THE SOCIAL ARCHITECTURES OF ACCESS AND INCLUSIVITY FOR ADULTS
WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN INDIGENOUS CULTURAL CONTEXTS

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Abstract

Rather than remaining confined to the educational experiences of childhood, learning disabilities (LDs) which impact one's ability to perceive, interpret, and use both verbal and/or non-verbal information, can be carried into adulthood (Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, LDAC, 2017; Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, LDAO, 2015). More precisely, rather than remaining stagnant, the way that LDs present themselves can change in response to situational demands (LDAC, 2017). The notion that LDs shift across multiple social situations brings the intersectionality of social architecture and LDs into sharp focus.

Social architecture represents the design of a community's social spaces and can be either an intentional or organic process (Kitchin, 2003; Lefebvre, 1991). If representations of 'accessible space', 'inclusive space', and 'disability space' are considered through the lens of social architecture, pertinent research questions are illuminated (Kitchin, 2003; Lefebvre, 1991). Specifically, the current project aims to explore how social architecture, inclusivity, and adults with LDs converge. Additionally, in an effort to explore how notions of privilege intersect with access and inclusiveness, LDs experiences will be investigated within the context of two Indigenous Nations: the Mi'kmaq and the Inuit. Not only will this approach diversify the existing literature, but it permits the current project to ask:
1. How are learning and LDs as conceptualized within both Mi'kmaq and Inuit communities understood and discussed though the framework of Traditional Knowledge?
2. How does this framing of learning and LDs impact the social architectures and/or social climates that exists across both Mi'kmaq and Inuit communities?
3. Finally, what impact, if any, does the unique social architecture of Mi'kmaq and Inuit communities facilitate the social inclusion and accessibility of adults with LDs?

At their core, learning disabilities (LDs) are a set of life-long conditions that are distinctly different from intellectual impairments and exist in citizens with otherwise average intellectual capacity (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO). More precisely, LDs represent "disorders that affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization or use of verbal and/or non-verbal information." (LDAO, unpaginated). However, despite the appearance of unity the term 'learning disabilities' is difficult to define with sufficient specificity (D'Intino, 2017). In the Canadian context, this results in identification criteria that differ from province to province (D'Intino, 2017). The notion that conceptions of LDs shift according to the spaces in which they exist highlights the social dimensions of these conditions and raises questions about how the architecture of social environments influence the inclusivity of adults with LD labels.

In particular, it is not enough to consign questions of disability and inclusivity to the physical environment. Instead, community social architecture must also be included alongside any discussion of LDs and adulthood inclusivity. Additionally, if the intersectionality of social architecture, inclusivity, and adults with LDs is to be examined in full, academics, planning professions, and the general public must include Indigenous constructions of LD labels in their analysis. By changing the perspective from which the intersectionality of social architecture, LDs, and inclusivity are explored, a richer analysis can be obtained and a more complete body of literature can be achieved. With these aims in mind, three specific research questions are to be addressed:

1. How are learning and LDs as conceptualized within both Mi'kmaq and Inuit communities understood and discussed though the framework of Traditional Knowledge?

2. How does this framing of learning and LDs impact the social architectures and/or social climates that exists across both Mi'kmaq and Inuit communities?

3. Finally, what impact, if any, does the unique social architecture of Mi'kmaq and Inuit communities facilitate the social inclusion and accessibility of adults with LDs?

Definitions and Language Use

In an effort to convey respect and reverence the term Traditional Knowledge will be capitalized throughout the text (Patterson, 2014). Furthermore, as Marie Battiste (2000) notes that within an international context the term 'Indigenous' is considered an acceptable and appropriate term of reference, this term will be both capitalized and used throughout. Moreover, unlike physical/built environments, the constraints of community social architectures are both subtle and less visible. Rather than utilizing clearly apparent boundaries with finite characteristics, social spaces instead shift according to the perceptions embedded in their time and place. In addition, social spaces are also actively filtered through individual impressions and perceptions, making it increasingly difficult to define. Moreover, although planning and building discourses are well constructed, the concept of social architecture is less developed. In particular, social architecture lacks both its own nomenclature and access to its own body of scholarly literature.

As an initial starting point, Rob Kitchin (2003) provides the scholarly framework onto which substantive notions of social architecture can be attached. In his article *'Architects Disable: A Challenge to Transform'* (2003) Kitchin asserts that "architectural apartheid" (pg. 8) (a term originally credited to Imrie) not only exists, but creates distinct social divisions between citizens with and without disability labels/identities. As is proposed by Kitchin (2003), physical inaccessibility not only separates individuals with disabilities from their non-disabled counterparts, but also imparts specific social norms about the importance and ultimate worth of disabled citizens to the community at large (Kitchin, 2003). In linking physical architecture with divisive community perceptions of disability, Kitchin (2003) provides academic support for the notion that architecture extends beyond the built environment.

In asserting that social climate and community social perceptions are not only linked, but are also both mutual and didactic in nature, Henri Lefebvre (1991) brings existing lines of discourse on architecture and inaccessibility squarely into the social sphere. Specifically, when layered with the work of Kitchin (2003), Lefebvre's (1991) research gives shape to the invisible relationships that both inform and differentiate the contours of what can be termed 'social architecture'. Moreover, whereas the terms 'social space' 'social climate' and 'social geographies' imply a general link between social perceptions and community design, 'social architecture' is both more concrete and signifies a more complex set of interconnections. As such, if the work of both Kitchin (2003) and Lefebvre (1991) is used as a springboard, social architecture is defined here as: an implicit system of social norms and perceptions about the value, worth, and

importance of citizens with disability labels/identities that instinctively extends from the built environment and serves as the core of community social environments.

Project Design and Fundamental Aims

In exploring how the concepts of learning, disability, and ability are constructed within Mi'kmaq and Inuit Traditional Knowledge frameworks, connections can be made between Indigeneity and LDs. The stepwise nature of this MRP is intentional and necessitates that the first two research questions be answered in sequence. These first two research questions provide the support and structure needed to answer the third –and most primary- research question. In interrogating the intricacies of LDs, social architecture, and notions of inclusive design, an attempt is made to understand how each of these lines of research intersect and overlap with one another. This structure not only facilitates a critical investigation into the existing literature, but also acts as the tool needed to explore some of the gaps that exist within these bodies of work.

The aim of any research project is not to replicate existing research, but instead to grow a particular body of work. Although the questions asked in this project cannot generate original research in-and-of themselves, by bringing together multiple fields of study these questions can facilitate a shift in how the current literature is used. The three questions embedded in the current project aim to examine the literature using multiple, perhaps non-traditional perspectives. More precisely, differing bodies of literature are used to explore issues of (dis)ability, learning, indigeneity, and social architecture from distinct vantage points, using contrasting discourses. However, by examining how multiple research disciplines both link to and intersect with one another, new questions

are highlighted, different avenues of research are uncovered, and a new angle or 'lens' for exploring this research is generated. Finally, while past research has explored the dynamics of power and disability, social climate, adulthood, and culture individually, few resources have investigated the interconnections between each of these issues. The current project hopes that by developing the tools needed to explore the existing literature from a different perspective, the curiosity of others can be piqued.

Before moving any further, it is important to assert that this project is not seeking to argue whether or not LDs exist, nor whether they are useful labels worthy of existence. Moreover, it should be made clear that the current project explicitly seeks not to co-opt and extract Indigenous culture for its own indiscriminate and inappropriate use. Instead, it aims to earnestly learn about another cultural perspective in a purposeful and genuinely respectful way (Patterson, 2014). As such, this MRP is not seeking to compare Indigenous and Eurocentric social architecture instead, it aims to explore how issues of social architecture and inclusivity are impacted when the socio-cultural perspective shifts. What happens to social inclusion when adults with LDs are viewed from outside a Eurocentric perspective? How does social architecture impact inclusivity and how can society move beyond physical access and toward inclusion?

Consequently, the current project seeks to unseat how accessible and inclusive design are conceptualized. While physical accessibility and inclusion have now become more common place in public settings, social accessibility and inclusivity are less often interrogated (Jasinki, 2014; Patterson, 2014). Inclusion and accessibility are multi-dimensional concepts and thus represent more than the singular ability to enter into a

particular physical space or built environment (N. Halifax, personal communication, 2016; Jasinki, 2014). By questioning how Indigenous Traditional Knowledge impacts community social structures, existing discussions about disability, accessibility, inclusion, and architecture can be expanded. Ultimately, this project investigates not only the fluidity of disability status, but also fills a hole in the literature.

<p align="center">**Populations of Interest**</p>

Running alongside questions of definitions and language use is the linked issue of specificity. Although some commonalities in terms of cultural beliefs and traditions exist across various Indigenous Nations, each cultural context is distinct. Therefore, the current MRP aims to explore how the specific social architecture of Mi'kmaq and Inuit communities intersects with social inclusivity for adults with LDs. As an initial point of reference, it is therefore vital to note that the Mi'kmaq Nation is a grouping of several communities numbering about 40,000 members spread across Atlantic Canada, the Gaspe Peninsula, and the Eastern United States including parts of Maine (Johnson, Vikic, & Parker, 2013; Patterson, 2014; Kirmayer et al., 2011). According to Kirmayer et al. (2011) the Mi'kmaq are a well-integrated and intact nation who "[d]espite the devastating impact of colonization, residential schools, and forced assimilation, … in many communities have continued to speak their language and to practice traditional culture in daily life" (p. 86). Although cultural traditions are never stagnant, but instead change over time, the notion that the Mi'kmaq nation has maintained and integrated their cultural traditions into the structure of their communities is an element that is important for the design of this project (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Vol. 4.

1996). More precisely, by maintaining a level of cultural distinctiveness that remains salient, the Mi'kmaq nation provides a unique opportunity for interrogating how Indigeneity, social architecture and inclusivity for adults with LDs intersect.

Additionally, the Inuit are a distinct Indigenous group made up of about 45,000 persons living in multiple remote northern communities (e.g. geographically above the 60th parallel) (Ross, Richmond, & Egeland, 2007). As noted by Kirmayer et al., (2011) Inuit social architecture often features close ties between community members. This community attribute paired with Nunavut's social-political design and structure offers this project an opportunity to explore the intersectionality of social architecture, Inuit culture, and LDs in greater depth. In particular, it is not only Nunavut's geography that is important, but its explicit incorporation of Inuit Traditional Knowledges into governmental policies that provides the current project with a valuable research opportunity. By intertwining Inuit Knowledges into the basis of its socio-political structures, Nunavut provides the tools needed to explore how indigeneity intersects with the larger social structures that underpin community architecture (R. Gorman, e-mail communication, May 17, 2016).

Moreover, as a population, there exists a long history of research involving and exploring Inuit perspectives and experiences. While a portion of this research is limited, biased, and ultimately disrespectful, valuable and reliable sources do exist. Of particular importance to the current project is the inclusion of first-person narratives, quotations, and experiences. When viewed critically this first-hand information is irreplaceable and provides fertile research material.

What is Traditional Knowledge? Traditional Knowledges as a Framework

Now that required definitions, specific research questions, and fundamental aims have been outlined, the task of clearly and carefully building a viable research framework can begin. As a first step, the meaning behind the term Traditional Knowledge will be investigated. This term helps to explain how Mi'kmaq and Inuit Traditional Knowledge frameworks can be used as a tool for tracing the linkages that have historically existed between the dynamics of power, disability, and spacial design concepts.

In an effort to build a specific research framework around Traditional Knowledge, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) provides a useful starting point when it notes that the term Traditional [K]nowledge "consists of a world view, ongoing principles of life, laws of behavior, and a knowledge of the sciences … framed and presented in a unique way through the power of the spoken word" (p.117 vol. 4). Although this is a government document that incorporates the first -person experiences of Indigenous individuals, the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government has been strained and tenuous at best (N. Halifax, personal communication, January, 2016). Consequently, Patterson (2014) was used to confirm how Traditional Knowledge is conceptualized. According to Patterson (2014), Traditional Knowledge incorporates "way[s] of life, language, and customs" (p.33). This author also notes that Traditional Knowledge encompasses both a particular way of conceiving and of perceiving the world (Patterson, 2014).

In seeking out additional first-person knowledge, Battiste (2000) a Mi'kmaq scholar rises to the forefront and serves as a valuable resource for understanding the

structure and functionality of Traditional Knowledge. As is asserted by Battiste and her co-author James Youngblood Henderson (2000), Traditional Knowledge functions as an alternative knowledge system that should be neither co-opted by nor forcibly confined within a traditional Eurocentric perspective (Battiste, 2002; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000). Additionally, Traditional Knowledge is highly sensitive and fluctuates in response to societal changes as they occur across both time and space (Battiste, 2002; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000). Although Battiste (2002; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000) vehemently asserts that Traditional Knowledge cannot be formally classified, she does provide a useful point of reference when she notes that "Indigenous knowledge … is the expression of the vibrant relationships between the people, their ecosystem, and the other living beings and spirits that share their lands" (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p. 42). In particular, Battiste (2002; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000) asserts that Traditional Knowledge provides Indigenous communities with a blueprint for both building and sustaining various social networks. Therefore, Traditional Knowledge provides insight not only into the social architecture of individual communities, but also into the wider social enclaves in which they exist.

It is important to note that the way that Traditional Knowledge is practiced is intimately connected to specific geographical locations (Battiste, 2002; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000). As such, it is unsurprising that the Inuit interpret Traditional Knowledge differently in comparison to the Mi'kmaq. Despite marked differences, the Inuit also have a lively and vital knowledge system that simultaneously looks toward the future, while learning from the past, and adapting to, current community

changes (Bell, 2002). Consequently, the Inuit term for their unique Traditional

Knowledge framework is Inuit Qaujimajatuqanginnut (IQ). Additionally, like other forms

of Traditional Knowledge, IQ is resistant to definition or classification. Bell (2002) an

educator with both extensive experience in the Canadian North and knowledge of IQ,

defines it simply as *"[t]he Inuit way of doing things: the past, the present, and the future*

knowledge of Inuit Society" (original italics) (p. 2). Like other forms of regional

Traditional Knowledge IQ is transmitted orally across both time and space, and is

focused on skill acquisition and the development of useful skill-sets (Bell, 2002). As is

the case with the Indigenous Traditional Knowledge described by Battiste (2002; Battiste

& Youngblood Henderson, 2000) IQ essentially forms the backbone of Inuit society,

including forming the basis for their social relations and community social architecture

(Bell, 2002).

  Despite these similarities, IQ has a unique structure that both differs from other

forms of Traditional Knowledge and is in part tied to the Northern environment in which

they live (Bell, 2002). Specifically, IQ revolves around several key relationships with the

notion of the Inummarik embedded in each. The notion of the Inummarik therefore serves

as a particularly salient anchor and can be translated as either "a human being or an able

person who can act with wisdom") or "the True Human" (Nunavut Department of

Education, 2007, p. 19; Qitsualik, 2013, p. 32). Through an exploration into how IQ

conceptualizes "an able human being", a framework for interrogating the intersectionality

of inclusivity and adults with LDs can be crafted (Nunavut Education, 2007, p. 19).

As such, Inuit conceptions of the Inummarik, along with pursuant educational principles, provide a necessary bridge between Inuit social architecture and theories of inclusive design. At this point it is vital to note that particularly in the case of Nunavut, IQ is deeply embedded in the running and administration of the government via formal policies and procedures. Even when Traditional Knowledge is not officially integrated into the government it is an undercurrent that runs through the social relationships that govern and ultimately shape the social architecture of Indigenous communities (Bell, 2002; Nunavut Education, 2007; Qitsualik, 2013). Finally, Traditional Knowledge serves as a tool for grafting the current project into the existing literature. Ultimately, this initial interrogation of how LDs, as viewed through the frame of Mi'kmaq and Inuit Traditional Knowledges, provides an access point for exploring how inclusivity, access, and adults with LD labels intersect.

Traditional Knowledge and Conceptions of Learning Disabilities

As a starting point, it is important to note that disabilities of one type or another occur almost universally across various cultural contexts. Thus, it is not the existence of citizens with disabilities that necessarily alters community social architecture. Rather, it is how these individuals are conceptualized by and/or incorporated into their community social networks that is particularly salient. In looking at the existing literature, Lefebvre's (1991) *The Production of Space* clearly notes that social spaces and power relationships are tightly interconnected (Lefebvre, 1991). Ultimately, this text posits that rather than being created through the use of physical entities, social spaces are instead products that embody the interplay between numerous social and political factors (Lefebvre, 1991).

Moreover, Lefebvre (1991) also suggests that spaces are created via the multi-directional

interconnections that exist between societal power dynamics and the environment.

Therefore, citizens, particularly – although not exclusively - persons in positions of

power, both influence and are impacted by the spaces they create (Lefebvre, 1991).

 Likewise, Brendan Gleeson's (1999) *Social Geography of Disability* explores the

relationship between space, access, and power dynamics using the lens of individuals

with physical/mobility impairments (Gleeson, 1999). As such, Gleeson (1999) echoes

Lefebvre's (1991) assertions about the strong linkages that exist between power

dynamics and the development of community social spaces. Most significantly, he (1999)

asserts that planners and design professionals - as persons in positions of power – have

the ability to control the design of the environment by repeatedly flouting the

mechanisms that legally mandate and enforce accessibility standards. This creates a built

environment that denies individuals with mobility impairments physical access, thereby

undermining their ability to engage with the community (Gleeson, 1999). As such

Gleeson furthers existing conversations about power relationships, the environment, and

inclusivity by framing the ongoing disregard of legal accessibility standards as a subtle

consequence of embedded cultural assumptions about disability (Gleeson, 1999). This

facilitates a cultural environment that accepts and implicitly encourages a climate of not

only architectural inaccessibility, but also social exclusion (Gleeson, 1999).

 Within these debates exists several aspects of the power, disability, and culture

trifecta that are left underexplored. In particular, within the current literature, the

experience of disability is often contextualized as a problem of the built environment

rather than a problem seated in the interplay between cultural institutions, the individual, and the social environments of communities (Gleeson, 1999; Lefebvre, 1991). Consequently, this project aims to ask further questions of this limited literature. Specifically, why has the importance of social climate been underexplored by existing research when it has ties to both the built environment and overall social inclusivity? Moreover, once LDs are explored from the viewpoint of both social architecture and Indigeneity, additional questions arise including: what societal purposes do LDs serve? How does disability and Indigeneity intersect with notions of ability, learning, and power? Furthermore, if Mi'kmaq and Inuit communities via Traditional Knowledge frameworks differ in their views toward these and other key concepts, what impact does this have on conceptualizations of LDs, and by extension, the social architecture of these Nations?

Learning Disabilities and Community: What Purpose Do They Serve?

LDs are neither innate to a particular individual nor to the communities in which they exist. Instead, they represent a collective social creation which identifies, locates, and codes citizens based on structures embedded in social climate/architecture (Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995). This notion is supported by the work of Christine Sleeter (1987) when she opinions that LD labels (and the schools where they exist) "more efficiently fit every child for a 'place' in society, with some 'places' more desirable and profitable than others." (pp. 219). As a label that is therefore highly dependent on social context to provide it with both meaning and utility it is worthwhile to note that Curt Dudley-Marling

and Don Dippo (1995) also suggest that LD labels are designed to build and reinforce three foundational elements of the Western social climate.

If LD labels depend on Western conceptions of authority, respect, and hard work, how might the diagnostic labels change when viewed from the standpoint of a Traditional Knowledge framework? Learned early, these standards form the core of the adult world and when linked to compulsory school attendance help to denote who has access to multiple social spaces (Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995). This access ultimately provides individuals with the power to make choices and explore multiple alternative avenues (Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995). As such, power and control are innately linked to both academic achievement and community inclusivity. Moreover, implicit in this social design is the expectation that regardless of personal differences, students can and should progress through the education system, and arguably the adult world, both in the same way and at the same pace (Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995). This stepwise system is reliant on a social architecture that is tied to notions of obedience, conformity, and normality.

As LDs are tied to the concept of the 'norm', they become identifiers which serve to problematize students who learn in atypical/non-normative ways thereby limiting their access to social spaces (Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995). After identification, the education system then aims to return labeled students to a mainstream learning environment, thereby forcing them to both obey and conform (Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995). As such, LDs are tied less to learning and ability and instead are more strongly linked to how well individuals can conform to societal norms. If the goal of LDs is in part

to mute and/or nullify difference via returning labelled individuals to 'the norm', what happens if Eurocentric narratives surrounding learning, ability, and normality differ in Mi'kmaq and Inuit communities?

Finally, within a Eurocentric context, competition - with its focus on perpetual advancement and improvement - is viewed as essential to both community longevity and health (Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995). By fostering both obedience and conformity via a return to the norm, LDs implicitly support this competition focused narrative by providing legitimacy to identified students. Without an LD label such students are undoubtedly viewed as flawed, unable to compete, and ultimately marginalized within their social networks (Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995). As such, the power embedded in LD labels provides identified individuals with the ability to re-gain their competitive edge, therefore avoiding the social exclusion usually associated with repeated academic failure. If LDs are designed to meet the needs of a competition-focused society what happens if this taken-for-granted narrative changes across both Mi'kmaq and Inuit communities? What level of importance does a Traditional Knowledge framework place on competition and how does this impact community cohesion and inclusivity? Additionally, within the context of Traditional Knowledge how are non-competitive (and therefore non-conforming) individuals both conceptualized and treated?

Notions of Learning, (Dis)Ability, and Normalcy: How do Learning Disabilities Intersect with Mi'kmaq and Inuit Traditional Knowledge Frameworks?

In pinpointing and problematizing only a single aspect of an individual, LD labels run counter to both the structure of Indigenous communities and the aims of Indigenous

learning. This position is supported by the government of Alberta in an educational

resource that discusses the intersection of LDs and Indigenous students. In particular, this

resource notes that as a concept, LDs violate the holistic norms embedded in Indigenous

Thought (Alberta Education, 2005). This construction of learning can serve as both the

nucleus of this project and an entry-point into the intersections that exist between

learning and LD, Indigeneity, and social architecture.

     Mi'kmaq and Inuit Traditional Knowledges form the bedrock of these Nations.

As such it is worthwhile to interrogate how learning is conceptualized within these

Knowledge frameworks. The notion that learning is not only a holistic experience, but

one that is both driven by each individual learner and also simultaneously connected to

the community is pivotal (Alberta Education, 2005). According to Battiste (2002),

learning is designed to be two-fold in nature: it is to be personally significant and

worthwhile while also fostering the growth of vital relationships between the student and

his or her environment, inclusive of the teacher. Within such a context, learning is less

about moving uniformly toward a pre-determined goal and instead represents an attempt

to find one's own skill sets, satisfy curiosities, and develop a unique sense of self

(Battiste, 2002; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000).

     Moreover, in addition to viewing learning as experiential, the community is also

embedded in Mi'kmaq learning paradigms. According to Battise and Youngblood

Henderson (2000) "the group is valued over the individual and extended family is valued

over immediate or biological family" (p.55). Furthermore, within a Mi'kmaq framework

learning is not only based in real life opportunities and experiences, but on developing

skill-sets that are utilized in and needed by the community itself (Battiste, 2002; Battiste

& Youngblood Henderson, 2000). As such, the goal of learning is neither to advance

through an artificially imposed learning curriculum nor to obey unquestioned conformity.

Instead, the goal becomes to grow into self-aware adults who are integrated into the

larger community environment (Battiste, 2002; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson,

2000). In this context, it may be less important to consider individual functionality and

instead is worthwhile to consider how individuals function within his/her community

milieu.

Additionally, the Inuit also share a similar approach toward the learning

experience. In a resource entitled *Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective*

(1996) learning is outlined as a process that is both intuitive and in part driven by

community needs and elements of community design. This resource explains that

learning is informal and is perpetuated across generations through real world, first person

experiences (North West Territories (NWT), 1996). Learning stems not from the

education system, but instead from direct family and/or Elder interactions (NWT, 1996).

In a segment of the above document it is noted that "[t]he primary education of children

takes place in the home" (NWT, 1996, p. 14). Therefore, learning is about reinforcing the

cohesiveness of the family unit – which for the Inuit includes a wide array of community

members. It is the importance of family inclusivity rather than school defined normality

that is paramount.

Moreover, instead of reinforcing obedience and conformity via moving students

through a uniform but abstract curriculum, the Inuit Nation fosters student holism thereby

facilitating student growth (NWT, 1996). A principle of *Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective* (1996) is that "[w]hen children are treated with respect, acceptance, enjoyment and as contributing individuals they will be strong and confident. They will be able to think and work things out; be able to deal appropriately with others; will be independent; able to plan ahead; have an understanding of consequences of their actions; and have a solid personal identity." (p. 15). Rather than demanding respect from students in an effort to ensure not only community cohesiveness, but also adult preparedness, the Inuit treat children as complete persons in need of respect (NWT, 1996). In flipping this Eurocentric respect paradigm on its head, student – and adulthood – agency and diversity become more valued in comparison to obedience.

Disability and Normalcy: Conceptualizations of LDs in Mi'kmaq and Inuit Communities.

Embedded in Indigenous Thought is the notion that normalcy stems from an intimate interconnectedness with the natural world, which is perceived as continually changing across both time and space (Lovern, 2008). More specifically, for the Mi'kmaq, the world is viewed as chaotic and the chief goal of individuals is to cope with the challenges presented to them (Ferguson, 2010). Within this context, finding balance in the connectedness between oneself, other community members, the spiritual world, and the physical environment are key (Ferguson, 2010). Likewise, the Inuit also stress learning to cope with the harshness of the environment through community inter-dependence, unity, and balance (Bell, 2002; Nunavut Education, 2007; NWT, 1996). In placing a high value on creative thinking, adaption, and unique problem-solving skills,

the community recognizes the innate instability of the world itself. So much so, that the

Inuit value the ability to survive with only the materials at hand, and this is an essential

element of Inuit Identity (Bell, 2002; Nunavut Education, 2007; NWT, 1996).

If a clear belief in instability is embedded in Mi'kmaq communities and adaption

to change is highly valued by the Inuit Nation, then the shifting nature of normalcy in

Indigenous communities is supported by Lavonna Lovern's (2008) work. Lovern (2008)

puts forth the notion that within Indigenous Knowledge systems disability is not

interpreted in a particularly static or rigid fashion. Using this as a springboard, if

normality represents a fluid continuum in an on-going state of flux, then defining

disability via deviation from a standardized norm becomes much more difficult. If

Eurocentric conceptions of the norm are shifted within both Mi'kmaq and Inuit

Traditional Knowledge frameworks, the community need for an LD label - as a means of

ensuring success for non-traditional learners becomes both null and void. Lefebvre

(1991) hints at this process when he asserts that visibility creates both a sense of societal

place and social space. Therefore, without the visibility created by the Eurocentric

touchstone of normality, the line between disability and viable difference becomes more

difficult to recognize. As a result, the social space that is occupied by LDs within

Mi'kmaq and Inuit communities becomes less well-defined.

Moreover, in exploring the murky intersection that exists between Indigeneity and

disability, it is interesting to note that Indigenous persons in many communities more

readily recognize visible physical disabilities (Durst, South, & Bluechardt, 2006; Durst &

Coburn, 2015). Furthermore, additional research indicates that Indigenous persons are

less likely to label themselves as disabled, despite meeting clinicians' diagnostic criteria

(Durst & Coburn, 2015). While initially appearing insignificant, this research highlights

the interplay that exists between language, Indigeneity, and disability. As such, if this

intersectionality is carried over into the specifics of Mi'kmaq communities the *Mi'kmaw*

Kina'matnewey Handbook for Parents (2004) stands as a vital resource.

As a starting point, it is useful to note that this resource is produced by the

Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) and is written both by and for the Mi'kmaq Nation. As

an entity the MK is composed of multiple Mi'kmaq Chiefs, education professionals, and

lay-persons and is concerned with both the educational and language rights of Mi'kmaq

citizens living in the province of Nova Scotia (Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, n.d.). As such,

the MK is driven to support the unique needs and perspectives of Mi'kmaq citizens

(Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, n.d.). To this end, the *Handbook for Parents* provides

Mi'kmaq parents information on the workings of the education system including how

students with "exceptionalities" are treated (Mi'kmaw, 2004). Within the education

system the term exceptionalities is used to describe any student in need of additional

resources, curriculum changes and/or accommodations, or support, inclusive of both

those with disabilities and those considered gifted (Mi'kmaw, 2004). Embedded in this

text are elements of the Mi'kmaq worldview including first-person quotations from

community Elders.

Although this resource is designed to discuss students with additional educational

needs, including those with disabilities, the term "learning disabilities" is not used in the

text (Mi'kmaw, 2004). The field of LDs has its own unique discourse complete with

specific terminology. While most of this discipline-specific language appears throughout the resource (i.e. "disabilities", "special needs", "identification and placement", "least restrictive environment" "special education") the term LDs remains noticeably absent (Mi'kmaw, 2004). In considering this absence, James Cherney's (2011) assertion that the foundation of language – its words – have very little innate meaning is especially useful. More precisely, if Cherney's (2011) theories of disability rhetoric are used as a bridge, the absence of the term 'learning disabilities', taken together with other linguistic aspects of this resource, and existing research on Mi'kmaq Traditional Knowledge, can be interrogated.

LD labels use the language of classification to carve out a space for those who, through repeated academic failure, would otherwise be deemed undeserving and shifted to the societal margins (Dudley-Marling, 2004; Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995). However, built into the basic structure of the Mi'kmaq language is the notion that it is less important to classify and categorically organize social phenomena (Mi'kmaw, 2004). Instead according to Battiste (2002; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000) the verb-based nature of Mi'kmaq dialects focus less on naming each object and instead place greater importance on understanding what objects do and how they are used. As such, with their increased descriptive fluidity and a lessened need for static and definitive categories, Mi'kmaq dialect(s) create a situation where LDs become less functional. Viewed from this vantage point, the framework of LDs with its dual aims of identifying and organizing individuals in an effort to distribute social resources makes little sense.

In referring back to the Mi'kmaw Kina'matneway (2004) resource, Charlie Herney, a member of the Mi'kmaw Nation, is credited with asserting that "Mi'kmaw people believe that everyone is born with a gift from the Creator. The family, the community and the Nation have a responsibility for the development of those gifts (Mi'kmaw, 2004, p. 16)". Moreover this community member also notes that "Mi'kmaw people use culturally defined criteria to define gifted and talented people. Those who live and work in a First Nation community know who has the gift or talents to be an athlete, an artist, or a leader … Mi'kmaw people believe that a gifted or talented person develops uses and shares their gifts for the benefit of others." (Mi'kmaw, 2004, p. 16) Although this quote discusses the identification of gifted community members it also stresses that each individual has worthwhile skills that can be developed to aid the community as a whole. The language in this quote neither places so called "gifted" students above others nor uses pejorative language to refer to non-gifted individuals. Instead it structures everyone regardless of their learning profile as a member of the wider community (Mi'kmaw, 2004). This community-focused linguistic structure shifts away from issues of worthiness, removal and re-education and instead is based on community inclusivity.

Moreover, in using language to insert or force North American norms on Mi'kmaq communities, LDs as a construct may violate the holistic norms embedded in Indigenous Traditional Knowledge systems. The above quote provides a useful example when it suggests that "gifted and talented" students can be identified using unique cultural and community factors (Mi'kmaw, 2004). This again stresses the important role the community has, both in the learning process and in defining what is and is not

considered as a worthwhile ability or skill-set. If communities have the ability to create

their own criteria about what constitutes ability, then is it possible that the community

can also dictate what constitutes a learning problem or learning disability? Perhaps more

interesting, using Cherney's (2011) theories as a backdrop, is it possible that the language

around LDs is missing because LDs themselves are not representative of the social

architecture of Mi'kmaq communities?

     A close reading of the *Mi'kmaw Kina'matneway* resource (2004) reveals that

while Mi'kmaq communities give acceptance to a LD paradigm, this paradigm has failed

to become embedded in the social frameworks of these communities. The language of

this document, while explicitly acknowledging that some students will carry with them

disability or "special needs" diagnoses subtly separates the community from such labels.

The absence of the term 'learning disabilities' supports the notion that as a social

construct LDs remain an imported concept. Assuming as Ferguson (2010) does, that

"language structure and vocabulary are shaped by the fundamental beliefs, values, and

thought patterns of the society that created it" (p. 4-5). And that "[t]he expression or

absence of a concept or words within a language are both influenced by as well as shape

the people that use it" (Ferguson, 2010, p. 5). The absence of the LD term in Mi'kmaq

literature raises the following questions; is it possible that rather than representing an

organic, culturally relevant construct, LDs instead act as a forcibly inserted colonial

framework, to which Mi'kmaq communities are expected to conform? In recognizing the

existence of disabilities while simultaneously leaving a gap in the LDs lexicon, the

Mi'kmaq Nation may be doing its best to cope with an imported social construct that is neither representative nor relevant.

This supposition gains increasing traction given that the entity to which this text is attributed, the *Mi'kmaw Kina'matneway,* is responsible for ensuring both the educational and language rights of multiple Mi'kmaq communities (Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, n.d.). Given that language serves as an additional point of advocacy, this gap could be indicative of something other than an unintentional oversight. Additionally, as Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) have asserted, Mi'kmaq communities traditionally resist the pressure to classifying phenomena in a linear fashion. More precisely, if as a Nation, the Mi'kmaq resist the need to classify their Traditional Knowledge linearly, then perhaps a linguistic gap around the term 'learning disabilities' represents a similar type of resistance. Furthermore, although Cherney's (2011) work moves in an alternative direction, his supposition that "[w]e *say* what happened, and if we do not or cannot, then the characteristics of the event remain undefined, unfixed, and mutable" (unpaginated) supports the notion that the impetus to describe, assign, and maintain LD labels using fixed and rigid language is lessened. Despite the gap around the LD label, other discipline specific language runs throughout this text. This could represent a compromise of sorts, an attempt to familiarize parents with the language embedded in the Eurocentric design of the school system, without fully embracing such a model. However, caution must be exercised at this point, as it must be remembered that these analyses are based on a single document, viewed from an outsider perspective.

Such assertions are also particularly salient when exploring the intersectionality that exists between LDs and Inuit IQ. Due to Nunavut's large Inuit population, IQ forms the basis for its government and its education system (Bell, 2002; Nunavut Education, 2007; NWT, 1996). In an effort to investigate the relationship that exists between language and Inuit notions of both ability and disability, three policy documents were explored including, *Inuugatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective* (1996), *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Education Framework for Nunavut* (2007), and *Inuglugijaittuq: Foundation for Inclusive Education In Nunavut Schools* (2008). Like the documents produced by the Mi'kmaq nation, a gap exists in the language used by the Inuit around LDs. Although educational supports are offered, and an identification process for struggling students is identified, the term LDs is not mentioned (Nunavut Education, 2007; Nunavut Education, 2008; NWT, 1996).

In exploring this gap, Susannah Mintz (2015) suggests that the absence of disability and by extension issues of ableism are representative of an inability to recognize any deviation from a variety of able-bodied norms. Using this assertion as a bridge, such a gap in both local and national Inuit discourses represents a deliberate denial and exclusion of disabled community members. While this theory has merit, an alternative perspective may exist. Specifically, this project asserts that the language gap around LDs in Inuit educational policies exists not because LDs are going unacknowledged, but because it is not constructed as problematic within the context of Inuit IQ. This is not to suggest that in either Mi'kmaq or Inuit Nations students with learning problems, LDs, and/or alternative learning styles do not exist. Instead, is it not

possible that these learning problems or LDs are absorbed differently into the social

frameworks of Inuit communities?

      Specifically, a careful reading of the above documents reveals both a heavy focus

on collective community wellbeing and a twofold view of education (Nunavut Education,

2007; Nunavut Education, 2008; NWT, 1996). Firstly, the linguistic focus of these

documents illustrates the importance of collective community functioning. This focus

arguably allows for the recognition of a more complete range of individual strengths and

weaknesses without the need to officially problematize individuals. The linguistics of

these documents illustrate that by creating a social architecture that is built on community

connectedness and interdependence, the need to both identify and manage individual LDs

may become less salient. Rather than ignoring the existence of LDs outright, the language

contained in these documents suggests a clear recognition of educational variations and

individual differences (Nunavut Education, 2007; Nunavut Education, 2008; NWT,

1996).

      Moreover, the Inuit education system provides more insight into how LDs may

intersect with community social networks through their understanding of both wisdom

and the Inuit concept of the 'skills needed for living' (Bell, 2002; Nunavut Education,

2007; Nunavut Education, 2008; NWT, 1996). In particular, this education system is

predicated on the notion that it is only through the achievement of both sets of abilities

that an individual becomes an Inummarik or "a human being or an able person who can

act with wisdom" (Nunavut Education, 2007, p. 19). In this sense, the making of "an able

person" becomes less about the absence of deviation from community norms and is

instead tied to an individual's capacity to make intelligent and thoughtful choices

(Nunavut Education, 2007). This definition of ability negates the need to maintain

community norms via the identification and management of LDs. Without the need to

police LDs as a perceived form of deviation the possibility for effective absorption into

one's community social fabric exists. As such, LDs, as an official classification become

not only less relevant, but also less powerful (Durst & Coburn, 2015).

In a linguistic framework designed to minimize such power differentials, LDs

emerge as both unnecessary and contradictory. According to The Royal Commission

(Vol. 4, 1996), Inuit language lacks the ability to denote differing (and in some cases

unequal) power relationships, not only between animals but also among different people.

At their core, labels including LDs, are about power relationships. In labeling specific

social phenomena as disabling, language itself has the ability to shift the balance of

power for both those with and without such identifiers (Dudley-Marling, 2004; Dudley-

Marling & Dippo, 1995). Viewed from this perspective, the gap around the language of

LDs is consistent with an IQ perspective.

Rather than using variations in ability as a focal point, the previously named texts

highlight the merits of community collectivism paired with a highly intricate and

integrated community and family social network. One example from *Inuuqatigiit: The

Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective* notes that "they [parents] want their children to be

encouraged to talk about how people are related to each other in the community" (NWT,

1996, p. 14). Through the language of IQ, communities construct conditions as disabling

only if they are disruptive to community health and wellbeing (e.g. as the result of long-

term addictions) (Douglas & Coburn, 2015; Nunavut Education, 2007). When asked

specifically about LDs one participant in a study by Alex Wright, Diane Hiebert-Murphy

and Gwendolyn Gosek (2005) reportedly responded *"[l]et's put it this way: special needs*

is a white term. That's your term" (italics in the original) (p. 40). As such, unless a LD

becomes associated with an overt disruption in community functioning, it is neither

problematized nor associated with a decline in social status and/or power.

The Intersection of LDs, Indigeneity, and Social Architecture

As a theoretical construct, universal design is not a unified framework, but instead

refers to a group of loosely defined design concepts (Imrie & Hall, 2003). The nucleus of

this framework is predicated on the notion that the built environment, and the products

produced within it should be innately designed as accessible to all individuals regardless

of ability status (Imrie & Hall, 2003; Jasinski, 2014). As a politicized alternative,

inclusive design represents a specific off-shoot of the universal design paradigm (Imrie &

Hall, 2003). In particular, inclusive design principles posit that making architectural

changes to the built environment lacks both utility and depth unless it is simultaneously

accompanied by deeper social, moral, and attitudinal change (Imrie & Hall, 2003). While

universal design principles may appear natural and innately inclusive, their focus on the

built environment as the sole source of exclusive and disabling barriers provides little, if

any, of the space needed to critique how Indigeneity, social climate, and inclusivity

intersect (Imrie & Hall, 2003). If the design of built environments is a reflection of wider

social/ power frameworks that underlie community social climates (as noted in

Lefebvre's (1991) work), then it is not enough to ask questions about indigeneity and inclusivity from a solely architectural perspective.

Through the use of an increasingly politicized lens, inclusive design recognizes that individual adaptions, rather than a single use design, may be required (Imrie & Hall, 2003). More precisely, in pairing the design of accessible products with the removal of the social barriers that inhibit their use, inclusive design theories explore the social contexts in which such products exist. While this may appear trivial it highlights small gaps in the structure of existing literature. Specifically, sparse cross-cultural research subtly limits how 'universal' design is conceptualized (Imrie & Edwards, 2007). If written from a primarily North American perspective, 'universal' architectural principles are developed with a largely white, European, context in mind (Imrie & Edwards, 2007). This Euro-centric framing marginalizes Indigenous cultures and therefore, raises questions about what 'universal' access means.

Additionally, it raises concerns about who has the power to implement such design principles and for whom universal spaces are being designed. Without the ability to consider individualized cultural adaptions, how can social inclusivity be achieved? Inclusive design principles, with their recognition of the continued need for individual modification, therefore offer an increased level of flexibility in comparison to its universal design counterpart (Imrie & Hall, 2003). Therefore, these theories provide a basis for suggesting that it is not enough to ask questions about indigeneity and inclusivity from a solely architectural perspective.

Mi'kmaq Social Architecture

In highlighting the interplay that exists between changes to social architecture, elements of community design, and conceptualizations of LDs, these lines of research create a space for additional questions. Marling and Dippo (1995) hint at the linkages that exist between social context and LD labels, in particular their influence on access and engagement. Sleeter (1987) furthers this narrative when she posits that as North American schools began to emphasize the acquisition of increasingly abstract intellectual content, the labeling of LDs "help[ed] schools more efficiently fit every child for a 'place' in society with some 'places' clearly more desirable and profitable than others" (Sleeter, 1987, p.219). If, alongside Dudley-Marling (2004) and Dippo (1995), Sleeter (1987) asserts that shifts in social architecture impact the use of LD labels, can the reverse also be true? Can changes to the social construction of learning and LDs impact the development of Mi'kmaq social architecture?

By positing that LDs stem from a shift in the socio-cultural environment Sleeter (1987) provides the latticework needed to graft theories of inclusive design into the existing bodies of literature. Specifically, cradled within the Mi'kmaq framework of resource sharing is the notion that while giving freely of skills, strengths, and knowledge is constructed as essential to community cohesiveness, seeking out "individual recognition and prosperity" for these abilities is discouraged (Ferguson, 2010, p. 6). In this context, a sense of both individual and collective community identity is fostered while the need to compete (in an effort to increase social status) is lessened. In this sense, education and learning become both mutual and reciprocal (Ferguson, 2010).

Consequently, in a community design where the pursuit of excessive prestige is shunned and learning is structured as both an individual and community occupation, Sleeter's (1987) notions of 'place' and 'space' are altered.

Resource sharing alters the political economy of Mi'kmaq community architecture by downplaying the tight linkages that exist between social recognition, competitiveness, and social capital. In particular, resource sharing facilitates a shift away from using notions of competition to assign community members both increased status and social mobility (Gleeson, 1996). In a climate that de-emphasizes social recognition the social capital of individuals who differ in terms of both rate and pace remains intact and their ability to access multiple social spaces is not disturbed. To this end, resource sharing alters how social capital is both assigned and retained, and provides individuals with LD labels an avenue through which marginalization can be avoided and access to beneficial social 'spaces' is retained.

This argument is aided by Gleeson's (1996) exploration of market relations and his assertion that: "[f]rom the beginning, this competitive social evaluation of individual labour-power meant that 'slower', 'weaker', or more 'inflexible' workers were devalued" (p. 392). Furthermore, Gleeson (1996) goes on to posit that within human geography and other related literature there are those "who see disablement as a 'state of mind'; a set of beliefs imposed upon different, if essentially normal people" (p. 393). This research supports the notion that in shifting the nucleus of community relations away from uniformity and competition, individuals who are non-conforming in terms of their learning are understood as normative citizens who can be absorbed successfully into their

respective social climates. As such, in a climate that values contributing to a collective

knowledge base, is it possible that individual inabilities are off-set by the strengths of

others?

Gleeson's (1996; 1999) ideas about the connectivity that exists between

conceptions of normality, space, and the underlying social environment are echoed in

Rob Imrie and Peter Hall's (2003) work. In exploring the subtle differences that exist

between theories of inclusive design and its counterparts, Imrie and Hall (2003) highlight

its increasingly political nature. These authors posit that disability cannot be disconnected

from the underlying social climate in which it exists (Imrie & Hall, 2003). Consequently,

inclusive design principles serve as a tool for probing how resource sharing both

functions in and shapes Mi'kmaq social architecture.

If the politicized stance of inclusive design is used to explore resource sharing

learning can be understood from an alternative vantage point. By placing learning in the

context of a larger community network, resource sharing prompts a shift in the power

assigned to learning deficits. In particular, individual learning gaps can be offset by

contributing to the collective community knowledge base (Ferguson, 2010). In this way,

the community adds individual learning to its collective consciousness and in doing so

simultaneously helps to mute or downplay the importance of personal weakness. In this

sense, uneven learning profiles (and the LD diagnoses they engender) no longer hold the

same power to inform notions of social space and place. This is in keeping with

Gleeson's (1996) assertion that "'different' but essentially normal people" (pp. 393) can

be slotted into separate social spaces based in part on elements embedded in their social context.

Embedded in Mi'kmaq Traditional Knowledge is a second core element of community design: non-interference. This principle is both subtle and highly nuanced and according to Brett Ferguson (2010) includes the notion that each individual is tasked with developing his/her own set of ideas, values, and perspectives. Using a combination of experience, trial and error, observation, and the asking of questions, each person develops a mature set of opinions about the world around them (Ferguson, 2010). As is asserted, non-interference permits each individual "both the privilege and responsibility to make their own decisions" (Ferguson, 2010, p. 5). As a consequence, injecting one's own opinion on another or forcing him/her to change or modify their own ideas, regardless of the reason, is constructed as a rude and unwelcome intrusion (Ferguson, 2010).

The notion that each individual has the ability to make and be responsible for their own choices dovetails with inclusive design interpretations of individual adaption. Specifically, as noted by Imrie and Hall (2003) a distinguishing element of inclusive design principles is the notion that individual adaption is both possible and encouraged. Inclusive design permits citizens to craft their own strategies for coping with the world rather than assuming a single 'universal' design can be functional for all persons (Irmie & Hall, 2003). Coupling this aspect of inclusive design with the Mi'kmaq notion of non-interference taps into issues related to choice.

In taking up issues of individual choice it is vital to note that while a sense of community identity is fostered via notions of resource sharing, this is not created at the

expense of an individual identity. Within the context of non-interference, community members are able to develop their own sense of self (Ferguson, 2010). This sense of self is one that is inclusive of the ability to adapt to the world in ways that are deemed personally suitable (Battiste, 2002; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Ferguson 2010). Moreover, Mi'kmaq notions about the fluidity of the environment suggest that personal versatility and adaptability are highly prized. As a result, is it possible that non-interference, when combined with individual adaption, grants the ability to build one's own 'space' within his/her community social architecture?

In contending that both individual choice/responsibility and flexibility are embedded social elements, does non-interference create a social framework where the risks associated with difference are mitigated? This idea dovetails well with other research which suggests that it is only when the balance of a community's social ecosystem is disturbed (often through impingement of another's rights) that conditions become disabling (Durst & Coburn, 2015). Dudley-Marling (2004) adds further support for this thesis when he posits that "learning and learning problems, including the identity of "having LD", do[es] not reside in people's heads as much as in the complex of social interactions performed in a place called school that is itself situated in a broader social, political, and cultural context" (p. 483). Rather than being organically attached to or embedded in the mind of identified individuals, Dudley-Marling (2004) argues that the 'problem' of learning disabilities exists instead in the social environment and more specifically in the interactions that individuals have with one another.

As such, nested in notions of non-interference and the creation of individual spaces exists a particular narrative surrounding time. In Mi'kmaq communities, the notion that 'the time must be right' includes the idea that events are designed to occur 'when the time is right' not before and not after (Ferguson, 2010). Consequently, artificially trying to alter the timing of events is especially ominous and determining the appropriate timing for events is a particularly difficult skill to master (Ferguson, 2010). In terms of the learning environment, the Mi'kmaq assert that "[u]ntil one is ready to ask the question, one is not ready to receive the answer" (Ferguson, 2010, p.6). As such, the timing of learning is governed by individual student readiness rather than statistically developed and applied norms.

Universal design explores singular designs that are accessible for all users, and can be accessed with the minimum amount of energy required (Imrie & Hall, 2003). Inclusive design principles, on the other hand, insist that the impetus for any design process stems from the needs, values, and desires of the individual (Imrie & Hall, 2003). Unlike its parent theory, inclusive design "does not look for the lowest common denominator, nor does it attempt to reconcile the often conflicting needs of every possible minority group in society. Rather, by considering varieties of special needs, inclusive design tries to break down the unnecessary barriers and exclusiveness." (quoted by RNIB in Imrie & Hall, 2003, pp. 18). As articulated by Imrie and Hall (2003) this process is often two-fold: first planners and professionals are ideally required to engage directly with citizens. Next, theories of design that rely on singular and/or unisex notions of use and usability are replaced with one that accepts the likelihood of individual modification.

Pushing such narratives further and viewing them alongside Mi'kmaq notions of timing raises questions about space and place. If conceptualizations of time differ across cultural lines how does this impact issues of social 'place' and notions of belonging?

In keeping with theories of inclusive design Mi'kmaq social networks place the individual squarely in the forefront through the privileging of experiential learning. In doing so, Mi'kmaq communities subtly disrupt social structures that are dependent on linear understandings of time. By acknowledging individual variation, in terms of both perception and lived experience, time can no longer be relied on to hold individuals with LD identifiers "in their place" (Kitchin, 1998). As Kitchin (1998) asserts, able-bodied persons often hold long-standing stereotypes or mistruths about what it means to possess a disability-identified embodiment. He also suggests that as these ill-informed truths become more ingrained in community social narratives, taken-for-granted inequities become increasingly naturalized and accepted (Kitchin, 1998). Such standards then serve as a tool which restricts citizens with disabilities from accessing multiple social spaces, types of professional identities, and other opportunities for personal and professional growth (Kitchin, 1998).

Using Kitchin's (1998) theories as a steppingstone, linear, age-graded, notions of time are used to lock students into specific social identities inclusive of that of a person with a LD label. As quoted by Dudley-Marling in *The Social Construction of Learning Disabilities* "[i]n an institution that makes much out of differential rates of learning,…we can expect the rate of learning to be fundamental to our understanding of LD and learning failures more generally" (Dudley-Marling, 2004, p. 484) The 'failure' of students with

LDs to keep time with their peers is used not only as an identifier, but also becomes a

central element of a LD identity.

      To this end, the sense of belonging afforded to students with LDs becomes

conditional. When coupled with the concept of Crip time this position gains a greater

level of traction. Specifically, Crip time asserts that people with disabilities often inhabit

an alternate experience of time, one that is both individualized and changeable (Kuppers,

2014). However, despite this line of inquiry, alternative experiences of time, like those

embedded in Mi'kmaq Traditional Knowledge frameworks, remain marginalized. To use

Kitchin (1998): only if students with LD labels stay 'in their place', are they deemed able

to belong. This ignores the innate fluidity of time and means that citizens labeled with

LDs are identified and defined by their alternative experiences. In developing a sense of

time that can move in a cyclical fashion (i.e. with the seasons, patterns of animal

migration), while also remaining tied to individual readiness; Mi'kmaq communities may

implicitly embrace a wider purview of possible identities (Ferguson, 2010). Perhaps this

creates the space needed to cultivate an alternative, but richer sense of belonging.

Inuit Social Architecture

      Inuit communities are also underpinned by a Traditional Knowledge framework

that is incredibly intricate. Moreover, with the creation of Nunavut in 1999, the Inuit

were able to secure the right to self-government, which is unique among Indigenous

populations in Canada (Bell, 2002). As such, Inuit IQ, unlike other forms of Indigenous

Knowledge is explicitly interwoven into governmental edicts, including its educational

policies. As, Francis Levesque (2014) indicates, Inuit Traditional Knowledge or Inuit

Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) is difficult to situate within the context of Western thought. In particular, as an interconnected knowledge system with ties to both its physical and social locales, IQ is designed to function as a single unified whole (Levesque, 2014). Whereas Eurocentric Knowledge is often compartmentalized (i.e. hard and soft sciences, science over intuitive/spiritual knowledge) IQ serves as a multidirectional knowledge system which has ties to both the past and the future and as such cannot be reduced to its component parts (Levesque, 2014). To this end, Levesque (2014) asserts that an increasingly all-encompassing or "seamless" definition of IQ needs to be adopted.

In an effort to interrogate the intersectionality of IQ, while also respecting its "seamless" design, the Inuit notion of "an able" or "true human being" can again serve as an entry point into existing discourses (Qitsualik, 2013). According to Rachel Qitusalik (2013) the Inuit concept of a "true human being" or Inummarik represents the gold - standard to which Inuit community members strive. As Qitsualik (2013) asserts "the Inummarik, too is a ghost concept, a model alone, … [t]he model is the free human, sovereign over the self, respectful of the self -sovereignty of others. It is the human whose awareness not only renders self-sovereignty possible, but comprehends how self-sovereignties – those of others in society- synergize toward a system of self-perpetuating health." (p. 32). In emphasizing the need to develop both independence and an awareness of the agency of others, IQ and its dependent educational philosophies stress both the advancement of individual skills and the development of the "wisdom" needed to work responsibly with others (Nunavut Education, 2007; NWT, 1996). In particular, Inuit's educational policies minimize the pitfalls often associated with conceptualizing

independence and dependence as mutually exclusive. This coincides with existing

literature which asserts that framing Inuit communities as either individualistic or

collectivist is reductionist (Nunavut Education, 2007; NWT, 1996). Instead, by

encouraging the parallel development of both individual agency and community

participation, Inuit communities address the deeper social change highlighted by

inclusive design principles.

　　　　The Inuit conceptualize belonging as limited neither by familial nor geographic

ties (Smylie et al. 2009). Instead, by defining themselves as part of a larger whole: "[a]ll

Inuit, regardless of their specific geographic community of origin or their immediate

family relations, are considered to belong to the larger Inuit community (which is

contrasted with the non-Inuit world outside the community)" (Smylie et al. 2009 p. 442).

Therefore, in conceptualizing community as a series of interconnected, co-occurring

"patterns", co-operative interdependence rather than exclusive independence or

dependence becomes a core element of Inuit social architecture (Kral et al. 2011;

Qitsualik, 2013). In re-shaping the social contract to be inclusive of interdependence, new

and alternative spaces for individual adaption are created and the power dynamics that

underpin the reproduction of social spaces shift. In particular, with interdependence at its

core, an alteration occurs in how the Inuit perceive, attain, and lose social status and

capital. Consequently, within the social design of Inuit communities, the loss of social

status often associated with the need for assistance may be mitigated.

　　　　By creating a social contract that negates either/or transactions about dependence

and independence, Inuit social architecture reshapes how LDs can be conceptualized.

This process aligns with inclusive design's stated aim of challenging how disabilities are perceived (Imrie & Hall, 2003). While strands of this altered social design are formally embedded in Inuit educational philosophy, at the core, it stems from the fundamentals of IQ. As such, interdependence extends beyond the confines of the educational system to become both functional within, and applicable to, the adult community. By moving beyond superficial social change, citizen's who rely on interdependence to function effectively retain a sense of personal agency. This retention of agency permits citizens with LDs to remain socially mobile, while also empowering them to serve as the creators of new, more inclusive, social spaces. Furthermore, if those in power have the ability to influence how spaces are designed, the provision of greater agency can influence the development of ever-more inclusive social spaces.

Moreover, a careful reading of the Innumarik or "capable human being" reveals that it exists in a sociopolitical framework which asks questions about complacency, utility, and changeability rather than (dis)ability status (Qitsualik, 2013). When discussing the Innumarik, Qitsualik (2013) asserts that "as truth is elusive and never satisfactory, the True Human mind must never become complacent in a given belief…ideas and concepts gain value only as they achieve utility; and …there is no time in which ideas and concepts should cease to be tested" (pp. 32, ellipses in original text). Consequently, is it possible that the Innumarik permits Inuit social spaces to recognize that ability and disability are neither mutually exclusive nor entirely permanent?

Specifically, in reading Qitsualik's (2013) understanding of the Innumarik it is revealed that instead of cultivating static structures of disability (e.g. LD diagnoses), Inuit

social design retains a sensitivity toward the role relationships play in such identities. By

recognizing that community norms are not innately meaningful, but instead become

serviceable based on both the demands of the space and the needs of its citizens, the

Innumarik respects the negotiable nature of LDs. This recognition challenges how

individuals with LD labels are perceived. Rather than being constructed as a homogenous

segment of the population, for whom a standard set of accommodations must legally be

made, community members with and without LD identities can be re-defined as

individuals with the capacity to continually re-negotiate the confines of the social spaces

in which they exist (Gleeson, 1999; Lefebvre, 1991; Qitsualik, 2013). Through the

provision of greater individual control, the Innumarik both dovetails with the bottom-up

structure of inclusive design frameworks, while also coinciding with its aim of altering

underlying community structures (Irmie & Hall, 2003). In thinking about community

structures, the following questions arise: what is meant by inclusive design and who are

inclusive spaces designed for?

Just as the built environment is planned with an able-bodied, white, male user in

mind, could this narrowed purview be carried through into the layout of community

social architecture? When viewed alongside Gleeson (1999), Qitsualik's (2013) narrative

provides traction for this position when she suggests that a sense of unfounded familiarity

may precipitate the design of an overly constricted social architecture. This limits how

citizens with LD experiences engage with others. In her explicit warning against

complacency Qitsualik states: "as truth is elusive and never satisfactory, the True Human

mind must never become complacent in a given belief… and …there is no time in which

ideas and concepts should cease to be tested" (p. 32). As such, by encouraging

disengagement from previously accepted norms, the Innumarik provides Inuit

communities the ability to design social spaces for a wider array of identities, inclusive of

LDs (Qitsualik, 2013). Therefore, the Innumarik, with its need to avoid complacency,

permits the building of social networks where previously unchallenged perceptions about

LDs become both unstable and uncomfortable.

Inclusive design narratives, like Inuit notions of 'the able human being', use this

instability to interrogate the design process itself. Embedded in the literature of both

disciplines is the assertion that inclusivity cannot be standardized, but instead needs to be

user driven (Imrie & Hall, 2003; Qitsualik, 2013). As such, inclusivity, when viewed

through the combined lens of Qitsualik (2013), Imrie, and Hall (2003), can be

conceptualized as a living organism which requires both the continual re-assessment and

re-imagination of community social perceptions about LD labels. In this sense, what is

perceived as inclusive by one community member, at a single point in time, and within

the confines of specific social relationships, may simultaneously be perceived as limiting

and exclusionary by another. By ushering in a discomfort with taken-for-granted norms,

the Innumarik converges with inclusive design narratives that subtly query how long-

held, community-wide assumptions intersect with the development of unique social

architectures (Qitsualik, 2013).

Canadian Social Architecture, Indigeneity, and White Privilege

To this end, it is insufficient to ask 'who are social spaces designed for?' without

also asking how are social spaces accessed and who has the right to be included in such

spaces? If such questions are used as an exploratory lens, Canada's social framework can

be understood as one which cultivates the perception of race as absent (Fee & Russell,

2007). Through its apology for past abuses, Canada has been able to push notions of race

out of its self-image (Fee & Russell, 2007). Specifically, in conflating its apology with

forgiveness, Indigeneity is subtly eased out of Canada's current discourses (Fee &

Russell, 2007). In this sense, Canada is permitted to rebuild its national and international

self-image as one of a "polite …peacekeeper" (Fee & Russel, 2007, p. 192). However,

despite creating a national image that holds fairness as paramount, white perspectives

continue to be held as both correct and appropriate, whereas dissenting Indigenous

perspectives are deemed unworthy of consideration (Fee & Russell, 2007).

Although subtle, the process of national self-editing proposed by Fee & Russell

(2007) mirrors a similar process suggested by Gleeson (1999). Specifically, like

Gleeson's (1999) theories on the removal of disability, Canadian communities also

embrace the active excision of Indigeneity. In this sense, Canada's social spaces are

purposefully designed to be reliant on, and invested in, preserving a particular form of

White privilege (Fee & Russell, 2007). At its core, White Privilege is "an institutional set

of benefits granted to those who, by colour, resemble the people who dominate the

powerful positions in our institutions and organizations. In turn, these become individual

benefits" (Frideres, 2007 p.44). Such an intentional erasure of race therefore ensures that

North American modes of access are first paired with white structures of belonging, and

then given primacy. This implicitly supports the on-going marginalization and active

discrediting of non-white theories of design: effectively white-washing Canadian social

spaces (Fee & Russell, 2007; Frideres, 2007). Moreover, it is at this point that white social architectures become both normalized and read as essentially neutral, implicitly permitting existing discourses to read white space is accessible to, and inclusive of, all citizens (Fee & Russell, 2007).

Therefore, White Privilege serves to actively suppress Indigenous perspectives using a two-pronged approach. First, Indigenous viewpoints are pushed to the edge of the academic consciousness. While recognizing that white privilege forms the core of the social geography field, work that queries such privilege is described as 'complementary' (Panelli, 2008). This permits issues of Indigeneity to be constructed as an adjunct, supplemental to other areas of scholarship. Ruth Panelli (2008) suggests support of this thesis with her assertion that the current "debate has been complemented by scholars working on Indigenous issues, and/or those questioning the politics and practice of contemporary geography a predominantly 'White' and 'Anglo-American' knowledge." (p. 801) As such, Indigeneity and corresponding interrogations of White Privilege remain a secondary line of inquiry.

Secondly, once moved to the periphery, Indigeneity becomes isolated from other avenues of scholarship preventing more complex and multi-layered critiques. When Siobhan Senior and Claire Baker (2013) point out that "[I]ndigenous studies is still too ableist and disability studies too white", they highlight the pitfalls of such an approach (pp. 125). In particular, it is through the segmenting of Indigenous lines of inquiry that a significant and noticeable gap in the literature is permitted to exist (Senior & Baker, 2013). By nurturing such a gap, the growth of literature that might question Eurocentric

norms about the intersection of disability and Indigeneity are intentionally stunted. In

such an environment, White Privilege flourishes, and longstanding Eurocentric

perspectives are permitted to remain unchallenged (Panelli, 2008; Senior & Baker, 2013).

Unable or unwilling to make significant interdisciplinary connections, Canadian social

spaces therefore remain shaped by Eurocentric theories of architecture with The

International Symbol of Access (ISA) standing as a prime example.

  The ISA is used internationally to delineate accessible spaces (Ben-Moshe &

Powell, 2007). For example, as depicted in both Canada and abroad, the ISA is

represented as a white stick person sitting in a white wheelchair against a blue

background (see appendix A for images; Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007). Despite facing

criticism from multiple perspectives, the whiteness of both the ISA's human form and its

wheelchair requires additional attention (Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007). In particular, the

ISA is not necessarily transferable outside of the Western world (Ben-Moshe & Powell,

2007). Instead, it depends on Eurocentric conceptions of disability to function effectively

(Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007). Rather than representing universal notions of access, Liat

Ben-Moshe and Justin Powell (2007) "argue that the image of a wheelchair user was used

because it was and is the prototypic representation of disability in Western societies" (p.

497).

  This pairing of whiteness and access exists even if the wheelchair is removed

from representations of accessibility and disability. More precisely, while the single letter

'A' has also been proposed as a potential representation of universal accessibility (see

Appendix B for image), it was dismissed in part because it was considered non-

transferable outside of English speaking (i.e. North American, White, Eurocentric)

contexts (Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007). As such, in identifying Eurocentric norms as a

precursor for access into disability spaces, a clear precedence is set. Specifically, the right

to belong in disability spaces is also tied to White, Westernized, modes of disability.

By pairing whiteness with access, the ISA subtly suggests that non-white ways of

interpreting disability should be excluded from accessible spaces. As such, the tight

intertwining of Eurocentrism and disability implies that only white expressions of LD

experiences are valid. As Ben-Moshe and Powell (2007) suggest, the ISA both creates a

space for the existence of disability, while simultaneously raising concerns about the

legitimacy of its users. Specifically, the design of such accessible spaces relies on a subtle

assumption: some citizens can be privileged with access while others can be deemed

undeserving and cast as illegitimate users of such access (Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007).

This narrative of illegitimacy is further advanced when the work of Ben-Moshe

and Powell (2007), Fee and Russell (2007), and Senior and Barker (2013) are viewed in

combination. When paired with the work of Margery Fee and Lynette Russell (2007),

Senior and Baker's (2013) assertion that some disabilities - particularly those linked to

substance use and misuse disorders - are negatively associated with Indigeneity forms the

latticework on which White privilege rests. Such privilege uses Indigeneity as a foil,

something against which Eurocentric norms can be both measured and reinforced (Fee &

Russell, 2007). In a social framework where Indigeneity and Eurocentrism consistently

exist in opposition to one another, whiteness comes to represent not only the norm but the

ideal, while Indigeneity stands as its necessary opposite (Fee & Russell, 2007). In this

dynamic, White Privilege subtly blames Indigenous citizens for falling short of North American ideals. As such, narratives of worth are tools which bolster the social boundaries that exclude Indigenous citizens from disability spaces (Fee & Russell, 2007). This moves current discourses beyond the simple reinforcement of Eurocentric perspectives, and toward legitimizing the exclusion of Indigenous citizens from social discourses.

Moreover, the absence of Indigenous disability narratives is nurtured perhaps in part, because it impairs the development of a unified minority identity (Brune, 2015). As Jeffery Brune (2015) suggests, power comes when members of a minority group come together as a united whole. In particular, Brune (2015) posits that using 'disability' as a minority identity gives such persons the ability to vote as a collective unit, producing the leverage needed to create long-standing changes in social climate. In exploring this line of thought further, the development of a unified and distinct political identity, may empower citizens to require that their unique narratives and perspectives be re-evaluated (Brune, 2015).

As such, by constructing Indigenous discourses as outside Eurocentric norms, White Privilege subtly permits Indigenous narratives to splinter away from both additional bodies of literature and from other Indigenous perspectives (Fee & Russell, 2007; Panelli, 2008). The segmentation of Indigenous perspectives on disability, space, social architecture, and even Indigeneity itself, therefore denies Indigenous citizens the social power that stems from the development of a unified social and political identity (Brune, 2015). To this end, if White Privilege also relies on embedded structures of

power to maintain control, then leaving a gap in the existing literature is subtly

advantageous as it permits the intersection of inclusivity, social architecture, and

disability to remain unchallenged (Brune, 2015; Fee & Russell, 2007; Panelli, 2008).

Access and Privilege

Privilege is, at its core, about power and control (Fee & Russell, 2007; Panelli,

2008). As such, at the nexus of social architecture, Indigeneity, and adults with LD

experiences, Eurocentric norms become imbued with the ability to grant (or conversely

refuse) citizens entry into community social architectures. As a necessary precursor to

inclusiveness, access when knitted together with privilege, creates the framework needed

to question how notions of social space, social architecture, and inclusivity converge.

Moreover, when access is used to investigate the linkages that exist between privilege

and social space, it forges a bridge for asking how the unique social architectures of

Mi'kmaq and Inuit communities facilitate the social inclusion of adults with LDs. Finally,

notions of access concurrently act as the interface required to both make sense of the

research uncovered, and graft it into the existing scholarship.

In considering access and its relationship to inclusiveness, it is valuable to frame

existing discourses with two particular points of reference. Firstly, access that is

constitutional and/or legislative in nature differs significantly from access in its practical

form (Carey, 2015). Moreover, access can serve as a precursor to inclusivity, without a

guarantee that inclusivity itself exists (Carey, 2015). These points are echoed by Bess

Williamson (2015) when she asserts that access encompasses "the power, opportunity,

permission, or right to come near or into contact with someone or something" (p. 14).

Access therefore becomes more complicated than the ability to engage with the

environment (Williamson, 2015). Instead, it also includes 'the power' or level of

privilege required to activate such engagement (Carey, 2015). In highlighting both

opportunity and permission, Williamson (2015) showcases how privilege and access are

tied together at their most basic levels.

Access therefore exists only as a function of community social architectures, with

some attitudinal climates either engaging with or inhibiting its usage (Gleeson, 1999;

Lefebvre, 1991). Despite this, rather than investigating how 'access' intersects with the

social conditions that limit its practical use, Canada's constitution assumes that once

legislated, access ensures equality for both those with and without disabilities. Likewise,

while the constitution states that it protects equality of all, it explicitly disregards pre-

existing documents which delineate issues of both Indigenous land use and Indigenous

self-government (University of British Columbia, UBC, 2009). While subtle, in

overriding its pre-existing obligation to Indigenous citizens, the Canadian constitution

creates a social framework that ties equality to Eurocentrism and subverts the ability of

Indigenous citizens to make required social change (UBC, 2009). By violating the

proclamation of 1763, which lays out notions of Indigenous title in North America, the

Canadian constitution implicitly retains its ability to monitor, control, and potentially

restrict the ability of Indigenous populations as a whole, and citizens as individuals, to

access social spaces across Canada (UBC, 2009).

As such, an error exists when access is inappropriately linked to constitutionally

protected equality rather than notions of social equity. As Allison Carey (2015) asserts

this is problematic because the act of legislating spaces to be accessible ensures equality

only on paper (Carey, 2015). Moreover, simply obtaining a legal right does not always

ensure equality. Instead, "people must be able to claim and use those rights actively in

order to participate in society" (Carey, 2015, p. 38). By ignoring the attitudinal barriers

that enable privilege, Canada neither recognizes nor challenges their existence. As such,

by conflating standardized legislation with equality, 'access', as a legal construct, falls

short.

This shortfall is illustrated by spaces that are designed with only a single

accessible table, bathroom stall, or hotel room in evidence. The social frameworks that

underlies these structural elements includes the notion that individuals with disability

labels do not need, want, or deserve the same level of choice that other non-disabled

citizens enjoy. More subtle examples of such a framework include the blocking of

accessible features by excess products or building materials. This belies the sentiment

that accessible features lack substance and are, in essence, only for show (Gleeson,

1999). When these examples are carried over into LD discourses, it can be said that the

confusion lay-people display is perhaps a softer example of a similar underlying social

architecture (see Kitchin, 1998). Even more subtle, is the assumption that LD labels are

not legitimate, but instead provide an unfair advantage to otherwise 'dull' or unfit

students or employees (Dudley-Marling, 2004; Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995). While

such displays emphasize that identified citizens are fundamentally different from the rest

of the population, they also intuit that ensuring constitutionally equal access is at best,

insufficient to provide inclusivity. Instead, legally achieved equality of access enables

two simultaneous processes to occur: it serves to re-affirm the correctness of long-held

(negative) community beliefs about LD labels, while also creating a social architecture

that justifies an isolationist attitude toward adults with such identities (Carey, 2015;

Gleeson, 1999; Lefebvre, 1991).

The Connections: Indigeneity, Social Architecture and the Inclusion of Adults with LD Identities

Given these shortcomings, how then does access, as a legislative concept,

intersect with the unique social architectures of Mi'kmaq and Inuit communities? By

exploring how belonging is constructed by Mi'kmaq and Inuit social structures, an

avenue exists for probing the deeper social changes that serve as a precursor to

inclusiveness. The work of Dudley-Marling (2004), Dudley-Marling and Dippo (1995),

and Sleeter (1987), therefore provides the first solid footing for exploring the connections

that exist between belonging, Indigeneity, access, and LD experiences. Each of these

authors similarly asserts that LD labels designate and hold students into particular social

spaces and places (Dudley-Marling, 2004; Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995; Sleeter,

1987). Although different, each author posits that not all social positions are created

equally, with some being more desirable than others (Dudley-Marling, 2004; Dudley-

Marling & Dippo, 1995; Sleeter, 1987). LDs and the educational institutions that create

them therefore become the instruments used to construct belonging. In this sense, LD

labels dictate who is eligible to access, and therefore belong in, an array of community

social spaces. Moreover, such LD experiences also define both the degree to which

belonging is achieved and whether or not such belonging will develop into inclusivity.

However, in probing how Mi'kmaq and Inuit communities define belonging, these paradigms of access are challenged. Although different, each of these Nations uses community membership itself, rather than larger educational institutions, to construct belonging and as such conceptualize access.

In the case of the Mi'kmaq, LD labels not only run contrary to their educational framework, but significantly, also present as artificially inserted (Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, 2004). LDs therefore represent an aside, an element that has been forced into Mi'kmaq social architectures by colonizing forces (Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, 2004). Despite the pressure of this insertion, the Mi'kmaq maintain that each citizen has gifts that he or she, with the aid of other community members is tasked with developing (Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, 2004). Moreover, such communities construct the development of such individual skill-sets as a long-term process. As such, belonging is less about short term achievement and more about slow, purposeful evolution (Battiste, 2002; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, 2004).

Likewise, the Inuit suggest that regardless of familial or geographical ties, each citizen is part of the larger Inuit community (Smylie et al., 2009). This philosophy runs through the educational principles that guide the Inuit school systems, with the 'Inumarik or true human' serving as a prime example (Qitsualik, 2013). Placed in the context of the education system, the Inumarik recognizes that while individual agency and growth are valuable, so too is the maintenance of overall community health (Qitsualik, 2013). As such, it is individual contributions paired with community engagement that determines belonging.

In this sense, the Inuit like the Mi'kmaq embrace social architectures that view belonging as something attained via personal growth rather than scholastic achievement. Whereas educational achievement is often represented as a pass/fail affair, individual growth can be delineated using a much wider purview. In the context of Mi'kmaq and Inuit social architecture, growth therefore represents a process that occurs not only across time, but also across multiple areas (Battiste, 2002; Battiste, & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, 2004; Qitsualik, 2013). Rather than having belonging externally shaped for them, both of these Nations build their social spaces with the understanding that belonging is carved out by the individual as a result of their developing maturity. In this sense, individual adaptations and differences represent both change and growth, therefore promoting, rather than detracting from, community social architectures.

Within these contexts, differences are neither troublesome, nor grounds for exclusion, but instead foster a sense of belonging that is both fluid and flexible. This pliable sense of belonging suggests that equality, as a tool of access, is a mobile perception rather than a uniform standard that must be rigidly applied. The fluid relationship that exists between notions of access, belonging, and equality is further supported by the assertion that it is individual adaption, coupled with an increasingly socio-political stance, which gives inclusive design perspectives their vitality (Imrie & Hall, 2003). In keeping with Mi'kmaq and Inuit trains of thought, inclusive design also suggests that usability shifts across both time and space and from one user to the next (Imrie & Hall, 2003). As such, it is the user, inclusive of the social factors that act upon

him or her, rather than stiff and unresponsive notions of equality that define belonging,

and therefore serve as the gateway to inclusivity (Imrie & Hall, 2003; Lefebvre, 1991).

The continued pairing of social connectedness with justice therefore separates

access from inclusiveness. Where access uses a passive and brittle legislature to ensure

equality, inclusiveness uses notions of equity to enable a responsive form of citizenship.

As Stephen Leeder (2003) proposes "[e]quity conveys a sense of fairness, but sharpens

fairness by adding equality and fellow-feeling" (p. 475). By concerning itself with

fairness rather than sameness, equity therefore recognizes that underlying social networks

can create situations that are unfair or unjust, even after equal rights have been assured.

This is in line with Carey's (2015) assertion that: "[d]isability scholars and activists are

rarely satisfied […] with the assumption that equality would flow from obtaining the

"same" package of rights" (p. 38). This is not to suggest that citizens with LD

labels/identities should be subjected to different or lesser forms of citizenship (Carey,

2015). Instead, using the parallel work of Williamson (2015), Carey (2015), Gleeson

(1999), and Lefebvre (1991), equity serves as an interface between individual uniqueness

and a socially aware, flexible, form of community belonging.

In exploring how the social architectures of Mi'kmaq and Inuit Nations facilitates

the inclusion of adults with LD experiences, interdependence serves as an additional

point of intersectionality that complements notions of belonging and equity. Despite the

assumed neutrality of independence, dependence, and interdependence as social

positions, community discourses can subtly elevate one position over another (Dudley-

Marling, 2004; Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995; Sleeter, 1987 see Appendix C for

definitions of dependence, independence and interdependence). In this sense, independence is associated with both ability and achievement while interdependence is linked to inability and the need for on-going assistance. Although implicit, by shunning interdependence, standard community architectures cultivate a specific social triad wherein independence, competition, and inclusivity become yoked to one another. Moreover, once bound, competition, together with independence, is promoted as both a singular (and simplified) measure of adulthood, and the only avenue through which long-term social integration and respect is achieved (Dudley-Marling, 2004; Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995; Sleeter, 1987).

This sentiment is again encapsulated in the ISA. As noted by Ben-Moshe and Powell (2007) the ISA is displayed as a single white figure against a blue background. As an image grounded in Eurocentric narratives, this depiction speaks to the social clout provided to those who can function independently (Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007). Among other issues, the singularity of the displayed figure implicitly asserts that independence, and by extension those who can compete, are held in high social esteem. Additionally, on a more implicit level, this image posits that inclusive spaces and inclusive design are open only to those who are able to be independent (Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007).

This perception is carried over into existing proposals for a new and updated ISA (see Appendix D for examples Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007). Despite providing for a more active representation of disability, these new images continue to suggest that in order to be a dynamic, strong, and healthy citizen, individuals with disability labels/identities need to be independent (Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007). Such implicit

narratives therefore further intertwine independence and inclusion in the mind of the viewer (Cherney, 2011; Kitchin, 1998). If such narratives are extended, it is evident that to be considered a self-sufficient citizen, individuals need to first separate themselves from those deemed dependent and therefore unworthy of inclusion. Specifically, in an effort to showcase their independence, citizens are required to compete against one another in order to provide evidence of their social worth (Dudley-Marling, 2004; Marling & Dippo, 1995).

Ben-Mosher and Powell (2007), highlight the connections between competition and social worth when they proport that the disability community itself is fracturing into a number of smaller sub-groups, based in part on disability type. In particular, the desire to differentiate individuals based on disability type culminated in a proposed symbol of access designed to represent specifically those with mobility issues. This proposed image is again represented as a single, white, hand holding a hand-rail (see Appendix E). In this sense, competition becomes the avenue through which legitimacy and entry into social spaces is acquired.

The research of both Kitchin (1998), Dudley-Marling (2004), and Dudley-Marling and Dippo (1995) provides support for this sentiment. As an initial point of connectivity, Kitchin (1998), posits that non-disability identified citizens often hold biases or "myths" about community members with disabilities, with such stereotypes often having a two-pronged purpose. First, such mistruths are maintained in an active effort to restrict the social mobility of citizens with disabilities. Once ingrained such social perceptions then become part of unquestioned community discourses (Kitchin,

1998). In this sense, narratives which support the social triad of independence, competition, and inclusion not only become ingrained as a central element of community social architecture, but also serve as a quick and efficient way of sorting and evaluating citizens (Dudley-Marling, 2004; Dudley-Marling & Dippo, 1995; Sleeter, 1987).

However, if Mi'kmaq and Inuit Nations perceive LD labels as less substantive, the linked perceptions that bind competition to both independence and inclusion are interrupted. Such an interruption therefore challenges existing perceptions of not only independence, but also of dependence and interdependence. To be more precise, a shift in social design occurs wherein it is competency, rather than competition, that both provides social capital and serves as a measure of inclusivity. As a first step in replacing competition with competence, Mi'kmaq communities permit narratives of interdependence to sit at the center of both the education system and community life. As an example, the notion that human beings are shaped or "given form" by one another is a perception that extends across multiple domains (Gespe'gewa'gi, 2016, p. 66). In the context of education, the goal remains to learn and grow, but not at the expense of others, lessening the on-going need for competition (Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, 2004).

Furthermore, alongside the position that the world remains constantly in flux, is the tenant that everything must be shared (Ferguson, 2010). This concept stresses that in addition to the equal distribution of material goods, immaterial goods such as "skills, abilities, and knowledge" should also be shared (Ferguson, 2010, p. 6). Such a concept, sitting at the core of community social architecture, directly challenges the notion that knowledge can be owned by any one person. In offering such a challenge, inclusion is

constructed as stemming not from the need to either dominate over, nor function entirely independently from one another. Instead, inclusion evolves from the ebb and flow inherent in a continuous exchange of knowledge and skills.

This thesis is furthered by James Cherney (2011), who like Kitchin (1998), explores the intersection of language and disability. However, where Cherney (2011) differs is when he points out that language use, particularly that used in issues of disability, can reveal much about the social perceptions that underlie community design. Therefore, rather than focusing on how such narratives hold citizens with disabilities in place, Cherney (2011) uses language to interrogate how ability and disability are perceived. In using this lens to probe the intersection of interdependence, Mi'kmaq social architecture, and inclusion, it becomes apparent that the need for assistance is not the result of inability, but rather a natural outcropping of community membership. Just as alternative constructions of belonging can trigger a social change toward equity, interdependence similarly permits competence rather than competition to be a center piece of Mi'kmaq community architectures.

In this sense, interdependence acts to render the social narrative of independence – competition - and inclusion ineffective. More precisely, by promoting a dialog of mutual reliance that extends beyond the tangible, Mi'kmaq social architectures include interdependence as a viable avenue through which to achieve community inclusivity (Ferguson, 2010). In a context where it is a willingness to share both material and immaterial competencies that delineates social inclusivity, it becomes apparent that

excessive competition, as an outward expression of independence, sparks social

disapproval and marginalization rather than inclusivity (Ferguson, 2010).

　　　Such a shift in community discourses has a multidirectional impact. First, it

loosens the narratives that yoke independence to inclusion. Next, perceptions concerning

excessive independence are replaced with alternative social narratives that also value

interdependence. This is therefore accompanied by a simultaneous lessening of the utility

of competition as a mode for securing one's social place. Instead, there is a striving to

make the best of one's unique abilities, both as a point of personal pride and for the well-

being of the community (Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, 2004). When taken together this

shift toward competence negates the need to concurrently denigrate interdependence

while also exemplifying independence, enabling citizens in need of assistance to retain

full and inclusive community membership.

　　　Although different, Inuit communities also place interdependence at the core of

their community social architectures. As Qitsualik (2013) posits, "as harmony naturally

arises from collaborative awareness, disharmony results only from lack of awareness" (p.

32). In continuing this line of thought she suggests that community health and well-being

are linked to a co-operative social architecture (Qitsualik, 2013). This position is

encapsulated in the assertion that both individuals and society at large are a series of

"pattern[s], both graspable and subtle in nature" (Qitsualik, 2013, p. 33).

As such, if Qitsualik's (2013) Inumarik is paired with the work of both Kitchin (1998)

and Cherney (2011), it is apparent that the language of 'the able human' is significant

both for what it expresses, and for what it leaves out.

Specifically, while interconnection, together with individual agency, are positioned as a path to greater capacity, the language of competition, as a display of independence, is absent (Qitsualik, 2013). This is not to suggest that competition is non-existent. Instead, by turning competition inward, it is channelled into an avenue for the development of the awareness required to become an Inummarik (Qitsualik, 2013). Such language therefore changes the relationship that exists between competence and competition. While these concepts exist in parallel to one another, their connection to independence is lacking. This alteration in social architecture constructs capacity as stemming from personal mastery, with or without independence (Qitsualik, 2013).

Moreover, interwoven into this narrative is the notion that community members are interconnected with their world – physically, emotionally, and spiritually. In a social climate where individual awareness or as Qitsualik (2013) terms it 'sovereignty' is intertwined with mutual awareness, assistance is not perceived as weaknesses or inability. Instead, both the giving and receiving of help is constructed as normative and as something that exists alongside other elements of social architecture and community discourses. In unpacking this use of language further, the Inmmarik neither elevates independence nor denounces dependence. As such, the pejorative language about the potential need for assistance is absent (Qitsualik, 2013).

When this absence is viewed through the overlapping lens of Cherney (2011), Kitchin (1998), Dudley-Marling (2004), and Dudley-Marling & Dippo (1995) the need to hold persons with LD experience 'in their place' changes, and the agency of such persons remains intact. More precisely, specialized 'accessible' spaces for adults with LD

experiences/identities are no longer relevant. As such, there is both no need to gain entry

into such spaces, and without such entry, no impitus to link one's level of independence

to inclusion (Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007). In negating the need for identified accessible

spaces, interdependence ushers in an architecture of wider social inclusivity (Ben-Moshe

& Powell, 2007).

It is this challenge to the perceptions of disability that sit at the core of both

Mi'kmaq and Inuit social architecture. By shifting toward competency, interdependence

permits communities to adapt to the individual, rather than applying social pressure in an

attempt to force the individual to adapt to the community. At its core competition is about

asking what individuals can do for the community (Dudley-Marling, 2004; Dudley-

Marling & Dippo, 1995). However, in focusing instead on competence, the social

architecture of Mi'kmaq and Inuit Nations asks instead what the community can do for its

citizens. Interdependence therefore prompts a shift not only in social perception, but also

in social relationality and behaviour.

The unique social architecture of Mi'kmaq and Inuit Nations therefore use

interdependence to facilitate the social inclusion of adults with alternative learning

experiences via an engaged form of citizenship that dovetail with the politized nature of

inclusive design theories. As is posited by Imrie and Hall (2003), changes in inclusion

remain superficial if more extensive social and moral shifts are lacking. Although enacted

differently, the interdependence embedded in each Nation's community frameworks

provoke changes both in the perceptions that frame LDs experiences, and a linked shift in

community behavior. In moving toward competency, interdependence, like equity and

belonging set the stage for the attitudinal changes needed for the achievement of social inclusivity.

Additional Points of Contact/Directions and Conclusions

For both the Mi'kmaq and Inuit Nations, a multilayered sense of interconnectedness sits at the core of community life (Battiste, 2002; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Smylie et al., 2009). Developing within such community frameworks, and alongside both belonging and interdependence, is an additional point of connectivity: desegregation. This desegregation runs deeper than permitting citizens of varying ability levels to engage with one another. Rather, it extends to the way in which learning and ultimately alternative learning experiences are conceptualized. Specifically, neither Mi'kmaq nor Inuit Nations segment alternative learning experiences as either rooted in the individual, school system/learning environment, or the community itself.

To be more precise, the urge to compartmentalize such learning experiences using either biological or social theories and/or frameworks of disability is lessened. Unlike scholars such as Dudley-Marling (2004), Dudley-Marling & Dippo (1995), and Sleeter (1987) among others, the primary text of the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (2004) school system (Mi'kmaq) or Qisualik (2013) (Inuit) do not query which framework can be best used to understand learning differences. This could impact social architecture in a two-fold manner. First, as the exclusive use of one conceptual framework often offers an ineffective, and lopsided perspective, exploring alternative learning experiences without this segmentation may permit greater inclusivity (Hansen & Philo, 2006).

In perceiving citizens to be both biologically-based and socially interconnected and actively aware, perhaps Indigenous social structure has the ability to better understand who each citizen is, how they function, and how best they can be supported. This coincides with the supposition that interdependence uses competency to grow the community around its citizens, rather than using competition as a strategy to force individuals to fit into community social structures. Through the combined use of both social and biological frameworks, it may be possible that Indigenous communities are better able to perceive citizens both as biological beings, and social creatures who exist in a wider social climate.

As the dichotomy that divides social and/or biological models of disability becomes increasingly permeable, is it possible that Indigenous perspectives can be added to these traditional (and Eurocentric) disability discourses? When either/or social/biological understandings of disability are softened, can individuals instead be perceived as simply 'citizens', and not 'citizens with a disability'? As such, rather than being an additive to the design process - something perceived as unusual or different - disability is conceived of as normative (Imrie & Hall, 2003). Therefore, the need for 'person-first' language is nullified, as the desire to point-out and label disabilities, including alternative learning experiences, becomes void.

Although such perspectives of disability have the potential to align with existing inclusive design perspectives, this thesis and its supporting lines of inquiry remain underdeveloped due to a gap and/or lack in the existing literature (Imrie & Hall, 2003). In particular, research on Indigenous persons with disabilities remains sparse, with specific

information on LD labels, experiences, and identities even more so. This absence is exacerbated by the reality that while research interrogating the relationship between disability, design, social architecture, and inclusivity does exist, it often grows in isolation and is rarely overlapped with Indigeneity. As such, while this project piques curiosity, and provides one potential avenue of inquiry, it has barely scratched the surface on what remains unknown.

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Appendix A: International Symbol of Access (ISA)

"Winning access symbol design by Susanne Koefoed, 1968 (white outline of a wheelchair within a black square (Arthur & Passini, 1992)" (Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007, p. 492).

"The International Symbol of Access (ISA). Official design copyrighted by ICTA and regulated by ISO 7001:1990 public information symbols (white outline of a wheelchair user within a blue square)" (Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007, p. 492).

Appendix A: International Symbol of Access (ISA) Continued

Colour Image of the current ISA as displayed on an Ontario, Canada, accessible parking

permit (August 2018).

Appendix B: Proposed Change to the International Symbol of Access (ISA)

" 'A' access symbol by Daniel Wilkens of Nth Degree (Roman capital letter A in

Helvetica bold white type)" (Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007, p. 502)

Appendix C: Definitions of Independence, Dependence, and Interdependence

Independence encompasses the ability to function freely. As Solveig Reindal (1999) asserts "[o]ften in commonsense usage, dependency suggests the incapacity to do things for oneself and, consequently, the reliance upon others to carry out some or all the chores of everyday life." (pp. 356) As proposed by Reindal (1999), independence is often constructed as a self-contained and finished state. Moreover, it frequently represents the end or optimal goal of most educational, social, and political frameworks. Additionally, independence often implies both physical and mental capacity, paired with the rationality (ability) needed to make informed choices (Reindal, 1999).

Dependence is often referenced as an unfinished state, one that serves as the necessary precursor to independence. More precisely, dependence is associated with two core features: the inability to complete routine, daily tasks (i.e. dressing, bathing etc.), and the subsequent need to illicit assistance from others (Reindal). In opposition to the active and able nature of independence, dependence is therefore perceived as passive, receptive, and non-able.

Interdependence represents an engaged form of citizenship that is neither the center-point of an independent-dependent spectrum, nor a combination of these two factors. Instead as conceptualized by Reindal (1999), interdependence serves as a "partnership…[wherein] independence becomes a two-way responsibility and not solely an individual ability (p. 364). In this sense, interdependence nullifies the importance of ability, while encouraging socio-political interactions that are both mutual and reciprocal.

Appendix D: Additional Proposed Changes to the International Symbol of Access (ISA)

"Logotype of ADAPT, American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today (ISA with an
animation showing a wheelchair user breaking chains overhead)" (Ben-Moshe & Powell,
2007, p. 495).

"Self-propelling wheelchair user ISA by VSA Arts, 2005" (Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007,
p. 499).

"Modified ISA (integrated into abstraction of an elevator with arrows), Museum of
Technology, Berlin, Germany, 2005" (Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007, p. 500).

Appendix D: Additional Proposed Changes to the International Symbol of Access (ISA)

Continued

" 'Universal access' symbol for Apple Computer's X operating system (human figure

standing with arms and legs outstretched surrounded by white and blue circles)" (Ben-

Moshe & Powell, 2007, p. 502).

Appendix E: Proposed Internal Symbol of Access (ISA) Specific to Mobility Impairment

"Proposed international symbol of mobility (ISM) by Access International (hand gripping

a rail for stability and guidance, on a blue background)" (Ben-Moshe & Powell, 2007, p.

501).