

An Amikwa Family through their eyes: An Auto-ethnographic Study of an Indigenous  
Community in Northern Ontario Canada

Ravindra Nandlall

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Master of Arts

Graduate Program in Social and Cultural Anthropology

YORK UNIVERSITY

TORONTO, ONTARIO

August 2016

© Ravindra Nandlall, 2016

## **Abstract**

This work is focused on the lived experience in Northern Ontario, on the Pickerel River. The Mcquabbie Family history is used as a platform for discussing larger socio-political issues directly connected to person-hood, and identity politics. Through this discussion, we attempt to unravel the multitude of ways in which knowledge and the production of knowledge can be interpreted and understood in a variance of ways historically, and cross-culturally.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to all people who have experienced marginalization or perceived marginalization, around the world. It is also dedicated to all colours and creeds that make up this beautiful planet we are so blessed to live upon, and to anyone who has ever struggled to find their rightful place and positionality in the world.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge my family and loved ones for their patience and motivation through this process, and for their lifetime of efforts and continual support that has contributed to the person I am today. More importantly, this thesis could not have been written without the dedication and support of Stacy and Jackie and the entire Mcquabbie Family. They were kind enough and willing to share their knowledge and histories with me, as well as their home as a forum to conduct these in depth discussions. I would also like to acknowledge the residents of the Henvey Inlet #13 French River Reserve for allowing my presence in an academic sense in their community and for treating me with dignity and respect anytime they encountered me throughout my research process whether it be in Stacy's family home or on the River. I also wanted to acknowledge the Pickerel River, for treating me with respect as I did it and will continue to do throughout my lifetime, I greatly appreciate it.

## Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Abstract .....   | ii        |
| Dedication .....   | iii       |
| Acknowledgments .....  | iv        |
| Table of Contents .....  | v         |
| List of Figures .....  | vi        |
| <b>Summary Remarks.....</b>                                    | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Chapter One: Introduction .....</b>                         | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Chapter Two: Field site and Methodology .....</b>           | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Chapter Three: “The Doctrine of Discovery” .....</b>        | <b>23</b> |
| <b>Chapter Four: The Robinson Huron Treaty .....</b>           | <b>26</b> |
| <b>Chapter Five: The Domesticated Cat.....</b>                 | <b>31</b> |
| <b>Chapter Six: Amikwa (The Beaver People).....</b>            | <b>37</b> |
| <b>Chapter Seven: Spirituality/Symbols.....</b>                | <b>39</b> |
| <b>Chapter Eight: Symbols, Anthropology and Identity .....</b> | <b>42</b> |
| <b>Chapter Nine: Rain .....</b>                                | <b>51</b> |
| <b>Chapter Ten: The soles of their feet.....</b>               | <b>59</b> |
| <b>Chapter Eleven: Logging .....</b>                           | <b>65</b> |
| <b>Chapter Twelve: Solitude.....</b>                           | <b>70</b> |
| <b>Conclusion .....</b>  | <b>78</b> |
| <b>Bibliography .....</b>                                      | <b>85</b> |

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1. Map of Ontario Copyright Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada: Natural Resources Canada, 2000.

Figure 2. Map of Pickerel River, Source: Stacy Mcquabbie

Figure 3. The Amikwa Logo, Source: Stacy Mcquabbie

## **Summary Remarks**

This summary is in reference to my thesis for a Master's Degree in Social and Cultural Anthropology here at York University. The title of my Thesis is, An Amikwa Family through their eyes: An Auto-ethnographic study of an Indigenous Community in Northern Ontario.

My research was situated in Northern Ontario. The research is based on a close examination of a familial lineage in connection with a Clan known as the Amikwa, a sub-category of the Anishnaabeg, and related to the Algonquin. According to my participants the "Mcquabbie's", their identity and connection to that particular Clan name has disappeared through various processes and government intervention. It is important to understand and highlight for the purpose of this presentation that I do not claim this to be a unique situation, or one that has never been discussed or approached from an academic standpoint. I am fully aware that there is historical evidence and documentation of Canadian processes related to assimilation including but not limited the uprooting of First Nations from their geographical origins and the placement of them in Canadian Reserve systems in order to execute larger plans related to, from a colonial standpoint, the overall "Native situation".

I think an important issue to highlight when discussing this paper is the importance of memory and loss and their association with historical and contemporary notions and articulation of identity amongst the Mcquabbie's. An example of the importance of the role that memory and loss play in conjunction with identity is demonstrated with the notion of the Mcquabbie name being transformed and changed over time.

Firstly, I would like to engage in some of the crucial ideologies and documents in dealing with First Nations issues in the Canadian context. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the idea of the "the

doctrine of discovery” instilled in the 1500’s was the “legal” means by which Europeans claimed their rights to the “new world”. This theory allows for the notion that because they “found” or discovered the land in turn they can claim rights.

Secondly, the Indian Act was influential as it was a way in which the Canadian government can clearly outline who belongs to the term “Indian” and who does not, essentially providing a mode of categorization for the First Nations peoples of Canada. In conjunction with the Indian act, came the White Paper of 1969 which outline the wrongdoings of the aforementioned categorization. Through their acknowledgement they cemented their ideas of seclusion and advocated for a Canada in which all members are equal and Indians can slowly integrate into society and become equals.

Lastly, the “Brown Paper” as a response to both the Indian Act and more specifically a direct response to the White paper, was an influential document, as it was able to provide for the Canadian government the way in which First Nations members interpret and refute government attempts at defining the relationship between First Nations and The Crown and their positionality in Canadian society.

Chapter Three signifies a very important chapter in this paper as it outlines the importance of both the Robinson Huron and the Robinson Superior treaties, the treaties in which settled the lands of First Nations communities adjacent to the upper Great Lakes, (Lake Huron and Lake Superior). This section is important as it is the section which outlines for the first time in this paper the issue of interpretation. Miller brings forth the notion that the two parties involved ie: Canadian government and First Nations groups have a difference in understanding what function treaties served and what they represent. The problem that arises in this Chapter is meant to



exemplify Euro-centric conceptualizations of treaties and treaty rights vs First Nations understanding of treaty rights/processes. These ideas are further explored by Ibhawoh as she describes what I would call the “politics” surrounding interpretation, and the variance in understanding between the Crown and First Nations groups. This is also the Chapter which highlights the importance of Oral history vs written history, and attempts to create some validation of Oral traditions.

Chapter Four is meant to further exemplify from Stacy’s point of view, the fact that the issues that face his family, and on a larger level the community of First Nations people in Canada have from time immemorial been placed in a box. Whereby they are at the will and submission of the Canadian government because structurally the system is designed as such, to where questioning the system is taboo for fear of losing any other additional rights. The idea of the kitten in the box lead to larger discussions that I understood through the works of Dews, Foucault, and Li as they describe the various instruments and tactics used by governing bodies in order to control and monitor specific populations. Through the various forms of power and through ideas such as governmentality governing bodies are able to control and contain particular populations for their own “common good”.

Chapter Five is a brief discussion of the history of the Amikwa from Stacy’s perspective. As mentioned previously, this seems to bring forth the issue of traditional and oral knowledge systems vs written and government documented knowledge interpretation.

Chapter Six is in reference to the importance of symbols in conjunction with spirituality. It is meant to demonstrate the ways in which First Nations members, more specifically the

Mcquabbie's interpret and understand their spiritual connection to their heritage and to the name Amikwa.

Chapter Seven was meant to initiate a discussion surrounding symbolism, and the importance of symbolism in conjunction with its effects on personhood or identity. The point of this chapter was to present a platform in which we can discuss the power that particular symbols can hold both on a personal level for the Mcquabbie's as well the effect the symbol of the Beaver in the store had on me personally and professionally. A point that was important for Stacy and I was the symbols that are directly connected to government, governance, and the Crown. As well, this Chapter was useful as it allowed us to expand this discussion into theories brought forth surrounding knowledge production and the importance of understanding the knowledge and processes associated with knowledge production. This is where the idea of knowledge being directly connected and understood through the social was initially presented. It also opened up a platform to discuss issues related to the "Indian" as defined by the Crown vs the Annishnaabeg as Stacy understands it.

Chapter Eight was intended to describe the ways in which weather and conditions can play a role in day to day living on the reserve. It was to provide for the reader a vignette of how challenging it is to live on a body of water when subject to weather conditions. As well, it allowed for the reader to see a snapshot of how various weather conditions and other circumstances can affect the product of work as well as the mental state while in the field.

Chapter Nine is a crucial chapter in understanding how Stacy interprets the term sovereignty differently than that of what is meant by the Crown. Through Stacy's understanding I was able to see broadly how powerful this idea of sovereignty being located in "the soles of their feet".

Through this deeper understanding it is easy to see why he feels the Canadian government is “immobile” without the Native people. This idea brings to light the powerful ways Stacy exemplifies his theories in our conversations and how eloquently he drives his points across.

Chapter Ten exemplifies the difficulties when dealing with issues related to the extraction of raw material on a colonial level. These extraction processes as presented in this thesis cause an influx and a variance of interpretations amongst the ones doing the extraction as well as historians who write about these processes. Furthermore, at the local level community members have been there and understand these processes differently and can demonstrate the hierarchical ways in which extraction, processing, and selling of resources impact local community members which can be seen in the closing of the logging mill. The Chapter highlights the main point of this thesis in that it demonstrates the alternate interpretations of the same history but from different perspectives.

Chapter Eleven attempts to show the relevance of dreams and spirituality within the First Nations culture and is an attempt to connect myself even at the smallest level to a kind of spirituality I never experienced prior to being in the field, nor after leaving the field.

To conclude I would like to provide for you all the main point of this paper. It is my belief that all the research conducted examines the difference in interpretation in conjunction with personal and historical perspectives of the same events. This brings forth larger questions of knowledge and the production of knowledge within a historical or Anthropological context. These ideas brought forth throughout this thesis tends to blur the lines between what can be considered as knowledge and what can be considered as truth or fact. As far as linking this thesis to broader anthropological issues, I think that within the discipline of Anthropology there has always been a

focus on methods of research and how and in what ways can this be ethically accomplished. I believe that this Thesis still opens up questions regarding research methods in that I am unsure if this style of Auto-ethnography that I have chosen can indeed stand up to the rigid ideals that some within and outside of the discipline suggest. As well when looking at this thesis from an Anthropological standpoint we can clearly see that this conversation opens up a space for continuing discussions on what defines “identity, community, ancestry, history, lineage, knowledge, and the production of knowledge.

Questions:

At the on-set of my research I attempted to include the voice of my participant in order to establish a more equitable relationship between the researcher (myself) and the participant. I am wondering now that I have completed the research was this was indeed the correct approach, or should there have been a clear cut method to the research conducted.

In Chapter Three I highlighted the idea that scholars dispute the notion that these processes were created deliberately in order to marginalize the First Nations peoples of Canada, this structured form of dominance and control make me wonder could the government really for-see this larger issue that is prevalent within First Nations politics in contemporary Canada, or was this just simply an oversight or a way of damage control.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

I would like to start this thesis by introducing myself. This will provide for the reader the background information to better understand the perspective in which this paper is written. My name is Ravi Nandlall. I am a 27-year-old male who was born and raised in Richmond Hill, Ontario. My parents were born and raised in Guyana and migrated here early in their lives. I am a Master's student in the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology. These and other characteristics have helped shaped my understanding of the First Nations issues that I will explore in the upcoming chapters of this thesis. The First Nations issues that will be explored focus primarily on the fieldwork that I conducted with Stacey and Jackie Mcquabbie. These two individuals are husband and wife. They live on the #13 French River Reserve part of the Henvey Inlet First Nations Ojibway territory in Alban, Ontario. This account will be presented through the Mcquabbie family history, combined with their personal accounts of living in an Ojibway reserve located in Alban Ontario, adjacent to the Pickerel River. It is an auto-ethnographic account that intertwines with my own experiences with the family when I conducted anthropological fieldwork in Northern Ontario while living in a cabin on the Pickerel River from May 26, 2014 to August 8, 2014. My account is also framed by anthropological theories including hegemony, necro-politics, bare life, governmentality, and imperial debris. This thesis will also engage in theories brought forth from a First Nations perspective when examining treaty rights, spirituality and dreams, production and interpretation of knowledge, and timber as a resource. Some of this research was provided to me by Stacy in his years working on these issues as in addition to my own independent research. These scholarly works will address the aforementioned issues as well as First Nations perspectives on sovereignty, land, and title claim. The central issues that I have identified as a result of work done with my participants relate to

questions of economics, land rights, race/ethnicity, inequalities, and social injustice. I also intend to highlight some of the Mcquabbie family's questions and issues about their place in Canada and amongst First Nations peoples and, more generally, the complex questions and issues facing First Nations peoples in Canada. These issues include, but are not limited to: power relations and structures and modes of domination and control between First Nations communities and other Canadians as well as power relations and structures and modes of domination and control within First Nations communities. As well, social injustices experienced by First Nations peoples for me focuses on the identity politics within First Nations peoples and the manner of its framing by the Canadian government. Furthermore, land, land rights and reserves; access to raw materials and resources; and the lack of care by the federal government will also be a focus. These issues, among others, continue to have a significant impact of the everyday lives of First Nations communities throughout Canada.

This ethnographic study of a family unit on the Pickerel River Henvey Inlet reserve seeks to provide a small window into these larger issues. In particular, I seek to explore concepts introduced by Giorgio Agamben in his discussion of "bare life". I will utilize this concept to interpret First Nations politics and overall welfare on the #13 French River Reserve. I will apply necro-politics as a framework for understanding how politics within a First Nations context affects the core of their life cycle the while demonstrating that politics and policies forced upon members of First Nations communities can negatively impact contemporary livelihood as well as future generations. Through this exploration, I argue that the structures of domination, power, and control that currently exist within First Nations communities lead to exclusion and marginalization of some First Nations communities. These structures are the result of on-going

processes related to the historical implementation and continued reinforcement of First Nations reserve systems by the Canadian government.

The way in which this argument will be structured will be the combination of auto-ethnography complimented by scholarly analysis to advance my arguments. Ethnographic writing has long been critiqued and analyzed within the discipline of anthropology as a method of research. Anthropologists have long debated the “scientific” basis of their research methods. The narrative style of ethnography challenges methods of “traditional” anthropological methodologies. Auto-ethnography in its beginnings was considered as “insider ethnography” where one studies a group of which they are a member of (Hayano 1979:101). Auto-ethnography allowed me to adopt a more self-reflexive approach to understanding the issues I encountered while in the field a both a personal and professional level. When conducting fieldwork, it is important that the voices of your participants are showcased and recognized as an instrumental part of the research conducted. These ideas emerge from the field of study known as “dialogical anthropology”. Some well-known scholars who have advocated for narrative ethnography include: Vincent Carpanzano, Dennis Tedlock, and Kevin Dwyer. Their scholarly works have demonstrated that dialogue stands at the core of the ethnographic encounter (Kohl 1998:52). Johannes Fabian suggests that these processes are “central for the early stages of knowledge production (Kohl 1998:52). In my own research, I found that including the voice of the participant allows for a more equitable relationship between the researcher and the participant and provides the reader with direct access to the participant’s narratives.

It has been commonly accepted in contemporary discussions amongst anthropologists that the study of culture cannot be honed in on a specific set of structures in which to understand

and examine various cultures throughout the world. Therefore, more non-traditional methods of research have been adapted, including this form of auto-ethnography.

Following Clough, I use auto-ethnography as an approach that allows the process of writing to be closely aligned with theoretical reflection, thereby serving as a vehicle for thinking ‘new sociological subjects’ and forming ‘new parameters of the social.’ (Clough 2000: 290)

One of the main arguments when discussing the validity of auto-ethnography as a tool of research, was the issue of authority e.g.: the voice of the author. The authority that the author holds is instrumental in understanding the complexities associated with this form of representation in research. However, it is important to understand that from a contemporary standpoint, auto-ethnography can and should be understood from the perspective of the author. While he/she does narrate the context of these accounts through his/her own voice, it is understood by both the researcher and participant that these accounts are to be understood as work written through the researchers understanding of the material. Through this style of examination, one can leave room for interpretation on gender/class/race/ differences between the researcher and the participant, and draw a conclusion based on those facts or remain as the researcher does, open to interpretation.



## Chapter Two: Field site and Methodology

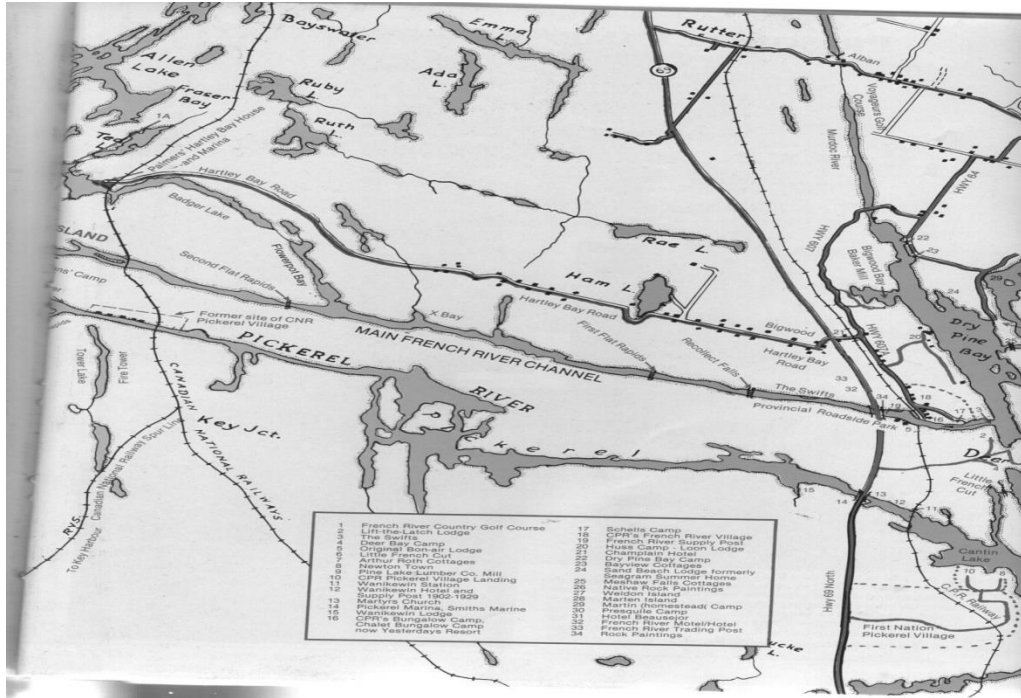
Summer of 2013: First Questions

From June 6th to August 23, 2013, I lived in a cabin located on the Pickerel River in Ontario Canada.

Figure .1



Figure. 2



The cabin belongs to my family, which we purchased in 2005. We are located two bays east of the #13 French River Reserve, deemed to be an Ojibway First Nations reserve part of Henvey Inlet and named as such by the Canadian government. I have visited this particular region for over ten years, and I have had many interactions with local community members and members of the reserve. For the purpose of this thesis and in order to situate the reader with my surroundings I will describe the property in detail as advised in Kirin Narayan’s on how to scrap ethnography. My location was situated approximately ten-minute boat ride from the marina, which is on the #13 French River Reserve. After the eastward journey to the cabin, I would arrive on a sandy beach on a property that is approximately ten acres in size. It has ten standing

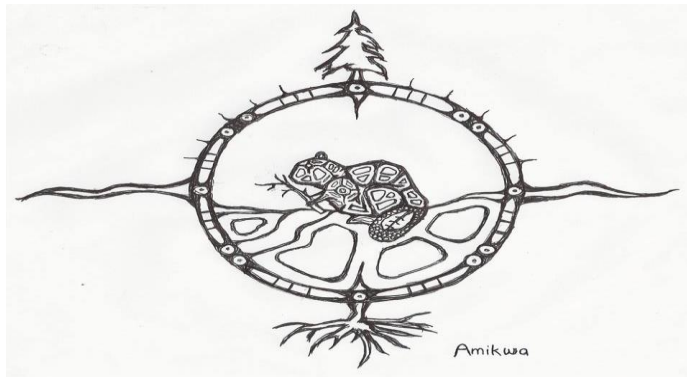
buildings. The first building seen is the cabana, a large roofed building with an open concept sitting area, it is an outdoor building designed like a gazebo. Adjacent to this building are three cabins aligned northward to the edge of the property line. My cabin was the very last one, furthest from the dock and backed into the deep brush of the woods. Behind the cabin closest to the dock is the ATV and electrical room, where we house our ATV and store tools. Behind the ATV room is the storage room where we keep our lawn mowers, also known as the “bat house” due to its large occupancy of bats prior to our obtaining this property. Behind the bat house is the shower house, which hold two separate rooms both with a shower, sink, and toilet. Adjacent to this room southward is a large three-bedroom cabin that my family and I custom built from the ground up. It sleeps up to sixteen people. Adjacent to this large cabin there are two unfinished cabins with no electricity and no plumbing, these are the only two unoccupied buildings on the land. This land was originally used on the river by a family who operated a lodge called Woodlands, which is still affectionately referred to by locals as well as by my family and I.

In the Summer of 2013, one particular local encounter piqued my interest. I went to purchase something from the local convenience store down the road from our cabin. When I entered the store, I noticed a drawing on the counter near the register that was very intricate. I asked Adam Mcquabbie, the shop owner, what the drawing depicted. Adam explained to me that it was a picture of their “clan’s logo”. The statement was puzzling to me because I had always assumed that since this convenience store was located on an Ojibwa First Nations Reserve, that all members of the community were “Ojibwa”. Adam’s statement prompted me to ask if their clan were “Ojibwa”? Adam replied that, ‘it was a common misconception that they are all Ojibwa’. He went on to tell me that his family, much like other families living within the Reserve, actually belong to a separate group with the cultural name, ‘Amikwa’. He continued by telling

me that most people do not even know that they are members of something other than Ojibwa, and that throughout time, the particular history regarding cultural names has been changed, altered, and, ultimately, lost.

My conversation with Adam Mcquabbie stayed with me though the course of the summer. I knew then that I wanted to learn more about the history of the Amikwa and by extension, the issues related to the identity politics within First Nations communities. When I next visited the store June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013, I spoke to Adam again about these issues. He politely explained to me that his father Stacy would be glad to speak to me about this topic when I had some free time. I understood this as Adam's way of letting me know that he is not as well-versed on issues regarding First Nations communities as was his father. I respected his wishes and chose to take up this discussion with his father, Stacy. While driving my boat back to the cabin, I also thought that Adam may not have felt comfortable speaking with me about issues related to his people or his community. On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013 I went back to the convenience store to purchase more supplies. Stacy was working behind the register that day and kindly helped me with my purchase. It was only at the end of the purchase as I removed my bag off of the counter that the image of the clan logo was uncovered again. This provoked an unanticipated lengthy conversation regarding identity politics and issues surrounding First Nations and their relationship with the Canadian government. We enjoyed an interesting and insightful conversation. Stacy got me to think more broadly about the importance of First Nations issues within our country, a subject matter which would drive my focus for the upcoming years.

Figure. 3



We continued to see one another throughout the summer of 2013 as I continuously purchased supplies there, though we did not engage in any additional in-depth conversations on the subject of the ‘Amikwa’. It was not until the fall of 2013, as I embarked on the beginning of my Master’s Degree in Social and Cultural Anthropology that I began to consider these issues as a potential area of study for my Thesis. I had written an initial thesis proposal on the topic of West Indian youth and immigrant politics, however, my Supervisor Zulfikar Hirji and I struggled to identify the essence of my research. What was I trying to find out? Would anyone care? Zulfikar and I discussed switching my focus to a topic that would be more meaningful and that would provide a more fulfilling research experience. . It was during this initial meeting that I began to recall the conversations that I had with Adam and Stacy. I mentioned the story to Zulfikar as a possible research option. It was one of many “eureka moments” I would have in the upcoming years regarding socio-political issues related to First Nations communities in the Canadian North. This conversation fueled my interests as we began to plot areas of interest and possible discussion points for the upcoming fieldwork that was to be conducted in the following summer months of 2014.

These two conversations provided me with a space to start thinking more broadly about issues of social and political identities, whereby identity is directly influenced by the political. These histories help us to understand the ways in which notions of memory and loss are associated with historical and contemporary articulations of identity amongst the Mcquabbie family. These notions are set against the background of debates about nation identity in Canada, specifically in regards to First Nations peoples.

Stacy has taken up this responsibility and has been working on a title claim on behalf of the Amikwa people in order to gain back recognition for his people from the Canadian government. To articulate some of these conventions that effect Stacy and the Mcquabbie family I will be viewing these discussions not from a legal standpoint but from a lens in which I can discuss the socio-political issues from an anthropological perspective. This style will provide for the reader an alternate view of understanding First Nations identity politics. The claim is one which Stacy has been researching for the majority of his life. Prior to meeting the Mcquabbie's in a professional context I was not aware of my potential role as a vehicle for communicating Stacy's message to a broader range of people. The "cause" for Stacy is an attempt to correct what he considers to be a major misconception/misrepresentation? of his ancestral histories? as well as his (own) contemporary history. The ethical obligations that make my research valuable to the Mcquabbie's are that I will be able to provide for Stacy and his family a detailed account of the historical processes that has affected him and members of the community from his perspective while in direct juxtaposition to the anthropological framework that my educational background has taught me.

In 1885 William W. Warren wrote extensively about the histories of the Ojibway. The oral traditions that he gathered seem to support/ acknowledge the existence of the Amikwa as a

totem (or subcategory) of the Ojibway. This contradicts Stacy's sentiments regarding his familial history being deemed as extinct by the Canadian government through colonial practices and processes of assimilation. Interestingly, although Warren acknowledges the existence of the Amikwa in 1885, Stacy affirms that continuously thereafter the assimilation processes conducted throughout the 1900's by the Canadian government essentially wiped his history away, including the slow assimilation of his family name "Amikwa" into its contemporary and "Canadianized" version "Mcquabbie".

#### Summer 2014: New Questions

I arrived in my new garb as 'student-researcher' in the summer of 2014. My first formal fieldwork experience was not as smooth as anticipated. I was under the assumption that since I had previous encounters with the family and that my family and I owned a cabin on the river, they would be willing and open to meeting as soon as I was available. That was not untrue. They were willing and open to meet, however, scheduling issues impeded on our initial meeting. This experience helped me to realize that that your participants are under no obligation to fulfill the demands of the research. This is especially true when dealing with marginalized populations. It is important to understand that research conducted at the graduate level can be interpreted by others and participants of the research as occupying a position of privilege. Keeping this in mind, the researcher should remain conscious of said interpretations and ensure that this position of privilege is not demonstrated in the form of entitlement. The participant does not have to work with you, nor does he/she have to cater to your schedule. It is in fact you, the researcher that is to accommodate the schedule/time constraints of the participant.

The first thing that I did when I got settled at my field site was to inform Stacy and Jackie for the purpose of my stay, the nature of my research and what I anticipated their roles would be in the context of my research. On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 I travelled for the first time in my boat, across the river to the marina where I got in my car and went off to meet my participants. Unfortunately, when I arrived there Jackie informed me that Stacy was out of town, and he would not return for a day or two. I felt discouraged- a feeling that I would get to know quite well over the next few months. However, one positive outcome of the meeting was that I was able to discuss some of my research goals with Jackie. After drafting several versions of my proposal the months before, it felt good to finally share my thoughts and goals with someone from my field site. else

A little less than a week later, on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014, I was able to go to the store to attempt to meet up with Stacy a second time. Stacy is a man of average height, of slender build, and with a very calm demeanor. There, he stood at the cash register of his convenience store wondering if I came there to buy something. Upon introduction, he informed me that his wife, Jackie, had already filled him in on the reason for my visit to his store that day. I wondered if this was the person that would be helpful to my research? I wondered if his passions were aligned with mine. I wondered if he possessed the information that I needed for my research. I wondered if he would be able to articulate his stories and opinions in a manner that is clear and relevant to my research. That day, I was accompanied by my two cousins. Both of them are male, approximately twenty-eight years of age and Canadian-born. They came to help me settle in for the first little while in the field. Although, I had interacted with Stacy many times before at the convenience store, this was the first time I actually held a noteworthy conversation with him. It was allowing me to see a different side of him. Now I was seeing him as a student of



Anthropology- one who was interested in the ways in which anthropology can be used to better understand his positionality within a Canadian context. Stacy automatically welcomed my cousins and I went into his home to sit at the kitchen table. The table was made of solid wood, and looked sturdier than ever and also appeared to house many in-depth discussions, including those I had frequently throughout the Summer of 2014.

The fact that Stacy and I shared a strong interest in similar issues sustained my curiosity and passion throughout the course of the research. My intrigue was in issues surrounding histories related to First Nations groupings primarily in the contemporary form of First Nation Reserves. It was my belief that the Canadian First Nations Reserve systems are put together primarily by the Canadian government without concern of the cultural differences various groupings of First Nations had with one another. Also without consideration of the alternate histories that First Nations members know and believe in. Based on the information provided to me by my participants, the reserves were established by the Canadian government so that they could control and take possession of raw materials (natural resources) that were on the lands that members of First Nations occupied throughout Canada.

As Stacy, my two cousins, and I sat around Stacy's kitchen table and discussed my research interests, Stacy started to speak passionately about various issues that personally plagued him as well as concerned many members of his community. A man who had previously seemed to me as quite reserved and calm surprised me as he spoke. Unfortunately, as his passion rose, and the conversation started to get in deep, I could neither process nor record all the information that he provided me due to the rapid pace at which he shared his stories. Not only had I left my tape recorder back at the cabin, I had only intended to meet and greet Stacy casually and slowly introduce him to my project. I did not anticipate us to speak to him at length

(or in any depth) about the issues. This is a situation that a researcher may encounter while in the field. Therefore, it is important to always be prepared when meeting a participant, as their eagerness (as was the case in my situation), may catch you off guard. Lucky for me, I did have a notepad that served me well as I was able to notate key subject matters, which I subsequently revisited upon our next meeting. What I took away from Stacy on this first official visit was the passion with which he spoke. I was satisfied that I had selected the right person to speak to in this community about the social and historical injustices that First Nations members have experienced.

According to the Tri-Council Policy which outlines the “Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans”, in the past, research conducted by First Nations people has not proved to be particularly beneficial to First Nations populations, nor has the research necessarily portrayed an accurate reflection of general Aboriginal world views (Tri-Council Policy 2010:105). Within the First Nations reserve systems, there exist hierarchies that govern the area. These hierarchies come in various forms. There is a locally elected Band Council that controls the day-to-day operation, functionality, and ongoing processes that affect the reserve and its community members. These are some of the reasons why it is difficult to gain permission to access and conduct research with members of a First Nations community. However, it is not my objective to speak for any members of this community in any way. My intention is to portray an accurate depiction of historical information that pertains to the life on the reserve for the Mcquabbie’s.

My next few weeks of fieldwork were filled with similar discussions, recording, and note-taking. Through this process and through social interaction of doing fieldwork at the only store on the reserve, I was able to meet people like Stacy’s mother, and his brother Arnold both who have since passed. I had many social conversations with people living on the reserve as

well as with local cottagers in the area. None of these interactions or conversations will be used for this research but must be considered as influential on the way in which I interpret the information presented to me. There are a multitude of reasons why I have chosen not to include the aforementioned interactions/conversation. These reasons include, but are not limited to issues of trust between the community members and myself, they may not want to be a part of my research, yet still want to provide feedback regarding some of the discussions Stacy and I engage in. As well, this paper was not meant to take into account all community members perspective on the Ojibwa, or the Amikwa, as not all members of this community relate to or have knowledge regarding the Amikwa history as Stacy depicts it and therefore prove irrelevant for the purpose of this thesis.

Upon returning from the field, I was enrolled in my last course for the completion of coursework required for my Masters in Social and Cultural Anthropology. Throughout this semester, I embarked on transcribing the data which I acquired while in the field. This proved to be a daunting task, while in the midst juggling course work, I spent countless hours just attempting to get my interviews transcribed. After months of working through interviews, I was able to seek the advice a colleague who is currently working through her PhD. She was able to provide for me a bit of insight into transcribing the rest of my data. The advice was to go back to my field notes and transcribe only the portions of my interviews which I found noteworthy. I was fortunate that, my field notes were dated and timed in accordance with the information I found noteworthy (one of the perks of being organized while in the field). This proved to be extremely useful as I was able to transcribe the information that allowed for the completion of this paper. Once the bulk of the transcribing was complete, I went through the transcriptions and separated them thematically, in order to provide some structure to my thought process. After this

process, I faced a barrier in my research whereby I could not fathom how and in what form would the writing process take place. It was at this time that I consulted with my supervisor, Zulfikar Hirji, in order to discuss a plan of action. Through this meeting, I was advised to read a book by Kirin Narayan entitled, “Alive in The Writing” 2010, which proved to be unbelievably useful in providing a framework in which I could write ethnography for the first time. Narayan lays out exercises in which one can follow systematically and can ultimately be the core information required for a successful interpretation of ethnographic field work.

### **Chapter Three: “The Doctrine of Discovery”**

Without providing a detailed account of the last 500 years of history, I would like to take a moment to address a few key concepts, laws, and treaties to provide for the reader a vignette of the political circumstances that currently still impact First Nations communities on both a local and a national scale. One of the main concepts that needs to be explored originated in the 1500’s upon the discovery of the “New World”. This concept is called “The Doctrine of Discovery”. This was the “legal” means by which Europeans claimed pre-emptive rights in the New World, and it underlies the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to this day (Reid 2010:335). The Doctrine of Discovery was the legal means by which Europeans claimed rights of sovereignty, property, and trade in regions they allegedly discovered during the age of expansion (Reid 2010:336). These claims were made without consultation with the resident populations in these territories – the people to whom, by any sensible account, the land actually belonged (Reid 2010:336). The doctrine held that Indigenous peoples could not claim ownership of their land, but only rights of occupation and use. In this way, colonial powers claimed pre-emptive rights while conceding only restricted title to a territory’s owners (Reid 2010:336). Stemming from this idea of “The Doctrine of Discovery” came the Royal Proclamation of 1763 whereby the document reflected the English Crown’s understanding of its rights. Lands occupied by Native peoples were defined in The Proclamation as “our dominions,” despite the fact that no Indigenous nation had relinquished its title (Reid 2010:342). The Crown promised to protect Native rights of occupancy and land use, thus subsuming Native title within the territorial sovereignty of the Crown. Natives were not permitted to sell their land to any party but the British Crown (Reid 2010:342). The Royal Proclamation seemed to have good intentions at first glance, as it outlined the ways in which it was meant to mediate tensions between Native peoples

and English Colonial law. Although it seemed to take up and address important issues like sovereignty, commerce, and land it further “but while it defined the limits of settler encroachment on Native land, its clear assertion that the territories in question were ultimately Crown “dominions” effectively removed the issue of sovereignty from the conversation about land rights and Aboriginal title” (Reid 2010:343). In this document, the British Crown asserted sovereignty over former French territories by virtue of France’s cession of its own discovery rights and despite the fact that no First Nation had ever ceded its land to either France or Britain. On the basis of the doctrine, France’s authority to transfer sovereignty to England needed no justification (Reid 2010:343).

The next significant piece of Canadian legislation that I would like to discuss is the Indian Act. According to the Canadian Encyclopedia, the Indian Act is “the principal statute which the Federal government administers Indian Status, local First Nations governments, and the management of reserve land and communal monies. The Indian Act was originally introduced in 1876 as a consolidation of previous colonial ordinances that aimed to eradicate First Nations culture in favour of assimilation into Euro-Canadian society. The Act has been amended several in order to address largely discriminatory sections. According to the Canadian Encyclopedia it is an involving paradoxical document that has enabled trauma, human rights violations, and social and cultural disruption for generations of First Nations peoples (Canadian Encyclopedia; Indian Act, page number(s)?).

In what I deem as an attempt to correct some of the wrongdoings of the Indian Act a future Prime Minister, Jean Chretien drafted the “Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy” commonly referred to as the “White Paper” of 1969. The White Paper is a document which acknowledges the wrongdoings of the Indian Act. It suggests in a very liberal

fashion a gradual shift whereby the Government believes that its policies must lead to the full, free and non-discriminatory participation of the Indian people in Canadian Society. This document was instrumental, as nearly a century had passed and the language had become a tad bit flowery, yet the message was still the same” “assimilate and be like us” which seemed to be the government sentiment in 1969.

This “White Paper” was met with a response by The Union of B.C Indian Chiefs in a document entitled A Declaration of Indian Rights, The B.C Indian Position Paper, known as the “Brown Paper” (or “Red Paper”). The Chiefs of British Columbia had interpreted the aforementioned document as another way for the Federal government to relinquish all responsibilities promised to First Nations people in centuries prior. They rejected and disagreed with the “unilateral attempt by government to extricate itself from its obligation to our people”. The Chiefs believed that the special relationships that have developed between Indians and the Federal government carries immense moral and legal force. According to the Brown Paper, “to terminate a relationship like this would be “no more appropriate than to terminate the citizenship of any other Canadian”. There are a multitude of impactful forms of legislation and on-goings after this period in history that affect First Nations, however, for the purpose of this paper the timeline stops here. This is due to the fact that it at this time in history Stacy begins researching and finding out his own family lineage and ancestral ties.

## **Chapter Four: The Robinson Huron Treaty**

To provide some background information to the ways in which the Henvey Inlet French River Reserve system was created/established, I would like to explain some of the roots of treaty making in Canada. According to J.R Miller, early forms of relationship-building between First Nations members and European settlers took place in the form of commercial fur trading relationships (Miller 1991:5). Miller also explains that the Royal Proclamation of 1763 paved the way for negotiation of several land treaties between First Nations and European colonists who desired access to Aboriginal lands (Miller 1991:6). The Robinson treaties of the 1850's are important to my research as they were the influential documents that shaped the settlement of the territory that my participant's and their family currently reside. The treaties consist of the Robinson-Huron and Robinson Superior Treaties, which dealt with lands adjacent to two of the upper Great Lakes (Huron and Superior). These treaties which were now a hundred years removed from original ideas around treaty making brought colonial treaty making into a completely different realm. Land- related treaties dealt with large tracts of land, recognized continuing hunting and fishing rights, committed the Crown to annuities, and contained provision for reserves for the First Nations signatories (Miller 1991:19). For Miller, the fundamental problem in interpreting the treaties is that the two main parties, the government, and First Nations, have very different understandings of what the treaties did and what they represent (Miller 1991:28). The National government tends to lean toward the idea that these treaties are merely contracts by which First Nations surrendered title to land in return for the aforementioned compensations such as annuities, access to agricultural support, and reserves. The government has generally interpreted and applied the treaties as contracts, reading (interpreting) them in a strict and literal fashion (Miller 1991:29).



First Nations groups did not see these treaties in the same light, as they did not believe their reading should be in the literal word for word contractual fashion as the government suggests. First Nations saw these treaties as a way of making a connection with incoming people through the Crown. They were looking for assurances of friendship and future support that would guarantee their survival. For First Nations peoples, the meaning of treaties was rooted in the relationships they built, rather than any literal interpretation of context. What was considered to be most important was the initial promised help to live well (Miller 1991:30). From the, First Nations perspective, as time progressed there would be room for negotiation and interpretation based on the initial treaty. The problem with the literal reading of treaties in a contractual sense is that there is no room for growth. For example, treaties that state there should be a school on the reserve allows for there to be a school built on the reserve. However, as situations evolve and the need for post-secondary school arises, the literal interpretations do not allow for the building of said school. The same goes for the original annuity allotted to First Nations members, which in the case of the Robinson Huron Treaty, was originally agreed upon at four dollars. Stacy, Jackie, and I discussed this at length one afternoon as they mocked the idea that members of the community have to line up one by one to receive a four-dollar annuity check every year, and that it costs more in gas to go deposit the check than the check is actually worth. In line with Miller, it is equally important to recognize that unlike Euro-centric ideologies regarding contractual obligations and agreements, First Nations refuse to believe that the origins of these treaties existed only through text (Miller 1991:31). They reject these notions as they understand that oral traditions played a significant role in their daily lives. Peoples who have a strong oral tradition in which learning and memory were transmitted by the spoken word, consider that everything said in treaty talks is as much a part of the treaty as the written. They

insist that greater things were promised verbally than that of what is found in written text (Miller 1991:31).

The author Bonny Ibhawoh echoes some of the same ideologies as Miller in her study, Ibhawoh explains that although most of the Robinson treaties were nominally founded on Aboriginal rights and sovereignty, others were premised on the notion of *terra nullius* the assumption that Aboriginal land was in effect no man's land and that by conquest and "improvement", European settlers could lay claim to them (Ibhawoh 2013:8). It seems as though this perspective allows for the idea that perhaps First Nations were overseers of their lands and if they accepted the way in which "development" or "improvement" was done by European settlers they would allow them to settle the lands. This theory is intriguing and is not the commonly accepted way in which these dealings have been interpreted by National governing bodies throughout history. Ibhawoh explains this as a shift of European thoughts of equality to "rights of discovery" which will be further elaborated on in subsequent chapters (Ibhawoh 2013:9). Like Miller, Ibhawoh states that Indigenous groups thought they had negotiated treaties of friendship and mutual assistance, while agreeing to Euro-Canadian agricultural settlements. Euro-Canadian negotiators believed that treaties secured Indian surrender of whatever claims they had to the vast lands of Upper and West Canada (Ibhawoh 2013:10).

It would be incorrect to only present popular? sentiments without demonstrating alternative views on treaty-making. Some scholars dispute the notion that treaty making was deliberately constructed for the marginalization of First Nations in the Canadian context. John Tobias argues that the government of Canada had no plans to deal with the Indigenous populations, and that there was no clear Indian policy to go by. According to Tobias, the efforts of the Canadian government were merely an attempt at avoiding costly conflict while negotiating

resistance (Tobias 1983:520). He continues by claiming that ideas associated around treaty making were not an initiative of the Canadian government but actually put forth at the instance of the Ojibwa Indians (Tobias 1983:520). Other scholars emphasize that since it was First Nations who sought out these forms of relationships (in exchange for guaranteed assistance in the future), then they were the one who were mainly responsible for many of the terms that promised continued assistance. From the First Nations perspective, the Robinson treaties recognized and respected their sub-surface land rights but irregular colonial actions caused the Anishinabe anger level to rise (Ibhawoh 2013:11).

More contemporary notions on treaty making are informed by oral traditions and the recollections of Indian chiefs and elders has been given attention. The weight of these oral traditions is largely being debated in the contemporary First Nations context in Canada. A precedent has been set in recent history revolving around oral history and its impact on Title claims in British Columbia. In the 1990's the *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* was the case in which First Nations required the courts to come to terms with the oral histories of First Nations societies. This once brought forth in order to present that oral traditions for many First Nations are the only record of their past, which play a crucial role in litigation of rights. Moreover, the emerging consensus seems to be that First Nations were not passive participants but played a major role in treaty making processes (Ibhawoh 2013:11).

Through a deeper understanding of First Nations perspectives on treaty making in conjunction with the ways in which the Canadian government views treaty making it is difficult to judge which interpretation is intended. In my discussions with Stacy it seemed as though his sentiments regarding the subject matter mirror the sentiments advanced by scholars such as Leanne Simpson. Simpson writes that these misunderstandings are further confounded by fact

that as time passed, the colonizer's view of treaties was entrenched in Euro-Canadian legal system and the academy, and that there are few written records of treaty arrangements made in the early colonial period where Indigenous perspectives were most influential (Simpson 2008:31).

## **Chapter Five: The Domesticated Cat**

The following conversation took place on July 7th 2014 (11:30am-4:00pm) after several weeks of being in the field. The initiation of this topic was spurred by what I had found out in the field in conjunction with my secondary source research, I was beginning to think that the Canadian government had created reserves based on their definition and their understanding of First Nations peoples and their history. I suggested to Stacy that the government does not factor in who comes from where. What cultural background they share or do not share, and the relations between First Nations communities. I suggested to him that the government decided to create a conglomerate of all different First Nations members and define them according to what the Canadian government deems them to be and that the creation of a homogeneous “Ojibway” was one such construction.

In this context, Stacy began telling me the following story:

Stacy: I was giving a talk the other day and, take for instance the domesticated cat. The domesticated cat has been with humanity and civilization for generations. Humans have been telling the domesticated cat for generations, that there’s the box and go crap in it. So, when kittens are born, they have their eyes closed and they’re sitting in the box with their mom nursing when they climb out the box, who tells them to crap in the other box? Is it god? Is it humans?

Rav: I doubt it. I don’t know, what do you think?

Stacy: The mother tells them, she teaches them. The mother teaches the kitten in the womb that it has to go to the box. In order to be civilized, it has to go to the box to crap or else there is (sic) consequences right? So, it was a human idea for the cat to be domesticated and to go into the box, so this has been going on for generations and generations amongst cats. The cat instinctually is a wild animal, but humans spent generations domesticating the cat to where the humans don’t even have to do that anymore- the cat now has taken it upon themselves to know that that is where they need to be because the mother cat from the womb tells the kitten that that is where they need to go. So, the indigenous people across the world have been told by the corporate entities go to the box. To where now...

Initially, I had no idea where Stacy was coming from or how this story related to First Nations, himself, or members of his community. I was lost. But toward the end of this story, I was astounded: Stacy had all along been using the story of the domesticated cat as a metaphor for the larger colonial history of his own people. This conversation opened up space for larger discussions related to belonging, power, dominance, and control. It sheds light on various anthropological discussions associated with these issues and its effect on First Nation identity within Canadian, as well as patriarchy as an ideology in conjunction with First Nations socio-political issues within communities both local to the Pickerel River and as well as on a national scale.

In reading some literature on story-telling and the importance of oral traditions within Indigenous communities, I have understood in a general sense that, as Julie Cruikshank has noted, oral narratives are part of a communicative process. You have to learn not only what the story says, but also what it does when used as a strategy for communication (Cruikshank 1998:41). In this particular context, I knew what the story regarding the domesticated cat was telling me in that moment in time, yet I did not see how powerful of a strategy for communication this was. Interestingly, Cruikshank points out that what appears to be the ‘same’ story, even in the repertoire of one individual, has multiple meanings depending on location, circumstance, audience, and stage of life of narrator and listener” (Cruikshank 1998:44). These modes of oral narratives and story-telling hold a particular power for me while conducting fieldwork. Stacy was able to conjure emotions in both him and myself during these processes, thus allowing us both to think more broadly and deeper about socio-political issues that seem to plague Stacy and the rest of the Mcquabbie family.

Stacy's story provided me with an alternative way for understanding socio-political issues related to First Nations people in Canada. Due to the fact that I was not experienced or well-versed in matters related to First Nations communities within Canada, I was unable to view their contemporary or historical situation from the perspective of one of their members. However, I was able to use my fieldwork as an entry point for gaining a better understanding of day to day life on the reserve. The strange thing about these narratives is that prior to being in the field, I always understood issues that concerned First Nations communities as unjust and unequal. However, in some respect, I viewed it as conditions that can be resisted and fought against. This new perspective provided an opportunity for understanding larger historical impacts that resonate between members of the Mcquabbie family. The logic or rationale, can be explored through the works of scholars like Foucault, Mbembe, and Agamben. Foucault's work (as understood and explained by scholars like Peter Dews and Stuart Hall) in his work, provide important insights on power and its role in discourse and knowledge production. Ideas associated with power, dominance, control, and the institution can be applied to understanding the issues that were central to my discussion with the Mcquabbie's. All which play a vital role in understanding what Stacy meant while he narrates the story about the kitten in the mother's womb in relation to First Nations and where they situate themselves in the larger Canadian context. Mbembe and Agamben deal with necro-politics and bare life, all theories and concepts related to the ways in which I have come to view the First Nation situation in Canada.

This conversation shaped the ways in which I view First Nations communities and the various circumstances both contemporarily and historically that have affected them. When describing the fact that the kitten is taught before they even open their eyes that they are not like the rest of the cats that are in the wild, they are domesticated and therefore remain in a box.

Equating First Nations communities to being placed in a box is an interesting concept, one that I had yet to visualize until this conversation took place.

We can view the kitten-in-the-box through the lens that Foucault provides when explaining theories of governmentality. In order to properly understand the ways in which identity is constructed and reconstructed, it is crucial to investigate how and by who is identity constructed and reconstructed by. As the introduction of this thesis alluded to, the government needs to be a primary focus when attempting to understand the ways in which identity differs through and because of governmental interventions. Foucault discusses some of these ideas from a genealogical perspective in his work *Governmentality*. The work on *Governmentality* outlines the ways in which the government operates as Foucault insists that in order to govern, means to govern things (Foucault 1991:94). For the purpose of this thesis, these “things” may be seen as the governance of First Nations people on the Pickerel River. Often times, when looking at government and government policy, the idea is always focused around the “common good.” Foucault also discusses what he believes to be the “common good”. For Foucault, this term refers to a state of affairs where the subjects without exception obey the laws, accomplish expected tasks, practice the assigned trade, and respect established order as it conforms to the laws imposed by God on nature and men (Foucault 1991:95). This essentially means that the “common good” is obedience to the law (Foucault 1991:95). These notions mirror the story of the kitten, and how the kitten demonstrates its obedience through the mother’s influence and adheres to using the box. Through these conceptualizations, it is understood that this is a process, and through these processes government establishes power and governs its operations. The operations of government occur through what Foucault calls “tactics”. He believes that employing tactics rather than laws are used to arrange things in such a way that through a



number of means, such and such ends may be achieved (Foucault 1991:95). These are the “instruments of government”. Instead of a focus on laws, it is a process or a range of multiform tactics to provide a particular result amongst the society being governed (Foucault 1991:95).

Tania Li extends Foucault’s notion of “governmentality” in her work. Simply put, Li believes that governmentality can be defined as the “conduct of conduct” whereby government is the attempt to shape human conduct by calculated means (Li 2007:275). Li’s discussion of governmentality is helpful when it comes to analyzing First Nations communities in Canada because, according to Li, when power operates at a distance, people are not aware of how their conduct is being conducted or why, and therefore the question of consent does not arise (Li 2007:275). This idea is also instrumental in understanding how and why the Canadian government was successfully able to create a reserve system in which they were able to displace First Nations communities throughout Canada. The Canadian government’s aim aligned with previous Imperial Britain as they both attempted to “foster beneficial processes and mitigate destructive ones” (Li 2007:276). Foucault would claim that the justification for the First Nations reserve system from the perspective of the Canadian government would be “identified as a distinct, governmental rationality” (Li 2007:276). Foucault always aims to expose the processes at work when discussing government and governmentality. He provides a framework for understanding how governments and their practices are “a whole series of specific finalities” that are achieved through “multiform tactics” (Li 2007:276).

As demonstrated through the work of Foucault and Li, it is interesting to debate the ways in which Stacy interprets the politics governing his community. The aforementioned notion of governmentality, is an excellent way for viewing such political action. However, other discourse around the subject reiterate that First Nations communities have received benefits due to the

patriarchal form of governance in Canada. It is important to understand for the purpose of this thesis that governance as a whole is not our main focus; rather the focus is on the erasure of identity within particular communities in our case #13 French River reserve.

## **Chapter Six: Amikwa (The Beaver People)**

The Beaver had been an ancient people, and they lived on dry land; they were always Beavers, not Men, they were wise and powerful, and neither Man, nor any animal made war on them.

They were well clothed as at present, and as they did not eat meat, they made no use of fire, and did not want it. How long they lived this way we cannot tell, but we must suppose they did not live well, for the Great Spirit became angry with them, and ordered Wisakedjak to drive them all into the water and there let them live, still to be wise, but without power (Symington 1978:1).

Although Stacy and his immediate and extended family reside on what the Canadian government identifies as an Ojibway First Nations reserve, which is part of the French River reserve system located in Henvey Inlet, Stacy does not identify with the name Ojibway. Stacy believes that he belongs culturally to the Amikwa people which translated from Anishnaabeg language means “The Beaver people”. According to Stacy, the Canadian government wiped away histories of First Nations cultural and physical connection to various lands throughout North America. Stacy is currently involved in a title claim case against the Crown to right a government injustice that according to him, his people have endured historically in Canada. He believes strongly, based on historical documentation he has collected over the last 20 years that the Canadian government changed his last name to “Mcquabbie” was an attempt to erase historical proof that the Amikwa were the rightful title holders of various parts of North America, including lands as far north as northern Quebec, and as far south as Florida. The reason Stacy is able to confidently make these bold claims is because he has been able to acquire early census documents that have his ancestral names written with their last name as Amikwa. He has shown me these documents from a genealogical perspective whereby the last names start becoming “Canadianized” (or “Anglicized”) for lack of a better term. His name is no longer

written in any Canadian legal documentation in a way which they could be identified, as particular clans but separate from it, as in the case of “Mcquabbie”. It has been changed over the years from Amikwa, to Amikwabi, to its contemporary name Mcquabbie. Stacy believes that ancestrally, his people occupied the majority of the East and North Coast of North America. He stakes this claim on an understanding of an online tool known as the “Handbook of Ethnography”. According to this online source, the Amikwa are an Algonquin tribe that are from the island of Manitoulin in Lake Huron on the North Shore of Lake Huron; now extinct. These opinions are clearly contradictory and demonstrate alternate views of history and (its) interpretation. It is important to acknowledge the discrepancies in both views as discussed in the previous chapters- knowledge and understanding of histories can be seen differently from various positions.

This is one of the main arguments of this thesis. This viewpoint provides an opportunity to explore historically, some of the ways in which Stacy’s story is an accurate depiction of the impacts of history impacts on his people. As discussed in the chapter on the Robinson treaties, alternate representations and understandings of traditional knowledge and oral histories plays a key role in highlighting the distinct ways in which historical information can often be seen with direct differences or with a variance in the ways in which subject matters are interpreted.

## **Chapter Seven: Spirituality/Symbols**

Stacy once described his strong beliefs regarding his spiritual and ancestral connection to the land, nature, and animals in the form of a story. When examining First Nations identity politics, I find useful the work of Alfred Taiaiake as he describes the ways in which non-human entities seemingly play a significant role within the formation of First Nations identity in Canada.

Taiaiake argues that the foundation of Indigenous peoples lies in their spiritual functioning which served as the maintenance of their ethics and a highly sensitive and internalized sense of self and Indigenous consciousness (Taiaiake 2009: 28). The relationship between the spiritual forces, humankind, the land, the animals, and other elements of the natural environment is an important perspective to take into consideration when considering First Nations identity politics (Taiaiake 2009:29). First Nations people recognize and respect that there are a multitude of non-human beings, yet consistently remind themselves that it is a daily responsibility to live life in relation to all life, the land, the sea, sky, mountains, and all other non-human beings, inclusive of the spiritual world (Taiaiake 2009:29). I would like to connect the aforementioned concepts to a story that Stacy shared with me during the time that I time spent with him. On a crisp November morning when he was approximately seven years old, Stacy went hunting with some relatives that came from a different area, relatives whom he had not hunted with before. Approximately ten of his distant and immediate family members went out for a yearly moose and deer hunt. The majority of them would get off the boat on the shore of an island on the Lower French River. There, they were to separate approximately ten to twenty yards apart from one another and flank the island in a fashion that would draw whatever large game was on the island out of the bush toward the shoreline where gunmen would be awaiting them. Not knowing the hunting partner beside him, Stacy continued trudging through the bush during the hunt but as he and his partner

and continued to walk, he realized that they had lost one another. Before he knew it, Stacy was calling for his hunting partner aloud. At the age of seven, Stacy had been schooled in the art of hunting and was quite familiar with guns. He himself carried a twenty-two caliber rifle with one bullet in the cartridge. Although he had lost his partner, he felt confident with his aim and his one bullet to feel relatively safe. After realizing that he and his partner had lost one another, Stacy proceeded to leave the bush and move toward to shoreline. Upon arriving at the shoreline, he determined he had a 50% chance at choosing the right way around the island. If he chose one way, he may be able to find members of his family/hunting party. Although it was late Fall, Stacy was dressed in light breathable clothing in order to be at optimal comfort throughout the hunt. As Stacy began his journey around this island in an attempt to find his family and hunting partners, he grew hungry and weary. He contemplated using his one and only bullet to shoot a squirrel or a rabbit if the opportunity presented itself but decided that it would be better to save in case a large animal approached and he needed to fire a warning shot or a possible kill shot. He walked the entire shoreline for the remainder of the day until nightfall without seeing anyone in a boat travelling the River or in the hunting party. Stacy decided that the only choice he had was to find a place to rest his head for the night. He was able to find this place in the form of an indentation in the island, which seemed to be an optimal place to rest as it was filled with soft moss and big enough for him to curl into that evening. As previously mentioned, Stacy was lightly dressed and unprepared for a night spent without a tent or a place to camp in the late Fall in Northern Ontario.

It was not long after he rested his head and the night grew darker that he heard a strange yet familiar noise to which he was startled and awakened. This noise turned out to be a consistent and rhythmic repetition of a Beaver that seemed not too far away beating his tail

against the water's edge. This sound continued throughout the night. Stacy felt as though every attempt that he made to fall sleep was disrupted by the noise of the Beaver's tail. In the morning, Stacy was surprised to see local Ontario Provincial Police on the River approaching the area where he was sleeping. He believed they were coming to his rescue – he was right, they were.

In this particular scenario, Stacy believes that the Beaver that came to his side was coming to him because of his ancestral ties to the Amikwa, the Beaver people. He believes that is the reason the Beaver stayed by his side throughout the night, and is convinced that the weather in Northern Ontario in November gets cold enough that an adult could freeze to death, let alone a child, an observation which I can attest to. This spiritual and cultural connection to nature, the land, and animals provided him with the assurance that he would remain safe, and that he would live through the night to hunt another day. Taiaiake's work, provides a useful lens for interpreting the deeper meaning embedded in Stacy's story and for recognizing the strong interconnectedness of all living and spiritual entities within First Nations belief systems.

Emancipation from state imposed names and labels such as the misnomer "Indian" is one aspect of the general trend by Indigenous peoples that do not conform to forms of domination (Retzlaff 2005: 610). The term "Indian" is not value-free. It has negative connotations attached to it. These connotations continue to shape both the direction of federal policy and popular prejudices toward the Aboriginal population of Canada (Retzlaff 2005:610). How people refer to themselves or are referred to by others, shape not only their own perception but other people's perception of who they are (Retzlaff 2005:2010). These and other concerns will be addressed in the following chapter.

## **Chapter Eight: Symbols, Anthropology and Identity**

A long list of early influential academics has contributed to the understanding of symbolic Anthropology. These include Clifford Geertz, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Victor Turner. For the purpose of this discussion, I will focus on the work of Victor Turner, influenced and in response to Geertz, and Levi-Strauss? According to Turner, symbols are seen as instrumentalities of various forces – physical, moral, economic, political, and so on – operating in isolable changing fields of social relationships (Turner 1975: 145). For Turner, it is the person or party who controls the assignment of “meaning” to them can also control the mobilizational efficacy their central cultural position assigned to them (Turner 1975: 146). In my earlier contact with Stacy, the symbol of the Beaver in the store captivated me and inspired a larger dialogue on the ways in which symbols are interpreted.

Retzlaff discusses how “nation” is a European or Western concept which describes a Western view of political, cultural, and economic entity. Using this term to describe traditionally clan and family oriented societies is one attempt of First Nation people to negotiate their way into the Canadian political consciousness (Retzlaff 2005:621). Retzlaff’s observation is worthy of mentioning, however, there are a number of ways that First Nations people can negotiate their way into the Canadian political consciousness without adapting the commonalities used by their government counterparts. Here I would like to highlight and explain some of the ways in which identity is directly connected to the symbolic, and how these symbols can be used as a way of First Nations negotiating their way into the Canadian political consciousness. Through the following section of dialogue, I will show the purpose and meaning of symbolism in Stacy’s testimony and how it informs his worldview.



Stacy: Yah it goes on deeper into the square and triangle concept you are going back to the drawing on the counter, the symbolism. Symbolism is something that people can identify with and I can sit and tell you volumes and volumes of words on the subject. I can show you one symbol and it will stand out for you, and obviously it has. Because of all the words and words that I have shared with you so far, the symbol is still there. And you see the symbol and the words underneath it representing that symbol. That symbol is universal to you and I as an object that we can relate to, to discuss those words. So you can see how everything comes together.

Here a subtle point is made regarding the ways in which the social is intertwined with the very notion of identity in conjunction with an understanding of symbols and their meanings. The knowledge behind the symbol is used as a vessel to carry larger messages with deeper meaning regarding socio-political identity amongst First Nations.

Stacy: “So we can go take that out into the other aspects in the symbolism formed to the square and the triangle, we see a crown, and that crown is everywhere, it permeates throughout, and the symbolism has been created as an idol, as a God, right. In general, you will see these crazy people waving flags with these symbols on them, screaming I am willing to fucking die for the symbol, right?”

This point is important because this is an example of how symbols can hold a particular power. In the case mentioned above, he is referencing the creation of the British Monarchy when he speaks about the crown and the symbolism behind it. This is where we can see how nation-state (i.e. Monarchs, or the Crown), can be seen as both a symbol, and something meaningful within the social realm as well.

Ravi: Absolutely, yah.

Stacy: And those are created things. I created that symbol, why? So you can wave it for me and say “I’m willing to fucking die for this”. And that’s why I did it, because I need to try to, with my knowledge that I possess of how to exist within it I see that symbol as a vehicle, it is a vehicle that we can climb on board and it can move us. And where are we moving to? Well I am not sure we are moving towards or if we are moving away from and that is still to be determined.

Ravi: The thing is though, it seems as though people with opinions are often deemed as crusaders, or outcasts within the community but what do people think? Do people listen, to people not listen? Or do they just not say a thing.

Stacy: I am pretty sure there is a silent revolution occurring, they are afraid. Fear is what dictates many people’s lives.

Ravi: Do you have lots of family members living within this community? Like cousins, brothers, sisters.

Stacy: Every single one of them.

Ravi: Really eh? Mcquabbie's? They are all Mcquabbie's?

Stacy: They are Anishinaabe, which are the original people.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, Stacy believes he is a descendant of the Anishnaabe, and belongs to the clan name Amikwa.

Stacy: There is another term now which I'm teaching, which is Algonquin. In the translation of the language is "related people" and the Algonquin is a very large group and we are all related peoples. When you examine our history, you will learn that. Interesting through the discussion yesterday I was sitting up in the group and they are creating for themselves Metis issues and I've been trying to tell them that all these discussions of identity and through that. So one of the discussions that came up was how the constitution was being affected and how we are doing that now, and what not—and what is coming out of it. A lot of the court decisions and a lot of the decisions the crown is owning up to and a lot of the things so a sentence coming out of my lawyer friend was "Stacy what he has created has the ability to protect you".

This point of conversation is crucial in understanding the ways in which the legal system can be directly connected to issues surrounding identity. Stacy has been using the legal system in order to solidify his interpretation of familial history in Canada. Through his understanding and acknowledgement of assimilation processes that took place, Stacy believes that he can trace his ancestral roots back to colonial times and revitalize a group that has disappeared into other labels and names whether it be "Ojibway" "Anishnaabeg" "Algonquin" or his identification with "Amikwa". Interestingly, the very laws created by governing bodies in order to assimilate and oppress the First Nations people of Canada could be Stacy's very own salvation.

Ravi: Oh the lawyer came too, the guy from New York or whatever?

Stacy: From Ottawa. And I had to stop him there and I corrected him. I said no, that is not the reality of this. The Amikwa people aren't here to protect you, that is not why we are doing this. It is because of kinship is why...we are not here pointing a gun at others, with you standing behind us for protection.

Ravi: We are just saying we are all family sort of thing.

Stacy: We are KIN. Which is motivation for all of us to exist. And the lawyer \*poof\*, he realized his error, and he realized that error of what he did there and he corrected it and commended it.

Ravi: He is also a native or no?

Stacy: No.

Stacy: So he is trapped because he is caught in the middle between trying to understand us. And place us in that. So he now has to balance between these two scenarios, between the circle and the square.

Ravi: Well, its difficult too because often times people are entrenched in these Euro-centric notions of knowledge without being a “victim” of colonization it is very difficult for you to understand other people’s perspective who have gone through that...so our situation is not the same, it will never be the same. However, there is a bit of an understanding of umm my ancestors being “duped” I would like to say to get onto this gigantic boat in India, with the opportunity of housing and wage in the cane fields in Guyana all the way across the ocean settle in Guyana and get absolutely smoked out there. There is no money out there is a mud hut over there for you and your 5 children, go live in there. So those concepts have followed us through time. But the Brits came over there with us, and they imposed their Euro-centric ideologies. And then my parents emigrated and came to Canada and brought those notions here in which they already existed, so...everywhere around the world – what’s the famous line? They say the sun never sets on the British flag, well, equally the same could be said about the knowledge, it never goes away. There was this author I think his name is John Collins, he deemed this term “imperial debris” that’s something that just never goes away, even if the crown leaves.

This discussion was a lengthily one in which I felt rather comfortable discussing my own relation to subject matter which Stacy is passionate about. I would recommend, as in any relationship personal, professional, or otherwise it is important to establish common ground especially while in the field. Often times, meeting people other than your participants can catch you off guard while conducting fieldwork. It is crucial to maintain composure and advertise yourself as an approachable, understanding, and relatable individual in order to ensure smooth discussion throughout fieldwork.

Stacy: The occupations of the land, by the symbol of the crown. And they come down and occupy based upon the titles that exist because they have no titles themselves so they administer and borrow from the proper right holders. So they must be maintained free, right? In order for the administration of the symbolism of the crown so to speak and then through that

administration they empower people under slave terms to do their bidding because they cannot be the title holder, because the title holder is BORROWED, so without the title holder, you have nothing. Your structure is pointless, whether it be legit or fraudulent it still will have no basis, no validity, no foundation. It's beyond what we get to understand as common knowledge, you have to read way deeper to try to get it right. So you are going to experience this in your life if you pursue a career as an Anthropologist and the study of people, you are going to have to be way more, you are going to have to be beyond 3 dimensions to understand it because it is a hell of a topic you're choosing to profess.

Jackie: On their land that you have taken from them.

As discussed at length in Chapters 5 and 6, it is understood that there is a variance between interpretations and different forms of knowing and understanding the world. Indigenous notions of land, property, and treaty rights as seen in the aforementioned chapters does not need to be further elaborated on. What needs to be reiterated, however is that, these are still the fundamental realities that exist and surround socio-political identity amongst First Nations in a Canadian context.

An interesting way of viewing the relationship between land and people can be demonstrated through Thoreau's notion of the wild. The idea that there is an existence peculiar to a thing that is irreducible to the thing's imbrications with human subjectivity (Bennett 2004:348). This notion of the wild is what is instrumental for understanding Jane Bennett's conceptualization of a type of materialism she labels as "thing-power". Thoreau also states that things have the power to addle and re-arrange thoughts and perceptions (Bennett 2004:348). A perfect example? of Bennett's concept in ordinary life when the "us" and the "it" slip- slide into each other because we are also non-human and that things too are vital players in the world (Bennett 2004:349). The author's primary focus is to show that agential powers of natural things need a further awareness of the dense web of their connections with each other and with human bodies (Bennett 2004:349). Through an understanding of Bennett's thing-power a broad lens has

been provided to investigate materialism and its relation to land in the Canadian context. For the former British colonial state as well as the current governing body in Canada, importance has been placed on the acquisition of land, as land is a “thing” which needs to be controlled. We need to focus on representation when examining land in this context. Land for the Canadian government seems to be a “thing” as demonstrated in earlier chapters and is subsequently not thought of as having power or agency. However, things have the ability to force you to represent them as something because it is always through the human that knowledge around a “thing” can be constituted. There needs to be a drastic displacement of this human-centric mode of knowledge production in order to create and understand a different ontology. Representation falters when thinking about land because that of which is known is validated through the human categories of knowledge, without taking into account when “the us and the it slip-side into each other” as previously stated.

The production of knowledge is a key component to understanding the ways in which land claims are an important issue in regards to First Nations communities in a Canadian context. Sheila Jasanoff addresses issues surrounding the production of knowledge in her work, “The idiom of co-production.” Although she is a scholar of science studies and her critique is primarily focused on the production of knowledge surrounding science, her work can be juxtaposed with a critique of knowledge production as a whole. Jasanoff’s conceptualization of co-production is shorthand for the proposition that the ways in which we know and represent the world (both nature and society) are inseparable from the ways in which we choose to live in it (Jasanoff 2013:2). An important understanding of knowledge production is provided in Jasanoff’s work, as she states that knowledge and its material embodiments are at once products of social work and constitutive of social life (Jasanoff 2013:2). Therefore, knowledge is

produced and tied directly to the social then to understand knowledge is to understand the social. First Nations Canadians did not operate under a system of property or with absolute divisions of land. The knowledge surrounding property was brought forth by the colonizers and adopted by the existing Canadian government. It is only within the last hundred years or so that conversations regarding First Nations property and land rights have been ramping up. Their challenges are often based on historical knowledge, knowledge that existed prior to the knowledge produced by Britain and extended through the Canadian government. Jasanoff believes that society cannot function without knowledge any more than knowledge can exist without appropriate social support (Jasanoff 2013:3). For Jasanoff, the co-productionist idiom stresses the constant intertwining of the cognitive, the material, the social, and the normative (Jasanoff 2013:6).

Ravi: And that is his main argument, is why is it their land, and I said how is it not their land though?

Stacy: But it is not so much that I do not think that we have a concept that it is our land because if it was our land then we would have pulled out all of our fucken guns and tried to kill everyone who set foot on it.

Ravi: So my discussions with him were on notions of property, like where are these concepts coming from, well they are coming from Europe, there is no notion of property without Europe. And these laws, everyone always says, well why is it so hard for them to get their land back? Well who created the fucken laws?

Jackie: And who do they have to go to court and stand in front of? The same people that took it from them that is who.

Stacy: Well I identified two types of native people here, one of them is the Anishnaabeg and the other is the Indian and see you are sitting here and you are not sitting with an Indian I'm an Anishnaabeg and Indians were created by the crown. Total Fiction, ok Indian Act Indians purpose for the Indian Act Indians, lands reserved for Indians, so when you go speaking to an Indian you are now talking about boundaries, money, policies, all this SHIT.

Ravi: All these concepts that are non-existent

Stacy: Yah. That's what an Indian talks about. One thing I said to the lawyer one day is only a stupid Indian reads the Indian Act, you will never get an intelligent Anishnaabeg to read the Indian Act. To put this into perspective, it is crucial that one understands the distinct separation Stacy has created between himself and the tool the Canadian government uses to address First Nations the "created self" the Indian.

Ravi: Because they know where it comes from they know who wrote it and they know where the knowledge is based.

Stacy: So it is pretty twisted stuff, it creates chaos. That is the only purpose it has, to create chaos. And out of this chaos certain individuals can rise to be leader or authority, or something right? So I choose not to live there, I choose to be spiritually grounded and truthful to who I am and why I am here and it doesn't get much more sophisticated than that.

This concept of the Indian versus the Anishnaabeg is an interesting topic to unpack. It seems as though Stacy does not identify himself as an Indian, and rightfully so. It is in defiance that he chooses not to identify with the term the Crown and Canadian government have been using historically. This act of defiance is a form of resistance much like his resistance to identify with the idea that his family ancestry belongs to the Ojibway instead of the Anishnaabeg or Amikwa.

Ravi: I'm sure there are still people within this system that actually care about what is going on?

Jackie: They care, but they think that they cannot do anything about it because they are collecting a paycheque.

Ravi: Probably a fat one too, working for Indian affairs.

Jackie: Right, so if they go against anything where is there paycheque coming from?

Here Jackie is making a larger point regarding intra-First Nations issues and the politics of fear. What is meant by the term politics of fear is that Jackie believes that due to the government support e.g.: welfare, disability, et cetera these and things alike prevent First Nations people from speaking out against and wrongdoings by the government. The old adage of "do not bite the hand that feeds you" seems to rightly describe the politics of fear within First Nations communities.

Stacy: Yah and see the policies that they are instituting were coming from hundreds of years ago, in a different concept of social things including slavery, racism, discrimination. Hatred was unadulterated, it was rampant. Those policies continue to be administered down, and they may be amended, but even though you amend them you are not really affecting a change, you are only disguising the original thing.

Ravi: that speaks to the politics of what is going on in the community currently, so theoretically what is the Band Council besides a façade?

Stacy: That's all it is it is just a piss poor excuse.

Ravi: So you are saying the people that run the Band Council are people implemented through the government.

Stacy: Yes, they are Indian agents.

Ravi: So they are not from this area?

Stacy: They are from this VILLAGE.

Jackie: The community members here are the ones that put them here, they vote right? They have an election.

This discussion is important as it highlights the hierarchies that have been put in place by the Canadian government on the reserve. It needs to be noted that most Band Councils are locally elected as Jackie mentioned throughout our discussion, however, this speaks larger to intra-First Nations issues. As in the case of the #13 French River Henvey Inlet Reserve locally elected forms of government exist in the form of band councils and within the reserve systems these forms of government can create barriers between the non Band Council members and the band council. For Stacy, this friction can be seen through the mere fact that his elder brother is the Chief of the reserve and thus head of the Band Council. Therefore, this relationship intertwined with the power behind governance can at times causing friction between personal beliefs and government support.



## Chapter Nine: Rain

As the rain continuously poured upon the aluminum roof and down the giant window that overlooked the Pickerel River, hopes and aspirations of a summer filled with fieldwork dwindled. The opportunity to speak to the family which I chose to work with seemed like an impossible feat the sadness and frustration deepened. The work seemed pointless, it seemed impossible, it seemed as though I would never be able to leave the cabin, the days peeled on, the weather ever dimmer, and the air continuously damp. The urge to leave the cabin grew as the weeks continued, the urge to acquire information inflated and deflated throughout time, but I knew things had to get better. My family and friends maintained consistent contact with me, and it made the days and nights longer and lonely. The promises of visits kept me happy, but made me count the days until their arrival. The urge to get the work done was large, but the who/what/where/why portion of the work seemed unfathomable. I did not know what I needed to know, but I knew I needed to know something. I did not know who I wanted to visit me or when I wanted them to arrive, but I knew I needed someone. I knew I would receive clarity once my initial interviews began, but I did not know when they would begin/how they would begin/or if they would begin at all. I consistently questioned reasons as to why I'm out in the middle of the woods all by myself in Northern Ontario while everyone is at "home" in Toronto enjoying one another's company while I think thoughts of them. Upon my first successful interview with Stacie Mcquabbie on July 7<sup>th</sup>, all my questions were answered. All my uncertainties vanished, and my faith was placed quite literally at his front doorstep on Sub road, located in the Henvey Inlet #13 French River Reserve system bordering the Pickerel River. After my first meeting with Stacy, we discussed at length my interest in his family history as well as my interests in First Nations communities and the social injustices that have plagued them throughout history. We

spoke for a little over an hour and I could see that his interests and passions associated with his community mirrored the interest of my field work. This conversation led me to be confident with my topic of choice and the opportunity of working with Stacy and his family greatly pleased me.

However, things turned for the worse over the next few weeks as it seemed as though a second meeting with Stacy was a slim hope. As I continuously woke up for fieldwork and visited his store, he was either in Sudbury or Ottawa taking care of a current title claim he is involved with regarding the Robinson Huron Treaty. Often times, the challenge with our meetings seemed to be weather related. My living quarters were situated in Woodlands bay, two bays east from the marina, albeit not a long distance boat ride, rain and thunderstorms consistently plagued my fieldwork on a weekly basis as the rain hindered my travel to the marina or “landing” as it is often referred to by the River’s local inhabitants. Often times, throughout my fieldwork, I was trapped in my small cabin due to the weather. Waking up for fieldwork at 8am every day was part of the routine that included a cup of tea on the front porch of my cabin. These small routines seemed to be an essential start of my day. Quite frequently, these morning routines were thrown out of sequence due to the fact that the rain was relentless, the clouds and the winds were consistent and would not allow for travel to the landing. This process combined with my earnest need to maintain contact with family and friends in Toronto via text message/email/and phone calls were making the situation very frustrating for me.

At the very beginning of fieldwork, it seemed as though I would never attain a rain free day but finally the rain subsided in the first week of July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and I was able to visit Stacy and engage in a wonderful 4-hour interview filled with a breadth of information covering a wide variety of historical/political/and personal knowledge. This was an incredible turning point for

me, as things seemed quite bleak prior to this, the weather was terrible, the fishing was even worse, and fieldwork prior to this seemed non-existent. Throughout my four-hour interview, I explained to both Stacie and Jackie about my difficulty in the beginning stages of my fieldwork with the weather, fishing, and attempts to conduct fieldwork. They were able to shed some light on my problems by relating it to my lack of connectedness to the land. Stacy explained to me that although I am living on the Pickerel River, in order to feel truly comfortable, I would need to quite literally take my shoes and socks off and walk the surrounding lands. According to Stacy, this process and others alike would help me reach a deeper connection with the land as well as my project. The purpose of disconnecting myself from the distractions Toronto/family/friends are for obvious reasons, it would allow me the clarity and peacefulness required to complete my work as well as endure the various discomforts of solitude living in the woods on the Pickerel River.

It was so dark, rainy, and windy some days that boats barely travelled, nobody feels safe on the river when it is like that. The waves form “whitecaps” at their peaks, and they can stretch to heights of four feet when the weather is rough and rainy. These conditions are freezing, and leave a chill in your bones that lasts for hours and sometimes days. Often times, throughout the summer of 2014, rain played a huge role in both my ability to travel to the “landing”/marina in order to visit with Stacie and Jackie as well as playing a role in my psyche. This type of weather condition made me never want to leave the cabin, a lesson learned the hard way. When I used to visit the river/cabin for leisurely purposes I never would mind getting soaked by the rain, yet it seemed as though throughout fieldwork that was my worst fear, being wet. I knew that if it rained I would never want to leave the cabin and it was not only because I did not want to get wet and change into dry clothes, I knew the wet and coldness of the rain combined with the

dreariness of the way the weather and environment looked would continue to plague my fieldwork.

The rains played a factor in landscape changes and my everyday practice, as well as my project. The landscape was changed as it was grey and dreary outside, it was also wet and cold. This affected my everyday practice as I rose at 8am to prepare for fieldwork, and to check in with my participants Stacie and Jackie. The rain stopped me from getting into my boat and travelling across the river to the marina. The lightning and thunder was enough of a deterrent for me to not feel safe to enter my 16-foot aluminum boat and travel in conditions such as these. These mornings were frequent as the rain persisted approximately 4 times a week, often times falling during the week. On the weekend, Stacy and Jackie normally spend their Summer days on the river fishing and having a good time with their family, despite the rain or any other weather conditions. They made permanent camp in the summer on First Nations land in a small bay near the Lower French River where Stacy docks his boat for the summer. These weekend outings leave the weekdays as the best time to conduct research with them. These weather conditions and lack of speaking opportunity lead my research to seem as though it was never going to be accomplished, and greatly affected both my project and my mental willingness to continue.

Furthermore, the rain had another major effect throughout my stay- it would consistently cause the water levels to rise and fall. When the River would raise my boat and dock would get swallowed by the water and become a part of Woodlands Bay. In order to fix this issue and retrieve my boat, I would have to wade through the water approximately 20 feet away in order to gain access to my boat. The result of these drastic shifts in water levels would cause me to have to move my docks closer to shore or further out pending water levels, this task is usually

reserved for a minimum of two individuals but optimal performance of this task is with the aid of at least 3-4 individuals. A situation arose in which I had to perform this task due to a drastic raise in water levels from the rain. With a break in the rain, I proceeded to wade out to the bigger of the two docks. I proceeded to remove the two anchor poles from the front of the dock and the two out of the back as the wind proceeded to get faster, I realized I was being blown further away from shore into the middle of the bay. In a panic, I jumped off the dock and proceeded to push the dock closer to the shore with my bare feet sinking in the muddy waters below. I realized this may be a safer thing to do on a sunnier day with a few more people. I quickly anchored the two front poles and the back one and proceeded to wade to my boat for the next few days until the weather subsided.

The river plays a role in the day-to-day lives of everyone living in the community. Stacy explained the river to me in a very simple term when I spoke with him. He identified it as a “yo-yo river”, a river in which everything about it was up and down. This was used to describe the ways in which water levels drastically dropped consistently throughout the summer, with heavy rainfall, and days of blistering heat, the river would rise and fall according to the conditions. This had an impact on something that was near and dear to both Stacie and I, and that was fishing conditions. Through this drastic shift in weather conditions, the water levels in the River had drastically impacted the fish that occupied it. Through my time spent fishing this River, I understood the fish in this region to be either resident species of fish that lived on the Pickerel River and made their home, or species of fish that were just passing through. The rise and fall of the river affected zones in which structurally were known to be prime fishing spots, but seemed to have no fish there. This was a subject Stacy and I frequently discussed. Certain types of desired fish for Northern Ontario anglers are known to stay fairly deep when the River is at its

highest depths, causing it to be much more difficult to locate them. When the River stays at a consistent depth, it is more likely to find them if fishing various shore lines as the smaller fish known as “bait fish” usually occupy shallower depths for the purpose of feeding on algae that is often situated near and on the shoreline. When the River is higher than normal it creates a lack of a shoreline making fishing those once populated regions very difficult. The river in this respect seemed to hold its own power from an anthropological perspective, in that Stacie and I seemed to be at the will of the river, attempting to keep up with the changing conditions in order to have productivity in catching dinner. Power is usually spoken about from an anthropological perspective in association with dominance, and control. The River in the aforementioned case proved to mirror such ideologies. It dictated through its conditions the ways in which its occupants performed social behaviors when interacting with the River.

Throughout my time in the field, moments of solitary absorption were prevalent more often than one would assume. These moments existed for two reasons. The first of the two reasons being on the days in which it would rain all day rendering myself and my boat immobile. One would ask why would rain stop me from travelling the River? The reason for this is quite simple: being alone in the wilderness leaves you much more careful than everyday life in the city. Knowing that my location was remote, and no neighbours or friends would know my ongoing or my whereabouts on a daily basis, I chose to practice sense by not taking the chance on overly rainy or windy days to travel to rough white-capped covered river in my sixteen-foot aluminum twenty-five horsepower boat. When telling the story of these days often my listeners would ask me what I would do throughout those lonely rainy days. The fact is that I did have electricity and leisurely reading material, but once experienced, one could understand that no amount of reading and viewing of Hollywood films can make those long days tolerable. The

days that I spent in the cabin passing the time with Hollywood stars and fictitious novel characters were some of the most pleasantly difficult. Being alone with my thoughts at times felt unbearable during those first initial days. I would find myself constantly opening the cabin door from 8am to nightfall which in Northern Ontario can be as late as 10:15pm, hoping for a halt in the weather conditions. As the summer progressed, I could only describe the earliest moments of field-work as very loud despite the quiet surroundings. The noise was created by constantly thinking and consistently trying to stimulate my brain. Although this seems like a productive process, it was only later on in the summer where I was able to quiet the noise in my head down. The reason I was able to accomplish the task of lessening the at times deafening noise in my head was through the help of Stacy and his family, when I explained to them the problems I faced while living alone in a cabin in the woods, Stacy gave me some helpful advice. He informed me that I may be too connected and too stimulated with information from Toronto, the city I was raised in. He politely pointed out that I live on the river now, and that in order to simplify things and feel better I must attempt to establish a connection with nature and my surroundings. This helped me hone in and focus on my physical and mental space. Stacy suggested to do some soul searching and to strive to become one with nature and my surroundings. Knowing the First Nations people strongly believe in the spiritual world I asked Stacy if it would be disrespectful if I took a walk through the local cemetery where all of his family members who have passed away are buried alongside many other generations of local inhabitants. I am unsure about whether or not it was a combination of the above suggestions or one particular thing that changed everything for me while in the field. However, what I can confirm is after that walk through the cemetery things drastically improved for me. Weather conditions got better as well, the interviews with Stacey and members of his family began

producing incredible amounts of personal and reflective data useful for this thesis. As well, I eventually began to notice that my daily existence alone in a cabin seemed to become more tolerable. I for once felt like this research served a purpose and was flowing at a manageable pace.



## Chapter Ten: The soles of their feet

In the words of Alfred Taiaiake: “If we are willing to put our words into action and transform our rhetoric into practice, we too can achieve the fundamental goal of the indigenous warrior: to live life as an act of indigeneity, to move across life’s landscape in an indigenous way (Taiaiake 2005: 45). A warrior confronts colonialism with the truth in order to regenerate authenticity and recreate a life worth living and principles worth dying for (Taiaiake 2005:45).

Stacy: Title claim is identity; land claim comes much after that scenario where you become recognized based on geography through your identity. In our case, we are at the point where our identities are not even being recognized so you cannot make claims when you have no identity and it has been changed and it has been altered from what the people themselves consider themselves to be identified as. The identity IS and always has been government grown, peoples around the world have always rallied around their identities to establish claims. They have taken it to the extreme in some places around the world where they are willing to DIE to uphold those customs and culture. There are people through their knowledge through their history and identity that can identify the INJUSTICES and those injustices motivate them to act.

Property: It boils back to Magna Carta at one point the British didn’t have any law relating to property either. In reality you cannot own the land, if we were able to own the land than we would be able to take the security within it and take it to the grave. Eventually we would be standing on no land right now.

Ravi: We’d be standing on a bunch of bodies.

Stacy: Titles of land is an interesting concept- it only speaks to the right of the individual to benefit in the sharing of the resources. They have been creative in creating hierarchies where there are Lords of trade they actually turn themselves into Lords of trade. The Lords of trade empower themselves to exclusive rights to administer those trades – they stand behind issues of protection and upholding good government for peace and the right of the people. Which is the principle behind it is fair, but the administration of it is corrupt, and you end up with injustices through the administration of those corruptions. Some happen by default through the exchange of administration of the policy it becomes misinterpreted (Language), it is developed not through *Mens Rea*. Some amendments of these policies take centuries to develop EG: Magna Carta through the creation of law the intentions were put there and created to alleviate issues of the time they continue to be administered and amended through the development of common law and the crown, eventually it becomes injustice because the corruption of the individuals that administer the policy had other intentions based on self-interest.

Ravi: The collection of raw materials logging or whatever it may be right?

Stacy: Mhmm. There is a scenario which we all possess, when we live our lives we experience turmoil and struggles of what survival actually entails. For most of us its basic, food, water, shelter. For some it becomes exaggerated into multiples of these scenarios in order to remain in that position to have to do many more scenarios of that to administer it so, and its fueled on by greed so every one of these people has the intent that they are going to pass on something that is worth-while, that they will be able to take that and use that.

Ravi: In terms of currency and in terms of that you mean?

Stacy: And property, so that these properties would be held in title that they may be transferred to their family members. So that their family will remain in a situation of power and authority based upon their wealth in the scenario. And that becomes exclusive, it has been created exclusive, at one time these ideas were put in place for larger groups, they were you can look at the history, say the Mayans civilization for example, it rose out of the jungles and was created for the population that grew out of those jungles, environment dictates a lot of how these things progress so if you have an environment that's conducive to prosperity and all those things you have all the resources it takes to prosper at your disposal than civilizations rise out of jungles.

In this particular discussion, Stacy demonstrates the ways in which through colonization has affected First Nations peoples historically. Stacy uses the Mayan example as a way to illustrate the importance of environment in the survival of a people. It is known that through the process of colonialization the colonial body, often remove particular groups of people in order to access the various raw materials that make living and populating a specific region beneficial to that group. For example, communities that had an abundance of trees and animals that can be hunted for food or the making of fur pelts. It seemed to me that Stacy is making a larger point about Native populations as a whole, and the impact of being displaced by colonial powers that exercise their modes of domination, power, and control.

Stacy explained sovereignty from his perspective, he told me a story about how there are certain words that when said by a First Nations person in a legal (atmosphere) context? it makes government officials as well as people that create and administer the law, cringe. Two words in particular were discussed, the first, "genocide" and the second "sovereignty". According to Stacy, both of those words have to come up in his discussion surrounding discrepancies with the

Robinson Huron Treaty and in their discussion he explained that the words “genocide” and “sovereignty” need to be explored and understood from various perspectives in order to discuss them and change them. Stacy believes one of the main reasons the word sovereignty causes government members to cringe is because members of the Canadian government from Stacy’s perspective believe sovereignty is contained in a pyramid. According to Stacy, at the very top of that pyramid there is a “sovereign”, in this particular case the sovereign is the crown that sits at the top of the pyramid. The sovereign crown according to Stacy places them with the authority and jurisdiction over all members of society, including the crown itself. Native and indigenous people come into these systems and express themselves and their sovereignty and the administrators and the crown view this as an act of treason, and its cringed upon because “no no” the only sovereignty here is contained in this crown. The crown sits upon the head of the monarch and the monarch is the pyramid and under the monarch is the Queen, and under the Queen is the subject of the Queen. Stacy believes that this idea is wrong as it leaves no room for other perspectives on sovereignty. Stacy trusts that sovereignty for the Native peoples are “contained in the soles of their feet”, an entirely different perspective on sovereignty, and one I have never been exposed to. Stacy’s perspective of the pyramid is interesting in that the crown sits atop the head of the monarch, the queen, underneath that is the subjects which can be understood as the “body” or “governing body”, and in conjunction with this notion he believes that since the native peoples sovereignty is located in the soles of their feet, then the crown, monarch, queen, and governing body is immobile without the native people themselves. From this perspective, the native people’s feet are “firmly planted on the ground, upon the land”.

The issues regarding identity amongst First Nations within a reserve are complex. These issues are due to a variety of different reasons and are entrenched in a long history with the

Canadian government. One of the most interesting theoretical frameworks in understanding some of these complexities has been brought forth by John Collins. Collins work extends the work of Mbembe and various other scholars who worked on issues regarding sovereignty and understanding how sovereign nations and nation-states are built and maintained throughout history. Unlike other scholars who believe that there are dramatic “shifts” or “ruptures” that mark drastic changes in the ways in which nations and nation-states achieve and maintain sovereignty, Collins advocates for a concept known as “imperial debris”. This concept of “imperial debris” challenges these previous notions as it supports a theory that in fact there are no “shifts” or “ruptures” because even when countries gain their independence and are no longer affiliated with their colonial and imperial counterparts (overlords?) there is always something left behind. Although Collins’ work is situated in Brazil and does not reference anything regarding First Nations or Canada in his analysis of “imperial debris” it does apply in the context being examined. This notion of “imperial debris” is visible within a Canadian context as it currently shapes and constructs the identities of members of the First Nations within a Canada. First Nations identity has been historically shaped and changed by the actions of Imperial Britain. The reserve system is an example of “imperial debris” because although Imperial Britain has given Canada its independence it has left the reserve system behind. In contemporary Canadian politics it remains part of the everyday lives of members of First Nations throughout Canada as they fight to reclaim land they were displaced from. The members of First Nations that still currently live on reserves now may have trouble with identifying with a particular notion of “homeland”. As Indigenous histories are rich and well documented in some cases the problem arises in the new “space”. Members of various First Nations groups are forced to identify with what they know, and in some cases what they know is the new “space” and the new community

they have been placed in by the Canadian government. This idea of “home” or “homeland” becomes lost in translation and subsequently becomes a government “imagination” of what they believe to be home for members of the First Nations.

This idea of “home” or “homeland” is embedded in larger anthropological issues regarding “space” and “place” which are concepts Akil Gupta and James Ferguson deal with extensively. Gupta and Ferguson claim that to deal with issues of “space” and “place” related concerns are things like displacement, community, and identity (Gupta, Ferguson 1992:6). When discussing the First Nations situation in a Canadian context the two aforementioned authors are perfect in exemplifying some of the complexities associated with understanding identity within this population. According to Gupta and Ferguson, space achieves a distinctive identity as a place (Gupta, Ferguson 1992:8). They also go on to say that the identity of a place emerges by the intersection of its specific involvement in a system of hierarchically organized spaces with its cultural construction as a community or locality (Gupta, Ferguson 1992:8). These two ideas are precisely what occurred within First Nations populations throughout Canada. The creation of the Canadian reserve system is an example of a system that has created a particular “space” and “place” in which identity can be reconstructed. They continue on in their article to say that displaced peoples cluster around remembered or imagined homelands, places or communities in a world that seems increasingly to deny such territorialized anchors in their actuality (Gupta, Ferguson 1992:11). The problem here is that there are important reasons as to why particular displaced communities feel the need to “cluster around remembered or imagined homelands”, and that is simply put because they have been uprooted from them and planted somewhere entirely different in most cases. This is an issue they deal with briefly when they claim that important tensions may arise when places that were imagined must become lived

spaces (Gupta, Ferguson 1992:11). The interesting underlying fact here is they are not addressing who these spaces are imagined by and why “must they become lived spaces”. With respect to First Nations, it is clear that the power dynamics in place by the Canadian government have historically forced these “spaces” to become lived. Furthermore, these lived “spaces” are “spaces” that are part of the Canadian reserve system that are imagined by the Canadian government.

Sovereignty for Stacy is a new perspective that needs to be recognized and understood through an entirely different discussion surrounding the true meaning of what it means to be a sovereign group or a group in which possess sovereignty over geographic location.

This concept was one that spoke volumes to me, as earlier on in my fieldwork when I was feeling as though everything was going wrong, I was advised to take off my shoes and socks and walk barefoot on all the grass, sand, and rock I could in the area in order to get “connected” with the land. As previously mentioned this was extremely beneficial to me as I started to feel much more centered in my surroundings which in turn, contributed to my overall confidence out in the woods and in turn provided for me some relevance to my fieldwork. While this was an interesting approach it mirrors ideas brought forth in what is known as “phenomenological anthropology”. It is suggested that one of the main contributions of phenomenology to contemporary phenomenological anthropology is evident in the tradition’s focus on embodiment (Desjarlais, Thorpe 2011:89). The body is not only an object that is available for scrutiny. It is also a locus from which our experience is arrayed (Desjarlais, Thorpe 2011:89). The body is not only a corpse- or text-like entity that can be examined, measure, inspected, interpreted, and evaluated in moral, epistemological, or aesthetic terms; it is a living entity by which, and through which we actively experience the world (Desjarlais, Thorpe 2011:89).

## Chapter Eleven: Logging

The development of Canada has been understood in terms of the requirements for extraction of a succession of staple products for export to meet the needs of more advanced nations (Bertram 1967: 77). From this perspective, staple products are essentially those natural resources which are extracted involving little processing prior to export (Bertram 1967: 78).

Stacy told me about the history of the River. The River used to be used as a logging river, much like the French River just a few kilometres north on HWY 69. Interestingly enough I had taken many trips to the nearby “town”, Britt Inlet approximately 20 kilometres south of the Pickerel River, and there I was able to see some of the evidence of the early logging days in the region. At a restaurant in Britt Inlet, there were large frames that hung from the walls that included pictures of early European settlers who came to the region in order to participate in the logging industry. Due to the immense amount of logging that took place on the Pickerel River until about the mid 1900’s, the River faced constant concerns. The logging process took place across the entire river whereby large tugboats would pull giant piles of floating logs up and down the river for the local lumber yard that was on Pickerel River road. According to Stacy, the problem with this process is that the people who were in control of the logging industry in the region were not knowledgeable with the species of trees native to the area. This caused issues as they were unable to tell the difference between the various types of hard wood and soft wood. Trees like Cedar and Yellow Birch were unable to float, and often sank shortly after they were pushed into the River. These ideas echo earlier conversations regarding knowledge production and the issue of local knowledge against Euro –centric settler knowledge. In Stacey’s view, these colonial processes of the cultivation of timber caused the River to be “matted with logs” approximately

forty feet in height from the bottom of the river. Below is a picture demonstrating the logging processes.

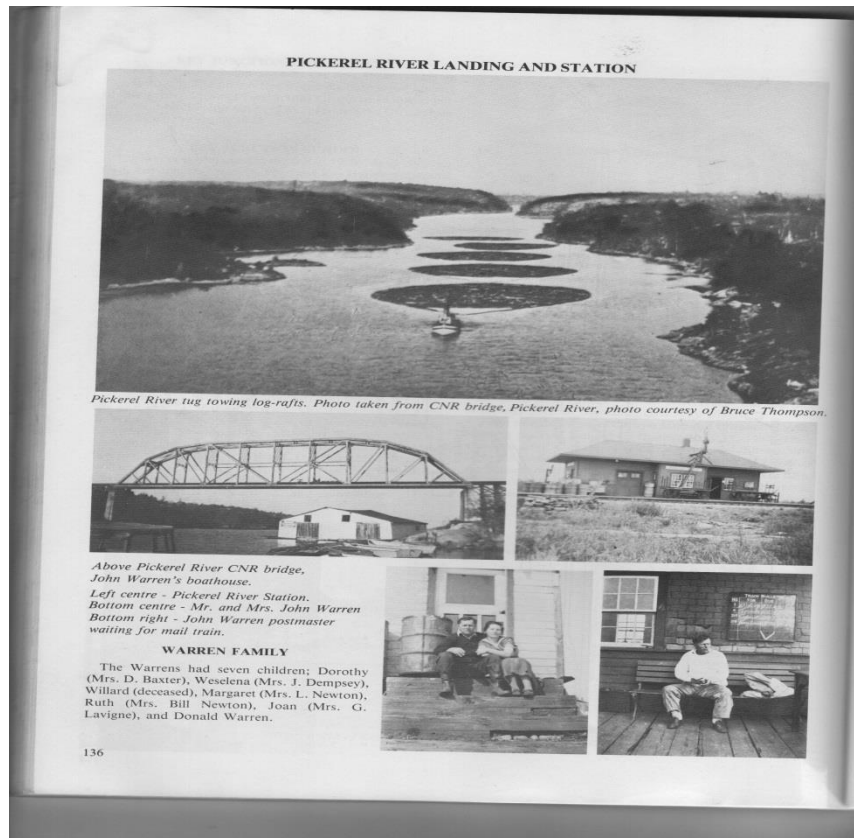


Figure 4. Pickerel River Logging vessels

This incident demonstrates the power relations that shaped the early Pickerel River, a river profitable for the exploitation of raw materials in the form of lumber, and pulp for paper. Early settlers of the region were able to transform the landscape through the rapid expansion of the timber industry. In conjunction with ideas put forth by Thorpe and Sanders, the Forest regions prove to be a valuable and important role in Canadian political economy (Thorpe, Sanders; year of publication? 57). These processes cause damage to the river by disrupting the ecosystem with dead and decaying logs that during these processes had sank to the bottom of the



river, as well as air pollution done by the influx of industry being introduced to the area. In order to settle the land and extract its resources, including forest products colonists and settlers built an entire society. This society and its economy organized around labour force to serve the ends of the resource extraction (Thorpe, Sanders; 57). The power relations remain in existence, even as logging industry evaporated and the logging mill was shut down community members, including Stacy's relatives, and himself, dependant on the work provided in the mill were left without an income to remain dependant on government aid thereafter. Interestingly, the river in contemporary times shows no sign above water that there was any logging going on in the area. A visitor with no previous knowledge of the area would have no clue that there was a time in history where no recreational boats were really passing through, and predominately there were only commercial logging vessels that occupied the area.

As previously mentioned, the exploitations of the timber industry by the European settlers and the negative impacts that the local industry had on the eco-system can be seen as early settlers used forests for fuel, farming, and construction purposes, and industry began later to cut raw timber and manufacture pulp and paper for export (Thorpe, Sandberg 2002: 57). In discussing the impacts of the disturbance of the eco-system with Stacy, he explained that he believes the River is still impacted by the effects of the timber industry. Stacy had a friend who was an expert at underwater diving. He explained to me that his friend was diving in the Pickerel River and securing large pieces of Cedar and Yellow Birch for the purpose of both cleaning up the River as well as to use for its commodity value. He was able to salvage these various precious types of wood for the purposes of sale while simultaneously attempting to restore some of the damage left behind by the logging and timber industry. Stacy explained to me that this shortly came to an abrupt halt as once governing bodies found out about these diving

expeditions. Stacy's friend was told to immediately stop retrieving wood that sank to the bottom of the Pickerel River as it would further damage the eco-system.

This was an interesting theory. When analyzed, one would assume that removal of dead, rotting, and decaying wood from the bottom of a once thriving algae rich eco-system would be beneficial to said eco-system. When discussing the change in eco-system after his friend removed logs from various parts of the River Stacy explained to me he noticed changes every season thereafter. He explained that first the weeds and algae started appearing in the region, followed by the slow return of various types of bait fish that were previously nowhere to be found in the region. Although the work done by Stacy's friend had in a short time restored regions, the governing body had alternative views on the work that was being accomplished in the region. Contrary to the information provided by Stacy, the governing body felt as though the removal of the wood will create a disturbance to the region and was to cause further damage to the region and thus not be beneficial.

When one critically analyzes the scenario, it becomes evident that although these examples are supposed to describe the same period of time, what emerges out of it becomes two alternative histories. Though an in depth discussion on the timber industry would be far too vast to carry forth in this thesis, it is important to highlight that ideas surrounding expansion and development stem from an ideology known as "Manifest Destiny". This ideology allows for governing body to justify its expansion because according to the Oxford English Dictionary, Manifest Destiny is the belief that the expansion of United States was justified and inevitable. Therefore, processes like massive expansion of the timber industry were easily understood and taken up by early settlers without question. Unfortunately, with this notion of inevitability

comes the disregard of the negative processes that occur as a result of the exploitation of timber and raw materials ie: decaying logs lying at the bottom of the Pickerel River.

## Chapter Twelve: Solitude

Solitude is a major attribute of wilderness experiences and a legally required distinguishing characteristic of wilderness experience (Hammit 1982: 472). The Wilderness Act of 1964 documents “solitude and naturalness” as important characteristics distinguishing wilderness from other kinds of outdoor recreation (Hammit 1982: 472). Solitude is often properly defined as the escape or complete isolation from all people (Hammit: 1982: 473). Moments of solitude would often exist in several different ways throughout fieldwork. One of the most impactful ways this occurred is when visitors of mine would depart after short stays with me. Amongst these visitors would be family and close friends. I had rules in place in order to keep me sane upon my guests’ departure. One of these rules was that upon dropping them off to the marina so they can begin their journey home, I would pull my boat up to the dock and hang on to the railing with my hand as opposed to tying it up and helping them with their belongings by taking it to their car. We would say our goodbyes without me getting out of the boat, the reason for this was primarily because getting out of the boat left room for long sad goodbye’, and this method allowed me to trick myself into believing I was in business mode, and that I would see them very soon in Toronto upon completion of my work. The second and most important rule would be to take off in my boat before their car departed as seeing me leave I presumed was easier for them than it would be for me watching them leave. Those moments travelling the river post family/friend departure were feelings of liberation in conjunction with loneliness. My rules kept the loneliness at bay, and my drive to complete my work furthered that. Although these rules were in place, twice something strange happened to me upon my return to the cabin.

On the property that I stayed throughout my fieldwork, there were several unoccupied cabins as well as the one I stayed in. The cabin that I stayed in worked as a living and work space. When I had visitors I allowed for them to cook, drink, eat, and have fun in this cabin but I always ensured they stayed in a separate cabin in order to not interfere with any of my work. I had spent ten days alone in the woods prior to my visitors arriving with minimal contact with family and friends back home. My guests along with their presence, was both stimulating and overwhelming at times. Upon their departure however, once I arrived back at the property I approached my visitor's cabin in order to start cleaning up and unplugging items to which used electricity. Once I entered, standing in the doorway gazing through the room, I saw a half glass of orange juice, alongside an empty Budweiser can with ash from a cigarette surrounding the can as well as on top of the can. At that moment, I felt my first inklings of "cabin fever" as I found myself wondering a very strange thought. I wondered, were my visitors ever there? Did they come a long time ago? Did they leave a long time ago? Is this something that ever even happened or had I dreamt the whole thing? When living in the woods alone it is very easy to lose track of the time as well as the days and weeks, and thus I found my thoughts frantically wandering, and I found myself lost in the experience the only thing I could think to do was shake it off and go back to what I refer to as the "home" cabin (where I worked, and where I slept). There I sat gathering my thoughts, looking through my calendar, reassuring myself of the dates I have been there, the time that has passed and the time I have left. It took an hour or so but I composed myself enough to realize that the experience in fact had happened, it ended earlier that day, and my guests were safely on route home.

The second time something strange happened to me was very interesting in that it mirrored my previous experience. Except this time, I broke the rules. This experience occurred

towards the end of my fieldwork, and in part was the reason I ended my fieldwork one week prematurely. I was scheduled to stay until approximately August 14th 2014. I did not know at the time that this would be my last set of visitors in the field. I travelled across the river on August 5<sup>th</sup>,2014 following the Civic Holiday. My visitors and pulled into my dock space at the landing. Routinely, I informed my guests that they needed to unload their stuff onto the dock so I could head back to the cabin and prepare myself for another week of fieldwork as well as, another week of living on the River. Once at the dock it seemed as though my visitors were as troubled about their departure as I was with the rest of my stay on the Pickerel River. They proceeded to coerce me into tying the boat up and assisting them with carrying their bags and other belongings to the car. It took quite a bit of convincing but they for the first time convinced me to assist them, up until that day I had never done that for a multitude of visitors which included. Once their car was loaded it seemed as though they were reluctant to say goodbye, due to the fact that we had such a memorable and quality good time over the previous few days they visited the cabin.

After what felt like minutes but was surely only seconds of this reluctance to part ways, I finally said my goodbyes and reassured my friends that I would see them in a week once back in Toronto. I recall this rainy day as though it were yesterday. Travelling back down the river and looking back at the dust trail behind my friend's car struck me in a way it never had prior to this date. I found myself deeply saddened by their departure and feeling completely incomplete. When arriving back to Woodlands bay I peered across the River and noticed a group of young Native people that I knew who had been camping on a sandy beach across the River from my cabin. I had seen them there every morning as I prepared for fieldwork and stood on the front porch while I drank my morning cup of tea.

I arrived back to the cabin at approximately 11:30 am and immediately went over to the cabin my visitors resided in over the weekend. Upon entering the cabin, eerily the same feeling as previously swept over me as I noticed similar items on the table including matches, empty beer bottles and a few other items. Oddly enough, the circumstance seemed to be repeating itself the same as before and began to slip back into that trancelike state whereby I could not recall whether this was an experience that had already happened long ago. This situation progressively got worse than the first time as the thoughts departed from, I wondered, were my visitors ever there? Did they come a long time ago? Did they leave a long time ago? Is this something that ever even happened or had I dreamt the whole thing?

Quickly these thoughts turned into very frantic anxious thoughts where I was questioning not only all of the aforementioned things but I now began to question my very existence and presence in that cabin. I wondered if I were actually present in this experience or was it some kind of out of body experience where my mind was elsewhere and my body remained in the room. I also understood this scenario as though this was actually a situation that I was remembering from home while writing this thesis. Although this was untrue at the time and I was actually there, it disturbed me deeply. I returned to the “home cabin” to try and regain composure. It was there that the strangeness continued, for the first time in all my months living in the cabin I began to feel uneasy. I began to feel as though I was being watched, and things that seemed so normal started to feel quite the opposite. I decided to take a nap and hope that it was just sheer exhaustion making me feel so out of place in a place I knew to be home.

I awoke from the nap to receive a welcoming text message from my visitors informing me of their safe passage home. When I arose I still did not feel quite myself. Luckily a friend of mine that has called the Pickerel River his home year around since 1994 came for a visit to my

cabin. Just as we did before, we embarked on having a few beers before I made dinner and turned in for the night. Still feeling uneasy, I enjoyed my time spent talking and joking around with John that evening as he happily got into his boat and pattered along the river's edge towards his cabin around nightfall.

I decided to do what I always did make dinner, put on a DVD in the background and relax for the evening. This feeling of uneasiness never left my side throughout the night, and I still had this strange feeling as though I were being watched. After dinner and a bit of winding down, I decided to go to sleep. I slept on a couch beside the front door which had a window the size of the couch that overlooked the river behind it. There like I did every night before I drifted to sleep. I rarely had poor sleep as the only noise that can usually be heard from the cabin is the sound of a train blowing its horn in the distance.

This night was particularly strange. I experienced a dream that was not quite like any dream I had ever had to date. The dream had me lying on the exact same couch I slept on, but much like any normal time the dream had me in anticipation that John who I had seen earlier on in the evening had forgotten something and was coming back up the patio steps to open the front door and retrieve his personal affects. To my surprise, in the dream I gazed upon the door as it opened expecting to see John, instead what appeared at the door was a short bald Native man dressed in blue jeans and a red and black lumberjack jacket, screaming as loud as he could in a language foreign to me. I rose off the couch feeling an adrenaline combined with fear that I had never felt before and rushed after the man in the doorway. He then scampered toward an escape by traversing the patio near the stairs, at the bottom of the short three step stairs I caught him from behind and began to scream and shake him by his shoulders. I awoke from what would be my first and only nightmare while living in the woods. I sat up on the couch unaware whether



this was an actual lived experience or only a dream. I felt frightened and anxious, I was mad with rage, I felt as though he was still there and in my mind I wished for him to approach the door a second time. I could feel his eyes stare at me through the front window, I could almost hear his footsteps on the patio. Throughout this time which felt like hours I smoked cigarettes on the couch with an empty beer can in my hand for the purpose of discarding the ash from my cigarette, I must have smoked 3-4 cigarettes before slightly calming down.

To this day, I understand this as an actual event that took place, realizing shortly thereafter that I had installed an automatically censored light on the front porch, to which I begged for it to turn on so I could face what I thought was a man who only had intentions to harm me. Without being able to distinguish reality from a dream, I calmed down a bit further when after an hour or so the light on the porch never turned on. I decided to text a friend in order to see whether or not a reply would aid in my realization that this was just a dream and it never actually occurred. A reply never came and I eventually fell back asleep. Several hours later I awoke from another nightmare, one that seemed relatively normal in comparison to the previous one, it was around 5:00am and was not light out yet, I felt as though this night would never end. I managed to sleep until the first crack of light appeared to which I arose immediately. Still feeling tense, anxious, and uneasy I immediately went out onto the porch in order to face my fears and ensure that there was nobody there. I enjoyed a cup or two of tea until I saw someone walking up the path toward the cabin. It was John he had in one hand, a beer, and the other a coffee. This furthered my confusion as to whether or not I had dreamt all of this, as well as whether or not I was still currently dreaming, until John stated that “I couldn’t decide between a beer and a coffee, so I brought both”, a jovial fashion in which John and I often banter. He noticed immediately that I was on edge and nothing like myself. John and I have

known one another for the better part of a decade so I felt good about confiding in him the night I had just had, and the things that had happened to me the day prior. We spoke about it for quite some time on the front porch of my cabin as he enjoyed both his beer and his coffee interchangeably.

Once I calmed down fully, I gazed across the bay to the other side of the river where the people I knew were camping over the last two weeks and noticed something, they were finally packing up their camp-site and heading back home. The land they camped was First Nations land, and no outsider was to be travelling on that side of the river. This was an epiphany for me I realized if the Natives are leaving the woods, maybe it is time I leave as well. Reflecting on this situation I felt perhaps spiritually connected, and that after all these months living in Northern Ontario, maybe I have received a sign in the form of the man in the dream. I feel as though this man came to me in my dreams to both, figuratively and literally get me out of the woods. These combinations of signs lead me to spend the rest of that day, as well as the next cleaning up, and closing up the property and eventually departing from the woods on Thursday August 7th 2014, and make my way back home.

Although there is no lack of discrimination between the experiences of self when awake and when dreaming, both sets of sequences are equally self-related (Hart 2010:7). Dream experiences function integrally with other recalled memory images so far as these, too, enter the field of self-awareness (Hart 2010:7). For the Anishnaabe spirit beings, spirit powers, spirit guardians, and spirit animals exist (Hart 2010: 7). Recognizing that there are many worldviews, and in turn, understandings of what exists, and recognizing that there are directly related, indirectly similar, and completely diverging perspectives, it appears that there would be overlaps and divergences in ontologies (Hart 2010:7). Indigenous people and indigenous ontology

recognize the spiritual realm, and this realm is understood as being interconnected with the physical realm.

## Conclusion

I returned to the region of the Pickerel River in the Late May of 2015. It was now one year removed from the field. Upon reflecting and spending a year of grappling with these various and complex ideas associated with First Nations peoples it was nice to be back where it all began. Over the last decade, I felt that I could always breathe easier every year that I return to that region, I was always unsure as to whether or not it was because returning to that region would also signify the beginning of a leisurely trip or because of some strange unknown reason for my connectedness to the Pickerel River. Upon my arrival, I made my usual stop at Stacy's convenience store in order to gather a few extra supplies for the next few days. It was then I was able to have a worthwhile conversation with Stacy for the first time in a year. It was at this time we sat again, at a familiar kitchen table. There, he explained to me how the past year was spent, mostly in and out of court rooms trying to gain momentum with the case he spent his adult life working on. The result of this long drawn out discussion between Stacy and the Crown was that the Crown deemed that although Stacy has an immense amount of research and historical documentation to back up his claims, without a clear cut defined community representation the Crown believes there is no point in moving forward with his claim. Therefore, according to Stacy he is to rally and inform community members stretching as far north as southern Quebec and as far south as the Gulf of Mexico (according to his research). The problems associated with this have been thoroughly engaged with at length throughout this thesis, and for the purpose of concluding this discussion I will not reiterate the same sentiments. However, I would like to engage briefly in contemporary notions of community within the realm of Social and Cultural Anthropology and the ways in which this term is defined in a problematic scope. To quote from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, he states that the definition of a nation is an

imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (reference citation?). Here, Anderson is speaking about nations and nation states, but through the research conducted I would like to take his definition and apply it in a different context. I would like to explore this First Nations family as an imagined “nation”. For that reason, I think it is appropriate to examine the First Nation “nation” as being imagined. This imagined nation as I call it is situated within a larger historical context, and it is in this larger historical context that identity is constructed and reconstructed by the Canadian nation-state as well as First Nations members. When I first started thinking about these issues it seemed as though the argument were situated around notions of power, domination, and control, subject matter that has been exhausted within the discipline of anthropology historically. Interestingly, what emerged through critical thinking and analysis were the same aforementioned notions, yet situated in a different context. These power relations, or modes of domination and control are the macro, the micro as demonstrated through this thesis is knowledge. The interpretation of knowledge and by whom is it being interpreted, knowledge production and the passing of knowledge, but more importantly how knowledge is represented has been the shift of my focus.

As demonstrated in Chapter 1 the beginnings of my research all started because of a thirst for knowledge and my attempt at trying to understand and ask questions regarding the Amikwa logo in the store. Stacy’s knowledge on these subject matters proceeded to fuel my interest regarding socio-political issues related to First Nations, and from an Anthropological standpoint it opened up a forum in which we could discuss First Nations identity from in a much larger context.

When examining the ideas put forth in Chapter 2 it is evident that the “doctrine of discovery” was instrumental in my understanding of how knowledge plays a crucial role in First Nations relations historically. Through the use of these ideologies, European settlers were able to gain access through “legal” means to their ultimate goal of colonization. We further examine this and other policies in order to better understand socio-political issues related to First Nations throughout Chapter 2 through engaging with policies such as the Royal Proclamation, Indian Act, the White Paper, and the Brown Paper. It is understood that the multitude of ways in which the impactful documents have been interpreted by First Nations groups are not necessarily in conjunction with the way the government intended. These and other such relations have been historically intertwined and have caused a relationship of friction within the Canadian context.

The discussion brought forth in Chapter 3 regarding the Robinson Huron Treaty again, exemplify notions of interpretation. As mentioned previously, negotiations of Treaties in Canadian history have been a long standing point of debate amongst First Nations members and the Canadian government. First Nations members place significance in the telling of oral history and its importance in treaty making in a Canadian context. From a government perspective, the treaty information is interpreted literally from a contract perspective. Therein lays the discrepancy both historically and contemporarily.

In Chapter 4, I attempt to describe for the reader the relevance and importance of oral history while using a story Stacy told me for the Mcquabbie family as well as First Nations as a whole. Through the subject matters and authors, I engaged with during my Masters in Social and Cultural Anthropology at York University, I was able to understand some of the ideas Stacy discussed not from a First Nations perspective but from a Western scholarly perspective. I often engaged with authors like Michel Foucault and Stuart Hall and because of that those are some of

the most influential scholars through which I understood governmental power and socio-political identity.

Through my discussions with Stacy, I was able to understand from his perspective the complexities associated with definitions of identity and identity construction. It can be understood from an anthropological perspective what is meant by the term identity construction. However, for the purpose of this discussion I mean it in its literal sense, the Amikwa identity is literally constructed through Stacy's understanding of his own history, as well as through the independent research he has spent his life conducting. For him, his culture is not "extinct" or "lost" and his community is not "sparse" or non-existent it is alive, and flourishing, and surviving on Henvey Inlet French River #13 Reserve, Pickerel River Road.

Chapter 6 once again highlights the importance of oral history and the telling of story to convey messages and explain First Nations connectedness to spirituality. Through the works of Taitaiki, and Retzlaff we can understand the relevance of Stacy's story regarding the Beaver and his connectedness to that animal and the Clan name Amikwa meaning Beaver people.

Understanding the importance of symbols was a key focus of mine throughout the research process as well as the writing phase of this thesis. Initially, it was a symbol that drew my interest in this subject matter as seen in the store that summer day. Through discussions brought forth in Chapter 7 regarding First Nations symbols as well as symbols related to government demonstrate the power symbols hold in relation to one's socio-political identity.

The chapter regarding Rain and the impact of weather conditions on the River and in the community was important for me to illustrate fieldwork obstacles. It can be as simple as weather conditions that negatively impact both the ability to physically travel to your participants as well

as its impact on your mind. I did not intend to overdramatize the experience I had while conducting fieldwork, and I hope that it determine the value of the research conducted for the reader. The reason this chapter focuses so heavily on the weather conditions is because even after a year removed from the field, that was the one thing that remained prevalent within my mind from the experience.

In Chapter 9 Stacy connects the micro to the macro when explaining to me the ways in which he interprets title claim and its connectedness to identity in conjunction with its relationship to sovereignty. This was a powerful discussion Stacy and I had, one in which was stopped several times as it was not the easiest subject matter to absorb for me. These discussions and others alike allowed me to understand more broadly, about how these issues effect First Nations identity on a National scale as well as on an individual level.

When understanding Euro-Centric ideas around colonization and settling new lands, it is important to place emphasis on the exploitation of raw materials and resources. As seen in Chapter 10, the logging industry was at the cornerstone of development in and around the French River and surrounding areas which included the Pickerel River. Stacy explained to me the effects both economically and environmentally of the logging industry on the Pickerel River. Through his narrations came once again the question of which form of knowledge can be deemed more valid. Local knowledge is pinned against government knowledge when it comes to the environmental concerns that have occurred to the Pickerel River ecosystem as demonstrated in this chapter.

Lastly, the chapter regarding the finality of my fieldwork was important as it demonstrated the power through which one can interpret dreams. Now, I do not claim nor intend



to claim that I have mastered First Nations spirituality, or First Nations ability to interpret dreams and share relevance to everyday life. However, this chapter simply explains some of the reasons why I chose to end my fieldwork prematurely. Eventually I felt as though I was grappling with many complex ideas as a result of my fieldwork and participant research, and reasons combined with the dream sequence in conjunction with the Native campers across the Bay packing up and leaving made me believe it was a sign that I should be doing the same thing. As discussed previously these sequences of events ultimately lead to my departure from the woods and the conclusion of my fieldwork.

Throughout this research I consistently grappled with the term “community” as early on in my academic studies I had no idea the complexities associated with such a term. It came to the forefront throughout this entire research project and continuous to remain a focus for both Stacy and I. What is community? How can it be defined? Can it be seen? Does it have to be geographically situated in one country or do borders further complicate the issue of community? These are issues are interesting and allow for the space to open up different conceptualizations of community. According to the Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, a community is defined as follows: Community describes a collectivity with shared identity or interests that has the capacity to act or express oneself as collective. In this policy a community may include members from multiple cultural groups. A community may be territorial, organizational, or a community of interest. “Territorial Communities” have governing bodies exercising local or regional jurisdiction eg: members of First Nations resident on reserve lands (reference citation?). By this definition comes the same question that has continued to come out throughout this thesis, questions of alternate knowledge and interpretation seem to be the recurring theme in this paper and throughout history in the Canadian context. In this thesis, I

do not claim to deem one interpretation valid over the other, but to demonstrate that the variance in knowledge systems and interpretation of history impact the socio-political identity of First Nations members on a national scale, as well as on an individual basis as seen through the information Stacy was kind enough to share with me.

## **Bibliography**

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Duke University Press, 2009.

Crehan, Kate “Subaltern Culture,” In *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology*. University of California Press. 2002.

Collins, John “‘But What if I Should Need to Defecate in Your Neighborhood Madam?’: Empire, Redemption, and the ‘Tradition of the Oppressed’ in a Brazilian World Heritage Site,” *Cultural Anthropology* 23(2):279-328 (2008)

Clough, P. (2000). Comments on setting criteria for experimental writing. *Qualitative Inquiry* 6(2), 278-291.

Dews, Peter “Power and Subjectivity in Foucault,” *New Left Review* 1/144, March-April 1984

Foucault, Michel “Governmentality,” In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, Eds. University of Chicago Press. 1991.

Gordon, Colin “Governmental Rationality: An Introduction,” In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, Eds. University of Chicago Press. 1991.

Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson “Beyond ‘Culture’: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference,” In *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*. Akhil Gupta

and James Ferguson, Eds, Duke University Press. 1997.

Hall, Stuart "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?" In *Identity: A Reader*. P. du Gay, J. Evans, P. Redman, Eds., Sage Publications Inc.

Karl-Heinz Kohl Source: *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde*, Bd. 44, *Anthropology and the Question of the Other* (1998), pp. 51-58

Jasanoff, Sheila, ed. *States of knowledge: the co-production of science and the social order*. Routledge, 2013.

Mbembe, Achille "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15(1):11-40 (2003)

Murray Li, Tania "Governmentality," *Anthropologica* 49(2):275-81, 2007

Rose, Nikolas "Identity, Genealogy, History," In *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Guy, Eds. Sage Publications. 1996.

Williams, Raymond "Hegemony," In *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford University, 1977

Warren, William W. 1885. *History of the Ojibways, based upon traditions and oral statements*. St. Paul : Minnesota Historical Society.

*The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* by Julie Cruikshank 1998.

*The Doctrine of Discovery and Canadian Law: Jennifer Reid* *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* XXX, 2(2010):335-359.

The Voice of the Crane Echoes Afar; The Socio-political Organization of the Lake Superior Ojibway 1640-1855: Theresa M. Schenek

Fraser Symington, The First Canadians 1978 Publisher: N.S.L

Steffi Retzlaff 2005 Journal of Canadian Native Studies: What's in a name? The Politics of Labelling and Native Identity Constructions.

Figure 4. Northeastern Georgian Bay and It's People; William A. Campbell Publisher: Self Published Sudbury Ontario 1986

Bertram, G.W. 1967. "Economic Growth in Canadian Industry 1887-1915. The Staple Model". In Approaches to Canadian Economic History. W.T. Easterbrook and M.H. Watkins, eds. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 74-98

Environment and Behavior Volume 14 No. 4: Cognitive Dimensions of Wilderness Solitude July 1982 pg 478-493 William E Hammit

Phenomenological Approaches in Anthropology\* Robert Desjarlais and C. Jason Throop Annual Review of Anthropology. 2011. 40:87-102

Journal of Indigenous voices in social work Volume 1 Issue 1 February 2010: Michael Anthony Hart, Indigenous Worldviews, Knowledge, and Research: The Development of an Indigenous Research Paradigm

Hayano, D. (1979). Auto-ethnography: Paradigms, problems and prospects. Human Organization, 38(1), 99-104.)

IFE Journal of History, Bonny Ibawoh Volume 6 Issue No.1 2013

John L. Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree 1879-1885," *Canadian Historical Review*, 64: 520. 1983.

Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa: Precolonial Nishnaabeg Diplomatic and Treaty Relationships

Leanne Simpson: *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Fall, 2008), pp. 29-42