative classroom programming of valid, appropriate Indigenous perspectives in our present education model.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this research study is to explore how mino-bimaadiziwin can help shape one's identity to support academic success with a balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning. Additional objectives of this research study include:

to document and transmit Indigenous ways of knowing as it is related to mino-bimaadiziwin; to honour storytelling as a practice in classroom pedagogy and to encourage and support educators to enhance current pedagogical practices in the classroom and land-based learning from both Indigenous and Western education models.

In this research study, the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin include the following themes: ceremony, land, language, and story. Mino-bimaadiziwin translates to a good way of life. This phrase is foundational to Indigenous theories of knowledge and the values and ethics of Indigenous people. The medicine wheel is important to a variety of Indigenous groups because it can represent many different teachings relating to culture, life, and nature (Bell, 2014; Big-Canoe, 2011; Stonechild, 2016). The medicine wheel encompasses the mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional aspects of the individual as they go through life. I am using the medicine wheel as the conceptual framework for the four themes: ceremony, land, language, and story. As the reader experiences this journey, storytelling from both the participant elders and I explore each of the themes throughout this document.

In this study, I want to validate further the value of elders' contributions to support students in their learning. Through the Indian residential school process, the connection between elders and children had been removed (Burns Ross, 2014; Chow, 2012; Gallagher, 2013; Neegan, 2005; Poitras-Collins, 2018). It is important to restore and honour these relationships as they support learning and aids in academic success by using Indigenous ways to navigate through a Western learning model.

Pre-existing, open relationships are key to this research process. I have developed relationships with the participant elders over years of working as a classroom teacher in the community. The pre-existing relationships I have with the participant elders is based on

openness, reciprocity, and trust. I view the stories that have been shared through this research process as gifts from the elders. The elders in this study understand the significance, purpose, and value of this research. I see my role as a knowledge gatherer picking those roots and berries in the form of stories and teachings from the elders, to continue that journey of life and share with others.

As I carry out this learning journey an important question to my inquiry is: How can mino-bimaadiziwin help shape one's identity to support academic success with a balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning? One goal of this research study is to gain knowledge about the practices and teachings of our elders, in part by exploring this question.

Research Questions

When designing a research study, the research question(s) shape the research design and the approach to the study. This study blends both Western and Indigenous research approaches to developing the research question. The open-ended, face-to-face interviews shape the conversations. The stories unfold without specific, direct questions or prompts. Specific questions or prompts may limit or narrow the depth of the study. The following questions offer a wider perspective on the purpose of the study. The following focus questions have been addressed in the interview questions (see Appendix E).

Primary research question:

How can mino-bimaadiziwin help shape one's identity to support academic success with a balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning?

Secondary questions:

1. What does it mean to have mino-bimaadiziwin?

2. Why is it important for students to know one's culture and history? What do our culture and history look like?
3. How can children benefit from knowing their identity? How can that help students become more successful in learning?
4. How can learning about mino-bimaadiziwin be done in classrooms?
5. How can using Indigenous knowledge and practice improve classroom practice?

Assumptions and Beliefs

Assumptions are the beliefs that I have about the components of my study. I believe that relationality is an important Indigenous concept and plays a significant role in this research study. The relationship between the participant elders and I provides the opportunity to share stories. I am a classroom teacher, and I observe that both teachers and students at Minegoziibe Anishinabe School are open and proud of being Anishinabe. I believe there is a correlation in building one's identity and academic success (Chaput, 2012; Gresczyk, 2011). I believe that the elders consider and respond in-depth to the interview questions to document their knowledge, stories, and teachings as it relates to mino-bimaadiziwin. I assume that their stories to the research questions depict mino-bimaadiziwin and hold Indigenous perspectives.

I believe that Indigenous perspectives and practices can be further shared within Minegoziibe Anishinabe school when facing resistance to change by classroom teachers. I also believe that elders can have a meaningful relationship with teachers to create and sustain learning experiences. I assume that there exists resistance to change. However, these culturally responsive learning experiences can transform teaching practices. This study implies significant transformation, and essentially then, I assume that classroom teachers value mino-bimaadiziwin and Indigenous ways of knowing. Lastly, I assume I have a responsibility to integrate Indigenous

knowledge and practices to develop more engaging, learning experiences that are relevant and meaningful to students.

Conceptual Framework

Last summer I sat in the Swan-Pelican Provincial Forest, locally known as the blueberry patch. A group of ladies and I finished picking our first round of blueberries and decided to break for a light lunch. The sun shone directly down on us that scorching July afternoon. As we sat in our chairs a light, the welcoming breeze cooled our skin. An elder shared a story about the different types of trees and how they can be used for medicine. Her knowledge and teaching on the medicinal purposes and types of trees affirmed my belief in Indigenous ways of knowing. This experience holds great significance for me.

The pine and berry trees provided shade as we talked. I asked about a specific plant. One of the elders explained the bear gifted the people with the plant. I listened intently. As she spoke, she shared more knowledge about different plants that she spotted. I soaked up everything she said and told my sister we should be recording this important teaching. She agreed.

We resumed picking, and I reflected on the policies and legislation that my own ancestors faced that limited their access to this land. It hit me hard. I sat on the ground, moving my fingers gently over the sand and scattered pine cones. I reflected on the barriers and challenges my ancestors faced when moved onto the reservation system and had limited access to these berries, medicines, and the land. It reminded me of how some of my students have very little connection to the land and with the teachings. In recent years, there has been an emphasis on place-based or experiential learning. During conferences and workshops, I have attended, elders encourage people to “go to the land,” “the land is our first teacher,” and “the plants are medicine.” I sat in

silence among the blueberry plants, the muskeg tea, and the fireweed plants. I felt a deep connection to our ways of knowing.

At present, I see myself as a knowledge gatherer, just like those childhood experiences of gathering berries, I am now gathering knowledge through stories. I used both the medicine wheel framework (see Figure 1, p. 16) and developed the mino-bimaadiziwin educational framework conceptual framework (see Figure 2, p. 21) for this research study. The medicine wheel draws on a holistic perspective for learning and personal growth (Preston & Claypool, 2013, pp. 270 -273). The medicine wheel represents the four components of life experiences we have as people. They are spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental (see Figure 1, p. 16). Wilson (2008) explains how the circle represents “an Indigenous research paradigm. Its entities are inseparable and blend from one into the next. The whole of the paradigm is greater than the sum of the parts” (p. 70). The medicine wheel may have some variations in arrangement; however, the teachings of the Medicine Wheel are similar among Indigenous groups. It is about interrelatedness, holism, and balance (Bell, 2014; Cherubini, Niemcyk, Hodson & McGean, 2010). The medicine wheel is important to a variety of Indigenous groups because it can represent many different teachings relating to life, nature, and culture.

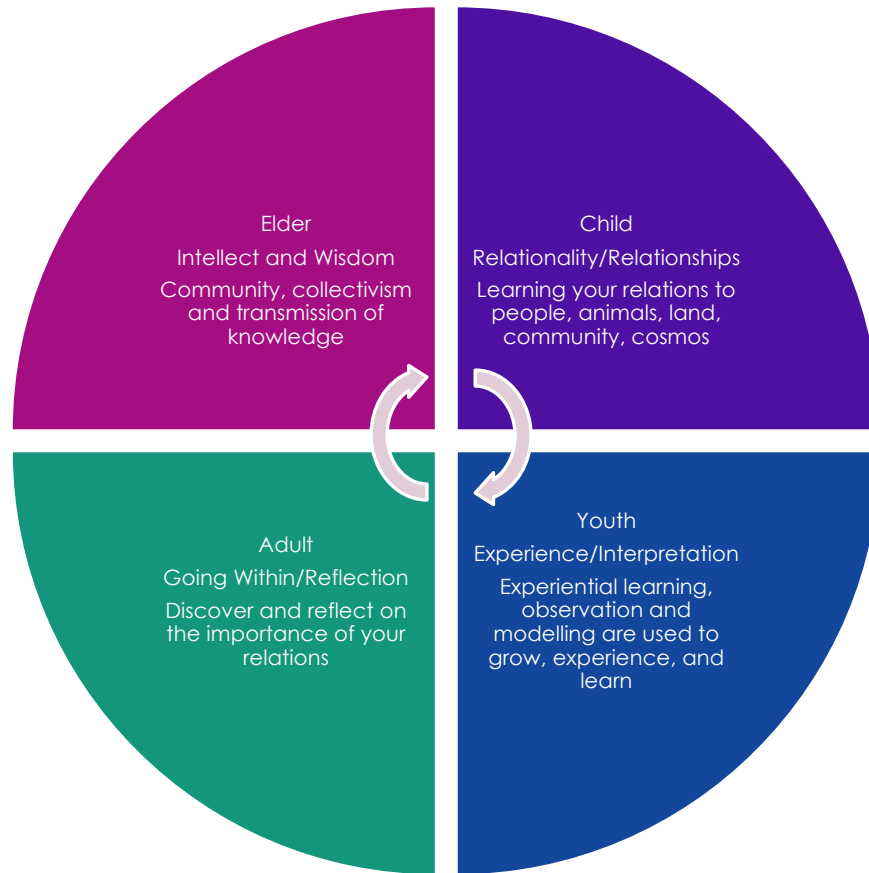


Figure 1. A Medicine Wheel Framework. This diagram represents the life stages and life processes.

The medicine wheel represents a holistic, pedagogical framework that Archibald (2008)

describes as:

“...the interrelatedness between the intellectual, spiritual (metaphysical values and beliefs and the Creator), emotional, and physical (body and behavior/action) realms to form a whole healthy person. The development of holism extends to and is mutually influenced by one’s family, community, band and Nation. Many First Nations peoples use the image of a circle to symbolize wholeness, completeness, and ultimately wellness. The never-ending circle also forms concentric circles to show both the synergistic influence of and our responsibility toward the generations of ancestors, the generations of today and the generations yet to come. The animal/human kingdoms, the elements of nature/land, and the Spirit World are an integral part of the concentric circles” (2008, p. 11).

In Young, Pompana, and Willier (2015), Willier, a Cree healer, recaps this same viewpoint, “a number of different variables are systematically related” of his understanding and description of the medicine wheel (p. 6). Stonechild (2016) elucidates the significances of the interrelatedness of each component by stating, “being deficient or out of balance spiritually will influence the other aspects of life” (pg. 57). In this research study, the medicine wheel is perceived as a framework in the design of this research and methods for this study. In the following section, I focus on the stages of knowledge, teachings, and perspective that occurs in each quadrant of the medicine wheel.

Eastern Direction

The east represents the first stage of life, where meaning and knowledge is constructed. It is where life begins. Relationality begins in the east. As a young child, we learn about all our relations. Relationality is fluid, action-oriented, and evolving. Indigenous people honour the concept of relationality. It is a fundamental, ancestral practice. A person’s experiences, connections, and interactions are purposeful. Knowledge is relational (Absolon, 2011; Cajete, 1994; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Learning emphasizes relationality and interconnectivity amongst the people, the animals, and the land. Learning also encompasses the mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional aspects of the individual. “Education of children reflected the interconnectedness of everything in that it was recognized that there were a limitless number of interconnected factors that might affect a child’s being” (Ledoux, 2006). Elders use storytelling to influence and shape younger generations. Oral narratives provide opportunities for sharing knowledge from elder to child.

This learning journey began in the east, where we greet the sun and begin our day. Chapter one represents the east, and I am developing relations with the reader. My life journey

brought me both literally and figuratively speaking to this research study. This stage of the medicine wheel is the beginning of developing relations. I share the background and context of this research study. I share the experiences and teachings that have led me to the writing of this thesis. It follows the Anishinabe practice of developing a positive connection between the reader and researcher. As a classroom teacher, relationality is the starting point in forming supportive, positive relationships with students. Through story, observation, and experiential learning, an individual develops culture, identity, perspective, and worldview.

Southern Direction

In the second quadrant of the medicine wheel or the south, it represents how we gather knowledge through stories and experience. This stage of life signifies youth and growth to prepare one for adult life. It is a time of growth and development through learning (English, 1996). Through this study, my learning took place both formally and informally. One elder held a smudging ceremony before we began the interview process. The ceremony both grounded and moved me. The smudge affirmed and demonstrated the shared beliefs of our ways of doing. The interview usually began with a cup of tea and sharing events of our daily lives. During some interviews, we put the questions away and spoke informally. The two knowledge systems, Indigenous and Western, blended well in this process. The purpose of story gathering is to learn and to gain new levels of understanding through experience. Knowledge and learning are essential through this stage of life (Bell, 2014). The experiences of knowledge gathering and interpretation processes demonstrate mino-bimaadiziwin. The south represents experience and honour. This stage of human growth and experience is where educators have the honour and responsibility of helping to shape children and youth. Through story, one learns and grows. It is important to speak from the heart and with authenticity.

Western Direction

In the west, people are encouraged to go within themselves, discovering what is important in relations to the connections between self, others, nature, and teachings. The elders' teachings strengthened our relationship. I gained a new understanding of this process. The third quadrant or western direction of the medicine wheel represents the adult stage of the life cycle. We synthesize our knowledge and teachings and prepare for the fourth stage of life (English, 1996; Kitchen & Raynor, 2013). In my quest to gain knowledge, I purposely sought elders who would share stories that describe mino-bimaadiziwin. In the academic field, the curriculum is developed by a diverse representation of stakeholders. The concept of mino-bimaadiziwin is identified, defined, and explored through stories from elders.

At the adult stage of life, one is encouraged to go within themselves, as classroom teachers, we can also do this. We reflect on our practices and continue to find new ways to engage students in learning. Through this research study, the four themes of mino-bimaadiziwin are ways to connect to or engage with students. Teachers can help students to discover new understandings as a learner: balancing emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical aspects of self.

Northern Direction

In the final quadrant of this circle, it represents the elder stage of life. It is where wisdom and knowledge are shared, and it completes the learning journey (Bell, 2014, Kitchen & Raynor, 2013, Preston & Claypool, 2013). Elders may take on the role of *knowledge keepers*³.

Knowledge and teachings are shared by elders to younger generations. The elders' stories support Indigenous ways of knowing. The north represents the mental processes of balancing

³ A person designated or acknowledged by other Elders of a cultural community as being knowledgeable about the culture, its perspectives, practices, and products.

intellect with wisdom. It is here we work to find solutions that are balanced and restore harmony to the community. This stage connects to the research participants; they have the knowledge and teachings of mino-bimaadiziwin. Listening and learning from the elders' stories creating a better understanding of mino-bimaadiziwin for me.

The elders' stories provided insight and perspective on the teaching strategies and practices to support students as they progress through the current school system. Finally, in the last part of the medicine wheel, it focuses on providing knowledge from the elders to the classroom teachers. I share the gift of story practice from elders perspectives in chapters four and five. I share the practice of story where young children learned through stories, language, and interaction with all levels of the community. Through the Indian residential school model, community members lost a huge part of their identity, their language, and their culture as Indigenous people. Students have experienced loss as well, including language, cultural practices, and Indigenous perspectives. Classroom teachers may utilize knowledge, perspectives, and practices into their learning experiences to support and foster students identities, knowledge, skills, and values from an Indigenous perspective. Transformative teaching practices will help to balance these two education models. Curriculum content should connect to culture and identity, nurturing Indigenous knowledge and practices. Elders played a critical role in the education of the younger members of a community. The role of the elder had been affected through the residential school system when children were removed from their homes and families; the storytelling from elder to s child is disconnected. In this research study, the elders' stories open myself and other readers to gifts of story, knowledge, teachings, and experience.

Mino-Bimaadiziwin Conceptual Educational Framework

The conceptual framework that undergirds this study utilizes the medicine wheel framework to interconnected the four themes of mino-bimaadiziwin. The mino-bimaadiziwin conceptual educational framework places mino-bimaadiziwin at the center of the illustrative diagram (see Figure 2, p. 21). The themes are interwoven and placed in a circular formation to reflect the medicine wheel. The practice of story is foundational to the other three themes. Collectively, all four themes of mino-bimaadiziwin represent the knowledge, skills, teachings, values, and worldview of the participant elders. This reinforces the significance of encouraging the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin with students to support their own cycle of learning.

The role of the teacher in the students learning journeys is fundamental. This conceptual framework utilizes the Medicine Wheel model framework to demonstrate how classroom teachers can apply the four themes to support mino-bimaadiziwin and Indigenous ways of knowing. Indigenous knowledge and practices are categorized into four main themes: ceremony, land, language, and story.

This section explains how the themes of the conceptual framework provide knowledge gathering and sharing to advance mino-bimaadiziwin as a foundation for development, learning, and success in today's classrooms. The conceptual framework may lead teaching for a deeper understanding of how Indigenous knowledge and practices transform learning experiences through reflective action, and in doing so, help to create learning experiences that integrate and support Indigenous ways of knowing.

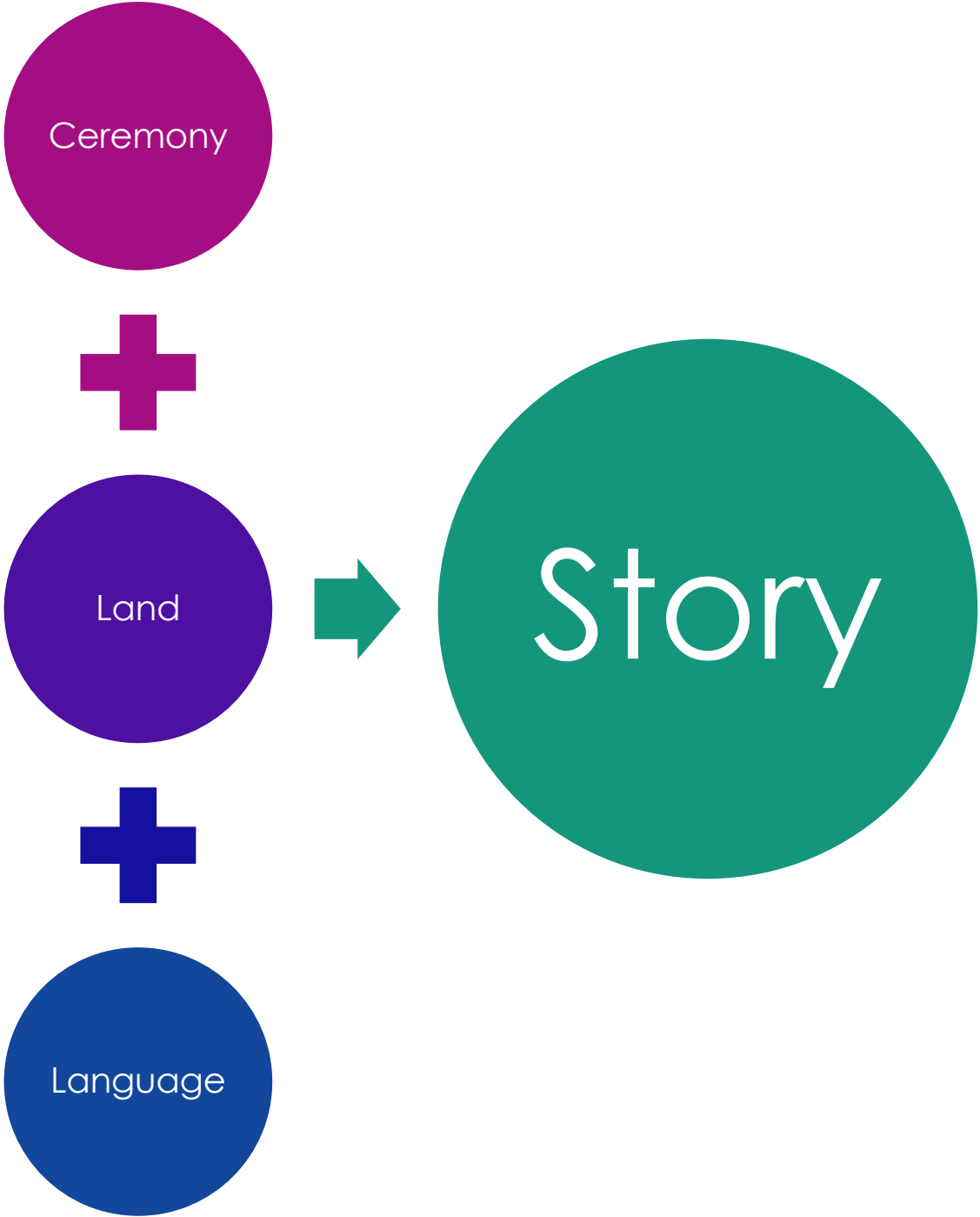


Figure 2. Mino-Bimaadiziwin Conceptual Educational Framework. This diagram represents the four themes of mino-bimaadiziwin and how story is foundational to the other three themes.

Ceremony

The practice of ceremony is part of learning and walking one's journey. Christensen (1999) states "to be a healthy, balanced person, one must walk the good road, living always in the sacred present, augmented and enhanced by ceremony" (p. 173). Ceremonies provide valuable life skills of respect and understanding. Identity is strengthened through the ceremony. Ceremonies contribute to the personal development of an individual, permitting one to understand better how cultural philosophy and perspectives develop. Poitras-Collins (2018) cites Settee's explanation of how "ceremony was part of the learning experience" (p. 40). The ceremony is an integral component in Indigenous culture. Everything a child interacts or connects with is purposeful; spirituality grows out of this worldview. Through the exploration of ceremonies, Indigenous knowledge and practices can be incorporated into learning experiences.

Land

The land holds great significance to Indigenous people. The land has been integral to Indigenous perspectives and worldview. Styres (2012) provides a comprehensive research study on the land as the first teacher. She asserts land is "an expression of holism that embodies the four aspects of being: spiritual, emotive, cognitive, and physical" (p. 60). Exploratory, experiential learning differentiates land-based learning from classroom-based learning. Educators use the concept of "place" to enhance learning experiences (O'Connor, 2009, p. 54). Land practices placed-based stories and memories, "as well as (re)cognizing and (re)constructing those very old pedagogies around different, innovative perspectives that help students find new ways to interact with *Land* in their own teaching" (Styres, Haig-Brown, & Blimkie, 2013, p. 58). The land holds the knowledge of Indigenous history, culture, and identity.

Language

The language preserves the teachings for Indigenous people. Elders convey knowledge, stories, and teachings to the younger generations. The language connects to the land, to the ceremonies, to the stories. Ball (2004) accentuates the elder's role in society, "the Elders usually model ways of storytelling, listening, encouraging sharing, and facilitating the elaboration of ideas and action plans that are themselves expressions of Indigenous cultures" (p. 469). The use of language promotes essential knowledge, life lessons, and values. In Young's (2005) own journey of studying the language, she explores language loss, the connection to identity, and the significance of understanding the language. The language is interwoven in both story and ceremony. It is also about relationship building. Language and learning emphasize relationships and interconnectivity amongst the people, the animals, and the land. Our culture, history, and traditions are significant to our identity; they are fused in our language which must be preserved, promoted, protected, and revitalized (McCarty, 2003; Pitawanakwat, 2009; Vicaire, 2010). Language revitalization programs are increasing to maintain Indigenous languages. It is tremendous the influence an educational project can have in supporting languages.

Story

The practice of story is fundamental to Anishinabe epistemology and worldview. McKeogh et al. (2008) assert "the stories we share of our life's experiences are shaped, in terms of content and organisation, by the stories others tell to us within our culture" (p. 5). Learning and development form social practices. Stories are about developing connections and understanding, they include emotional, healing, and spiritual aspects (Archibald, 2008). Stories are recurring in nature so one can determine what is important to him or her – relevant to his or her life (Eder, 2007). Storytelling guarantees the sharing of knowledge: knowledge of self,

knowledge of community, knowledge of history, knowledge of worldview—the foundation that strengthens every person in a cultural group. Using story and observation as teaching strategies can draw in Indigenous students. Teachers play a critical role in determining the success of a student (Hart, 2007; Kanu, 2002). Storytelling principles include repetition of story, observations, and modelling. The acquisition of knowledge guarantees that the cycle of learning continues. Readers may require a shift in their thinking that stories are not simply myths and legends but viewed as a significant Indigenous, intellectual practice. As Wagamese (2015) illustrates in his quote at the beginning of this chapter, we are story.

Summary

There are five chapters in this study. Chapter one contains the introduction, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, assumptions and beliefs, and the conceptual framework. Chapter two presents a review of the literature on the historical overview of education models, relationality and identity, Indigenous ways of knowing, and culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy. Chapter three describes and explains the methodology of the study. In that process, the chapter includes sections on the research design, description of the sample, instruments, relationship-building and rapport, ethical considerations, and patterns of data analyses procedures. Chapter four identifies, describes, and explains the findings of the elders' stories and the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin centered around the emergent themes of ceremony, land, language, and story. Finally, chapter five provides a summary of the study, as well as its significance and the implications for future studies.

Chapter Two: Historical Overview and Literature Review

All that we are is story. From the moment we are born to the time we continue our spirit journey, we are involved in the creation of the story of our time here. It is what we arrive with. It is all we leave behind. We are not the things we accumulate. We are not the things we deem important. We are story. All of us. What comes to matter then is the creation of the best possible story we can while we're here; you, me, us, together. When we can do that and we take the time to share those stories with each other, we get bigger inside, we see each other, we recognize our kinship – we change the world, one story at a time... (Wagamese, 2015)

It is a long, arduous journey to fully understand the mandated education models in my community of Pine Creek First Nation. There are indications and movements to implement original teachings; the Indigenous knowledge and practices are slowly returning in the classroom context. As a young elementary student, I learned about different perspectives. I learned the story of the discovery of this land even though my ancestors existed here since time immemorial. I also learned through my journey that my own peoples' knowledge and practices are increasing in scholarly discussions and research studies. As a classroom teacher combined with the graduate studies program, my perspective on research widened. I am thankful for this learning process.

Firstly, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a general overview of the literature on the history of education models concerning First Nation communities, focusing on Pine Creek First Nation. It highlights a pre-contact education model, how knowledge developed through Indigenous practices and teachings. It reviews how the government developed policies and legislations to have control and power over First Nation communities that affected generations of people. The connection to Indigenous ways became disregarded for many children and youth in these institutions. Educational practices and policies supported Eurocentric values and perspectives.

Secondly, it provides an overview of the literature of recent movement to integrate Indigenous perspectives into public school classrooms, including Pine Creek First Nation. It is critical to understand the philosophical and social influences that shape the curricula put into practice in education systems. Education models, especially in First Nation communities, promote traditional Western philosophies of education without incorporating Indigenous perspectives or philosophy. In Canada, the movement toward integrating Indigenous perspectives across all curricula is an ongoing course of action for the past several decades. There exists growth in the creation of Indigenous education resources due to political and social influences across the nation. Evaluation, research, and political pressure created opportunities for curricula transformation.

Thirdly, it provides an overview of the literature of recent research to integrate the four themes to advance *mino-bimaadiziwin* as a foundation for development, growth, and academic success in today's classroom. The four themes of ceremony, land, language, and story, will extend understanding to classroom teachers to transform learning experiences. The learning experience help shapes a student's identity to support academic success with a balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning. Elders can provide guidance and support to classroom teachers in incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing in learning contexts.

Historical Overview of Education

Pre-Contact Education Model

In pre-European contact, the parents and the elders convey education collectively (Big-Canoe, 2011; Catlin, 2013; Hart, 2007; Marker, 2011; Neegan, 2005; Styres, 2012). Through daily activities, children and youth would develop the knowledge and skills to contribute to the

community as adults. Observation, story, and experiential learning were central to knowledge gathering (Archibald, 2008; Ball, 2004; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Debassige, 2013; Wilson, 2008). Cultural practices vary amongst cultural groups. As children grow, their caregivers, home environment, and extended family or community influence them. These experiences shape their learning. Bruner's model of scaffolding supports this concept. Bruner advocates scaffolding as significant to conceptual learning which contributes to child development and language mastery. Winter and Goldfield (1991) support Bruner's concept of scaffolding as significant to conceptual learning through early, social activity (p. 440). Storytelling is fundamental to cognitive development in Indigenous communities. McKeogh et al. (2008) support this theory, "the stories we share of our life's experiences are shaped, in terms of content and organisation, by the stories others tell to us within our culture" (p. 5). Through observation and attunement with the environment, young people develop interconnectedness and relationality (Ermine, 1995). Learning through modelling and observation is supported by Vygotsky's theory of language and cultural transmission (Winter & Goldfield, 1991). Experiential learning experiences aid in development. The social practices of a community support learning and development.

The Indian Act and Numbered Treaties

Several significant historical events led to the transformation of Indigenous education and practices. On September 15, 1874, Treaty #4 officially established and designated the reservation location of Pine Creek band (Pine Creek First Nation, 2019). Following the numbered treaties, the *Indian Act* granted colonial powers the most control over education on reservations. One of the prominent administrative features of this *Act* "permits the Minister to enter into agreements with provinces or religious organizations to run First Nations schools, but does not permit the Minister to enter into an agreement with a First Nations organization to run its own schools"

(Mendelson, 2008). Through the *Indian Act*, the Canadian government consented to church groups operating residential schools (Neegan, 2005).

An Indian residential school had been established in Pine Creek, Manitoba, during the years 1891 – 1971 (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2007). The Roman Catholic Church operated this school and maintained control of education for the students. The residential school experience has had a harrowing effect in Indigenous communities across Canada (Agbo, 2007; Battiste, 2013; Fontaine, 2010; Gray, 2011; Saul, 2014). The Indigenous education model stopped.

Indian Residential School System Model

The Indian Residential education model followed a Eurocentric design. Children attended these institutions where Indigenous language and culture became insignificant. This educational initiative held one objective, “using the key mechanisms of civilizations – language, culture and all things spiritual – they could mount a direct attack on Indigenous people” (Saul, 2014, p. 12). The results of the Indian residential school experience were not promising. The cyclic model of lifelong learning had been deeply affected. Students lacked skills to be contributing members of mainstream society. Many students suffered from identity, culture, and language loss. The education model used in this system did not reflect the traditional Indigenous foundations of knowledge acquisition for Indigenous children. Battiste (2013) illustrates:

The revised *Indian Act* laid the foundation for the removal of children from their homes and the massive forced migration of children to a large network of residential schools, leaving families and communities without children and continuing and enlarging the erosion of their core values and knowledge related to their children’s learning and their own sustenance. (p.55)

The profound relationship between elders and children seceded when children became removed from their homes and community. “This breakdown was a serious blow to the

maintenance of Aboriginal worldviews as there was a heavy reliance on Elders to manifest such worldviews” (Neegan, 2005). The practice of sharing of knowledge broke. In the traditional model, children learned through a story about their own identity, history and culture. These essential teachings would not occur in the same manner. The basic questions of life: who am I, where do I come from, where am I going and why am I here, would remain unanswered in this learning environment (Manitoba Teacher, 2014). Smith (2012) discusses how Eurocentric perspectives weighted and represented “the validity of specific forms of knowledge,” this method became accomplished through colonial education. The Indian residential school experience devastated many communities across the nation.

Across Canada, there have been many similar experiences shared by former residential school students. One of the goals of this type of school involved assimilation (Fallon & Paquette, 2012; Pushor, 2010). Agbo (2007) discusses how the church groups who operated the schools used “cultural invasion” to groom these students for mainstream society (p. 2). The traditional custom of learning, through story and observation, diminished (RCAP, The Vision, “None,” para. 17). This educational movement, which spanned over a century, had catastrophic effects on Indigenous communities. A generation gap developed, and the traditional teaching practices declined.

Many personal accounts written or recorded by former students surfaced, describing the abuse and trauma students experienced while in and after leaving this school system. For example, Fontaine (2010) shares his own story of his residential school experience. He describes how this educational model did not value him as a person. “These preachers and soul-gatherers, after all, knew nothing about who we were, and were ignorant of our culture and deep spiritual beliefs” (p. 95). Neegan (2005) points out the separation of a child from the family during the

residential school experience “contrasted with the Aboriginal worldview that children are full participants of the household” (p. 6). Students left the school system with insufficient knowledge of themselves as Indigenous people. The connection to Indigenous ways of knowing instrumental to child development disconnected further.

This change in educational practices—from an Indigenous to a Western model—had disastrous and continuing effects on Aboriginal language, culture and worldview. The *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP)* (1996) asserts, “...it was a precise pedagogy for re-socializing children in the schools.” The RCAP goes on to explain “...they [the children] would leave behind the ‘savage’ seasonal round of hunting and gathering for a life ordered by the hourly precision of clocks and bells.” This educational framework’s objectives did not have effective results in the eyes of many of the students. “I find it very perplexing and sad to realize now that my life at the school during those years didn’t contribute anything that helped or prepared me for the outside world” (Fontaine, p. 49). The government and church policies focused on assimilation. The residential school system displaced and eliminated Indigenous culture (Neegan, 2005).

This Western education model reinforced with assimilation policies affected generations of Indigenous people. Battiste (2013) affirms “Eurocentric education policies and attempts at assimilation have contributed to major global losses in Indigenous languages and knowledge, and to persistent poverty among Indigenous people” (p. 25). One of the most prominent losses across the country includes the loss of language. Language usage declined steadily.

“Governments paid teachers across the country to stop us from speaking our languages in residential schools through shaming, threats, and physical punishment including having pins stuck through children’s tongues, so government should be paying teachers now to help us

relearn our languages” (Gray, 2011, p. 245). Language is vital to a culture; it holds the teachings and worldview of people. As Fontaine explains, “These languages are unique to Canada and are the main means by which culture, identity and spirituality are articulated, shared and passed on to successive generations” (p. 110). For almost a century, the Roman Catholic Church in Pine Creek First Nation shaped the educational experiences for the students. This curriculum had minimal grounding in Indigenous philosophies and perspectives. The research literature that studies the inter-generational effects of the Indian Residential school system grew drastically over the past few decades.

Towards a Balance of Perspectives in the Current Education Model

A series of actions led to the transformation of education and research to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and practices for solutions in Canadian classrooms. The effects of the Indian residential school instigated Aboriginal leaders to demand control of education in their communities. During the 1950s and the 1960s, the federal government implemented on-reserve day schools. In Pine Creek, Manitoba, in the 1950s, the residential school became a day school where students could return home in the evenings (Demas, 2018). Because of this change, traditional knowledge and practices re-emerged to help the community deal with the aftermath of this appalling experience (Demas, 2018). In the political arena, significant events and initiatives would shape the next few decades of Indigenous education.

During the 1960s and 1970s several important political initiatives set off a series of events that strengthened Aboriginal leadership in demanding more control of their education. In 1969, the “Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian policy” proposed to dismantle the *Indian Act* and to remove the unique legal status of Status Indians (Hanson, 2009). This proposed legislation is commonly referred to as the *White Paper*. In response to this, in 1972, the National

Indian Brotherhood developed a report, “Indian Control of Indian Education” which advocated Indian control of Indian education (Pushor & Murphy, 2010, pp. 29-30). The following explanation summarizes the thrust of this transformative educational policy:

Unless a child learns about the forces which shape him: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being. Indian culture and values have a unique place in the history of mankind. The Indian child who learns about his heritage will be proud of it. The lessons he learns in school, his whole school experience, should reinforce and contribute to the image he has of himself as an Indian. (p.9)

The movement of having more Indigenous knowledge and practices had begun. In 1971, the Pine Creek Indian Residential School had been torn down. The local leadership developed the Pine Creek Indian Education Authority, like many other communities across the nation (Goddard & Foster, 2002). However, until the late 1980s, the local members of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate maintained a prominent role in educational activities and programming in this school.

They taught curricula and continued to teach skills like knitting and crocheting, which they deemed necessary (Demas, 2018). The cessation of Indian residential schools did not see overnight changes to curriculum and educational objectives for Indigenous students. The model of education continued to have non-Indigenous perspectives promoted. First Nations languages, histories, and cultures remained devalued (Fallon & Paquette, 2012). The last Indian residential school closed its doors in 1996 (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2007). Over the next few decades, the gradual increase of Indigenous knowledge, practices, and teachings appeared in classrooms both on and off-reserve. These significant movements began the integration of Indigenous knowledge and practices into the classroom learning context.

Indigenous Perspectives in Today's Classrooms

Research regarding integrating Indigenous knowledge and practices into classrooms continues to highlight colonialism, inequality, and systematic policies and practices that offset attempts to increase Indigenous perspectives into classrooms (Agbo, 2007; Fallon & Paquette, 2012; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Kanu, 2005; Madden, Higgins & Korteweg, 2013; Pushor & Murphy, 2010; Sackney, 2011). These research studies jointly emphasize how teachers' beliefs and attitudes and lack of Indigenous knowledge affect their teaching practices. Kanu (2005) discusses how teacher's attitudes and beliefs of Aboriginal education initiatives grounded in Indigenous perspectives became developed and established. There had been a call for an increase in professional development opportunities in Indigenous knowledge and practices for both candidate and current teachers. One of the most critical arguments Saul (2014) makes through his book "The Comeback" is that he is "not all convinced that our society has changed what it believes about Aboriginal people in Canada" (p. 159). Educational practices and policies supported Western values and perspectives based on the Western philosophy of education. Educators, in general, faced a myriad of challenges in incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices in the classroom (Ball, 2004, p. 471; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008, p. 952; Settee, 2011, p. 438). In the past few decades, the creation of Indigenous-centric curricula resources grew due to political and social influences across the nation (Manitoba Education, 2019).

Indigenous Teaching Practices

In Neegan's (2005) research, she recommends changes to the curriculum to include Aboriginal knowledge. She states, "the holistic patterns that are consistent with Aboriginal knowledge need to be incorporated into the curriculum. Doing so strengthens Aboriginal philosophies and facilitate both Eurocentric and Aboriginal ways of knowing rather than pit one

against the other” (p. 13). Community and cultural groups are diverse in this province and curricula should reflect the worldviews of its audience: the students (Ball, 2004, p. 466). In Kanu’s (2002) additional article, she emphasizes the importance of teachers having competent knowledge about Indigenous culture and customs. Students should see their identity and culture in learning experiences; otherwise, disconnection can occur. She insists that Eurocentric and patriarchal views persist where curriculum and learning are concerned (p. 113). She recommends using story and observation as teaching practices to draw in Indigenous students in the classroom. Kana offers learning techniques such as numerous examples, slow explanations, and direct guidance.

Hart (2007) echoes these same initiatives so teachers can become more open to Indigenous ways of learning. Research literature emphasizes creating a balanced model for learners to walk in both ways of knowing. In Hare’s (2011) research, she analyzes “the contributions of Indigenous knowledge to young First Nations children’s literacy learning” (p. 391). Two essential findings rose from this study. The first finding demonstrates that Indigenous practices constitute literacy. The second finding reveals that educators who work with Indigenous children must familiarize themselves with the Indigenous communities in order to support the children and their families. Teachers play an essential role in supporting student success.

Scott (2013) supports this notion. He outlines how teachers resist integrating Indigenous knowledge into the learning experience. His study focused on how five teachers incorporated Aboriginal perspectives into the classroom. The teachers in this study showed resistance to providing space for Aboriginal perspectives. Goddard and Foster’s (2002) study contain similar results. The schools in northern Alberta, while having more control of education, did not reflect

the community's culture, values, and norms as part of the educational institutions that presided in these communities. His research shows how the school did not embrace the language or the culture of the community. He proposed that policy-makers must include the voices of the marginalized in curricular and educational reform.

Two separate significant research studies (Wallin & Peden, 2014; Blimkie, Vetter & Haig-Brown, 2014) offer ways to support the integration of Indigenous perspectives into the classroom. These studies demonstrate how to create a more balanced education framework. Wallin and Peden (2014) developed a Graduate Level Summer Institute to advance the ability of educational leaders to support First Nation, Métis, and Inuit learners (FNMI). At present, public school policies have not mandated Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. I have participated in this Summer Institute and understand the value of having current and candidate teachers participate in a program with similar objectives. Wallin and Peden (2014) suggest, "there is a huge gap between what is advocated as a more responsive teacher education program and FNMI students' experiences in schools" (p. 49). Participants realized how culturally responsive teaching could improve their teaching practice for FNMI learners.

Blimkie's et al. (2014) research highlights how the *Infusion* program, a teacher education program, infused Aboriginal content and pedagogies to its teacher candidates. Her research shares the findings of their exploratory case study that investigated teacher candidates' perspectives and experiences of the *Infusion*. A realization that occurred through that many teachers "remarked that it helped them develop teaching practices that were respectful of and responsive to Aboriginal students and those from other diverse cultures" (p. 61). These two initiatives are exemplars for universities to address the challenges in teacher education programs.

The recent trends in research literature outline utilizing Indigenous practices, including sharing circles, the medicine wheel, and Elder visits to better reflect Indigenous knowledge and practices in schools. Hart (2007) promotes the use of sharing circles as learning practices. Hart states that sharing circles “provide the context for the presentation of each participants’ thoughts and the development of a shared understanding” (p. 87). Wallin and Peden’s (2014) research study also exemplifies the benefits of the sharing circle in a learning context. Sharing circles engaged the summer institute participants who “enjoyed the use of sharing circles where each individual was acknowledged...” (p. 58). Sharing circles allow for full student participation in a classroom. Preston and Claypool (2013) explain how using Aboriginal epistemology of the Medicine Wheel connected to life and learning for these students in the study (p. 271). Blimkie’s et al. (2014) research support this concept by using the Medicine wheel to design understanding. There are many ways to incorporate these two teaching practices in classrooms.

Other research studies (Ignas, 2004; Manitowabi, 2017; O’Connor, 2009; Parhar & Sensoy, 2011; Preston & Claypool, 2013) recommend collaborative, community-based educational initiatives to successfully integrating Aboriginal perspectives into classrooms to improve teaching practices. Culturally responsive schools help support all students to become creative, critical thinkers who are aware of and respect cultural and linguistic diversity (Gallagher, 2013, pp. 9-10; McIntosh, Mathews, Gietz, Pelsner, Mah...Edgecombe, 2011, p. 193; McMurchy-Pilkington, Pikiario & Rongomai, 2008, p. 634). Educational programs and models that blend Indigenous knowledge and practices into the school’s educational initiatives is essential to learning.

Elders in the Learning Context

In Aboriginal communities, elders are the keepers of knowledge. In recent years, the movement to invite and welcome elders as knowledge holders is growing in classrooms across the nation. Ignas's (2004) research illustrates how elders represented and collaborated the science curriculum development team in meeting the needs of the community involved in the research. This research proposes that "the oral tradition must be respected and viewed by the teacher as a distinctive intellectual tradition-not simply myths and legends" (p. 54). Neegan (2005) recommends that educational institutions' "collaborate and consult with elders and the community so that Aboriginal worldviews and epistemology can be integrated in producing and the transmitting of knowledge (p. 13). The connection between the elders and the younger generations is strengthening through projects and teacher-led initiatives. In another separate community-based project by Burns Ross (2014), youth and elders participated in an intergenerational exchange; elders shared Indigenous ways with the youth involved in the project. A similar study conducted by Chow (2012) includes local youth and elders documenting an intergenerational knowledge transfer. One of the recommendations of this study is "that all teachers investigate more ways to incorporate traditional and local knowledge in all subject areas..." (p.82). In Chaput's (2012) study, he asserts "transmission of traditional knowledge and culture by Elders in Indigenous communities has, by definition, always been seen as vital to oral cultures" (p. 97). Elders can have a more prominent role in the current education model.

Mino-Bimaadiziwin Conceptual Educational Framework

In chapter one of this research study, the mino-bimaadiziwin conceptual educational framework (see Figure 2, p. 21) outlines this research study. This framework supports the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin to shape one's identity to support academic success with a

balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning. This section will highlight research literature focusing on both pre-service teacher training and classroom practices to include ceremony, language, land, and story as they relate to mino-bimaadiziwin. The integration of indigenous practices and teachings in education is significant.

Ceremony – A Way of Life

The ceremony experience is central to the Indigenous way of life. It is holistic, spiritual, and practical. It is relative to all aspects of daily life. Shaw (2007) supports Cajete's (1994) viewpoint that learning through ceremony "involves coming to understand one's unique potential through deep personal processes that embrace spiritual aspects of life's meaning" and "describes the highest goal of Indigenous education as being to help each individual person realize completeness in his or her life" (pp. 22-23). The ceremony represents a holistic practice that Wilson describes as:

The purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships to bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves. The research we do as Indigenous people is a ceremony that allows us to raise levels of consciousness and insight into our world. Let us go forward together with open minds and good hearts as we further take part in this ceremony. (Wilson, 2008, p. 11)

There are several ceremonial practices classroom teachers can apply to learn experiences. The seven teachings, smudging, and sharing circles are essential practices that can be part of the classroom practices. There are other ceremonial practices for Indigenous people, including but not limited to the practices discussed in this study.

In two separate studies by Farrell-Morneau (2014) and Laramée (2013), both researchers incorporate the seven grandfather teachings and the seven traditional indigenous teaching practices, respectively into their research study. Farrell-Morneau describes and explains the sacredness of the seven teachings: wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth.

She explores how the practice of story honours the teachings in a classroom context. Farrell-Morneau asserts, “what is at stake here is not simply the loss of our sacred stories, but the loss of our culture that is inherently embedded within those stories” (p. 282). Laramée’s study examines the perceptions of participants in Summer Institutes in Aboriginal Education and their involvement in seven traditional indigenous teaching practices as educators in school classrooms. These practices include smudge, oral knowledge transmission, teaching circle, sharing circles, storytelling, an oracle, and sweat lodge. One of the key findings of this study shows improvement in how they implemented Indigenous practices in their school and classroom.

Smudging is a ceremony that teachers can implement in their daily classroom routines. Laramée (2013) explains, “The various ways in which people smudge to cleanse their minds, bodies, and spirits become strategies to help learners focus on their work” (p. 45). In Swanson’s (2013) study, she explores connecting the school curriculum-making world and the familial curriculum-making world. In her study, Swanson describes the smudging ceremony that took place in the classroom over an extended period; students were engaged and shared stories (pp. 60-62). Swanson asserts that by creating safe places and including familial curriculum making in schools is valuable. We not only will see schools as places of becoming and shaping identities, but also as sustaining and engaging places for children, families, and teachers. Bebonang (2008) also supports using smudging. She describes two purposes of smudging: before, during and after the ceremony and settling students down in the classroom. In Bebonang’s study, elders provide practices and teachings to create “radically different” school experiences for students (pp. 88-92).

Koleszar-Green’s (2016) study centers on *Onkwehonwe* worldviews. and through this study explores the concept of sharing circles. She asserts that sharing circles are “forms of

knowledge gathering and sharing are used within a traditional Aboriginal communication model since time immemorial. A sharing circle is a forum in which people are gathered together to share their experiences and stories around a specific topic” (p. 62). In Tanaka’s (2009) research study, pre-service teachers became transformed after an Indigenous course based on the practice of story. The pre-service teachers experience “stories with each other in different ways – through sharing in the circle, discussions, ceremony, and the simple act of cleaning up and putting away supplies” (p. 78). Students participated in opening circles throughout the course. The pre-service teachers “saw the circle times as a way to open up communication with and between their students by creating a safe environment where students felt included, could share their feelings, and have their voices heard” (p. 205).

Ceremonies, such as the sharing circle, seven teachings, and smudging, are unique approaches to integrating Indigenous perspectives. These approaches can be used to build more positive relationships between the students and the teachers and collectively among the students.

Land as the Learning Environment

The research literature on land-based learning to improve classroom practices experienced significant growth in recent years. The land is integral to Indigenous perspectives and worldview. The land continues to have a significant meaning for Indigenous people. The land has been considered another form of text where stories stem from (Hare, 2011, p. 407; Lyons et al., 2010, p. 10). Lethwaithe’s (2007) study focuses on a culture-based community school for its students. In his study, place-based learning “promotes the use of community resource people and is inherently experiential drawing upon the opportunities provided by the local context and its people” (p. 5). Restoule’s et al. (2013) research article demonstrates the importance of the “paquataskamik” which illustrates “the historical relationship to the land” (p.

77). Experiential or hands-on learning experiences provide authentic, meaningful connections into students' learning. Land-based learning activities have a practical application while achieving curricular outcomes.

In Styres's (2012) study, she explores the land as the first teacher. Styres looks at the conceptual principles, philosophies, and ontologies of the land. The land is holistic and shapes teaching practices. She asserts that that land "is consistently informing pedagogy through storied relationships" (p. 63). Styres recommends infusing the principle of the land as the first teacher in classroom practices to enhance teaching practices. Styres asserts that academic institutions examine "the ways Land-centred approaches to teaching and learning can create learning communities grounded in the philosophies of Land as first teacher" (p. 203). Manitowabi (2017) asserts this same principle that the land is the first teacher. Culture-Based Education (CBE) is the focus of Manitowabi's study at a First Nation elementary school in Ontario. Through this study, one of the recommendations includes "learning about local ecological knowledge in sciences, such as teaching about natural plants, land, animal cycle, seasons, moon, stars, snowshoeing, fishing, and maple syrup" (p. 71). This study uses a collaborative approach to include community members, parents, Knowledge Keepers, elders, and women. This research is beneficial for school curriculum planning and to extend understanding of land-based education.

Sterenbergs (2013) article *Considering Indigenous Knowledge and Mathematics Curriculum*, explores one teacher's approach to integrating Indigenous knowledge involving the construction of a model house and learning from a place. The teacher connects tipi poles to construction design (pp. 25-26). Students visit the land, and the teacher recognizes "the significance of learning from place" (p. 28). The teacher, Bryony, found that students felt more connected to the land and community by integrating Indigenous knowledge into curriculum and

learning experiences. Sterenberg concludes, “learning from place continues to be a valid and meaningful method of interpreting and understanding the world, including mathematics” (p. 30).

In another study, O’Connor (2009) examines educational challenges facing First Nation students of northern Canada, through the exploration of two experiential and place-based educational programs. The programs include the following activities: snowshoeing, hiking, hunting, sweat lodges, feasts, field trips, and canoe trips. This program component is not an exhaustive list, but it demonstrates how many activities are taking place. One of the educators in this study shares his vision, “It is real life, authentic, and reflects the actual community history and perspectives” (pp. 151-152). Several of the challenges in the development and implementation of these educational programs include cultural perceptions, funding sources, educational framework, assessment, and human resources. This study offers insight into educators’ approaches to engage students and build student success in experiential learning through innovative teaching practices.

Community members identified the value and meaning of their cultural landscape in Driedger’s (2006) research study that supports land-based learning. Driedger discusses learning journeys where local youth and elders interact with the outdoor environment. The learning journey occurred where students “could partake in traditional activities and learn Anishinaabe plant and animal names, plant uses/medicines, stories, history, values, survival skills or other things the elders might decide to teach (p. 103). According to Driedger, these learning journeys can “complement and enhance the Ontario curriculum” (p. 100). One of the goals of this study includes understanding the significance of cultural landscape as “reflections of the relationships of people and their landscape. They may include physical elements, places given cultural

meaning, and spiritual connectedness. Landscapes and sites are dynamic: physically, ecologically, and culturally” (p. 120).

Indigenous people have a fundamental connection to the land. Educators may understand the land as story origins, teaching resource, and a vital philosophy that represents Indigenous ways of knowing. By providing land-based learning opportunities to a student, this will enrich learning experiences. Land-based learning provides engaging, experiential opportunities to support student growth. These experiences reflect an Indigenous cultural and philosophical perspective and worldview.

Language Connection to Culture and Identity

Language revitalization programs are increasing to maintain Indigenous languages. It is tremendous the influence an educational project can have in supporting languages. In Pitawanakwat’s (2009) research study, he explores how Indigenous communities strive to maintain and revitalize *Anishinaabemowin* [Anishinabe language]. The findings of this research, including language immersion, second language teaching methods, and developing ASL (Anishinabemowin as a Second Language) institutions and programs, support language revitalization efforts. The study “emphasized the importance of ensuring that immersion language teaching includes abstract concepts that permit ASL learners to not only speak but also “think” in Anishinaabemowin” (pp. 108-110). Three broad areas identified in this study to develop an ideal ASL program include “expand immersion programs; initiate “whole family” language programs; and set up language clubs or “sanctuaries.”

In Big-Canoe’s (2011) study, she examines how the quality of local, social environments, including the school environment, influence First Nations youth health. Through this study, Big-Canoe utilizes an Indigenous Knowledge framework to explore youth perceptions of health,

social relationships, and the ways they interact. One of the important findings of this study centers around language. “Youth spoke of the importance of the language for culture. Language, and in particular, Ojibway, was considered important for prayers and therefore the spiritual connection to the creator” (p. 89). The research study suggests, “language could be strengthened by offering language camps, night courses, or by offering more courses in school” (p. 99). The McKeogh’s et al. (2008) article centers on literacy development with Aboriginal youth. Through the research, it highlights, “Instruction in both Aboriginal languages and English was the constant across all schools. but challenges in finding Aboriginal materials and instructors were reported” (p. 3). McKeogh et al. (2008) supports Bell et al. (2004) study with the following recommendations: “models of language, Aboriginal or English, be provided to children in the home environment, Aboriginal language immersion programmes be developed, and empirical research conducted on them, and language and literacy instruction be provided by trained Aboriginal teachers and curriculum materials be culturally appropriate” (p. 3).

Smith’s (1995) research study focuses on the community school and how the Wabaseemong’s school language and cultural programs could support student learning and help to develop a sense of self or identity. Smith focuses on appropriate education for First Nation students involved interviewing local community members on various issues in education. One of the proposals for change in this community included elders supporting the Ojibway language program in school, thus integrating the school and community (pp.119-121). Smith identifies challenges and barriers to Ojibway language instruction in Wabaseemong school but asserts, “the presentation of Ojibway culture in the school is best done through the Ojibway language” (pp. 113-115). Smith identifies two challenges to effective language programs in school: Ojibway print material and trained Ojibway language teachers (pp. 92-95). In Nikkel’s (2006) study of an

elementary Cree bilingual program, Nikkel affirms Smith's challenges of language programming resources and teaching professional development. Landon's (2012) study explores how educators can address the needs of Aboriginal high school students. This study offers programs and practices to improve the practices of educating First Nation secondary students. One of the four schools involved in this study offered high school Ojibway language programming. Through this study, one of the fifteen recommendations highlight "schools that have significant Aboriginal student populations are encouraged to implement, maintain and enrich existing language programs" (p. 303).

Hermes and Uran (2006) explore the issues and challenges surrounding literacy and language. They describe their efforts at the language-immersion school, "we used our "English" class time to produce, write, and direct short movies using the iMovie software done entirely in the Ojibwe language" (p. 396). Hermes and Uran affirm these projects "did not demand rational responses from students but, rather, invited students to create or produce in response to the curriculum. Students were able to interact with each other, the community, and their own identities in their creative acts" (p. 396). In another study, McIntosh et al. (2011) examine the effectiveness of a culturally responsive early language development curriculum on the language skills of Kindergarten students of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage. A cultural education component takes place through the program. There are culturally relevant practices that teachers incorporate into the program, students "compile a list of vocabulary in their traditional language" and "the program contains a DVD of videos from elders and other members of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth First Nation. In these segments, speakers share samples of their songs, stories, culture, language, and history" (p. 187). One of the results of this study indicates, "improved outcomes for speech and language skills when implementing an early language

development curriculum, which was developed to incorporate culturally relevant practices and adapted to include effective instructional practices” (p. 193). Language correlates to identity and culture.

Story as Teaching Practice and Tool

The Indigenous practice of story is essential. Stories transmit personal and cultural knowledge. The literature is increasing on storytelling or oral narratives as a transformative practice in classrooms. One research project defines oral tradition “to include worldviews, and ways of being and learning that are communicated orally” (Catlin, 2013, p. 128). The oral tradition is a conceptual method of development (McIntosh et al., 2011, p. 193; Moayeri & Smith, 2010, p. 414). Pedagogical changes that involve parents and elders as language models and instructors are one method of integrating storytelling practices in the classroom (McCarty, 2003, p. 151).

Teachers can provide different ways for students to find their voices. In Hildebrandt’s et al. (2016) article, the research project highlights using digital storytelling to understand treaties and the treaty relationship that exists in western Canada. The goal of this learning project for students to “employ aural and visual modalities as they gained a historical understanding of Treaties and recognized their relationship to Treaties in a modern context” (p. 21). The critical elements of this project include working with a local Knowledge Keeper and student-led inquiry. This project demonstrates a culturally responsive practice that a teacher can utilize in classroom learning experiences. In Coulthard (2017)’s research study, an Aboriginal Head Start Preschool uses innovative teaching practices for children to develop age-appropriate, dual-language, self-authored books. This research study demonstrates examples of culturally relevant teaching. An innovative research study by Hudson (2016) explores how Indigenous young adults use

photography and hip-hop based education to tell their stories continually. Through this unique project, the youth involved increased their self-confidence while making meaning of the cultural narratives in their lives.

Through story, students can learn about themselves and the world around them. In one study by Hewitt (2011), the study focuses on an inter-community exchange for students. They shared photos, stories, and memories through photo-story. Through this study, four broad themes emerged: community and relationships; culture and ceremony; connections with place, and confidence-building. This project exemplifies transformative teaching practices. In a similar study by Allen (2013), two groups of elementary school students engage in narrative practice using cultural education programming. Allen examines the effects of the participant in First Nation cultural practices on children's cognitive development. Narrative activities are a fundamental component of this research study. Students show engagement and enthusiasm when provided space for storytelling. Teachers can implement storytelling as part of innovative learning experiences or projects in the classroom.

Summary

This literature review provides a general overview of the socio-historical models of education concerning Pine Creek First Nation, which other First Nations across Canada have similarly experienced. There is a movement toward more excellent inclusive, culturally responsive teaching methods that supports Indigenous knowledge and practices. Educational theory and practice have been slowly integrating Indigenous ways of knowing into mainstream education. By understanding the philosophical and social influences that shape curricula in education systems, it provides opportunities for discussions, advocacy, and pressure to move further in integrating Indigenous perspectives into the current education model. Educational and

curricula transformation has been occurring in recent years at a much higher pace, as highlighted in the last section of this chapter to include the themes of ceremony, land, language, supported through the practice of story.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research methodology for this qualitative research study, exploring the knowledge, practices and teachings related to mino-bimaadiziwin. I am integrating an Indigenous research paradigm with a Western constructivist-interpretivist research paradigm. My primary method of research uses storytelling as an Indigenous practice for research; other methods employed in this research study include observation, reflection, ceremony, and teachings from the elders. Although interviews are the primary knowledge-gathering source, I share both my personal stories and the stories of elders' experiences throughout the study. In this chapter, I provide description and rationale for the qualitative research methodology that premises on Indigenous research methods, including storywork and story. Following that, I describe the study environment and context; finally, the procedural aspects are discussed, including participant selection, data analysis, confidentiality and ethics are discussed.

Methodology

This qualitative research study explores elders knowledge, perspectives, and teachings on mino-bimaadiziwin to help shape students identities to support academic success with a balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning. This research study also includes the following objectives: to document and transmit Indigenous ways of knowing as it relates to mino-bimaadiziwin; to honour storytelling as a practice in classroom pedagogy and to encourage and support educators to enhance current pedagogical practices in the classroom and land-based learning from both Indigenous and Western education models. I understand how these elders achieve mino-bimaadiziwin by focusing on the four components of the mino-bimaadiziwin conceptual educational framework: language, land, story, and ceremony. I

developed a clearer understanding of how these themes complement one another in classroom learning contexts and can be used to assist teachers in enhancing their current practices. The following research questions guide the research:

Primary research question:

How can mino-bimaadiziwin help shape one's identity to support academic success with a balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning?

Secondary questions:

1. What does it mean to have mino-bimaadiziwin?
2. Why is it important for students to know one's culture and history? What do our culture and history look like?
3. How can children benefit from knowing their identity? How can that help students become more successful in learning?
4. How can learning about mino-bimaadiziwin be done in classrooms?
5. How can using Indigenous knowledge and practice improve classroom practice?

Research Design

Research begins with a question that develops from theory or situation in order to advance a theory. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) identify three interconnected principles that define the qualitative research process: ontology, epistemology, and methodology. According to Denzin and Lincoln, "these beliefs shape how the qualitative researcher sees the world," (p. 13). These beliefs frame how we, as researchers, view the world and is universally referred to as a paradigm in research (Schwandt, 2001). Wilson (2008) defines research paradigms as "sets of underlying beliefs or assumptions upon which research is based. These sets of beliefs go together to guide researchers' action" (p. 33). There are many similar viewpoints, definitions, and interpretations

of these three principles. Denzin and Lincoln define these three terms with the following explanation:

Ontology includes the nature of social reality and answers the question, what kind of being is the being? What is the nature of reality? Epistemology answers the question, what is the relationship between the inquirer and the known? Finally, methodology answers the question, how do we know the world or gain knowledge of it? (2011, p. 11-13)

My own ontological, epistemological and methodological principles shape the research design. As a researcher, I am applying an Indigenous paradigm to the study. The philosophical paradigm associated with the research design and informing my study is grounded in the medicine wheel framework and blends Indigenous methods, including ceremony, observation, reflection, and the practice of story. In his book *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, Wilson (2008) describes the development of an Indigenous research paradigm that honours respect, reciprocity, and relationality as the three Rs of Indigenous methodologies. In her book *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know*, Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogiizhigokwe) describes Indigenous ways of searching for knowledge by stating, “[W]e journey, we search, we converse, we process, we gather, we harvest, we make meaning, we do, we create, we transform, and we share what we know. Our Spirit walks with us on these journeys. Our ancestors accompany us,” (p. 168). As a researcher, I felt the need to blend both Indigenous and Western paradigms as a reflection of my objectives within this research study. Through this research design, I wanted to honour and privilege the voices, experiences, teachings, and worldview of our elders. The participant elders knowledge sharing through a story can create space to advance and support Indigenous knowledge and practices in the classroom context.

Several researchers identify similarities that exist between an indigenous research paradigm and a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) describe the

constructivist-interpretivist paradigm with terms such as “multiple realities” “knower and respondent co-create understanding” “natural world” (p. 13). Creswell (2012) describes the constructivist researcher, “focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants,” (p. 8). Kovach (2009) states, “Indigenous epistemologies fit nicely within the narrative aspect of a constructive paradigm,” (p. 30). Wahyuni states constructivist-interpretivist research attempts “to understand the social world from the experiences and subjective meanings that people attach to it, interpretivist researchers favour to interact and to have a dialogue with the studied participants” and “... prefer to work with qualitative data which provides rich descriptions of social constructs” (p. 71). I considered these descriptions and utilized elements from both Indigenous and constructivist-interpretivist paradigms as I designed this research study.

In a research study, both the methodology and the methods depend on one’s philosophical approach and worldview of knowledge and knowledge gathering (Brundett & Rhodes, 2013). With all that I do, I carry my understandings throughout this entire research process (Drawson, Toombs, Mushquash, 2017). As a classroom teacher and graduate student, I am fully aware of the processes of Western curriculum development and implementation. Indigenous approaches to knowledge and learning suggest significant differences to teaching practices in this study. Because of my knowledge and experience with curricula, I attempted to blend both Western and Indigenous research foundations to honour both ways of knowing. Alberta Education (2005) notes that while Western educational practices have been founded in the use of analytical approaches to solving problems, Indigenous educational practices have emphasized a holistic approach that focuses on the development of the whole person. This finding implies that First Nations education practice focuses on the development of the mental,

emotional, spiritual, and physical connections between individuals and the world. The philosophy and teachings of the Medicine Wheel became a vital part of this research study. Wilson (2008) identifies and describes a traditional knowledge theoretical framework approach through his book, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* and how epistemology, axiology, ontology and methodology suggests the medicine wheel framework. He goes on to describe the paradigm as “systems of knowledge and relationships” and “being accountable to your relations” (pp. 62-79).

It has been challenging to blend both an Indigenous and Western research paradigm. Chapter seven of Smith’s (2012) *Decolonizing Methodologies* book describes the challenges and barriers faced when carrying out Indigenous research, she explains:

This domain is dominated by a history, by institutional practices and by paradigms and approaches to research held by communities of like-minded scholars. The spaces within the research domain through which indigenous research can operate are small spaces on shifting ground. Negotiating and transforming institutional practices and research frameworks is as significant as the carrying out of actual research programmes. (p. 141)

Storywork (Archibald, 2008) and story (Wilson, 2008) are central to this research study. Archibald asserts that knowledge sharing is deep and meaningful through oral storytelling and the researcher takes on both the role of “researcher and learner.” Archibald (2008) describes storytelling as an Indigenous research methodology and explains, “many First Nations storytellers use their personal life experiences as teaching stories in a manner similar to how they use traditional stories. These storytellers help to carry on the oral tradition’s obligation of educational reciprocity” (p. 112). When seeking knowledge, teachings, and perspectives on *mino-bimaadiziwin*, it was imperative to design and shape this study, so the voices of the participant elders voices resonated.

Indigenous knowledge and practices are commonly shared and I have a responsibility to my community to frame the research, the knowledge gathering, and the findings in a manner that give back to the community. Windchief, Polacek, Munson, Ulrich and Cummins (2018) support and assert Battiste and Louis's thought that "Indigenous methodologies center and privilege the Indigenous community's voice(s) in an effort to contribute to the community" (p. 533). Snow et al. (2016) state that "relations are essential" and quote Chambers (1994) and Hsia's (2006) idea that "researcher responsibilities to participants and their community do not end with conclusion of the project or publication of the study" (pp. 363-365). Pidgeon (2018) emphasizes the importance of "reciprocity" in research, to give back to the community. The Indigenous lifelong journey represented by the medicine wheel includes mino-bimaadiziwin to support Indigenous ways including: ceremony, land, language, and story.

Research Approach

I had come to the medicine picking camp prepared to begin the learning. I sat and sat around the fire at camp, waiting for the lesson to begin. Earlier, I have driven into unfamiliar territory, following the bewildering directions (turn right after three minutes of travelling on the gravel road, look for the second sign). As an experienced classroom teacher, with all the methods courses under my belt, I had expected "classes" to run like the structure I had been used to, clocks and bells.

We sat around the fire, introducing ourselves and becoming familiar with one another. People were from all over the country, and there were volunteers from the nearby First Nation community. The elders shared stories, laughed and drank tea through the evening. There were babies, children, young men and women, new faces, and happy, elderly faces that welcomed each participant. Setting up our tents became relaxing and welcoming. The tall, mighty spruce

trees swayed in the distance. I spotted clusters of sage throughout the campground. My excitement grew for the days to come!

The evening wore on, and like a child waiting for the bell to ring, my eagerness to start medicine picking grew steadily. Instead, we sat around the campfire, we shared personal stories, and we talked. As the night grew dark and the array of stars shined above, we turned in for the night. Disappointment filled my spirit. I grumbled to my campmate and said that I sure hoped I would learn through this experience.

A few years have passed since that night. Since then, I recognize the oversight in my thinking. I adopted the Western way of learning and could not adapt as quickly to this different model of learning. I now see the effectiveness of the teachings and methodology much clearer. We spent the first night getting to know one another and more specifically the story of the land we sat on. The elders' reflective structure became important. When I go to the land, I remember this teaching. It has been an exciting and rewarding lesson I have learned through the camp and this process. I, too, support an Indigenous research paradigm. I am applying Indigenous storytelling as the groundwork for this study.

Through the act of storytelling, the participant elders explore their own lived experiences to document how mino-bimaadiziwin demonstrates educational pedagogy. Kovach (2009) describes how using an Indigenous research framework, with "the use of story, life history, oral history, unstructured interviews, and other processes that allow participants to share their experiences on their terms" is powerful (p. 82). The data collection gathering method uses open-ended face-to-face interviews, like guided conversations. I asked open-ended questions to generate qualitative knowledge, commonly referred to in Western research as data. For this study, knowledge gathering represents the process of data collection. The elders' stories describe

the data. An informal setting honoured the interview process as part of the Indigenous research framework. Wilson (2007) also explains, “It is important for storytellers to impart their own life and experience into telling. They also recognize that listeners will filter the story being told through their own experience and thus adapt the information to make it relevant and specific to their life” (p. 32). In terms of adhering to traditional protocol, I asked questions related to *mino-bimaadiziwin*, and I focused on the purpose of the study.

Storytelling is a lifelong Indigenous experience and practice. From the moment a baby enters the world, storytelling is part of his or her experiences. The power of stories and the teachings, values, and knowledge they contain are essential to development (Archibald, 2008; King, 2008). These stories define who we were and whom we are becoming; it gives a sense of purpose and identity, factors critical to development. Absolon (2011) highlights how stories are “lived experiences,” “cultural histories,” and that these “histories were/are relevant and meaningful to the lives, culture and survival of each Indigenous nation,” (p. 26). It provides a holistic foundation for each member of the community. Goulet and Goulet (2014) also identify how “stories, practices, and ceremonies carry knowledge through multiple and countless generations” (p. 63).

The open-ended, face-to-face interviews were recorded and transcribed per verbatim. I looked for emergent themes in the stories after the transcription process ended. Also, I kept notes with key concepts and keywords on them, which were kept in my home office as a visual aide of the findings as they emerged. I used thick descriptions as part of my notes and reflections to describe the observed social action in this interviewing context. Ponterotto (2006) analyzes the meaning of thick descriptions and describes them as “thick meaning” to allow the reader to place themselves within the research context (p. 543). Ponterotto asserts thick descriptions presents

adequate “voice” of participants. In the following chapter, I provide long quotes from the participant elders so the reader “gets a sense of the cognitive and emotive state of the interviewee” (p. 547). Themes became identified, the further analysis took place to identify teaching practices and instructional strategies for classroom educators. The four elders have been instrumental in the analysis and verification of the findings; they remained involved in all aspects of the research. These changes occurred due to our relationships and constant exchanges through this learning journey.

To this end, to develop an understanding of how the elder uses different approaches to these themes, I sought to understand the framework of the medicine wheel as it connects to mino-bimaadiziwin. Identifying the mino-bimaadiziwin occurred through the knowledge and experiences of the elders’ stories elaborated as ceremony, land, language, and story. I have developed a greater understanding of how these themes connect in the Mino-Bimaadiziwin Conceptual Educational Framework (see Figure 2, p. 21).

Research Sampling within a Population

I am a member of the Pine Creek First Nation. I have been working as a high school teacher for over fourteen years. I have developed positive, supportive relationships with students, parents, elders, leaders, and community members. The participants who were asked to be part of this study are members whom I have known and worked within the school and community setting. I purposely selected elders based on our pre-existing relationship as well as their reputation as storytellers and knowledge keepers within the community. While I would have enjoyed working with a larger group of elders on this project, I considered time, availability, and data analysis constraints. It would have been ineffective to select elders who did not know me personally. I am aware of and honour the existing protocol when knowledge gathering with

elders. I have kept this principle in mind as I asked elders for permission to share their stories. I selected four elders to be a part of this research. Each elder's story is unique but shares common views on Indigenous knowledge and practices.

The elders shared similar characteristics. All four elders are fluent speakers and thinkers of *Anishinabemowin* (Ojibway language). All four individuals have been a part of the Indian residential school system. This element is important to note because these elders have experienced both Indigenous and Western models of education. As children, they would have been fully immersed in their language and land practices, a prominent difference to children in the community today. The richness of knowledge, skills, and experiences greatly contributes to identifying and exploring the meaning of *mino-bimaadiziwin*.

As I worked through my master's program courses, I would share my learning with other colleagues both inside and outside of the community. When I began this research project, I would share with my co-workers the ideas about this research study. He or she would offer to speak to their parent whom they thought would contribute a great deal of information on the study. The local interest in the topic remains positive and supportive. I knew I belonged on this journey. Because I wanted to have a balance of perspectives, I purposely selected both female and male elders from the community of Pine Creek.

Instruments of Knowledge Gathering (Data Collection)

The term data collection supports Western approaches to research studies. For this study, I purposely use the term knowledge gathering to honour Indigenous ways of knowing and knowledge. My principal instrument of data collection for my qualitative research study is open-ended, unstructured interviews. I focused on the method of listening to the story or personal narratives that arose from the open-ended, unstructured interviews. I had developed an interview

guide (Appendix E) that I had given to participants before the interview sessions first began. We did not focus on the questions; instead, we looked at the questions together, and the participant elders decided to use them as prompts or to consider for the following interview session. This form of the unstructured interview follows the recommendation of Kovach (2009), who allows research participants an opportunity to share their story on a specific topic without the periodic disruptions involved in adhering to a structured approach. In Archibald's (2008) own journey of "Indigenous Storywork" she outlines significant steps to the storytelling process: talking around the circle, story listening; learning to make meaning from stories and so on (pp. 83-100). Stories are powerful teaching practices to make meaning and build relationships. Ray (2012) explains the interview structure that follows Indigenous research practices as "the knowledge holder determines what is shared, what is important to be shared and at what time. It is important for the 'interviewee' be in control to allow for a spiritual consciousness to emerge" (p. 94). I chose open-ended, unstructured interviews to allow stories to follow without specific questions or prompts. Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) discuss and explore unstructured interviews and assert "the decision to use unstructured interviews as a data collection is governed by both the research's epistemology and the study's objectives" (p. 2).

I spoke with the elder participants for approximately one to two hours in length for a total of four interview sessions per elder. To begin seeking participants for this study, I began by asking the elders with whom I had an established, pre-existing relationship. The first four elders I asked all agreed to participate in this research study. I asked the participant elders if I could audio record the conversations. I explained the reasons for the audio recordings. The goal of the conversations included: listening to the stories of the participants, and learning from the participants about mino-bimaadiziwin, and honouring Indigenous practices of storytelling. In

keeping with Indigenous ways, I chose not to conduct formal interviews, and it would have completely altered the entire research process. One of the participant elders started each session with a smudging ceremony, and we ended our final session with a closing smudge ceremony to honour Indigenous ways of doing.

At the beginning of the interview process, I had arranged a semi-structured interview format. However, the interviews developed into their shape and form based on each elder's preference. Throughout the research gathering process, there were multiple visits to each elder. Both the elders and I reflected on the knowledge and stories shared. A solitary visit would not be justifiable for both the participant elder and myself. The schedule of the visits became biweekly sessions to allow elders and I time to reflect on the knowledge gathering process. The visits ranged in time, depending on the elder's availability and personal daily schedule.

During the data gathering, audio recordings took place. The audio recordings allowed for transcription, and I was able to listen to each interview several times for understanding and analysis. During several interview sessions, the elders used the Ojibway language to express their thoughts precisely. After each transcribed interview, we would discuss the words and phrases spoken for accuracy, interpretation, and meaning. The elders also used non-verbal communication as part of the effect and the impact of the meaning of the story. These recordings were significant to the reflection process. As I listened to the audio-recordings, I would gain new insight or understanding to both the knowledge gathering process and the interpretation of the stories' teachings on *mino-bimaadiziwin*. As an insider researcher, my perspective influences the interpretation of the data. After each elder visit, I wrote in my reflective journal to note my observations both in their stories and their body language. I also recorded my thoughts immediately after each interview session. Qualitative research is much more subjective than

quantitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I have had to be aware of my own interpretation of the knowledge gathering process to ensure validity and accuracy.

Relationship-Building and Rapport

The research design and methodology chosen for this research study supports an Indigenous research paradigm based on the principles of relationality, reciprocity, and respect. In this study, I support and affirm Wilson's (2008) description of relations with people, "all forms of interpersonal relationships take on special significance within Indigenous communities" (p. 84). Trust is an integral part of our relationship. I selected elders who felt comfortable sharing stories with me based on our existing relationship. The participants are all fluent language speakers and have had a lifetime of experiences to be able to describe and explain the concept of *mino-bimaadiziwin*. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) assert that "the qualitative research interview is to contribute to a body of knowledge that is conceptual and theoretical and is based on the meanings that life experiences hold for the interviewees" (p. 314). As a researcher, I have been an active community member and classroom teacher for many years. I have worked with all levels of the community both personally and professionally. Elders have been held in the highest regard and treated very respectfully throughout the research study. Personally speaking, as a member of the Pine Creek First Nation community, I highly value the teachings of our culture and practices hold.

These personal stories are stories they share with family members and friends based on their own life experiences and observations. Because of the nature of our close relationships, I acknowledge that the participant elders would share stories and teachings on a much deeper level. I recognize that the depth and breadth of the stories told would not be the same with an unfamiliar researcher. I acknowledged this trust and provided elders with the freedom to decide

what the sharing of stories in the final report. Together, we reviewed the transcribed copies, and each elder decided what to include in the research study. The participant elders decided how their contributions to the research project were acknowledged and credited in the dissemination of results.

Ethical Considerations

In any research study, it is critical that respect for the participants must be maintained. The researcher must inform individuals participating in a study about the purpose and aim of the study before participation, how the results of the study are to be used, and the possible implications of the study on their lives and in the community of Pine Creek, in which they reside. Protecting participants' anonymity is of high importance, and researchers must ensure that stories shared reflect the anonymity of the participants' identities. Participation in a research study must be voluntary. Participants volunteering in a study have the right to refuse to participate and to withdraw at any time noted in the consent form, and need not offer any reason for doing so. The purpose of the study must be explained by providing well-detailed information. To affirm the ethical considerations, a researcher must inform participants about the purpose and aim of the study, must respect participants by protecting their identity as the source of information in a study, and must not engage participants in any unnecessary deception about the study.

During the research process, ethical consideration is essential, especially when working with Indigenous people and communities. Ethical consideration is the first feature of a research study to assess, before any other components of the project. In conducting a research study, a researcher must put the following ethical issues into consideration before embarking on the study: confidentiality, respect for individuals and for the site, informed consent, consideration of

cultural and personal boundaries, and analyze the potential risks and benefits to research participants. The following sections detail the ethical issues considered in this study.

Confidentiality

Throughout the process of the research, I took the following steps to assure the confidentiality of my participants: 1) Interviews occurred at a time when the elder would not be interrupted and, therefore, would not run the risk of having someone overhear her/his interview; 2) Seasonal pseudonyms took place of the names of the elders who participated in the study; 3) The stories became stored in a safe place and I have not shared the stories with other elders or individuals outside the project other than my supervisor; and 4) Once the thesis is completed and approved, paper copies of the information will be shredded and digital copies will be securely erased in the future.

Informed Consent

To begin my research, I forwarded a letter of introduction and a request for permission to invite elders to participate in the study to the Pine Creek Chief and Council members (Appendix B). The letter explained that the purpose of my study involved developing an understanding of how mino-bimaadiziwin can help shape one's identity to support academic success with a balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning. In response, I received correspondence from Chief and council members supporting this study and giving me their consent to proceed with approaching elders in our community to participate in my research study.

The four elders responded via telephone calls to let me know that they were interested in participating and I proceeded to set times with each of them for the interview. Prior to the face-to-face interview, I took time to review and verify the consent form with each participant to

ensure that they understood their rights before they signed the document and agreed to participate. For example, I explained to the elders that given the small population of Pine Creek First Nation, and the connections among nearby communities, it is anticipated, despite all precautions, that their identities might become known to the broader community.

Consideration of Cultural and Personal Boundaries

Elders hold a special status in Indigenous communities. Kokos and chooms are the heart of the family and the community. During the research process, I held each elder in high regard and demonstrated respect and humility. I respected each participant's boundaries by allowing the elders to set the time and place convenient for the interview to take place. I reminded participants a day or two before the interview date with them. My relationship with the participants centered around attention, humility, interest, and respect. Lastly, during the interview session I kept enough personal distance and provided additional time to allow the participants to make their responses as independently as possible.

I have ensured, as well as I can, that the participants had a good feeling about my research study by treating them very well. The interviewees in this study have not participated because of any financial reward, no remuneration is provided to participate in the study. However, electronic copies of the thesis will be sent to the Chief and council members after the completion of the thesis.

Permission from the Pine Creek First Nation and Ethics Committee

In keeping with an Indigenous framework, I honoured local protocol by seeking permission from the Chief and Council to do the research. Pine Creek First Nation does not have its own research ethics board or committee that reviews proposed research in the community. I provided a letter of introduction to the Pine Creek Chief and council for approval (Appendix A).

I wrote a Research Agreement (Appendix C) with Pine Creek First Nation. The research study received approval by the Pine Creek First Nation Chief and council (Appendix C). The agreement acted as a guideline for this research study. This research study followed the National Aboriginal Health Organization's OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) principles outlining the governance of research data within Indigenous communities.

This research study received approval from Brandon University's Research Ethics Committee (Appendix D), which includes reviewers who review ethics applications for research involving humans. The research ethics application form at Brandon University includes a section based on Chapter 9, Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Metis People of Canada, of the TCPS-2, for research involving First Nations or Aboriginal participants. Brandon University also requires all researchers to complete the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) tutorial and to submit a copy of their certificate with each ethics proposal (Appendix F). The tutorial gave me an in-depth understanding of ethics regarding research involving humans. This knowledge addresses the ethical considerations of conducting the entire research process.

Data Analysis

I used thematic analysis techniques to identify the themes in the knowledge gathering process. The qualitative data or stories are thematically-analyzed by discovering meaning from the textual data (Silverman 2011 as cited in Wahyuni, 2012, p. 76). The interview format remained open-ended, and the format of the interview sessions remained unstructured. I transcribed each interview session and provided a printed copy at the next interview session to each participant elder. This format allowed the participant elders to reflect on their stories and add or modify the existing transcribed interviews. During the research gathering, the stories had been prepared and organized around themes and topics. One of the challenges of unstructured

interviews is analyzing the stories gathered and “a great deal of effort has to be made to analyze the data systematically, to find patterns within it” (Patton, 2002, as cited in Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 6). Bogdan and Biklen (1982) define qualitative data analysis as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (1982, p. 145). As the data gathering occurred, important themes and topics transpired.

All four sets of interviews lasted approximately one to two hours each, therefore producing a lot of text in transcribed form. Through time and close attention to the audio recordings, I discovered new meaning in the stories I had not noticed while the actual interview happened. I realized this enriched my understanding of the Elders such as: the cadence of their language; voice inflections, dialectical differences between the language groups. Through listening and replaying the interviews and the transcriptions, I immersed myself into the actual experiences of the conversations, allowing the Elders’ voices to resonate in the processing of their stories, adding more insights and deeper understanding of the emerging themes and patterns. I believe that transcribing all Elders’ words, although an arduous task helped me to extend my understanding of the stories. Listening, writing, replaying, and listening again enabled me to notice nuances that I might have otherwise missed. As well, in sitting with the stories and reflecting on the content over time, I believed that this process allowed a more continuous analysis of the knowledge gathering process.

I summarized each elder’s interviews into the topics discussed. Together we reviewed the stories and the participant elders identified knowledge and teachings in this study. After transcribing the four interview sessions, I was able to discuss the full content of the transcripts with the participant elders. These conversations became incorporated into the analysis process.

Also, I kept notes to record key concepts and words, and I distributed these in my home office to record my findings. The stories transformed into four broad themes: ceremony, language, land, and story. The participant elders agreed with these four themes to represent mino-bimaadiziwin in this research context. Once the themes emerged, further analysis aided in the identification of the Indigenous knowledge and teachings became included into the framework for the development of classroom strategies to support student success.

The elders' stories are narrative in form. I chose to include words and phrases in the Ojibway language because I felt that reading their authentic voices may extend the understanding of the stories. Throughout this process, the stories are interpreted, organized, and summarized. Throughout this learning process, the questions became refined and new topics identified for further exploration. These steps are all part of qualitative analysis.

In the end, I categorized the data under four major themes: ceremony; land; language and story, relevant to understanding mino-bimaadiziwin. I then placed each of these themes into sub-themes to reflect the themes and ideas that emerged from my analysis. I am confident that this process has allowed me to offer a clear and accurate reflection of the knowledge and teachings in the interviews.

Summary

My research study consciously blends the utmost respect for the participant elders and the Pine Creek First Nation community with qualitative research methods to explore and facilitate a clearer understanding of mino-bimaadiziwin. Throughout this research, I remained mindful of the importance of respect and ethical procedures. As a member of Pine Creek First Nation, the approval to engage in in-depth discussions with participants elders about their lives and experiences helped me better understand the concerns and issues of our ways of knowing.

Following in-depth interviews to gather detailed and rich experiences, I analyzed all stories thematically to determine significant themes in the research. The next two chapters present what the four participants elders share on the knowledge, teachings, and practices of mino-bimaadiziwin. In the next chapter, I report the findings, which comprise the four elders' interviews and offer a thematic analysis of all stories. In the final chapter, I synthesize the results of the research, note the significance of the study and make recommendations for further research, as well include the final reflections on the research study.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis – A Summary of Stories

After 59 years on the planet, the people who have gone on to shape my journey have been a mixed bag. There have been Ojibwe elders, Cree-Dene elders, Sioux elders. But there have also been Hungarians, Romanians, Germans and Scots. To write about a life without outside influences seems to me to write about a life that's not concluded yet. When we open ourselves to experience, we don't say, "I'm opening myself to only brown experience." We would rob ourselves of a whole amazing width and breadth and scope of information that could help us along the way. (Wagamese, 2015)

In Canada, the movement toward integrating Indigenous knowledge and teaching practices across all grades and curricula is ongoing. This research study explores how mino-bimaadiziwin shapes one's identity to support academic success by balancing both Indigenous and Western models of learning. Indigenous knowledge and practices would allow students to explore who they are as a person to better understand themselves, whether Indigenous or not. The principles of mino-bimaadiziwin in this research study include the following themes: ceremony, land, language, and story. Educators may integrate the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin into their teaching methods to balance Indigenous and Western education models. This research study contributes to transformative classroom programming of authentic, appropriate Indigenous knowledge and practices to our present Western education model.

The findings of this chapter reflect the design of this research study. I used open-ended, unstructured interviews where the participant elders share stories that relate to mino-bimaadiziwin. Due to the nature of the interview sessions, the stories are contained in this chapter not only to provide the context of the research design but to allow the stories to represent the knowledge and teachings and be interpreted by the reader as well. Kovach (2009) asserts "the presentation of story in research is an increasingly common method of presenting the findings" and discusses the challenges of fragmenting or decontextualizing the knowledge the stories hold

(pp. 131-133). This chapter contains the findings of the elders' stories conducted to answer the question: How can mino-bimaadiziwin help shape one's identity to support academic success with a balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning? I am applying an Indigenous research paradigm which bears many similarities to the constructivist-interpretive paradigm. My primary method of research is using a qualitative approach with storytelling as an Indigenous practice; other methods employed in this research study include observation, reflection, ceremony, and teachings from the elders. The goal of this chapter is to portray a full context of the experiences, teachings, and understanding of mino-bimaadiziwin of participant elders as observed and analyzed.

Findings

This chapter outlines the findings of the elders' stories through interviews conducted during the winter and early spring months of 2019 at Pine Creek First Nation. In the first part of this chapter, I describe the participant elders, educational experiences and their understanding of mino-bimaadiziwin. In the body of this chapter, I explore each of the four themes in more detail.

When considering the richness of the stories, there were times when I struggled with how to manage the number of stories I collected from each of the elders. I transcribed each participant's interview transcript and highlighted their responses according to the four themes and gave them a colour code. Each participant elder's collection of stories became placed into the four themes. As I read and re-read each chapter, themes emerge within the four categories. As well, I intentionally provide extended quotes from each participant elder so that the reader may get a better sense of each elder's knowledge, perspective, and worldview. I also included their wording, expressions, and emphases to understand each participant better. In order to

highlight quotes from the participant elders, I italicized their words and indented the paragraphs to separate them from my thoughts and analysis.

Participants: Life Stories, Educational Experiences and Defining Mino-Bimaadiziwin

The participant elders have the knowledge, skills, and life experiences that enhance the development of mino-bimaadiziwin. Each of the elders holds individual narratives with collective teachings. All four elders are from Pine Creek First Nation. They range in ages from 61 to 82 years. The elders are all fluent Ojibway speakers. Of particular note is that all four participant elders follow the Indigenous way of life. I have chosen to share biographical information so the reader can better understand the elder's perspective and worldview. I chose to use pseudonyms to provide confidentiality to the participant elders.

Participant Elder Spring

Elder Spring spent his formative years in the residential school system. After being educated in three different Indian residential school systems, Elder Spring decided to relocate to the city, shortly after he enlisted in the army. He shared that the experience he had in the residential school system prepared him for a workplace that followed similar rigorous procedures. Elder Spring experienced many challenges and barriers during his adult life. He described his relationship with his father and his children as distant. His father attended the Indian residential school, which directly affected their relationship. A significant, recent change to Elder Spring's life includes following a more traditional way of life, mino-bimaadiziwin.

Participant Elder Summer

Elder Summer describes her family history and experiences through story. She began her formal schooling by residing at the residential school for several years. She then attended the day school when the residential school closed. Her older siblings and her father resided at the Indian

residential school system for their entire school experience. She described the effects the Indian residential school experienced both on herself and her family members. Elder Summer became a teacher and during her teaching career, decided to provide opportunities for her students to learn and experience traditional teachings. Elder Summer continues to practice the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin.

Participant Elder Autumn

Elder Autumn is also a former student of the Indian residential school system. She left the community as soon as she could. She lived in Winnipeg most of her life where she raised her family. Elder Autumn and her late husband were both sun dancers and followed the traditional way of life for decades. They shared these teachings with their children. Elder Autumn faced many barriers and challenges while living away from the community. She recently returned to Pine Creek.

Participant Elder Winter

Elder Winter and his siblings attended the Indian residential school system. He gained a wide variety of experience working on the land. Elder Winter shared memories of his mother and grandmother and the support and teachings they provided him as a young boy. Elder Winter spent most of his life on the land, being a hunting guide, hunter, fisherman and outdoor enthusiast. His love of the land came through clearly during the interview process.

Defining Mino-Bimaadiziwin

The phrase mino-bimaadiziwin from Ojibway to English translates to living a good way of life. The concept is both humble and profound. It entails the teachings, the philosophy, the worldview, the knowledge, the skills, and the foundation of being Anishinabe. Mino-bimaadiziwin represents how one walk's the life journey, how one interacts with both the

physical and spiritual world, and how one honours this Indigenous way of being (Hart, 1997; Manitowabi, 2017; Styres, 2012; Wilson, 2008). In education, mino-bimaadiziwin can be represented through learning and achieving curricular outcomes related to knowledge, skills, and values. The Western and Indigenous learning models do share similarities that can support mino-bimaadiziwin in learning and growing as an individual.

Each of the elders shared their understanding and knowledge of the meaning of this principle. Each elder described their understanding of mino-bimaadiziwin. All the participants described mino-bimaadiziwin as “how one carries themselves in their daily life.” Based on their responses to this initial question, one’s daily actions demonstrate mino-bimaadiziwin. Mino-bimaadiziwin relates to the seven teachings of love, respect, humility, wisdom, courage, truth, and honesty. The family members and community shaped the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin for the participant elders. Reciprocity is an essential belief among elders. The participants explained how leading a good life with others, family, and community occur in your daily life. Elder Winter elaborated:

Mino-bimaadiziwin means a good life and kindness, regardless of who you meet, when you have kindness in you, even a stranger, go up to him, shake hands with him. Just go up to him and shake his hand. It doesn't matter if it is a woman, shake the hand, that's kindness. When you see a person that's good living, you can see it in his eyes what kind of person, you can tell by the eyes of a person, by looking in their eyes, either it is negative or positive by the way a person talks to you.

Elder Spring also describes his understanding of mino-bimaadiziwin as follows:

When someone has mino-bimaadiziwin you would see it in their personality. You will see how a person runs their normal day to day life, if they are happy, they are walking in a good way, a good solid life. When you work, you are working for a livelihood. When you are home, you are yourself, you can live mino-bimaadiziwin. When you combine the two together, you have the wealth you accumulated when you are working and you have your home life, put them together, that is where that mino-bimaadiziwin comes in. That is one way of explaining that. Well, like I say here, you can see how a person runs their normal day to day life, if they are happy, they are having a good bimaadiziwin. In order to get to mino-bimaadiziwin, you have to grow and learn. We combine our teachings, including the seven teachings, you would be living the good life. If you look at a person, you can tell if he is having a good life by how he presents himself, how he presents himself to other people, if he is happy. You can look and see that. Okay, I want that, I want to be happy like that person is, to be a model to somebody else.

Elder Summer emphasized family and the teachings instilled in the daily routine of their lives. Elder Summer commended her mother's teachings for teaching her and her siblings of mino-bimaadiziwin. Elder Summer described her understanding of mino-bimaadiziwin:

It means good living, that is what it means, to lead a good life. There are different ways, it depends, I guess, your family and who raised you has a big impact on the way you raise your kids and the way you live out your life. For me, it was my dad and my mom. My mom always cooked, she fed us, she kept a clean home. I think that it was important to her, she did not want us to go without,

because she went without. She was always like that, cooking, washing, cleaning up. You know, she would take us all to the point and go and haul wood. For us, it was not a job, it was having fun with her, we were laughing all the way there and back with her.

Throughout the interview process, Elder Summer would recall important memories about her mother and the role she continued to play in her present life. Elder Summer described the teachings her mother provided to her as a young girl and how she eventually understood the wisdom in the teachings. As a young girl, she did not understand the lesson but is continuing to master her own mother's lessons, as described in one of her childhood memories:

When they [people] were being mean to me, my mom would say manoo, she said those people had a harder time than me. As I became an adult, I understood what she was always saying, "manoo," [never mind]. Instead she would make pies and ask me to go give that person that was mean. She wanted me [emphasis added] to go give that person of that family that was mean to me. I didn't want to. I couldn't tell her that, I just put on my shoes and grabbed the pie or bannock and I went carrying it. I went swearing all the way, but my mom didn't hear me [laughter]. It was respect my mom was showing me, no matter how much we hated that person, to just be kind. She is still teaching me from wherever the good creator has her. You know, my mom was a true miracle from God, that is how I feel about my mom. She was sent to us. I never met anybody, ever, after she passed away that was like her. Nobody could even compare to the way she was, my mother. Then she would probably be telling me from the grave, "tuguhhsahnah kiin" [let see, you].

Elder Autumn provided an overview of mino-bimaadiziwin and how family plays a vital role in this concept. Elder Autumn lived many years away from her family and described how she felt that she did not have mino-bimaadiziwin because she left her community. She further explains her understanding:

Mino-bimaadiziwin means having a good life. To me, mino-bimaadiziwin is having a mother and a father that are good parents and having brothers and sisters that you enjoy being around and having meals together, going out places together. The guys go hunting with their father, riding around, being together, having feasts together. Being together, being with family, enjoying each other, having a boyfriend, having a girlfriend, nothing to do with alcoholism or drugs or anything like that. That is what I call a good life, to me that is a good life. That is what I see is a good life, loving one another, no arguments, no fighting over anything. To me, that is the best life a person can have.

This section described the participant elders, their life experiences, and their understanding of mino-bimaadiziwin. The following section describes the four themes that emerged from the stories. First, I read all the text from each participant. I reviewed the text with each participant for validation and further explanation or verification. The completion of interview sessions led to reviewing the stories with each elder. As I reflected and reviewed my notes, these four themes emerged from the stories collected and connected with and amongst one another (see Figure 1, p. 16). The conceptual framework supports these four themes by representing the medicine wheel as being circular and in the form to represent Indigenous ways of knowing (Wilson, 2008). Each of these components supports the concept of mino-bimaadiziwin equally.

Ceremony

After explaining their understanding of mino-bimaadiziwin, the four elders shared stories based on the interview guide; I provided them before we began the interview process (see Appendix E). As I organized the stories, the four themes emerged from the knowledge gathering process. In this section of the chapter, I provide thorough explanations of each theme. There is no set order for each theme, but they do reflect the medicine wheel framework discussed in chapter one of this study. They are part physical, part spiritual, part emotional, and part intellectual. The sub-themes that emerged from the data within the theme of the ceremony include attention to experiential experiences; healing; resistance and resiliency; a fundamental way of life; and practice.

Ceremonies are sacred; ceremonies are interwoven and connect to the other components of the medicine wheel (Bebonang; 2008, Stonechild, 2016; Wilson, 2008; Young, 2015). In the following section, elders share knowledge, teachings, and perspective on topics about a ceremony. Elders share knowledge through stories on prayer, smudging, dreams, medicine picking, and the Indian way of life. These stories encapsulate the knowledge, values, and ways of Indigenous people.

Ceremony is holistic.

Learning occurs through many methods and in many forms. In Indigenous communities, learning occurs through modelling and observation. According to the elders' responses, mino-bimaadiziwin is holistic. It is both an abstract and a concrete concept. Kolb (1984) combines Lewin, Dewey and Piaget's models of learning and asserts "learning is described as a process whereby concepts are derived from and continuously modified by experience" (p. 26). The

experiences the elders describe in the following section are experiential and contribute understanding of their knowledge and teachings on both ceremony and mino-bimaadiziwin.

The participant elders' own parents' and grandparents' knowledge and teachings about ceremony developed through their observation and experiential learning as children. Ceremonies, based on the participant elders' response, relate to the other three themes. Through ceremony, one connects to land, language, and story. A ceremony involves gathering medicines, plants, and food from the land. The teachings of the Ojibway practices and worldview exist within the Ojibway language through the ceremony. As ceremonies take place, stories are shared as both teachings and connecting. One Elder Autumn shared how her grandmother modelled praying in the woods. She shared the following description:

My grandmother used to take me in the bush to pick berries. She would describe how they looked. One time I picked snake berries. She used to take me in the bush and she was blind. I would hold her hand and say what I see. I would take her hand and make her touch the tree. She said, "One of these days, this tree, you'll listen to what I am telling you. One of these days you will be putting cloth, ribbon, food, tea, tobacco and you will be praying from the east, south, west, and north."

I wasn't even in school yet, I must have been about six years old. You know she did that to me? I used to see my mom getting up in the morning, take her tobacco and walk out. I used to wonder why she did that. So, one day I followed her. I took some. I put it in my little hand and I followed her. She went to a birch tree. I was looking at her, she had her arm up and was saying something [gestures]. I found the same kind of tree and prayed. All of a sudden, she said,

“Danis [daughter], one of these days my girl, you will really know what you are doing.” That’s how I learned. She modelled it.

Another similar description involved Elder Winter. He described his first-time picking medicine as a young man and what he learned from the experience. He described it as:

The first time she asked me one time to go get that medicine, I didn’t know what the heck I was doing. I didn’t know what to pick, ehh. So, I picked any old one. [laughter]. I dragged them all inside. I asked her, mom are these the ones. She looked at me and she said, “you take those things and you throw them away.” [laughter] But she taught me what kind, I know. I use four directions when I smudge. I use tobacco, that’s the leader of a smudge. When you pick medicine, you put tobacco out.

Elder Spring shared that he had only recently decided to follow the traditional way of life. He shared life experiences to describe the challenges he faced when relearning about his self and his spiritual beliefs. He provided an extended description of his journey:

I got interested in it after my first powwow. This is who I am supposed to be. The things we are supposed to do, not hide it, like how they rammed it into our heads, we aren’t supposed to be doing that, we are white people. They were trying to make us into something we weren’t. It’s hard for me to go back into that way, the cultural way of life. There’s a lot of teachings that we have to learn.

When I smudge, I cleanse my body. I pray and ask that everything that is going on, for example, this interview, that everything will go good. So, people who may read this will understand more. I pray that people will have the understanding. I ask for help, letting all what I know to come easy to speak.

That's the way I do things. Sometimes I'll smudge in the morning and pray that we will have a good day and people will be happy, so that it turns out good.

I usually go and pick medicines. We go and pick the main four. The sage, the sweetgrass, the cedar and tobacco sometimes, I use the regular tobacco and sometimes the real tobacco an elder has given me.

After my smudge, I sit there and I have a cigarette. I feel my ancestors come and sit around me. They will pass the pipe around and they will start singing. It's just me here doing a smudge and that is what I envision, that is what I see. They all come sit around me, having a smoke and singing. So far, this has been given to me. They say that things will come when you least expect it. It will be shown onto you.

I think we should introduce the more traditional ways, this would stay with them as they grow up. They will remember and it will come back to them. Like me with the language, it came back, it was still with me. In that context, it will be the same with the language and traditional teachings.

Ceremony is a healing process.

The elders shared many stories about the medicines and plants their families used for health. The land provided medicines in forms of roots, plants, and animals. In Indigenous communities, the elders are the teachers. For Elder Winter, his grandmother, lovingly referred to as koko during our interviews, played an essential role in helping to shape and to influence his own spiritual beliefs and values. He explains his koko's role in the following description:

My koko was a medicine woman. My mom was like that, too. I have my mom's medicine here, the four directions medicine. She taught me that. I make it

once and a while, we drink it once in a while. She used to take other people to pick medicine.

One time we went out trapping, there was a skunk on the trap. We went right up to it and he killed a skunk. We dragged it all the way home. We let it hang up for four days and the smell went away. Then he skinned it, we cooked it and we ate it, that's good medicine, skunk. No wonder long time ago people used to be healthy. There was never anybody sick like today, no sickness, nothing. They used to eat everything from Mother Earth. That's how they lived. They doctored themselves, with medicine, they knew everything. Mother Earth gave you the medicine to heal yourself.

Elder Summer shared an experience she had about her mother using roots to heal her blister:

I got a big scab on my hand, one time, it was so sore, it was big, too. And, like, she tried cleaning it and bandaging it and it still hurt. The next day, she took a root out of the cupboard, you know those old-fashioned sealers, she took that, she put it on the counter, she started using a nail and a hammer and she started putting little dents in it and flipped it to the other side. It was just rough, so she scrapped that root against that cover and it fell, just like powder. Then she melted a little bit of lard on the stove, she cooled it off and then she mixed that stuff with what she grinded up. Then she said, there. She put that stuff on a little cloth. Then she put it on my hand, she tied it up. She told me don't take it off. No, I told her. So, I went to bed, I forgot about my bandage. I think we had to go to school, I'm not sure. Then I asked her what about my bandage. She said, let see, bring it. She

undid that bandage; my hand was just clean. It still had that sore but it was just clean. Oh well, she said, you are going to live.

Ceremony is resilience.

For many decades, Indigenous people could not practice their ceremonies. It is necessary to understand the historical and political context of a community. Many First Nation communities have experienced loss of ceremonial practices. There does exist resistance to Indigenous spirituality. I learned about the secrecy and the resiliency community members experienced to practice their own Indigenous. All four elders spoke about the observations they made as young children as their parents and grandparents tried to maintain these practices in secrecy. These stories demonstrate the resilient nature of the elders' ancestors and how a ceremony is fundamental to the growth and links us to our broader communities and helps guide us in our journeys. Elder Spring shared how his own grandmother uses the sweat lodge teaching as best she could under these conditions:

Well, I was thinking about my grandma. When she made that little fire and covered her head what she was doing was, she was sweating. It wasn't until later on that I found out what she was doing because it was illegal. When she was younger, she knew a lot about our traditional ways, but again, all that was illegal.

You couldn't do stuff like that. If you did stuff like that, you were threatened or that religion was rammed into them to scare them. Like today, some people are still scared because it was rammed into them. They don't know how to get out of it or they think it's right. But when you look at it, it's still embedded into them. It's hard to get out of that.

Elder Summer shared her views that the church and the residential school experience had on traditional ceremonial practices in the following extended explanation:

Nobody, nobody [emphasis added] was doing traditional stuff, it was like taboo. Not even to smudge or pick sweetgrass or nobody ever did that. It was just my grandma who would pick that weekay [root medicine] and we went with her. But nobody else did anything, everybody else was scared [emphasis added], scared to go back and do all that stuff.

I remember one time, when I was living with my ex-husband, I was telling him this, like about what my mom used to tell me. I guess he got comfortable with me, we would talk lots. One time, he shared with me when his grandpa was alive that his grandpa would do sweats in the house.

He had a room, with no floor, but it had a tent, like a tent where he did the rocks and prayed and had a sweat in there for himself. It was long time ago. He did it secretly. We weren't allowed to do that. If you got caught smudging or sweats or picking medicine you would get into a lot of trouble, there would be bad consequences for that. I'm not sure if everyone ever got put into jail after that was outlawed by the government or whoever.

Because the Roman Catholic way was the way to go, we were all forced to go into that Roman Catholic religion. That had a bigger impact on the people around here than being traditional because what the Roman Catholic did was sort of brainwash the people that what they were doing before, like sweats and picking medicine wasn't God's way. So, everybody quit doing it for the longest time.

Ceremony is a way of life.

Both Elder Autumn and Elder Winter refer numerous times to the expression “the Indian way of life” through the interview process. They shared how spirituality connects to the spiritual aspect of life. A ceremony is part of their daily functions. The land and ceremony relate to one another, without the land ceremony would not be possible. The tools and sources for a ceremony are land-based. Ceremony as a way of life includes dreams, prayers, smudges, sweat lodges, and medicines (Manitowabi, 2017; Laramée, 2013; Swanson, 2013). Elder Winter describes the Indian way of life in the following explanation:

The Indian way of life is how you live when you are growing up. Your parents taught you the way, that way you don't lose it. We were brought up the way we were. Never lose your culture, the Indian way of life, to live off of Mother Earth. We step on Mother Earth every day, she is taking care of us. If we didn't have that, we would have nothing, gone. But, she's taking care of us, she feeds us, she doctors us, she watches over our way of life, regardless of who we are. There are a lot of people who don't believe in that, that don't follow that, if it wasn't for this, they wouldn't be living. I don't know if they don't want to learn or don't believe. But some do follow this way of life, it is nice when you follow this way of life.

Elder Autumn described how she received her gifts of the drum, pipe, and rattle. She shared that following the Indian way of life, there were protocols to follow. She explains as follow:

First of all, I didn't know I was given these things [gestures]. I went and contacted a medicine person. He told me you have to have a drum, a rattle and a

pipe. I asked what for? He showed me. But, you can pick that cedar, sage, sweetgrass, but you have to use tobacco. You have to ask for them before you pick them. You'll see them, they will be plentiful if you make that offering. It's good to do that. That's what you have to teach the kids, if they are interested or when they are older. The girls, especially, you have to show them. You feel good when you smudge. You know that. Smudge with them, teach them, talk to them. Pray with them. They pray in Saulteaux but they also pray in English. That's why native people who follow this way of life can heal a person without opening their body, cutting them up. They can heal them. That's what I know about medicine.

The relationship with Creator, as the elders refer to the spirit, is an important and meaningful one. Elder Autumn describes how important it is to show humility and how we received our Indigenous way of life. She explains this teaching in the following:

When things happen, when they go your way, when you ask for something, for health or for your children, what I did, was I made a feast. I would offer it and go and put it the bush with tobacco. I would say thank you for that. All the time we do it. But I couldn't do that in the city. That is the best way you can show your appreciation for the help you get. Because the way I see it, every nation was given their own way of life, this is ours. I am sure the Creator didn't just push us aside and say I don't want anything to do with you. He came here, where the Native people were and showed them how to live their lives. The way I look at it, there are saints, angels. They help people, they are protectors. I think the grandfathers and the grandmothers are the same, too. I think that's the whole way of life for us. We weren't given the white man's ways. It was given to us this way. We weren't

given any other way of life, except ours and I think we have to live this way in order to save our kids.

All participant elders shared the practice of prayer. The participant elders spoke about the importance of prayers and offering to honour Indigenous ways of being. Elder Spring described positively and fondly his practice of praying in the following:

I like to pray, how to really pray and mean it in our language, especially in a sweat or in a smudge. This stands out. I guess because when I was a kid, growing up, those nuns were trying to send me to become a priest. They saw spirituality in me. When I do pray, I am a spiritual person, I don't know if that makes sense. This is what stands out for me. The things that you do in a sweat, like after a sweat you feast, you have a meal. These things stand out in my mind where people gather around and talk and be themselves and have a good time. When you go to those sweats, people are more comfortable and happy with one another, that's what I see. When I was growing up, it was the Roman Catholic church. When I came out of there, I didn't stay with the Roman Catholic church. I went to different religions, Apostolic, Pentecostal, it didn't seem like I fit into any one of them. When I came to our traditional prayers and ways, that is where I fit.

His parents played an important role in shaping Elder Winter's beliefs and values.

Praying is vital to him. He explains his views on praying in the following:

I pray to the Creator for everything, to have a good life. Never forget what you are taught when you are young, to thank your parents how they brought you up, I had good parents. My mom and dad taught us how to live honestly. Dad was strict for that.

In the Indigenous way of life, dreams represent signs or foresight of the future. Dreams communicate messages. As a child, every morning, our family ritual around the breakfast table included sharing the dreams we experienced during the night. I continue to do this with my sons. My parents would ask everyone about their dreams, and we would share, laugh, and interpret their dreams. This practice held importance to my parents. All four participant elders spoke about the importance of dreaming before picking medicines or receiving a spiritual gift, such as a rattle. These dreams are different; they signify a person is ready for more teachings. Elder Autumn shared her views on the significance of dreams:

A lot of the medicines you cannot pick. You have to dream about them. You have to be given that right, simply because if you are given that right, you have to use it. Most of the time it isn't for yourself but it's for someone else that will ask for it later on in life. That's what the dreams are about, you are given something in your dream. If you want that medicine, you will be given through the grandfathers or the grandmothers. When you make that medicine for yourself, you ask that medicine to heal your body through the grandmothers. You ask that medicine. It will heal you, it does [emphasis added]. Some of that medicine you take, will help you to a certain point if your sickness is too far gone. That's one of the reasons why a lot people don't believe in it because it doesn't heal the person that they want to get healed. The sickness is too far gone. It will not heal, it will help but it's too late. That is the way I learned about medicine.

Dreams are connections to places beyond earth, a spiritual means of communication. Throughout the interview process, both Elder Autumn and Elder Winter stressed the importance of dreams. According to the elders, dreams are significant because of the messages they carry to

a person. They also stressed how a person should dream about a gift, offering, or experience before they are truly ready to have the experience. Elder Winter shared how his mother's dreams would provide directions for her children's hunting experiences as follows:

You know, my mom used to tell us when to go out hunting. She used to dream about it. She said, "You'll get something. You'll get a moose, you go out hunting." Sure enough, when we used to go out hunting, we would get a moose, one or two moose. "You'll kill something," she used to tell us. She used to know, she would dream about it. She phoned me one time when I was over there [gestures]. She said, "Did you go hunting?" I told her no, I did not go. She said, "You go in the morning." I asked her why. "You'll kill something," she told me. I asked her, like what mom, what will I kill? She said, "you'll kill a moose."

I took off early that one morning when she told me. Sure enough, I shot a bull, not very far. I was crossing the meadow, I seen something black. I never used to see that before. I got on my knees, I was looking, daylight was coming. As I was kneeling, sure enough it started moving. There was two of them. [laughter]. So, I waited until they got behind the bluff. I ran across the meadow. [laughter]. I got one. I shot one. She used to tell me. When I got back, I phoned her. I said mom, I got a moose. She said, "I told you you'll get a moose." So, I brought her some meat. There was lots of meat for her. She used to tell us that, yes. She would tell us about her dreams only when we were hunting. She used to tell us lots of things like that, what we were going to get.

Elder Autumn discussed the significance of dreams during an interview. She described the meaning and purpose of dreams:

If you are always dreaming about something, you are on the right path and you are going to be following that path. You do not just let it sit and sit and sit without making sure you find out why. There is always a good reason why. You do not dream for nothing. You get warning dreams if something is going to happen if you follow this way of life. See this is culture, those dreams tell you, they come around. Dreams are very, very special.

She also shared about how dreams are messages from the grandmothers and grandfathers, our ancestors. She explained the practice when following the way of life, in this extended explanation:

If you follow this way of life, if you are given a pipe or a drum, or a rattle. You are given those gifts through a dream or a medicine person that you go and see or in a lodge. You are given that right to medicine. You are given dreams about medicine that you dream about. You dream about that medicine, you have the right to pick it. You have to know why you are picking it and what it is used for. You just don't make it and give it to somebody. You have to go to a medicine man and tell him you dreamed about it. He will tell you what it is for, he will show you what it is for, then you can use it. You always have to exchange tobacco. If you go out there and just pick it on your own, and you use it, it is not going to work. You have to go through the grandfathers and the grandmothers in order for it to work. They communicate to someone through dreams, through the sweat lodge, through a shake tent, when you are fasting. They contact you through your dreams.

I wanted to share my own ceremonial experience with you, the reader, to end this section of the chapter.

The first time I made a rattle, the experience showed me how deeply connected we are to the land. I became the unofficial beading instructor for several summers at Egg Lake. There were other teachings happening as well. After a few nights of beading instruction, the novice learners felt comfortable enough with the process that I did not need to provide further guidance or instruction.

I signed up for the rattle-making session on the last night of the Summer Institute. This experience began with a song. One of the helpers beat the drum and sang in the Cree language. His voice was smooth and soft. After the song, we all stood around the tables and the instructor shared the rattle making process.

This teaching is not an easy process. First, the hunter shot the moose. The instructor shared a teaching on how their people use all parts of the moose. The moose hide was scraped clean to prepare to use the hide. The hide had been soaking in a container to prepare for rattle-making. It was a multi-day process.

The first thing we had to do was go into the nearby tree stand and find a stick for the rattle. Every step had clear instructions provided by the main guide and two helpers. We cut out our shapes for the rattle, made the holes and strung the two sides of the rattle together. As we worked individually, the instructor would move around the teepee and guide as needed.

Once we completed this step, we were sent to the nearby lake to go collect sand. We used the sand to fill the rattle so that we could shape the rattle. I found it quite difficult to put enough sand in the rattle to shape the top of it. It sure surprised me how much sand filled the rattle. We

were instructed to hang the rattle for several days while it dried and shaped its form. The summer institute finished and I hung my rattle outside my home to dry.

The instructor shared that once my rattle was dry, I was to collect a few items for the rattle for sound purposes. I shared my learning with my husband and my youngest son. I decided to travel to the blueberry patch in search of a distinct rock or item that would catch my eye. I explained the entire process to my husband so he knew that I wanted particular items in the rattle.

We drove into the blueberry patch and parked near our usually picking spot. The three of us went into separate directions. After a few minutes, my husband called me over. He shared that he felt something urged him to walk opposite my direction. When he started walking, a sharp pink stone caught his eye. When he passed it to me, I recognized it immediately. It was part of an arrowhead. My older sister had been collecting arrowheads for the past fifteen years so I knew the shape and form of arrowheads. Happiness engulfed me. My little boy found a small piece of a tree branch that he wanted me to add into the rattle. I agreed.

We returned home, and I completed the process of finishing my rattle. This experience holds great significance for me in many ways.

Land

The land relates to all the elements of the medicine wheel. The land is one of the major themes of this research study. The land serves many purposes in Indigenous teachings and practices. Land and being on the land are ceremonial. The language also comes from the land and its teachings. Styres (2012), in her research, describes “land as first teacher.” A story originates from the land. Indigenous communities honour their relationship with the land. I attended a professional development workshop which was led by Indigenous elders several years

ago. It was a moving experience for me. The one elder started his presentation by stating, “the land is your first teacher.” I carry this phrase with me. When I think about my childhood experiences, I spent so much time on the land. There are teachings, perspective, and worldview shaped by the land. Styres (2012) discusses the significance of having the perspective of land not just by its “physical space and materials” but the “complexities of the fundamental being of Land” (p. 59).

All four elders shared similar explanations about honouring Mother Earth by showing respect and thankfulness for the gifts it provided to both their families and them. It is much more than going into the forest; it is about relationality, philosophy, and worldview. The stories revealed the participant elders believe that *mino-bimaadiziwin* necessitates incorporating teachings that interconnect with one another; they cannot stand alone. These teachings would include seasonal patterns of living on the land, hands-on learning, the use of the Ojibway language, and Indigenous ceremonial practices. The sub-themes that emerged from the data within the theme of land include interconnectedness; community, medicine, methods, and harvest.

Land is interconnectedness.

Interconnectedness or relationality is more than relating to oneself, developing relationships with everything a person interacts with both in the abstract and the concrete form. As a researcher, my relationality plays an important role in this process. Wilson (2001) describes his views on relationality:

It is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos; it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge ... [hence] you are answerable to all your relations when you are doing research. (Wilson 2001,177)

Participant Elder Spring spent his formative years in the residential school system. He shared that he felt that he was only in the beginning stage of developing a closer relationship with the land. It is critical as educators to provide young children with opportunities to develop this interconnectedness with all their relations. Elder Spring stressed the importance for young children to develop a relationship with the land in the following extended response:

In my experience growing up, I never did fishing, hunting, stuff like that. I was gone for a few years from the reserve then I came back. I started fishing, ice fishing, hunting and I really enjoyed it. I was thinking, I should have done this when I was a young kid, learning all this stuff. Like I said, I am learning. At my age, I am still learning. In those days, we never did stuff like that. I feel good when I am out there. Like I am free, I never felt that freedom growing up.

Well, you are out in the bush. You are free. You can do anything, you know, you are out there [emphasis added]. I never did that when I was young, going out in the bush, like when I was in residential school. They never took us out to go picking or stuff like that.

All this stuff [traditions] that I am learning, I never knew that growing up. If you can visualize me not knowing all this stuff at a late age, trying to learn this stuff, it is a little complicated, it is a little hard. But, I do it one day at a time [laughter]. Now, if the children at a young age learn this, it will stay with them, when they come to my age, they will know a whole lot of stuff about our culture, our language, everything in that area. We lost that way of life. The way of life is

in the bush, that freedom, which is for us that freedom. Now that we have it, we are starting to live the good life.

When you take students on the land, they are free. They have the attitude, like this is where they were supposed to be. They have fun. When our old friend was alive, when we would take kids camping in the hills, we learned a lot there, through our elder. I keep asking community reps, do something, let us take the kids out again, to take those kids out. They need to be in the bush, learn how to make fire. To show them how to hunt and trap, all that traditional stuff. I am learning through my stepson. He is showing me how to hunt and fish. This is where I am getting my traditional ways. Some of that stuff that is being done in the school, I was learning along with the kids. I was learning with them, too. We were never exposed to that.

Colonization affected the community's relationship with the land in many ways. Pine Creek became a site for an Indian residential school in the late 1890s. Participant Elder Spring also shares how the church built in Pine Creek caused "a lot of people to lose their traditional ways." He continues to express how children should learn about their community history and how our Indigenous practices disappeared. Elder Spring used the term "red road", which suggests following the Indigenous way of living. As the interviews continued, Elder Spring shared the following understanding of how everyday practices and principles supported *mino-bimaadiziwin* and Indigenous way of knowing:

Mother earth keeps coming to mind. Because I think in our indigenous way of thinking, the planet, creator and mother earth, that is all blended into one. This is where we start our learning from. What we do is we combine all those

teachings and learning from that to take your next step. There are a lot of steps on what they call the red road. When you follow that and you are going along, let me put it this way, when you pick blueberries, you pick from there and then you keeping going and pick some more and you keep going.

When you are walking the red road, you are bringing your bounty as you are picking those blueberries, you are making bountiful, meaning great, you are having a bountiful life. You are full of blueberries [laughter]. I like using analogies, that is the only way I can put that one. Once your basket is full you just keep going, when you spill your blueberries into a box that's when other people are learning. Whatever you pick, you share it with other people, when you share, other people are having that bountiful life too, they are enjoying it, too.

Land is sharing and community.

During a separate interview, Elder Summer shared insight on how people would share, like Elder Spring. This practice is part of the Indigenous value of sharing and reciprocity. It honours the concept of community through actions that support one another. She described sharing in the following stories:

I remember one time, my dad and some guys, they all went hunting, I do not know where, I do not even know how they went hunting. But when they came back through the night, they got two moose. So, when they came back my mom and dad and their families, skinned and split all that meat; everybody took some of that meat. So, us, like we looked out for each other, us over there at the point, our families, probably it was the same all over. Or we would go snaring rabbits,

partridges, chickens. I knew right away those were hard times, when we started eating rabbits.

This one time, she woke me up early one time and she said let us go with koko. I got ready and we went to her house. We picked up my grandma. They went to the point somewhere and went and dig up roots. My grandma was picking plants, but I do not know what they were. Then she told my mom, amii miinik [that is enough]. I do not even remember coming home, it is just flashbacks that I had. My mom always took me with her when she went somewhere.

One time, behind the church, when you go behind that way, the field and the lake [gestures], my grandma took me there one time. She was picking stuff off the trees. Then, help me she told me. So, I started helping there. She was throwing them in a little bag. Then I asked her, what is that? She said, just pick them mawinzo [to pick them]. So, I picked. She filled up a little bag about this big [gestures], with those little round, white things. She said, "Don't eat them." Then that was it, we went back to her place. When we got back to where she lived, she threw all those things in a bowl then she started peeling those things, there is a little round circle in those things. There is a little hard, round circle it looks like a pearl. Then, I asked her wegonan doodaman [what are you going to do with those?] She said she is going to send them to Winnipeg, this woman wanted them. We are picking them for her. She is going to pay me, my grandma said. Then I told her, aaniin miinik wiimiishian [how much are you going to give me] She said, kang gah goo [nothing]. I thought, oh well. Then years and years after, I grew up I went looking for those things, I found it. I peeled it and it did look like a little

pearl, after you rinse it out in water. I do not know what that woman did with them.

Land is our source of life.

All four participants spoke in a loving, respectful way when describing the land and their experiences on it. They view the land as a place not only for food and for medicine but a place that provides everything to live. The land offers plants, roots, berries for energy, healing, and renewal. The relationship with the land is significance. Battiste (2002) describes this relationship in the following explanation:

Indigenous Knowledge is also inherently tied to land, not to land in general, but to a particular landscape, landforms, and biomes where ceremonies are properly held, stories properly recited, medicine properly gathered, and transfers of knowledge properly authenticated (p. 11).

Throughout the interview process, the data revealed Elder Winter's respect for the land's teachings provided to his family and him. He repeatedly stated through the entire interview process, "Everything I learned is because I had good teachers, I had a great mom and dad." His philosophy and worldview became shaped by his parents and his grandparents.

Everything that was from Mother Earth, they used for medicine. We stepped on medicine everywhere we went, most of it we do not know, lots of it. We are stepping on it, the roots. Every tree, you see, is a living thing. They are alive. And they create medicine, too. They have medicine, everything.

Animals, they are medicine. Birds, duck, geese, all medicine. Even the frogs are medicine. Even snakes are medicine. They are medicine. Every living animal, I do not know if I should say this but, when you have warts, a cow, the

waste of a cow, you take that and you rub that, and it kills your warts. I used to have warts, that is what I done. No more warts.

Just like a skunk, the liquid of the skunk, it saved my life. My mom gave me that, to drink. That was hard to take. I had to drink it in order to get cured, she put a little bit of orange juice, I was small, I was always sick. I guess this one time, she took this from the skunk, but I took it, it cured me, it practically saved my life.

We lived from Mother Earth a long time. The medicine and the hunting, the land fed you, cured you with the medicine. It healed you, it fed you with the hunting. It gave you blueberries. There were all kinds of berries, cranberries, berries, loganberries, raspberries, strawberries, everything! [emphasis added]

During the middle of the interview process, I asked Elder Spring about his relationship with the land and whether he thought that his relationship with the land grew. The stories show that the participant elder Spring acknowledges how important the land is to his family and community. He responded with the following:

Yes, say with fishing, the fish nurture us and make us feel good and healthy, same thing with the animals. The deer give us all the nourishment. The Creator put them there for us to utilize them, for our bodies to be healthy. This is another way of having a good life, eating well. When I look at it, I see all these diseases we never had, diabetes, cancers, we never had those before. When they put all these chemicals in the land, it is not good for us, that is the way I see things.

Land is ceremonial.

There are Indigenous hunting approaches as methodology. The stories revealed practices and protocol in land-based practices. They connect to ceremony, land, language, and story, the four themes of mino-bimaadiziwin. Elder Winter had spent decades on the land. He was a hunter, fisherman, trapper, and gatherer. The land is central to Elder Winter's knowledge, teachings, and worldview. Throughout the interviews, he shared stories of his hunting expeditions, usually ending in laughter. Elder Winter shared many teachings received from his parents and grandparents. These teachings are shaped by the love of the land, the respect for Mother Earth, and the gratitude that animals would offer themselves as food to his family and him. Indigenous philosophy and worldview honour these teachings; there is a ceremonial aspect of these practices. He shared many customs and traditions that he has been gifted in the following extended description of hunting, trapping, snaring, smoking fish and making maple sugar. I share Elder Winter's personal extended story, as recorded and transcribed, in its entirety in the following:

Moose Hunting

I done a lot of skinning, moose, yea that is how I learned, my brothers used to tell me that even my dad, well I had good teachers, my mom and my dad and my brothers. That is the first thing use to do when you kill a moose, you cut the "necktie", that is the one thing he is [the moose] proud of, the bulls, that is the first thing you do then you hang it up. My dad and brothers taught me what to do.

You always put tobacco, we always put tobacco. My brother always smoked, so we always had tobacco. I did not smoke that much, me. You put the

tobacco on the moose head, and say a prayer, you make the four directions, always this way [gestures clockwise] never the other way [gestures counter-clockwise], always this way.

You gotta respect even his legs. We used to put the legs in one pile, while we are skinning it, cause we used to cut the legs off. We put them in one pile, do not just throw them away like that, a lot of guys do that, they do not have no respect. I don't know if there are a lot of guys who put out tobacco when they kill something, any animal you kill. Even beavers, muskrats, you gotta have respect. They feed you, they feed your families, whatever you get, meat, anything, fur.

When you kill something, what do you do, you put tobacco. And you thank the animal for feeding your family. To give up its life to feed your family, anything, you give tobacco because you are feeding your family.

We would just leave the moose legs there. Let the little animals take care of them. Sometimes we would make a big fire. We would throw the legs into the fire, just like that [gestures]. They would gradually burn all the fur and the bone. The bone would just [gesture], when you hit it, it would just break. It would crack. You used to cut little sticks, you make little sticks to dig the meat [marrow] out. Or if we had bannock, we would put it on there, it would taste good. We used to take everything, even the nose, the chin. We singed the nose, the tongue, especially a cow, we took everything. We used to take everything when we used to hunt.

There used to be a lot of rabbits when we were hunting. I used to eat a lot of rabbit. Even the beavers, we used to hang them up, smoke them. Boy they are

good eating, even muskrats. My mom used to like those muskrat tails, when we used to be trapping. She used to put them in the oven, she used to like that, even the beaver tail. You put them in the pan, my mom used to line up the little muskrat tails. She used to like them, even the beaver tails, she used to cook them.

We used to bring everything when we were trapping like that. She used to say, "Don't throw away anything you get, bring it home." So, we used to bring everything home. When we killed a moose, especially a cow, we used to take everything, the tongue, the nose, the chin, even the jaws here, we used to skin, we used to eat that, to boil them. They are good, singe them a little then boil them. Do not throw away anything. A long time ago, people used to take the hooves. But I do not know what they did with them. They used to take everything long time ago, you know [emphasis added].

Smoking Animals

You start off with dry willows. That red willow is good to use. It would dye the suckers, it would just turn red. We used to use red willow. I smoked quite a bit of fish. I had everything to smoke. We used dry logs. I was making a frame last fall, it is still here. It is easy to make. It is good to use dry poles; some guys make them this way [gestures]. They used willows, they made lines. Even old plyboard was good to use. My mom used to do that. I made barrels, I made them myself. I have a couple of them. I am going to make them in the bush in the spring. You watch over the fish, not to smoke them too much. You watch for them to turn a little brownish, then you turn them, ehh. I smoked suckers, even pickerel fillets. I even used to smoke rabbits. They taste good. Even muskrats, ohh they taste good

when you smoke them, yup muskrats. When you eat the rabbit, you eat everything, the heart, the kidneys.

Snaring Rabbits

The rabbits, you know right away, when they start to mate. They whistle. You ever hear them? They whistle. I used to hear them when they start looking for their mates. [laughter] When you snare rabbits, you use snares and stick. I use dry willows. A lot of guys used green, but the rabbits they eat the bark off that green, that is why I always used dry willows. I place my sticks at an angle, not too high, about that high [gestures]. I used to snare a lot of rabbits, I used to snare lots. I used to go out with my brother to go snare. We used to go out walking. We did not have anything to use at that time, we used to walk. We used to chop down poplar willows, chop them down. You used to go a couple of days or the next day after and there would be a lot of marks. The rabbits were starting to feed, that is where we used to snare. There would be lots of little roads coming from all directions.

Maple Sugar

Maple trees, they make sugar out of that. My old grandma used to do that in the spring time. There were lots of those trees one time over here. [gestures] She used to do that in the spring. When you make that, you gotta cut the trees. They got those little cans. You cut the tree like that [gestures], they use to use a saw. And cut it like this, [gestures] and make some kind of slot so the sap would fall in the can. They used to make a fire, a big fire, they would put the sap in there. Sometimes in good spring weather, the sap would just go in there, you had

to move fast. They used to boil that stuff, that sugar. They used to let it harden up. They used to make little birch containers, oh, they were good at it. They let it harden up. After it harden up, it was just like block cheese, that's how it used to turn out. It took a few days. Boy, that was good. My old koko used to give me some of that.

Salt Picking

We used to go to grandmas. I used to go with her to pick salt in the alkaloids. She'd make salt. She got salt from the ground, sugar from the trees. I used to go with her to pick salt, I was small but I remember. She used to take me with her, and she'd boil that. I used to see her boiling it to get the salt. There was pepper too, but I don't know what kind of a plant it is, eh. They didn't buy pepper, they got it from Mother Earth, long time ago, everything they got from Mother Earth. But today you go ask someone about that, he thinks you'd be talking crazy. They lived from Mother Earth. That's why people use to be in good health long time ago, there was no sickness like what we have today, nothing, very seldom you would hear someone was sick. They used to cure each other, that Aboriginal medicine they used to use.

Elder Summer also shared her own family's practice of smoking fish, similar to Elder Winter's family's practice in a similar manner. The following is Elder Summer's description:

Smoking Fish

When they would smoke fish, they would make them right outside the house. They would make that, that thing that looks like a teepee and there were rows and rows of sticks. Then they would hang that fish. My dad would start the

fire and place a big tarp around it, he would start to smoke that fish. It was not my dad that went and got the wood. It was my mom and us. She always went and got dry, fallen red willow because it was dry. Plus, regular wood to start the fire. But after that they would throw that red willow into the fire. The red willow was used to smoke it. They had about eight of those sticks [rows] hanging, there were so many fish.

Berry gathering is still an ongoing practice for many Indigenous people. For decades, people would leave their residential homes and camp at “blueberry patch” for the summer. I share similar experiences like the elder participants about berry gathering. Berry gathering is a collective experience. This sub-theme of land is significant because it demonstrates mino-bimaadiziwin to the fullest extent. Mino-bimaadiziwin is land-based, experiential learning while gathering in the evening for stories and a sense of community. It also shows how the land provides for everyone in a variety of ways, through hunting, berry, plant, and root gathering. The land provided everything for our people to live. Elder Winter shared his own experiences and observations about berry picking:

Every summer we got out of school. Every summer dad went, everybody went. Camperville, Duck Bay and here, everybody [emphasis added]. There used to be a lot of pickers, there were tents all over, picking berries. That was the lifestyle, that is how they lived. There was nothing them years. There was no allowance, no welfare. Everybody had to do something to make a living, a long time ago. Today, it is easier, they get everything. Some of them don't even have to work.

They used to have stores at blueberries. I think my uncle used to run the store, he used to take care of it. At night, people would sit around the campfire, tell stories. We used to play a little ball there, young kids, us. There used to be a lot of people. Every one used to be gone to the blueberry patch.

There were lots of people in blueberry patch, all over the place. We wouldn't start to pick until late, cause in the morning there's lot of dew. They were wet, you can't pick when it wet, you have to wait until they dry up, around eleven o'clock, getting close to lunch time, that is when we used to start picking, they are really dry, they'd be good. I used to be lazy to pick berries, it was hard on the knees to crawl [laughter]. But we had to pick.

There were bears around, lots of bear, but they didn't really bother us. They had lots to eat, lots of berries. Lots of saskatoons, lots of everything, they didn't really bother the people. We used to have a dog or a couple of dogs with us. People would take their dogs; the bears didn't bother us.

In the muskeg, we used to dig holes to get that cold water. The water was cold. It used to be clear, like that spring water, clean and cold. You boil it with tea, that muskeg tea, that time it was loose tea. Blue ribbon, loose tea, you put the leaves in there with the tea, boy that's nice. It's medicine that stuff [muskeg tea]. I used to like drinking that.

During the interview process, Elder Winter spoke of Mother Earth and areas of land as though they were a spiritual body or entity. He would speak fondly of the river as though it was an old familiar friend or that it had a spirit or life. These stories demonstrate the close relationship between Indigenous people and the land. He continued to share Indigenous

knowledge about the seasonal changes, “When the tiger lilies come out, you know you can hunt. In the fall, you know when they start rutting, especially the moose in September. The deer do not start rutting until November.” Elder Winter credits his parents with the teachings that gave him the perspective and understanding of the land he calls Mother Earth.

Language

Language holds the key to understanding Indigenous perspective, teachings, and worldview. The language contains many teachings about Indigenous epistemology or ways of knowing. Language usage has continued to become endangered (Norris, 2007). Fluent language speakers are becoming less and less in many communities across the nation. There are programs started to revitalize language in communities. During the data analysis process, I shared the conceptual framework with the participant elders and all four elders emphasized the importance of language over the other three themes. Elders share their perspective on the teachings in the language, the language loss and impacts, and provide teaching practices to ensure the language in being used in classrooms today. Neegan (2005) states, “It is critical for Aboriginal children to be educated in culturally sensitive ways. Furthermore, being able to learn one’s language and culture makes one more empowered, which is crucial for the survival of Aboriginal cultures and worldviews” (p. 7). The sub-themes of language include structure, meaning, and a cultural connection.

One of the interesting topics about language that arose included the correct or accurate name of the language spoken in our community. The name of our language has different references, including Ojibway, Anishinabe, Saulteaux and informally, Indian. These names are identified based on historical, political, and social contexts. Elder Summer shared her perspective on the name of our language, “I spoke Ojibway at home before I went out to school. We do not

use that word, ‘Saulteaux’. We use Ojibway.” I asked her why some people call it the Anishinabe language. She explained the term:

That’s just any person speaking their language. Anishinabemowin, it means speaking the [emphasis added] language. Anishinabe means an Indian, anybody from any reserve can be Anishinabe and could be any Indian. There was no English in our house.

Language is meaningful.

Throughout the interview process, elders would use both English and Ojibway in their responses. I grew up around the language. My older siblings are fluent, and as school became the leading role in our lives, English prevailed. My first language is English. I am not a fluent speaker, and during the interview sessions, elders translated some of their expressions or phrases to English. They appeared willing to teach the language structure and meaning and how it contrasted from the English language. English is noun-based while Ojibway is verb-based. This difference demonstrates an Indigenous way of being, which is to think differently from English speakers. Elder Spring highlighted the differences in the following:

When someone is talking our language or if I am trying to teach someone our language, I will simplify it. I will break it down what we are saying. For example, “omah bizhan”, “omah” means “here”, “bizhan” means “come.” It’s backwards [laughter]. When we talk, we are talking backwards from English [laughter].

But when we [more than one language speaker] talk, we know what we are saying. But we are always talking backwards or another one. Here’s an easy one: “omah piwisinin” it means “come eat here.” I noticed that when we talk, we

are talking backwards. We put our last words in the front and the front in the back, like it's how we think different. Like I say, we talk backwards [laughter]. When you were talking about the differences between our languages, that's the difference. So, we have to talk backwards to everybody [laughter].

Our spoken language is more meaningful than English, according to Elder Autumn. She also identified that meaning became lost during translation to English. The following is her perspective on the difference between Saulteaux and English:

The difference between the English language and the Saulteaux language or another native language, the words they use are meaningful [emphasis added]. They have a meaning, every word they say, have meaning, it makes sense [emphasis added]. There are some English words that we talk that you can't translate in Saulteaux because that's a different way of life. They use the "I" language.

Our language has so much more meaning than the English language. It hits your heart. When you follow this way of life, if you are meant to follow this way of life, you can talk to see spirits and you will see these spirits. People don't believe that. You do see them. You do hear them. You do talk to them. They talk to you.

What I found out about the native language its meaning is more sincere than the English language. The English language is just like a business language. The Saulteaux language goes along way.

Language is culture.

Language is part of a group's culture. Language holds the perspective, teachings, and worldview of a cultural group. Elder Spring described the impact of not learning one's Indigenous language in the following:

They need to understand our culture, our language from an early age. To be able to understand who they are as Anishinabek. Like I find it difficult for children nowadays because their parents don't really know the language and the culture. It wasn't taught to them. Our children today are having a hard time to grasp that so if they were taught that an early age, they could understand our culture, our history and our languages. As a Native language teacher, I found it difficult to teach the young ones. They didn't understand. They didn't know what was presented to them. When I think about myself, when I was in residential school, they were teaching us French and that to us, was a foreign language that we couldn't grasp. It was the same thing, when we were altar boys and when they were teaching catechism, everything was in Latin, which was another foreign language we had to learn. They didn't teach us our language, which was unfortunate at that time.

Elder Autumn shared a similar view to revitalizing the language. She spoke about the importance of language in a ceremony, another theme in this research study. She shared the following:

Learning the language, they can get along with people. When you don't know your Native language and you are sitting in a room with a bunch of our people [emphasis added] you don't know what they are saying. They don't

translate what they are saying so you are lost. You want to get out of there because what is the use of you sitting there, not understanding, wishing you could understand. No matter where you go, you meet people, you meet a lot of Natives. If you go to powwows, sun dances, gatherings, all they talk is their Native language. Your advantage is to learn that language. In gatherings and ceremonies, they pray in the Native language, it is nice to speak that language. You'll be happy. You'll be confident. When we were in the residential school, they wouldn't let us talk our native tongue.

During the interview process, we would return to previous questions, and I would ask participant elders whether he or she would like to explore the topic further. Elder Spring shared his views on language loss and the effects on a cultural group. The stories show that we are continuing to experience language loss and with that, knowledge and teachings. Language connects to our culture, history, and identity. He described it in the following manner:

All of our languages would be eliminated. We would lose our culture, our history and our identity. For example, right now, if some of our people would try and speak the language, they would mix it up with English. The language is being torn apart with English and our language. If you look at in stages, a long time, they would speak fluently. When they were interrupted with that residential school and couldn't speak their language, when they came out, they just knew a little. They mixed the English and our language together. And now, it's going more English and our language is slowly disappearing. That's my thoughts on that, that's the way I see it. It will disappear... eventually.

Elder Winter also shared similar views on the topic of language as Elder Spring. Again, the knowledge gathering and stories show that language connects to culture. It is essential to understand why language is important and why it must be preserved, promoted, protected, and revitalized. Hermes and Uran (2006) discuss the critical awareness of the connection between language and identity (pp. 395-396). Elder Winter described how language supports culture and identity. He shared the following:

Some elders, they can talk Saulteaux, real high words in Saulteaux. It's hard to understand them. But that's how it is. That's the first thing they should teach them, their Saulteaux. Because if you lose it, that's it, your culture, you are done, you don't understand. The only language you will understand is English, the mooniyah [non-Indigenous] way.

If we don't have our language, we don't have our culture. What if you run into old Native people, and they are asking you about stuff like, they know you are Aboriginal. They start talking to you in Saulteaux, you wouldn't understand what they are saying to you. They might think, oh this person is so proud of himself, he won't even talk to us. Then you would be stuck, you wouldn't know what to say. They wouldn't understand what you say in English. They'd say mooniyah kwe [non-Indigenous woman]. They don't understand you, you don't know how to talk in Saulteaux. Some young people have their native language, their native tongue. Some, you talk to them in Saulteaux but they understand, they use their English language to talk to you.

Several of the elders shared how language loss occurred through the Indian residential school system. Students became forbidden from speaking their language. They did share that

they heard and spoke other languages, including English, French and Latin. Elder Winter shared his own experience while in a residential school in the following:

And now, they never allowed us to talk our Native language in the residential school. If the nuns heard you talking, you would get a good slap. I never lost it. A lot of these guys never lost their native language when we were in the residential school.

Elder Summer also shared her own experience with language as a residential school student. I asked if she had heard other languages spoken while a student. She stated, “Just French. We were not allowed to speak. We heard English and just little French they were trying to show us.” She also shared a significant memory of how one of the nuns working at the school would always use one French term to call the students, “Chien, chien, chien, that one nun used. We irritated them. Chien, chien, chien, that’s what she was always [emphasis added] saying to us.”

Stories

The practice of story is a significant part of this research study, it is the research method. The use of story connects people to their identity, their culture, their community, and their history. The following extended stories became shared with me, the researcher, throughout the knowledge gathering process. These stories center around the other three themes of ceremony, land, and language. Some stories initiated interview sessions because elders specifically wanted to share part of their own stories and experiences they had experienced growing up and the teachings imparted to them. Sub-themes emerged through the theme of story to include empowerment, culture, Nanabush as a teacher, educational experiences, personal experiences, community history, and healing and finding mino-bimaadiziwin. Each story has its meaning and

place in this research process. It is a collection of stories by the elders and it is considered to be gifts of a story for the reader.

Story is empowering.

Elders shared many different stories throughout this research process. Elder Spring shares a particularly empowering experience he had through the act of sharing a story. Participant Elder Spring shared how story honours life and teachings:

When I was young, they would go to a house and tell stories. I'd be sitting there and watching them and listening. They'd be telling all kinds of stories, anything, or how people would react to something. There would be a lot of laughter, camaraderie. I remember that. I remember my grandparents, they would sit us down and tell us stories. One of the stories I can think of, oh boy, it's all in pieces. I remember when she [grandma] was telling us a story, but now I can't remember it. I remember her telling us about Nanabush. There were all different kinds. The way they would say it to us, Nanabush was a trickster or one that would make people laugh. It's been a while since I talked about this, something is blocking it out. If I knew that story, the whole story, there was one she told us but I can't bring it out right now. My grandma would tell us lots of stories.

Stories are important, especially for mainstream society, to recognize and see what we went through as children. For people to understand what happened, these stories are real. The mainstream society, still to this day, they may be ignorant about it, they don't want to know. When I was at Red River College, when I did those presentations and essays, that's all that I spoke about, residential schools. They finally understood me. At first, they didn't want to listen,

they'd say "Oh no, there he goes again." After a while they got into the presentations.

It teaches them how we used to live, to tell the stories of the old days, of our culture and history. If we tell them stories regarding the old days, it will make them understand our ways more. Stories are ways of teaching young people our culture, our history, the important thing is for them to know who they are [emphasis added], if stories help them realize that, they become a better person.

After we get this information out there, this is what could happen, then maybe mainstream society will change their opinion about us and our children as they go out there. A lot of people in mainstream society, they are thinking about it, but we have to make them wonder more about it. It will be safer for our children when they go out there.

Elder Summer shared how learning the Ojibway language empowered her. By using her language, it gave her a stronger sense of community. She interacted with fluent speakers in a more meaningful way. She connected to people through the language. She shares her experience as follows:

I got sick with tuberculosis. My dad sent me to Cranberry Portage, to go to school over there. When I was over there for six months, I came home. They took me right to the doctor. That doctor didn't even let me stay home, they sent me to the sanitorium. I was sick bad with TB, that doctor in Winnipegosis told my parents not to expect me to come home, that's how sick I was. So, off away I went. I went to Winnipeg for six months, then from Winnipeg they sent me to Ninette. And in Ninette, another awful place, the first person I seen when I got there was

Hilda Portage⁴, geez, she was a nice woman, a nice old lady, her hair was just white. She started talking to me right away, she was friendly, like she wanted to get to know me. She asked me where I was from so I told her Camperville and Pine Creek. She said, ohh, Susan⁵, I understood her, because of the language we spoke at home, I understood her. I said, who? She said, my sister was married that way, like to Camperville. Then I asked her who? Then she said, Susan I said, that's your sister? She said yes. Then I said, okay, you kind of look like her. Then she said nishiimenz, [little sister]. We hit it off right away, we became friends.

When I'd be crying, she'd always be coming to see me. Then she'd say aniin [what's wrong]" I told her I want to go home. Then she told me kahwiin kinashin ga ya si [I won't be there long] and gego mawikan [don't cry]. Umbe [come] she'd told, umbe pimosedah [let's go for a walk]. That's how she got me out of my loneliness, in the meantime she'd always be talking to me in our language.

Then when I started talking in English, she'd say "kaygoo gego zhaaganaashiimokan [don't talk in English, talk in Indian]. I don't know what you are saying, that's what she'd tell me. I was kind of forced to talk to her because she was my only friend. Every day she's come and visit me. She'd take me outside. We would go walking around outside, all the time she'd be talking in our language and I was forced to listen to her, and try to understand her, I picked up fast. I guess because being talked like that at home, I understood right away what she was saying. I was so happy someone knew my family! [emphasis added]

⁴ Pseudonym

⁵ Pseudonym

Story is lived.

An honoured tradition that many people are experiencing involves receiving one's spirit name. It is often termed "Indian name" but there exists a movement to use the term "spirit name" in recent years. It is both ceremony and tradition. Based on the knowledge gathering process, it is revealed through storytelling how culture can be explored, learned, and celebrated. Elder Summer chose to share how she received her spirit name by the following story:

You know, I want to share that with you how I got my spirit name. Do you remember when my sister first married her husband when they used to live here? At the time, I was learning from my sister. She told me I had to get my Indian name. I asked what do you mean? She said, you have to ask someone to give you your Indian name. It has to be an elder. I was trying to think of someone around here. I didn't want to ask anybody. First of all, many people didn't believe the traditions, it was all our residential school people who were the elders at the time. Then, I went and talked to my other sister at her house where she used to live. I told her what our other sister said, that I had to get my Indian name. I asked her how do you get an Indian name and that I didn't know how. Her husband, who was standing behind her, near the sink said, my koko gives Indian names. Then I looked at him and asked who is his koko. He told me her name and she live in Saskatchewan and I would have to go over there.

I went. I drove over there one weekend. I had a visit with them, with her and her boys. I asked them that I wanted to get an Indian name. That boy, explained to his mom what I wanted because she didn't talk English. Then she went okay. She wouldn't give me right away. That guy said you have to come

back. I said "When?" He said, maybe a week's time. I asked him what I had to bring. He told me to bring tobacco, cloth, something to have a feast with. I was thinking, well, that's a long way to bring a bunch of food. I asked him, do I have to come and sleep here and prepare the food when I get up. He looked at me and then laughed. He said, just bring stew and bannock, that's a feast he said. I said okay.

Now, it's the time for me to come, I made the stew the night before and bannock. So, I could just grab it and leave. I left four thirty in the morning, I had to get there before sunrise. There I am, driving fast to get down the highway and I made it. I took in my stuff. I gave her the tobacco and told her what I was there for. "Alright" her son said, "let me get my friend here." Then he left [emphasis added].

All of a sudden two or three guys walked in. "We are here to help," he told that old lady in our language. "Kibiwigigo," the boy said. "Umsah" that old lady said. They started everything. They made a fire outside. It was a great big fire. Now, they were bringing in those coals, enough to fit in a frying pan. Next, they were putting all the medicines in there. So, this man walks there and he has two other guys with him. Each of them is carrying something. So that son, he makes room in the middle of the floor and we all sit down. Those guys are bringing hot coals in a frying pan and they are smudging. This guy unwraps this cloth about this big [gestures] and they start smoking the pipe. They made me smoke it, that was the first time I ever smoked a pipe. But that old lady wouldn't. She just sat off in a chair by herself, while we sat in a circle. We did four rounds

of that pipe. That son asked him mom, “Did anything come to you?” She said, “comehsheh” (not yet). Then they started going around with that pipe again. There I was smoking that pipe, first time in my life I was so scared. Then she said “Okay, azha.” We did the four rounds and she stopped. That son asked her what is it and they are talking in the language.

She said, “Wi obah nah, gi dishinkaazh, nita wi bineshi gindishinakse”[good to speak my language bird]. I was so happy [emphasis added] I could have jumped for joy! We all got up, we had the feast with the stew and bannock. We all shared, then I gave them tobacco. Then we left. When I got home, I was scared to sleep in case I forgot my Indian name [emphasis added]. I just conked out because I was so tired. When I opened my eyes, I thought, my Indian name! I jumped up I was so happy that I remembered. Maybe three years after, maybe a year, I guess that old lady was always asking for me, asking where I was, that I should go and see her. I never did go back and see her. She passed away after that. My sister’s husband told me that she always talked about me after I left. He told me that she wondered if I remembered my Indian name. He said that I was one of the last of the few people that she gave an Indian name too. She was an older lady, old [emphasis added].

Elder Spring also shared teachings on receiving his spirit name. He explained how the ceremonies provide the teachings. Elder Spring also shared how different people had different procedures for a ceremony. However, felt that “each individual is different and they are learning differently.” He shared, “they gave me *mako peendigin* [bear that comes in].” He went into the sweat lodge, and the person inside the lodge prayed, and the name came to that person for Elder

Spring. He further explained that the lodge-keeper “asked the creator to give my name through that ceremony.”

Story is Nanabush.

In Nanabush stories, Nanabush plays several roles to the Anishinabe people. He represents many forms, including trickster, teacher, and spirit. Nanabush stories become shared from generation to generation. As an Anishinabe mother, I sought texts on Nanabush during my sons’ formative years. They sure enjoyed the humour and delight in Nanabush’s stories. We shared many laughs, and it became the most requested book that my youngest son read.

During my Bachelor of Education studies, I researched and wrote an essay on community members experiences in Indian residential schools. I interviewed local elders about both their formative and school experiences. We talked about Nanabush. They would enjoy the humour displayed in the stories of Nanabush. By the time the elder would get to the lesson or moral, he or she would be laughing and wiping away tears, recalling the humour and teachings Nanabush provided for them at a young age. Nanabush stories support the seven teachings through Nanabush’s action in the stories for young children to learn. Elder Winter shared his knowledge on Nanabush and how it connected to the land in the following description:

Ohhh, Nanabush, you’re looking at one [laughter]. There’s lot of stories about Nanabush. They used to talk about that, those old people. They make stories out of him about living.

You know when you go into the bush and you see a poplar like this ehh [gestures] and it’s like this [gestures] like a chair. They used to say, Nanabush’s chair, that’s where he sits. Like that little picture I got, Nanabush sits here. They

used to make all kind of different stories. These old people would make all kinds of stories about Nanabush.

The sharp tails, agizcoo, you ever see them when they are dancing? They make noises when they are dancing. Me and my brother sneaked up on them once. We were camping and we heard them early in the morning. We went and seen them dancing. They make a circle and flap their wings and a sound, early in the morning, that is what they do. Agiscoo. sharp tails, that's what they do, they make noise when they are dancing around.

Elder Autumn supported Elder's Winter's explanation of Nanabush and the stories told by the older people. She explained how her grandmother would "sit close to the woodstove. She would make us little girls sit around and the little boys in front of her. She would tell us a story." She shared how, when stories occurred, they held great significance for the listener. Elder Winter provided one of many stories about Nanabush in the following account:

One-time Nanabush was looking for food, he was hungry. He was following this little trail. Then all of a sudden, he heard...something. He wasn't too sure what it was, my grandma said. So, he kind of went toward that sound, sneaking, he started crawling because he heard something louder. He heard these little birds, sharp tails.

They were dancing in a circle. Just having a good time [gestures], a big dance for them. They were making a lot of racket. He was hungry and he was licking his mouth. He wanted to eat them, he was starving, he was hungry. So, he showed himself but he went that way [gestures] and came in the front. He said, "That's not the way you dance this dance." They all stopped and they looked at

him. They didn't run away, they didn't fly away, they just looked at him. "This is how you dance," he said. "You got to close your eyes." He's dancing and they are following him.

He went quite a few rounds, dancing. Then he stopped and told them, "keep on dancing, keep on dancing." In the meantime, one at a time, he is breaking their necks and throwing them over there [gestures] until they are all gone [laughter]. He had a lot to eat [laughter]. That's Nanabush [laughter].

Story is learning.

This research study focuses on identifying and describing mino-bimaadiziwin as a way to support student's academic success of both Indigenous and Western models of learning. The participant elders' life stories are important as they share knowledge and teachings about Indigenous ways of knowing. Educators should be cognizant of a community's social, cultural, and historical contexts. I included this story, not as analysis but for explanatory purposes. Through the story, the reader can gain insight and understanding into this participant elder's experiences and how their knowledge and teachings contribute to this research study. There persisted many challenges and barriers for the former Indian residential school students from that education model. Their experiences are personal, informative, and valuable. I want to honour their stories. Elder Summer shared her extended personal story on her education:

We went to day school in that residential school. The only thing with us, we went home at the end of the day, where those other kids stayed there. That place was full to an extent, my sister was in there.

I was in there [living there] for a while. Like, maybe to me, like the time went so fast, it could have been years, but it seemed like only months. 1969,

maybe 65-67, the other [new] school might have been built and all those buildings, that church, the residential school, where the priest lived, it was all made out of stone, the men like from around here, built that place.

They built that church and that residential school, they just hauled those rocks from the lake. They were from all over [the children]. In 1969, they let them go. Maybe '65, all of a sudden, those kids were gone. Like, one day, it was just us, the kids from the reserve, going to school. They were building that school then all of a sudden, we were all going there. Then, the way that the residential school sat, where those kids came in and out of, we went to a side building, maybe that's where I did grade one and two. Because we had to go in there and had to go upstairs to go to school. The only thing with us is, we went home at the end of the day, where those other ones had to stay there.

A lot of kids ran away from there. I remember my mom telling me, you know where that baby place is in the graveyard, that's where a lot of those girls in that residential school, that's where their babies are buried. The ones that got pregnant from those priests, that's what my mom used to say. But silly me, I used to think, I couldn't put two and two together, I used to say, well, why would a priest have a baby? How could a priest have a baby? He's not even married, that's what I used to think. My mom used to say, two boys ran away from there, they were never found. It was in the winter, they ran away and nobody ever found them. They must have died somewhere by the lake. So even then, like even after it was shut down, they still had that mentality of us.

And even, for me, another thing that just popped in my head was the sisters. They were the last nuns here. And yes, I thought Sister X was a beautiful person, until she gave me a licking. Then I didn't like her anymore. She was mean and coming here and acting all good. It had such a bad impact on me, not only physical but mental.

There was a lot of mental abuse from those nuns and that priest. I didn't want my kids, when they were getting bigger to go through anything like that ever [emphasis added], in their lives. I used to think when my kids were growing up, how could I make a difference to them. I went to school, but at school, and with my sister, we used to talk about what I am talking about. She was already going that traditional way, it was pulling her and she talked to me. She told me, that's not us, that Roman Catholic religion, it was forced upon us. She was like the Oka crisis, that's how she was [laughs]. She had a lot of anger toward the Roman Catholic church. It was her and when I went to university, some professors were going back and relearning the traditions. With my sister, she told us to do this and that. I was kind of railroaded into doing this. I was scared but it was nothing to be scared of. The more she pushed the traditional way, the more I let go of that other way.

Elder Winter shared how his mother demonstrated mino-bimaadiziwin through her teachings and daily living. Opportunities for children to build their skills, after much observation and listening, through participation and practice took place (Gray, 2011; Neegan, 2005). He shared the following about his mother:

I used to watch my mom when she would dry the meat. She would dry the meat real nice, that jerky, moose especially. She used to cut it thin, after she dried it so much, it was crispy. My mom used to have a canvas, she used to throw all the jerky in there and hit it with a stick, to make it into pieces, small pieces. You use to eat that with brown sugar and lard. I used to watch my mom do that.

Even the chokecherries, go look for a black stone, real flat. It's got to be a little bit flat. She'd take those chokecherries and she would smash them, like a grinder then she'd cook that in the frying pan, it was like blueberries, it was good. Everything, they knew everything, how to survive, what to do.

I used to help her make deer hides and moose hides. We would put sticks like that and like that [gestures], we used to stretch it. They had everything to use for hides. Mom had everything. My brother used to tan hides, he used to teach in school how to do that. Bison hides were tough. I don't know if anybody does that anymore, to tan hides like that, but you have to know how, how to put them on racks, for deer, elk, and moose.

It would be nice to learn, you have to brown them hides, like you are smoking fish, the hides have to be smoked. My brother and I used to work on them. He used to make his own moccasins [laughter], he'd be sitting there, mom used to teach him. My mom used to make tents, my dad would go get canvas at the store, I used to watch her making the tent. She knew what to do, it didn't take her long to make a tent for when we went picking berries.

Story is moving.

As the interview process moved forward, interviews would take their shape and form. As a researcher, I provided time between the interviews so the participants could reflect on what stories they shared and also review the written material of their interviews. Elder Autumn chose to share this story of her own experience and how she had carried this story her entire life and wanted to share its significance with both the audience and myself, the researcher. She felt this story connected to our philosophy, worldview and our way of life. The following is an extended description of her experience:

When I was a little girl I got lost. We got thrown out of school because my dad was sick. I was almost seven I think. My dad was taken away because he had TB. I was roaming around. I followed my auntie and her husband, they went up in the mountains. They were about 19 miles up in the mountain. They had camps there for the men cutting pulp. I always followed them. One morning, we got up early. It was kind of wet. They usually didn't go out right away. She called me. But there was a camp close by. My uncles lived over there. She wanted me to go down that hill and ask my aunt and uncle for some sugar.

She gave me a little cup to take. I walked, all of a sudden, I saw something. A little baby rabbit right over my feet! I started chasing it right into the bush. I was running, just as I was about to grab it, it was quick, too fast. Finally, in what seemed like forever, I lost it. I stood up, I looked around. The trees were way up [gestures]. I was lost. I didn't know what to do. I started walking and it felt like I was climbing up hill. That is what it felt liked. I saw birds, butterflies, I saw what I think was a deer. I ate berries, I was singing and

jumping around. A child doesn't get scared right away when they are lost. It seemed like forever I was walking and walking. I looked around, all I saw were trees. Then I came to this opening. Maybe the size of this [gestures], it looked like there was some kind of the house. There was a hole, this much [gestures], all the way over there. I was sitting there. I sat down, I was tired.

All I did was walk. I didn't know what to think, I saw a wooden dish. It was old, just like the tree opening was worn out. I saw another dish, it was cut and it was old, kind of greyish and was made of wood. I was sitting there, I didn't know what to do. There were a few sticks there. I am sitting there, all of a sudden, I heard something. It sounded like a horse. So, I went that way [gestures], I didn't see nothing. I am standing there, I called. I figured the horse would come. See, how a child thinks, I thought I could ride home with it. It wouldn't show up, so I put my fists up, I was going to fight it. Finally, I gave up and sat down. All of a sudden, my neck went funny, my hairs stood up. I felt like somebody was watching me. I got up and looked around. I saw these poplars, three of them together. I looked up, way up there [emphasis added]. You know how, a long time ago, babies used to have their swings, with those strings. That looked like it up there, but those were branches. I was looking at them, just looking at them. So, I took a long stick. I think the first one was a bow, I was trying to reach it. The second one looked like an arrow. They were old. They were tied with some kind of beige string, something, it dug into the tree. I couldn't figure out anything. I looked at the last one [poplar tree]. I was poking it. It seemed to bend this way [gestures]. It came down and I grabbed it. It was a little hatchet. It was made of wood, old, it

was kind of dry, just like a slivered thing. It had a stone, it was made like this [gestures]. It was sharp in the bottom. I grabbed it and I was going to walk away with it.

A long time ago, when I was a younger girl yet, I went with someone to Dauphin and Kitty Wells was singing. Kitty Wells gave me a record, an LP. I was standing right by the stage listening. They came and gave me a white scarf. I wrapped it three times around myself, that's how long it was, but I must have been tiny. Anyways, I was walking away with that. I thought to myself, I'm stealing. I figured, I'll trade. So, I took that white scarf off myself and I always had that thing on. It must have been yucky and dirty. I went and tied it on that tree. So, I went back and sat down, in that hole. I took it [the hatchet] and I threw it up like this [gestures]. It pointed that way. I grabbed it again, it pointed that way. So, I threw it over there [gestures] and it pointed that way. So, I got up and started walking that way.

I must have walked for a long time. I came into some bushes, they were tall. There was water in there, it was up to my waist. It was already getting dark. Then I started getting scared and I kept on walking and walking. I put my head down and then I'd look at the moon and at the stars. I would stop and listen because I felt like somebody was, you know. I was terrified. I hit the road. So, I am standing there with my little hatchet. I didn't know what to do. I thought, should I go that way? So, I took my hatchet and threw it up. It fell down and pointed that way [gestures]. I went that way. After what seemed like the longest time of my life, I reached the camp. I could hear a man, he climbed up a tree,

calling my name. I guess they were scared. He was the first to see me. He started screaming. My uncle came running and picked me up. He took me to this blind man who was a medicine man. They took that little hatchet and gave it to that man. He took it, he's blind, he's feeling it. He said that hatchet came from another world. I thought to myself, another world, what does that mean? He was talking in Saulteaux but I didn't understand. My uncle said he'd take me home. He took me back to the camp. These two uncles wanted that hatchet. I didn't know what to do.

We got to the camp, auntie fed me. She fed me and told me that I was tired and to go to bed. My uncles were outside. I looked out and one of them had the hatchet, he put it on the tree and it was stuck there. I figured I'd have it in the morning, so I went to bed. That night, you should have heard the dogs. Those dogs were fighting our uncle, they wanted to come into the tent. They were terrified. I didn't know anything, I was just a kid. In the morning, that hatchet was gone. From that day on, my uncles used to blame one another, that they were hiding it on each other. That was the end, no hatchet. What happened to it, I don't know. It took me home. How many children in this world have gone into a bush and actually got home on their own? I would have never got him if I didn't get help. I don't know how to talk about that because my grandfather was a medicine man, my mother followed this way of life. My dad followed this way of life, his parents followed this way of life. A lot of people that were here followed this way of life. I follow it, too.

The community of Pine Creek had legislation and policies imposed on the community, including both the reservation system and the Indian residential school system. It is important to understand history to understand the present better. Elder Summer shared an vital memory that described how controlling the movement of community members occurred:

I remember this when I was a little girl because my mom and dad used to take me to the store when they'd go. And that line, I don't know where that fence line is, but my dad had to show that guy standing there, at that gate, something. He took out of his pocket, this paper, and showed that guy, that guy would open the gate and off away we went to the store. We went to the store but that gate was by the residential school, by the church. By the graveyard, coming this way [gestures], that's where that gate was, a big gate. And it seemed like it went forever both ways, we were gated over there in the point because that was the reserve boundary for us.

My dad had to show that guy his treaty card so he could get out of that gate. I don't know how it was this way [gestures], probably same thing. My dad had to show that guy his treaty card and when we came back he had to show him again, just to go to the store and get whatever. I remember that, I remember going to the store and that man standing there. I used to think, what about at night, when someone wants to go somewhere, who's standing there? [laughter] When they first made reserves, I guess. This was in the 1960's I guess. I must have been five or six. We had to get permission to go to the store. Then all of a sudden, things started changing and that gate disappeared. It was gone. I used to ask mom, where's that gate? Where's my treaty card I used to ask her. She used to tell

me ahh, tugahh, kiin [let see, you]. But after that, they never had to show their treaty card. I questioned the purpose of that, we were being treated like we were in a corral or were cattle.

Story is healing.

Elder Spring shared stories about how he sought out elders, teachers, and experiences to learn more about himself as an Anishinabe person. He attended a program after leaving the Indian residential school system and gained employment with a variety of jobs. Elder Spring shared his own story about his healing journey, a term he refers to about his experiences:

The first one [healing program] I ever had was about ten years ago. Oh no, we went to Matheson Island. They were doing a treatment for residential school. They were using cold and hot water tubs in a pool. We would be submerged under there and we would be lying there motionless, just like in your mom's womb.

They would be teaching us to bring out that burden of the residential school experience. On the last day, we did a sweat, that was the first time I ever did a sweat. It was a program for healing residential school students. This would have been in the 90's, when they first started talking about residential schools. It was about thirty years ago, close to that. That was the first sweat I had, I enjoyed that program. I went for the seven-day program. There was a fourteen-day program. This was while I was living off the reserve, living in Winnipeg. It was dealing with residential schools. I just heard about it and signed up.

After the program was over, all the stuff they had, the sweats, the traditional prayers and medicines, that kind of brought me back to wishing I

could do stuff like that. It put a spark in me. I've been following the traditional ways for the past ten years, like I say, you are never too old to learn, especially our ways of life they had before to have for myself, to have mino-bimaadiziwin.

Findings and Recommendations to Improving Teaching Practices

I included this section in this chapter to share the recommended practices for educators to use based on elders' stories and teachings. My final secondary research question highlights this section: how can using Indigenous knowledge and practices improve classroom practices. The participant elders provided recommendations for educators to use mino-bimaadiziwin to support academic success with a balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning.

Ceremonies

Teachers can implement several practices in the classroom context. Smudging is a daily practice of cleaning and preparing for the day or experience ahead. In the literature review in chapter two, I highlighted several different studies that implemented traditional Indigenous practices in the classroom or learning environment. Through this study, knowledge and practices are shared in great detail about smudging and the sweat lodge.

Ceremonies, such as the sharing circle, the medicine wheel, and smudging are unique approaches to integrating Indigenous perspectives. These approaches can build more positive relationships between the students and the teachers and amongst the students.

There are several methods teachers can use to honour ceremony in their teaching practices. Teachers can use sharing circles which are circular and allows everyone to communicate and share thoughts. A ceremony is highly personal, and during the interviews, all

four elders stressed the importance of having parent permission to use these ceremonies in the classroom or school environment.

Elder Spring shared how the residential school still affected people today regarding the practice of ceremony. He felt that by providing cultural practices in school settings, students might feel empowered and find their voices. He explained it in the following:

It should be done right across the school, from the little ones to the older students. The parents too, they probably understand it, but they don't speak it. With the parents, if they came with the children, if there was some interaction with their kids, they would live by it. If they want to, that is. But then again, some don't want to and that's the sad part. The residential schools, it was grilled so deep into them, they were scared.

If it comes out, they are going to punish us. They are stuck in that era, they don't want to bring it out. It's so grilled into them. When I used to try to talk to my dad, he didn't want to let anything out. He would say, "I don't know, I don't remember." They are still scared, scared of the unknown. The older ones don't know how to deal with, they don't have outside experiences to deal with. I'm not sure if I can explain this right. For me, the outside experiences, I had to literally fight my way with white people, even in conversations, I knew how to talk back to them. Most people I know, when a white person talks to them, they shy away. They don't really know how to talk to them. For myself, I jump up right away. I don't know if that's from the military training, I don't know. I can't explain that. When it comes to stuff, I have to speak out.

Prayer and smudging are two practices that Elder Summer stated could be done in the classroom. She explains which medicines can be used for smudging:

Well, sage is good all the time. It's those other ones [medicine], that can't be put together. See, that teacher should have sage in her classroom and the other medicines put away. She can have that sage all the time. First thing in the morning, she can light it and pray with the kids.

Elder Summer went on to explain the purpose of praying and smudging in a classroom context. She provided specific ways teachers could pray and how it could help to promote participation in ceremonial practices:

Well, it depends on the kids age. You could even pray for a good day, for good behaviour, for everyone to have good behaviour and for yourself, not to get angry at them, have patience. You try and get teenagers involved, for yourself and them, for the same reason, to have a good day and for them to learn, not to be angry, pray for a good day. Participate, the way for them to learn is for them to participate.

But that teacher should have that knowledge about the four medicines. Because those four medicines revolve around all the teachings you do all day. Cedar is the water medicine. Like, they need to wash their face, their hands every time they go to the bathroom, they need to have a bath, every day. Even for cooking, making tea, ice cubes. That's that respect for water.

Elder Autumn shares how teachers can teach the Indigenous way of life in the school in the following brief description:

If they were taught [Indian way of life] that in school, at a very young age, they would have something to do. They could go with their relatives or their dad or their cousins, brothers to go hunting or go fishing or go trapping. Or visit people who follow the Indian way of life, like culture-wise. They want to pick medicine, they want to learn about medicine, period. Like, the four berries that we pick. That's one medicine that people use that follow this life.

They could pick sage, pick sweetgrass, cedar, that is what the teachers could show them. They don't have to pick it, but they can introduce it and tell them what it is. And of course, you offer that tobacco to the east. And ask if you can pick that medicine.

All four elders drew attention to the importance of following procedures and practices if teachers hold ceremonial practices as learning experiences. A ceremony is very personal and sacred. It has multiple meanings and teachings. From the elders' perspective, teachers must have parents' permission and find a knowledgeable person that is able and willing to share the practices and teachings. A ceremony is also about reciprocity, an Indigenous principle, as Elder Spring describes in the following:

Last night, my partner's son came here. He's way ahead on the traditional life that he's following but he still has a lot of barriers. I'm learning a lot from him. I talked to him about us talking backward in our language and he says he heard that, too. What he is learning he learns from his elder and the teachings that his elder is giving him, he's sharing his blueberries with me. This is what we have to do, share our blueberries to learn.

Smudging is a practice prepared in many different contexts. According to the elders, smudging items can be placed in the room for students to smudge. They also shared that the location of the smudge will depend on the teacher or the principal. Smudging can be very personal or honoured when starting and closing an event or experience. The participant elders spoke about their own smudging experiences. Elder Spring shared his perspective on smudging in the following:

After a smudge, when I am sitting there, I contemplate and relax. It seems like I have a smoke and I can see the people around me, like in their full regalia, in their headdresses and they are passing their pipe around. This is what I see. They are sending me something, I have to learn and analyze what that vision is about. If I can figure that out, then I will know more, what is it they are saying to me.

Smudging is sacred, according to Elder Autumn. She recommended smudging in the school context to start and end each week. She explained that smudging is a daily practice that involves prayer, medicine, and spirituality. She described the ceremony of smudging in the following extended explanation extensively:

When you smudge, you put the sage, the cedar, the sweetgrass and the tobacco. Before you even start that, when you hold that sage and you point it to the east, to the south, to the west, to the north and then you put it there [gestures]. You do that to each and every one of them, including the tobacco.

You ask the Great Spirit what you are asking for, you tell what you want, what you need. Then you light, then you smudge. But if you are going to smudge in a school gathering, you light the same way. You ask for a good teaching, if you

want to teach something, for the kids to understand it. But like I have said, you have to ask permission.

I don't know if there is a lot of that smudging going on around here. In the woman's gathering, we smudge, at the band office, people smudge, at our meetings, we smudge. That's the way I was taught. My uncle taught me that. He taught me some medicine. But he never had a chance to explain when we were picking it, what it was for. I know it but I don't pick it because I don't know yet. It wasn't given to me, he was giving me the teaching he got directly, but he died before he finished.

When you smudge, in your life it's just like you are waking up, you feel good, you feel great. Yes, they should smudge. They should smudge the school before it starts and, on a Friday, when they close the school. Monday morning, before you start, smudge your classroom, there will be a big difference with your students. But don't do it when one of your girls [on their time]. And you can't chase her out, that's something you would have to figure out yourself. I would do that if I was a teacher. The kids are so cute, they are so beautiful. Those are the ones you have to work with, catch them while they are small.

When I put a smudge together, I am also praying while I am doing it. In my smudge, I put the stuff I need, the sage, the cedar, the sweetgrass. But the tobacco, I make the four directions starting from the east, then south, west and north. Then, I put the tobacco in the middle. Then, I pray. I pray for what I need that day, like to clean the house, when something doesn't feel right. I will smudge with my partner.

From the top of your head, down your front to your feet, your arms and then you turn around. From the back of your head, all the way down to your heels. We smudge our feet. Then, you are cleansing your spirit, your body. If you are worried about something or worried about something that's going to happen, you can get confused. Best thing you can do is smudge. Then you seem to come back to yourself, you can make the right decisions, you don't get panicky or anything like that. You can smudge your house, starting with the left all the way to the right, and across. I usually smudge inside my closet, my bedroom, even my bathroom. I will go to the bedroom, closet and go back to the door. It feels good. You feel good.

This is what smudging is all about, you smudge for a good day, a good life. If you have a headache or not feeling right, you smudge. If we have misunderstanding between husband and wife, we smudged ourselves and our house, then back to normal. It's normal, it's not something that a miracle or anything like that, that is what the smudge goes, when you pray for someone.

When following this way of life, Elder Autumn stated that these teachings and experiences are particularly personal and expressed her concerns about revealing such exclusive cultural practices. A sweat lodge is a profoundly personal, genuinely moving experience for almost everyone who participates. All four elders shared their concerns with ceremonies. They felt that some community members, due to their own beliefs and experiences, would not participate in ceremonies. They also cautioned that educators should have permission and seek elders from the community to guide these particular teachings. She explained her perspective and understanding of the sweat lodge in the following extended account:

When you are native and you are following the Indian way of life, you can teach them about the sweat lodges. You can take them to the sweat lodge, they don't have to go in, they are little ones. But what they should know what those adults are doing in the lodge. They are going there to ask for healing from the grandfathers and the grandmothers.

A woman could be sick and they ask for healing, they offer that tobacco. They ask the one that's running the sweat lodge, this is what I am asking for, to get better. So, that leader, the one that's running the lodge, he goes in there, he opens the tobacco and puts it in the bowl. He does that to every tobacco he receives. He puts a little bit in the fire, what I mean by the fire is the rocks.

Every medicine man that runs a sweat lodge has different numbers of stones they have to put in the fire. They are called the grandfathers. Once they are red hot and they are taken into the lodge, they are called grandfathers. So, they brought into the lodge one at a time, some do seven, some do fourteen, some do twenty-four, some more.

They take these stones in there one at a time. The people who are inside that lodge, they welcome these stones. They say, "Ahh, mishoomis [grandfather]. Then it's put in the east, south, west and in the north. It goes around like that. They are red hot.

After they all come in, the one that's running the sweat lodge, he will talk to the people that are in there. He knows every single person that's in there and what they are coming in for, what they are asking for in prayers. You can ask for

prayers if you are sick, if you have a headache that doesn't want to go away, you can go into a lodge.

You can go into a lodge if you have a stronger sickness. If you have sickness inside your body, all kinds of sickness you have. You can go in there to pray for someone else, your mother, your father, your brother, your sister, anyone in your family. If you are in school, and there is a special child that's sick, you can go to the lodge and ask for prayers.

You can offer four cigarettes or a pouch of tobacco or a package of cigarettes to the elder. You don't have to go in if you don't want to go, but you can ask for prayers for that person. That's the way a sweat lodge is run. If you are curious and want to see a sweat lodge, you can ask someone to see what they do. You can sit outside the sweat lodge to see and listen to what they do.

They sing songs, they use drums, they use rattles. Sometimes you can hear them talking in Saulteaux. You can listen to the drums and singing. That's what a sweat lodge does. You can really, really find out what Indians do, what they do a long time, your ancestors, your great-great grandfathers. If the parents aren't into the Indian way of life and you go to church, you can go to church with them. You can pray to Jesus for healing, to be blessed. Prayer is very important in your life. Prayer can save your life whether you are into the sweat lodge and pray to the Creator, healing, life. You can even pray for people that don't like you.

These early experiences helped to shape the participant elders' perspective and worldview. The knowledge and teachings come from the ceremonies, the land, and the language. The Ojibway language is used through a ceremony and in the language, there are teachings.

Through story, ceremonies become honoured. Ceremony plays a significant role in mino-bimaadiziwin.

Land

The land is a fundamental concept of Indigenous ways of knowing. It is sacred; it is medicine; it is life. Indigenous people maintain a close, respectful relationship with the land. All four participant elders shared stories about the philosophy and perspectives that originated from the land. They spoke about their own experiences while being on the land. They also provided practices and a perspective for teachers to use the land as a classroom and respect and understanding required for land-based learning.

Land-based learning is another important aspect of Indigenous perspectives. Indigenous people have always had an essential connection to the land. Teachers may understand land as a text resource and a significant learning environment. By providing land-based opportunities to students enriches their learning experiences and reflect their Indigenous cultural and philosophical worldview. Observation and modelling are the two main components of Indigenous teaching methodologies. Land-based learning provides excellent opportunities that are engaging and supportive in the development of students.

All four participant elders provided suggestions for classroom teachers to provide opportunities for students to have land-based, experiential learning. They discussed the importance of involving elders or land-based knowledge community members. They shared the importance of following protocol in a respectful manner that honours Indigenous ways of knowing.

There are many teachings about the land. Elder Autumn provided a brief overview of the knowledge teachers could provide for students in the following depiction:

Teach them about the trees, the snow, the rain. They should be taught how to play safe. Teach them about what's growing out there, the sage, the cedar. Teach them about the dangers of water and how water saves your life. Teach them about insects, the bees, mosquitoes, flies, what do bees do? Teach them why animals are alive. If they know all the stuff about the animals and which ones you can eat, and how to hunt, if they want to kill something, offer that tobacco. Only take what they need otherwise they are abusing nature. They should learn about the different trees. They should learn about sweetgrass and the grasses. There are a lot of things you can teach children.

During the interviews, Elder Spring identified the following skills children should learn:

Hunting skills, how to catch wildlife. If they are in the bush and get lost, they know how to hunt, how to fish, and how to survive. It's mostly survival. Once they know that, they can follow their traditional ways that way. They can thank the Creator for finding meat when they are out there, to thank the spirits and be spiritual in that way with the Creator. To learn to be thankful that they got something from the Creator off the land, that the Creator gave them. If they can follow the teachings that the Elders teach them, it will be a lasting impression on them, I believe. It will be an experience from them and they can decide which way they want to follow.

Teachers practices and methods can be changed to accommodate a wide variety of learning experiences, including land-based learning. Land-based learning has grown in the past few decades. There are initiatives that highlight the success and benefits of land-based learning. Elder Spring eloquently stated, "Use the land as a classroom." He also stated, "the children

should be taken into the bush. Go for a walk outdoors and ask them what they see and what are their thoughts are about the bush.” Elder Winter did stress that this should not be a one-time event and that teachers should expect students “will not know what is going on and will fool around. Once they get used to it, they will understand better. Have that classroom outside.” He provided a thorough explanation of the benefits of having an outside classroom in the following:

In the wintertime, have a giant teepee and put them there. The kids should be out on the land or out in the lake, get them out of the classroom, get them out of that mindset for learning.

Years ago, when I was hanging around with a local elder, he took the kids to the mountain. It was good. He sang songs. The other campers enjoyed it. He was telling them stories and took them into the bush and showed them medicines. It would be good to take these kids out there and show them. It's good for these kids to experience these things, they really enjoy themselves. Some of these elders have to come out and show the kids what they know.

Showing respect for animals is an significant principle for Elder Winter; he received this teaching from his older family members. He firmly stated that children should be taken onto the land to learn the Indigenous way of life. Elder Winter described the importance of young children being on the land and shaping their identity and perspective in the following:

Yes, they should take them out on to the land. That is where they will get their education, the Indian way of life. They should learn their Native language, show them the land, the water, the lakes. Show them everything, what they are. All these birds, geese. I could name animals in Saulteaux, I know them all. I know every species, the ducks. We are losing a lot of these birds, there is hardly what

there used to be. The meadowlark, we lost that. It had such a nice sound, you would hear it first thing in the morning. The eagles are coming in this month [February], that's when they lay their eggs, this month.

Boys should learn how what to do when they kill something. Somebody has to be with them that knows how, because a lot of them just waste. They waste a lot of that stuff. We used to take the fat off the cows [female moose], take all the fat and make lard. We made lard, yup.

The teacher should always have respect for what she is going to do and teach the kids that you are taking out. If you are picking medicine, tell the kids what it is for, curing, stuff like that. Not to abuse us or mishandle it. Tell them what kind of medicine you are picking, if you know what it is. Every medicine that's here on Mother Earth is medicine, that is what the teacher should teach.

One of the barriers that exist is finding an individual to provide the teachings about land-based education. This aspect is where the notion of relationality comes into effect. Teachers need to work with other people in the community, including elders, knowledge keepers, and skilled community members. When asked about the importance of following traditional ways of doing to seek an elder if a teacher felt untrained to have land-based learning experiences, Elder Winter answered in the following response:

Yes, ask an elder. Never mistreat medicine when you go out. A woman that goes out and tries to go out on her time, she shouldn't go out. When a woman goes out, she should wear a skirt, not just like that because medicine is medicine, it's very great. Always remember that. As you pick your medicine, if you are with an elder, they will tell you what is it and tell your pupils what it is, so they won't

lose it. You can even have them taste it, like weekay, you can taste it, that weekay is hard to take [laughter]. Then they'll know. I used to eat them, the rushes, we used to pull them up and eat them. It was just like white stuff, we used to peel it off and it was good. That is what the muskrats and the beavers eat, that's medicine. That's why the muskrat tastes good [to eat] kayget aneesh [that's true, that's why], young people should learn that.

Language

All four participants provided explanations and perspectives on the importance of keeping the language alive in the community. They also explained the cultural connection to the language. Elders emphasized the importance of language in a ceremony. Language holds the teachings, the Indigenous ways of knowing.

All participant elders stressed the importance of learning the language. It connects to the teachings, perspective, and worldview of a cultural group. Language strongly connects to culture, which connects oneself to identity. Elder Winter shared his thoughts on what teachers could do in the classroom environment:

And now, that is what they are trying to teach, these schools, they are trying that now. They should take an elder to try and teach them the right Saulteaux, not the bad words. A lot of these guys, try to teach them swearing, that's not the right words. They should show them things and say them, like "aki" [earth], the grass or the animals in Saulteaux, the ducks in Saulteaux, everything. So that they will know. It would be pretty hard because some of those kids won't want to learn, they'd rather talk the language, English. It's very important to learn the language.

They could teach them the Native language, if they knew how to talk the native language. We are losing our Native language. These young people today, teenagers, they don't their language to you. When you talk to them, they just look at you. It's important to know, when you go out, there are old people who are talking their Native language, they won't understand what they are saying.

Language revitalization must happen on several levels. Elder Spring discussed how parents should support a language revitalization program. Many of the students in the community have English as their mother tongue. While the older generation speaks the language, the younger generations do not have a strong sense of the language. Parents must be part of language programming in both the school and community level. Elder Spring shared his in-depth perspective on language programs:

For our language, I think it would be good to have parents come in to learn, have the children and the parents and this way they can associate with one another at home. They can talk the language and teach the culture. It's not just the children, bring in the parents. But then, that's another hard thing to try and accomplish. Even the parents, it would be hard for them to understand because they never heard it at home.

I think it would have to be taught orally rather than with books. When you are reading books, it's not the same as me talking to you, as we are now. If you are reading that, it's like a third person, this way it's just you and I. It's not through the paper and the books, like it's fine to do it that way, but I find it a little harder. I find it easier to learn our language through sound [emphasis added]. When I am teaching somebody, I'd rather them follow what I am saying. Like say,

for example, I'll tell you "omaa bi-izhaan" and you will hear what I am saying and you could say it back to me, easier. Then, you'll understand what it is.

Whereas, with myself, if I look at the words in a book, it would be hard to grasp that, I would rather go by sound. That's the way I would do it.

The common greetings, at the school, when they come to the classroom, the teacher could say, "biindigeg" that means come in. It's just simple, little things, like if it was taught to them in a way they would understand, every day words to be implemented while they are in school. Then, maybe that would take off. The parents could sit and listen while they [children] are being taught the language Both sides [parents and children] would probably communicate at home and that way we could preserve the language. It can't just be two weeks, it has to be long term.

Elder Autumn shared her hopes for young people to learn the language. She described how children would find it harder without the language, without the Indigenous ways of knowing through language. She shared the following:

Every child, I hope and pray, that they learn this language. Your heart will be at ease. You won't fit into the white world, if you can't fit in your own world.

It's a confusing, it's hard, it's a lonely way of life.

During our third of four interviews, I asked Elder Autumn about the phrase she used quite often in the interviews, "Indian way of life," and shared how to say it in the language, "Anishinabe opimadiziwin." She explained the meaning of the phrase, "In the Indian way of life, there is a good way of life, it is hard, it is narrow."

Elder Summer shared common phrases from the language that classroom teachers could use in their everyday instruction and practice, identified in Table 1.

Table 1. Common Ojibway Phrases

| Ojibway Phrase/Word | English Translation |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Abin | Sit |
| Anishinabemowin | Speak your language |
| Biziidunmoog | All of you listen |
| Biziindan | Listen |
| Gaweh gikandun | Try and learn something |
| Gi dabwe | You're telling the truth |
| Gikinomagun | I am going to teach you |
| Oshibiian | Write |

Story

The practice of story is critical to integrating Indigenous perspectives into learning experiences. Stories communicate personal and cultural knowledge and experience. Storytelling achieves several purposes. It builds relationships, cultural knowledge and historical information is gained and strengthens the listener's critical literacy. It builds cognitive development for students. Storytelling can be used as an approach to develop and promotes language skills, values, and life lessons.

Elders have always played an important role in Indigenous communities. They share the knowledge and teachings developed over a lifetime of experiences, reflection, and growth. They share teachings through a story. By providing opportunities to interact with Elders in classroom settings, students gain knowledge and skills that reflect their worldview and perspectives. Elders play a central role in cognitive development for the young. Educators, supported by administrators, can incorporate Elders as mentors in classroom learning experiences.

A story connects to ceremony, land, language. Storytelling has ceremonial purposes. Stories also arise from land experiences and teachings. I end this chapter with a quote by Thomas King (2003): "Don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now" (p. 60).

Summary

In this chapter, I have identified and described the findings of the research study. It highlights the findings that answer the question: How can mino-bimaadiziwin help shape one's identity to support academic success with a balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning? The four major themes include ceremony, land, language, and story. The participant elders' stories contribute and extend understanding of mino-bimaadiziwin can support students to become more engaged and more successful in the school system. The elders' stories hold knowledge, teachings, and worldview represent mino-bimaadiziwin and the Indigenous way of life. The mino-bimaadiziwin educational framework can be used as a model to support educators to continue to integrate Indigenous ways of knowing into curriculum and learning experiences to better support students.

The following chapter, chapter five, concludes the research study. The chapter provides the summary and conclusion of the study, as well as recommendations and implications for future studies. It also presents the overall significance of the study. Final reflections complete the chapter.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

We were born bearing the gift of language. When I began to learn the traditional principles of storytelling, the old ones told me that my greatest tool as a storyteller was my authentic, original voice. To learn to find it, I needed to practice principles, beginning with humility, then faith, then trust, then bravery. Our youth especially really need to be able to see themselves in our storytelling, regardless of what form or medium that takes place in. (Wagamese, 2015)

The purpose of this qualitative study explored how mino-bimaadiziwin can help shape one's identity to support academic success with a balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning. This research also includes these additional objectives: to document and transmit Indigenous ways of knowing as it related to mino-bimaadiziwin; to honour storytelling as a practice in classroom pedagogy and to encourage and support educators to enhance current pedagogical practices in the classroom and land-based learning from both Indigenous and Western education models. This final chapter integrates a discussion of the literature review with the research findings of the stories of the four participant elders regarding how they used the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin in their own lives and through experience and growth gained knowledge and teachings about Indigenous ways of knowing.

The conceptual framework called the mino-bimaadiziwin educational framework includes ceremony, land, language, and story to provide a base for the literature review, interviews, and knowledge gathering and story analysis. This educational framework reflects the medicine wheel framework as a teaching resource and practice. The participant elders stories developed and shaped around these four themes. The mino-bimaadiziwin educational framework followed the medicine wheel framework and developed to demonstrate Indigenous research processes holistically. This framework encourages educators to implement knowledge and teaching practices that reflect Indigenous ways to better support students in their academic

studies. Educators have an essential role to continuously transform learning experiences to honour both Indigenous and Western ways of learning. Rich, culturally responsive, learning experiences will contribute positively to the development of the student. By integrating Indigenous language, culture, and land-based learning, schools will build more supportive environments to help support all students to become creative, critical thinkers who are aware of and respect cultural and linguistic diversity. In this chapter, I will incorporate existing literature and practice in the area of study, as discussed in chapter two. I will then summarize the significance of the study to the field while making recommendations for further studies. I will offer recommendations by the participant elders for teachers to implement Indigenous knowledge and teachings into learning experiences. I will end this chapter with a conclusion and recommendations.

Integrating the (Western) Literature and the (Indigenous) Research

This next section integrates a discussion of the literature review concerning the four themes in the conceptual framework and examines the stories of the participant elders as they shared on mino-bimaadiziwin through their stories from their knowledge, teachings, and practices. During the interview process, I analyzed and re-analyzed the stories to seek an understanding of how the participant elders used mino-bimaadiziwin in their daily lives and their understanding and perspective of this concept. During the fieldwork, I started by examining the stories for themes as they emerged, while looking for parallelism with the research literature. During the interview process, many standard practices emerged from the participant elders' stories that related to mino-bimaadiziwin. In this section of this chapter, I am providing a discussion of the four themes that reflect the mino-bimaadiziwin educational framework so that a

delicate balance can exist to support both Western and Indigenous perspectives into school classrooms.

Ceremony

The participant elders stressed their belief of the holistic nature in a ceremony as a critical part of *mino-bimaadiziwin*. They described how one carries oneself through their daily life concerning *mino-bimaadiziwin*. Through ceremony, elders have found healing from their own educational experiences of the Indian residential school system. They understand Indigenous knowledge and teachings to honour and to celebrate *mino-bimaadiziwin* in their everyday lives. It surprised me to learn the secrecy involved in maintaining ceremonial practices, despite the government and church policies banning ceremonial practices. The magnitude of the significance of the ceremonies grew within my perspective based on these stories of our people who practiced ceremonies in secrecy. The honouring of a ceremony can occur in the school context, both as a school-wide process and classroom process. The findings show that implementing ceremonial practices belong to everyone. Elders support the research that it will be challenging and it will take a community-wide effort to make changes in the classroom context. Neegan (2005) indicates the holistic patterns that are consistent with Aboriginal knowledge need to be incorporated into the curriculum. She also indicated that Eurocentric and Aboriginal ways of knowing should not be pitted against the other, finding a balance between the two models would provide transformative teaching and learning practices. Bell (2004) indicated this as well, stating curricula should reflect the worldview of its audience, the students.

All four elders agreed that parents play an significant role in accepting, learning, and growing from ceremonial practices to support young children. These findings support the research of Cajete (1994) who recommended that ceremony involves coming to understand one's

unique potential through personal processes that embrace spiritual aspects of life's meaning and describes the highest goal of Indigenous education as being to help each person becoming themselves fully. Wilson (2008) also connects the ceremony and relationality to bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves. The findings lead to an understanding that both teachers and students in the school that support and honour ceremonial practices such as the seven teachings, smudging, and the sharing circle provide a better balance of both Indigenous and Western models of learning. Laramee (2013), Swanson (2013) and Bebonang's (2008) studies indicate that these practices provide different learning experiences which helped students focus on their work while feeling more engaged in the classroom.

The elders demonstrated the seven teachings throughout their shared stories. They shared experiences where they gained knowledge about the teachings that were being shared by their parents and grandparents. Farrel-Morneau (2014) indicates that the practice of story and the seven teachings inherently embed culture into sacred stories. Laramee (2013) indicates that these Indigenous practices made a difference to the participants in her research. Kanu (2002) indicates the importance of teachers having competent knowledge about Indigenous culture and customs. All four elders supported the research that educator develop the cultural competency of the community in which they teach.

The elders shared their own experiences with the smudging practice. They have incorporated this practice into their daily lives. The findings show that smudging is a form of prayer and sets the mindset for the day ahead. Laramee's (2013) study indicates that smudging cleanses their minds, bodies, and spirits and become practices to help learners focus on their work. Bebonang (2008) indicates that smudging helps students settle down in the classroom. The

elders affirmed that these practices would help support the students not only in their school lives but their daily life as well. These practices honour practicing mino-bimaadiziwin.

All four participant elders agreed that seeking and building positive relationships held importance to honour mino-bimaadiziwin. The elders encouraged teachers to seek traditional knowledge keepers and healers to aid in implementing ceremonial practices in the school context. The elders also encouraged teachers to continue to maintain positive, supportive relationships with the families and communities of these students so that the ceremony can be honoured respectfully. The elders also encouraged the use of sharing circles to build a stronger sense of community within a group of learners. They recommended having different types of sharing circles for different purposes. Koleszar-Green's (2016) indicates that sharing circles are a forum in which people gather to share their experiences and stories around a specific topic. This activity will help to build a classroom environment where students feel safe to express themselves and to better support one another in their learning journeys. Tanaka's (2009) study indicates similar findings; students felt included, could share their feelings, and have their voices heard. The elders use these teachings and practices to demonstrate and honour mino-bimaadiziwin in their own lives.

Land

The elders in this study agreed that the land is more than geography or its physical features; the land represents our first teacher. This concept is critical to understanding Indigenous perspective and worldview. The Indigenous model of learning is in stark contrast to the Western learning model as indicated by the *RCAP*, from the seasonal round of hunting and gathering for a life ordered by hourly precision of clocks and bells. The elders shared stories and explanations of how the land keeps all our relations interconnected. Styres (2012) indicates that land is

consistently informing practice through storied relationships. Styres asserts that the philosophy of “land as first teacher,” land is an expression of holism that embodies the four aspects of being: spiritual, emotive, cognitive, and physical (p. 60). Restoule et al. (2013) indicate when youth lose a sense of what *paquataskamik* [the natural environment] is, they may begin to lose the connections that form the complex set of relations that bind them together in a historically and geographically informed identity. The findings support this research; all four elders agreed that the land is an integral part of young children’s learning experiences. There are many teachings, knowledge, and values contained in land-based experiences. Sterenberg (2013) concludes that learning from place continues to be a valid and meaningful method of interpreting and understanding the world (p. 30). All four elders agreed that effective implementation of land-based learning experiences would transform learning and support the principles of *mino-bimaadiziwin* to help shape student’s identity.

All four elders agreed that the land provides everything for the family and the community. They all discussed and supported the idea that families shared and how being on the land build a stronger sense of community and interconnectedness. Hare (2011) and Lyons’s et al. (2010) indicate that land is where stories begin. Many of the stories in the findings section relate to the land and demonstrated sharing and community. Driedger (2006) indicates that the cultural landscape is the reflections of the people and their landscape. They may include physical elements, places give cultural meaning, and spiritual connectedness. The elders stressed the importance of students being on to the land and that through these experiences, they will develop a stronger connection to the land. The findings suggest the more land-based experiences the students have will provide opportunities for students to develop their understanding and relation with the land.

All four elders agreed that ceremony connects to the land. Styres (2012) indicates that Indigenous philosophies are grounded in primacy and centrality of Land as first teacher. She also indicated that in her communication with Karen Dannenman, Anishinaabe community scholar, states, “what turns Land as first teacher from concept to philosophy is ceremony” (p. 142). The elders shared personal stories about their own experiences of combining land and ceremony. A ceremony cannot take place without land because it begins with the land. The four elders agreed that the medicines, roots, plants, and animals are all used in ceremonies. These two themes are interconnected. Manitowabi (2017) indicates the teacher is the land and holds ecological knowledge that one can learn from, which is intergenerational because it is through Knowledge Keepers that these understandings are shared. The embodied experience is the practice in which society comes to know and how things occur (pp. 58-59). Driedger (2006) indicates that elders are valuable teachers; they are most valuable when teaching on the land with which they have intimate knowledge. The participant elders utilized land-based philosophies and approaches in many aspects of their lives to demonstrate mino-bimaadiziwin.

Language

All four elders agreed that language held the knowledge, perspective, teachings, and worldview of Indigenous people. They explored the challenges in maintaining the Ojibway language in the community. They identified the historical and political contexts that contributed to language loss. They indicated that there is resistance to learning the language due to the large-scale efforts of the Indian residential school system that hindered Ojibway language use. One elder believed that Ojibway culture also would be lost if the language is not protected nor revitalized in the community.

The elders established that it is critical to preserve, promote, protect, and revitalize the Ojibway language. The findings of the study indicate that the Ojibway language carries distinct meaning from the English language. The structure of the language is also distinctive. Language connects to the ceremony, land practices, and story. Vicaire (2010) indicates that language serves as the primary cultural tool and medium for transmitting meaning and concepts. Pitawanakwat (2009) indicates the Anishinabemowin's importance for maintaining both a strong collective and individual identity for our *Anishinabeg* [people].

Two of the elders stressed that the meaning of the language became lost when translating to English. The elders in this study addressed the importance of being able to think in their language, which connects to Indigenous worldview. The oldest elder reverted to the Ojibway language many times during his interview. The literature supports Elder's beliefs about language translation. Pitawanakwat (2009) indicates the significance of "thinking in Anishinabemowin" (pp. 108-110). The findings also support the research of Big-Canoe (2011), who explained language connected to culture and the Ojibway language held importance for prayers and through language, a spiritual connection to the creator lives. Big-Canoe also explains, "Indigenous knowledge is expressed through language, stories and the way Indigenous peoples live their lives" (p. 13).

Three of the four elders identified how total language loss would directly impact the culture and Indigenous ways of knowing. Smith's (1995) research supports this finding that a "culture without its language is also headed for extinction" (p. 123). Language helps to develop a sense of identity. McCarty (2003) indicates "students who enter school with a primary language other than the national or dominant language perform significantly better on academic tasks

when they receive consistent and cumulative academic support in the native/heritage language” (p. 149).

The participant elders established the importance of using the Ojibway language in the classroom context. They also indicated that both teachers and parents also play a vital role in language revitalization; both teachers and parents should commit to using the language in everyday practice. One elder indicated that language programming would require community-wide training and support. Nikkel (2006) indicates language programming and resources and language teaching professional development to address classroom language programming challenges. Nikkel’s research also indicates that learning the language and culture will lead to enhanced self-esteem, confidence, pride, and increased academic success for the students. Young (2005) indicates how elders act as guides to language and identity and a connection to the land and environment that offered a good life, “mino pimatisiwin.”

Story

Storytelling is empowering. The fieldwork of this research employed storytelling as the methodology for data gathering. Stories transmit knowledge and teachings. The findings indicate that stories build connections and relationships. The findings indicated that the practice of story connects to ceremony, land, and language. Archibald (2008) indicates that knowledge shared through storytelling is meaningful. Archibald also indicates “many First Nations storytellers use their personal life experiences as teaching stories like how they use traditional stories. These storytellers help to carry on the oral tradition’s obligation of educational reciprocity” (p. 112).

Eder (2007) indicates how stories emphasized respect of relationships, to self, others and the environment; stories provided models of how to live. Both Bandura’s social learning theory and Vygotsky’s theory of language and cultural transmission support the findings on the

fieldwork about a story (Tumangday, 1977; Winter & Goldfield, 1991). Stories could be shared to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teachings into learning experiences. The findings indicated that students do not see themselves or their culture reflected in the learning experience, a disconnection and disengagement in the learning process can result.

One of the findings of the fieldwork demonstrated how Nanabush is central to Ojibway storytelling. Pitawanakwat's (2009) research indicates that Nanabush was the first Anishinaabe in the stories. Farrell-Moreanu (2014) indicates that Nanabush stories "describe how something came to be; they also describe how something came to be changed" (p. 215).

The findings indicate that classroom teachers can apply storytelling in the classroom to learn more about the students and their backgrounds. Ball (2004) indicates that "the Elders usually model ways of storytelling, listening, encouraging sharing, and facilitating the elaboration of ideas and action plans that are themselves expressions of Indigenous cultures" (p. 469). McKeogh et al. (2008) indicate the importance of children practicing storytelling as follows:

They begin to think deliberately about the story's structure, verbal expression is transformed into composing a text. Thus, the strong oral tradition of Aboriginal peoples provides the opportunity to ground literacy development in oral stories that reflect the children's family, community relationships, and culture. (p.5)

Storytelling is a practice educators can use to build relationships with students and learn about their personal lives. Students can share through story and honour their voices.

Significance of the Study and Recommendations for Further Studies

This section complements the knowledge gathering process from this research study and provides a guide for future reference on research in this and related areas of study, particularly utilizing the themes of the mino-bimaadiziwin educational framework. I present the significance

of the study to the field and make recommendations for further studies. Finally, in the last section of the thesis, I conclude the document with reflections on the study.

Significance of the Study

This research study deepens our collective understanding of the documentation and transmission of Indigenous ways of knowing as it relates to mino-bimaadiziwin. It also honours storytelling as an Indigenous practice to inform classroom teaching practices. In these times of curricula transformation, educators must learn how to enhance current practices in the classroom and land-based learning from both Indigenous and Western education models. This study could serve as a guide for classroom teachers who aspire to find a balance between both education models.

The study illustrates the literature and the field research are consistent. The four themes of the mino-bimaadiziwin educational framework lend meaning to the study because the elders share stories and the four themes emerged from the knowledge gathering process. This research study utilizes the Medicine Wheel model framework approach to develop the goal to integrate Indigenous knowledge and practices into classrooms. The medicine wheel conceptual framework and the mino-bimaadiziwin educational conceptual framework also related to the literature, as they address how mino-bimaadiziwin can help shape one's identity to support academic success with a balance of perspectives from both Indigenous and Western models of learning.

The study also pointed to the significance of building supportive, mutually respectful relationships with elders. Elders are vital in learning experiences, especially in First Nation communities. Through stories about their knowledge, teachings, and worldview, the elders can demonstrate mino-bimaadiziwin and the approach to support students in their academic learning

journeys. This research study established that relationality is significant to all of the four themes within the conceptual framework.

Recommendations for Further Studies

The study leads to recommendations for further research in this area. It would be valuable to compare the outcomes of this research to future research if extended to involve more participant elders overall and to include other First Nation communities. The conceptual framework developed in this study elaborated what the participant elders are doing to demonstrate *mino-bimaadiziwin* in their own lives.

Another recommendation for further studies would involve the entire learning community, which includes children, families, educators, and community members in language programming and revitalization. Such a development would also need to include how language learning will take place. This study highlighted how language connects to ceremony, land, and story. Involving all members of the learning community will reflect a holistic and culturally responsive practice. Elders, parents, and community members can support and teach the language to the educators and children. This practice would allow for educators to support language learning in children in the learning activities.

It would also be valuable to compare how educational institutions are preparing teachers for today's classroom that support Indigenous practices. Teacher education programs need practices that centre around stories of Indigenous knowledge and teachings so that the connections between Indigenous languages, culture, and spirituality can be recognized and embraced by all educators. This research study suggests additional in successfully integrating Indigenous knowledge and practices into both university and public schools to improve the professional practice of teaching.

Final Reflections

Gaining an understanding of the issues, challenges, and concerns facing Indigenous peoples and by learning the vital life lesson of being able to put oneself in the perspective of another culture's beliefs and traditions to support *mino-bimaadiziwin* provides greater insight and perspective. This research study intends to provide support to teachers in understanding the unique thoughts, beliefs, and practices of First Nations people and cultures across Canada, mainly in Manitoba.

The elders promoted and supported positive recommendations for their school and community. The elders' stories and voices are valued and encouraged, and they were able to express their thoughts, beliefs, and perspectives on many teachings. These stories provided a great deal of insight and understanding into the beliefs, practices, and worldview of First Nation peoples. They have achieved *mino-bimaadiziwin* by honouring the practices of ceremony, land, language, and story as seen through this study.

Students can engage in studies that not only provide opportunities for intellectual development, but also for spiritual, linguistic, and cultural learning opportunities that cultivate the development of the learner in a holistic sense as opposed to a singular mindset. Students are also able to make sense of navigating the challenges of the Western world with this mindset and the foundational knowledge provided by traditional teachings, beliefs, and culture. These actions can only serve to provide a great deal of insight and understanding into the thoughts, beliefs, practices, and cultural traditions of not only First Nations peoples, but one's own culture as well. The four themes of *mino-bimaadiziwin* support students' academic and personal success.

I am grateful for the insight and knowledge I have experienced in this research work. The participant elders remained open and reflective in their stories and teachings. In the process of

writing this study, I have tried to remain honourable to the lived experiences of the participant elders. Through the incredible, moving, and individuals stories, I gained a deeper understanding of how mino-bimaadiziwin is celebrated and honoured in their daily lives. I have developed a much deeper understanding of the four themes of the mino-bimaadiziwin educational conceptual framework applies within the dynamic contexts encountered within the challenges of day-to-day life in a school, particularly in a First Nation community context.

In conclusion, it is imperative to include and integrate Indigenous ceremony, land, language, and story into classrooms to contribute positively to the cognitive, cultural, and social development of students. Indigenous ways of knowing and practices have their rightful place in the classroom for the benefit of all students and can contribute positively to mainstream education. An educational transformation that blends Indigenous knowledge and practices into the public school's educational initiatives is essential to learning. By doing so, students' identity, skills, and abilities will strengthen and contribute to society in meaningful and productive ways. Meegwetch.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Letter to Chief and Council

P.O. Box 24
Camperville, MB
R0L 0J0

August 28, 2018

PCFN Chief & Council
Pine Creek First Nation
Camperville, MB
R0L 0J0

Dear Chief and Council members

I am currently in the process of completing my Master's degree in Education through Brandon University. I am writing to share my proposed research study plans for my thesis of "Mino Bimaadiziwin" and how it will enhance youths' understanding of self, community, culture and local history.

My research plan is to interview four elders from the community. The interviews will be audio-recorded, semi-formal in nature and I will work to ensure elders feel respected, safe and valued. I plan to hold interview sessions that will allow both the participants and I adequate time to reflect and/or clarify the information provided. I will provide a transcript copy of interview to the interviewees who will have the opportunity to review the transcriptions and make necessary additions, deletions, or changes to the transcriptions. Participation in the research process is voluntary and I will work hard to maintain rigorous standards of ethics.

I am also providing a copy of the consent form for your review. I am also enclosing the research agreement that outlines each party's responsibilities.

I look forward to working with you on this process and am excited to share the findings in this learning journey I am about to embark on.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration in this matter. It is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Shirley Nepinak

enclosure

Appendix B: Consent Form

Project Title: Exploring Our Roots: Knowledge gathering with elders

Principal Investigator: Shirley Nepinak, Brandon University

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Chris Beeman, Brandon University

Site Where Study Is to Be Conducted: Pine Creek First Nation

Introduction/Purpose: You are invited to participate in a research study. The study is conducted under the direction of Shirley Nepinak, Brandon University. The purpose of this research study is to better understand how the concept of “Mino Bimaadiziwin” will enhance youths’ understanding of self, community, culture and history. The results of this study will increase Pine Creek First Nation youths’ awareness of the concept of Mino Bimaadiziwin. There will be both audio and video recordings of interviews and sharing circles. These recordings will be transcribed and shared with local elders and interested community members.

Procedures: Approximately four individuals are expected to participate in this study. Each participant will participate in face-to-face opened-ended interviews. The time commitment of each participant is expected to be two hours per week for four weeks. Each session will take place at the participant’s residence for interviews in Pine Creek, Manitoba.

Possible Discomforts and Risks: Your participation in the study may involve anxiety or stress. To minimize these risks, the participant will be provided with an interview guide and may choose not to comment on particular topics or themes in the interview. Also, we will conduct opening and closing prayers with optional smudging practices. If you are upset or bothered, as a result of this study, you should contact the Pine Creek Health Department.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits. However, participating in the study may increase general knowledge for the youth of Pine Creek of the concept of Mino Bimaadiziwin, including the history and culture of Pine Creek First Nation.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may decide not to participate without prejudice, penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to leave this study, please contact the principal investigator, Shirley Nepinak, to inform her of your decision.

Financial Considerations: Participation in the study will not involve costs. For your participation in this study, you will receive an honorary gift after the completion of the study.

Confidentiality: The data obtained from you will be collected via audio and video recordings. The collected data will be accessible to Dr. Chris Beeman of Brandon University, Dr. Cindy Clarke of Brandon University, Dr. Karen Rempel of Brandon University, and Brandon University's institutional review board. The researcher will protect your confidentiality by securely storing the data. The collected data will be stored on a computer and in a locked filing cabinet. The audio and visual recordings will be used for transcriptions and will be stored in the research's filing system.

I give my permission to the researcher to use my identity in published materials:

Yes

No

Contact Questions/Persons: If you have any questions about the research now or in the future, you should contact the principal investigator, Shirley Nepinak, 204-524-2130 or 204-524-2354 or by email at Shirley.nepinak@fsdnet.ca. If you have any questions or concerning your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact

Statement of Consent:

"I have read the above description of this research, and I understand it. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions I may have will also be answered by the principal investigator of the research study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

By signing this form, I have not waived any of my legal rights to which I would otherwise be entitled. I will be given a copy of this statement."

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Printed Name of
Person Explaining
Consent Form

Signature of Person Explaining
Consent Form

Date

Printed Name of
Investigator

Signature of Investigator

Date

*Appendix C: Research Agreement – Pine Creek First Nation***RESEARCH AGREEMENT****PROJECT TITLE: Pine Creek Elders' Perspective on Mino-Bimaadiziwin****Researcher's Responsibilities**

As part of the agreement, I, as the researcher, will:

1. Conduct respectful and ethical research.
2. Adhere to community protocol, traditions and customs. I will provide a copy of the interview questions to Pine Creek Chief and Council prior to interviews.
3. If required, prepare an in-person presentation at a PCFN Chief and Council meeting regarding the objectives, data collection procedures, implications, and the dissemination of results of the study.
4. Provide a transcript copy of interview to the interviewees who will have the opportunity to review the transcriptions and make necessary additions, deletions, or changes to the transcriptions. Each collaborator will have the right to waive his or her anonymity via the **Waiver of Anonymity** form. As well, any confidential information will be protected. At any time, the interviewees could elect to withdraw from the project; all information gathered from interviewees who choose to withdraw will be destroyed.
5. Incorporate the findings of the study into the M.Ed. thesis, which will be submitted as partial fulfilment for my M.Ed. degree at the department of Graduate Studies, Brandon University.
6. Present a draft copy of my thesis to the First Nation to review.
7. Invite community representatives to attend my thesis defense.
8. Upon successful defense of the thesis, provide the community with:
 - a. a copy of the thesis, this copy has been requested for archival purposes by Pine Creek First Nation.
 - b. an executive summary of the study, and
 - c. a community presentation on the findings of the research, if requested.

Participant's Responsibilities

As part of the agreement, Pine Creek First Nation, as the participant, will:

1. Grant me permission to conduct the research on PCFN.
2. Select any person (or persons) believed to be appropriate to review a draft copy of the thesis. The review will allow for community input into the thesis. The reviewer(s) will:
 - a. identify any incorrect factual information. Any corrections will be changed to reflect correct factual information.
 - b. point out disagreements with any interpretation of the data and provide alternate interpretations. If the alternative interpretation corresponds with the data, I will change my

interpretation and explain why I have changed the interpretations. However, if the alternative interpretation is not substantiated by the data, I will not change my interpretation. Nonetheless, I will include the alternative interpretation in the final draft; thereby ensuring the community perspective is included in the thesis.

3. Be provided the opportunity to review any future publication related to PCFN.
4. If it deems necessary to make changes after a submission of the thesis to the Graduate Studies and Research, I will incorporate them in any future publications.
5. If it chooses, be provided the opportunity to review the thesis and/or any future publications. The First Nation is not required to review and/or provide input into the thesis if they choose not to. If the Band chooses not to review the document, a representative of the First Nation must sign a waiver to review the document.
6. Attendance the thesis defense will be greatly appreciated, but is voluntary.

Both PCFN and the researcher agree to the above.

Researcher:

Name: (Print) Shirley Nepinak
Signature: S. Nepinak
Date: NOV. 26, 2018

Representative of PCFN:

Name: (Print) KAREN BATSON
Position: Chief
Signature: Karen Batson
Date: NOV. 29/18

Appendix D: TCPS 2



Appendix E: Sample Questions

1. Tell me what mino-bimaadiziwin means to you.
2. What words or ideas should young people know in our language? Why are these words important?
3. Can you give an example of an important teaching that is part of our language?
4. What do you think will happen if children don't learn our language?
5. Based on your own life, what are the stages of life and what teachings do we need to get through them?
6. What teachings will young children need to become adults?
7. In your opinion, what is the role of a baby/child in our community?
8. In your opinion, what is the role of a person in our community?
9. In your opinion, what is the role of an elder in our community?
10. Why are animals important to our people?
11. What are some teachings that animals offer to our people?
12. How do we show respect to the animals for the teachings?
13. Why are stories important in our families and community?
14. What should teachers teach students about mino-bimaadiziwin?
15. What experiences should teachers gift students to learn more about our culture and our history?

Appendix F: Ethics Certificate

Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC) Ethics Certificate for Research Involving Human Participants

The following ethics proposal has been approved by the BUREC. **Ethics Certification is valid for up to five (5) years from the date approved, pending receipt of Annual Progress Reports.** As per *BUREC Policies and Procedures*, section 6.0, "At a minimum, continuing ethics research review shall consist of an Annual Report for multi-year projects and a Final Report at the end of all projects... Failure to fulfill the continuing research ethics review requirements is considered an act of non-compliance and may result in the suspension of active ethics certification; refusal to review and approval any new research ethics submissions, and/or others as outlined in Section 10.0".

Any changes made to the protocol must be reported to the BUREC prior to implementation. See *BUREC Policies and Procedures* for more details.

As per *BUREC Policies and Procedures*, section 10.0, "Brandon University requires that all faculty members, staff, and students adhere to the *BUREC Policies and Procedures*. The University considers non-compliance and the inappropriate treatment of human participants to be a serious offence, subject to penalties, including, but not limited to, formal written documentation including permanently in one's personnel file, suspension of ethics certification, withdrawal of privileges to conduct research involving humans, and/or disciplinary action."

| | |
|--|---|
| Principal Investigator: | Ms. Shirley Nepinak, Brandon University |
| Title of Project: | Exploring Our Roots: Knowledge Gathering with the Elders |
| Co-Investigators: | n/a |
| Faculty Supervisor: <i>(if applicable)</i> | Dr. Chris Beeman, Brandon University |
| Research Ethics File #: | 22425 |
| Date of Approval: | February 8, 2019 |
| Ethics Expiry Date: | February 8, 2024 |
| Authorizing Signature: | |

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christopher D. Hurst".

Mr. Christopher Hurst
Chair, Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC)

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