

Kikisôkêmôwin¹: Pawâtamowin in nêhiyaw Legal Procedures

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTERS OF LAW

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN FACULTY OF LAW
OSGOODE HALL LAW SCHOOL
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

May 2026

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¹ Meaning “To remind by word of mouth to all your gifts”; a process using prayer, words, actions and ceremony to remind people of various ancient knowledges to stir their memories as well as their thoughts and dreaming of existing: *Itwêwina Plains Cree Dictionary* (Alberta Language Technology Lab), online: <itwewina.altlab.app> [*Itwêwina Dictionary*].

Abstract

This master's thesis explores *nêhiyaw* (Cree) and Anishinaabe legal orders, methodologies (Indigegogy), and epistemologies, emphasizing matrilineal systems within the language as well as kinship, and dreaming as law. It centers on the concept of **kikisôkêmwîn**—a process of spiritual and ancestral remembrance—and uses personal narratives, ceremonies, and linguistic analysis to decolonize and disrupt colonial manifestations and frameworks. This thesis also critiques colonial structures like the Doctrine of Discovery and calls for Indigenous resurgence rooted in original laws, kinship, and matrilineal knowledge.

Dedication

It was a beautiful June day when I saw him walking along the rez² road. I recognized him, with hesitation I decided to pick him up, he was after all my cousin's common law partner. I have heard people refer to him as a "thief, meth head, no good." I even had people approach me to state that I should not be "hanging around" with "those" people. All this filtered through my thoughts as I was driving him home. He mentioned that he was on his way to check on his rabbit snares. I asked him if he would bring me rabbits and he answered "yes."

After I dropped him off, I wondered if he would. For a couple of years now I had been giving tobacco and gas money to some of our Whitefish Lake Reserve #118 hunters, and none ever arrived to deliver or share their kill. There would be days I would see them on Facebook cutting up the animal and I would think "would they be dropping some off for me?" However, they did not. I was left wondering and I'd feel disappointed and perplexed.

A couple of weeks went by, and I soon forgot about the rabbits. However, one afternoon I heard a knock at the door, and he stood there with a backpack. He said, "I have your rabbits." I was shocked and taken aback as I told him "Come in." He looked a little bit uncomfortable, but he came in and set his backpack down on the table. He brought out several freezer baggies, he stated, he snared and killed 2 rabbits. He had skinned, cut them up and put them in baggies.

I still feel emotional when I remember this spiritual memory.

He places the rabbits on the table as I hurriedly retrieved tobacco and a gift to follow our nêhiyaw protocol to show my gratitude. He left not knowing how profoundly he shifted my soulflame.³ Whether he knew it or not, but I think in a way he did, he was following our nêhiyaw law of kistêyihitamowin.⁴ Kistêyihitamowin is to show respect by your actions whether it be physical actions such as body language etc. or even inaction by not following through with "promises". He demonstrated respect by fulfilling my request and in doing so, he cut up the rabbits, cleaned them and delivered them as he said he would. He also showed kistêyihitamowin to the rabbit by using every part of it, cleaning it and cutting it up very well.

I wondered about the other hunters that I had approached. Did they have respect for me?

That year, the rabbit hunter was brutally murdered in a freezing January winter. I dedicate this thesis to him who showed respect by following kisêmanitôw⁵ laws, I hope that he finds his way to kisêmanitôwnâhk⁶ swiftly and peacefully – a place where dreams begin.

² Slang for reservation road.

³ Sylvia McAdam, *Nationhood Interrupted: Revitalizing nêhiyaw Legal Systems* (Saskatoon, SK, Canada: Purich Publishing Limited, 2015) at 27.

⁴ *Ibid* at 61.

⁵ "Creator" or spiritual being equivalent to "God" but has no gender and is everywhere. It is important to note, God and Kisêmanitôw are not one and the same but the idea of a creator of all things is similar: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

⁶ Word to describe similar locations to "heaven," the spirit world etc. [translated by author].

Statement

Indigenous laws are ancient, diverse, practical, and spiritual. For this master's thesis, the focus will be on nêhiyaw methodology with Anishinaabe reinforcements framed with nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina (Cree laws) from the Treaty 6 lands specifically mistahatihkamêk sâkahikan (Big Whitefish Lake) reserve #118 also known under the Indian Act as Big River First Nation in which this thesis and dreaming begins. The dreaming is foundational towards freedom, liberation and self-determination following the women's pipe inviting the 6 directions to join in spiritual and sacred effort to deprogram, decolonize as well as disrupt colonial narratives surrounding Indigenous research methods, ontology, methodologies, and laws.

I suggest readers enter this thesis with prayer and open mindedness.

Acknowledgements

*This master's thesis is Dedicated in Memory of
"My Booeey," Angela Jacqueline McAdam
Also,
To my parents Francis & Juliette McAdam (Saysewahum),
To all our relatives.*

I am grateful to kisêmanitôw as well as our nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe ways of being and doing. It is life of brilliance, beauty and ceremonial lodges. I am grateful to the sweetgrass, sage and the medicines. I am grateful to our ancestors who continue to guide and instruct from the spiritual realm.

My life would be meaningless without ninosimak,⁷ Sienna, Kaydance, Keenan, Ciara, Zoey, Cassidy, Samuel, Elias, Nathaniel, Jake, Alara, Jonathon, Avalyn, Carter, Journey and Emma. This thesis stands as a beacon, illuminating the way forward on our shared journey toward freedom, liberation, and self-determination. Its purpose endures beyond my presence. You are my heart. To my adult children, I am thankful for your patience and love, Jenna, Amanda, Richard, Vicky and Storm – you are a blessing.

My siblings who have always championed my meandering path, even in silence, Doris, Agnes, Corrine, Arnold, Dion, Kurtis and Tony – kinanaskomtinawaw mistahi. I remember all our family that have passed on, our parents, Francis & Juliette McAdam, brothers Raymond, Darryl, and Sterling along with our sister Rosie and ninosim Tommy.

I am endlessly grateful to Dr. Sheelah McLean, Meg Gregoire, Dr. Claire Mumme, Dr. Kristen Thomason, Professor Jillian Rogin, Dr. Sujith Xavier, Dr. Shanti Senthil, and Professor

⁷ Nêhiyaw word for "my grandchildren", no gender [translated by author].

Reem Bahdi for your insights and gentle friendships. The food, laughter and perceptions have been invaluable and so appreciated.

Nimama's dream guided me to the University of Windsor, Faculty of Law. Within its walls, I discovered a sense of solace and quietness that allowed for profound personal transformation. Although the institution itself exists within a colonial framework, my experience there was shaped by the gentle and compassionate nature of the people I encountered. Their kindness helped to ease the conflicted feelings for a nêhiyawskwew working in such environments so far from my homelands, creating a space where I could grow and find comfort amid complexity.

Always, I am grateful to the Elders who provide their insights, knowledge and their wisdom. Elder Emma Steinhauer and Stanley Wilson generously gave their time to share their rich knowledge and, in their flexibility, to accept "virtual tobacco" so that we may speak; it was such a joy to hear you both.

I try to leave the best for last; my Osgoode Hall Law School thesis supervisor Professor Jeff Hewitt is a gift; his visionary guidance was invaluable, especially during times when I struggled or felt lost for words. His encouragement led to new perspectives in my research, reminding me of the importance of freedom and liberation in every step. Professor Hewitt was one of the voices heard in my mother's dream and is forever in my story. Thank you also to Professor Kate Sutherland for your time as my committee member – it's much appreciated.

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Introduction: Preparing A Sacred Bundle

Aboriginal (Indigenous) Hunters always speak as if the keepers of the spirits of nature are in control of the hunt. The hunters do not believe that their awareness or skills have any controlling authority in their hunt. They say the forces of nature are watching them, know everything on their minds, and what and how they behave in the hunt. The spiritual forces decide which animals will be made available and caught, thus determining the success of the hunt. The creation of this book followed this pattern, with the many spirits and forces controlling its production and contents.

— Sa'ke'j Henderson⁸

Preparing for any journey requires planning, especially an extended trip – preparation may entail praying, planning, ceremony, packing, organizing, and arranging. When I was born, similar preparations were made, nicâpân was a midwife and she had the ability to foretell children's future according to nimama, she foretold mine. The spiritual keepers⁹ are believed to guide, instruct and direct a person on their path even beyond into the spiritual realm. They are intentionally and purposefully pursued for their instructions and guidance. Each person fulfilling their path should choose to listen and follow instructions from beyond the physical world. Indigenous epistemic centered methodologies¹⁰ refer to Indigenous knowledge as sacred knowledge,¹¹ instructions and directions are received in different forms. There is not only one path, but there can be multiple paths.

My own instructions began at my birth, as stated nicâpân¹² was the midwife and the first human to hold me. She told nimama¹³ who I am and gave her teachings to prepare my life's path.

⁸ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 21.

⁹ Spirit Keepers are from the spirit world and maybe acquired through vision quests, dreams, ceremonies, generational transmission.

¹⁰ Margaret Kovach, *Searching for Arrowheads: An inquiry into Approaches to Indigenous Research using a Tribal Methodology with a Nêhiyaw Kistêiyhtamowin Worldview* University of Victoria, (2006) at 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² "Great-grandparent"; *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

¹³ "Mother"; Anishinaabe [translated by author].

The nêhiyaw word for “prepare” is waweyih.¹⁴ It is these teachings that prepared and initiated my eventual journey to Windsor Ontario. I prepared my kanaw’simowina¹⁵ creating and adding to an existing “bundle” or bag that I have carried throughout my life. A bundle can be a bag, suitcase – depending on the person’s preferred container for their sacred items. Each kanaw’simowin is a sacred item, either passed down through the generations or acquired by the holder through vision quests or other sacred methods. Much like the above rabbit hunter story, each item is lovingly cared for and put away respectfully using our laws of kistêyihitamowin.¹⁶ In nêhiyawêwin and Anishinaabemowin, there are two similar understandings for “respect,” kistêyihitamowin and manâcim, or manâcitohwin, follow the laws of pâstâmwîn and pâstâhowin.¹⁷

The term manâcim means to show verbal respect to someone, take care verbally. Another term which is similar, kistêyihitamowin, is the physical respecting of someone. This supports the physical and verbal laws which apply to how a person acts and how they to speak appropriately following kinship terms and laws. There is the verbal respecting and the physical respecting of kin. The respect shown is dependent on the terms and roles of each family member.¹⁸

In preparing for my journey to Windsor to follow nimama’s dream, I followed this similar instruction in organizing with prayer and care.

¹⁴ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

¹⁵ Word for “things that protect you” such as a pipe, sweetgrass, amulets, rock, rattle, etc.; kanaw’simowin is singular: spelling provided by Les Skinner, “kanaw’simowina ᑕᑎᑎᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ I’m thinking— some kind of protection?” (2 November 2021), online: <facebook.com/groups/18414147673> [perma.cc/GJX3-LHC2] (comment thread).

¹⁶ Meaning to show respect by your actions whether it be physical actions such as body language or even inaction by not following through with “promises”: McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 61 and 99 [translated by author].

¹⁷ *Ibid* at 43.

¹⁸ *Ibid* at 61.

I will position myself so that I can speak from the lands and nation that I am born into. I am nêhiyaw¹⁹ and Anishinaabe²⁰; nipapa²¹ is nêhiyaw and nimama²² is Anishinaabe. I speak nipapa's language called nêhiyawêwin²³ and am adequately fluent. I understand to some degree nimama's language Anishinaabemowin²⁴ although I am not fluent. I am registered under the *Indian Act* as belonging to the Whitefish Lake reserve #118 also known as Big River First Nation situated in what is now Saskatchewan. More importantly, I am a descendent of Treaty 6 Original Peoples of who existed and walked these lands and are signatory to the Treaty. For purposes of this article, I can only speak on the experience from the place I come from and in no way speak for nêhiyawak.²⁵

I enter and navigate this space of academic research shared in the colonizer's language and in paper form, but I am nourished and nurtured in nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina as well as the lodges of nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe Peoples. I think, speak, and dream in nêhiyawêwin. I open and enter this door into a space to transmit, translate and guide non speakers to understand nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina in hopes that their journey into research is guided and instructed by nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe epistemology, relationality and methodology. This thesis centers and examines the complexity and brilliance that guided nêhiyaw thoughts and practices since our "original ancestors came from Kakanâcisitacâhk"²⁶ (north star).²⁷ Nêhiyaw laws enriched and

¹⁹ "Cree person"; Nêhiyaw: *Ibid* at 100 [translated by author].

²⁰ "Ojibway Peoples"; Anishinaabe [translated by author].

²¹ "Father/dad"; Nêhiyaw [translated by author].

²² "Mother/mom"; Anishinaabe [translated by author].

²³ The Cree language, McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 100 [translated by author].

²⁴ The Ojibway language; Anishinaabe [translated by author].

²⁵ "Cree Peoples"; plural spelling, Nêhiyaw: McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 100 [translated by author].

²⁶ Spelling from A2G, "Kakanâcisitacâhk: Drumming Our Houses Home" (2025) online: (event) <a2g.ca/ohmn/>.

²⁷ Stanley Wilson, "Teaching in the Anthropocene" (2 February 2023), online (podcast) <writersfestival.org/events/spring-2023-spring-podcast/1.-teaching-in-the-anthropocene>.

supported our education, our ecologies, our landscapes and ecosystems nurturing and informing our physical health of the people and nations.

Nêhiyaw methodology is a way of life that utilizes several methods to involve systems in assisting specific or general processes, methods and procedures. With years of nêhiyaw instructions, learning and training involved, a person's initial usual first step towards invoking a methodology is to mâmitonêyihta. Translated, mâmitonêyihta means "to think" or "thinking,"²⁸ however, when analyzed, mâmitonêyihta has a complex and spiritual meaning. Each sound needs examining. The first sound is "ma mi" is like the sound nêhiyawak believe the universe makes, a low hum could be heard through the universe, rhythmically broken by a consistent lull then the hum would repeat itself over and over again.²⁹ The sound "ma mi" has also been described to mean "gather together," from the word mamawo.³⁰ The second sound "to" is from the word nitona which means "to seek or look for."³¹ The third sound nêyihta means "the thinking part of the brain or mind." So, when the literally translation is put together what mâmitonêyihta means is "to seek/gather your thinking from the sound/vibration of the universe – to gather/bring it together." The language brings the force or energy referred to as "pim"³² into the methods, prayers woven into each action of thought, movement and decisions. Even inaction means something – a quietness, a silence, an opportunity to hear the stillness.

Nêhiyaw methodology is a complex coordination interconnected and interrelated with wâhkôhtowin³³ and wâhkôhmtowin³⁴ as well as nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina³⁵ and manitow

²⁸ Meaning "to think" [translated by author].

²⁹ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 37.

³⁰ Itwêwina Dictionary, *supra* note 1.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Pim from Pimâtisiwin, meaning "source of all living beings"; this will be examined thoroughly in later chapter.

³³ Meaning "human kinship, as well as all of creation": McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 104 [translated by author].

³⁴ Meaning "human kinship through blood line": *Ibid* [translated by author].

³⁵ "Cree human laws": *Ibid* at 40 and 100 [translated by author].

wiyinikêwina.³⁶ Each is integral in understanding the force or energy in which “life” of each thing begins. It is the force of the universe’s sound or vibration that guides the seeking.

Nêhiyaw methods are demonstrated in the following diagram:

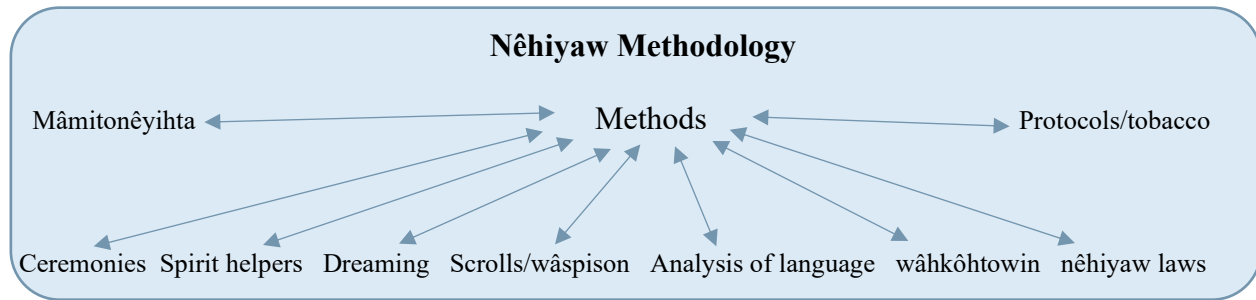


Diagram 1

There are many methods, each nation has their own and are as important to the processes and procedures. For nêhiyawak, the methods may differ depending on what the person is seeking, not all are the same.

This master’s thesis began long ago utilizing nêhiyaw methods with sacred items prepared, picked, or given. It is understood that the human experience is fundamentally ambiguous and far too complex for single approaches.³⁷ Further, each Indigenous works, songs, poems, art etc., sets out to utilize and employ kikisôkêmôwin.³⁸ Kikisôkêmôwin means “to remind,” to speak to the mind, spirit, emotions, and the physical – even to stir ancient memories through the vibration of words and thoughts from ancient generational knowledge – mihko (blood)³⁹ memory. However, nêhiyawak and Anishinaabe believe feelings, spiritual and physical memory is carried in other parts of the human body.

³⁶ “Creator’s laws”: *Ibid* at 38 and 99 [translated by author].

³⁷ Norman Denzin, Yvonna Lincoln & Linda Smith, *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2008) at 348.

³⁸ Meaning “to remind”; to stir awake memories either ancient or current through stories, historical accounts, teachings, songs etc. [translated by author].

³⁹ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

The first chapter has nêhiyaw words to situate in what manner nêhiyaw, and Anishinaabe Peoples are matrilineal by examining and unpacking the language as well as how critical language is in understanding the importance blood kinships as related to the systems of nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe matriarchs. To do this, understanding otisiy and otisiyêyâpiya is detailed and examined in how they imbed the understanding of why nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe are known matriarchal.

The second chapter weaves in an examination and scrutiny of what pimâtisiwin and itâtisiwin looks like when inquired through nêhiyaw otisiy analysis moving away from current English interpretation and translation. Through the assistance of transformative Indigenous scholars, Elders and knowledge keepers, I've uncovered the sounds that create pimâtisiwin and itâtisiwin by understanding the impact of otisiyêyâpiy knowledge. Nêhiyaw science and intelligence may have words for DNA or epigenetics as explored in this chapter, such a transformative analysis that brings the meanings of matriarchy and sacredness on a new level.

Chapter three, kikişôkêmôwin,⁴⁰ is a provocative reminder to language speakers as well as readers that understanding the origin and meaning of words in nêhiyawêwin may challenge the current translation and interpretation. Weaving in dreaming as understood in nêhiyawêwin as pawâtamowin shifts creating a bridge to the spiritual realm, a profound location to access guidance and instructions. Some Indigenous scholars have stated that this form of work is resistance, a pushing back on colonialism, and this chapter explores how language is critical in analyzing and understanding Nêhiyaw methods.

Chapter four is about honouring wâhkôhmtowin, the blood kinship. Kinship is one of the foundations to nêhiyaw laws. wâhkôhtowin is about human kinships with all of creation,

⁴⁰ Meaning "to remind by word of mouth to all your gifts": *Ibid.*

however, wâhkôhmtowin also specifically speaks to human kinships through bloodline. The bloodline kinship is intricate and can be complicated. This chapter will explore in depth wâhkôhmtowin and how it applies to land and hunting. This kinship law guides and directs interaction between relatives and who can interact with each other. This chapter is guided by nêhiyaw methodology and protocol weaved with the four “Rs”: responsibility, respect, reciprocity, and rights and regulations of the researched.⁴¹ I would anchor the four “Rs” with nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina and manitow wiyinikêwina⁴² seeking guidance and direction from them. Nimama’s dreaming is the source that began this thesis and is discussed at length in this chapter as law instruction by understanding nêhiyaw interpretation of pawâtamowin.

Chapter five takes readers back to otisiy and otisiyêyâpiy interconnecting with the blood in wâhkôhmtowin. This chapter weaves pimâtisiwin with the menstruation of nêhiyaw women and the impacts of church especially the Victorian era. This is a vulnerable chapter connecting personal experience to the brutal impacts brought here by the scripture and ideology of the bible and church. How blood is instrumental and ungendered, blood as sacred understanding that binds nêhiyaw laws to respect it as carrying ancestral and ancient knowledge through the ages therefore must be honoured.

Chapter six unpacks the history of when the Europeans arrived on Turtle Island on what is now called “Canada.” Its impacts are generational and still felt today. Indigenous Peoples, and for this thesis, nêhiyawak and Anishinaabe family and science knowledge systems that have existed since millennia became targeted for genocide and brutal assimilation. Doctrine of Discovery is complex legal tradition that arose in the West during the medieval period, and this

⁴¹ Bagele Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies*, second edition. ed (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications Inc., 2020) at 5.

⁴² McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 37. See also 'wiyasiwêwina' means “Cree human laws” and 'manitow wiyinikêwina' means “Creator’s laws”: *Ibid* at 99 and 104 [translated by author].

chapter examines how it continues to be applied in Canadian court cases in violation to the freedom, liberation and self-determination of nêhiyawak. The churches played a central and violent role by issuing a series of papal bulls that reflected the thinking of dominant European powers and reinforced the trajectory of justifying Christian domination. In Canada, the Doctrine of Discovery is called the underlying title of the crown and simply put, it is the application of the racist Doctrine of (Christian) Discovery.⁴³ It is critical to understand the impact in today's Canadian laws.

Chapter 1 Otisiy: Naming my Belly Button

“Our first home was a log house, and you were born there, not in a hospital. Kicâpân⁴⁴ was the midwife and was the first human to hold you as you took your first breath. As you came into this world, you were born with a mitastotin⁴⁵: we call it awâsismitastotin.⁴⁶ It is our belief that when a child is born with awâsismitastotin, they are born with instructions from kisêmanitôwnâhk.⁴⁷ Kicâpân took it off your head, wrapped it in sage and sweetgrass and stored it in a tin can. As she did this, she told me your birth is unusual: she stated that you would be a leader for our people in the future, not right away because the awâsismitastotin was positioned high above your eyebrows near your hair line – it would be later in your life. Kicâpân cleaned you up then I held you. As I held you, kicâpân sang a welcoming song and introduced herself to you saying “Niya oma kicâpân.⁴⁸” Nicâpân sang a birth song. Shortly afterwards, she took the aspiskwêsimon⁴⁹ (placenta/afterbirth) along with your otisiyêyâpiy,⁵⁰ smudging both with sweetgrass, giving thanks to them for feeding you in the months before your birth as well as your healthy entrance into this world. Afterwards, she wrapped it in leaves then placed it in one of those potato sacks. Kicâpân took the wrapped aspiskwêsimon and otisiyêyâpiy tying both to a black pine tree as high as she could, giving them both in gratitude to the spirit world - kisêmanitôwnâhk.

⁴³ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 12.

⁴⁴ Meaning “your great grandparent”; no gender [translated by author].

⁴⁵ “Hat” [translated by author].

⁴⁶ Translates to a “child’s hat”, also called awâsastotin: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1; It describes the condition of “being born with the caul” as: “when a baby or a child is born with a portion of the amniotic sac or membrane remaining on the head”; a “caul” (Latin: Caput galeatum, literally, “head helmet”) is a thin, filmy membrane, the amnion, that can cover a newborn’s head and face immediately after birth: “What Is an “En Caul” Birth?”, online: <babymed.com/what-is-an-en-caul-birth>.

⁴⁷ “Spirit world” [translated by author].

⁴⁸ Meaning “I am your great grandparent” [translated by author].

⁴⁹ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

⁵⁰ “Umbilical cord”: *Ibid*.

*You were given a water bath then a paskwâwihkwaskwa⁵¹ (buffalo sage) bath⁵² to ensure you were not 'hairy' as you grew into your life. This is how you were born, and this is your birth story."*⁵³

This thesis began on the lands of Anishinaabe and nêhiyawak through the history, stories, mysteries and language that paved a path towards my LL.M guided by nimama's dream. To understand this path, I begin by analyzing the nêhiyaw language used throughout this thesis, therefore this chapter will use nêhiyaw words to review core nêhiyawêwin⁵⁴ concepts, interpretations and translations. This is a valuable and crucial part of nêhiyaw methods.

It is my hope that readers will have an idea of what each word means in depth, to uncover the intelligence and brilliance of nêhiyaw concepts and thoughts. Each sound creates meaning within the word and is important in the flow of the expression itself. There are different dialects within the nêhiyaw nation, I speak, and I am from the widely used and most familiar nêhiyaw "y" dialect. The analysis is critical in unpacking words which bring life and divine light into this master's thesis. Some words are impossible to translate. I hope to do the best I can and seek guidance from my own knowledge of my father's Peoples language nêhiyawêwin. Nêhiyawêwin is a non-gendered language, there is no "he" or "she," some even call our language nonbinary. I feel fortunate to still speak and understand the language.⁵⁵ This thesis will hopefully stir the ancient âcimona⁵⁶ and atayôhkawêwna (or atayôhkeywêwna)⁵⁷ that exist imbedded in the language. Ekikisôkêmôyan, meaning "I become the voice to remind, convey and communicate"⁵⁸

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² "Our babies would be given a sage bath shortly after birth to make sure they did not grow up to be hairy." Apparently, the midwife would gently roll them over the sage then bath them" as told by my mother generally.

⁵³ As told by my mother, Juliette McAdam (nee Whitefish), generally, over my lifetime.

⁵⁴ The Cree language: McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 100 [translated by author].

⁵⁵ There are far more fluent speakers, and these nêhiyaw words shared here need more analysis.

⁵⁶ "Stories" [translated by author].

⁵⁷ "Sacred stories/histories" [translated by author].

⁵⁸ When an "e" is in front of a nêhiyaw words, it means "I".

this research and thesis as accurately as possible through various modes and the original instructions guided by nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe manitow wiyinikêwina,⁵⁹ nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina⁶⁰ and nêhiyaw itâtisiwin.⁶¹

Further, this chapter and thesis will incorporate personal life experiences as part of nêhiyaw methodology⁶² to clarify and amplify the daily and current colonial impacts using my own family life. Storytelling has the ability to fill the gaps in the present documentation of the lives of Indigenous people,⁶³ this includes my family life. Relationships and life experiences are deeply personal. The reality is that colonial erasure continues for Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island especially for Indigenous women and Two-Spirit peoples.

I have asked nimama⁶⁴ to tell the above birth story repeatedly over the years until it became etched into my spiritual memory with detail and emotion. More so now since nimama passed away in 2017. Nicâpân's⁶⁵ picture can be found in my book "Nationhood Interrupted: Revitalizing nêhiyaw Legal Systems." I've looked at that picture with intensity and love knowing she was the first human to hold me. I wish pictures could speak. For generations, midwives have served births like mine, singing our babies into our nations, into our bloodlines, into our nêhiyaw kinship structures. The umbilical cord tenderly given prayers for its connection to our nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe matrilineal lines as well as to our origins.

⁵⁹ "Creator's law"; Anishinaabe: McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 99 [translated by author].

⁶⁰ "Cree human laws": *Ibid* at 100 [translated by the author].

⁶¹ Meaning "conduct, behaviour or demeanor" [translated by author].

⁶² Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous methodologies: characteristics, conversations and contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) at 102.

⁶³ Leslie Allison Brown & Susan Strega, *Research as Resistance: Revisiting critical, Indigenous, and Anti-oppressive Approaches*, second edition. ed (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2015) at 186.

⁶⁴ Meaning "my mother"; Anishinaabe [translated by author].

⁶⁵ Meaning "my great grandparent"; Nêhiyaw [translated by author].

The spiritual laws cannot be discussed or revealed: these are the unwritten laws of the People.⁶⁶ However, sometimes to understand a concept imbedded in the language, spirituality will be generally interwoven with consideration and care. For this thesis, I will focus on *nêhiyawêwin*⁶⁷ in my translation and interpretation of words that I am writing about in this chapter and subsequent chapters which are critical in comprehending why *nêhiyaw* and Anishinaabe Peoples are called “matrilineal.” They are matrilineal because of how *otisiy*⁶⁸ and *otisiyêyâpiy*⁶⁹ are central in the language. They are both believed to carry memory, DNA and/or generational genetics. This will be analyzed further in the chapter.

The *otisiy* is carefully cared for while attached to the baby using binding to keep it secure until it naturally falls off. During this time, the baby is held gently and carefully, he/she is not moved suddenly or quickly. It is a tender period of their first days in the physical world. It is believed baby is attached to the spirit world⁷⁰ until the *otisiy* falls off. After the *otisiy* falls off, an *okohkoma*⁷¹ is contacted or a relative who has knowledge of what to do with the *otisiy*. It is ceremonial when an *otisiy* falls off, an indicator the baby has now fully joined the physical world with their body. The *otisiy* is smudged⁷² and taken to a chosen location after discussion with parents and family because it is believed the location will influence what characteristic the baby will have as they grow up. For example, the *otisiy* can be placed on an ant pile/home in the belief the baby will take on the characteristics of a strong, hard worker as well as have dedicated team

⁶⁶ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 39.

⁶⁷ The Cree language: *Ibid* at 100 [translated by author].

⁶⁸ “Belly button”; *otisiya*, plural [translated by author].

⁶⁹ “Umbilical cord”: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

⁷⁰ ‘Kisêmanitôwnâhk’ is “spirit world” [translated by author].

⁷¹ Meaning “their grandmother” [translated by author].

⁷² Sylvia McAdam, *Cultural Teachings: First Nations Protocols and Methodologies* (Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre, 2009) at 18.

work ethics for the nation. It will be decided by the parents with guidance by their parents or grandparents when possible.⁷³

Each nêhiyaw nation has their understanding of otisiy and otisiyêyâpiy, each community has their instructions about the otisiy. There is a tradition and custom within the Swampy Cree peoples to bury a child's umbilical cord so that the child will always feel a connection to the earth, to the cosmology.⁷⁴ The family gathers together in ceremony to bury the dried umbilical cord and then planted a willow tree on the place where the umbilical cord is buried.⁷⁵

The otisiy is so important that in nêhiyawêwin upon introducing themselves, they say, for example, “âmow-piyêsîs⁷⁶ nitisiyihkâson⁷⁷” which translates into “the sound to make when calling my belly button is Hummingbird.” When taken apart the word “ni ti si yih kâ son”⁷⁸ has “ti si” as the noun or center of the complete word, “ni” means “my” indicating singular person so “ni ti si” means *my belly button*. The rest of the word “yih kâ son” means “the sound...” when translated together it means “the sound of my belly button.” Put together with otisiyêyâpiy, this means “who they are from the sound of their umbilical cord” or the sound their belly button makes, which in turn identifies the “sound” of their mother's generational line. This identifies and entrenches nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe otisiyêyâpiya⁷⁹ lineages which is why nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe Peoples are described as matrilineal, following the mothers line.

⁷³ It can involve family members who may have knowledge in family history.

⁷⁴ Wilson Stanley & Peggy Wilson, “Wahkootowin” in *Cree Teaching Stories* (Unpublished, 2024).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Using my granddaughter's nêhiyaw name as an example, her name means “hummingbird”: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

⁷⁷ (Last visited 7 September 2024), online: <facebook.com/groups/18414147673/> (general search by author).

⁷⁸ I was visiting my relative, Eileen Gelowitz, and her son, my nephew Dr. Jordan Gelowitz, when this topic came up at their home in Winnipeg, MB (8 March 2024). Eileen reminded me of what nitisiyihkâson meant when broken down. Jordan joined in the conversation stating when he introduces himself, he is reminded of where he belongs.

⁷⁹ Adding the ‘a’ at the end of ‘otisiyêyâpiy’ indicates more than one umbilical cord: plural spelling [translated by author].

I utilize a Facebook group called Nêhiyawêwin Word/Phrase of the Day,⁸⁰ it is administered and run by knowledgeable linguists and language speakers who provide a forum for much needed translations, interpretations and discussions. Given there is very little written material available for nêhiyawêwin,⁸¹ it became a valuable resource. I reached out to the group and certain individuals responded about the word otisiy because there are different ways to say it given there are different nêhiyaw dialects. The following is their understanding as well as my own of the belly button in the “y” dialect of nêhiyawêwin and how it is applied in the language:

Belly button itself is called mitisey. Otisiy refers to someone’s belly button in a third person. Nitisiy means my belly button. Kitisiy means your belly button.⁸²

There are basic unchangeable anchors in nêhiyawêwin, such as “ni” means “my,” “ki” means “your,” “o” means a third person (or animate being). Mitisey is the name of the belly button as standing on its own. Other nêhiyaw communities have called the otisiy “itisey,” the spelling can vary but the core meaning of otisiy or tisiy is unchanged.

As far as I could remember, every spring nimama would walk to a nearby field just as the purple crocuses were budding and flourishing. On our lands, these flowers appear every spring bringing color back onto the lands, signaling budding and renewal. Nimama would carry her cistêmâw⁸³ in hand and sit beside crocuses quietly as she gently and tenderly put her cistêmâw beside them. She would softly whisper a prayer of gratitude to the female bison and to the flower. I would sit beside her and listen. I was always curious, so I asked why we did this, she answered “When the female bison/buffalo gives birth in the spring, where her otisiyâyâpiy falls,

⁸⁰ (Last visited 7 September 2024), online: <facebook.com/groups/18414147673/>.

⁸¹ The Cree language: McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 100 [translated by author].

⁸² Permission given by Terry Badine to quote her knowledge. I mailed her tobacco and a gift to follow nêhiyaw protocol. Terry Badine, from Moberly Lake, BC, (17 September 2024), online: <facebook.com/groups/18414147673> [perma.cc/8MU5-5NFS] (comment thread).

⁸³ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1. See also spelling for “tobacco”: (last visited 9 September 2024), online: <facebook.com/groups/18414147673> (general search by author).

the crocuses flourish,” that’s why we call them paskwāw mostos⁸⁴ otisiy which translates to “bison belly button.” This is to honor and remember how the beautiful and powerful bison generational otisiyêyâpiy has sustained my people for millennia. This is an example of how even animals have their otisiy, and how the bison have been given pimâtisiwin – their way of “life.” I am grateful that the bison have kept my Peoples housed, fed, and nourished for as long as they have.

Since millennia, Indigenous women have practiced birth control referred to as contraceptives. They have used masân, translated to stinging nettles (*Urtica Dioica*),⁸⁵ and it’s boiled to a tea form for the women to drink.⁸⁶ Further, long before any European settlers arrived, Indigenous Americans used various herbs for contraceptives, including black cohosh, blue cohosh, thistles, stone seed, false hellebore, and Indian paintbrush.⁸⁷ The women would not be allowed to have a second child unless the first-born child is able to run.⁸⁸ The practical application of Indigenous knowledge and intelligence refers to a time when humans used their bodies as a vehicle and the ability to run meant survival for the people and the generations to come.

Matrilineal systems are imbedded in the language and are a testament of a Peoples knowledge of body, blood and birth to guide and instruct the nations towards manitow wiyinikêwina with nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina in harmony and respect for creations otisiyêyâpiya in

⁸⁴ Nêhiyaw spelling for “buffalo”: (last visited 9 September 2024), online: <facebook.com/groups/18414147673> (general search by author).

⁸⁵ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1; see also: Equinox Wilderness Adventure, (5 May 2022), online (post): <facebook.com/groups/18414147673> [perma.cc/8DN8-68P8].

⁸⁶ General conversation with nimama Juliette McAdam before she passed away.

⁸⁷ Healthline, “The History of Birth Control” (28 June 2021), online: <healthline.com/health/birth-control/history-of-birth-control#early-history>.

⁸⁸ General conversation with nimama Juliette McAdam before she passed away.

whatever way all have been given. In this way, nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe recognized creations genetic blueprint guided by the original instructions since ancient times.

Chapter 2 Life: Nêhiyaw Genetic Blueprint of Pimâtisiwin⁸⁹

We came from a star called kakanâcisitacâhk,⁹⁰ it is referred to as the north star. We journeyed from kakanâcisitacâhk arriving on the furthest star located on the “handle” of the big dipper, making our way towards the last star located on the corner of the “cup” closest to the earth. As we got close to the earth, we created a braid that we used as a bridge to arrive at kîwêtinohk⁹¹ the furthest and coldest peak of the earth as it is known today.⁹²

As I was exploring otisiy and otisiyêyâpiy, I came across another word that is profound and incredible; it needs more exploring and research – at this time with conversations with nêhiyaw Elders and speakers I’ve arrived at a translation and interpretation which may need, as stated further exploring and vetting. I was reading a book called “Canada’s Indigenous Constitution” by John Borrows when I came across this nêhiyaw word “itâtisiwin.”⁹³ I’ve heard this word growing up on the Whitefish Lake reserve #118⁹⁴ but only had an abstract understanding, and I rarely gave it much thought. I noticed the translation states that itâtisiwin means “nature” which needed further nêhiyaw analysis. Also, according to the Cree Dictionary, itâtisiwin is translated to mean “demeanor, behavior, conduct.”⁹⁵ Yet I wondered where this meaning originated? After much reflection and sounding it out, I came to understand it in a way

⁸⁹ “Life”: McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 103 [translated by author].

⁹⁰ “Pure star” or “pure soul” [translated by author].

⁹¹ “The north”: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

⁹² This is part of nêhiyaw origin or creation history: Wilson & Wilson, *supra* note 74; see also Stanley Wilson & Barbara Schellhammer, *Indigegogy, An Invitation to Learning in a Relational Way*, (Darmstadt: wbg Academic, 2014) at 23.

⁹³ The correct SRO spelling is itâtisiwin, and itâtisiwina, plural; to be used throughout this thesis: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1; I was at a “block” in my UWindsor office when I got up to look at my bookcase full of books and began pulling them out. As I began opening pages, the highlighted portions got my attention and I thought “why did I highlight this?” I began to think on what this word meant: (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

⁹⁴ Also referred to today as Big River First Nation.

⁹⁵ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

that required analyzing each sound from the nêhiyaw nuances and sounds. Itâtisiwin is spelt with an “I.” When said phonetically, it sounds like a hard “ee” followed by “tâ ti si win,” – each sound having meaning. Depending on where the “ee” is used, it can give different meanings. But for itâtisiwin, “ee” signals an animate subject indicating it has “spirit” or energy. It is an example of how, in the y-dialect, verb with “î” “keep the î”⁹⁶ sound when the word indicates a third person/animate subject. Over the years, the nêhiyaw language been adapted into Standard Roman Orthography (SRO)⁹⁷ to assist in creating materials to teach language in schools and onto paper form. I am finding the translations are colonizing the language making nêhiyaw words fit into the English language interpretation instead of the other way around. For example, it would have been much easier for this thesis to say nitisiyihkâson means “my name is...” but nitisiyihkâson would lose its in-depth original meaning connecting the genetics of each person to their mothers, grandmothers and so on,⁹⁸ thereby erasing the language interpretation of nêhiyawak and how it informs their matrilineal systems. At its core, it would erase the mother’s lineage imbedded in the language.

In analyzing the word itâtisiwin, “î” indicates the third person, similarly, “o” can even be used in the context of a third person, like in otatisiwin. The “ta” or “tat” is the action of coding or marking or it may also mean to “script” or “write.” This same action of marking/coding can be found in words such as **it**asinahikâsêw or **it**askinahikâshot, meaning “how that animate being/thing is marked, written, coded or even tattooed.”⁹⁹ The same “ta” sound is in the words signaling same action being performed as well as the meaning to mark, write, or tattoo. With

⁹⁶ Arden Ogg, “Dialect Differences (y-, th-, n-)” (6 October 2021), online: *Cree Literacy Network* <creeliteracy.org/2021/10/06/dialect-differences-y-th-n>.

⁹⁷ Arden Ogg, “What is SRO?” (17 January 2012), online: *Cree Literacy Network* <creeliteracy.org/2012/01/17/what-is-sro>.

⁹⁸ Hannah Pazderka et al, “Nitisiyihkâson: The Brain Science behind Cree Teachings of Early Childhood Attachment” (2020) 9:1 *First Peoples Child & Family Review* 53 at 54.

⁹⁹ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

Itâtisiwin’s core word put together with “ti si win” sounds like the biological - genetic instruction of each species but for this thesis - humans. The meaning in the second part of itâtisiwin is “ti si win,” is described as “unending,” an “interconnectedness unending,” like a generational otisiyêyâpiy that is infinite and interrelated. The core meaning from “ti si win” comes from the nêhiyaw misiwê, which translated means “all over” like a web or weavings.¹⁰⁰ The “si” is the same sounding “si” in itâtisiwin. Each sound replicates and is used to create the action that describes the infinite and interrelated movement. To expand on this, the process of interconnectedness is infinite, unending like the generational line of otisiyêyâpiya.¹⁰¹ Itâtisiwin is relational, all species or creation have it, whether it is from an umbilical cord, or other ways – each is given a way of being to live according to their pimâtisiwin original instructions, side by side with humans, to leave undisturbed their itâtisiwin. For instance, nêhiyawak would leave the bison/buffalo undisturbed so that they can thrive on their lands – doing their best not to impact their food sources so that their way of life flourishes. Nêhiyawak have intrinsic knowledge in ecological protection.

Further to this, belly button or otisiy “relates to the kinship connections of the child to the network of social relationships in the community, and indeed the genetic and spiritual connections the child shares with their ancestors.”¹⁰² “Therefore, “it seeks to understand the child’s connection, linkage, and attachment”¹⁰³ which is connected to the otisiy and the otisiyêyâpiy. Itâtisiwin is often translated to simply mean “nature,” however, when broken down and analyzed, its meaning is more similar to deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA),¹⁰⁴ which is an

¹⁰⁰ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

¹⁰¹ “Umbilical cords”; plural spelling [translated by author].

¹⁰² Pazderka et al, *supra* note 98 at 54.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Encyclopedia Britannica, “DNA - Chemical compound” (20 June 2025), online: *Encyclopedia Britannica* <[britannica.com/science/DNA](https://www.britannica.com/science/DNA)>.

“organic chemical of complex molecular structure that is found in all prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells and in many viruses. DNA codes genetic information for the transmission of inherited traits.”¹⁰⁵ Could marking/coding mean how a person is marked such as in “**ta**” in itâtisiwin? Itâtisiwin may also mean genetics or epigenetics which the interpretation and actions seem to imply. Genetics is the “study of heredity in general and of genes in particular”¹⁰⁶ and is further defined in the following statement:

Genetics forms one of the central pillars of biology and overlaps with many other areas, such as agriculture, medicine, and biotechnology. Since the dawn of civilization, humankind has recognized the influence of heredity and Human genetic disease, any of the diseases and disorders that are caused by mutations in one or more genes.¹⁰⁷

With the considerable word analysis above, I came to understand that “DNA” or “genetics” is located within the core of *itâtisiwin*. Itâtisiwin’s “web,” like the generational and genetic otisiyêyâpiy, creates outcomes such as “conduct, behaviour, demeanor,”¹⁰⁸ which is the “surface” translation. Itâtisiwin’s core location is from the mother and father combined transmitted to the otisiyêyâpiy. The combined markings/coding from parents and their parents and so on as described in detail in the following which may be the reason for the first translation from Borrows that’s called itâtisiwin as “nature”:

Genetics arose out of the identification of genes, the fundamental units responsible for heredity. Genetics may be defined as the study of genes at all levels, including the ways in which they act in the cell and the ways in which they are transmitted from parents to offspring. Modern genetics focuses on the chemical substance that genes are made of, called deoxyribonucleic acid, or DNA, and the ways in which it affects the chemical reactions that constitute the living processes within the cell. Gene action depends on interaction with the environment.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

¹⁰⁹ AM Winchester, “Genetics” (11 June 2025), online: *Encyclopedia Britannica* <[britannica.com/science/genetics](https://www.britannica.com/science/genetics)>.

This thesis is not a science document, however for this chapter I am incorporating the language of Western science to explain in the translation of nêhiyaw science and knowledge to understand itâtisiwin because the ideas and concepts have profound similarities however, this needs further scrutiny and investigation.

As far as I could remember growing up within my own family system, when a young women began her menstrual cycles, she is taken to a lodge and given instructions by old women on how to care for her body so that the future children would be born healthy. Young women did not start their menstrual cycles until much later in their lives, some even in their early twenties, nimama states this has changed, and she speculated it had something to do with the food. Pregnant women would be given instructions, I would hear nimama would give advice on the “dos” and “don’ts” so that the baby would be born healthy. The men are given similar directions and instructions when they reach a certain age and are potentially seeking to have children, these are referred to as “rites of passage.” However, for this thesis, the focus is nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe women and how the language impacts and entrenches knowledges of women and matrilineal systems. I remember being given these instructions which I share here. One of the “don’ts” was not to eat animal intestines which are considered a delicacy in my nation because it is believed the baby may become entangled in the umbilical cord if a woman eats intestines while pregnant. Generally, wolves, cougars, and lynx were not eaten because they can eat humans. Preference is given to bison, deer, moose, muskrat – animals believed to eat medicines of the land. Therefore, when we eat the meat of these animals, we are eating medicine which creates healthy bodies, and minds.¹¹⁰ One of the “do’s” is to wear loose clothing to give room for baby to grow, physical activity is encouraged so that the placenta would not get “stuck” or grow

¹¹⁰ Generally shared by my parents growing up.

onto the woman's womb – not strenuous activity that would put the baby at risk. These instructions convey concern or fear for disrupting or changing the baby's environment prior to, and during pregnancy inferring knowledge of epigenetics. Epigenetics is best defined as the study of changes in organisms brought about by modification of gene expression, rather than by alteration of the genetic code in the form of DNA.¹¹¹ Further, epigenetics is influenced by environmental factors such as food, smoking, alcohol prior to and during pregnancy, most notably example during pregnancy is fetal alcohol syndrome:

An epigenetic system should be heritable, self-perpetuating, and reversible. Whether histone modifications (and many noncoding RNAs) are epigenetic is debated; it is likely that relatively few of these modifications or RNAs will be self-perpetuating and inherited. Looking beyond DNA-associated molecules, prions (infectious proteins) are clearly epigenetic, perpetuating themselves through altered folding states. These states can act as sensors of environmental stress and, through the phenotypic changes they promote, potentially drive evolution.¹¹²

Although nêhiyaw science provides a path to a healthy life therefore a healthy child, limitation to access Indigenous foods, erasure of land-based knowledge of food, access to healthy water contributes to an uncertain future for Indigenous children. Furthermore, the effects are still being studied, the following statement explains “although the exact molecular mechanisms underlying these effects remain unknown, epigenetics is a prime candidate for the programming effects of environmental factors on physiological systems, as it might serve as a link between environmental stimuli and neurodevelopmental outcomes to influence health and behavior well into adulthood.”¹¹³

¹¹¹ John Launer, “Epigenetics for dummies” (2016) 92:1085 Postgraduate Medical Journal 183–184 at 183.

¹¹² Guy Riddihough & Laura M Zahn, “What Is Epigenetics?” (2010) 330:6004 Science 611–611 at 611.

¹¹³ Alexandre A Lussier, Joanne Weinberg & Michael S Kobor, “Epigenetics Studies of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Where are We Now?” (2017) 9:3 Epigenomics 291–311 at 292.

Nêhiyawak have always known, potential parents specifically women can be affected by her environment, food, body health and thus affecting her children as well as the generations. Previously, a pregnant woman was treated with tenderness, gentleness and joy, this has changed drastically with colonization and the violence against women.

When nêhiyawak ask “Tânite ohci kiya?” the core of ohci is taken from otisiy or otisiyêyâpiy – the same “o” sound from these three words originate from the “o” in otisiy. So, the literal meaning of “Tânite ohci kiya?” means “what is your lineage following your belly button or umbilical cord?” It is asking about your mother’s lineage. This discloses where the person’s otisiyêyâpiy is from and their generational connection to it, thereby, asking what is their wâhkôhmtowin.¹¹⁴ Their blood or umbilical cord connects back to the first Peoples who came from the first iskwewak.¹¹⁵ The word ohci comes from the word ohcîw, which means “this one is from there,”¹¹⁶ however, with further scrutiny, it means “this person comes from a specific mother’s lineage.” This is one of the reasons nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe are mainly matrilineal, it is from Indigenous scientific knowledge of otisiyêyâpiy. *Matrilineal* refers to familial relationships that can be traced through a female.¹¹⁷ To follow the *matrilineal* line in your family, starts with your mom.¹¹⁸

Nêhiyaw science generally understood that human marking/coding is described as a generational otisiyêyâpiy of itâtisiwina¹¹⁹ and one of its locations is in the blood and otisiyêyâpiy. Certainly, this understanding is in the language of nêhiyaw science. Also described as a process, humans are believed to be part of this “web.” Anything that affects the otisiyêyâpiy,

¹¹⁴ “Blood kinship” [translated by author].

¹¹⁵ “Women” [translated by author].

¹¹⁶ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

¹¹⁷ *Vocabulary.com Dictionary* (Vocabulary.com), online: < vocabulary.com/dictionary> *sub verbo* “matrilineal.”

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Meaning “many human coding/markings”; plural spelling [translated by author].

affects humans, including the understanding that all living beings have itâtisiwin, even when not necessarily having an umbilical cord. It is pim¹²⁰ that is the source of all living beings. Without **pim**, there is no movement of genetics or DNA of each living being. It is the life force of creation.

For Nêhiyawak, the soul or spirit is connected to kakanâcisitacâhk from our origin story that I shared at the beginning of this chapter. The word for “star” is acâhkos¹²¹ and the word for the “human soul” or “spirit” is ahcâhk,¹²² Both of these nêhiyaw words originate from the “north star” – kakanâcisitacâhk or “from the stars.” Our origin history or chronicles speak of our connection even to the universe as shared at the beginning of this chapter. Nêhiyaw science knew the existence of the universe, which can be found in words such as kîsik, meaning “sky,”¹²³ and kihcikîsikohk, which means “universe.”¹²⁴ These words have been problematically interpreted in English to mean “heaven.” Even the universe has “spirit keepers” called okîsikowak¹²⁵ who guide and instruct nêhiyawak when their support and counsel is prayed for and sought after. As stated, Nêhiyaw people knew of the universe and the stars, this is supported by an analysis of the language. Understanding the core of Nêhiyaw language is essential for identifying the connection to other words that work like a weaving or a web. For example, kîsik is the root word for miskîsik which means “eye.”¹²⁶ This connects the word “eye” to the meaning of our nêhiyaw word for “sky” and “universe” as well as our connection to the origin story and our travels from the universe. The following statement is a powerful narrative and description:

¹²⁰ Source of all living beings, an energy/force to give “life” [translated by author].

¹²¹ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Deanna Christensen & Ahtahkakoop First Nation, *Ahtahkakoop: the Epic Account of a Plains Cree Head Chief, his people, and their vision for survival, 1816-1896* (Shell Lake, Sask: Ahtahkakoop Publishing, 2000) at 33.

¹²⁶ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

Ininiwak becoming happens elsewhere. As such, my body is who I am; it is a manifestation of my energy, it carries my medicine, it contains the data of generations of my ancestors, and it is the conduit through which I channel tapwewin. For me, being kwe and becoming sexed and gendered, are inextricable from all of these things.¹²⁷

Further, our origin histories (stories) speak of our nêhiyaw “soul” or “spirit” that was given to each human before making their way to their physical form in the womb of their mother. We are taught our “soulflame” is a gift from kisêmanitôwnâhk (spirit world) as we make our way to our bodies:

The teaching is about the spiritual journey before human birth; it begins in that spiritual realm in which the Creator, the life giver, resides. When it is time for human beings to be born, they make their way to a flame. This flame is similar in shape and form to the sun: it is called manitow iskotêw (Creator’s flame). The culture, language, and lands of the nêhiyawak (Crees) play a critical role in the lives of nêhiyaw children. nêhiyaw children are not born “Canadian”; rather, they are born into their nation with a distinct “bundle” of inherent rights and Treaty rights.¹²⁸

The flame becomes the **pim**,¹²⁹ the force or energy that moves itâtisiwin giving movement or “life” to all living things in creation.

Nêhiyaw itâtisiwin is woven with nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina, also referred to as original instructions, natural laws, or Cree laws, to instruct and guide humans. It is believed that even creation has been given laws woven into their itâtisiwin:

For the Cree, ‘animals are spoken of as possessing their own *it[â]tisiwin* “nature”: it is itatisiwak that caribou migrate, that beavers build lodges, and so forth. In the shaking lodge and dreams, animals share human it[â]tisiwin: They come to be like humans.’¹³⁰

Each animate/living creature or creation has a life force, a way to live – a way of being or doing given to them as part of the interconnectedness with all living beings. Their instructions are

¹²⁷ Jessica Kolopenuk, “Miskâsowin: Indigenous Science, Technology, and Society” (2020) 4:1 Genealogy 17 at 11.

¹²⁸ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 28.

¹²⁹ ‘Pim’ is further explained in following paragraphs.

¹³⁰ Borrows, *supra* note 93 at 85.

located in their itâtisiwin as well as from “pim” of their life force, their energy – within their *pimâtisiwin*.

Nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina inform nêhiyaw itâtisiwin to live miyopimâtisiwin.¹³¹ While itâtisiwin describes DNA/genetics, it also describes how nêhiyaw are guided, informed and instructed to live a “good life” called miyopimâtisiwin. Miyopimâtisiwin has been commonly translated and understood to mean a “good life,” however, it contains a deeper meaning. The first part begins with miyo, which has a relatively simple meaning of “good” or “beautiful.” The second part is pimâtisiwin, which has been translated to mean “life.” However, it too has a deeper nêhiyaw¹³² significance, as each word belongs to a core sound. For pimâtisiwin, it can be broken down to pim â t i s i win. Pim is the action or energy that moves “something” and “â t” is the marking/coding of the living being. It is also used in words such as **pimohtë**¹³³ or **pimâkocin**,¹³⁴ both used to describe an action or the energy of a movement, like walking or flowing/driving. **Pim** is the “spark” that creates movement. Without it, there would be no movement of *anything*. It is the name of what European science would generally refer to as “energy” or a “force.” At this point, both itâtisiwin and pimâtisiwin have “ti si win” within them which has already been described above. So, when pimâtisiwin is described in its most literal nêhiyaw form, it means “the energy/action that moves the infinite web/ otisiyêyâpiy /interconnectedness of the markings/coding.” There is no word or name that European sciences have to describe this energy.¹³⁵ For nêhiyawak, its name is **pim** as stated above. Upon further analysis, the word pimâtisiwin means “the energy/action that moves DNA/genetics in the infinite

¹³¹ Meaning “the act of leading an exemplary life”; also means “to walk a good/beautiful life”: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

¹³² It also has a deeper significance for the Anishinaabe.

¹³³ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, first edition. ed (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Milkweed Editions, 2013) at 57.

movement web/process/interconnectedness.” And when it is beautiful, miyo is added. This shapes what we know as “life.” When the miyopimâtisiwin is further examined, it not only means “life,” but it also means when overall health, spirit, mind and emotions of the individual is in balance through the otisiyêyâpiy.

I first came across an analysis of pimâtisiwin while I was reading *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer.¹³⁶ I am so very grateful because it ignited a passion to seek a deeper analysis and a deprogramming how I read nêhiyaw words – to discard the English translations. I began to understand and “see” nêhiyaw words within their spiritual and authentic meanings. It was pivotal and fundamental to read the word “puhpowee,”¹³⁷ a Potawatomi word to describe “the force which causes mushrooms to push up from the earth overnight.”¹³⁸ I was blown away. I took that sentence and placed it in my spiritual memory. I wept when I found similar description of a “force” in nipapa’s language. Like Robin Wall Kimmerer, I was in awe and vibrating with emotion when I found it – *pimohpikin*.¹³⁹ The force that makes a plant or similar creation “grow” or move out of its “birth” location like the description of the mushroom with that same “force.” “Puhpowee” gave me direction, a path to question and seek a word in nêhiyawêwin. I knew we had to have one since Anishinaabe and nêhiyawêwin are a similar language group with Potawatomi. I am deeply grateful for having found this word “Puhpowee.” I keep hearing it in my mind “Puhpowee.” As the book states, “the formulation of a theory for which English has no equivalent.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ This book was suggested by my thesis supervisor Professor Jeff Hewitt, and I am forever grateful for his suggestion.

¹³⁷ Kimmerer, *supra* note 135 at 49.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ I took from ohpikin and added pim because that is the “force” or “energy” that moves the growth through: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

¹⁴⁰ Kimmerer, *supra* note 135 at 49.

It is important to investigate and unpack the depth and phonetics of the nêhiyaw language so that the complexity of our knowledge and legal orders can be understood. Each relative has itâtisiwin including the trees, plants, medicines, even the air and water – a way to live miyopimâtisiwin. The nêhiyaw Peoples have laws/instructions on how to interact and interrelate with the environment, animals, air and so forth.¹⁴¹ Nêhiyaw languages are complex, verb based and woven into kinship and relationships with animate beings in an unending web.

As well, how a woman is treated can affect the otisiyêyâpiy which means the epigenetics can be impacted. There is an increasing body of research affirming that trauma can be transferred generationally. The health of a woman as well as her environment is determined by her access to healthy foods, safety, etc., influences the health of the otisiyêyâpiy thereby modifying or securing the health of children. This has gone even further with current research showing that not only can genetic expression be changed by exposure to factors such as emotional trauma, smoking, and dietary habits, but it can also then be passed down to future generations (epigenetic inheritance).¹⁴²

With my first pregnancy, I remember nimama¹⁴³ telling people around me “pêyâhtik”¹⁴⁴ to be careful how they spoke to me and how they treated me. I thought it was because she wanted to protect my physical health, however reflecting I understand with some clarity after writing this chapter how come nimama tried to protect my environment knowing that it would impact my unborn child. She did her best to provide a tender, nourishing and gentle environment.

¹⁴¹ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3.

¹⁴² Nicole Redvers, *The Science of the Sacred: Bridging Global Indigenous Medicine Systems and Modern Scientific Principles* (Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books, 2019) Bridging global indigenous medicine systems and modern scientific principles at 25.

¹⁴³ “Mother” [translated by author].

¹⁴⁴ Meaning “be careful!, take it easy”: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

Further, wâspisonâhtik¹⁴⁵ is a nêhiyaw word for cradleboard, but the contemporary version is a cloth swaddling method now called wâspison¹⁴⁶ or moss bag. It is similar but a



simple method that is a nêhiyaw way of swaddling newborn babies until they are approximately 2 years old. This method mimics the mother's womb and keeps the baby from moving too much. It also trains baby to learn seeing and hearing. The string binding the material together to swaddle baby symbolizes the

umbilical cord, some parents have tied soothers onto it and in many cases a dreamcatcher.¹⁴⁷

Most babies are put to sleep in the wâspison as they grow within their nations.

This nêhiyaw ideology and epistemology is similarly applied with all living beings and creation including lands, waters and air. The same or similar reverence, respect and honor for its own pimâtisiwin that is interconnected with humans, must be protected not only as living trees or as other species in their physical form but **their DNA** – their itâtisiwin.

*Our dreams are part of our methods as we co-create with the universe and the Ancestors.*¹⁴⁸

Chapter 3 Kikisôkêmôwin¹⁴⁹ Within Dreaming: Pawâtamowin in Nêhiyaw Legal Methods.

I have tried to navigate the content of this chapter carefully as it may cross a boundary to speak about âtayôhkanak (spirit helpers).¹⁵⁰ Nimama¹⁵¹ had a dream which led to a path unfolding in writing this thesis; I've worked to explain how dreaming is a nêhiyaw method that

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ "Mossbag"; also refer to as 'wâspison': Alex Guye, "Indigenous woman draws on oral teachings to revive traditional motherhood practices", *CBC News* (8 April 2022), online: <[cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/indigenous-women-mothers-moss-bags-eskasoni-1.6412317](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/indigenous-women-mothers-moss-bags-eskasoni-1.6412317)>.

¹⁴⁷ See generally: Nudrat Karim, "Dreamcatchers are not your 'aesthetic'", online (blog): The Indigenous Foundation <theindigenousfoundation.org/articles/dreamcatchers>.

¹⁴⁸ Amy Shawanda, "Baawaajige: Exploring Dreams as Academic References" (2020) 1:1 *Turtle Island Journal of Indigenous Health* 37–47 at 38.

¹⁴⁹ Meaning "to remind by word of mouth to all your gifts": *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

¹⁵⁰ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 57.

¹⁵¹ "Mother" [translated by author].

is related to our laws. There are numerous thoughts and feelings of doubt and reluctance to bring forward nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe law of pawâtamowin to weave into the fabric of non-Indigenous academia – I ask, “Where does it belong?” Yet, instructive dreams have spanned millennia since nêhiyawak looked up at the stars for which we traveled from to our otisiyêyâpiya (umbilical cords). In our origin histories as shared by Dr. Stan Wilson, he connects nêhiyawak to the stars:

According to our Cree origin story, we are descendants of Kaahkanatissik achak, the “Great Spirit”. Our language, as in all other languages, is structured to reflect who we are physically as well as spiritually. Kii-t-achak means “your soul/spirit.” Achak(osak) is also the same as the word for “star(s).”

The word inniniwak is used for “people”, any people, much like the notion of human beings. The first part though is essential in knowing who we are as anisininiwak, because it is the piece that defines the “descending” or “coming down” and explains whose descendants we are. The story is that our ancestors came from the North Star, Kahkanatissit Achak, the “Sacred Spirit”, also known as the “Great Spirit” moving from one star to the next down the handle of the “big dipper” constellation. When the handle of the cup was at the closest to the earth they descended to earth via a braid landing “up north”. A question that some people might consider a bit “too much out of this world” is, if this happened intentionally and by design or through some other natural or metaphysical interstellar phenomenon by some other intelligent life. Either way, that is why the direction north is keewehtinook, which literally means “homeland.”¹⁵²

Dr. Wilson refers to this knowledge as Indigenous intelligence or science naming it Indigegogy. Indigegogy was coined by Dr. Wilson as a term used for Indigenous knowledge, literature and scholarship and is centered on land-based education.¹⁵³

Indigegogy engages Indigenous methodology such as circle work to uplift traditional teachings, ceremonies, and practices. Indigegogy is a decolonizing practice that builds on the resurgence of Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching and learning.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Wilson & Schellhammer, *supra* note 92 at 22-23.

¹⁵³ Laurier University, “Centre for Indigegogy”, online: *Centre for Indigegogy* <wlu.ca/academics/faculties/faculty-of-social-work/centre-for-indigegogy/index.html>.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Indigenous methodology is thus defined as a theory of inquiry,¹⁵⁵ for this thesis, *nêhiyaw* inquiry is woven with *nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina* as a method utilized to seek and analyze the language to bring in-depth understanding. Indigenous methods – including poetry, storytelling, and critical personal narratives – are performative practices that represent and make Indigenous life visible.¹⁵⁶ Further, story methodology,¹⁵⁷ is part of *nêhiyaw* methods anchored in sharing my own experiences as well as histories, and stories of my family. I would add *pawâtamowin* as a method and pedagogy or Indigegogy of receiving, teaching, instructing, retrieving, revealing, and sharing of *nêhiyaw* and Anishinaabe laws. Social science research needs to involve spirituality in research, respecting communal forms of living that are not Western and creating space for inquiries based on relational realities and forms of knowing that are predominant among the non-Western Other/s still being colonized.¹⁵⁸ Some Indigenous scholars have stated that this form of work is resistance, a pushing back on colonialism. I do not disagree. However, I hope that Indigenous Peoples reading this thesis are stirred to remember the locations of our laws are also weavings from *kisêmanitôwnâhk* (spirit world). In this way, I hope to *kikisôkêwôyan*¹⁵⁹ or to use *kikisôkêwôwin*¹⁶⁰ – a *nêhiyaw* process using prayer, words, actions and ceremony to remind people of various ancient knowledges to stir their memories as well as their thoughts and dreaming of existing. To stir life into ancient *âcimona*¹⁶¹ and *atayôhkawêwna*.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁵ Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, *supra* note 37 at 22.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Kovach, *supra* note 62 at 102.

¹⁵⁸ Chilisa, *supra* note 41 at 2.

¹⁵⁹ Meaning “to remind peoples” [translated by author].

¹⁶⁰ Laurier University, *supra* note 153.

¹⁶¹ “Stories” [translated by author].

¹⁶² Meaning “sacred stories/histories” [translated by author].

Ekikisôkêmôyan¹⁶³ that nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe research is guided and instructed by manitow wiyinikêwina, nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina and nêhiyaw itâtisiwin.

Further, I hope this thesis disrupts colonial notions and narratives that nêhiyawak did not have laws, in fact “Canada is legally a pluralistic state: civil law, common law and Indigenous legal traditions organize dispute resolution in our country in different ways.”¹⁶⁴ Further to this, I will join the growing voices “to embrace the commitment of Indigenous scholars to decolonize Western methodologies, to criticize and demystify the ways in which Western science and modern academy have been part of the colonial apparatus.”¹⁶⁵ In decolonizing and deprogramming our own internal colonization, I encourage a view to an ethnoecological context checking on and caring for the boreal forest serves as a way of tending to relations, or a relational ethic that Indigenous peoples of the region have practiced for endless generations, ensuring their survival.¹⁶⁶ Loving attentiveness to kin and forest kin alike prevents overharvesting.¹⁶⁷

I urge that my thesis and deer hide scroll will hopefully demystify nêhiyaw processes of law and bring to “light” procedures and practical applications using nêhiyaw methodologies and most importantly manitow wiyinikêwina¹⁶⁸ with nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, through rigorous examination, and critical analysis, the process of “dreaming” law can withstand probing and examination. I will utilize deer hide, and written documentation to demonstrate and record the internal workings of nêhiyaw laws with Anishinaabe underpinnings. As well, “traditional

¹⁶³ When an “e” is in front of a nêhiyaw words, it means “i.”

¹⁶⁴ Borrows, *supra* note 93 at 8.

¹⁶⁵ Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, *supra* note 37 at 2.

¹⁶⁶ Janelle Marie Baker, “Boreal Plants That Enchant: A Lively Ethnography of Sakâwiyiniwak (Northern Bush Cree) Multispecies Kinship Obligations” (2022) 14:2 Environmental Humanities 385–400 at 386.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ “Creator’s law”: McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 99 [translated by author].

¹⁶⁹ “Cree human laws”: *Ibid* [translated by author].

protocols often manifest spiritual knowledge.”¹⁷⁰ An example of a traditional protocol for accessing a spiritual route to knowledge is the offering of tobacco.”¹⁷¹ That will not be an easy project. It is a task done by many before me recording histories, treaties and countless other events on rock, stone, songs and so forth since time immemorial. Our nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe history is written on the lands, peoples, and waters: we do have a written history; however, it is different than European writing methods. In time, the deer hide scroll will travel with me as record of this thesis.

A) Seeking Spirit Keepers

I navigate cautiously as I am also bound by our nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina¹⁷² – they guide every aspect of this thesis as well as the deer hide scroll. I hope to thread carefully and mindfully following nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina.¹⁷³ As stated above, this thesis will continue like the flow of a river weaving voices of my two books in unison; *Cultural Teachings: First Nations Protocols and Methodologies* as well as *Nationhood Interrupted: Revitalizing nêhiyaw Legal Systems*.

Such is the paradox of dreaming: it bears witness to the power and depth of the psyche while simultaneously trying to mediate that power into socially recognizable channels not wholly adequate to bear the full complexity of the experience. It is important to recognize that in studying the dreaming basis of culture, we are coming to an encounter with depths of experience that cannot be contained within the normative, cognitive models of the dominant culture.¹⁷⁴

Pawâtamowin is recognized as a means of nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe communications and directions from kisêmanitôwnâhk. This research and thesis were activated from the place of

¹⁷⁰ Jean-Paul Restoule et al, *Indigenous research: theories, practices, and relationships* (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars, 2018).

¹⁷¹ *Ibid* at 9.

¹⁷² McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 40.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*.

¹⁷⁴ Lee Irwin, “Dreams, Theory, and Culture: The Plains Vision Quest Paradigm” (1994) 18:2 *American Indian quarterly* 229–245 at 230.

pawâtamowin so this chapter will explore what pawâtamowin may mean in nêhiyaw interpretation and translation. Pawâtamowin has been translated into the English understanding as “dreaming” however in nêhiyawêwin¹⁷⁵ the literal translation is “to enter the spirit world to seek spirit helpers.” These spirits have also been called “angels, guardians, and keepers.” Opewâmw¹⁷⁶ similarly means “to seek spirits or spirit world” or “this person’s spirit helpers.”¹⁷⁷ Pawâtamowin is a sub meaning of opewâmw, a term not easily utilized.¹⁷⁸ It is a sacred and powerful nêhiyaw word that borders on “taboo,”¹⁷⁹ however, it describes an individual with “spirit guardians”¹⁸⁰ that could be a few or many but are believed to protect the individual and perhaps have a powerful impact. It is an influential nêhiyaw word that is never voluntarily used to describe oneself rather it is a sacred positioning generally identified and recognized by the nation in which the person belongs. Pawâtamona¹⁸¹ can happen at any time, even when Nêhiyaw pray to access the Spiritual Realm, it is at times, it is not unusual to receive instructions and directions from “dreaming” as experience by nimama, I will explain further in the chapter. Some enter nipâwin¹⁸² intentionally seeking pawâtamowin for answers to questions from beings in the spirit realm.

Indigenous scholars have referred to dreaming as “revealed knowledge.”¹⁸³ Dreaming gives us the capacity to transcend into Sacred Space and return to our Ancestors’ land.¹⁸⁴ We

¹⁷⁵ The Cree language: McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 100 [translated by author].

¹⁷⁶ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Opewâmw is not found in many dictionaries.

¹⁷⁹ General reflection: I am uncomfortable to even write this word, but it is essential to place it within this thesis. It is the core of “dreaming.”

¹⁸⁰ Jennifer S H Brown & Robert Brightman, “*The Orders of the Dreamed*”: *George Nelson on Cree and northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 1990) Manitoba Studies in Native History 3.

¹⁸¹ “Dreams”; plural spelling [translated by author].

¹⁸² Meaning “sleep state” [translated by author].

¹⁸³ Amy Shawanda & Joshua Manitowabi, “Anishinaabe Dream Methodology” (2023) TIJIH, online: <jpls.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/tijih/article/view/38566> at 29.

¹⁸⁴ Shawanda, *supra* note 148 at 39.

obtain Dream Knowledge throughout the day and at night, as well as through vision questions, ceremonies, rites of passage, healing, prophecies, and when looking for guidance.¹⁸⁵ It is not without scrutiny, variables, and discussion because not every pawâtamowin is considered communication, instructions or sacred. There is rigorous examination involved once a pawâtamowin is released and shared in the physical world. In nimama's pawâtamowin, my family and I waited for her pawâtamowin to reveal itself in the physical world even as I remained doubtful. After Professor Hewitt called, my family and I recognized nimama's pawâtamowin and the physical world have crossed together. It is like "weaving" - the weaving of the dream and the physical realm together. That is the spiritual path I must now follow. In fact, the nêhiyaw word wiyinikêwina similarly means "weavings" as in the nêhiyaw words for manitow wiyinikêwina which translates to the creator's weavings indicating humans and creation as well as the spiritual realm can cross paths.

B) Sweatlodge as Nêhiyaw Structure to Gather Our Relatives

Before I left for Windsor in August of 2018, nipapa along with myself and family members had a sweatlodge¹⁸⁶ ceremony, also called a matotisân ceremony in nêhiyawêwin, to make certain and scrutinize nimama's dream. I was instructed by nipapa to bring my cistêmâw¹⁸⁷ and gifts¹⁸⁸ so that the sweatlodge could be prepared. This part of the nêhiyaw methods utilizes protocols as a way of beginning to seek out answers, confirmation, assurance, from âtayôhkanak.¹⁸⁹ Seeking out nêhiyaw lodges can be for just about any reason, from seeking

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ William Asikinack, "Sweat-lodge Ceremony", online: *Indigenous Saskatchewan Encyclopedia* <teaching.usask.ca/indigenoussk/import/sweat-lodge_ceremony.php>.

¹⁸⁷ "Tobacco": *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1; (Last visited 7 September 2024), online: <facebook.com/groups/18414147673/> (general search by author).

¹⁸⁸ It's part of nêhiyaw protocol to provide a blanket or other gifts that may be useful to the lodge holder, in this case whoever is conducting the sweatlodge.

¹⁸⁹ "Spirit helpers": Christensen & Ahtahkakoop First Nation, *supra* note 125 at xv.

a nêhiyaw or Anishinaabe name to health reasons. To begin with the method, protocols lead the way and must be followed. First Nations' *Peoples*¹⁹⁰ begin ceremonies, feasts, songs, gatherings, healings and other occasions with traditional protocols and methodologies which have been passed on from generation to generation since time immemorial,¹⁹¹ I would also add, these protocols and traditions are primarily fluid and flexible flowing with the instructions and guidance from kisêmanitôwnâhk and our laws. I share both stories because respect and protocol are weaved into every aspect of relationships regardless of if they are human or a part of creation. Each story involved protocol: nêhiyaw protocol is used when approaching a person for various reasons, for purposes of thesis I gave protocol because a life (lives) was going to be taken, and they must be honoured.

Indigenous Protocols are an important aspect of complex traditional systems of Indigenous governance. The languages and cultures of Indigenous Peoples of Canada and around the world have transmitted Protocols through time. Although these systems of knowledge have been disrupted, throughout the generations people have maintained and protected these ways of working and being together.¹⁹²

It is further noted that:

Protocols is a better word than customs for these systems of knowledge. *Customs* implies something less informal than what Protocols are. The word *Protocols* is capitalized as a way to mark the permanence and significance of these systems of knowledge as Indigenous institutions. You can also *Protocols* Indigenous Laws.¹⁹³

For nêhiyaw Peoples, the giving of cistêmâw is a representation of the pipe which is guided by pipe laws,¹⁹⁴ therefore, the reciprocity of giving is guided and directed by kisêmanitôw and the

¹⁹⁰ I've corrected this word to respect capitalizing Peoples.

¹⁹¹ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 1.

¹⁹² Gregory Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples* (Edmonton, AB: Brush Education Inc., 2018) at 35.

¹⁹³ *Ibid* at 36.

¹⁹⁴ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 30.

kisêmanitôwnâhk (spirit world)¹⁹⁵ involving manitow wiyinikêwina¹⁹⁶ and nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina. This seemingly simple act of following nêhiyaw cistêmâw protocol carries with it a bundle of laws as stated and are referred to as pipe laws.

As soon as I gave cistêmâw to nipapa,¹⁹⁷ there began a sacred line of cistêmâw. He in turn gave cistêmâw to my brother Kurtis McAdam to gather “helpers” who are called oskâpêwisak¹⁹⁸ to assist in gathering the “materials” to begin the matotisân ceremony to scrutinize and confirm my mom’s dream. When Kurtis gathered and/or invited the oskâpêwisak, he gave them cistêmâw indicating a sacred invitation that they cannot and must not refuse. Each relative that’s invited is given cistêmâw. This includes firewood, red willow etc., all the relatives needed to create the ceremony.

A matotisân ceremony varies from nation to nation, even the matotisân varies in name within nations. For this thesis, I will call it interchangeably matotisân or sweatlodge. The matotisân is made of “materials” gathered from the lands. It is difficult to call our relatives “materials”; however, I recognize the limitations in communicating in the colonizer’s English language. When I say “materials” I mean our relatives – the rocks, red willow, and all other relations invited to bring together in building the sweatlodge. I will explain what I mean by “invited.”

Before any Indigenous ceremony can begin, as stated after each relative is emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually invited to join as soon as I thought of giving cistêmâw from the first thought to the physical act itself sparks a nêhiyaw methodology. The four human parts

¹⁹⁵ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

¹⁹⁶ “Father/dad” [translated by author].

¹⁹⁷ Adding the ‘ni’ to ‘papa’ means “my dad” [translated by author].

¹⁹⁸ Meaning “Elder’s helper, helper at ceremonies”: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

are the emotional, physical, mental and spiritual gifts¹⁹⁹ given to nêhiyawak by kisêmanitôw and kisêmanitôwnâhk. Thus begins the movement of prayers and action. There are several “moving parts” that begin the sweatlodge ceremony or any Indigenous ceremony. The person asking for the ceremony, the *ceremonial lodge holder*²⁰⁰ and the oskâpêwisak as well as our creation relatives to begin a partnership²⁰¹ of prayer and relationality. Generally, it would be challenging to mobilize without each other. They are interconnected, relational, and breathe life into each other. As Thomas Berry has written “we must say of the universe that it is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.”²⁰²

The sweatlodge is dome shaped structure mimicking the shape of a woman’s belly in full term pregnancy or some believe the shape of mother earth.²⁰³ Most of the Algonquian families have some form of a sweatlodge, for nêhiyawak the following statement is generally accurate:

A Sweat Lodge is constructed from willows bent to form a dome shape and covered with blankets, tarps or canvas. A Sweat Lodge is typically sixteen to twenty feet across. It has a low entrance that requires the participants to enter by crawling. A pit is in the middle of the Sweat Lodge. Stones are heated in a fire in front of the Sweat Lodge. These heated stones are placed in the pit in the Sweat Lodge and water is poured on the stones to generate steam.²⁰⁴

The idea is, when people arrive for the sweatlodge, they enter the womb reminding them of their mothers, to the female spirit as well as going back to the state of physical “beginning.” People may enter as pitiful humans who know nothing, arriving as vessels to hear and listen for directions through prayers, receiving and listening for instructions and guidance. Depending on

¹⁹⁹ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 29.

²⁰⁰ A ceremonial lodge holder is a person who leads the ceremony, they’ve been trained and raised to lead it.

²⁰¹ Kimmerer, *supra* note 135 at 135.

²⁰² *Ibid* at 56.

²⁰³ Asikinack “Sweat-lodge Ceremony”, *supra* note 186.

²⁰⁴ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 43.

the lodge holder, the sweatlodge can be built at any time, or may stand for the year or be taken down after the ceremony is done. Each sweatlodge is different, some are called the bear lodge or thunderbird lodge; this is dependent on the lodge holder,²⁰⁵ who is leading the ceremony and whose lodge is being used. The following relatives are integral to the sweatlodge and become part of the ceremony, joining in the circle of ancient prayers. The nêhiyaw word for sweatlodge is matotisân.²⁰⁶ Matotisân has the word *mato* or *matot* which means “cry” or “to cry,” the sweatlodge is literally interpreted and translated to mean “a crying lodge.” This brings us back to the problematic translation of nêhiyaw words into English thereby losing their core meanings in nêhiyawêwin.

The ospwâkan (translated to mean “pipe”)²⁰⁷ is significant and vital to any nêhiyaw ceremony and used by many nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe Peoples. Ospwâkan contains three core words. The first is “os” comes from “oski” means “new”²⁰⁸ and is also located in the nêhiyaw word ospwatâhtam, which means “the first/new breath,”²⁰⁹ like the descriptive of a newly born baby taking its first breath. So, the understanding is when a person takes the first inhale of the ospwâkan, it is similar to their first breath as a newborn. The ospwâkan is made from a specific pipe stone that may be different from Nation to Nation. The following describes in some detail an understanding of the ospwâkan:

The Pipe is a sacred object among First Nations’ people. The Pipe is a means of communication with the Creator. Before the Pipe is handled, it is customary to purify one’s self by smudging with sweetgrass, cedar, sage or other sacred plants. An individual who has been gifted with a Pipe is referred to as a Pipe carrier. Respect, self-discipline and humility are

²⁰⁵ Lodge holder is the person leading the sweatlodge, whose lodge has been called upon.

²⁰⁶ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

²⁰⁷ William Asikinack, “Pipe Ceremony” (26 June 2019), online: *Indigenous Saskatchewan Encyclopedia* <teaching.usask.ca/indigenoussk/import/pipe_ceremony.php>.

²⁰⁸ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

²⁰⁹ Spelling by John Swiftwolfe, “Ospwatâhtam” (18 November 2024), online: <facebook.com/groups/18414147673> [perma.cc/4MMA-ADR9] (comment thread). ‘Ospwatâhtam’ can also mean “breathes in water” as shared by May Desnomie (*ibid*).

needed to be a carrier of the Pipe. First Nations' Elders teachings relate that the person gifted with a Pipe understands that the Pipe keeps and protects them. If you use the Pipe, you must worship in truth; you have to answer for those things that may not be right.²¹⁰

The ospwâkan has 7 (seven) pipes and they are as follows: the Pipe laws include “health, happiness, generosity, generations, quietness, compassion and respect.”²¹¹ The Pipe carrier is expected to follow the Pipe laws in their own lives. They are held at a higher standard than other individuals because of these laws.²¹²

Wêpinâson is commonly referred to as “print” or cloth.²¹³ Wêpinâson is broadcloth that can be purchased at most fabric stores. Most individuals will give the five standard colors, blue, green, yellow, red, and white. Another cloth considered as the grandmother cloth is a flower fabric, this cloth is for the female spirit, an ancient ancestor. The following is told of a long time ago, before cloth was brought to nêhiyaw lands:

The nêhiyaw generally follows a particular protocol: the general protocol and methodology is to present the knowledge keeper or elder with tobacco and a cloth (also referred to as print). “The cloth is usually broad cloth and one to two meters [or yards] long. The colour of the print depends on the circumstances.” When tobacco and gifts are offered and accepted, this signifies acceptance of the invitation or assent to the proposition stated in the message. Gifts usually accompany the tobacco and cloth and can vary from guns to clothing or money.²¹⁴

The tobacco is called cistêmâw, in a contemporary version of tobacco is the store-bought problematic version. Before the current tobacco, kinnikanik (also spelt kinnikinnick) was and is still used as pipe tobacco:

²¹⁰ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 45.

²¹¹ *Ibid* at 46.

²¹² *Ibid*.

²¹³ Singular spelling: Itwêwina Plains Cree Dictionary, *supra* note 1.

²¹⁴ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 21.

Prior to the European tobacco distribution, First Nations people had their own tobacco that was used in ceremony. This tobacco was a mixture of Red Willow Bark and other plants that are referred to as Kinnikinnick. Tobacco is also an important part of medicine bundles that are used for protection, in keeping one safe.²¹⁵

It was believed that tobacco was a gift from the Creator and that the exhaled tobacco smoke was capable of carrying one's thoughts and prayers to heaven.²¹⁶

Prior to colonization, kinnikanik was used to recognize the borders²¹⁷ of nations and is instrumental in diplomatic relationships between nations symbolic of trust and reciprocity.

Asinîyak²¹⁸ are the rocks used to create steam and warmth inside the sweatlodge. A sweatlodge has been described as a sauna except other saunas may not necessarily involve prayer. Asinîyak are placed in the fire until they are red with heat, once the matotîsân is ready, the rocks are carefully and prayerfully carried into the lodge to create heat and steam mimicking the womb of women.

Mihkwâpemak, red willows,²¹⁹ are used to create the dome shape²²⁰ of the lodge.²²¹ Red willow can bend without easily breaking therefore making the lodge strong and sturdy, it is usually built for enough room to seat at least 10 people. The willow's color is deep red, which is likely why it is called red willow. It is also believed to symbolize the blood veins of a human, in this case the blood veins of a female womb.

²¹⁵ City of Saskatoon, *ayisinowak, A Communications Guide: kâ-isi-pîkiskwâtôyahk* (May 2018), online (pdf): <saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/community-services/planning-development/future-growth/regional-planning/ayisinowak_a_communications_guide_web_may_2018.pdf>.

²¹⁶ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 33.

²¹⁷ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 77.

²¹⁸ Itwêwina Plains Cree Dictionary, *supra* note 1.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ Asikinack "Sweat-lodge Ceremony", *supra* note 186.

²²¹ A sweatlodge, generally referred to as the lodge.

Nipiy, meaning “water,”²²² is central to the matotisân (sweatlodge) ceremony, this relative is considered life. Without nipiy, we would cease to exist. Water is used to create steam by splashing water using cedar branches on the rocks. The rocks are hot inside the matotisân creating the heat and warmth like being inside the womb – the beginning of our physical journey.

Mihtah is “firewood”²²³ which is taken from our mîtos²²⁴ (tree) relative who provide the means to create a fire thereby, creating warmth, cooked food, and steam. Black or white pine trees are preferable; this type of firewood does not throw sparks as much as elm or fir trees.

The mistikwaskihk is translated to mean “drum.”²²⁵ However, in its literal translation means “wooden pail” and sîsikwan is translated to “rattles.”²²⁶ These two items are the most popular and are used as the main musical instruments on Treaty 6 lands. They provide the tune and harmony to sing sacred songs, and these songs are sung to call forth the various “spirit keepers” as described throughout the chapters.

Iskotêw is fire.²²⁷ The word “fire” in Nakawē²²⁸ literally translates to “woman’s heart.” They say the love of a woman is so great, so powerful that it caused creation to take place. And because her love is so powerful, when she withdraws it, destruction can occur.²²⁹ Fire is life giving but can be destructive leaving behind in its aftermath rebirth. Fire creates heat needed for the matotisân simulating as stated above the womb.

²²² Itwêwina Plains Cree Dictionary, *supra* note 1.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Meaning “trees” in general: *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ “Fire”; *ibid.* See also Diane Knight & Dan Musqua, *The Seven Fires: Teachings of the Bear Clan as Recounted by Dr. Dan Musqua: Knowledge of Human Growth and Learning Practiced in the Old World of the Nacowaninawuk (Salteaux): a Guide to Health and Well-being in the New World* (Many Worlds Publishing, 2001) at 43.

²²⁸ “Anishnaabe person” [translated by author].

²²⁹ Knight & Musqua, *supra* note 227 at 43.

Nikamona are the songs sung in the sweatlodge.²³⁰ Songs become the “gateway” a connector to open communication to kisêmanitôwnâhk or spirit realm. Thus, it is like the following statement when hunters sing for the animals:

The lyrics can invoke the spirit of the wolf so that hunter will be like a predator, hoping “that he would be, like a wolf, a good and successful hunter.” During this time of singing and praying in preparation for the hunt, great care is taken to utter language to influence a successful hunt.²³¹

The sweatlodge nikamona (songs) have lyrics to invite or call out to the âtayôhkanak, each lodge holder instructed and given similar or different songs.

Each First Nations’ culture means a way of life, the way of life provided by the Creator. Each First Nation has an understanding of their way of life and the gifts given to them. These gifts include the language, the land, the air, the water, the ceremonies and the traditions. However, individual people can be gifted with their own special skills, songs, knowledge, medicines and so forth. The language of each First Nation speaks to a way of life that surpasses the borders of the physical world and reaches into the stars and to the universe.²³²

The oskâpêwisak is a nêhiyaw word for “helpers,”²³³ they are trained and instructed on nêhiyaw ceremonial protocols, ways of being and doing. They are given cistêmâw before the ceremony and instructed to join and to help. Oskâpêwisak do the physical work like building the sweatlodge, but they also pray with all relatives:

A First Nations’ Elder or knowledge keeper conducting a Sweat Lodge ceremony would be assisted by one or more helpers. The helper would be responsible for setting up the Sweat Lodge, heating of the rocks, smudging the Sweat Lodge area and offerings, filling the pipe, bringing the heated rocks into the Sweat Lodge and taking care of the door. Like the Elder or knowledge keeper conducting the ceremony, these helpers would be experienced in their duties.²³⁴

²³⁰ “Songs”: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

²³¹ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 33.

²³² McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 27.

²³³ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

²³⁴ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 43.

Askîy means “land” or “nêhiyaw land.”²³⁵ Humans would have great difficulty without

land:

Without land, ceremonies could not exist. Land provides all the necessities needed to conduct a ceremony and provides the materials for the sacred items. The land has all of the sacred areas and sites that have profound meaning to the First Nations. The history and names of each place is intricately intertwined with culture, traditions and language. For example, Saskatchewan is derived from the nêhiyaw word kisiskāciwan meaning “fast flowing river.” Most locations in Canada were named by First Nations.²³⁶

Land is like water, it is life. It gives nêhiyawak all that we need to be who we are and what is given to us as a gift to nourish our way of being and doing.

Wihkask (Sweetgrass)²³⁷ and paskwâwihkwaskwa (sage)²³⁸ are referred to as medicine to smudge²³⁹ with. Our stories say that of all the plants, *wiingaashk*, or sweetgrass, was the very first to grow on the earth, its fragrance a sweet memory of Skywoman’s hand.²⁴⁰

Smudging is a protocol that has long been observed and performed by many First Nations. When First Nations gather for meetings, ceremonies or for personal prayer, smudging is conducted. First Nations in Saskatchewan generally use sweetgrass, sages, cedars and other plants for smudging. When preparations are made to smudge, the sweetgrass, sages, cedars and other plants are lit with matches or hot coals. The smoke is then used with the person’s hands in a ‘washing’ manner by pushing or cupping the smoke towards them.²⁴¹

The burning of various medicine plants to make a smudge or cleansing smoke is used by the majority of Native North American peoples. It is a ritual cleansing. As the smoke rises, our prayers rise to the Spirit World where the Grandfathers and our Creator reside. Negative energy, feelings,

²³⁵ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

²³⁶ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 40.

²³⁷ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 57.

²³⁸ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

²³⁹ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 34.

²⁴⁰ Kimmerer, *supra* note 135 at 5.

²⁴¹ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 34.

and emotions are lifted away. It is also used for healing of mind, body and spirit, as well as balancing energies.²⁴²

Smudging is believed to ground a person before entering any lodge, to prepare them for prayers and to join the circle of relatives in a good way. At the entrance of the sweatlodge generally there is smudge for every person to use as they enter.

Finally, when all the relatives mentioned above are brought together and the matotisân (sweatlodge) is ready, a kinship-based reciprocity has already begun. With this, a call is made to the âtayôhkanak, to invite the ones that exist in the unknown, in the spiritual realm. An oskâpêwisak walks in each four directions calling out an invitation to all our relatives to join us. In a loud voice, the oskâpêws says “Haw, wâhkôhmakanahk²⁴³ pihtikwehk.”²⁴⁴ The oskâpêws²⁴⁵ speaks the message to the four-directions inviting our spiritual and physical relatives to join as the door is now open for everyone to enter including the relatives who hold up the lodge; they are the ones who surround the people as they enter. After that is done, everyone is welcome to enter the lodge and to take a seat to join in saying prayers in unison, we ask for continued guidance from the spirit realm to bless us. In this matotisân, my family and I shared my mother’s dream to the Elders, afterwards when they had an opportunity to scrutinize the dream, I was instructed and informed I must follow nimama’s pawâtamowin and that I would be blessed²⁴⁶ and protected as I embark towards unfamiliar lands that my mother’s ancestors came from, unfamiliar but still connected.

C) Pawâtamona Procedure: Speaking into Dreams

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ Meaning “all relatives”; plural spelling [translated by author].

²⁴⁴ Meaning “come in”: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

²⁴⁵ Meaning “it is so marked or written”: *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ “Blessed” is a problematic word that connotes biblical meaning however, I use it to describe nêhiyaw understanding that I would be taken care of by the “great mystery” that is nimama’s dreaming.

I am here, writing this because of nimama's dream. Let me explain. It was a beautiful, lazy July morning in 2016 on the Whitefish Lake reserve #118 (Big River First Nation) that I found myself sitting across the kitchen table from nimama. As I enjoyed my first cup of coffee periodically watching her do her bead work that was spread out in front of her on the kitchen table, the house was quiet with random noises of family pouring coffee and puttering about. For as long as I can remember nimama always did her bead work at the kitchen table. She was a master beader,²⁴⁷ her work is creative, artistic, and exquisite. She sat at her "usual spot," with her beads and hide surrounding her. Nimama looked up from her work, stating clearing in the quiet kitchen in nêhiyawêwin "daughter, I had a dream the spirit keepers²⁴⁸ told me that you will be living and working in Windsor, Ontario. They said you have things to do there."²⁴⁹ I was stunned. I almost spit out my coffee! I responded to nimama "they're getting pretty specific, aren't they, mama." I laughed a bit. Nimama shrugged her shoulders, replying with "this is what they told me." I didn't even know where Windsor, Ontario was, so I quickly googled it. I was surprised to see it was across from Detroit, Michigan. I told nimama "mama, Windsor is across from Detroit, there is no way I'm moving there. For one thing, I'm not leaving you and another reason, it's too far – I do not know anyone there." With that, I tucked away nimama's pawâtamowin in the obscure places of my mind, believing the spirit keepers to be mistaken maybe this one time. A year later in June of 2017, it would be nimama who would leave us as she passed away making her journey to the kisêmanitôwnâhk to join our ancestors. It was a very difficult and challenging time.

²⁴⁷ A master beader is someone with years of beading many works of art, clothing, necklaces etc., has creative knowledge working with beads and other material.

²⁴⁸ Entities believed to be "workers" of the Creator, they guide and protect people similar notions as "angels".

²⁴⁹ Juliette McAdam, mistahatikamêk sâkahikan Treaty 6, "Future" (2015) via dream visitation [communicated to author].

Another year goes by, almost to the day in July of 2018, I was outside enjoying the sun at our familial home when I received a call. The voice identified themselves as Professor Jeff Hewitt. Professor Hewitt called to offer a job, a professorship. After he provided information regarding the job offer, I asked him where it was located – he answered “Windsor, Ontario.” I was overwhelmed as emotions rocked through my mind and through my heart. It was this phone call that set nimama’s pawâtamowin in physical motion continually changing my soul flame.²⁵⁰ I talked to my family and friends – they said I would be foolish not to accept such a great opportunity. It was an offer I could not refuse. Alone in the house that evening with nipapa, he lit sweetgrass, as we smudged, we spoke of nimama’s pawâtamowin. I wept quietly as nipapa said “you must go, it’s our law that you must follow kimama’s²⁵¹ pawâtamowin, it has revealed itself.” My life’s path has been set in motion by mysteries beyond my understanding and I must follow its instructions wherever it may lead me. I must trust that kisêmanitôw and the spirit keepers would take care of me as I am woven into the spiritual fabric of pawâtamowin wiyasiwêwina.

It is important to note at this time that, if I had not followed the instructions of nimama’s dream, my path may have led to a more questionable place, an “unknown.” There are so many variables to pawâtamona²⁵² that scrutiny from knowledge keepers and Indigenous Elders with Indigenous ceremonies must guide in the interpretations and information. It is not an informal task. As I write and speak about nimama’s pawâtamowin, I am aware I must follow pâstâmwîn²⁵³ instructions which guide and direct human thought, memories and verbal

²⁵⁰ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 27.

²⁵¹ Meaning “your mother” [translated by author].

²⁵² “Dreams”; plural spelling [translated by author].

²⁵³ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 43.

communication to ensure the person uses tapwewin²⁵⁴ in how they understand and know what they are sharing. To exaggerate, gossip, lie, or to omit may violate pâstâmwîn. Sometimes a person may not remember a detail and can come back to share it. Part of pawâtamowin is to pay attention, to remember and even observe while “dreaming.” Learning occurs through observation, contribution, and recognizing and encouraging strengths.²⁵⁵ Learning honours the power of the mind, our history, and our stories, as well as spirituality and protocol.²⁵⁶ Even during pawâtamowin, it is the dreamer’s responsibility to honor the information being shared, it could possibly be sacred information, teachings and knowledge. In other cases, it could be a transference of songs, dances, and communication of even names. I will explain in more detail in the next chapter.

I resisted nimama’s pawâtamowin even though I was instructed that I must follow it. Reflecting on that time, I did everything I could not to go to Windsor. I made excuses such as the moving costs would be too much, I had nowhere to live, it was too far etc. Each excuse I had was slowly dismantled with each phone call I received. I recognize my own limitations of my humanity, my own short sightedness and so grateful I had guidance that supported and encouraged that I follow nêhiyaw laws of pawâtamowin.

Before entering pawâtamowin, there is the process of “falling asleep” or to enter sleep. Nipêyipayit means similarly “to fall asleep” or to “fall asleep quickly” at the core of this nêhiyaw word is *nipiht*²⁵⁷ which means “this person has died” or death. Nipêyipayit means to enter a sub type of “death.” Dream Knowledge requires patience because we may not always remember

²⁵⁴ Meaning “truth”; to be as accurate as a person knows and understands: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

²⁵⁵ Sara Florence Davidson & Robert Davidson, *Potlatch as pedagogy: learning through ceremony* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Portage & Main Press, 2018) at 13.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ “Death” [translated by author].

right away, and the knowledge will unfold when the time comes.²⁵⁸ Not every nipâwin leads to pawâtamowin, there are nights when rest is needed and a person is left alone. The diagram below will only demonstrate the general process of entering pawâtamowin.

The following diagram shows the process of entering nipâwin however not all nipâwina²⁵⁹ leads to pawâtamowin, and when a pawâtamowin occurs, it can be a silly dream or a sacred dream – sharing a pawâtamon²⁶⁰ with someone with Indigenous knowledge interpretation is important and requires following protocol.²⁶¹



Diagram 2

Different seasons bring opportunities to enter the spiritual realm. As the nights get longer for fall and winter, this version of “death” is a sacred journey into different spiritual places. No one person has the same “death” journey while in a nipâwin. I share the following pawâtamowin experience as an example of nipêyipayit or in a “first person singular” version enipêyipahyan:

“I was on the hunting lands of my people on a quiet summer day. I was sitting in my parked truck when a wave of powerful sleepiness hit me. I couldn't help

²⁵⁸ Shawanda, *supra* note 148 at 40.

²⁵⁹ “Sleeping”; plural spelling [translated by author].

²⁶⁰ “Dream”, singular spelling [translated by author].

²⁶¹ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72.

it, I fell asleep. In that brief enipêyipahyan, the trees, leaves, grass, and other creatures spoke but they didn't speak. They "sparkled" as they spoke. It's difficult to describe. They said, "where are the people? where are the drums?" Then I woke up. I cried because I didn't have a drum or a song to offer them."²⁶²

In the above pawâtamon,²⁶³ the “spirit” of trees, grass etc., collectively “spoke,” they are referred to as âtayôhkan.²⁶⁴ Âtayôhkanak²⁶⁵ have existed since kisêmanitôw²⁶⁶ and are beyond ancient. Another spirit that is so important in the “dreaming” world are called pawâkanak,²⁶⁷ they are considered the personal dream spirits²⁶⁸ that guide and instruct as you navigate pawâtamowin – it is the unseen voice. They are the voices heard in the “dreaming” and they are ancient, known since the first humans journeyed the universe. Time as humans understand, does not exist for them. When a person dreams about humans whether they have passed on or not, they referred to as kiwâkômakânowak (our relatives)²⁶⁹ or if a person dreams of a relative who has passed on, they are referred to as ayisiyinîpan.²⁷⁰ Eventually though, everyone becomes an ancestor. An âtayôhkan is a different spirit from an ayisiyinîpan, generally when a person seeks to acquire a spirit keeper through vision quests²⁷¹ or fasting, it is an âtayôhkan they are seeking. However, an âtayôhkan or âtayôhkanak may choose to become their “keeper” or not. It is an individual experience.

Pawâtamowin is a doorway to different locations in the spiritual realm, giving room for the past, present, and future to exist – it is understood to be timeless like that universe shrouded

²⁶² Sylvia McAdam, *Top Lake Treaty 6 Lands* (now referred to as Saskatchewan), “Being spoken to” (2012) via dream visitation [communicated to author].

²⁶³ “Dream”; singular spelling [translated by author].

²⁶⁴ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

²⁶⁵ “Spirits” or “spirit keepers”; plural spelling [translated by author].

²⁶⁶ Meaning “Creator” or spiritual being equivalent to “God”; but ‘kise-manitow’ has no gender and is everywhere [translated by author].

²⁶⁷ Christensen & Ahtahkakoop First Nation, *supra* note 125 at xv.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ Meaning “our relatives” [translated by author].

²⁷⁰ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

²⁷¹ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72.

in mystery. Many nêhiyaw words have been translated into the English language without a thorough examination of their interpretation thereby many lose their authenticity and sacred meanings such as pawâtamowin.

D) Wâspison: Cradling Our Nations

When I arrived in Windsor Ontario to begin my Professorship, I was already contemplating doing my master's in law. Eventually, I was accepted into Osgoode Hall law school the following year after a very great experience at Windsor Faculty of Law. It was such a powerful experience that I accepted a position to stay and continue teaching.

I wrote my thesis proposal and submitted it. Classes began and I settled in for the long haul. One night in September 2020, I had a pawâtamowin. I dreamt of nimama; in my pawâtamowin I was taken to a house, I walked into a doorway that led to a living room full of people. I think I knew them but can not remember. I look to my left, and I see a hallway and what seemed like doors assuming to lead to bedrooms. As I stood at the entrance of the living room, a voice in nêhiyawêwin said "you must sing." Without hesitation I began to sing a song nimama loved when she was in her physical form, it is an ancient song of my peoples. The first verse goes like this "*Niwîcêwâkan ohcicipayiw âsamîna tahpaskêwicitowak...*" which means "my friend, it is time we must part ways..." Niwîcêwâkan has been translated as "friend" however the literal translation means "the one I walk with" or "the one I be with." The second verse ends with "may you have a good journey home, and we will see each other again." As I sang, I recognize nimama's voice as she immediately joined me from a different location, I thought I heard her voice from one of the rooms. We sang in unison and finished the song together. I awoke still hearing the song in my mind. To this day, I still hear it. It was my first visit with nimama since she passed away, and I grieved hearing the echo of the dream song. The

next day, I called my supervisor, and we discussed nipawâtamowin.²⁷² We agreed, the dream confirmed and instructed that I must continue the work of my two books which are the voices of my parents and the ancestors.

E) Deer Hide Scroll as an Evolving Nêhiyaw Method

The idea of incorporating deer hide scrolls came from Professor Andrée Boisselle's Law and Social Justice class in which we were invited to create works that used alternative methods of "storying." My people, nêhiyawak have always written their history, stories through songs, in pictographs, and petroglyphs as well as birch bark and deer hide scrolls. I wanted to incorporate nêhiyaw writing such as syllabics and symbolism to honour nêhiyaw ancient way of being and doing. Along with written documentation of my thesis, I will use a deer hide scroll. In November 2020, I spoke with Professor Hewitt about a deer hide scroll. It was shortly after that I had another pawâtamowin. On Friday, November 13th, 2023, I entered pawâtamowin – nipawâtamowin, I was standing on the lands looking towards the sky. As I stood there, I hear a voice say in nêhiyawêwin "unroll the hide." I look down at my left hand, I can see I am holding a rolled-up hide that almost looked like a scroll. I do as I'm told, and I unroll it. I watched as it unfolded touching the earth as it began to roll to the sky moved and animated by the wind. It seemed like the wind carried it and shifted the hide further and further into kîsikohk.²⁷³ As I look at the hide, it seemed to vary in color and material from brown hide to white cloth as the wind stirred and moved it almost endlessly into the sky world. I woke up, quickly smudged, and wrote my dream on paper. Again, I called my thesis supervisor to discuss nipawâtamowin's instructions and we agreed that I may be on the right path to incorporate the deer hide scroll with my thesis depending on how the future unfolds.

²⁷² Adding 'ni' in front of pawâtamowin means "my."

²⁷³ Meaning "sky"; alternatively, "spirit realm/heavens"; also "universe": *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

However, nipawâtamowin must now be presented with further scrutiny. This means “the forces of nature” or the forces of the spirit keepers or kisêmanitôw are in control of the process. The next step and questions are, “how do I acquire deer hide and from whom?” This means going on a hunt which brings me to the next chapter.

As I continued to write this chapter, the plans to turn the deer hide into a scroll changed when I spoke with my brother Anthony (Tony) McAdam, a gifted artist. He explained it would be ideal to turn the hide into a wâspison instead of a scroll. A wâspison can be created to unfold out into a type of pictograph message that he could paint onto the hide, and I could use whenever I needed to utilize it. It was an exciting idea! It certainly followed the flow of this thesis. So, we began to discussion plans on what it would look like. I gave protocol of print and cistêmâw to Tony to begin dreaming and creating the wâspison to go with my thesis.

Aboriginal (Indigenous) Hunters always speak as if the keepers of the spirits of nature are in control of the hunt. The hunters do not believe that their awareness or skills have any controlling authority in their hunt. They say the forces of nature are watching them, know everything on their minds, and what and how they behave in the hunt. The spiritual forces decide which animals will be made available and caught, thus determining the success of the hunt. The creation of this book followed this pattern, with the many spirits and forces controlling its production and contents.

— Sa’ke’j Henderson²⁷⁴

Chapter 4 Honouring Wâhkôhmtowin: The Blood of Kinship.

The animals stoon in a circle with kisêmanitôw²⁷⁵ discussing who would give themselves to the nêhiyawak. It was a time of horrible starvation, the nêhiyawak were starving to death. The land was suffering to provide. Children cried pitifully for food. As the animals stood together, kisêmanitôw asked who will give up their bodies to feed the nêhiyawak so they may survive. Môswa²⁷⁶ said “namoya niya.”²⁷⁷ Next the amisk²⁷⁸ quietly nodded their head “namoya.” All the animals who stood before kisêmanitôw almost shamefully nodded their heads “no.” Finally in the

²⁷⁴ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 21.

²⁷⁵ “Creator” [translated by author].

²⁷⁶ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

²⁷⁷ Meaning “do not go” or “no go”; “namoya” means “no” and “niya” means “to go”: *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ “Beaver”: *ibid.*

*quiet of the air, a voice could be heard clearly and strongly stating “niya kisêmanitôw, niya nikasamawak nêhiyawak.” It was only the wâpos nation that gave its body to feed nêhiyawak saving them and their children from starvation and certain death.*²⁷⁹

This chapter will weave nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina and manitow wiyinikêwina into nêhiyaw methods described within Chapter 3. This section will speak about what guides and instructs the methods, “the doing”: the actions behind and inside the methodologies. Along the way, “stories” will be shared as a reminder of who we are and of our belonging²⁸⁰ simultaneously emphasizing and recalling wâhkôhmtowin and wâhkôhtowin. Nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina inform nêhiyaw itâtisiwin to live miyopimâtisiwin. I will explain this statement further.

Indigenous laws are told in life stories that have been passed down from generation to generation; soon the names fade, but the moral and ethical elements remain.²⁸¹ These “stories” can come from two general forms of stories.²⁸² There are the human stories called âcimona then there are the sacred stories that existed before and beyond humans in the “spiritual realms” (“spiritual realm” is interchangeably called kîsikohk or kisêmanitôwnâhk), these are called atayôhkeywêwna.²⁸³ The nêhiyaw point of view is that knowledge and story are inseparable, and that interpretive knowing is highly valued, that story is purposeful.²⁸⁴ I would also add that nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina are contained in both general forms of “stories” in âcimona as well as atayôhkeywêwna.

As stated in *Nationhood Interrupted: Revitalizing nêhiyaw Legal Systems*, nêhiyawak and Anishinaabe Peoples are not a lawless Peoples.²⁸⁵ I would even suggest that all Indigenous

²⁷⁹ Anthony McAdam, Big River First Nation, circa 2012, Community gathering.

²⁸⁰ Kovach, *supra* note 62 at 94.

²⁸¹ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 48.

²⁸² Kovach, *supra* note 62 at 95.

²⁸³ Meaning “sacred instructions, history, and stories from the spirits” [translated by author].

²⁸⁴ Kovach, *supra* note 62 at 98.

²⁸⁵ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 23.

nations have their original instructions to live amongst each other as well as their lands and creation. Nêhiyaw laws have four core foundational laws,²⁸⁶ they are the “center pieces” woven into daily lives as nêhiyawak navigate and move with creation and the universe. Those “center pieces” are pâstâhowin, pâstâmowin, ohcinêwin and ohcinêmwîn.²⁸⁷

To provide clarity to pâstâhowin and pâstâmowin, they are explained in this statement:

There are two laws that describe the “act of breaking” a law or laws, but there are subcategories identified from these two main laws. The first one is called pâstâhowin, meaning “the breaking of a law(s) against another human being.” pâstâhowin has also been described as going against natural law: you will suffer retribution for an action against creation. However, this is not quite an accurate description of pâstâhowin; it says creation, but pâstâhowin applies only when a human breaks a law physically against another human being, not against creation per se. Breaking these laws can bring about divine retribution with grave consequences. The core of pâstâhowin is the root pâst-, meaning to “go beyond or over” as in ê-pâstohtêt, which translates as “stepping over” something. The verb pâstâhw- indicates that one transgresses against another, while a more generic verb, pâstâho-, indicates a transgression, and this verb is nominalized by the ending -win; hence, pâstâhowin, “transgression.” Imagine yourself surrounded by lines of laws all your life; there is a line for stealing, murder, etc.; these lines must not be stepped over. When you step over those lines, then you have broken a law, and that law needs to be identified. Pâstâhowin and ohcinêwin can apply to any circumstance where the law is not followed, either by action or omission. pâstâhowin could be the physical breaking of a law(s) through human actions, or it could be applied to the spiritual breaking of laws; however, the spiritual laws cannot be discussed. Spiritual laws are unwritten and must remain in the spiritual realm.²⁸⁸

Pâstâhowin is not “sin.” There has been some problematic interpretation of pâstâhowin, once a speaker examines the word, there is clarity in the core of it as specified in the above quote. There is a subcategory to pâstâhowin which is called pâstâmowin.²⁸⁹ Pâstâmowin “refers to what

²⁸⁶ I recognize that “laws” does not “fit” but for this time, it is the closest translation.

²⁸⁷ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 44.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid* at 43.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

someone said which led to something undesirable happening,” misfortune to the speaker.²⁹⁰ This law is broken when the person utters threats, gossip, or profanity²⁹¹ including boastfulness. Pâstâmowin is about language and its profane use contrary to nêhiyaw laws.²⁹² It’s about efficacy, because words have power outside an individual.²⁹³

There are consequences if a person does not follow pâstâmowin.²⁹⁴ If for example, a person receives a pawâtamowin about dancing and they exaggerate their dream to include dancing with bear fur; when it is time to unfold the pawâtamowin, it will not be supported by the spirit world. Therefore, that person may have extreme difficulty accessing bear fur, bad luck may follow them in acquiring what they need to unfold the pawâtamowin. The following âcimowin²⁹⁵ is an example of putting into action lessons of nêhiyaw law:

“kayas (a long time ago) an old woman heard a young man gossiping to his friends, so she took him aside and said, “Come and help me pluck the ducks for supper.” The young man said yes. As they plucked the feathers, the old woman told him, put the feathers in a bag, so he did. After they were done, she took him to a hill where there was wind blowing on their backs. She said to him, “Throw the duck feathers into the wind.” The young man threw the feathers into the wind; as expected, the wind carried the feathers a long distance, spreading them everywhere as the young man and the old woman watched. After a while, the old woman told the young man, “Now, I want you to go and take back every feather you’ve thrown into the wind and bring it back to me.” The young man spent almost all day picking the feathers. After a while, he returned to the old woman and said, “I can’t pick every feather, it’s impossible because I don’t know where the wind has carried the feathers.” The old woman told the young man to sit down. The old woman said to the young man, “When you gossip and spread information that is not true, it’s like those feathers: you don’t know where your words have gone and to take back what you say is nearly impossible.”²⁹⁶

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid* at 44.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid* at 43.

²⁹⁵ Meaning “one story” [translated by author].

²⁹⁶ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 49.

The privileging of story in knowledge-seeking systems means honouring the “talk.”²⁹⁷ Âcimona and atayôhkawêwna do not share conventional categorical boundaries: the package is holistic – they include [spiritual] teachings, metaphysical links, cultural insights, history, linguistic structures, literary and aesthetic form, and Indigenous “truths.”²⁹⁸

There are parallel stories to this thesis that are powerfully connected and relevant. Some years ago, I began approaching hunters. I offered cistêmâw and gas money in return. None of the hunters ever brought me anything even though I watched as some of them posted their “kills” on social media. I was very disappointed. One day, in the summer of 2019, I saw a familiar person walking along the road, he was from the “wrong side of the rez,” many believed he had an addiction and was a thief. I picked him up and gave him a ride home. As we drove along, he told me he was going to check his rabbit snares that evening. I asked him to bring me some rabbit meat; in return I would give him protocol of cistêmâw. He said he would but as the days went by, I thought he was like the other hunters and had forgotten about me. A couple of weeks go by when I hear a knock at my parents’ house, I open it and there he stood. He said he had rabbit meat for me. He took them out of his backpack in plastic baggies, skinned and cut. As promised, I gave him cistêmâw. I was thinking of him and how he demonstrated respect when he cleaned and cut up the rabbit as well as his quietness. He was following wâhkôhmtowin. He was never inappropriate. I think about how he was stigmatized by being labelled an “addict” and “thief,” it is a form of dehumanization and not allowing him to be seen as a kind human who demonstrated respectful actions. Stigmatizing people takes away their humanity, labelling them as unworthy. The young man has since passed away, making his journey to the ancestors.

²⁹⁷ Kovach, *supra* note 62 at 99.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid* at 101.

The animals were giving up their lives so my family and I will be fed and be nourished. Therefore, the hunter(s) must use hunting laws of ohcinêwin²⁹⁹ and ohcinêwîwin³⁰⁰ because the “vibrations”³⁰¹ of respect is critical and essential. I want to share something about respect; I wrote a bit about it in my book "Nationhood Interrupted." In the English language, there is only one word for respect. In nêhiyaw and nahkawiniw³⁰² methods of being and doing, there are two ways of understanding respect, those are manâcim³⁰³ and kistêyihtamowin.³⁰⁴ I thought about these two ways of nêhiyaw understanding of respect. A person can demonstrate respect; they show it by the way they treat and think of people. They can verbally or thoughtfully respect you; nêhiyawak describe this type of respect as manâcim or manâcitohwin. A person can also demonstrate respect by their physical or emotional actions; this type of respect is called kistêyihtamowin. People’s actions can speak loudly or gently in how much respect they have for you.

Kinship is one of the foundations or pillars to nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina.³⁰⁵ wâhkôhtowin is about human kinships such as adoptions, as well as kinship with creation such animals, trees etc. Wâhkôhtowin is also about reciprocity and relationship with all creation. Reciprocity, obligation, and relationship is shown through actions and in some cases, inaction – depending on the situation.

Ethically, this meant that humans hold certain obligations to the land, animals, plants, and lakes in much the same that we hold obligations to other people. And if those obligations were met, then the land, animals,

²⁹⁹ Meaning “the breaking of a law against anything other than a human being”: McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 44 and 101 [translated by author].

³⁰⁰ Meaning “verbal law that addresses the use of language against creation”: *Ibid* at 46 and 101 [translated by author].

³⁰¹ *Ibid* at 63.

³⁰² *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1 at meaning “Saulteaux”.

³⁰³ Meaning “to show verbal respect”: McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 66 and 99 [translated by author].

³⁰⁴ Meaning “the physical respecting of someone”: *Ibid* at 61 and 99 [translated by author].

³⁰⁵ “Cree human laws”: *Ibid* at 100 [translated by author].

plants, and lakes would reciprocate and meet their obligations to humans, thus ensuring the survival and well-being of all over time.³⁰⁶

This reciprocity is demonstrated in the following story of a man hunting and was successful in acquiring food for his family with the help of raven:

Edward was hunting near a small river when he heard a raven croaking, far off to his left. Ravens can't kill animals themselves, so they depend on hunters and wolves to kill food for them. Flying high in the sky, they spot animals too far away for humans or wolves to see. They then fly to the hunter and attract his attention by croaking loudly, then fly back to where the animals are. Edward stopped and watched the raven carefully. It made two trips back and forth in the same direction. Edward made a sharp turn and walked to where the raven was flying. There were no moose tracks, but he kept following the raven. When he got to the riverbank and looked down, Edward saw two big moose feeding the bank. He shot them, skinned them, and covered the meat with their hides. Before he left, Edward put some fat meat out on the snow for the raven. He knew that without the bird, he wouldn't have killed any meat that day.³⁰⁷

This powerful narrative and statement embody prayer songs, believed to reach into kisêmanitôwnâhk – to call upon the animals in gratitude for a life taken:

The ceremonies renewed and affirmed the ancient family relationships to the land, symbolically asserting and adjusting claims to the ecosystems. The responsibility to care for and adhere to the nêhiyaw laws of the land with its ecosystems fell to the family. This included specific laws on how to hunt the animals. omâcîw nikamona means hunter songs. Hunters of the nêhiyaw Nation have sung these songs since ancient times, beyond the memory of humans. Cree hunting songs are one subset of a more inclusive group of songs whose performance is associated with communication with the spirit beings and typically also with a positive influence on some objective desired by the singer. The objectives vary from praying for a successful hunt to thanking the animal who sacrifices its life so that the hunter can provide for his family. Crees say that both the music and the lyrics of sacred or magical songs originate in dreams, the singer either learning them in a dream experience.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 2014) Indigenous Americas at 61.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 53.

However, wâhkôhmtowin means something similar, it specifically speaks to human kinships through blood line. The bloodline kinship is intricate and can be complicated. This chapter will explore wâhkôhmtowin and how it applies to land and hunting. This kinship law guides and directions interaction between relatives on who can interact with each other and when they cannot.

Nêhiyaw methodology is relational through interconnectedness, interweaving and relational accountability of wâhkôhmtowin (blood kinship) and wâhkôhtowin (kinship)³⁰⁹ laws with our other relatives the animals, trees, plants and so forth as well as the human relationships. Nêhiyaw law is circular and unending, each step a renewal of ancient and spiritual commitments and connection to kisêmanitôw³¹⁰ whose laws nêhiyawak and creation have been given to follow. In this same or similar thread, I seek to utilize Indigenous methodologies specifically nêhiyaw protocols and methodologies.³¹¹

When nêhiyawak speak of wâhkôhmtowin and wâhkôhtowin, there are a bundle of other wiyasiwêwina that must be followed with it. For this chapter, I will write about nîcimos and the reasons I called him, his name is Randy Morin. How I am related to him in our wâhkôhmtowin is important in the reasons why I approached him. In our wâhkôhmtowin, I am related to Randy through our blood line connections. Randy's maternal ohkoma (his grandmother) is my maternal mosôm's sister. Thomas Whitefish is nimama's dad and his sister is Flora Weenonis. Therefore, Randy belongs to the female bloodline, and I belong to the male bloodline. This is very important. It is the bloodline that determines the wâhkôhmtowin terminology and where each

³⁰⁹ *Ibid* at 22 and 104 [translated by author].

³¹⁰ "Life giver"; also referred to as 'manitow': *Ibid* at 99 [translated by author].

³¹¹ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 12.

relative is situated. In nêhiyaw wâhkôhmtowin, there does not exist “great aunt” or “great uncle” terminology, Randy’s grandmother is my nohkom because she is nimosôm’s sister. Nimosôm’s siblings whether they are male, or female become my grandparents.

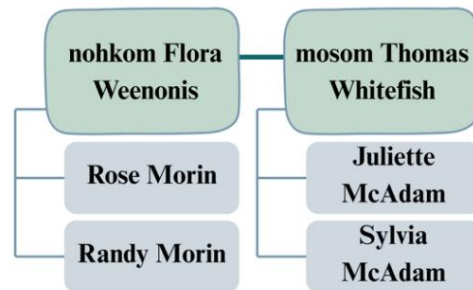


Diagram 3

In the summer of 2021 during a cultural camp located outside on Treaty 6 hunting lands near what is now known as Tea Creek. We were camped there for a few nights. In attendance were some family members, my nisikos (mother-in-law)³¹² with my cross cousins namely Randy Morin – nîcimos. Something happened during the cultural camp that is important to mention here that supports and nourishes nêhiyaw wâhkôhmtowin. We set up our tents and readied our shelters. Bears, cougars and other predators are known to visit human camps looking for food or wanting to make food of humans. Our camp was no different. As the dusk came and the sun began to set, we prepared for sleep. As nôsimak³¹³ and I entered our mikiwahp,³¹⁴ nisikos told her son, nîcimos Randy he must pitch his tent close to our door to ensure our safety. To make sure no predators can harm us, he would be first in the “line” of defense – putting himself in predator’s way to protect and defend us. I felt safe knowing this and slept peacefully. This is part of our kinship, our beautiful, protective nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe wâhkôhmtowin. The courage and love nîcimos Randy demonstrated by his actions are part of our wâhkôhmtowin. My

³¹² *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

³¹³ “Grandchildren” [translated by author]

³¹⁴ Tipi: *Itwêwina Plains Cree Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

nôsimak become his grandchildren through our bloodline and kinship. Nôsimak would call him mosom.³¹⁵

Our nêhiyaw wâhkôhmtowin is extension and intricate, each term is a “locator” of who and where that person is in the structure. In the kinship diagram describes some of the terms:

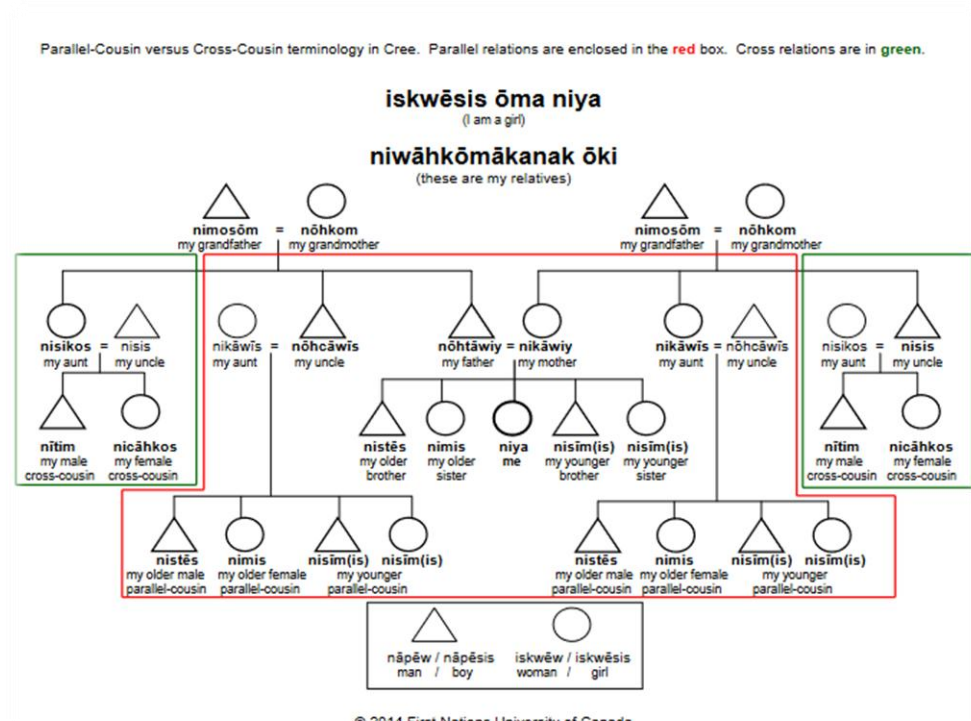


Diagram 4

The diagram is but a snapshot of the complex wâhkôhmtowin translated to "blood kinship" or how we are related by blood.³¹⁶ Wâhkôhtowin also means kinship but describes how humans are related to all of creation, to the animals, trees, etc. Located in wâhkôhmtowin, is the "m" that represents mihko meaning "blood." This is connected to the language such as the word "ninohkomnan" which may infer "blood connected grandmother." It is the same with "nimosomnan" which may mean "blood connected grandfather."

³¹⁵ “Grandfather” [translated by author].

³¹⁶ For the Cree Kinship Chart see; Arok Wolvengrey, “About all those Cousins,” online: *Cree Literacy Network* <creeliteracy.org/2014/02/26/about-all-those-cousins-arok-wolvengrey>.

The nêhiyaw word for great grandparent is câpân,³¹⁷ the Anishinaabe and nêhiyaw languages are genderless, our languages do not have “he or she.” Câpân is used for male or female great grandparent. Câpân is also used interchangeably to describe a non-gendered great grandchild. When the câpân talks about their great grandchild they use the words nitâpân or nitâniskotâpân.³¹⁸ In many of my conversations with nipapa, our conversations became much more meaningful because I think he knew he did not have long for this world. We were talking about the responsibility of being a great grandparent. He stated “nitâniskotâpân incorporates the word tâpân, tâpân means to “pull along” like the action of pulling a sled. Nipapa believed he did his best to live a nêhiyaw pimâtisiwin so that his generations can continue to follow his path. Similar with nimama, she would incorporate and live an Anishinaabe pimâtisiwin, teaching her children the values, principles and laws of her Peoples. Nipapa asked me “Tânite ewêstâpiyan nitâniskotâpân.”³¹⁹ Nipapa used to say, “Some people pull their grandchildren, their generations towards alcohol or drugs.” He did not want that for his descendants. He clarified he wanted me to continue pulling our nêhiyaw children. grandchildren towards our languages, lands, culture, ceremonies otherwise he would say “*who are we if we do not?*” Nipapa further stated when he is no longer in this world, I must step into where he and nimama once stood to “pull” nitâniskotâpân³²⁰ towards our nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina and manitow wiyinikêwina³²¹ just as they did, and my ancestors did. I feel overwhelmed and unworthy for such a huge sacred task. As I remember this conversation, I feel emotional hearing nipapa’s voice from my spiritual memories.

³¹⁷ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ Meaning “when I’m gone, where are you going to pull my generations towards?” [translated by author].

³²⁰ “My great-grandparent” or “great-great-grandparent” [translated by author].

³²¹ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 38.

I shared about nêhiyaw and nahkawiniw³²² understanding about manâcim (manâcithwin) and kistêyhtamowin. My parents and family were hunters who lived on the lands, my dad hunted all his life. We used to go with him on our hunting lands, it was a beautiful life. He used to say "peyâtihk"³²³ when we'd be skinning the animals because my siblings and I would sometimes argue. He would remind us to be kind, happy or quiet as we skinned the animals because our actions affected the hide/fur therefore whoever received the hide/fur would also be affected. So, if we made the fur/hide in anger/sadness/jealousy etc., the hide/fur would carry our emotions and be transferred to the person receiving the hide/fur. My mom would say the same about her beadwork. As I had stated, nimama was a master beader, her beadwork was art. I loved how much care and intricate detail she put into her work. She would light sage, or sweetgrass as she did her beadwork. She would say, her thoughts, actions, feelings must be kind, gentle and prayerful as she worked so that kindness would be transferred to her beadwork, the person wearing the item would feel the kindness, gentleness and prayers woven into it.

An Elder's Teaching: kēhtē-aya otâcimowin.

The tradition and practice of First Nations' Elders is to teach through storytelling. This Elder's teaching describes the difficulty of living a life true to First Nations' laws: Some years ago, a young man maybe in his early twenties with a young family approached an Elder. The young man said to the Elder, "Could you teach me the laws and the ways of our people?" The Elder told him he could do that. The Elder said to the young man, "First of all I want you to take this sweetgrass that I'm going to give you. Take it. Every morning when you wake up and every night before you sleep, light up the sweetgrass and make a commitment to the Creator and the keepers that each day you will not gossip about anyone. Also, you will commit to be kind to everyone, you will make an effort to get along with everyone, and you will be respectful to your wife and children. Also, you will pray to make a commitment to take care of your home." The Elder told the young man to finish the sweetgrass then come back and he would teach him the laws. The young man went home. A week went by, and the young man came back. The young man told the Elder, "Take this sweetgrass back because I can't do it. I can't follow what you told me to do because it's too hard." The Elder asked, "Why?" The sweetgrass was

³²² Saulteaux People or Anishinaabe People: Itwêwina Plains Cree Dictionary, *supra* note 1.

³²³ Meaning "caution or be cautious" *ibid.*

not finished, the young man only used a little of it. The young man said, "Each day when I woke up I couldn't gossip about anyone, I couldn't be unkind to anyone, I couldn't get angry at my wife. Because I couldn't do these things because I made a commitment to the Creator, I had no choice but to think of the future for my children and to think about my life." In thinking about his life, the young man realized how much he did not follow what the Creator had given him as an Indian man to follow. The young man realized how difficult it was to follow the Creator's laws. The Elder said, "The young man has already learned one of the Creator's teachings and that is in recognizing his humanness and how difficult it is to follow the Creator's laws."³²⁴

This is the inference of environment affecting *nêhiyaw pimâtisiwin*, always promoting and encouraging a "good" ethical, moral way of being and doing. My parents would say, use *manâcitohwin* and *kistêyihtamowin* to the best of your ability in everything you do including how you move in actions towards the work you are doing. I have heard people say, "respect is earned..." That may be true - I do not know much.³²⁵ However, what I do know is this; our laws of respect are from *kisêmanitôw* and are animated from the *kisêmanitôwnâhk* (spirit world). Every day, *manâcitohwin* and *kistêyihtamowin* guide and direct me because I must respect the *kisêmanitôwnâhk* flame/soul³²⁶ that each of us carry. I answer to no human being. I answer to and have responsibilities as well as obligations to *kisêmanitôw* and to *kisêmanitôwnâhk*. Now that my parents have joined our ancestors, I am obligated to them too. I do not need to "earn respect". I hope that makes sense.

Going back to *nîcimos*, Randy Morin and his family as stated above, I'm related to by blood and how they impact this chapter. When I began thinking about how I was going to access deer hide to create a hide scroll, I reviewed in my mind the various hunters and recalled from their actions what I presumed as lacking in demonstrating *nêhiyaw* respect and law. I knew

³²⁴ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 22.

³²⁵ "I do not know much" is generally used by *nêhiyawak* and *Anishinaabe* to be humble in their knowledge, respecting the spiritual "listeners" that humans are limited.

³²⁶ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 27-28.

Randy understood and followed our nêhiyaw laws, so I reach out to him and on January 26th, 2021, we met at a restaurant with his son, Kesik. I gave Randy cistêmâw and a gift as I explained my thesis and we discussed how we would go to our peoples hunting lands to kill a deer for meat and for its hide so that I could meet this portion of my thesis. We decided we would hunt when it was warmer. I was excited and thrilled to secure a hunter! I sought qualities in a hunter who lived a nêhiyaw way of being and doing. Randy led a sober and clean lifestyle which was important to me because of what I understood that our actions affect how we navigate the world. Our actions or inactions can demonstrate kindness, our voice becomes gratitude and prayer, so I specifically looked for those qualities in a hunter that exemplified nêhiyaw laws and lived by them. I believed Randy lived and exemplified loving, kind and compassionate qualities. I did this following what my parents instructed that our actions must be prayerful in the work we do.

I began my Osgoode research ethics application amid a global COVID pandemic in February 2021. After much discussion with my thesis supervisor who was hesitant and expressed concern that my plans to go hunting with a group during a pandemic would be difficult to approve even though, the group was my family members. I remained hopeful. As I waited for my approval, I was planning on having lunch at a nearby town from my reserve so as I was exiting my vehicle, I could hear a familiar voice call my name. I turned to see nisikos Rose Morin standing by her vehicle. I walk over always grateful to see her. She told me “I have a hide you might be interested in.” I thought, well that’s interesting, why would this hide come to me this way? I told her “No, it is ok nisikos. I’m going hunting with Randy to secure a hide.” As I was walking away, I felt this ‘pull.’ I paused and stood. I wondered what it was but without thinking about it, I turned back to nisikos, telling her “I’m sorry nisikos, let me see the hide.” As she unfolded the hide, it was deep brown and so well made. In that moment I decided – this hide

came to me so I must accept it. I gave her cistêmâw to follow nêhiyaw protocol and gifts in exchange for this beautiful deer hide. There I was, walking with my deer hide towards my vehicle, wondering what this meant but it was not how I planned to secure a hide. In my mind, I had a plan – a path that I believed I had to follow, and I did not want to deviant from it. So, in my fixation to fill my human plan, I almost rejected the deer hide nisikos offered. As time went by, I found out my Osgoode ethics application was primarily not approved and would be extremely difficult to fulfill because of the stringent limitations in human gatherings and human interview process. So, there it was, my hunting plans could not happen. I was in awe of the “universe” at this point, even though I could not go hunt, I still had the deer hide and I could begin marking it to fulfill the dream I had. How mystery guided to intervene and still provided to bring the deer hide to me. How grateful I am to have family such as nisikos, Rose and her son Randy – my blood kinship.

Nêhiyaw laws are complex and sacred; I am not saying to achieve perfection, that is not possible. I do the best I can each day, I fail a lot, I can be a pitiful human,³²⁷ but I try to follow our laws even when times seem uncertain. To have faith that I would be guided and protected. Each person is expected to do their very best and their best in these colonial structures and systems can be extremely challenging especially for brown and black bodies. Indigenous women’s jurisdiction and power is mere shadow of their historic place within nêhiyaw nations. They now face an epidemic of violence which will be discussed in the next chapter.

³²⁷ Nêhiyawak always refer to themselves as “pitiful” to demonstrate humbleness.

Chapter 5 Wâspison: From Cradle Board to Shattering of Nationhood

“kimosôm³²⁸ ekiwecihewet³²⁹ and was a witness to what I am about to tell you.” Nipapa began his story in the history of our last battle with the Blackfoot in our region as I sat across from him in the kitchen where most our family conversation began. Nipapa stated, “kimosôm³³⁰ was about 9(nine) or 10(ten) when his father told him to get ready. The nêhiyawak and Anishinaabe have always created alliances through marriage, treaty and various other reasons because they were similar in customs and language. This history is from your mother’s peoples. This really happened. Kimosom told it to us and now I tell you. We have always battled the Blackfoot so, it was one of those wars that the nêhiyawak and Anishinaabe created an alliance to fight them. They mobilized and rode their horses to nôtinito-sîpiy.³³¹ Your câpân³³² took kimosôm along to look after the horses. Kimosôm witnessed the battle surrounded by horses on a high hill. Many people died and managed to push the Blackfoot further south. I guess you could say we “won” but it was not a victory. When the warriors came back, the okihcitâwiskwêwak³³³ said “ekosi” no more war.” I’m not sure who reached out to who, but arrangements were made to meet the Blackfoot in maskihkiywahastotin.³³⁴ According to nipapa, before they did, the women gathered and raised up their lodges to sing their songs. Decisions had to be made, lawful decisions. As they made their way, many joined the leading men and leading women to meet with the Blackfoot. After much discussion and decisions, the leading men and women exchanged children creating a Peace and Kinship Treaty. It is a generational peace that endures to this day.

I write this section of my thesis with deep vulnerability and anguish. I suppose I’m in my *final life chapter* as I navigate my later years. The irony as I write these final two chapters of this thesis with soft retrospection and reflection. As I traverse this part of my life, I experienced life changing events that have affected and transformed my chaos. I recently bought a home and began to unpack more than just material items. As I sat quietly in my home for many days, I started to unravel my anguish and personal pain. I realized my anguish and pain emerged because I had a safe place in which to unpack my emotions. I’ve never had a ‘safe’ place before,

³²⁸ “Your grandfather” [translated by author].

³²⁹ “Your grandfather went along” [translated by author].

³³⁰ My “grandfather” [translated by author].

³³¹ Referring to place also known as Battle River, SK: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ “Woman warriors” or “female head warrior”: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

³³⁴ Referring to place also known as Medicine Hat, AB: *Ibid.*

every place of my childhood and adulthood were variations of violence and brutality. In my adulthood specifically, within my intimate relationships with men. It is with intense pain that I say, I've never known an intimate male relationship without violence and brutality, without a man wanting to beat me. The violence and brutality have been horrific, sometimes I would be hospitalized, even fleeing down a road to escape during the night. There is a depth of sorrow that has settled into my heart and my bones realizing I may be in this final chapter not ever experiencing and knowing non-violence in an intimate relationship. It is with vulnerability and fear of judgment that I put this here. At the same time such an enigma, I feel something akin to peace inside my skin, a quietness has taken hold – a forgiveness for my troubled relationship with others and with nimama since I've written this thesis.

*Wait for me here, whilst I smudge my bones,
I exhale.*

Ever since I could remember, my relationship with my mother was always troubled. Her methods of discipline and punishment mimicked those of violent Indian Day schools and Indian Residential schools. My parents lived through the Pass and Permit era,³³⁵ Indian Day schools,³³⁶ and many other systems of violence and genocide enforced and implemented by the Indian Agent, church Priests and the RCMP through the Department of Indian Affairs as an apparatus of the British Crown as well as Canada. In other words, my parents carried far too much colonial trauma and violence in their itâtisiwin as well as in their learnt behaviours. Both my parents came from alcoholic homes. Nimama being the main disciplinarian and stay at home parent, became our sole caregiver while nipapa worked, sometimes days at a time during the winter. I

³³⁵ Treaties and Historical Research Centre, Study of Passes for Indians to Leave their Reserves (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1974) online (pdf): <publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2018/aanc-inac/R5-670-1974-eng.pdf>.

³³⁶ University of British Columbia, "Indian Day Schools" (last visited 11 September 2025) online (website): <irshdc.ubc.ca/learn/indian-day-schools/>.

sometimes wonder if he stayed away for his own reasons. In nimama's final days and months, we resolved and mended some of what troubled me however, it was not until I researched and began to understand in depth of nêhiyaw concepts about otisiy and otisiyêyâpiy that my own recovery reached a transformative spiritual healing from trauma and with it I would say, variations of forgiveness. I smudged and wept many times through this thesis. I grieve for nimama who endured so much violence and witnessed brutality growing up in a reservation.

As I stated, nimama became the person who guided our household, she informed the women in our family of traditional roles such as when I first menstruated. We were working in the sugar beet fields³³⁷ in Coaldale Alberta; I was 15 years old when I first got my period.³³⁸ I was unprepared and did not know much of anything even though I had older sisters. I do not remember ever talking about menstruation, there was always a taboo about female anatomy and functions. Reflecting on it now, it was a horrible experience. I felt dirty. Nimama took me into a bedroom and gave instructions on how to use pads, as well as to use my own specific drinking cup, utensils and a plate; I was not to touch or use any other kitchen items and to be secluded for the first couple of days as much as possible in a very crowded family situation. I was instructed by nimama that I was a “woman” and that I must not have kîminîcâkanak or as translated in the Cree Dictionary “children out of wedlock”³³⁹ with different men. I must behave myself and not

³³⁷ Ron Laliberté, “Grab-a-Hoe Indians”, online: *Indigenous Saskatchewan Encyclopedia* <teaching.usask.ca/indigenoussk/import/grab-a-hoe_indians.php>.

³³⁸ Menstruation.

³³⁹ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1. This translation is problematic, as stated throughout this thesis, the translations are interpreted through European and church ideology. There are speculations and support from language speakers that 'kîminîcâkanak' does not mean “children out of wedlock” prior to colonization there are questions of whether there was the idea of “weddings” or “marriages” in a colonial context. Further, I posted a question in the Nêhiyawêwin (Cree) Word/Phrase of the Day Facebook Group asking what 'kîminîcâkan' (singular) or 'kîminîcâkanak' (plural) means. What followed was an amazing thread of nêhiyaw speakers contributing to a conversation that tentatively and speculatively narrowed 'kîminîcâkanak' to its possible origin words of 'kîmin' and 'kîmôc'. 'Kîmin' means to “sexually touch” and 'kîmôc' means “secret” or “secretive”. The end word of 'câkan' is a signify that may indicate a child or person: (27 March 2025), online: <facebook.com/groups/18414147673> [perma.cc/49GS-VQWM] (thread not directly shared out of respect).

embarrass them. I was instructed that when I'm menstruating, not to sit in cold places or I will get sick such as hockey arenas with their cold benches. I do not remember verbatim the exact words, I remember feeling "dirty" and unwanted – a burden now that I was a "woman." The word *kîminîcâkanak* stayed with me because it was the first time I heard that word and did not understand its meaning. It was almost like *nimama* was angry as she spoke. She gave instructions on how to dispose of my bloody pad so that *nipapa* and my brothers or any man would not see it. I hated it. Prior to becoming a "woman," I was free to run with my brothers, I wanted to be a boy. Now I was instructed to keep my distance, not step over men's clothing, not to be near men's pipes and to stay away from Indigenous ceremonial lodges while menstruating – even when I was not menstruating. It was confusing. *Nimama* later stated, this was our *nêhiyaw* and Anishinaabe "rite of passage" for young women who first menstruate. It was our "role" as women to follow these directions. As a result of my own experience, I refused to use this "rite of passage" on my own female *nôsisimak*.³⁴⁰

I felt alone, unwanted and dirty.

For this final thesis chapter, I envisioned a different conclusion – not so vulnerable and intimate – I wanted to sound "academic," impersonal. But in following the spirit of this thesis and the direction it has taken as *nimama* co-instructs from the spiritual realm – it has unfolded in the most powerful and paradigm shifting process of re-awakening and unpacking of the *nêhiyaw* language to its original veracities and meanings. It has become a thesis of forgiveness and a deep grief. A revelation of the impact of brutality and violence towards *nimama* and the women of my bloodline – in general Indigenous women across our lands. Also, the erasure of *nêhiyaw* intellect and science.

³⁴⁰ "My grandchildren": *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

As I shared my experience with my “rite of passage” into womanhood, I recall and revisit my feelings as I research nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe menstruation for this chapter. I grieved reading the immense effort to indoctrinate and infiltrate Indigenous female worldviews regarding menstruation by the colonizer through imposed Church ideologies and laws. The colonizer and their European Victorian era ideologies surrounding women’s bodies saturate literature that a woman was “powerful” by their ability to destroy things while menstruating. Further, “Judeo-Christian culture saw menstruation not as a manifestation of female power, but as a manifestation of female sin, contamination and inferiority.”³⁴¹ Missionaries did not understand menstruation as a sacred gift; rather, they taught women to see it from western eyes, as a “curse.”³⁴² Further, according to the St. James Bible in Leviticus 15:19–24 (ESV): 19:

“When a woman has a discharge, and the discharge in her body is blood, she shall be in her menstrual impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. And everything on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean. Everything also on which she sits shall be unclean. And whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. And whoever touches anything on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. Whether it is the bed or anything on which she sits, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until the evening. And if any man lies with her and her menstrual impurity comes upon him, he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.”³⁴³

The new version of St. James bible further includes a 7-day separation clause which states “If a woman has a discharge, and the discharge from her body is blood, she shall be set apart seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening.”³⁴⁴

During the Victorian era woman in general were constructed inferior to men, and believed to be incapacitated, unable to think, debilitated, and mentally unstable. The following statements

³⁴¹ Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* (Toronto, Ontario: Sumach Press, 2000) Women’s issues publishing program at 77.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ “Leviticus 15:19–24 ESV”, online: *Biblia* <biblia.com/bible/esv/leviticus/15/19-24>.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

are a snapshot of how men during this time viewed and recorded their beliefs about women's menstruation:

"During its continuance, the woman is said to be unwell, or out of order. Various unpleasant feelings are liable to attend it; but when it is attended with severe pain, as it not infrequently is, it becomes a disease, and the woman is not likely to conceive until it be cured. During the existence of the 'turns' or 'monthlies,' as they are often called, indigestible food, dancing in warm rooms, sudden exposure to cold or wet, and mental agitations should be avoided as much as possible."³⁴⁵

Further, the following statement supports this ideology:

Women have had it pretty rough when it comes to social attitudes towards menstruation. Menstruation has historically been viewed as a symbol of inferiority, disability, impurity, weakness, and rooted in medical myth and cultural taboo. Hippocrates, the fifth-century physician and "Father of Modern Medicine" believed that menstruating women could sink ships, spoil cheese, tarnish silver, and kill livestock. In the year 77 CE, the Roman natural philosopher Pliny the Elder wrote a thirty-seven-volume encyclopedia which included theories on menstruation. According to him, menstrual blood could make seeds infertile, kill insects, flowers, and grass, and drive dogs mad. Just a glance from a menstruating woman could kill bees.³⁴⁶

But it was not just the Victorian era or ancient times that promoted these problematic narratives, according to a menstruation information booklet from 1943 produced by Kotex, they listed a section on "common superstitions of the day" the following:

If she drank milk, the cows were doomed.
If she entered a wine cellar, wine went sour.
Flowers would wither at her touch....
Meat would spoil if she dared salt it.
A look from her eyes would kill a swarm of bees.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ Elaine Showalter & English Showalter, "Victorian Women and Menstruation", JSTOR (1970) 14:1 Victorian Studies 83–89 at 84.

³⁴⁶ Anna Weissman, "Period Piece: Menstruation's Hidden History", online: *History Colorado* <historycolorado.org/story/2024/08/16/period-piece-menstruations-hidden-history>.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Recording of beliefs about menstruation during the Victorian era are few or nonexistent and what exists is with revulsion and fear. Men of that era argued that women could not attend college nor do the same work as them because of their female physiology as stated in the following:

Maudsley concluded that women could never hope to equal masculine accomplishments, because their physiology acted as a handicap, body and mind being "for one quarter of each month during the best years of life . . . more or less sick and unfit for hard work."³⁴⁸

As well, in "eighteenth-century England, public discourse on the female body varied considerably, but menstruation was quite consistently a topic addressed publicly only by physicians and those attempting to be shocking."³⁴⁹ In general, European ideas, concepts and medical information about menstruation revolved around women as inferior and condemned by their gender. Women were referred to as menstruous as shown in the following quote:

The menstruous woman is possessed by an evil spirit; the spirit resides in her blood, and by the medium of her menstrual blood may exert its influence, for good or for harm, on her environment. The evil spirit may effect its entry into the woman in the form of a bird, or a lizard, or a serpent; hence the folk association of these animals with menstruation. It was the serpent that marred the primordial bliss of Eden.³⁵⁰

It is not lost to the reader that the use of a word like "menstruous" is comparable to the word monstrous to describe women.

This bring me back to my own "rites of passage" with nimama and how violent it felt as well as how unclean, unwanted and burdensome I was as a "woman." Reflecting on the nêhiyaw or Anishinaabe rite of passage for womanhood, I recognized how much of the Victorian and biblical ideology has devastated and infiltrated the original instructions of the "authentic"

³⁴⁸ Showalter & Showalter, *supra* note 345 at 87.

³⁴⁹ Tiffany Potter, "Reciprocal Regulation: Trans-Atlantic Implications of Colonial Accounts of North American Indian Women and Menstruation" (2006) 29:1 *Journal for eighteenth-century studies* 97–113 at 98.

³⁵⁰ Raymond Crawford, "Of Superstitions Concerning Menstruation" (1916) 9:Sect_Hist_Med *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* 49–66 at 51.

menstrual knowledge of Indigenous Peoples. I was shocked to see the similarity to what nimama said to me as a “rite of passage” and what I was reading as I researched this chapter.

I also recognize that there is limited information in this thesis about the menstruation of nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe women from the nations themselves, it is my hope that I will do further research to access knowledge of it in the future.

A) The Blood of Our Peoples: Iskwewak

Our kinship, wâhkôhmtowin has the letter “m” located within it which stands for as stated in various chapters mihko our nêhiyaw word for “blood.”³⁵¹ I found an article that had a section that I was particularly moved to share here, it makes a connection to mihko in the following quote:

Pierre Liette, for example, reported of the Illinois nations in 1702 that young women at menarche were removed to a separate dwelling and advised to fast throughout menstruation that they might ‘see the Manitou, and when he has spoken to them, they are everlastingly fortunate and achieve the gift of great power for the future’. The ritual of menarche thus is likened in Liette’s account to a spirit quest undertaken to mark a young man’s transition to adulthood in the culture. Menstruation opens communication to supernatural forces and a lifetime of ‘great power’ associated with a woman’s bodily cycles. Modern historical anthropology affirms the power of the menstruating woman. Thea Perdue’s *Cherokee Women* also notes that the seclusion of women signified the power conferred by their contact with North American Indian Women and Menstruation the spiritual power preserved in blood: ‘Women secluded themselves; men did not force restrictions and rituals on them. Men, in fact, often observed similar restrictions before and after warfare, and they, like women, regarded seclusion as a practical precaution and a demonstration of the elevated plane they had achieved [...I War, hunting, childbirth, and menstruation required strict rules of behavior because they all involved blood.’ The ungendered power of blood is divided to controllable gendered divisions in the colonial accounts of menstruation. The importance of blood ritual in battle need not be denied, but the recognition of power inherent in women’s blood ritual transgresses against the hierarchy of gender required to determined civility in the dominant eighteenth-century mindset.³⁵²

³⁵¹ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

³⁵² Potter, *supra* note 349 at 104.

I believe this quote has similar interpretation and understanding to the sacredness of mihko in nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe worldview and is woven into our word for wâhkôhmtowin that speaks of blood kinships and how the concepts of blood are integral and sacred:

The taking of a life was a serious matter and not contemplated lightly. Life is precious and life is a gift from the creator. By rights it is only the creator who can take life but sometimes men have to protect themselves. In taking a life, the war chief had to consider how that action was going to honor the ancestors, and how it was going to affect those yet to come.³⁵³

The taking of life regardless if that life is human, animal, or anything in creation, it requires prayer and ceremony such as the protocol of giving cistêmâw to anything nêhiyawak take from the lands, and waters.

I grieve for the loss and harm of nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe women's jurisdiction and power. I dream of a return of women's power, leadership and jurisdiction, such as the above history of our battle with the Blackfoot which demonstrates a snapshot of what "had" been. Nipapa and I discussed the implications of the above shared history with the Blackfoot nation. How incredibly amazing it was for the women to give up their children to create peace and kinship – a peace and kinship Treaty. Nipapa said "they gave up their children knowing each nation would follow their laws not to make war on their child." According to the above shared history from nipapa, it was law coming from the women – it was constructed and decided from the women. It was the women who decided who would give up their children to create this astounding and powerful Treaty that created peace not for themselves, but generational and enduring. It is unknown from my conversations with nipapa how many children were exchanged.

³⁵³ Alan Corbiere, "Symbolic, Cultural and Linguistic Meanings", *American Indian Art Magazine* 37:3 (2012), online: <[researchgate.net/publication/335988280_SymbolicCultural_and_Linguistic_Meanings_SymbolicCultural_and_Linguistic_Meanings](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335988280_SymbolicCultural_and_Linguistic_Meanings_SymbolicCultural_and_Linguistic_Meanings)>.

The Blackfoot women agreed to the terms and came forward with their children to exchange with the nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe women and nations. Can you imagine the incredible amount of courage, love and faith it must have taken to give up a child to create a generational peace and kinship Treaty knowing your child is going to be raised by your enemy? To have faith in nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe law, to have that amazing volume of love for peace enough to create wâhkôhmtowin – an exchanging of blood to create kinship.

When the Europeans arrived on Turtle Island,³⁵⁴ they encountered robust and powerful structures of Indigenous women’s leadership, jurisdiction and power. They “found” nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe systems of matriarchs and matrilineal structures thriving in flourishing organized healthy leaderships. As stated in previous chapters, nêhiyaw women practiced birth control, selected leadership, healed their people with medicinal knowledge from the lands and waters. They instructed children about nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe laws, honouring matrilineal systems through the language, culture and lands.

After their arrival, upon setting foot on Indigenous lands, Europeans with the Jesuits intentionally sought out “Creeps,” a name given to nêhiyawak by the Jesuits. When they did find them, the Jesuits stated: “You need to teach them how to beat their wives and make sure, as we do, that the stick you use is no bigger than your little finger.”³⁵⁵ The Jesuits set out to change the power and jurisdiction of nêhiyaw women because “Their women have too much power.”³⁵⁶ By doing so, the Jesuit began to introduce their brutality, gendered mutilation, misogyny and violence to nêhiyaw men as well as all indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island. It took shattering

³⁵⁴ Most Indigenous nations called this continent “Turtle Island.”

³⁵⁵ Charlie Smith, “Wendy Grant-John reveals how colonialism shattered relationships between Indigenous men and women”, *Georgia Straight* (29 May 2019), online: <straight.com/news/1246791/wendy-grant-john-reveals-how-colonialism-destroyed-relationships-between-indigenous-men>.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Indigenous nations through genocide, disease, alcohol, enslavement of women, indoctrination and systematic and intentional targeting of nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe iskwewak³⁵⁷ to create a mere shadow of women's former position of jurisdiction and power.

B) May the force of Pim Be with You: Nêhiyaw DNA/Epigenetics

As stated in previous chapters, nêhiyawêwin imbeds the matrilineal system nêhiyaw Peoples follow, this system is not limited to humans. As our origin history teaches us, our original ancestors came from kakanâcisitacâhk,³⁵⁸ how we navigated the universe to arrive on askîy – our origin “stories” or history determine how we walk on the lands and the worldview in which we see it from:

How did the world come to be? How did humans come to be? What is the origin of all living beings? The myth-history of who we are begins with the creation stories we tell. These stories guide us on the path to who we will become and how we understand ourselves and our relation to the planet and the other life on Earth. We settler colonialists have our origin story in the Christian Bible, the fiction that set our Western worldview on the path to Christian male domination of the earth and women.³⁵⁹

Nêhiyawak utilized syllabics, pictographs and markings on the land to record and document history, lands, and laws. This chapter will examine the writing of nêhiyaw law on deer hide and its meaning. The care and maintenance that will be required to paint it, as well as what care is needed for the future.

The following account gives insight into how the drum was given to a little girl because the Ojibway and Sioux peoples were at war with each other, and she was tired of it:

Tired of war, she decided to fast to seek guidance. On the 7th day a grandmother appeared to her, telling the men are so busy with the war that they forgot how to connect with their hearts. She showed the little girl how to make a drum and told her

³⁵⁷ “Women”; Anishinaabe [translated by author].

³⁵⁸ Nêhiyaw word for the North Star: Wilson & Wilson, *supra* note 74.

³⁵⁹ Sally Roesch-Wagner, “Christian Control of Women and Mother Earth: The Doctrine of Discovery and the Doctrine of Male Domination” (8 April 2023), online (blog): *Doctrine of Discovery Project* <doctrineofdiscovery.org/blog/christian-control-women-mother-earth>.

that if the drum is given to the men, they would once again connect with their hearts.³⁶⁰

It is the knowledge and awareness of mihko, otisiyêyâpiya and pimâtisiwin with itâtisiwin that made human blood sacred and ungendered. The knowledge of DNA in otisiyêyâpiya combined with blood knowledge from wâhkôhmtowin supports the concept that nêhiyawak and Anishinaabe valued and considered blood kinship to be sacred and important to follow and uphold. This is important because of the male and female bloodlines that instruct complex nêhiyaw kinship structures as discussed in chapter four, blood guides kinship conversations and respectful protocols that communicate interactions to prevent incest or other forbidden kinship abuses or violations. This is further supported by nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina that direct and guide nêhiyawak to use only what is needed from creation ensuring that creations way of pimâtisiwin remains as unaffected as possible. Human actions honour creations “DNA” that is rooted and established in nêhiyawêwin.

Pimâtisiwin, itâtisiwin and mihko are what creates ‘sacredness’ in humans, to upset these three by not following nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe original instructions disrupts, disturbs, and interrupts harmony in the flow of life and creation. To disrupt pim – the energy that moves itâtisiwin (DNA) disturbs mihko and otisiyêyâpiya as well as otisiy thereby affecting babies and children as well as the generations. This disruption may come in the form of the foods we now eat that affect our bodies. It can come in the form of incestuous relationships, sexual assault, hunger, contaminated water, drugs, alcohol, smoking and so forth. It can come forward in the form of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women as well as Two-Spirit people.

Further, nêhiyawak and Anishinaabe as well as other Indigenous nations recognized and respected the sacredness of the “life force” or “energy” of humans and creation that moves our

³⁶⁰ Restoule et al, *supra* note 170 at 113.

bodies, our hearts – life movement of “things.” This same or similar life force named “Puhpowee”³⁶¹ as stated previously is a word to describe “the force which causes mushrooms to push up from the earth overnight.”³⁶² In nêhiyawêwin, it is called pimohpikin³⁶³ the force that makes a plant or similar creation “grow” or move out of its “birth” location like the mushroom description of that same “force.” As stated in previous chapters, there is no word for pim in “the formulation of a theory for which English has no equivalent.”³⁶⁴ It is **pim** that is honoured and deemed sacred life force, the “light” or fire, it is ungendered and comes from kisêmanitôwnâhk as well as from our origin history of our star journey. So, combined with pimâtisiwin, itâtisiwin, mihko and pim that exist in humanity as well as creation, it is these that nêhiyawak and Anishinaabe are instructed through their laws to live in harmony with to hold sacred pim – the force or energy that moves creation including humans. For women, it is the sacredness of mihko, otisiyêyâpiya and placenta which carry the DNA of generations that is considered sacred which is likely why ceremonies are used to honour them.

This same or similar recognition of pim and their pimâtisiwin with itâtisiwin in plants, animals – in general all of creation is identified in how nêhiyawak navigate hunting, gathering and living in harmony with the world through the laws and original instructions that I wrote about in *Nationhood Interrupted*. Nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina instruct people to use ohcinêwin and ohcinêwôwin when engaging with creation. These wiyasiwêwina instruct people to take only what is needed to live, to feed their nations and to leave creation as undisturbed as possible thereby, not disrupting or disturbing what they’ve been given to live, their pimâtisiwin. This is

³⁶¹ Kimmerer, *supra* note 135 at 49.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ I took from 'ohpikin' and added 'pim' because that is the “force” or “energy” that moves the growth through: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

³⁶⁴ Kimmerer, *supra* note 135 at 49.

likely why nimama honoured the crocus every spring, a remnant of an ancient knowledge connected to the otisiyêyâpiya and pim of bison and the female bison.

Physical anthropologists have described nineteenth-century bison hunters as “the tallest in the world.”³⁶⁵ Members of societies that maintained a continental system of communication and trade without the assistance of horses must have been incredible fit, since running would have been integral to the maintenance of ties and trade.³⁶⁶ There was no question that a diet based on a plentiful and reliable supply of bison afforded a high degree of nutrition.³⁶⁷ Nêhiyawak and Anishinaabe enjoyed long healthy lives prior to European contact, often trading for corn and various other food items.³⁶⁸ Research has shown that “bison was the staff of life,” though beaver were at the core of profound ideological framework which prized the role of the beaver in the stabilization of water sources.³⁶⁹ Access to clean water sources and non-disruptive bison hunting required key strategies to ensure reliable supply of food and water,³⁷⁰ Indigenous Peoples work with the lands and waters to avert and mitigate hardships.³⁷¹ This changed with European contact.

Europeans arrived creating an old but new kinship, we called the Europeans kiciwâminawak. Along with this new kinship came disease, death, and alcohol along with new a language of domination and dehumanization. The shattering of women’s jurisdiction and authority as law keepers and the continued erasure of nêhiyaw laws:

....the best way to control and manipulate an individual is not to tell them what to do; that always generates resistance, hostility, and defiance. Instead, tell a person *who*

³⁶⁵ James W Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: disease, politics of starvation, and the loss of Indigenous life*, new edition ed (Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada: University of Regina Press, 2019) Canadian plains studies 65 at 9.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ *Ibid* at 4–5.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid* at 7.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid* at 8.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

and *what* they are. They will end up eating out of your hand....[The media] are mutually reinforcing resources in the American struggle for identity.³⁷²

With the new language came as stated infiltration, erasure and devastation of nêhiyaw way of life and being. So began the domination of Indigenous women in all accounts by “domesticating” their skills, knowledge and jurisdiction by the following statement:

Thus, the accounts of the Recollects and Jesuits in particular need to be read not as automatically accurate ethnography so much as narrative, telling the tale of the beginnings of the presumptive civilisation indicated by appropriately modest domestic femininity in Indigenous North American women. From the original Latin root connected to both domus (lord) and domum (home), the link between domesticity and domination in Western culture was a longstanding one. As Eve Tavor Bannet points out, the eighteenth-century use of the word domestic ‘had come into English from the French where it designated “all those persons subordinate to someone, who constitute his household [...I [and] owe him submission, respect and fidelity”’. The connotations of domestic were feudal and hierarchical.” The domesticating descriptions of the disempowered, contaminated menstruating body use the European ideologies of racial and gendered hierarchy to ensure larger cultural domination through smaller rituals of enforced domestication. Le Clercq uses the same vocabulary of European valuation of the ‘natural inclination’ to specifically feminised modesty and chastity in his description of menstrual rituals among the Micmac:

‘they observe still to this day certain ceremonies of which they do not know the origin, giving no other reasons than that their ancestors have always practised the same thing. The first is this, that the women and girls, when they suffer the inconveniences usual to their sex, are accounted unclean. At that time they are not permitted to eat with the others, but they must have their separate kettle, and live by themselves’. The ostensibly neutral, ethnographic description asserts female ignorance and obedience as the origins of menstrual separation in the euphemistic ‘inconveniences’ of uncleanness that interfere with the specifically domestic duties identified by the reference to food preparation’. As in so many of the early accounts, the completeness of the information that the women choose to convey to the missionary, and the ethnographic accuracy of Le Clercq’s account are less important than the cultural function fulfilled by the text: establishing the essentialised continuity of the morals, modesty, passivity and ignorance of women, despite apparent differences in individual behaviours or appearances.³⁷³

³⁷² Wub-e-ke-niew, *We have the Right to Exist: a translation of Aboriginal Indigenous thought: The First Book ever Published from an Ahnishinahbæótjibway Perspective* (New York City: Black Thistle Press, 1995) at 97.

³⁷³ Potter, *supra* note 349 at 101.

In the resurgence of nêhiyaw way of being and doing, recognizing and unpacking the language of domination should be seriously required just as much as revitalizing language and culture. To recognize as the above quote states, even words like “domestic” means to be subordinate to another. I would further say, as nations we need to reject alcohol, drugs and all the problematic paraphernalia that currently consume Indigenous Peoples as well as all peoples. To unpack what it is that we consider “traditional” especially the nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe female rite of passage so obviously influenced and infiltrated by church ideology and Victorian era patriarchy. Perhaps to further ask, what is our role in our own colonization?

Chapter 6 Rebuilding Nationhood: Remove the Doctrine of Discovery

*Our mission is to raise the Flag
Of Britain's Empire here,
Restrain the lawless savage,
And protect the Pioneer,
And 'tis a proud and daring trust,
To hold these vast Domains,
With but three hundred Mounted Men,
The Riders of the Plains.*³⁷⁴

It is not enough to learn about nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe laws, cultures and worldviews. Nations must also understand and investigate historical impacts from various Doctrines still unfolding today towards a goal of dismantling and abolishing those Doctrines and their manifestations. To understand and dismantle the above statement, of “mounted men” setting out to raise a flag on lands that belong to Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples have always existed on these lands now known as “Canada.” We lived as vibrant, independent and free Peoples enjoying structured leadership, centuries-honed legal orders, intimate relationships with all the diverse landscapes and waterscapes that make up Turtle Island. Our Indigenous history

³⁷⁴ Daniel Francis, *The imaginary Indian: the image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver, B.C: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992) at 77.

did not begin with the arrival of Europeans. What happened when Europeans arrived is a critical turning point that Indigenous Peoples, Christians and Canadians need to understand so that they may be given the opportunity to act.

Recently, there were discussing of a “resurgence”³⁷⁵ of Indigenous knowledge systems. I have contemplated and studied the word “resurgence” along with its synonyms: rebirth, renaissance, and resurrection. I sensed a resistance and began to contemplate the idea of resurgence. When I sensed the resistance, I turned to prayer and smudging³⁷⁶ as well as connecting with other language speakers and academics to understand and verbalize it – to give it form. I attempted to interpret and translate “resurgence” into my first language, nêhiyawêwin. Nêhiyawak believe language has a spirit and is animate so the interpretation and translation must be done carefully and diligently as well as with prayer. We have similar words like resurgence however, does “resurgence” apply in the experience of nêhiyawak? I would argue that for a resurgence to happen along with rebuilding of Indigenous nationhood, we must unpack, investigate and deprogram the following information shared in this chapter especially how it impacts current nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe women, 2Spirit, LGBTQ peoples, ceremonies and languages. We need to identify the sources of violence, brutality, and mass death so we can expose and acknowledge them towards a truthful future of reparation, compensation and nation building.

Nêhiyawak and in general, Indigenous Peoples located in what is now referred to as “Canada” were forbidden, outlawed, jailed, hunted down and killed to prevent them from using their languages, cultures and for being who they are. Colonization is a structure that continues

³⁷⁵ Sylvia McAdam, “Nation Building After an Apocalypse” (2022) 2:1, McGill’s Indigenous Law Journal Rooted 70, online: <issuu.com/rootedmcgill/docs/rooted-2022_v11-online>.

³⁷⁶ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 18.

and has not stopped.³⁷⁷ This must be loudly shouted to the four directions of our Indigenous lands. The impacts are apocalyptic,³⁷⁸ causing the death of millions upon millions of Indigenous Peoples. Those left standing continue to be subjected to forced colonial assimilation, dehumanization and domination.

Through a series of catastrophic events such as the mass killing of bison and beaver thoroughly disrupted the way of life for Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island as well as the systematic targeting of Indigenous women. This can be traced back to examples such as the recorded sexual enslavement by Montreal fur traders in 1795,³⁷⁹ as the fur trade descended into despair and violence.³⁸⁰ Indigenous Peoples experienced unprecedented genocidal disruption and destruction to Indigenous family systems and science knowledge systems that have existed since millennia.

Colonial oppression and dehumanization of Indigenous Peoples can be traced through laws and policies such as the Indian Act, Pass and Permit system, and the Peasant Farming Policy – far too many to list here. However, attention must also be paid to the *Malleus Maleficarum* (“The Hammer of Witches”), a doctrine from 1486,³⁸¹ which specifically targeted women and was used against Indigenous women upon the arrival of Europeans to Turtle Island, now called Canada. There is very little known of this *Malleus Maleficarum* doctrine but needs so much more investigation that this thesis is unable to properly provide but it is worth mentioning here perhaps a jumping point for further research down my path. The persecution of women began in Europe and was transported here by colonizers through doctrines, laws, and policies like the Doctrine of

³⁷⁷ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native” (2006) 8:4 *Journal of Genocide Research* 387–409.

³⁷⁸ Julian Brave NoiseCat, “How Indigenous Peoples Are Fighting the Apocalypse”, *Emergence Magazine* (23 November 2021), online: <emergencemagazine.org/op_ed/how-indigenous-peoples-are-fighting-the-apocalypse>.

³⁷⁹ Daschuk, *supra* note 365 at 50.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid* at 51.

³⁸¹ Roesch-Wagner, *supra* note 359.

Discovery. The domination and dehumanization of Indigenous women became so extensive that it is difficult to know where to begin unraveling this history. To understand ongoing colonial control, it is necessary to revisit history and expose the origins of violence against nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe women. This chapter offers a brief overview of this vast issue.

As Richard Phillips stated, “to unmap literally is to denaturalise geography, hence, to undermine world views that rest upon it.”³⁸² Such is the case for the Doctrine of Discovery, a complex legal tradition that arose in the West during the medieval period. And the church played a central role with Christian states or crowns assisting in its enforcement and implementation onward to the assimilation of Indigenous nations. The international legal principle of Discovery was used by England and by the governments, courts, politicians, and English settlers in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States to justify Crown and colonial control of the Indigenous peoples and ownership of the Indigenous lands within these countries.³⁸³ A series of papal bulls both reflected the thinking of dominant European powers and reinforced the trajectory of justifying Christian conquest. Among them was the 1455 Papal Bull, *Romanus Pontifex*, which sanctified the seizure of newly ‘discovered’ lands and encouraged the enslavement of native peoples. Then, in 1493 Pope Alexander VI issued *Inter Caetera*, which gave the Americas to Spain and Portugal. It is through this that the infamous explorer (or land speculator) Christopher Columbus was given his royal prerogatives.³⁸⁴ Columbus’s prerogatives were to convert the land, subdue, convert or kill the barbarians and assert the Monarchy’s title to the land; in other words, to colonize the lands and its peoples. With his royal prerogatives in hand, Columbus arrived in the far south of Turtle Island. His first act was one rich with Christian

³⁸² Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire: Geographies of Adventure* (London New York: Routledge, 1997).

³⁸³ Robert J. Miller et al., *Discovering Indigenous Lands, the Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) at 3.

³⁸⁴ *The Doctrine of Discovery: Unmasking the Domination Code* (Morton, MN: 38 Plus 2 Productions, 2015).

symbolism. He planted a sword into the soil and invoked a Christian chant that baptized the lands.³⁸⁵ This chant was a symbolic act of asserting sovereignty and dominance over Indigenous Peoples, lands and all that came with it. This seemingly simple act – a symbolic Christian ritual - set in motion a series of horrific events still felt today in many Canadian court cases, laws and policies.

In summary, the fifteenth century papal bulls defined all unbaptized persons, including Indigenous peoples (Original peoples), as barbarians, heathens, pagans, infidels and savages. Only Christians were and are considered humans. Since they could not kill all the barbarians to acquire the wealth of land and resources, they had to do something with us. Thus began a horrific forced baptismal of Indigenous Peoples based on the belief that we became somewhat human through conversion, though it did not prevent the ongoing massacre of thousands, if not millions. As Indigenous Peoples were baptized, they became baptized barbarians – not civilized humans on equal footing to Euro-Christians. They were forever designated for servitude and slavery.³⁸⁶ Though baptized we were nonetheless always considered nonhuman pagans and savages. Therefore, we could not own property nor claim Nationhood as a Peoples. As a direct result of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery, millions of Indigenous Peoples perished through intentional and purposeful genocide to clear the lands and memory of their existence in some cases forever silencing their languages. It is an overwhelming erasure of a peoples through colonial laws, policies and outright theft. These systems are the typologies of genocide that currently still exist.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3.

So, what does this have to do with today's Canada? Everything. Our relatives to the south of Turtle Island had Christopher Columbus. In Canada, the arrival of John Cabot³⁸⁸ flying the English flag³⁸⁹ and possibly carrying a similar sword symbolizes the baptizing of lands for King Henry VII of England, thereby taking possession of them. In fact, King Henry VII granted a 1497 Charter of Conquest to John Cabot to "occupy and possess all such towns, cities, castles, and lands" longing to heathen and infidel persons.³⁹⁰ The wording of the Charter is taken from the Doctrine of Discovery used globally to assert domination. Settler Christians and all non-Indigenous peoples benefit from the riches and wealth of these lands at the cost of Indigenous Peoples perpetual poverty and racism. The domination of women occurred through the erasure of matrilineal knowledge with the intentional and purposeful assimilation and entrenchment of church and state ideology.

The very idea that one group of people could assert domination over another – through slavery, death and servitude – by virtue of being religiously superior, and by virtue of being white is racist and dehumanizing. Yet that's what we are dealing with today. Whenever Indigenous Peoples have taken their matters to Canadian courts questioning and challenging the Crown's assumed sovereignty to Indigenous lands, we are told the "underlying title" of the Crown is the basis of their ownership to all lands and resources. What is the "underlying title" of the Crown? Simply put, it is the application of the racist Doctrine of (Christian) Discovery.³⁹¹

We need to disrupt and deconstruct this myth and begin taking apart and unpacking its continued devastation not only on language but on Indigenous lands. The mentality that

³⁸⁸ "Biography of John Cabot" (25 April 2025), online: *Britannica* <[britannica.com/biography/John-Cabot](https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Cabot)>.

³⁸⁹ Evan T. Jones & Margaret M. Condon, *Cabot and Bristol's Age of Discovery: The Bristol Discovery Voyages 1480-1509*, (University of Bristol, 2020) online at: <archive.org/details/Cabotdigital/page/n1/mode/1up> at 1.

³⁹⁰ Miller et al., *supra* note 383 at 96.

³⁹¹ *Ibid* at 12.

Indigenous peoples are barbarian's incapable of making decisions (without the paternalistic help of Canada) is imbedded in every law, policy and legislation in the federal system. The ongoing existence of the Indian Act is proof; it is the most racist piece of legislation still utilized to monitor and police Indigenous Peoples and their lands. Even as nêhiyawak made Treaty with the British Crown in 1876 – a treaty based on promised peace and friendship – the Indian Act was being created in total violation to the numbered Treaties.

The 1497 Charter of Conquest and Doctrine of Christian Discovery is an act of theft with no basis in law. It is fiction constructed out of the imaginations of Church and State. This act of theft has left Indigenous Peoples with very little means to defend and protect an impending environmental catastrophe created by the destructive activities of colonial corporations acting under the presumed sovereignty of Canada who grants them permission to extract resources. The horrific impacts of the Alberta tar sands, hydro flooding, the potash mines in Saskatchewan, the dams of British Columbia and Manitoba, the clearcutting of old growth forests in BC, Saskatchewan and Ontario, are just a few actions of Canadian presumed sovereignty through the Doctrine of Christian Discovery.

The colonization and genocide of Indigenous Peoples continue. There is no freedom or self-determination for my Peoples, the nêhiyawak of Treaty 6. So long as the Doctrine of Christian Discovery is used as the basis of ownership over Indigenous lands and resources; there is no real humanity and no hopeful future for anyone. Various efforts have been made to address colonial occupation of Indigenous lands in what is now referred to as “Canada.” I say, as nations - we cannot discuss a renaissance or “resurgence” without jurisdiction over our lands, legal orders, inherent leadership structures, languages and cultures. When colonies such as Canada continue to use the Doctrine of Discovery to assume fictional title over Indigenous lands – this is

the truth that needs to be heard, and actions taken to abolish the Doctrine of Discovery and all its manifestations.

Since the brutal and systemic silencing of our languages, nêhiyaw Elders would say our language has “fallen asleep.” Nêhiyawak believe our language has a spirit, therefore it can “leave” us to enter the spirit world taking with it our knowledge about our matrilineal systems. When it enters the spirit world, it falls into a form of “death” or “sleep.” In nêhiyawêwin, we have various words to describe falling asleep or death whether it involves a human or creation. To describe our language of “falling sleep,” we say ênipêpayik.³⁹² At the core of this nêhiyaw word is *nipiht* which means “died” or “death.” ênipêpayik means to enter a sub type of “death,” a form of “death sleep” in which something enters the spirit world, not dead. Nêhiyawak believe there are four levels of “death,” we have various words to describe each “death.” The first level is the “death sleep” in which even a human can come back from. The second level is a bit more difficult and requires ceremonial songs,³⁹³ requiring knowledge keepers and ceremonial Elders. Each level is closer to the spirit world or kisêmanitôwnâhk.³⁹⁴ Each level requires a process and protocol³⁹⁵ to be retrieved or “woken up.” For purposes of respecting nêhiyaw laws and protocols, I cannot disclose any further, nêhiyawak are not allowed to write about our spiritual knowledge. I further suggest nêhiyawak and Anishinaabe need resurgence to revitalize the matrilineal knowledge and to rematriate Indigenous knowledge by rejecting and removing English translations and interpretations. To bring life back into respecting and honouring of **pim** into nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe discussions and ceremonies, I speculate that labeling of

³⁹² Roman orthography and nêhiyaw spelling provided by Neil Redcrow, “ê-nipêpayik maybe” (2 February 2022), online: <facebook.com/groups/18414147673> [perma.cc/YRE3-YEHM] (comment thread).

³⁹³ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 23.

³⁹⁴ Meaning “Spirit word”: *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

³⁹⁵ McAdam *Cultural Teachings*, *supra* note 72 at 12.

Indigenous girls and women and 2spirit peoples as “sacred” is a means to bring “pim” back that’s been erased from their lives.

In Conclusion

Nêhiyaw methodology is integral and crucial in the various methods explained throughout the chapters, from the nêhiyaw origins of our arrival from the north star called kakanâcisitacâhk to analyzing the language. This thesis is to remind, perhaps invoke ancient knowledge imbedded in the language, using kikisôkêmôwin through the thinking interpreted from mâmitonêyihta which seeks knowledge from the sound or vibration of the universe. Pawâtamowin is the reason for this thesis, a dream nimama had that took me to unknown lands to a powerful re-discovery for the love of nêhiyawêwin, nipapa’s language woven with nimama’s Anishinaabe Peoples knowledge. Dreaming as a method of retrieving, sourcing knowledge and information guided and examined through nêhiyaw ceremonies. Through nimama’s dream, she co-instructs this thesis. Pawâtamowin is recognized as a method of nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe communications and directions from kisêmanitôwnâhk which informs this thesis, and as previously stated, Indigenous scholars have referred to dreaming as “revealed knowledge.”³⁹⁶ Indeed, through rigorous examination, and critical analysis, the procedure of “dreaming” law can withstand probing and examination using various nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe methods in particular ceremonial lodges, as well as knowledgeable Elders who still retain ancient languages and information.

Nêhiyaw epistemology, relationality and methodology’s foundations are woven from wâhkôhtowin and wâhkôhmtowin as well as our laws of nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina and manitow wiyinikêwina. The matrilineal knowledge is living in the language and in unpacked from

³⁹⁶ Shawanda & Maniwabi, *supra* note 183 at 29.

analyzing simple questions such as **nitisiyihkâson** which means “the sound made to call out to my belly button”, connecting people to their mother’s lineage through the otisiy and otisiyêyâpiy by identifying the nitisiy within the word. Nitisiy means “my belly button” inferring and connecting to generational otisiya and otisiyêyâpiya. In examining otisiy and otisiyêyâpiy, two other important words emerged connected to them and those are itâtisiwin and pimâtisiwin. Both words speak to coding/marking much like the understanding of DNA and epigenetics except pimâtisiwin has “pim” in front of it. Pim is the most important and critical analysis in this thesis, it is the name for the force or energy that moves the DNA – that moves creation. Pimâtisiwin means the energy/action that moves DNA/epigenetics in the infinite web movement of interconnectedness – an unending progression of generations. Pim is the force that moves the blood, the energy of breath, of birth, of growth – an unseen mystery. Without pim, there would be no trees, water, air – life itself. It may even be the sound of the universe found in mâmitonêyihta.

As stated in previous chapters, nêhiyaw science knew the existence of the universe which can be found in words such as kîsik meaning sky and kihcikîsikohk which means universe, despite problematic translation the knowledge is shared by Elders who still carry it. Even the universe has “spirit keepers” called okîsikowak, the root of these words is kîsik and can also be found in the nêhiyaw word miskîsik which means “eye.” How very remarkable and intense nêhiyaw science is to connect the universe to an eye or eyes. The understanding of miskîsik is not limited to the human eyes, it is applicable to all of creation. Nêhiyaw language is complex, science and verb based woven into kinship and relationships with animate and inanimate beings in an unending web of knowledge connected to the matrilineal.

It is important to revitalize the kinship terms and terminologies that instruct and guide nêhiyawak as they navigate their lives. These kinship terms carry bundles of knowledge and laws on how to respect each person within the wâhkôhtowin or wâhkôhmtowin structure. Nêhiyaw methodology is relational through interconnectedness, interweaving and relational accountability of wâhkôhmtowin (blood kinship) and wâhkôhtowin (kinship)³⁹⁷ laws with our other relatives the animals, trees, plants and so forth as well as the human relationships. It is so critical to share generational knowledge, because it is descriptive and gentle such as this following interpretation shared in a previous chapter; “nitâniskotâpân incorporates the word tâpân, tâpân means to “pull along” like the action of pulling a sled. Nêhiyaw kinship responsibilities and obligations guide and instruct nêhiyawak to pull our generations towards a nêhiyaw pimâtisiwin that is healthy, vibrant and following nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina so that our DNA and epigenetics are healthy. Ensuring access to clean water, food, and land contributes to the ability for future generations to live sustainably on these lands – an authentic meaning to “land back.” I suggest, the important and crucial question left to ponder is, which direction will we “pull” the generations? Towards a European worldview? Towards nêhiyaw languages? Towards our nêhiyaw lands? These are important questions in rebuilding our nations.

With each passing generation, there are less nêhiyawêwin speakers, our language continues to “fall asleep.” Nêhiyawêwin is an amazing, non-gendered, animate language, even words like cîmân,³⁹⁸ which means canoe like the Anishinaabe word *jiiman* is a verb which similarly means “to kiss” because the dip of a paddle sound so similar to the touch of lips.³⁹⁹ We

³⁹⁷ McAdam *Nationhood Interrupted*, *supra* note 3 at 22.

³⁹⁸ *Itwêwina Dictionary*, *supra* note 1.

³⁹⁹ Lindsay Keegitah Borrows, *Otter’s Journey through Indigenous Language and Law* (Vancouver Toronto: UBC Press, 2018) at 83.

need to rebuild and call upon our ceremonial lodges to bring back the spirit of our languages so that our songs can be heard once again across these lands.

To call the current movements for self-determination a “resurgence” minimizes and erases the truth about the apocalypse. As a result of this apocalypse, our Indigenous legal orders have been damaged and erased, our teachers, judges, lawyers, lawkeepers, faithkeepers, ceremonial peoples and our historians assassinated through bounty hunters, disease, Indian Residential Schools and many other methods that I invite readers to research and inform themselves. This thesis is merely a seed.

As stated through out this thesis, language is critically important which is why we must analyze and critique the use of “resurgence” to describe Indigenous Peoples seeking to build shattered nations. Decolonization requires intensive deprogramming from colonial impacts and narratives of misogyny, patriarchy and language of dehumanization and domination with its roots in white supremacy from the Doctrine of Discovery. Authentic freedom, liberation and self-determination demand we cannot bring the problematic systems of the colonizer as we build our nations; rebuilding our lands back, our inherent structures of leadership, and our languages requires action and allies to support and push back on colonial systems. Indigenous Peoples need to breathe life back into our Nations, we need support in doing so and we need it now. To implement the decision on the ground will require implementing our own Indigenous governance, based on our Indigenous laws, not on processes funded and directed by the government.⁴⁰⁰ To do less will set us spiritually, politically, economically and socially in a trajectory toward destruction.⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰⁰ Arthur Manuel, Ronald M Derrickson & Naomi Klein, *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-up Call*, 2nd ed (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2021) at 224.

⁴⁰¹ Roesch-Wagner, *supra* note note 359.

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Glossary of Terms

Words	Definition *Indicates Anishinaabemowin	Page #	Footnote
Acâhkos	Star	22	121
Âcimona	Stories (plural)	9, 29	56, 161
Âcimowin	Story (singular)	54	295
Ahcâhk	Human soul or spirit	22	122
Âmow-piyêsis	Hummingbird	12	76
Anishinaabe*	Ojibway Peoples	3	20
Anishinaabemowin*	Ojibway language	3	24
Asinîyak	Rocks used to create steam and warmth inside the sweatlodge	39	218
Askîy	Land/earth, or nêhiyaw land	41	235
Aspiskwêsimon	Placenta/afterbirth	8	49
Âtayôhkan	“Spirit” of trees, grass etc.	48	264
Âtayôhkanak	Spirit helpers	27, 33, 48	150, 189, 265
Atayôhkawêwna or Atayôhkeywêwna	Sacred stories/histories	9, 29, 52	57, 162, 283
Awâsismitastotin or awâsastotin	Child’s hat; Describes the condition of being “born with the caul” where “a baby or a child is born with a portion of the amniotic sac or membrane remaining on the head. A caul (in Latin, literally translates to ‘head helmet’) is a thin, filmy membrane, the amnion, that can cover a newborn’s head and face immediately after birth.”	8	46
Ayisiyinîpan	A relative who has passed on, when a person dreams of them	48	270
Câpân	Great-grandparent	61, 66	317, 332
Cîmân	Canoe	91	398
Cistêmâw	Tobacco	33	187
Ekikisôkêmôyan	“I become the voice to remind,” convey and communicate ^When an “e” is in front of a nêhiyaw words, it means “I”	9, 30	58, 163
Ê-nipêpayik or ênipêpayik	Falling asleep; Describes literally entering a subtype of “death,” a form of “death sleep” in which something enters the spirit world not dead	88	392

Words	Definition *Indicates Anishinaabemowin	Page #	Footnote
Iskotêw	Fire; Also “woman’s heart” in Nakawē	40	227
Iskwewak	Women	21, 76	115, 357
Itasinahikâsêw or itaskinahikâshot	How an animate being/thing is marked, written, coded or even tattooed	16	99
Itatisiwin	Human coding/markings; Translates literally to conduct, behaviour, demeanor (singular)	15	93
Itatisiwina	Many human codings/markings (plural)		
Jiiman*	“To kiss,” because the dip of a paddle sound so similar to the touch of lips	91	399
Kakanâcisitacâhk	Purest or cleanest star; Pure star or North star	3, 15, 76	26, 90, 358
Kanaw’simowin	Items that keep a person or "protects them," such as a pipe, sweetgrass, rock, rattle amulet	2	15
Kicâpân	For “your great grandparent,” no gender	8, 8	44, 48
Kihcikîsikohk	Universe	22	124
Kikisôkêmôwin	“To remind by word of mouth to all your gifts”; A nêhiyaw process using prayer, words, actions and ceremony to remind people of various ancient knowledges to stir their memories as well as their thoughts and dreaming of existing	0, 5, 6, 27, 29	1, 38, 40, 149, 160
Kikisôkêmôyan	“To remind peoples”	29	159
Kîminîcâkanak	Children out of wedlock	68	339
Kimosôm	Your grandfather	66, 66	328, 330
Kimosôm ekiwecihewet	“Your grandfather went along”	66	329
Kinnikanik or kinnikinnick	Shrub mixture (red willow bark and green leaves) used as traditional tobacco for the pipe	39, 39	215, 216
Kisêmanitôw	Creator or Great Spirit, no gender and is everywhere	iii, 48, 51, 58	5, 266, 275, 310
Kisêmanitôwnâhk	Similar locations like “heaven” or spirit world	iii, 8, 11, 34, 63, 88	6, 47, 70, 195, 326, 394
Kîsik	Sky	22	123
Kîsikohk	Universe; Sky; Alternatively, “spirit realm” or heavens	50	273

Words	Definition *Indicates Anishinaabemowin	Page #	Footnote
Kistêiyhtamowin	Physical respecting of someone; To show respect by your actions whether it be physical actions, such as body language, or even inaction by not following through with “promises”	iii, 2, 2, 56	4, 16, 18, 304
Kitisiy	“Your” belly button	13	82
Kiwâkômakânowak	“Our” relatives	48	269
Kîwêtinohk	The north	15	91
Mamawo	“To gather together”	4	30
Mâmitonêyihta	“To think”	4	28
Manâcim	“To show verbal respect to someone”; Take care, verbally	2, 56	18, 303
Manitow iskotêw	Creator’s flame	23	128
Manitow wiyinikêwina	Creator’s laws	5, 7, 10, 30, 34, 61	36, 42, 59, 168, 196, 321
Masân	Stinging nettles (Urtica Dioica)	14	85
Maskihkiywahastotin	Medicine hat	66	334
Matotisân	Sweatlodge or crying lodge	33, 37	186, 206
Mihko	Blood	1, 73	39, 351
Mihkwâpemak	Red willows	39	219
Mihtah	Firewood	40	223
Mikiwahp	Tipi	59	314
Misiwê	“All over”	17	100
Miskîsik	Eye	22	126
Mistikwaskihk	Drum; Literal translation means “wooden pail”	40	225
Mitastotin	Hat	8	45
Mîtos	Tree	40	224
Miyo	Good, or beautiful	24	
Miyopimâtisiwin	When overall health, spirit, mind and emotions of the individual is in balance through the otisiyêyâpiy; Literal translation means "good life"	24	131
Mosom	Grandfather	60	315
Nahkawiniw	Saulteaux Indian or Anishinaabe People	56, 62	302, 322
Nakawê	Anishnaabe person	40	228

Words	Definition *Indicates Anishinaabemowin	Page #	Footnote
Nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina	Human laws	4, 10, 30, 31, 56	35, 60, 169, 172, 305
Nêhiyawak	Cree Peoples (plural)	3	25
Nêhiyawêwin	Cree language	3, 9, 11, 13, 32	23, 54, 67, 81, 175
Nicâpân	Great-grandparent	1, 10	12, 65
Nikamona	Songs	40	230
Nimama	"My" Mother/mom ^Adding “ni” to the beginning of the word means “my”	1, 3, 10, 26, 27	13, 22, 64, 143, 151
Nipapa	"My" Father/dad	2, 35	21, 197
Nipawâtamowin	“To enter the spirit world to seek spirit helpers”; literal translation means "my dreaming"	49	272
Nipâwin	“Sleep” state (singular)	32	182
Nipâwina	Sleeping (plural)	46	259
Nipêyipayit	“To fall asleep” or “to fall asleep quickly”	46	
Nipiht	“This person has died” or death	46	257
Nipiy	Water	39	222
Nisikos	Mother-in-law	59	312
Nitâniskotâpân or Nitâpân	When the câpân talks about their greatgrandchild	61, 61	318, 320
Nitisiy	“My” belly button, inferring and connecting to generational otisiya and otisiyêyâpiya	13	82
Nitisiyihkâson	“The sound made to call out to my belly button”, connecting people to their mother’s lineage through the otisiy and otisiyêyâpiy by identifying the nitisiy within the word	12	77
Nitona	“To seek or look for”	4	31
Niwîcêwâkan	Friend; literal translation means “the one I walk with” or “the one I be with”	49	
Niwîcêwâkan ohcicipayiw âsamîna tahpaskêwicitowak	"My friend, it that time we must part ways..."	49	
Nosimak or Ninosimak	Grandchildren, no gender (plural) or “my” grandchildren, no gender (plural)	v	7
Nôsisim	Grandchild, no gender (singular)	69	340

Words	Definition *Indicates Anishinaabemowin	Page #	Footnote
Nôtinitosîpiy or Nôtinito-sîpiy	“Battle river”	66	331
Ohcinêmwîn	Verbal law that addresses the use of language against creation	56	300
Ohcinêwîn	Breaking of a law against anything other than a human being	56	299
Ohcîw	“This person comes from a specific mother’s lineage”; Literal translation means “this one from here”	21	116
Okihcitâwiskwêwak	Warriors/lawkeepers who are women	66	333
Okîsikowak	Spirit keepers	22	125
Okohkoma	Grandmother	11	71
Opewâmwîn	“To seek spirits or spirit world” or “this person’s spirit helpers”; Describes an individual with “spirit guardians”	32	176
Oskâpêwisak	Elder’s helper, helper at ceremonies	35, 41	198, 233
Oskâpêws	“It is so marked or written”	43	245
Oski	New	37	208
Ospwâkan	Pipe	37	207
Ospwatâhtam	“The first/new breath”; Can also mean “breathes in” water	37	209
Otisiy	Belly button (singular)	11	68
Otisiya	Belly buttons (plural); Can also be spelt otisiyak	11	68
Otisiyêyâpiy	Umbilical cord (singular)	8, 11	50, 69
Otisiyêyâpiya	Umbilical cords (plural)	12	79
Paskwâw mostos	Buffalo	13	84
Paskwâwihkwaskwa	Sage	9, 42	51, 238
Pâstâhowin	Breaking of a law(s) against another human being; A transgression when breaking a law physically against another human	2, 53	18, 288
Pâstâmwîn	Refers to what someone said which led to something undesirable happening, misfortune to the speaker, a subcategory to pâstâhowin	45, 54, 54	253, 289, 290
Pawâkanak	Personal dream spirits that guide and instruct you as you navigate pawâtamowin, the unseen voice	48	267
Pawâtamôn	Dream (singular)	47, 48	260, 263
Pawâtamona	Dreams (plural)	32, 45	181, 252

Words	Definition *Indicates Anishinaabemowin	Page #	Footnote
Pawâtamowin	Dreaming, “to enter the spirit world to seek spirit helpers,” or “revealed knowledge,” a sub meaning of opewâmw. These spirits have also been called “angels, guardians, and keepers.”	50	272
Pêyâhtik	“Be careful!, take it easy”; “caution or be cautious”	26, 62	144, 323
Pihtikwehk	“Come in”	43	244
Pim	Source of all living beings; Action or energy that moves “something”	4, 25	32, 139
Pimâtisiwin	“Energy/action that moves the infinite web/process/interconnectedness of the markings/coding” and “the energy/action that moves DNA/genetics in the infinite movement web/process/interconnectedness”; Literal translation means “life”	15	89
Pimohpikin	“Force” or “energy” that moves the growth through	25, 78	139, 363
Pimohtë or pimâkocin	Action or energy of movement, like walking or flowing/driving	24, 24	133, 134
Sîsîkwan	Rattle	40	226
Tânite ewêstâpîyan nitâniskotâpân	“When I’m gone, where are you going to pull my generations towards?”	61	319
Tâpân	“To pull along,” like the action of pulling a sled	61, 91	
Tapwewin	Truth	45	254
Wâhkôhmakanahk	All relatives (plural)	43	243
Wâhkôhmtowin	Blood kinship	4, 21	34, 114
Wâhkôhtowin	Kinship	4, 58, 91	33, 309, 397
Wâspison	Cloth swaddling method, or moss bag	27	146
Wâspisonâhtik	Cradleboard	27	145
Waweyih	Prepare	2	14
Wêpinâson	“Print” or cloth (singular)	38	213
Wîhkask	Sweetgrass	42	237