

**Anishinaabe Learning Places: Teaching and Learning through Gift, Relational, Movement
and Spirit Pedagogies**

John (Waaseyaabin) Hupfield

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Education, York University, Toronto, Ontario

Date: February 2023

© John Hupfield 2023

Abstract

Powwows have always been a place of dynamic colours, beadwork, a celebration of life on the land, a site for Anishinaabeg to ‘dance, sing, and pray, the Anishinaabe way.’ *Anishinaabe pedagogy and powwow as place: Teaching and Learning through Gift, Relational, Movement and Spirit Pedagogies* is a project that examines the ways in which powwow as place can provide spaces for teaching and learning within powwow families. As a grass dancer themselves, the author centres relationship with three other powwow families through a methodology rooted in *Anishinaabewin* (Indigenous knowledge systems), *dibaajimowinan* (storysharing), and *nbwaachewin* (visiting). Through a series of ZOOM sessions, stories were shared and knowledge co-constructed about Anishinaabe pedagogy through processes of reciprocity and relationality. The stories shared by families were oft-framed by colonization, naming its impacts on family structures and Anishinaabe identity - the dismantling of kinship systems. Powwow as place was described as a space that not only provides respite from ongoing forms of colonization, but fosters kin-making, wholistic wellbeing, and the learning of *Anishinaabewin* through coming to understand teachings about kinship through roles and responsibilities. Powwow families expressed the need to nurture the ‘spirit’ of the learner, a notion rooted in wholism that they felt is oft-lacking in *zhaagnosh* (non-Anishinaabe) learning settings. These findings indicate a need for powwows to be reframed from cultural gatherings and celebrations, to critical places of learning/teaching for Anishinaabeg. The focus on gifts of learners, reframing relationships between teacher and learner relationships, and a call for the hosting of more Anishinaabeg places of learning such as powwow, are all aspects that non-Indigenous educational contexts can learn from.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Glossary	vi
Chapter 1	1
Introduction - Daaban and word bundles	1
‘Powwow as place’	3
My inquiry into powwow as place	4
Nidibajimowinaan - my stories	5
Bbaamaadzi - Travel	5
Medicine in the morning	8
Arriving at the grounds	9
Getting ready	10
Grand Entry - lining up	11
Grand Entry - dancing parents and tiny tots	12
Getting ready to dance	14
Dancing - Grass songs	15
Contest dancing - kids	17
Situating the critical need for increased powwow discourse	20
Summary	22
Chapter 2	24
Literature Review	24
Learning within the urban Indigenous community	25
Graduate studies as a place for storying	27
Literature review	29
Centreing Oral teachings	30
Oral teaching 1 - Kinoomaagegamig and the language	31
Oral teaching 2 - Life stages and our roles and responsibilities	33
Oral teaching 3 - Aanikoobijigan/ancestors	34
Powwow literature - Writing from story, relationality and love	35
History and background	38
Indigenous Pedagogy Literature	42
Red pedagogy and Zisbaakdoke	45
Summary of key ideas	47
Theoretical Framework	48
Pillar one - Dibaajimowinan - Experiential knowledge through story	49
Pillar Two - Aadisokaanag miinwaa Anishinaabemowin - teachings and the language	51
Pillar Three - Radical Resurgence	55
Pillar Four - Transmotion	58

Powwow as a site of teaching/learning	61
Chapter 3 - Theoretical Framework and Methodology	62
Centreing Indigenous methodologies	65
Nbwaachwewin: visiting as methodology	67
Dibaajimowinan - Story as methodology	68
Centering my own self and stories	70
Research Plan	71
Research questions	75
Guiding Question:	76
Reciprocity: What stories will I share?	76
Blankie story	76
Nieces and Niblets	78
Positionality: What are my responsibilities?	79
From vision into action: storying the data collection process	81
Chapter 4 Data Chapter	87
DIBAAJIMOWINAN - telling our stories	87
Story one - Nathalie	91
Story two - Elaine	95
DIBAAJIMOWINAN - ANALYSIS	98
Analysis: Story one - Nathalie	99
Analysis: Story two - Elaine	108
Concluding thoughts	116
Chapter 5	120
DIBAAJIMOWINAN - telling our stories	120
Story three - Theland	121
Story four - Karen	125
Dibaajimowinan - analysis	127
Analysis: Story three - Theland	127
Analysis: Story four - Karen	138
The role of spirit	141
Conclusion	145
Chapter 6: Dissertation Conclusion	148
Niin Dibaajimowinaan - My story - Summer 2022	148
Dibaajimowinan as introspection	151
The sharing of stories: ethics of relationality and reciprocity as Anishinaabe academic	152
Powwow as enacting Anishinaabeg roles and responsibilities	154
Powwow as more than healing: (re)connection to miikaans	156
Powwow as feeling - movement and wholism	157
Powwow as lived place: accessing the dance spirit	159
Summary: Anishinaabeg places and the nurturing of learning	160
Anishinaabeg conditions for learning	162

Key elements of Indigenous/Anishinaabeg Pedagogy	164
Anishinaabeg as knowledge makers	165
Powwow as place, Anishinaabeg pedagogy, and possible applications to non-Indigenous educational contexts	167
Conclusion	171
Works and People Cited	173

Glossary:

The following terms are outlined as contextual pieces that provide additional framing for readers who may not be familiar with powwow terminology as well as Anishinaabe language.

Anishinaabe - the term we use to describe ourselves, refers to our creation stories and the core understanding that Anishinaabeg (g- denotes plural) have been on Turtle Island since its inception. Also refers to the Three Fires Confederacy - Ojibway, Odawa, Pottawotami - of whom comprise the Anishinaabeg Nation - spanning traditional territories from Manitoba, across the Great Lakes into Minnesota, the North Shore of Lake Superior, Lake Huron, and down into central/southern Ontario. The term Anishinaabe is also used in place of other terms of recognition that are not our own - ie. Indigenous, Aboriginal - where appropriate.

Anishinaabemowin - The term which refers to the language of the Anishinaabeg.

Zhaaganosh - A term with contentious origins, while the exact meaning of the word is not agreed upon within Anishinaabeg nation, I use the term to denote non-Anishinaabe/Indigenous peoples within our territory, ie. visitors, settlers. Within the text, *zhaaganosh* is also used in reference to non-Indigenous ways of knowing and being and the systems which the Euro-centric framing has brought to Turtle Island.

Powwow - Cultural gatherings which occur seasonally, hosted by local First Nations, urban Anishinaabe communities, with the core activities being dance and singing.

Big Drum (dawaayagan) - A large wooden frame drum with the skin of our hoof-nation relatives (deer, moose etc) stretched across the frame - the primary instrument which singing groups use at powwow

Pushup - Each song within powwow is made up of four push-ups (verses), with a lead sung by one singer at the start (lead singer), which is echoed back by the other singers, after which the core vocables are sung together in unison. Honour beats (louder beats towards the end of each push-up) are used to denote communication outwards to the spirit world, as well as a cue to dancers that the next push-up is about to start

MC - The 'Master of Ceremonies', usually a respected individual on the powwow trail who brings a wealth of knowledge and experience from the powwow trail, they are responsible for 'hosting' the powwow and communicating with the dancers/singers and attendees to ensure folks know what is taking place and the order of events. These individuals often share teachings and stories, mixed in with humour, to keep the event moving and flowing from activity to activity. It has become common practice for Emcee's to have a microphone and PA system setup to ensure all dancers and spectators can hear when specific songs are coming up and when to be ready.

Arena Director (AD) - An individual invited by the host community to run the activities of the powwow, ie. organize dancers for Grand Entry, ensure Elders are cared for, lining up the eagle staffs and flags, assisting with movement of dancers and ensures safety during intertribals/contest songs.

Arbor/arena - The space where dancing occurs, often a circular area with cared for grass if outdoors, within indoor spaces the area is often carpeted or denoted with mats, sometimes there is a rope denoting this space and it is maintained for the safety of dancers by the AD.

Drum pit - The space where drum groups set up, usually a PA system is setup with microphones that rotate from drum to drum to ensure singers are heard across the powwow.

Protocol - Within the powwow trail this refers to doing things in a good way. There are cultural norms and teachings that frame the activity at powwows, for example there are specific songs

for the dance styles, there are specific times when all attendees are invited to dance, there are spaces within the powwow that spectators are not generally permitted to enter (ie. the Eastern doorway where Grand Entry occurs). The Emcee provides reminders and works alongside the AD and Elders, as well as the dancers, to ensure protocol is honoured and that the powwow accounts for physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of those in attendance.

Grand Entry - Originally a practice introduced by a non-Indigenous man - William Cody “Buffalo Bill” - during the ‘Western’ shows of the late 1800s. It involves the lining up of dancers within their ‘categories’ of dance, and dancing in formation during an extended song. This practice has been repurposed on the powwow trail to honour the Eagle Staffs, Flags of territory upon which the gathering occurs, dignitaries, and dancers, it is seen by many as a ceremonial practice that conveys the start of the powwow.

Regalia - Refers to the specific outfits dancers wear. Each regalia is tailored, designed, and adheres to core frameworks of structure, teachings, and movements. It is okay to refer to regalia as an ‘outfit’, never as a costume though.

Grassdance - The oldest dance style within powwow, denoted by the long fringe dancers wear on their regalia. Teachings vary from nation to nation, but one of the core functions of grass dancers is to ensure the safety of the community, historically this meant scouting and dancing ahead of the community when moving. The movement is meant to emulate the flow of prairie grass, with steps that dancers make being taken to ‘pat down’ the grass in preparation for others. Today we see grass dancers fulfilling this responsibility at the start of powwows before Grand Entry.

Jingle dress - A style of dance originating in the early 1900s, within Lake of the Woods in Northwest Ontario, Anishinaabeg territory. Signified by the tin cones tied onto the dress, the sound and movement came to Anishinaabeg through a specific dream and is meant to facilitate

healing. There are specific songs sung, nowadays called 'side-steps', and when families or community members are seeking community support during difficult times, these dancers can be requested to dance in support of the healing those individuals seek.

Fancy Shawl - A style of dance that originated in the mid 1950s, fancy shawl is a newer dance style that responded to the desire for femme/female dancers who were seeking a more dynamic and higher intensity dance style. It is seen as a more contemporary dance style, with higher leg movement, fancier footwork, and what originally was a blanket shawl, now a specially designed and intricately beautiful shawl with ribbon sewn on.

Chapter 1

Introduction - *Daaban* and word bundles

The story of the community becomes a living and animate entity that is vitalized when it is nourished properly through the special attention given it by its tellers and those that listen to it. And, when a story finds that special circumstance or special person through which its message is fully received, it induces a direct and powerful understanding.

Through their exposure to this aspect of community education, the most effective Indigenous leaders internalized the “story” of their people. (Cajete, 1994, p. 167)

Our family is a powwow family. My partner, Deanne Hupfield, and I, have been travelling the powwow trail together for over 12 years. We have two daughters and three nieces/niblets we care for in our home. We dance most weekends and travel upwards of one to two days to attend powwows all across Turtle Island. Sometimes we fly, but most of the time we drive in a ten year old Dodge Caravan. When we first got the minivan, we refer to as *daaban* (Anishinaabemowin for car), we took it to Six Nations powwow and covered it in geometric floral bumper stickers that Deanne had purchased from a powwow vendor. On each side my wife put two smaller stickers of fancy shawl dancers. At the time we didn't know, but we ended up having two daughters, both of whom became shawl dancers. It's funny how choices you make end up being affirmed and fulfilled later in life. *Daaban* has been steadfast and reliable, getting us to countless events, powwows, and dancing gigs over the years. Daaban even brought both of our daughters home from the hospital. Precious cargo is its specialty.

My friend Michael White once told me about the etymology of the word *daaban*, that it refers to notions of time in Anishinaabemowin, our language. I've come to learn that when we start to look at the components of words within Indigenous languages, they often carry bundles of

teachings within them, a word bundle (Anderson, 2018). As a verb based language, Anishinaabemowin focuses on descriptive actions, movements and processes; in this instance *daa-* refers to the notion of present time while *ban-* refers to the notion of past. *Daaban* talks about a passage of time. It makes sense to me as *daaban* allowed Anishinaabeg to travel vast distances from one place to another in relatively short periods of time, unlike anything we had experienced before. Rather than just labeling something 'car', we use the language to describe the process of that entity. *Daaban*, an entity that moves us through time and takes us to a present place. *Daaban* revolutionized powwows, it allowed families to travel vast differences and visit communities in ways impossible for our ancestors. Most weekends in the summer I load up our *daaban* with a canopy, regalia bags, food, my kids of course, and when required - all of our camping gear in a Thule roof rack. Many dancers jokingly call their vehicles their war pony, harkening back to an age when some nations and their ancestors used horses to travel. For us Great Lakes Anishinaabe, water faring people, it would've probably been a canoe, instead. I suppose that makes the contemporary facsimile of a war pony a birchbark canoe instead of a horse.

Our *daaban* has brought us to many places, away from the current home of our family, Toronto¹, Ontario. As a family, my partner, myself and our two daughters have powwowed from Treaty 3 past Thunder Bay, East through Algonquin and Atikamekw territory, south to the borders of the Haudenosaunee confederacy, West across the medicine line to our relatives in the US and the prairies. Our powwow trail is generally referred to as the 'Ontario powwows,' but when powwow dancers talk about our region colloquially, they are referring to the confines of the central, south-western and eastern portions of the province. Of course, with the COVID-19 pandemic and provincial restrictions on large scale gatherings, powwows were interrupted in the

¹ Recently referred to as Tkaronto, a Haudenosaunee name for a place with trees in the water, actually referring to Rama and Lake Simcoe but misunderstood as a place name for the place where Toronto now stands during the early efforts by zhaagnosh to 'map' the land.

province for 2020 and 2021, with several communities hosting again the 2022 after a long hiatus. My family was very fortunate over the course of what would have been our 2021 powwow season to make it to a handful of gatherings outside of our normal circuit. Lac Simon, Wemotaci and Manawan hosted traditional gatherings in Quebec, Fort William First Nation also hosted a fall powwow on *Nimkii Ajiw* (Thunderbird mountain) nextdoor to Thunder Bay, and Garden River First Nation hosted a contest powwow in the month of August. Our *daaban* got us to these events, and it was within these times that I really found myself reflecting on how important powwow is as a place for teaching and learning to occur for Anishinaabeg.

‘Powwow as place’

As we travelled as a family on the abbreviated powwow trail of 2021, I recognized how important it was for us to go to place(s) that were organized and hosted by Anishinaabeg. I would be remiss to write about powwow during this time without addressing the impacts of the pandemic. There have been vast implications not only on our ability to powwow, but the inability to dance was something that vastly affected our quality of life. Time away from dancing stirred many memories, I found myself fasting from dancing, turning to writing, reading, and thoughts during this time of absence. I was fortunate to read a piece shared with me by my supervisor, Dr. Susan D. Dion (Lenaape and Pottawotami) by Dene scholar Greg Coulthard which asserted the notion of ‘place’ as critical for all Indigenous peoples (2010). Coulthard’s description of place, oft-referred to as ‘land’, is central in fostering an ethic of reciprocity for Anishinaabeg². His relatives learned about themselves as Dene by living and being in relation to land as place, by coming to understand interrelationality and interdependence through their daily lives. Coming

² Anishinaabeg is plural for the cultural grouping of nations including the Ojibway, Odawa, Pottawotami, Algonquin. It is a term used to refer to ourselves and increasingly has replaced older terminology such as Chippewa, Ojibway, etc. Within the writing contained herein, I will also be using Anishinaabe(g) interchangeably with broader definitions used for Indigenous peoples, within education writing often framed as FNMI - First Nations, Metis and Inuit.

to know place, taking one's learning from that relationship, relying upon land, and the intricately complex forms of knowing is a notion that made sense to me as I travelled across those powwows in 2021.

Taking up Coulthard's notion of place, I began to think of **powwow as place**, the possibility of powwow as a spatial and temporal event that might also provide a pathway for all Indigenous peoples - a term I will be using interchangeably herein with Anishinaabe(g) moving forward - to learn, teach, and come to understand reciprocity and interrelationality themselves. Spending time in the city raising my family, the land is present, always, but seeing powwow as place opened up other avenues of teaching and learning for Anishinaabeg that I believe are critical to articulate and learn from. After years of dancing every weekend at powwows on our regional trail I came to recognize how important powwow is as a place unto itself.

My inquiry into powwow as place

I believe there are many things powwow as place provides, and so when I set down to begin writing, to spend time carrying out my research, I documented those few powwows in the summer of 2021. What follows within the introduction of my dissertation is a critical time for not only my own learning journey, but for all Anishinaabeg to take stock and reflect upon what places we want and need as we continue through life. What follows is an important collection of stories that I began jotting down during that summer, as I took Coulthard's notion of place and began applying it to my own contexts. I believe these stories helped frame my research project as Anishinaabe academic. The core principle of story, of coming to know through relationships with others, and knowing of self, are all contributing to my understanding of Anishinaabeg educational theory and praxis, something I will extrapolate on in later chapters. The stories that follow are also important as they position myself and how I have come to know powwows at this stage of my personal life in conjunction with academia. More importantly they provide a context

for the important shift in my thinking about what powwows can be, that they may provide more than celebratory dance and song, that they offer interstitial spaces for teaching and learning to occur for Anishinaabeg through reciprocity, interrelationality, and interdependence. What follows are stories of my own and my families' time on the trail during what proved to be a very difficult couple of years as dancers.

Nidibajimowinaan - my stories

Bbaamaadzi - Travel

"Don't show up after dark," my friend warned me not to arrive at the rez after the sun went down. Where we were going had no cell service so we couldn't let our friends know when we'd arrived, and the houses on the rez didn't have the same street numbers you become accustomed to in other town settings. It was going to be hard to find the person we needed to find when we arrived. I realized why he warned us not to show up after dark, not only was it going to be hard to find someone on the rez, we didn't know anyone, and there was a language barrier. Wemotaci is a Atikimakew community where French is the common language.

To get to Wemotaci you have to take a dirt road for 80km North-West of the small Francophone town called La Tuque. It was close to suppertime when we got to La Tuque and we needed to grab some dinner, figuring we had more than enough time until sundown. The province of Quebec had just started its vaccine-pass system, meaning we needed proof of our double vaccinations in order to enter restaurants. Usually we'd just go through a drive thru to save time, the kids still love chicken nuggets and happy meals, but as we pulled up to those familiar golden arches we noticed a long line of cars waiting to get into the drive thru. With the new vaccine pass system they had closed indoor dining at many of the fast food places and only operated drive thrus. We lined up and after 15 minutes of sitting and idling without any movement we

decided to try out one of the local diners. Thankfully the server spoke some English as she explained that we'd have to show proof of vaccination, and the wait was going to be 30-40 minutes. We opted to wait and have a decent meal, but I watched as the sun kept dropping over the buildings, and down to the treeline. With poutine, spaghetti, and pizzas in our bellies we climbed back in the van and made our way to the Wemotaci road.

To say that the road was a bit rough would be an understatement. My friend had warned me to watch out for rocks sticking out of the ground, "the last thing you want is a flat tire," he had said to me. I don't know if he spoke from experience but I believed him. We pushed to get there before sunset, but things got dark much quicker than they do in our hometown of Toronto. Five minutes onto the road we heard the kids moan that their phone service was gone, and I watched as the bars slowly went from 3, down to 1, and then an empty space on the top right of my phone. I noticed on our drive up that the more north we went the more vehicles had antennas for ham radios and many folks drove trucks and large SUVs. Well here we were driving on the road at night with 7 people, 5 kids, a roof top carrier, regalia, and a canopy all crammed into one minivan. The lengths we go to for a powwow, and especially one after a long drought during a global pandemic. Some corners and the long winding hills were blind corners with no visibility. I remember telling Deanne that this was probably the most dangerous driving I had ever done in my life. We drove those 80kms, it took just under an hour. Some locals whipped right by us, probably doing well over 100kms/hr, I don't blame them. They probably had those winds, and hills, and rough spots memorized from countless trips to town and back. It turns out the road was really well maintained, many sections of it felt like it was paved, many sections and straightaways were super smooth and even. We made it to the rez after about an hour, pretty fatigued, white knuckle driving at times, all the while scanning the road for the glimmer of wildlife's eyes in the headlights.

We pulled up to the gate for the community and noticed right away that the road was paved. A

tall man with hair tied back into a tight bun walked over and spoke several sentences in French to us. “Ummm... parle anglais?” I shyly stated back. “We are dancers here for the powwow.” “Ah, ok,” he said. “Do you have proof of vaccines?” We showed him our screenshots from the Ministry of Health in Ontario for two Pfizer doses we had received back in March. “Okay, where are you going?” he asked. “We were told to ask for Ayami.” He told us that Ayami was expecting us. He walked over to the gate, lifted it up then waved at us to follow as he hopped on a dirtbike and sped into the community. “There’s no way we would have found this,” said Deanne as we winded our way along the road chasing the dirtbike. The homes were beautiful, there were streetlights, the roads were paved, and we marvelled that they had sidewalks down the side of the street. Much different than our home reserves we had become accustomed to. And the van’s shocks were happy after having driven on that dirt road for over an hour. Our kids eagerly peered out of the windows to see if there were any rez dogs. Our friend on the dirtbike led us to a duplex, pulled into the driveway, and hopped off his bike. “My name is Reginald, I just live over there,” he pointed as I got out of the van. We went to knock on the door to see two kids with beautiful long braids answer, followed by a woman who exchanged some words with Reginald and shouted back into the home. “Ok, Ayami is coming,” said Reginald, “I’ll see you at the powwow tomorrow.” “Ok, miigwech” I said and watched him take off on his bike again down the road. Ayami came to the doorway along with our friend Gabe. We had asked for some help with accommodations and Ayami had set us up in the youth centre, he gave us some extra sleeping mats, which we were very thankful for. When we got to the youth centre it was still open, our kids ran inside with their masks on, just happy to be out of the van. They helped unload a bit then were delighted to see a visitor that came to the door as we unloaded, a cute mid-sized brown rez dog which they promptly named ‘Bubs’.

Medicine in the morning

I will be the first to admit that I'm very much a city Anishinaabe. Having moved to Toronto, Tkaronto as its more recently being referred to as, after finishing university was necessary for employment at the time. I started as a youth worker with Indigenous agencies in the city, dabbled in film making and worked at imagineNATIVE Film Festival for a couple falls before finding an office job with the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC). Working in that office setting for many years taught me a great deal about the importance of our culture, teachings, and ceremony for which I remain grateful. However, an often unspoken and powerful medicine I also learned about during my time at the OFIFC is something I wanted to share within this space. In the language it is called *mkade mushkiki waabo*, a delicious earthy flavoured drink our ancestors adopted post-contact and dubbed 'black medicine water,' I believe *zhaaganosh* had an oversimplified word for this dark liquid - coffee. The longer I worked at the office the more medicine I seemed to need. And my lactose intolerance be damned, sometimes I just needed a good latte to make it through the day. So flash forward to Wemotaci and there I was dragging myself off the air mattress on the floor of the Youth Centre. I set out on my next journey to find some good hot medicine on the rez. It turned out to be a bigger ask than I anticipated, we were a far way from any chain stores, the sacred gathering place oft-referred to as Timmies. I scanned the horizon and remembered seeing the rez grocery store, which was a bit of ways a way, so I hopped in the van, turned the key, and drove off down the immaculately paved rez road. I pulled up to the grocery store, walked in and saw quite a decent selection of fresh produce, pre-made foods, and your standard aisles of dry goods, but sadly no coffee machine. I checked for bottled coffees amongst the throng of Pepsi and other pops, but no luck. I tried asking the cashier on the way out and they just giggled and shrugged, clearly not understanding my Englishness. I wasn't fully awake at the time so sadly didn't think to try and ask in Anishinaabemowin. I hopped back in the van and crossed the street to the gas station,

walked in and was so relieved to see a coffee station in the back left corner. As I stood there making two coffees I tried to make chit chat with the cashier, she just stared at me and shook her head that she had no clue what I was saying. I walked over and bought the coffees, saying thank you and *miigwech* (thank you) on the way out the door, to which she replied “your welcome” and started to laugh out loud as the door closed.

Arriving at the grounds

I circled back to our place, we fed the kids, got them dressed, braided heads, and loaded into our *daaban*. It was such a relief to see the familiar signs of the powwow as we pulled up to the grounds. The people gathering, cars being unloaded, vehicles spilling out from the parking lot. There was another checkpoint where they reviewed our vaccine certificates before letting us onto the grounds. One of the first tasks is to find a good location for our canopy. The canopy is the closest thing to a camp, to our homebase for the weekend. It shelters from rain, it provides respite from the sun, gives us a 10x10 area to get ready, eat, and for the kids to find us. We try to factor in a number of things - proximity to the dance arbor, how easy is it to get out there when you hear a jamming song? How close are you to the PA system, too close and you won't be able to hold a basic conversation, too far and you'll have trouble hearing what's coming up from the MC, proximity to washrooms - no one likes having to walk a kilometre to use an outhouse while wearing a fully beaded regalia.

Getting ready

“Mom, can you braid my hair?” It had been far too long since we'd heard our daughter say those six words. We'd been driving since the day before, having slept at a hotel on the way from Toronto, it was a last minute decision to go to the powwow. When we pulled up it was after 1pm and the powwow had already started. Due to our late arrival we missed Grand Entry. We were

so eager to see who was there, we hadn't seen any of our powwow family since the pandemic started. We recognized faces as I circled the van around looking for a place to park. The powwow was in a ballfield right next to the community centre. They had repurposed the space to have the dancing arbor in centre field, with the vendors lining the fence around the park. We parked outside the fence and one of the staff let us through a doorway on the outfield chain link fence. Hauling all our gear into the powwow is always a task, we need the canopy if there is no sun cover, chairs, our regalia bags, and any snacks or water to get us through the day. That canopy is our home base and has gotten us through many storms, hot muggy days, and provided a place of respite and shelter. As we pulled all of our gear into the row of canopies set up by other families, Niimin listened to the sound of the intertribals, we all just stood there and watched - it was familiar yet surreal to be at an event like this after being in isolation in downtown Toronto for several months before. I just wanted to soak it up and didn't rush to get dressed. As we started to setup the chairs and shift things around for the day my partner heard Niimin say, "I'm finally in my element." She was the first one to get ready, carefully setting aside her regalia, putting it on piece by piece. My partner and I gave each other a glance, and recounted at the end of the day how much we loved seeing Niimin feel comfortable to dance again in that arbor. To get ready, get her hair braided, squish her feet into her old moccs (she'd grown several inches) and actually go out and dance. This was her element, she'd been raised on the powwow trail, she was in the womb while her mom danced early in the pregnancy, was strollered to sleep listening to the *dawaaygaan*, crawled on the grass, wobbled out with her little steps for Tiny Tot songs, and started competing in Junior girls category as a Fancy Shawl dancer.

Grand Entry - lining up

Niimin and I lined up together for Grand Entry on the second day of the powwow in Manawan. We walked up in our regalia and I tied my roach on as we came up to the Eastern Doorway of

the arbor. Black Bear started to sing a beautiful song and we just both stood there waiting for the Arena Director to signal for Grand Entry to start. As we stood there together I leaned over and said, "You know why they wait one pushup before we start to dance in?" "No, why?" "

Before I went to lineup with the other grass dancers I told her why we wait one pushup before we enter the dance arbor. "That first push-up of the song is for those who have passed away. Our ancestors. We invite them here to see. So that they can go out there first." She stood there with me and listened to that song and my words. She didn't reply because we heard that second lead and the Arena Director motioned for the staff and flag carriers to begin dancing into the arena.

Before Niimin was born Deanne and I went to Treaty 3 territory in NorthWest Ontario to powwow with her Thunder Bay family. My father in law was the Emcee of the powwow and he asked me to dance in his family Eagle Staff in Grand Entry. It was the first time I'd been asked to dance in the Eagle Staff, and when he chuckled, "If anything, just make for damn sure you don't drop it," it added to my anxiety a bit. White knuckled I carried his family Eagle Staff over to the Grand Entry lineup, each feather representing his family members, the brown feathers representing the living family members and the white *migizi* (eagle) tail feathers representing those who had journeyed home. The Arena Director waved his hand for the singers to start and he motioned for us to stay in place for one push-up. He shouted over the song to those in the lineup, "We're gonna wait here until the second push-up to honour the ancestors, this song is for them!" I nodded in response and waited for him to wave us in.

Grand Entry - dancing parents and tiny tots

Most powwows bring dancers in by their age categories. Over the years Niimin has become accustomed to dancing in with the other junior aged girls. I remember when she was just a baby and before she could walk we'd ask our friends and family to watch her while we danced into

Grand Entry. If it were a contest powwow we'd dance in and when the song was over one of us would go attend to her. She was a breastfed baby so Deanne had actually made her regalia into maternity wear so she could feed Niimin and still be able to dance at powwows. Every family has different teachings about this, but for Deanne's wellness and mental health she knew she needed to dance so we made it work for our family. I remember as Niimin got older and she'd walk into Grand Entry with us she'd putter alongside until the song ended and then she'd hide under the aprons of my outfit, sitting in the shade out of site. Or she'd stand under Deanne's shawl playing with the fringes, while her mom chatted with other dancers. You'd just see these little moccasins sticking out underneath the fringes of our outfits. One time I carried Niimin up to the Grand Entry lineup, I was in full regalia and she was wearing a ribbon dress. I got chastised by an Elderly dancer for carrying her, because in Anishinaabe territory it goes against our teachings to carry our children into the dance arbor. I never intended to carry her into the dance arbor and I recall feeling very upset and defensive. To this day I've still never heard the original teaching why, just that it's taboo. When I talked to Deanne about what happened she told me that she was taught when we carry our children in through dance and it is a signal to the spirit world that we are giving them away. Of course, this cultural notion is not observed or practiced across Turtle Island. We've been to several US powwows where dancers carry their children and in Haudenosaunee territory on both sides of the medicine line you'll see fathers and mothers carrying their children into the circle. One of the most beautiful things I've seen was a young mother, a jingle dress dancer carrying her baby in a *tikinagan* (cradle board) in through Grand Entry. She danced and her little one just watched out the back of the cradleboard. This was in Atikamekw territory, there was no chastising or public shaming, only support. The Arena Director ran a chair out to her after the Grand Entry ended and we stood in place for the introduction of dignitaries and the flag and veteran songs.

Biidaaban is still in tiny tots. There is no contest dancing for kids until they turn six years old. The last powwow season we had before COVID put a halt on things in Ontario was a really special one. We saw Biidaaban grow in comfort and interest at being in the circle. At the start of the season she'd hang out at the canopy with her cousins and powwow aunties. Sometimes she'd go out for the tiny tot song, sometimes not. We never really pushed her, but wanted her to be comfortable of course. I remember we were at *Deshkaan Zibi* - Chippewa of the Thames - near London, Ontario, dancing in for Grand Entry on the second day of the powwow and she grabbed her sisters old shawl and came out there with us. I lined up as I usually do, with the other adult grass dancers and she waited towards the back with the other younger dancers. When we started to dance in I went around the arbor once and saw the eagle staffs stop in the centre facing outwards dancing in spot. And out came Biidaaban with the biggest smile just beaming. She danced into that Grand Entry just smiling and looking around at everyone. She didn't stay in her lineup, when the dancers started to circle around the outer edge of the dance arena she just danced straight up towards the eagle staffs and flags in the centre, looking right at the carriers while they danced in place. It was beautiful to witness. No Arena Director scolded her, no one told her to go back into the lineup with the other young dancers. She went where she wanted in that space, with all the other dancers, families, and spectators watching on. She was free.

Getting ready to dance

"Grassdancers standby, you're up next after jingle."

Okay, I think to myself. If they are giving the group ahead of me two songs then I know I'll have about 7-8 minutes to put on the rest of my gear and do some light warm-up movements before they call me out there. Because I'm in the canopy and usually taking care of my kids, playing, or feeding them, or maybe I'm just trying to stay cool in the summer's heat, I typically take off as

much of my outfit as I can in between dancing. This time I dig through my regalia bag and pull out my beaded cuffs, deer hoof armbands, and beaded tie. I pull the armbands onto my arms first, then put on my cuffs. I wrap the beaded tie around my neck and fasten it in place. I reach to the metal frame of the canopy where my roach is hanging with my feathers. Undoing the knot at the base lacing for the roach I place the roach on top of my head, pass the shoe laces down in front of my ears and tie them together under my neck with a single ear loop knot. I take the rear laces and do a single wrap around the front laces pulling them behind my neck and tying another knot in back under my roach.

I still remember going to Rama powwow many years ago and not having my roach tied on securely. I didn't know how to tie it snug. The song came blasting out and I danced as hard as I could and by the second or third pushup I felt it coming loose and sliding off to the side of my head. I didn't really know what to do so I just kept dancing while it clung on, thankfully those feathers didn't hit the ground. When I walked off my friend Anthony said, "you did good, but you shoulda re-tied it." He showed me afterwards how to loop the rear lace through the front in order to create a lockdown effect so the roach wouldn't move when dancing again.

Dancing - Grass songs

"Northern Voice, you'll have song number one, Black Bear song number two, changeup," says the Emcee. I've danced to both of these drums before, they are both champion drum groups with world class singers so I know I'll be getting something really deadly³. I used to get really nervous going out there to dance in front of everyone. I suppose when you do something enough you are still nervous, but you're able to focus on the work at hand. Sometimes dancers walk around and give a fist bump to the others, it's kind of a way to acknowledge that

³ Deadly is an adjective used by Anishnaabeg peoples to explain something that is really great, or wonderful or awesome, it is an example of Indigenous people reappropriating the English language to express our delight in something.

relationship we have as grass dancers together, “dance hard,” “jam out,” you’ll often hear exchanged. It’s not an easy style of dance, none of the styles are easy, and you really have to rely on your intuition, muscle memory, and ears while dancing. Northern Voice starts to drum. There’s usually a few drum beats before the first lead comes out of the lead singer’s mouth. In those first 2-3 seconds I can already glean a lot of information just from the sound of the drum. Is it a straight song? Crow hop? Double beat? Grass song? Is the tempo a fast one? If the sound of the drum is deeper than the singers are drumming more towards the centre, meaning it’s a straight song used for all styles of dancers. If I hear a lighter tap at an increased tempo, they are drumming towards the edge of the drum, which usually means it’s a song specifically for grass dancers. My one friend jokingly calls them ‘necklace breakers’, meaning the song makes you dance so hard that parts of your regalia can get damaged from the intensity of the movement. I love those grass songs where they tap more towards the side of the drum. Sometimes there’s a trick stop, sometimes there’s a pickup in the middle of the song and they’ll move towards the centre of the drum for that fuller sound and intensity of singing. Over the years I’ve gleaned this information and can generally figure out what type of movement I’ll need to do based on these first few drum beats. It’s taken years to get to this place of knowing.

Today the song doesn’t come right away. I wait in the centre of the dance arbor for the drum to start and the song to come. The Arena Director walks over and says, “we’re waiting for the other dancer to get ready.” “Ok, no problem,” I reply. He goes on to tell me a quick story about how we once borrowed an outfit from a grass dancer for the day to try dancing. He laughs as he tells me he couldn’t make it to the end of the song. I chuckle, “Yah, I have to make sure I’m in shape otherwise I can’t make it either. You should see me at the first powwow of the season.” He smiles and the other dancer walks out into the arena. The Arena Director waves a stick with an eagle feather tied to the end up in the air in a circular motion. His signal to the Emcee and the drum that the dancers are ready. The lead singer sees the signal and they start to drum.

Northern Voice has a fast one for us today. The song rips out of the speakers like a torrent of water spilling out into the dance arena. I find my footing and start to pat down the grass around me, spinning with one leg while pressing down to the beat of the drum with the other. I do one full rotation patting down the grass to where I started. In time with the drum beat I switch feet and start to pat down the grass with my other leg, spinning the other direction this time...

I remember feeling like there were times the song was in control of my movement. I couldn't keep up with the tempo, the pace was too quick to do any footwork, like my brain couldn't send signals down to my feet as quick as I wanted it to. This was the time before I had muscle memory, before I had developed my own 'style.' I remember spending countless hours at the park without my regalia on, listening to earbuds, and practicing movements in the spring and in between powwows during the summer. Of course, this was just practice, and nothing can compare to the actual feeling of being at the powwow. Dancers bells, singers belting out a deadly song, the Emcee blasting out of the PA system. If I've been dancing lots that summer, or been training leading up to the powwow, I can keep up, but if I haven't been as active, that song is gonna be a rough one for my lungs and legs to keep up. Either way, I love the challenge of pushing myself to connect to the song. I simply love to dance.

Contest dancing - kids

After COVID there weren't many powwows taking place in Ontario so we took our vaccine proof and headed to Quebec. I noticed that Biidaaban seemed very shy about being at powwows after a year and a half long hiatus. When we were all getting ready at Lac Simon powwow she told us that she didn't want to dance. Which didn't surprise me, it had been so long since we'd even been in public around large groups of people, let alone a powwow. As the weekend when on we tried to coax her out for the tiny tots song, kept checking in if she wanted to put on her beadwork

(it was a hard no). She went out for one intertribal during the Sunday session and she was incredibly nervous and wanted to go back to the canopy before the song was over. We went to another powwow in Garden River, where again she refused to dance on the first day, but on day 2 she decided to go out for the Tiny Tots song. We were so relieved to see her out there again after such a long time. By the third powwow of the year, Wemotaci, she got her hair braided, put on her regalia and beadwork, and danced in with her mom for the entire first grand entry. She went out for Tiny Tots, got her five bucks from the powwow committee and was pleased to be able to go to the vendors and see what she could get. The second day she didn't want to braid her hair, and insisted on pigtails, but wanted to go out for Grand Entry again. This time she danced in with me and the other grass dancers. I let her take the lead as we entered the arena. We were a bit slower than the other grass dancers at first, but she kept up for the entire song. Shortly after Grand Entry the committee announced they would be hosting a dance special for all Fancy Shawl dancers. She got ready and went out with Deanne, dancing close by to her mom. When the song was over she said she was thirsty and started to walk back towards the canopy. This is when the committee said they were picking the winners. Just as she walked out of the Eastern doorway, one of the committee dancers came running over shouting, "hey, wait!" I was just as surprised as her to turn around and see him holding a \$50 bill and handed it over to Biidaaban. Her eyes lit up. He waved over for her to come to the front with the other two winners of the special. There she lined up next to two adult shawl dancers, both champion high level dancers in their own right. They announced the names of the winners and took a photo of them together. She high fived the other dancers and finally made her way back over towards the canopy, crisp bill in her hand.

I can hear the voice of Chris-ba⁴ Pheasant echo over the microphone and PA system in my mind during Grand Entries, reminding us that we "dance, sing, pray, the Anishnaabe way."

⁴ -ba denoting someone who has passed onto the spirit world

Dancing is the main reason why I go. I know it when I hear it, that solid drum beat from a real deadly singing group, that beat calls out and you drop everything you're doing to hurriedly throw on whatever pieces of your outfit you can in order to dance just a few push-ups before it's over. There are so many reasons why I go to the powwow. I go to the powwow to share a plate of *manoomin* (wild rice) salad with my *bazgim* (sweetheart), my life partner Deanne. I powwow so I can listen to my auntie talk about the way it used to be, that the drums sing too fast nowadays, and that these contemporary dancers are all in it for the wrong reasons. I go to the powwow to laugh with my cousins who I don't see enough. I go to the powwow to watch my kids dance and to try and live a good way of life, what I've come to know as *mino-bimaadziwin* (Debassige, 2012). *Mino* speaks about that notion of something that is 'good', I've heard that refrain time and time again since I was a little kid - oft waiting at ceremonies for the prayer so I could finally get a plate of that tantalizing feast food my aunties had just brought in and laid on the blanket. Anishinaabeg strive to do things in a 'good' way, to be respectful, to be kind, to have gratitude. Such a simple phrase, but what the word good/*mino* stands in for is all of the knowledge, teachings, stories, and principles that are at the foundation of our way of life. So when we say a good life, *mino-bimaadziwin*, we are talking about living a life informed by all of those pieces, so that the daily practice of our culture, the ideas that inform it, are what guide us. I also recognize that I go to powwows to find reprieve from the deleterious effects of colonization, the intergenerational trauma that's ever-present in our communities. These processes are still at play within powwows, but for me being at the powwow offers an intentional place that outweighs the lateral violence and dysfunctional behaviours that I have also witnessed.

Perhaps this is a choice that I am making that carries some privileges, but when I am at powwow I see dancers striving to present the best of their Anishinaabeg selves, not only in appearance (proud, resplendent regalia and stunning beadwork), but in action (hosting giveaways, sharing food and teachings, taking care of Elders, visiting), and in values (kindness,

bravery, love, collectiveness). These are the types of stories and experiences I wish to locate through my project. I recognize that powwows are contested spaces, informed by a variety of ideas and concerns about who (ongoing reinforcement of gendered dance styles), what ('dancing for money' at contest powwows), and how (cultural gatekeeper mentalities) our cultural gatherings are taking place. I am not willfully ignoring these public discourses, many of which take place online through calling-out of community, Elders, teachings, and powwow committees⁵, if anything I want to identify and look at the strengths and core pillars of powwow which I believe hold great value and outweigh these important topics.

Situating the critical need for increased powwow discourse

Over the past several decades I see more families practicing this way of life out in the open, passing on their cultural knowledge and teachings from one generation to the next, a process I have come to know as intergenerational cultural continuity (Chandler and Lalonde, 2011). The oft-recited term, intergenerational trauma, talks about the pain, suffering, and toxic behaviours that have been passed from generation to generation both consciously and subconsciously within our families, communities and nations. Intergenerational cultural continuity is not intended to be a binary opposition to intergenerational trauma, instead it is a way for me to think about the healthy experiences rooted in culture, important knowledge shared, and the education being provided for our families, communities and nations.

The process of intergenerational cultural continuity - the continuation of our cultural way of life across generations - is something that I believe to be critical to the health and wellbeing of our families, communities and nations. After all, this way of life is what was directly targeted by assimilationist policy and state laws through the Indian Act, residential school system (Truth and

⁵ Kamloopa Powwow in the summer of 2022 posted their dancer registration guidelines which caused controversy and discourse around a binary gendering of dance styles within the Indigenous community

Reconciliation Commission, 2012), 60's scoop (Johnston, 1983), and now the millennium scoop (Sinclair, 2007). The Canadian government also banned all potlatches, cultural gatherings, ceremonies - inclusive of powwows - from 1885 through to 1951. We were criminalized because we danced, sang, and prayed the Anishinaabeg way. It gave us something that bound us together, nurtured and provided place for cultural continuity. To put it into perspective, I'm 38 years old, and the year my mom was born the Anishinaabeg were still being policed and convicted simply for being Anishinaabeg. This is not some long-forgotten time ago. Due to the culture ban being in place for so many years, most communities have only recently returned to hosting powwow as an open and annual event. In Anishinaabeg territory the powwows that are familiar today have only been run since the 1950s (Pheasant, 2020). It is during the time of powwow that a cultural resurgence has been underway across Turtle Island. It is not only a place of song and dance, I wish to unearth stories and knowledges that help demonstrate the ways in which Anishinaabeg are creators and makers of knowledge. I believe powwows have the potential to be sites for creating, (re)creating, and sharing knowledge across generations. At the core of my writing, the project herein, is the desire to understand how powwow as place may contribute to cultural continuity for Anishinaabeg.

When I watch my children experiencing powwow, when we talk to them about powwow as a way of life, seeing them develop as dancers with their own style, or feeling safe and secure enough to run and play with other kids in the bleachers, I believe these are critical components of understanding what it means to be Anishinaabeg. I can recall the important teaching and learning that occurred for me on my own learning journey through powwow, but now that I am a father and uncle to my two daughters and uncle to numerous nieces, nephews, and niblets⁶, my focus has shifted towards understanding how intergenerational cultural continuity works beyond self and outwards to the family and community. While large scale contests and traditional

⁶ A term of kinship that denotes a non-binary child of my siblings

powwows in arenas with bleachers of spectators are a very recent cultural phenomenon, the fact remains - there are very few documented stories from dancers and their families that talk about the importance of life on the trail and what is obtained from their experiences. Moving forward, it's critical that families and community members collectively identify what we want for the younger generation in terms of knowledge, teachings, and practice. My desire is for the work herein to contribute to a broader discourse around powwow that is driven by Indigenous communities themselves, and in turn we can identify ways to foster and build upon the important work already underway. While my arena of interest is focused primarily on powwow I recognize there are many spaces and places across the Anishinaabeg nation where teaching and learning are occurring and contributing to intergenerational cultural continuity - such as land-based activities, language revitalization programs, ceremonies, lodges, medicine camps, sundances, kids camps, Indigenous community organizations, urban spaces and yes even in schools. As far as I am concerned all of these spaces and efforts are about re-instilling a connected, grounded, and culturally-based understanding of what it means to be Anishinaabeg in today's world.

Summary

Within the first section of my dissertation I have set out to introduce myself in a good way. By sharing stories about my experiences on the trail this past year I am able to identify and contextualize my research topic - powwow as place, powwow as pedagogy. Grounding myself in story and sharing narratives about my family I have begun to describe my personal and intimate relationship to powwow. There are many things I've observed from attending powwows, as described within my experiences above, and these experiences now inform and shape my interest in understanding powwow as a critical site of teaching and learning for Anishinaabeg. Moving forward into the next section of my project, I will be bringing forward experiences that have occurred outside of the powwow circle that also influence my academic journey in

graduate studies, including but not limited to key teachings, visiting with knowledge keepers, as well as important texts I have read that frame my questions about powwow. These experiences, stories and texts, are what also frame my understandings of Indigenous education, of Anishinaabeg education, and the components culminate into what becomes my literature review and theoretical framework. The third section of my research project is the methodology, wherein I describe the challenges of COVID-19 as Anishinaabe researcher, and the efforts to maintain cultural relevance for the powwow families I spent time with for the data collection process. What follows the methodology chapter are two data chapters, the first of which is chapter 4 which follows two dancers, Nathalie Restoule and Elaine Kicknosway, as they story how they see themselves in relation to powwow. The stories contain inferences to the importance of community, and knowledge of self from an Anishinaabe perspective. The second data chapter, chapter five within the dissertation, builds upon the narratives of Elaine and Nathalie, by spending time with Theland Kicknosway and Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane. The stories shared by Theland and Karen demonstrate how knowledge is formulated and understood within powwow as place, and how notions of wholism and spirit are pivotal components that inform not only why dancers dance, but how they carry out the process of learning in the powwow arbor.

Cajete has stated, "...when a story finds that special circumstance or special person through which its message is fully received, it induces a direct and powerful understanding" (1994, p.167). I recognize that I have been fortunate to write stories about powwow, my vocation, my life's journey, and my role as a dancer. These are all things that I am grateful for. I share my stories not to centre myself as an expert, nor to try and validate Anishinaabeg ways of knowing and being, but simply because this is how I have come to know and experience the world. The stories I share, the stories contained herein, those which are my own, and those which are owned by others, help to further the understanding of powwow as place. I dream that this work will contribute in a good way to the continued articulation of our Anishinaabeg theories of

knowledge, teaching/learning, and pedagogy. *Miigwech*.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

While a typical approach to a dissertation within academia might be to do a conventional literature review, I believe that the stories, teachings, and experiences I've partaken in outside

of academia are just as valid and important at framing my knowledge as Anishinaabe. The key question that guides me at this point in my writing is, where have I been? Thinking about this question within an Anishinaabeg framing is no simple task. “Where have I been?” is asking me to embark upon the sharing of my story, to put words and thought to my experienced knowledge, to not only think about my academic training through courses and readings. Two experiences in particular are important to revisit as they assist in understanding how I entered into academia and some key ideas informing my reading of texts. The first is a story about the type of learning I’ve undergone since moving to Toronto, the type of opportunities I’ve had access to since becoming a member of the urban Indigenous community in Toronto. The second story will retrace my steps and key learning from my Masters degree experience, the important reflections and learnings. By spending time with these two experiences I intend to provide further insight into the ways I approach texts and in turn my literature review as Anishinaabe. By the completion of this chapter, the literature review will address the following: the re-centring of oral teachings and experiential learning as ‘literature’; an overview of existing literature about powwow; and a summary of key texts that inform my understanding of Anishinaabeg concepts of teaching and learning. By centering my stories and reviewing key texts from my academic journey, I believe I will have effectively answered the question - where have I been? - and then can begin to move into the next chapter of my exploration into powwow as place.

Learning within the urban Indigenous community

While I’ve been attending powwows all of my life - as a child my journey started as an observer. I remember being a younger kid and watching those dancers out there with the flowing fringe, loud bells, beautiful beadwork and being entranced by their movement. I’ve always loved the movement but never knew how to connect my own body to what the drum was offering through

song. And so I stayed observing, learning, and connecting to what was happening in the dance arena, but with no immediate dancers in our family, I didn't have a doorway into participating. My first (re)connection to that fire inside, that desire to dance and come to know our songs, came when I moved to Toronto as a youth. Steve Teekens hosted a drop-in singing program at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, and he played a big role in introducing me to the drum and the powwow lifestyle. He shared stories of travelling to powwows, told lots of jokes, pushed us to try singing, and perhaps most importantly just created a space to visit. One thing that really stood out to me from learning from Steve was the amount of good hearted teasing, laughing, and jokes which helped me feel comfortable and to make mistakes as I sang. Steve helped me find my voice and over time I pushed myself to sing more and more. I always left the drop in, located under a bar on Yonge Street downtown Toronto, feeling really good. Through our time together I was taught the structure of the songs - each song has four verses called push-ups, composed of a lead sung by one singer, then echoed back by the group. The songs generally last 2 to 4 minutes, depending on tempo, and there are many specific songs for the different dance styles and ceremonial aspects of powwow. I was taught where many of the songs originated, usually from a specific nation on Turtle Island that's been shared with others throughout the passage of time. I learned stories about where the drum came from and how to care for it as a ceremonial item. We talked about the drum as having a spirit, as a living entity that needs to be fed, nurtured, cared for (Teekens, 2006). I think I enjoyed his stories the most, the way he openly shared his experiences with us, and reminisced about how he started singing. When I think back, even though I was not the greatest singer, there was an important relationship that was being forged to not only the drum, the foundation of the powwow, but to each other. Singing was an important point of access to powwows for me. It was through my relationship with Steve that I met other dancers who would eventually come to know me and support my journey into becoming a grass dancer. In many ways I was like my kids are today, just feeling out my place at powwows, experiencing and trying, sometimes messing up,

sometimes not knowing how to proceed or what to do, it's almost like a dance unto itself - learning how to learn powwow. The best tool I took away and which informs much of my thinking is the importance of observation, really watching and listening to what's occurring and taking the time to learn. Today I have immense gratitude for the experience I had to sit down and learn within a community based setting about the big drum. There is much wisdom, teaching, and learning that occurs within community settings like the one Steve created all those years ago at the youth drop-in. *Miigwech*, Steve.

Graduate studies as a place for storytelling

When I went back to school for my Masters at York University I knew I wanted to learn about what was possible through Indigenous education. I had just left my previous employer - an Indigenous organization - where I had been teaching college level courses, with Indigenous content vetted by Indigenous Elders. The folks we were teaching were Indigenous too, but I felt like the way we were teaching wasn't always coming from an Indigenous place. It was plenary style, with powerpoints, group assignments, and we handed out marks and certificates at the end. When I returned to school at York I wanted to know what an Indigenous, or more appropriately for my own context, an Anishinaabe education might look like instead of what I had known. At the time I didn't really consider the importance of my own journey in becoming a dancer, or learning beadwork from different folks throughout my life, as relevant parts of an Anishinaabe education. However, that all started to change when I met my academic supervisor and mapped out what I wanted to achieve during my program of study. Dr. Susan D. Dion is Lenape, and like me she was raised by an Indigenous mother who didn't pass on 'teachings' and 'language' directly. With guidance from Dr. Dion I was able to begin identifying and naming the importance of learning experiences that occurred outside of formalized school settings. Understandings that came to the fore were rooted in my own experiences as a grass dancer

and for my Major Research Paper (MRP) I carried out interviews with two Anishinaabeg dancers I look up to - Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane and Emile (EJ) Kwandibens. I had known EJ for many years, he was the first grass dancer I offered tobacco to when seeking out knowledge on how to make regalia and start dancing. He told me to put out water and make offerings for four days to signal my intentions to creation, and to really put thought into what I was asking for and why. We picked colours and a style of outfit, and it was as we worked together that he shared stories, about how to care for the outfit, how to conduct myself as a dancer, that others would be watching my actions closely (Kwandibens, 2014). Karen helped me learn through our time together that teaching and learning is always reciprocal within an Anishinaabe context, that the learner has responsibilities to the teacher, and vice versa, that a mutually beneficial relationship is the foundation of learning (Pheasant-Neganigwane, 2014). Throughout my Masters program I came to understand that dancing is much more than a physical, social, or even cultural activity and practice, and that being prepared for the responsibilities of dancing is vital. Spending time with other dancers also helped me understand how important *dibaaajimowinaan* - storytelling of one's own experiences and life - can have within the process of teaching and learning. The individuals who I talked to were able to recite how they started dancing, who they talked to, the mistakes they made, and in sharing their stories; they assisted me in mapping out the gaps in my own knowledge and how to best proceed. I am ever grateful for those discussions and carry their meaning and intent with me into the dance arbor still to this day. *Miigwech*, Karen. *Miinwaa miigwech*, EJ.

From analyzing my own narrative experiences as well as the interviews with the support of Dr. Dion, I was able to begin articulating the importance of relational learning, cultural protocols, storytelling, and reciprocal teaching and learning as important constructs within an Indigenous education. I recall being asked during the examination of the Major Research Paper (MRP) if Indigenous pedagogy could be implemented within a school context with children, and at that

time I paused to consider the question and had to answer that I had my doubts. The Indigenous pedagogy I had been reflecting on within my MRP was rooted in interpersonal relationships, stories, sharing, laughter, and visiting. At the time I honestly didn't think classroom dynamics could allow for the same relational learning I had experienced. Since that time I've spent much of my coursework within my PhD trying to reconcile Indigenous pedagogy with non-Indigenous education systems. The more I spoke to my colleagues and the more I thought and wrote, the more I came to understand the problem of trying to transplant Indigenous knowledge into a system inherently non-Indigenous. In my MRP I wrote about my own story and came to understand the multitude of Indigenous spaces where I'd been learning with and from the Indigenous community that did more to support my journey as Anishinaabe than any brick and mortar school ever had. This was an important realization for me, especially in light of the damaging processes of colonization, because I had carried this subconscious mindset that I was lacking Indigenous knowledge for the majority of my life. My MRP helped me understand key tenets of Indigenous pedagogy through relationships, and most importantly it validated the knowledge that I carried too. *Miigwech*, Susan.

Literature review

In many ways it feels strange to talk about powwow as a site of teaching and learning or as a site of education. I say this because my goal is not to validate powwow as an institution of education through a non-Indigenous lens nor through educational theories that are rooted within colonial frameworks. To do this would be a huge disservice to Indigenous knowledge systems, and an inadequate way of understanding the breadth of learning that occurs on the powwow trail. Powwow as a way of life - the knowledge contained therein and how it is taught to others through story - offers a valid education as is. That is indisputable in my mind. Having said that, I have yet to read any text that articulates what an education rooted in powwow does provide for

Anishinaabeg. Thus it is important for me to spend time reflecting upon the relationships I've forged to the following academic texts that have contributed ideas, nuances, and given me language to help describe education through an Indigenous way of knowing. The concepts of Indigenous education and Indigenous pedagogy potentially offer insight into processes of intergenerational cultural continuity that occur on the powwow trail. By starting with myself, my own experience and story, I have tried to honour the knowledge I've spent time building out through my relationship with others. I now work to honour and show respect to those who have come before me - Indigenous thinkers, educators, Elders, academics, scholars - those who have shared their knowledge through teachings and texts and supported me on my own academic journey. The academic world has much to learn from Indigenous knowledge in general, Anishinaabewin in particular, and centreing the experiences and teachings that Anishinaabeg carry into and throughout their academic journey, be it through storying within a literature review, or other methods, is something that I dream my inquiry can contribute to more broadly. A long time ago I told my supervisor that I felt like I had to leave my Anishinaabe self at the door whenever I entered a school, those days are over and post-secondary institutions can assist in the recognition, propulsion, and centering of Indigenous knowledges at all levels of its academic programs.

Centreing Oral teachings

Within the field of Anishinaabeg studies there is much work being done to re-centre and restore the vitality and validity of story as a central pillar within Anishinaabeg worldviews. According to Pelletier (2013), a story provides "the beginnings of revitalization, identity and nation-building" (p.160). I have woven my stories throughout my dissertation as one way of demonstrating my own commitment to 'story' as a central pillar. I have since come to know Shawn Wilson's work, in which he also situates story within text, as a means of building relationships across the page

from writer to reader (2008). While I respect that much of my learning has come from text and various Indigenous, Anishinaabeg, and non-Indigenous scholars, I wanted to continue with the re-centring of key teachings that were shared with me that have not come from texts. Coming from an oratory culture, many of the teachings and stories have been shared with me through experiential, relational, processes. Each time those stories are shared, they are being imparted based on the specific context and circumstances at hand. A teaching may be shared based on what needs to be imparted to that particular person. A word of caution to those engaging with teachings within their work, while I am choosing to share 'teachings' that I have been given over the years, these are merely fragments of a larger story. Teachings are not intended to be extrapolated upon, generalized, and then applied to other contexts. It is through oral teachings, through fostered relationships with people over the course of my life, and ongoing consent being granted that I have come to understand *kendaaswin* (knowledge) and what it means to be Anishinaabe. What follows are four teachings which have shaped the way I come to see and know the world, what my academic training refers to as ontological and epistemological framing.

Oral teaching 1 - *Kinoomaagegamig* and the language

Anishinaabemowin (oft-referred to in our community as 'the language') has become an important aspect of affirming my knowledge as Anishinaabe within my academic journey. The more access I have to the language, the more I recognize that several teachings I received in English were always present within Anishinaabemowin. One particular story comes to mind from when I was a child attending grade school in the public education system. We had a language instructor, Mrs. Linda-ba King, who taught all the Anishinaabeg students in what we used to call Native Second Language. She had a basement classroom which housed all of us local Anishinaabeg kids, it was kind of like visiting an Auntie at school. I remember one day she taught us the word for 'school' in the language - *kinoomaagegamig* (King, 1994).

I remember thinking I knew what a school was and what it could be. I would draw pictures of a brick building with these little brown faces peering out the cross framed windows, with requisite Canadian flag, yellow sun in the sky, and green grass. The image of what a school looked like stayed this way in my mind until I was much older. It wasn't until I was in my late 20s, when I heard Anishinaabemowin speaker and educator Stanley Toulouse speak at a conference in Thunder Bay about what *kinoomaagegamig* means again. Toulouse spoke about how our idea of education and what a school is comes from the core word '*aki*', which means earth, our mother. That all ideas of what we learn are shown to us from the earth, the land, creation itself (Toulouse, 2017). The idea of what a school looked like began to change, I started to think more about what it 'felt' like to be that brown face kid peering out the windows. We were separated from the land, from our mother in that building. A couple years ago I came across a resource from Wiikwemkoong (an Anishinaabeg reserve on Manitoulin Island) online that broke down each aspect of *kinoomaagegamig*. Akin to what Stanley taught us that day, "*ki*" the earth, our mother is the first teaching within that word. Following that, "*noo*" means to show, "*maa*" means to move, "*ge*" is the act of doing; and "*gamig*" is our word for a home/building/lodge. I recognize that the teaching of these words will differ across Anishinaabeg territory, but what I have come to know is that our word for schools is talking about about a pedagogy of learning from the earth. The land shows us, encourages us to move, through doing, and that a school should emulate a place we might call home. *Gamig* is related to the notion of the beaver, *amik*, who builds beautiful lodges. On that day Stanley reminded me that the land is a vital teacher. I have gone on to learn that an Anishinaabeg understanding of what a school can be is rooted in our pedagogies, a place of being shown, a place of movement, a place of doing, and like that beaver lodge, it can be a beautiful and sustainable place we call home. These teachings through the language gave me a new way of seeing, and understanding what school might be, from an Anishinaabe way of knowing and for that I am beyond grateful. *Miigwech*, Mrs. King. *Miigwech*, Stanley.

Oral teaching 2 - Life stages and our roles and responsibilities

When my partner and I were expecting our first child I set out some time to visit with my mom's first cousin John Rice back in my traditional territory. When we first met up I offered him tobacco because I felt like there were some things I wanted to talk to him about being Anishinaabe and about becoming a father. I ended up going home for a couple of weeks after he agreed to visit with me. I stayed at my sisters in Parry Sound and waited each morning to get picked up. He took me somewhere each day, sometimes on the land, sometimes to an important landmark, sometimes to hang out in his house, but mostly we'd just visit, talk, and sip coffees together. Later on in my trip we went to his house and he pulled out a piece of paper with black sharpie. He drew a line down the centre, essentially cutting the paper in half, and started to share a very personal story about his own life. He talked about the efforts he made to learn about a better way of life than the one he had grown up with, and about a specific dream he had that finally gave him a place to look for that different life. I will forego the details of his dream as that is not mine to tell, however he did give me permission to use the teachings he obtained from that dream. What he shared with me on that black sharpied-line - what he referred to as our *miikaans* or path - ended up being the life stage teachings of the Anishinaabeg. At first he didn't know what the *miikaans* meant, but over time he came to learn from many teachers about the roles we have on our path in life: babies, children, youth, young adults, adults, grandparents and Elders all have corresponding teachings and concepts that help guide their function within an Anishinaabeg context (Rice, 2011). I will be sharing additional aspects of these teachings further along into the dissertation. The teaching took the better part of a day, during which he shared an overview of the teaching, all while imparting that what he shared were only the core concepts and to fully understand the layering of meanings and applications will come over the course of lifetime. The sheet he gifted to me that day still hangs on the wall of my workspace, and I continue to reflect upon, and learn from those *miikaans* and Anishinaabeg life stage

teachings. *Miigwech*, John.

Oral teaching 3 - *Aanikoobijigan*/ancestors

It was during the first year of my PhD that I had the ability to attend a teaching series hosted by the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto and Dodem Kanonhsa - an urban cultural teaching space translated into English to mean 'clan lodge'. The invited speaker was James Vukelich, an Anishinaabeg linguist specialist who works with the online Ojibwe People's dictionary based out of Minnesota. James posts regularly on Facebook live to share an Ojibwe Word of the Day and his videos are widely viewed and shared across the Anishinaabeg Nation. James was invited to the city to talk about the Seven Grandfather Teachings and his lens of understanding through the language. He opened with stories about his experience working with Elders to contribute towards the ongoing development of the online dictionary. Some key words he shared with us were related to the 7 generations teaching - another oft-cited teaching that often gets talked about in English but without translations into Anishinaabemowin. He talked about the interchangeability of the word - *aanikoobijigan* - and how it often gets translated into English as the idea of an Elder. James articulated that the role of the Elder in our communities is paramount, but he went further to add to that notion through *aanikoobijigan* which is also used to refer to the ancestors. By drawing out our relations in generations with a graphical representation of links in a chain, he showed that we are connected three generations back to our Elders/Ancestors (parents, uncles, aunties, 2-spirit kin, grandparents, great grandparents, Elders, Ancestors) and three generations forward to the children yet unborn whom we will become the ancestors to in the future (child, niece, nephew, niblet, grandchild, great grandchild). We have connections into the past, present and future at every living moment through the concept of *aanikoobijigan* (Vukelich, 2018). The 7 generations teaching and the notion of *aanikoobijigan* are both notions that I have heard before, but never so beautifully articulated before. His story and the knowledge he shared that day helped put to words and

gave a visual narrative of the way in which we are directly connected to our ancestors. Rather than being an abstraction of a core belief, something I had heard time and again growing up, I now had a tangible way to understand and apply how I am connected to the ancestors, past, and future. *Miigwech*, James.

Powwow literature - Writing from story, relationality and love

Powwow has a swath of literature coming from the lens of anthropology, as well as hobbyist venturists, often the all too common non-Indigenous researcher or craftsperson enamoured by Indigenous aesthetic who as an outsider is romantically describing, cataloguing, and even teaching powwow culture to a largely non-Indigenous audience. The literature review contained herein was purposeful in its intention to not engage with these texts. I wanted to look for and build relationships to texts written by Indigenous scholars with an intended audience of Indigenous peoples, ones that come from the core tenets of story, cultural protocol, relationality, and experience within their respective community. Unfortunately, it was harder to locate texts in this vein than I would've anticipated and I had to broaden my literature review to include authors who are non-Indigenous, but work with Indigenous knowledge holders in a good way within their work. When my supervisor suggested I look at the work of Gail Guthrie Valaskasis - Chippewa from Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin - it was a breath of fresh air after coming away from most of my library trips and database searches disappointed up to that point. What stood out for me about Valaskasis (2005) was the way in which they wrote about the long line of anthropologists and musicologists who study powwow, citing numerous texts along the way, while stating that something is missing from their interpretations and understandings of powwow. Powwows are oft-referred to as sites of popular culture, where "traditional practice is often misunderstood as feathers and fantasy or, worse, as oppressive reification of the distant past (Ibid, p.10)." Often powwows are seen as a window into a bygone way of life, a cultural practice that is

spectacularly beautiful but no more than cultural practice. Valaskasis pushes back on this idea and asserts that the Anishinaabeg have always had agency over their cultural expression through song and dance, which she refers to as collective reflexivity and social agency. For Valaskasis, powwow is about more than expression of tradition, heritage, cultural practice, or any political act, it is about feeling. In closing her chapter - Dance me outside - Valaskasis quotes Dana Runs Above: "I love powwows. I can sit and listen to the songs, bells, and drumming for the rest of my life... The feeling of being part of it, the whole scene, singing and dancing, being Indian, is an extraordinary feeling" (Ibid, p.174). Valaskasis identifies an important notion of feeling, something that helped steer me towards a more wholistic way of thinking about powwow and proves indispensable in later chapters.

Browner (2004) - Choctaw - writes about powwow from the fields of ethnomusicology and American Indian Studies while providing a succinct overview of the origins of contemporary powwows dating back to the mid-1800s. Browner wrote that the term pow-wow is "probably from the Algonquian language family of the northeastern United States and Canada and derived from the Naragansett words *pau wau*, which can be understood as "he/she dreams" (Ibid, p. 27). She goes on to describe powwow as a consecrated gathering space, blessed by members through prayer, song, Elders, and the importance of holding space where all personal hostilities are put aside. The notion of powwow as an important gathering space is also addressed in Gloria Alese Young's (1981) unpublished dissertation where she writes about the ways powwow contributes to the development of an overarching philosophy of 'Indianness', supports identity formation of individuals and families, and assists in establishing the boundaries for who is 'Indian' and how⁷.

Recently we have seen controversy and discourse over self-identification of Indigenous

⁷ Identity formation is something that is of utmost importance to consider moving forward as we have seen the experiences of Joseph Boyden, Carrie Bourassa, and others. I have seen folks in our territory assume Indigenous identities through becoming a 'dancer' and attending powwow, using their knowledge acquired from cultural workshops in urban centres to 'become' Indigenous, with unclear connections to place, community, and land.

identities, Joseph Boyden was a well-known writer, Carrie Bourassa a renowned health researcher and academic, both of whom committed ethnic fraud after misrepresenting their claims of Indigenous heritage in order to advance their careers. Young also draws attention to the importance of powwow as a space that can raise the quality of life of its participants through improved mental health and social contacts (Ellis, 2003, p.8). Powwow also provides a recognizable and community-oriented space for Indigenous folks of diverse nations to come together and bridge temporal and geographic spaces (Johnson, 2013). The process of movement and travel is an important aspect of powwow which sees the flowing of peoples across borders, nations, state imposed boundaries, and in between rural and urban divides, a process referred to by Ramirez (Ibid) as transnationalism. Transnationalism, a term that I simply see as the free movements/trails and travels of Indigenous peoples, is a critical component of today's powwows because this movement is what contributed to an exchange of teachings, dance styles, songs, regalia, and cultural practices amongst Indigenous nations (Pheasant-Neganigwane, 2020) never experienced before. Valaskasis wrote about the concerns at one time that this flowing of cultural exchange was resulting in pan-indianism, where all Indigenous nations were no longer distinctive from one another, however, this concern has proven incorrect over time as we are now seeing more localized cultural resurgences identified by Leanne Simpson (2011) as *biiskaaybiyaang*, “a verb meaning to look back” and “returning to ourselves” (2011, p.49). While there was a period of powwow becoming a pan-Indigenous phenomenon, powwows are becoming a vehicle for nation specific dance styles to come to the fore, ie. woodland style in the Great Lakes region and Smoke dance in the Haudenosaunee powwows. Looking at the literature thus far, powwows become apparent as a vehicle for cultural resurgences that are malleable and contribute to the wellbeing of those in attendance. Notions of feeling, of coming together in a good way, and for the gathering and exchange across imposed colonial divides, make powwow a critical place for not only Anishinaabeg, but Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island.

History and background

It is often difficult to talk about powwow without acknowledging the traumatic history that government assimilationist policy affected upon Indigenous families, communities and nations. The culture ban in Canada and the United States has been well documented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada (2012) and non-Indigenous scholar Jacqueline Shea Murphy's book *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Contemporary Dance Histories* (2007) respectively. Shea Murphy provides an important account of the cultural prohibition era, as many dancers, singers, knowledge keepers, and ceremonialists were imprisoned and subject to punitive actions for practicing their way of life. Regardless of the laws of the time, powwows were still occurring, they just went deeper into the bush away from Indian Agent eyes, or as described by Valaskasis (2008) and Shea Murphy they morphed into 'shows' that were sanctioned by the state as entertainment for non-Indigenous onlookers and spectators. This era was understandably bleak for our ancestors, the culture and the people, and yet Anishinaabeg and other nations endured and passed on the pieces they knew - often through ceremony and rites of passage carried out in plain sight of spectators within the 'shows' (Shea Murphy, 2007). Non-Indigenous scholar, Axtmann (2001) wrote that in many ways powwow dancing has become an act of resistance to oppression - even if the action and movement was held as a temporary space. These texts help describe in great detail how the times of culture bans created the need for adoption of new cultural practices, resistance, and the embedding of teachings that continue to frame powwows today. One example is the adoption and ceremonialization of the Grand Entry, a practice first started to line up all the dancers and dance them in together at the start of Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows that endures to this day and has been repurposed by Indigenous communities to honour Eagle Staffs, Elders, Veterans, and the host community. Doerfler (2013) wrote about cultural adaptations that our ancestors and the generations who've come before have made, suggesting that these types of

adaptations made within Indigenous ways of life are necessary for survivance. Today we know that a great deal of our collective culture has survived through the culture bans, with the explosion of powwows being hosted across Anishinaabeg territories after 1951 when the culture ban was finally dismantled and we could gather again in groups bigger than three.

Indigenous Education Literature

In keeping with the project's approach thus far, I am weaving together my story with academic texts as a way of articulating how literature and community experience have contributed to my understanding of Indigenous education. I begin with a quote about the imposition of *zhaaganosh* conceptualizations of education onto the Anishinaabeg:

It is important to understand that the term "Indian education" is an externally imposed concept that was created and sustained by white architects of Indigenous education. This refers to the dominant society's educational system as applied to Indigenous peoples rather than the Indigenous forms of education existent in Indigenous societies prior to colonization (Pewewardy, 2010, p.156).

As I work towards a definition and position on education I must first honour and acknowledge the great deal of harm caused by the 'white architects', the imposed structures, and systems that set out to deculturalize my Anishinaabeg family and ancestors. I've seen first hand how racial hierarchies (Willinsky, 1998) and deficit theory models cause harm, whether it is my aunties and mother being punished for speaking their mother tongue in school, or the moving of my sister into applied streams by guidance counselors because of their preconceived ideas about her intellectual abilities. What Pewewardy helps illustrate is the ongoing process of deculturalization that occurs through the state apparatus of the education system. Pewewardy paints a stark picture that positions Indigenous learners in a difficult place, but goes on to write that our communities would be better served to revisit "Indigenous forms of education existent in

Indigenous societies prior to colonization” (2010, p.156). Such an education built upon a foundation of Indigenous knowledge, structures, and systems is concisely articulated by Jeff Lambe (2003) as one rooted in culture, language, land, and access to knowledgeable Elders and teachers. Lambe and Pewewardy offer critical reminders that our own forms of education existed pre-colonization, that they may have been affected or marginalized, but that they remain available to our nations and communities despite our colonized history.

Much of the literature and core texts that I've spent time with in my study thus far look to the non-Indigenous education system as one that has many areas of concern within its operations and machinery. Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) is instrumental in articulating the purposeful discrediting of Indigenous knowledge at a societal level, within academia, and thus its inability to enter into the non-Indigenous controlled education system. Marie Battiste's (2000) identification of cognitive imperialism - whereby Indigenous ways of knowing and being are denied through the maintenance, institutionalization, and enforcement of mainstream languages, cultures, and frameworks - speaks back to the process of deculturalization described by Pewewardy. Even when educators recognize the process of deculturalization and try to account for it, Dion et al (2010) have highlighted how disparaging the gap is for non-Indigenous curricula and educators to overcome the structural barriers and provide Indigenous content to students. Educators who take up the mantle of Indigenous education, often are positioned as disruptors, agitators, and/or at odds with the administration itself due to the lack of content and support within the Ministry standard curricula. Others, such as Kirkness & Barnhardt (1991) have set out to address the emphasis on the institutionalized approach to education that has negative ramifications on interpersonal relationships for Indigenous educators and learners. Reading deeper into their article 'First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R's - Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility', Kirkness & Barnhardt are foundational in encapsulating core principles that inform an understanding of Indigenous education. They write;

First Nations (Indigenous) people are seeking... a better education -- an education that respects them for who they are, that is relevant to their view of the world, that offers reciprocity in their relationships with others, and that helps them exercise responsibility over their lives. (1991, p.15)

Tuhiwai-Smith, Battiste, Dion et al, and Kirkness & Barnhardt have all been instrumental in identifying the challenges a non-Indigenous education system has in meeting the needs of Indigenous learners. The inability to meet the needs of these students has been theorized to have a ripple effect into other areas of their development, namely identity, belonging, and an understanding of self within an holistic framework.

Gregory Cajete - Pueblo - (2000) describes a critical need for Indigenous students to find their 'face,' which can only be achieved by examining who they are, where they come from, and their own unique character. Looking at other Indigenous education literature, Willie Ermine (1995) has written about Indigenous epistemology and the critical importance of looking inward to understand one's place within the world. Ermine describes how failing to locate one's self through Indigenous contexts, an individual may rely on external agents – media, non-Indigenous culture, schools – to frame themselves which he argues can result in a "fragmentary self-world view" (Ibid, p. 102). Gregory Cajete identified a very similar phenomenon through his discussion of the Pueblo teaching *pin geh seh*, translated into English as 'split head' (2000, p.187). Cajete describes how *pin geh seh* plays out when students are not feeling honoured within a non-Indigenous learning environment, wherein they may express different 'selves' for each learning environment. He goes on to suggest that *pin geh seh* is a damaging process to Indigenous students and advocates for the need to limit its effects and develop support for students who have experienced this split. When given the opportunity to share their stories, through digital and mixed media projects, urban Indigenous youth continue to show school as a difficult place, that struggles to support their identity formation, and a lack of safety to foster an Indigenous

identity and presence (Dion & Salamanca, 2014). Battiste (2013) has written about the need to honour the learning spirit of Indigenous students within their education, meaning they are educated in a manner that values and respects Indigenous ways of knowing and supports students to embrace and celebrate who they are instead of making them doubt themselves.

Indigenous Pedagogy Literature

When I returned to grad studies I wanted to know ‘how’ we taught each other, what were the key characteristics that set an Anishinaabeg pedagogy apart from the process of teaching and learning I had known within the education system. As is the case with many inquiries, the answer is not so clearly articulated or easy to locate, and unfortunately there are no textbooks about Indigenous pedagogy to pull off the shelf at the library. And yet to the library I did go, and was fortunate to pull *Look to the Mountain*, by Gregory Cajete (1994), off the shelf and read the following description of Indigenous education articulated as an “art of process, participation, and making connection. Learning is a growth and life process (for Indigenous peoples)” (p. 24).

While Cajete is writing about Indigenous education at large, his words inform an understanding of Indigenous pedagogy that is central to understanding the process of how one receives an education in their own life. Cajete’s words are precise and help me see pedagogy as the ‘process’ of teaching and learning. I take up Cajete’s work as differentiating between the process of ‘how’ and ‘what’, namely *how* one learns (pedagogy) within an Indigenous context is equally or more important than *what* one learns (curricula and content). When Cajete identifies participation as a second key principle, he is speaking to a pedagogical approach rooted in reciprocity. There is an active giving and taking between the learner and teacher, one that is mutually beneficial and nourishes each other’s spirit (Battiste, 2013). Cajete’s third principle, connection, is identifying the inter-relational aspect of learning within an Indigenous framework. A relationship-based pedagogy (Hupfield, 2015) is one that is rooted in the understanding that

Anishinaabeg are always learning through connection to another - sometimes the 'other' is a person, sometimes an animate/inanimate object, sometimes through spirit, sometimes from the land, or another aspect of creation. Thinking of Indigenous education and pedagogy as intrinsically connected to each other is another key take away. As I continued to read and search the literature, I found it difficult to locate texts that focused on Indigenous pedagogy, which has led me to question if pedagogy - coming from Greco-languages - is the appropriate terminology to be utilizing. I have endeavored to include several key texts that further inform my understanding of the 'growth' and 'life process' which Cajete describes, as a way of speaking to a larger frame and worldview that can inform teaching and learning processes for Indigenous peoples.

I found great value in Keith and Linda Goulet's book *Teaching Each Other: Nehinuw Concepts and Indigenous pedagogies*, their analysis of Nehinuw language and how it frames understandings of Indigenous teaching and learning of particular importance. Linda and Keith Goulet (2014) utilized the Nehinuw/Cree language, to identify the varying types of relationships that can contribute to the articulation of pedagogy from an Indigenous perspective. Three forms of Nehinuw teaching-learning processes are identified: *kiskinaumagehin*/teaching another, *kiskinaumasowin*/teaching one-self, and *kiskinaumatowin*/teaching each other (Ibid, p.65). Even though these are conceptually from a Nehinuw framework, these concepts inform principles of relationality that can inform an understanding of Indigenous pedagogy. According to Goulet and Goulet the concept of *kiskinaumatowin* (teaching each other) is based on equality and interaction. Where *kiskinaumagehin* (teaching another) and *kiskinaumasowin* (teaching one-self) identify times when individual and group learning take place in isolation, as noted above, learning always occurs in relation with another. The need for balance between self and other in the relationship is key, with the key tenets of self-determined action including "independence, responsibility, autonomy, and authority over oneself" (Goulet & Goulet, 2014, p. 62). The way

Goulet and Goulet articulate and translate the Nehinuw language offers increased understanding that 'teachers' - knowledge holders and Elders - carry an important responsibility to respect and honour the sovereignty of the learner. As I continued to read Goulet & Goulet I began to find congruence with Cajete's notion of Indigenous education and pedagogy contributing to the 'growth' of one's 'life process.'

Elder Ken Goodwill from the Dakota First Nation of Standing Buffalo saw human (and spiritual) development as learning about your place in the world – finding out who you are, including who you are in relation to the world, discovering the gifts you have, developing those gifts to make your contribution in this world, and assuming the responsibility for the use of those gifts. (Goulet & Goulet, 2014, p.78)

Elder Goodwill identifies a core understanding within Anishinaabe conceptualizations of education and pedagogy as a process of life-long learning; the individual has inalienable rights to know who they are, understand their relationship to creation, receive guidance and support in their learning, and that these processes are what contribute to their growth and 'development' as a human being, as Anishinaabe.

Red pedagogy and *Ziisbaakdoke*

The more I read, and the more I considered the implications of the *zhaagnosh* education system, the more I came to see the importance of spaces that are informed by Anishinaabeg worldviews, ways of knowing and being. Two texts were incredibly useful in helping me come to a better place of understanding why my work would begin to recentre Anishinaabeg places of learning, over working to address the *zhaagnosh* education system itself. It was in an Indigenous Pedagogies class taught by Dr. Susan Dion that I was introduced to Sandy Grande (2004) - Quechua - and her book *Red Pedagogy*. Grande's work articulates in great detail how a non-Indigenous knowledge system props up the education system, resulting in the reproduction

of its own societal structures that serve the state, and does not reflect the values, needs, and vision of Indigenous communities. An important concept Grande brings forth in her text is the notion of an emancipatory pedagogy, a red pedagogy. Such a pedagogy would work to disrupt epistemic notions rooted in hierarchical thinking while re-centring relationships to land as more than simply a resource for extraction. The notion of re-centring land was a profound learning for me, and I relate it back to Stanley's notions around *kinomaagegamig*, that an Anishinaabeg place of learning takes its cue from the land, and not a board of education, a ministry, nor a provincial government. It comes as little surprise that the education system struggles so mightily to meet the needs of Indigenous students at large, our knowledge systems, the values and the teachings of our own nation, the Anishinaabeg, are not informing the processes of learning. Grande helped me think beyond the reaches of the traditional classroom, to peer outside, and think beyond those institutions and brick buildings that Anishinaabeg has been put into for so long - and continue to be.

It wasn't until I spent time in my PhD thinking more about what an Indigenous pedagogy might look and feel like, that I read Leanne Bematamasoke Simpson's text *As we have always done : Indigenous freedom through radical resistance*. (2017). It was specifically her retelling of an Anishinaabeg story involving *biinoonjiinhs* (baby) in relation to *ziisbaakdoke* (maple sugar). In brief, the story teaches about how important it is that a child have freedom to observe, explore, and learn from the land while their family works within their encampment. On one of their expeditions onto the land they see an animal relative suckling water from a tree. Curious, they move in to investigate, decide to try the sap water and make a monumental discovery about sweet water that must be shared with their family. Simpson notes in the story that *biinoonjiinhs'* family, their kookum, cousins, and aunties immediately drop what they're doing to see what's been discovered. Simpson tells the story of *ziisbaakdoke* and *biinoonjiinhs* as an example of

Indigenous education rooted in *Nishnaabewin*⁸ - a pedagogical framework in which children feel safe and secure on the land, they have a semblance of freedom to explore their world, and most importantly, they are trusted and supported by their family and caregivers without question.

Simpson in concert with Grande provide the possibility of emancipatory pedagogies, wherein spaces informed by the land, by *Nishinaabewin* can produce a process of learning that benefits not only the individual, but the rest of their relationships. A process of growth and life that does not impose harm and honours the learner, something that Anishinaabeg continue to strive for in the wake of the imposition of *zhaaganosh* models of education.

Summary of key ideas

I have immense gratitude for the opportunity to revisit literature, teachings and experiences that have contributed to my education thus far as Anishinaabe. While they all hold a place of importance in framing my understanding of powwow, Anishinaabe/Indigenous education and pedagogy. I wish to highlight how powwow has been oft-misunderstood, misrepresented, and miscommunicated in academic text and social discourse. Within academic literature, powwow is rarely attributed its value for contributing to an Anishinaabeg way of life, as a place that fosters well-being, and as a critical space of teaching and learning. Thus far, there has been minimal exploration of powwow beyond that which is seen, heard, documented and recorded, leaving a large gap for potential research into the intrinsic value of powwow for Indigenous communities and Anishinaabeg. The texts which I have engaged with over the course of my academic journey have repeatedly shown me how the *zhaaganosh* framework for education continually impacts Anishinaabeg on their own learning journeys through life. The literature, and my own family experience, demonstrate clearly that the experiences of Anishinaabeg within school settings - both historically and ongoing today - continue to be divisive and potentially harmful in

⁸ An Indigenous way of knowing and being, which I write as Anishinaabewin

terms of the development of an Indigenous self. The education system imposed has been shown to deculturalize Anishinaabeg, and then replace and prioritize non-Indigenous knowledges, values, and norms through the phenomenon of cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2013). The third idea I'd like to forward based on the literature at hand is the dire need for Indigenous education to be articulated and informed by notions of lifelong learning, and the role Anishinaabeg pedagogy plays in that continual development of self. The third idea links into the fourth notion, which is the interdependence of Indigenous knowledges with understandings of Indigenous education and pedagogy, insomuch as the theories that inform the practice of teaching and learning are rooted in teachings around relationships, responsibilities, reciprocity, and recognition of one's gifts.

Theoretical Framework

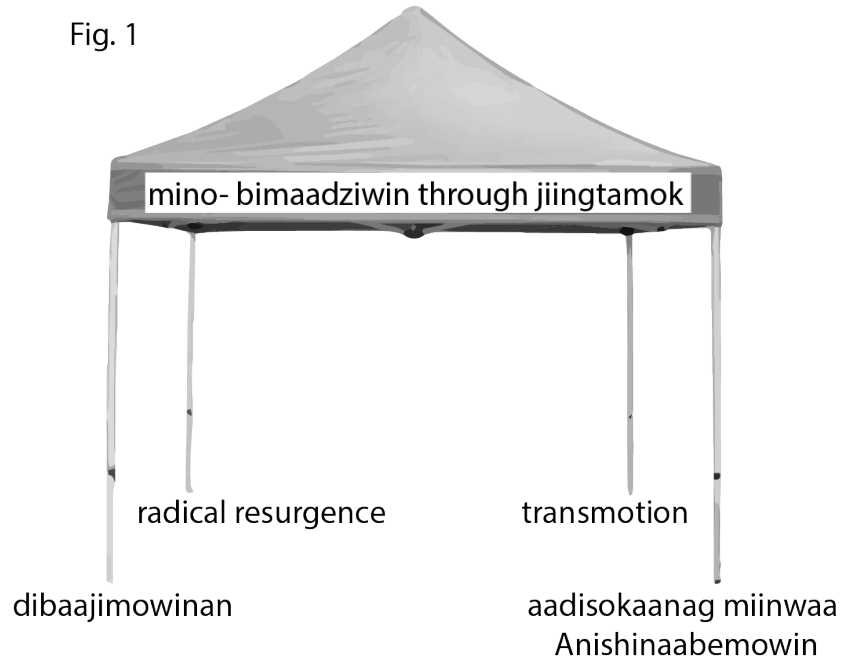
Part of preparing for the powwow is setting up camp - a homebase for the duration of the weekend - which often looks different for families based on region and what the powwow grounds have as a built infrastructure. Sometimes camp is a campsite, a trailer, the family vehicle, or a blanket on the bleachers. While some regions have permanent structures built around their dance arbors, the frequency of stands is few and far between at powwows in Southern Ontario. In my area of the Great Lakes the homebase of choice is the metallic-framed, canvas-roofed, oft bought-at-Walmart, canopy.

The four-legged canopy - transportable, durable and utilitarian - provides shelter, acts as a space for respite, eating, visiting, and most importantly it's where our family knows to meet up over the course of the powwow. The canopy is an integral organizing structure at powwows, and for the purposes of my research it also provides a crucial structure to organize my theoretical framework upon. I offer the following model for my research, the canopy framework, with four 'legs' that act as theoretical constructs upon which I organize my thinking: dibaajimowinan-

experiential knowledge through story; *aadisokaanag miinwaa Anishinaabemowin* - teachings and the Anishinaabe language; radical resurgence (Simpson, 2017); and transmotion (Blaeser, 2013). As seen in the figure below, these four pillars provide the foundational understanding, grounding beliefs, and over-arching structure that support my inquiry into powwow's role as a site of teaching and learning in pursuit of *mino-bimaadziwin* (a good life) through powwow.

The canopy is an intermediary space for dancers and their families to gather. In many ways it provides respite from the weather, elements, and even the spectators. If you've ever tried getting changed after dancing two contest songs drenched in sweat, while a tourist takes your photo with a zoom lens, you'll know how important it is to have a place for respite and rest. The canopy is an interstitial space, it provides not only a physical place for Anishinaabeg to gather, but it creates a sense of home, of peace, a place where relationships are strengthened. While the legs of the canopy framework are what create space and place for Anishinaabeg to come together, it is what happens within that canopy that is instrumental. Recounting stories together, sharing experiences, building upon our learning, all of these are integral processes that happen when Anishinaabeg visit together. The conceptualization and framing of 'visiting' as methodology will follow in the coming pages as a culturally relevant and grounded approach for the project as Anishinaabe academic.

Fig. 1



Pillar one - *Dibaajimowinan* - Experiential knowledge through story

I claim a storied landscape. I say Indian people do not so much teach, but rather story their children.

(Blaeser, 2013, p.240)

One of the four pillars that holds up the canopy framework comes from the Anishinaabe concept of *dibaajimowinan*, which translates into English as: stories about personal experiences, narratives, and/or “histories” and “news” (Doerfler et al., 2013). Doerfler et al provide further explanation for *dibaajimowinan* as the types of stories that can be from long ago or today, often telling of family genealogies, geographies, and historical experiences. Within *Anishinaabewin*⁹,

⁹ While Leanne Simpson utilizes the spelling Nishinaabewin, I chose to utilize my local spelling of Anishinaabewin, to denote ‘Indigenous ways of knowing and being’, aka an epistemological and ontological framework rooted within Anishinaabe contexts.

stories provide a critical process in meaning making and knowledge production. Having already put some context into answering the question of who I am and where I've been, I now recognize more clearly that the texts I've spent the most time thinking about are ones that centre Anishinaabe knowledge. I started with my own story, like the Blaeser quote above, I storied my children as well as stories others have shared within the introduction of my project because Anishinaabeg knowledge rooted in oral tradition has historically been discredited, devalued, or only seen as valid within specific areas of the academy. In my own academic journey I too have struggled at times with connecting teachings and story with other forms of knowledge deemed more valuable or credible.

Within my academic journey I've continually integrated story within my work, having woven it into the way I read, engage with ideas, make understandings, and then synthesize and write. Whether it is stories of my family at the powwow, or the memory of a certain class when I read a text for the first time, context and storying the experience through *dibaajimowinan* is a critical process for my own learning. I found it incredibly difficult to carry out a conventional 'literature review' wherein I summarize ideas of others without engaging, reflecting, and storying a response within my writing. The way in which I forge an understanding in relation to information or knowledge that is new to me is often contextual, relational, and grounded in the following questions: Who was there? How did I feel at the time and was I able to connect to the material? How would I retell that experience? How do I integrate that knowledge while honouring and respecting the source person, material, and story? How do I retell the information to others? It was years ago when I was still a youth that I worked with Lee Maracle on a project and she encouraged me to learn traditional storytelling by making stories into my own. Maracle emphasized that you don't really know something until you can retell it in your own words, and that it is important to bring my own style to the story (2007). While I see *dibaajimowinan* as a pillar for my inquiry, I would argue that the ways in which stories are employed within

Anishinaabeg thought are not fixed, they are fluid and in motion based on the context and discourse at hand. Being able to read the situation, the audience, and having clear intention is what makes *dibaajimowinan* an effective tool for my own teaching and learning. In this way, *dibaajimowinan* provide Anishinaabeg with a framework in coming to know, providing a process of learning that is not predicated upon the *zhaagnosh* education project or other non-Indigenous ways of schooling. The ways in which stories are thought about within *zhaagnosh* contexts greatly underservice the crucial role of *dibaajimowinan* as theory, praxis, and pedagogy for Anishinaabeg. However, not all stories are considered the same within Anishinaabe contexts, an important distinction between *dibaajimowinan* (personal stories) and *aadisokaanag* (traditional teachings) - the second pillar of my canopy framework - is outlined below.

Pillar Two - *Aadisokaanag miinwaa Anishinaabemowin* - teachings and the language

The second pillar of my canopy framework looks to the roles *aadisokanaan* (teachings) and *Anishinaabemowin* (the language) play within my research as theoretical constructs. Within the language, *aadizookaanag* oft refers to the “traditional” or “sacred” narratives that embody the values, philosophies, and laws important to life (Doerfler et al., 2013). While the storyteller always has influence over the intent, purpose, and details of a teaching being shared, when we are reciting sacred teachings and traditional stories it is critical that we do not arbitrarily change details and that we honour protocols. It is a significant responsibility to honour the core concepts of the teachings, and so *aadizookaanag* carry a bit more rigidity in terms of an earned ‘right’ to share the knowledge contained within. As an Anishinaabe academic it is critical that I address and create space for those teachings and stories that have been shared with me, however I am always careful not to share the entirety of the teaching, as the arena of academia is not always the appropriate place to put our teachings into. The knowledge contained therein is rooted in a

collective memory of knowledge holders, and it would be inappropriate of me to misrepresent myself or try to speak on behalf of those who have come before me, and continue to take up that work for Anishinaabeg. With all of these considerations in mind, it still remains important for me to articulate those key stories about learning from John Rice, James Vukelich and Stanley Toulouse. If I were to read the teachings they imparted within a text, I may indeed acquire the information they were trying to convey, but it would not carry the same resonance and markers of remembrance for me. I am not always observant to visual details of what was shared, but I can certainly recall what people have said, the emotional/spiritual temperature of the room, the way I was feeling, which allows me further resources to access, recall, and (re)story the information for my own understanding. Often I find myself (re)storying teachings within my own mind and leaving them within that sphere, but within the academic context it has become imperative for me to find ways of conveying that process through text and writing processes. The ability to listen to teachings in the language is also crucial, because even though I am not a fluent speaker, I can recognize key phrases and I find the best language teachers are the ones who take time to translate and break down the meaning of words in the language for everyone in the room. Stanley Toulouse and James Vukelich are adept educators in this regard, and not only has it empowered me to utilize my own language in my day to day life, but I try to further the application of language within my academic writing as well. As an example of the importance that teachings and the language have I wish to briefly revisit one of the teachings offered by these three Anishinaabeg and how I was able to process, theorize and then articulate ideas to further my own knowledge and understandings.

I'd like to revisit the time Stanley talked about *kinomaagegamig* as a model for school as an example of how language and *Anishinaabeg kendaaswin* (Indigenous knowledge) frame my understanding of *Anishinaabewin*. While I heard Stanley speak at that conference I felt a connection to what he was saying almost immediately. His passion and ability to clearly

articulate his meaning gave me much to take from a single word and walking away from that talk I was able to begin reflecting on the teaching embedded in the language around *aki* - land.

Oftentimes as an urban Indigenous city dweller, I create a mental division that I am not on the land, even though I walk over waterways under the city streets and through medicines growing in greenspaces, it is easy to lose track of those connections in the light and noise. While Stanley didn't teach me how to apply the concept of *kinoomaagegamig*, I recognized over time that it offered an Anishinaabeg model for learning that comes from time spent in relation to land. In terms of powwows, even if it's temporarily over the course of a weekend, once we setup that canopy and spend the days outside we are learning in relation to land.

For example, I've personally learnt that the weather app on my iPhone can't (re)place my own eyes, ears, and senses. I can use those forms of technology, I often use my phone to record myself dancing at powwow, but the reproduction through the digital images, the information on the internet, always pales in comparison to situating my own relationships to land, to place, and relying on my intuition, and my feeling. Scanning the horizon for different types of clouds, I also remember that Anishinaabe Elder Alex Jacobs taught me how to read the way wind hits the trees, and that those gusts let you know a heavy rainfall is coming in and when to prepare. I don't know how many thunderstorms, windstorms, microbursts, we've weathered as a family at powwows but it's more than I can list. Sometimes the rain would wash out the grounds and the powwow would move indoors, sometimes the thunders would cause us to huddle together in our canopy, everything and everyone tucked into the middle while waters flow at our feet. All you can do sometimes is just make the most of it, wait it out, and we'd just laugh, visit, complain, tell stories with whoever got caught under the canopy with us in the downpours. I can tell you, without a doubt, that because of that learning in relation to land, the literacy we've acquired has ensured we're never caught unprepared by the weather. And of course, how many of those beautiful days, *mino-giishigaad*, where we've said our words of gratitude and been able to

dance, sing, pray into the night when the sun sets. *Kinoomaagegamig*, when I think in the language I understand the land is a school unto itself. When my kids are growing up with their summers spent powwowing, they are on *aki*, dancing, playing, observing, and learning. *Aki* as a teacher, as a site of learning, is one of the core ideas that motivates my work and I say *miigwech*, again, to Stanley, for sharing his kind words that helped me understand.

I would also like to reflect briefly on the story shared with me by my Uncle John Rice. When he shared the teachings about life stages with me I also took some time to reflect, retell the teaching in my own mind, and synthesize the ideas. One notion that I have continued to reflect upon is what might a pedagogical framework informed by Indigenous knowledge systems look like if lifelong learning and life stage teachings are the grounding principles. The continuum of life from spirit, to the womb, through the life-stages and onto spirit again, affords opportunities for learning and teaching to occur at each step on our path along *shkagamik-kwe* (mother earth). At each life stage we are continuously reflecting upon our teachings, coming to know ourselves, storying and re-storying our relations and experiences, and most importantly coming to understand the responsibility of sharing our gifts to others. It is the responsibility for those around us to come to know, help us identify our gifts, and work to nurture those for the betterment of the community and nation at large. In this way Indigenous community members are continuously on a pathway of learning/teaching and as such are agents of change within the continuum of Indigenous education and pedagogy. Over time I began to internalize and then notice life stage teachings all around me, not just in my relationship to my kids and family members, but extended family and kinship systems. I am grateful to spend that time with John Rice and I see important elements of kinship systems, of extended family, of blood relation and non, that all contribute towards helping children find their gifts and begin to understand how community and Anishinaabeg family operates.

Pillar Three - Radical Resurgence

I simply cannot see how Indigenous peoples can continue to exist as Indigenous if we are willing to replicate the logics of colonialism, because to do so is to actively engage in self-dispossession from the relationships that make us Indigenous in the first place.
(Simpson, 2017, p.35)

When I first read Leanne Simpson's (2011) text *Dancing on our Turtle's Back* I was appreciative of how she spent her time building out her understanding of *Nishinaabewin* through relationships with Elders, Edna Manitowabi and Doug Williams. This approach to knowledge formation was not dissimilar to my own experiences working with my own family and other knowledge keepers in my respective communities of Wasauksing and Toronto. When Simpson wrote about *biskaaybiyaang* - cultural resurgence within the Anishinaabeg nation - it really began to shift my priorities from research centred in non-Indigenous education systems towards the reclaiming of our own knowledge systems and ways of being. Initially I had thought my research would centre on supporting the development of a school informed by Anishinaabe worldviews, however I've come to realize that the concept of the school is in itself foreign to Anishinaabeg. When I read Leanne Bematamosake Simpson's text - *As We Have Always Done* - in the summer of 2019 it really resonated with me and my thoughts about mainstream education at the time. Simpson wrote at length about a desire to contribute to knowledge systems and cultural spaces that already centre Indigenous ways of seeing and being - *Nishinaabewin* (2017). My own reclamation of the word *Anishinaabewin* has become a powerful tool to speak back in my own language to the harms that have come from colonialism and build out a project that seeks to centre my own culture.

Simpson goes on to write about concerns that cultural reclamation projects have become co-opted by the state's reconciliatory post-TRC agenda. In response to the way in which the state

has embraced culture as an 'acceptable' outcome, Simpson argues that Anishinaabeg would be best served to break out of the mould and develop radical resurgence projects that are not impinged upon by colonial logics of harm and maintenance of the status quo. Resurgence projects can have many different shapes and forms, she recounts a collective effort of urban *Anishinaabe kwewag*, Indigenous femme and non-binary folx, who tapped maple trees in suburban landscapes, sometimes with and without permission of 'land owners.' In some ways I believe powwow lifestyles are a radical resurgence project onto their own, requiring travel, time investment, creation of regalia, resources and relationships simply to attend. Of course, collecting sap from the land, and seeking places to dance, sing, and pray, should not have to be seen as radical, but indeed within the context of *zhaagnosh* impositions onto our territories, bodies, and movements over time, at this point in time, they are.

Reflecting on Leanne's text in relation to powwow, I want to be clear that powwows are not simply a restoration of what's been lost in our communities. My supervisor Dr. Susan Dion reminded me that we did not only come out of the cultural prohibition era with what cultures and language that were lost, but that many of our teachings and knowledges were protected during that era. Many families continued to dance, even when it was illegal, they danced hidden away in the bush, they joined Wild West shows and taught their dance styles in plain sight, they still sounded their drums out to creation, and while much was impacted not all was lost. It wasn't until I read Simpson's recent text that I started to recognize powwow as a project of radical resurgence. While powwow is certainly influenced by logics of colonialism at times - ie. economies of scale, binary-gender roles, gatekeeper mentalities - I truly believe that the core tenets of powwow are nurturing, generative, and centre *Anishinaabewin* at its core. When you start to list the aspects of powwows, the aspects of ceremony, relationship to land, the big drum, dance, regalia and beadwork, Indigenous kinship systems, giveaways, and the redistribution of wealth, powwows accomplish a lot within one short weekend. For the Anishinaabeg, *niimi*

(dance) is an embodiment and expression of a way of life that is generative for those in attendance - and when viewed as a ceremony - powwow aligns with notions of *mino-bimaadiziwin* (Debassige, 2012) a good life. Simpson adds, “If we want to live in a different present, we have to center Indigeneity and allow it to change us” (2017, p.20). Powwow has certainly changed me since I donned regalia in my early 20s. Radical resurgence - the centering of *Anishinaabewin* - is a core concept within my inquiry. Simpson is clear in her assertion that current colonial constructs - the institution of Western education included - require radical projects, theories, and actions to disrupt the ongoing grip on the minds, bodies, emotions and spirits of Anishinaabeg. Radical resurgence is about taking a divergent path towards an Anishinaabeg future, a vision for the coming generations that is deeply rooted in and informed by our own systems and ways of knowing.

Simpson’s story about *ziisbaakdoke* and *biinoonhjiinhs* provided me with an example of radical resurgence that I believe demonstrates a relational pedagogy in action. Within the story we can observe a strong familial bond rooted in care, love and interest for the child’s discovery as their family immediately acknowledges, validates, and goes with *biinoonhjiinhs* to share in their learning of this new sweet water. I can envision the place Simpson stories - the sugar maple bush and the *biinoonhjiinhs* - yet I know where Anishinaabeg are today within the education system and it makes Simpson’s example of land as pedagogy seem like a distant memory or impossible future. On one hand she is demonstrating how far removed, perhaps how far we have to go, towards building an education that is rooted in *Anishinaabewin*. Today when I listen to stories, or in this case a story written into text, I recognize that they have a power to convey traditional teachings that may influence our own vision of what we see today and what we dream of in our future. Key tenets of Indigenous education and pedagogy taken from Simpson’s *ziisbaakdoke* story centre the importance of the land, of story and teachings, family and kinship structures, and point to a relational pedagogy rooted in trust, love, care, kindness, and the

understanding of the gifts we carry. Simpson's story also points to the role of family and kinship systems in providing a nurturing space - context - to welcome and support the gifts of the child/learner. The education demonstrated by *ziisbaakdoke* feels like *Anishinaabewin* in action to me, and yet it would probably be seen as radical within the context of a settler colonial state and its corresponding education system. Powwows provide a possibility for radical cultural resurgence that is unlike any other I have encountered, and it is for this reason that radical resurgence is a core pillar of my theoretical framework.

Pillar Four - Transmotion

Just as our bodily labor is rewarded with physical and spiritual sustenance, our telling or retelling of story teaches appropriate process, enriches our experiences, and builds communal connections. When we ritualize appropriate action, we ritualize tribal continuance. When we invoke teachings and tell ourselves into communities, we build a genealogy of story.

(Blaeser, 2013, p.241)

The notion of past into present is an important concept that Anishinaabeg scholar Gerald Vizenor outlined through the concept of transmotion, which is "a sense of sovereignty, an ethical relationship with nature, 'native motion and an active presence'" (Blaeser, 2013, p.252). Blaeser applies Vizenor's concept of transmotion to help in understanding and examining the processes that underlie ricing, the traditional harvesting of *manoomin*, commonly known as wild rice. By retelling a story shared by their Uncle Bill, who has the ability to recall how ricing was done in the past, and how that story informs their current practice, Blaeser argues that the act of ricing forges relatedness, between family, place and tradition, not unlike many of the seasonal activities of Anishinaabeg. Transmotion occurs when one person retraces the actions and practices of their ancestors in specific spaces, rooted in relationship, in a way that connects

generations to each other through space and time. If movement and motion can be a way of presence-ing ourselves, of bridging relations from our ancestors to today, then powwow dancing and the intertribal at powwow can also be seen as transmotion in action. Blaeser and Vizenor also suggest that this temporal connection can occur through story, that “we somehow claim and re-create these many layers of relatedness in our simple story acts (Ibid, p.238).”

Anishinaabeg take the learning from actions, from one space, and can transfer the meanings and teachings through the process of storying into another temporal space. It is not action alone that allows for teaching and learning to occur however, it is through story, through interpretation of what occurred that Anishinaabeg are able to connect the circle of actions from one to another, from past into present, and amongst the woodland and Great Lakes regions. Coming from Blaeser and Vizenor’s works, knowledge generation is two-fold; Anishinaabeg are literally dancing in the footsteps of our ancestors, by congregating, lighting the sacred fires, doing ceremony, we are able to put *Anishinaabewin* into action and movement. Secondly, “the tales of the *anishinaabe*,” Vizenor writes, “are not an objective collection and interpretation of facts. Stories are a circle of dreams and oratorical gestures showing the meaning between the present and the past in the life of tribal people of the woodland” (Ibid, p.243). It is through processes of action and story, movement into story, story of movement, that Blaeser and Vizenor convey important ideas that also inform my inquiry into powwow.

I would like to spend some time connecting Vizenor’s concept of transmotion to James Vukelich’s teachings about *aanikoobijigaan* as I see these two in relation to one another. During Vukelich’s talk there was a really interesting dialogue in the session about intergenerational trauma, basically how actions and harms from the past are carried forward to generations yet unborn, even at a physiological level. I walked away from that session really questioning why our communities often emphasize the harm and trauma that have bridged generations, time and space. I recognize it is because the hurt is still embodied, and that these narratives have been

buried under the meta-narrative of Canadian history, and that it is about accountability. In some ways this notion of harm being passed forward from the past is an expression of transmotion within our communities. And yet, only talking about the trauma, pain and continued suffering often comes at the expense of the love, kindness, language, teachings, stories, and cultural practices that were also passed down by our ancestors. The teaching of ancestors and the concept of transmotion on the powwow trail are oft-spoken by Elders and Emcees when they refer to dancing for our loved ones, dancing for our ancestors, and for those yet unborn. There is a great pride in seeing those youngest ones dance in the arbor. They often say our ancestors smile down on us from the stars when they see us dancing together in that good way. Many families will also host memorial specials, offering a giveaway and prize money to dancers, asking them to dance hard and to honour and remember a special person who has gone home to the spirit world - *giiwe*. And so the Anishinaabe concept of *aanikoobijigan* in relation to Vizenor's transmotion is crucial as it underpins my inquiry into powwow.

Powwow as a site of teaching/learning

As discussed above, for the majority of my life I have thought about education within the confines of the non-Indigenous education system, as the institutionalized and highly regulated product of a colonial society. Yes I am a product of that system and yet I am also a product of an Anishinaabeg family, community, nation, a product of *jiingtamok*, and of *ngamowin miinwaa niimiwin* (song and dance) that offers another approach to learning and teaching. Thinking through the canopy framework has afforded me space to revisit and retell the importance of *dibaajimowinan*, *aadisookanag* within the language, radical resurgence, and transmotion as pillars that hold up my understanding of powwow as a good way of life.

I've always thought the progression of my work was working towards the development of an Anishinaabeg school, but increasingly I am coming to see the institutional brick and mortar

approach as part of the problem for enacting Anishinaabeg spaces of teaching and learning. If our communities have already built dance arbors, hosted gatherings, and invested in annual social dances and powwows, then do these spaces not offer a pre-existing infrastructure upon which Anishinaabeg teaching and learning already occurs? When we hear a teaching over the speakers from the Emcee or an Elder at the powwow, are we not learning from those stories? As we get ready together with family members, donning regalia and spending time on the land, what learning is taking place in those instances? When we are asked to dance our style in the arbor, what are we learning from participating in that movement of body through song and dance? When we observe or take part in a giveaway at the end of the powwow what lesson do we take from that ceremony? These are the types of questions I ask myself in response to this literature review and theoretical framework. I seek to find answers the only way I know how, in relation to the community of dancers I find myself a part of today. What follows is an explanation of how I have carried out that work in relation to my fellow dancers.

Chapter 3 - Theoretical Framework and

Methodology

As I embarked onto my journey into the PhD program at York University, there was a pivotal experience I had which shaped my understanding of research and the role of researcher. I had been working at the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) as a member of the research team. We were conducting research utilizing the USAI: Research Framework, which centred the principles of utility, self-voiced, action-based, and interrelationality within all projects. The purpose was to centre the urban Indigenous community as the experts of their own knowledge and ways of knowing/being, and we as researchers were positioned more as helpers and facilitators of the research process. One project I was involved with from its inception, through to the data collection phase was *Ganohonyohk: Urban Indigenous Prosperity Research Project*. At the time the project looked at the variety of ways in which urban Indigenous communities define their understandings of prosperity by looking beyond the typical socio-economic indicators around income and determinants of health. One of the urban Indigenous communities we travelled to for data collection was the Kenora Native Friendship Centre in Treaty 3, Northwestern Ontario. They were hosting a powwow later in the summer and invited us to talk to staff and community members about concepts of prosperity while attending the event. My colleague and I accepted the invitation, made the travel plans and loaded up our recording gear to spend a few days collecting data and interviewing folks about what they think prosperity is. I was prepared to fulfill my role as helper, as we had been instructed to do, meaning I would listen to and support the local community as best as I could. I understood that this meant my role as researcher was to put aside my own interests and be as non-impositional in the data production as possible. What I hadn't really put much thought into was my pre-existing connection to the community of Kenora and the surrounding First Nations.

My wife was raised in Thunder Bay and had family within the area, and we had spent a couple of summers powwowing the local circuit visiting with her family when our kids were much younger. With that bit of context in hand, what transpired upon arriving at the Friendship Centre was something that left me re-thinking my assumptions around what a researcher's role is within an Indigenous context. When my colleague and I arrived at the Friendship Centre to be introduced to the community members and staff we were to interview, I was pleasantly surprised to see one of my wife's cousins working in the building. We greeted each other, asked how each other's families were doing, visited for a bit and were both looking forward to being present at the powwow. The next day I showed up with the recording gear and we started interviewing folks before Grand Entry. Everything was going smoothly when my wife's cousin approached, looking around at my feet and the recording gear, she asked where my grassdance regalia was. I was embarrassed to say that I left it at home in Toronto. It honestly had never occurred to me that I should even bring it to the powwow until that point. Of course, my relatives would want to know if I was going to dance, they knew me as a grass dancer. I realized that day that I was carrying some baggage about my role as an Anishinaabeg researcher. I believed that I was to leave my own gifts to the side, to not centre myself in the process of research, that it was more important to put myself to the margins and not take up space. However, what I learned that day was that I was expected to bring all my gifts with me to the project. I was expected to dance that weekend, to participate as a visitor, to bring all aspects of my being to the relationship. And now I am left to wonder what might the interviews have come out like if I had indeed brought my regalia, danced, shared, participated. This was an important learning for me and something I continually reflect upon as I went through my coursework, text readings, proposal writing, and into the data collection outlined within this chapter. I now know that the role of an Anishinaabe researcher has many additional responsibilities, and in many ways carries more challenges,

awareness, and work than that of an outsider. What follows in the following pages are some of the ways in which I've thought about and tried to accommodate for my responsibilities as Anishinaabe researcher.

Centring Indigenous methodologies

There are several texts that underpin my methodology and informed my research plan.

Foremost among these texts is Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Research Methodologies*, a transformational text which helped me recontextualize the role research and academia plays in relation to Indigenous communities. I came to understand how damaging the process and outcomes of research can be as an extension of the colonization-project. Absolon and Willett (2005) have described research that causes harm as the extraction of Indigenous knowledge. In extreme cases research can be deceitful, harmful, and the outcomes of knowledge production do little to benefit, acknowledge or assist the Indigenous persons/community directly. As noted above, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) enabled me to rethink decolonization but she also helped me re-frame research as a project that should not only be product oriented, but one that might centre process and relationality in an effort to align with Indigenous epistemologies. Absolon (2022) has provided empowerment and validation in recognizing the knowledge that I carry as Anishinaabe, as grass dancer, as foundational and necessary within my journey as an academic. While the Four R's of respect, relevance, reciprocity and relationship were written by Kirkness and Barnhardt in response to the education system, the Four R's can also be thought of and applied as core tenets within an Indigenous research methodology. A project or inquiry that centres respect for the participant and their knowledge, ensures the research is relevant to their own context, honours reciprocity throughout the stages of research and prioritizes ongoing relationships that might lead to 'better' and more ethical research (1991, p.15). In the wake of my experiences at the OFIFC, the idea of relationship centred research is one that has become

foundational for me and is taken up in depth by Margaret Kovach in her text *Indigenous Methodologies* (2009). Kovach underscores that in order for relational research to occur there must be a process of trust-building that adheres to a culturally relevant framework. Who one is, the way one carries themselves, the protocols they utilize when entering a research relationship must be extrapolated and built into the method of the project. Absolon and Willett (2005) argue that centering of one's self and positionality is key within Indigenous research contexts, inclusive of but not limited to self-identification of one's name, family, home community, nation, clan. I would add that the sharing of our gifts might also be added to the list. Due to the role of colonization in breaking down individual ties to Indigenous kinship, familial, clan and nation systems there are many instances where even an Indigenous researcher may not be able to self-identify themselves within the criteria set forth by Absolon and Willett. Cree scholar Laara Fitznor is cited within Kovach's (2009) text and demonstrates how important a pre-existing relationship between a researcher and their research subject can aid the inquiry process. Based on the literature and my research experience within my Masters degree it is of utmost importance that relationship sits at the centre of my inquiry.

Lianne Leddy's (2010) *Interviewing Nookomis and Other Reflections: The Promise of Community Collaboration* is an important article that has also helped me reconsider my role as an Anishinaabe researcher in relation to the Anishinaabeg community. Leddy's reflections on her responsibilities to the community, of being a relative (family member) and a researcher, an insider and an outsider, are very pertinent to my context and the design of my method. One of my primary concerns about interviewing folks involved with powwows is that it will somehow change the dynamic of our relationship and move away from the flow of visiting that I've enjoyed over the years - not unlike the disruptive experience Leddy outlines when she tried interviewing her *Nookomis* (grandmother). When Leddy shifted away from a formalized interview approach and more towards a story-sharing of experiences, she found an increased ability to connect with

her Nookomis and a vitality to their discourse which didn't exist when she simply was asking her grandmother questions. "They spoke as elders, family members, and fellow stakeholders in our community's future" (2010, p.12), I take some solace in Leddy's words and experiences interviewing her own community members. While she originally had reservations about the research she was carrying out, what she found was that individuals were willing to assist her learning journey and opened up in ways that she hadn't anticipated. I believe that focusing my research with Indigenous families who are known to me from years of dancing together will foster a relational foundation that can ease tensions the same way Leddy found success.

Nbwaachwewin: visiting as methodology

For her Masters degree Inuk scholar Jackie Price (2007) developed a methodology centred around Indigenous knowledge and visiting which she called the kitchen table consultation model. Kitchen table methodology came out of a concern that community consultations carried out in her community were always too short on time. Often a decision was being made by the leadership and the rigid timelines drove the consultation process towards surveys, questionnaires, and other culturally inappropriate methods of engagement. Relationship was not at the centre of the data collection and so she developed a method that re-emphasized time, respect, trust, and cultural protocols. Price echoes the importance of self-location and sharing one's own stories and experiences.

Other people's experiences remind people of their own experiences. The potential of this intellectual reciprocity is continuous and consistent – if supported in an open environment. In following this thinking, the more interaction there is, the greater the opportunity that people will share their experiences (2007, p.81).

At its core, kitchen table consultation is talking about the cultural importance of visiting. Within an Anishinaabeg context I've been working to learn the *Anishinaabemowin* equivalency for the

word visit and the regional word that I've come to understand is *nbwaachwe*, paying someone a visit (Pitawanakwat, 2020). When I think about the way *nbwaachwe* takes place within powwow it's usually in-between the scheduled events; sometimes through stories shared amongst friends walking in the arbour during an intertribal, sometimes when we're lined up together at the feast waiting for the food to get served, sometimes at each other's camps sharing our thoughts about the days events, and sometimes when we're parked next to each other rushing to get ready for Grand Entry while our kids run around playing. Visiting at the powwow is oftentimes hurried, but the concept of time and how it impacts visiting is always fluid and in motion, what I mean by that is a conversation can be disrupted at a moments notice without it damaging the relationship. There are times when a real deadly crow hop gets blasted out by a drum group and everyone drops what they are doing to grab their stuff and get out to the dance arbor. The relationship is not damaged because we know a deadly song warrants the break and that we can always visit again somewhere down the trail. It's almost cliché in the community, but we say there are no words for good-bye in our languages, only see you again. The type of visiting that leads to knowledge production, where we exchange pieces of ourselves and confirm or debate teachings we hear on the mic from the Emcee or an Elder are deeply reciprocal. *Nbwaachwewin* often involves humour, and it happens informally and unplanned - therefore my method had to be respectful of the processes of visiting and not be unwieldy and impositional.

Dibaajimowinan - Story as methodology

Story can bring us from present discourse, to past events and experiences, and even forward in time to visions and dreams - Gerald Vizenor writes about the timelessness of story as transmotion. When visiting with individuals on the powwow trail I anticipate that there will be a host of ways in which teaching, learning, and knowledge formation occur - and the role of stories as pedagogy within powwow cannot be understated. Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) has had a

significant impact on my understanding of story as not only a process of cultural continuity, but as knowledge production and method unto itself. Granted, story is not the only method of knowledge transmission at powwow, I anticipate that due to the COVID-19 pandemic *dibaajimowinan* will become the primary method of data collection for my project. While I am looking to *dibaajimowinan* as a grounding structure for my inquiry, I believe that the ways in which stories are employed within Anishinaabeg thought are not fixed, they are fluid, and in motion always relating to the dialogue and action at hand - transmotion exemplified. Stories are a time-travelling device of great utility to Anishinaabeg. When *dibaajimowinan* is informed by an ethical and reciprocal space created by *nbwaachwewin*, the stories, experiences, sharing of regalia and beadwork projects, visions, hopes and dreams that come to the fore will be emergent and non-rehearsed. The emergent stories that come from visiting are not pre-planned and may offer greater insight and go further to unveil the core tenets of Anishinaabeg education and pedagogy through powwow than any formalized interview structure might otherwise.

My focus is on understanding how and articulating the ways teaching and learning occur by accessing stories that focus on powwow. One approach would be to welcome the stories and cultural teachings - otherwise known within *Anishinaabewin* as *aadizookaanag*, the “traditional” or “sacred” narratives that embody the values, philosophies, and laws important to life (Doerfler et al., 2013). It is important to acknowledge the distinct difference in intentions and protocols between *dibaajimowinan* and *aadizookaanag*. For example, I was taught that we only share *aadizookaanag* when the snow is on the ground in the winter months and these stories have their own spirit we must respect and allow to rest during the other times of the year. Typically an Elder or Knowledge Keeper has the responsibility of sharing *aadizookaanag* during those winter months. It is thus important for me to clarify as Anishinaabeg, that it is not my intention to seek out *aadizookaanag* - the teachings and sacred stories - that inform *jiingtamok*, but instead the *dibaajimowinan*, the stories of the people who live, learn, and love to powwow as a way of life.

Personal stories are the ones that are shared and told in-between, during, and after powwows, and they are what I believe will help illustrate the valuable processes of teaching and learning that contribute towards intergenerational cultural continuity.

Centering my own self and stories

I also want to be explicit that I am not seeking to collect stories or events as a witness, bystander, or objective researcher, I am purposefully grounding myself in a relational methodology wherein my own stories, experiences, hopes, and dreams are centred in connection to others. As noted above, Kovach, Absolon and Price helped to articulate that a relational approach grounded in reciprocity is a culturally appropriate approach for an Indigenous researcher. Visiting and sharing stories about our experiences and observations can encourage reciprocity within the project that in turn aligns closely with a worldview informed by *Anishinaabewin*. Kovach states, “(g)iving back does not only mean the dissemination of the findings; it means creating a relationship throughout the entirety of the research” (2009, p.149). It is critical that I consider what giving back will look like at each stage of the project and what cultural protocols might guide my inquiry. For example, I am considering at the onset of the project it will be important to acknowledge the relationship through an offering. The importance of offerings are reflected in Anishinaabemowin as *bagijigan*, and the act of making an offering is *bagijige* (Doerfler et al., 2013).

They can take many forms, from asemaa (tobacco) to nagamowin (songs) to zhooniyaa (money). Food is an offering. A story can be an offering. Knowledge can be an offering. One can witness hundreds of examples of offerings in ceremony - ceremonies are indeed offerings unto themselves -- but there are many other places these can be given too (Ibid, p.15).

Offerings are a way of making meaning, of sharing intentions, of asking consent, to form a

relationship to one another. Much akin to Kirkness and Barnhardt's Four R's, the reasons why one makes an offering to another can vary greatly, yet at its core it is an effort to honour, respect, and care for the relationship. It is not only a kind gesture, it is the picking up and enactment of a responsibility as learner and teacher within *Anishinaabewin*. The types of offerings one can make also vary greatly, sometimes it is a small bundle of *semaa*, sometimes a cigarette, sometimes it's a specific gift, and I echo the notions of Doerfler, Sinclair and Stark that sharing a story can also be an offering unto itself. In my territory reciprocity is commonly acknowledged and respected through the protocol of offering *semaa* in exchange for the time and knowledge of one party to another. In the old times when we grew our own *semaa*, from seedling through to harvest and drying, tobacco was a significant gift to provide in honouring the learning relationship. Today, commercial tobacco has become commonplace, but the sentiment and respect being endowed remains the same.

Research Plan

The project's research plan was to engage five powwow families through the tenets of relationship, reciprocity, *nbwaachwewin*, *dibaajimowinan*, and sharing. The families I planned to approach were all intended to reside within or originate from the Anishinaabeg Nation and territories located inside the geo-political construct of Ontario. By approaching families with pre-existing relationships in place with my own family. The families I sought out were to be well-respected on the trail, regularly attend powwows in the region, and have established dancers, singers, beadworkers within their family. The rationale for identifying families who have been dancing for a longer duration of time, across at least two generations, was to centre the experience of teaching and learning over the course of time, from parent/caregiver through to child. As such, it was also important for my project to identify families composed of intergenerational life stages including young children, youth, adults, grandparents and Elders.

Utilizing Anishinaabeg reciprocity and cultural protocols, I planned to offer a gift to the families alongside my intentions to request a sharing of their knowledge alongside my own family through *nbwaachwewin* and *dibaajimowinan*.

Powwows in the central Great Lakes region typically run from May through to mid-September, with hundreds if not thousands of people in attendance, and with the provincial government sanctioning such events due to social distancing protocols, my initial plan to visit and collect data at powwows themselves was no longer feasible. The pandemic not only disrupted the writing of my proposal and completion of coursework, but it altered my research plan. Originally my plan consisted of visiting families in person over the course of the powwow season, but I was required to rethink that concept. The *nbwaachwewin miinwaa dibaajimowinan* had to move to an online platform, in this case the use of Zoom and Google Meet. It is important to note that the lack of powwows does not preclude people from dancing, as social media platforms enabled folks to continue to post videos and host dance specials online - ie. the Quarantine Dance Specials 2020 Facebook page. And yet, there are many families who have chosen not to dance. Each family has their own reasons and rationale in how they choose to respond to the difficult times and isolation that were a result of COVID-19, social distancing and lockdowns. In my home the pandemic powwow season was initially spent repairing and finishing beadwork, starting new regalia projects, feasting our outfits, reflecting on the powwows we loved and new ones we'd like to travel to in the future. As the time progressed we found our desire to dance waned alongside our overall mental health from moving everything online. With no powwows going on, there were times we went to the park or onto the land and suited up in our regalia just to dance. There were a handful of online community events we were invited to dance for, but on a whole we were vastly affected by the social distancing and cancelling of in person powwows for the better part of two years. During this time of challenges, loss of powwows, I was hopeful yet unsure that families would be willing to discuss, share, and reflect upon the importance of

powwow.

For the families who chose to accept the invitation to contribute to the project, they were asked to recall their own experiences of teaching and learning within powwow over the course of 2-3 online visits - each taking 1 to 1.5 hours. The way in which families chose to participate was at their own discretion. I was as flexible as I could be with scheduling their times and willing to speak to as many or little individuals they deemed appropriate. The goal was to identify key stories or experiences that carry exceptional meaning within families in terms of teaching and learning at powwow. Within the writing of my dissertation thus far I've shared versions of my own family's stories as a way of thinking through but also modelling narratives that could be shared by others. I planned on sharing my own family stories as a way to reciprocate, visit, and demonstrate the type of narratives I was trying to elicit. As noted in the methodology section above it was important for me to model a space of *nbwaachwewin* as opposed to a formalized interview structure. While the primary focus of data collection was story driven, I invited families to bring any powwow items and pictures from previous powwow seasons that they might want to share as a means to encourage stories or memories of import. They may also opt to bring a new project to the *nbwaachwewin* sessions - beadwork for example. In the first session I planned to review the aims and objectives of my dissertation, what I hoped to learn, their role within the inquiry, and to also cover consent forms, ethics, and determine what expectations they have for my role as researcher. The initial session would be critical in co-curating what we wanted the remaining time and sessions to look like as well. *Nbwaachwewin* is intended to be an organic process that gives increased control to the research participant. By opening up space for individuals to work on a project while we visit together, I believe the research can be grounded in the words and experiences of powwow, as well as the ongoing actions, movement, and sharing of the ways in which we work to teach and learn as Anishinaabeg.

The plan for enacting *nbwaachwewin miinwaa dibaajimowinan* was not as straightforward as I

had initially planned. Building off of pre-established and long-standing relationships, I was beyond grateful to get encouraging feedback and support from several families. Every family I approached to participate in the project agreed to visit with me and contribute their stories and experiences. Due to the COVID restrictions I was unable to offer *semaa* in person, and so in the Spring of 2021 I made sure to uphold the cultural protocol of relational offerings and mailed tobacco to each family. Data collection methods I planned to utilize during *nbwaachwewin* included audio recordings of conversations and stories, collection of pictures or images of projects brought forth by the families, and perhaps most importantly my own journaling and reflections will be carried out between the sessions. I relied on my own reflexivity, my positionality as an insider/outsider, and the centring of the project's methodology within *dibaajimowinan* and *nbwaachwewin* to collect meaningful data that aids in continuing through my inquiry. One outstanding consideration that I have continued to check-in with families about is how to reciprocate and acknowledge the relationships through to the end of the project. One idea I had was to honour the families contributions with a giveaway or dance special hosted at a powwow upon completion of the PhD. While the work of hosting such an event is beyond the scope of my dissertation, it is an important aspect of my responsibility as a dancer to still see that through after the completion of my dissertation.

Research questions

I already know teaching and learning happens within powwow. I already know it's powerful. Whenever I sit as a spectator in the bleachers with Indian taco in hand and watch those little ones dance during a tiny tots song, finding their feet within the drumbeats of the one-two step, I know I'm witnessing something important. When the song is over those little ones run over to the arena director and line up for a gift from the powwow committee - sometimes they get a treat, sometimes it's a crisp 5 dollar bill - then they all go running back with toothy grins to their

family members sitting along the sides of the dance arena. This is one example of how powwows and the people who run them are trying to support and encourage young ones to participate, learn from, and practice their culture, yet this is only one aspect - a strategy even - that's easily observable. What I set out to find through this research is the teaching and learning, the encouragement and pedagogy that families employ across generations of learners that is not as easily observable. What ways do they teach under their canopies at powwows, within the privacy of their homes, and how do families understand powwows as a site of teaching and learning? Through this research I set out to understand how families utilize powwows as a site of intergenerational cultural continuity - the teaching and learning that connects current and coming generations to our ancestors. What education does powwow provide? What growth and life processes inform the learning process, the pedagogy? When those little ones put on their regalia and dance, when they listen to the MC, when they spend time with their extended family, when they play under the bleachers and visit the vendors, how do they learn and what are they taking with them after the Eastern doorway closes and the Eagle staffs are retired at the end of the powwow?

Guiding Question:

What can I learn about Anishinaabeg (Indigenous) pedagogy from the stories families tell about their participation within powwow?

- 1) What kind of teaching and learning happens at powwow?
- 2) When does teaching and learning happen on the powwow trail?
- 3) Who does the teaching and learning within these spaces?
- 4) What is it about the teaching and learning that happens at powwow that is so important for families?

Reciprocity: What stories will I share?

As noted above, it was my intention to not simply ask questions of the families, but to facilitate a space of *nbwaachwewin*. I am an active participant in the research phase and as a dancer, father/uncle, I carry stories and experiences into the visiting sessions as do the invited families. What follows are several narratives I planned to share with the other powwow families, which I had scripted beforehand, but ultimately told in shortened oral narratives where appropriate. These stories are one way in which I reciprocated my own knowledge to the other families and brought some of my experiences to the relationship.

Blankie story

My two daughters (10 and 5) were raised going to powwows from their time within the womb, later in life they were pushed in strollers and napped listening to intertribal songs, they played on the grass under the canopy, watched us dance during our contest songs, until they too went out to dance during the tiny tot songs. Powwow was and continues to be as much a part of their yearly life balance as the 10-month school year. For our family we tried not to force our kids to dance, we learned the hard way if you suit them up in their outfit and make them go out into the dance arbor when they don't want to - well, it rarely ends well. My partner sews and I do beadwork, but it wasn't until they demonstrated a desire and ability to start dancing that we really went to work on regalia for them. I remember years ago at Northwest Bay's powwow when my eldest daughter Niimin first started wrapping her baby blanket over her shoulders like a fancy shawl dancer. It was a patchwork blankie made by my sister - composed of different sized and coloured baby blankets that was far too big for her to wear as a shawl. She had been running around dragging that blankie in the dirt and mud while chasing the other kids at the powwow. When one intertribal song came on in the evening session there was little Niimin dancing with her baby blanket alongside the other fully beaded and kitted out kids. Deanne, my

partner, and I laughed and cried at the sight of it. Laughed because we had fully beaded outfits and there was our daughter running around with a dirty blankie dancing an intertribal. We cried too. I think people call them tears of joy. We were ecstatic because she finally wanted to dance and after years of playing on the sidelines with other kids, she pushed herself to go out there and join the circle. In a lot of ways it was an affirmation of all the work my partner and I had done to show them a way of life that they could see themselves a part of. I've always known powwow was powerful, and there was something about the way she came to dance that I think of often. She learned to dance through her own volition, as an autonomous and free Anishinaabe child, she danced when she was ready, and picked the style that moved her. As I reflect upon the story of Niimin's dancing, I am reminded of Leanne Simpson's story about the sugar bush and *biinoonhjiinhs*. The possibility of learning as Anishinaabe through agency of self, through exploration, and perhaps most importantly, observation, are all critical components that offer a constellation of guidance for the 'teachers.' Creating a safe context for learning, allowing learning to occur through the child's ability to navigate their environment and try, these emergent processes are important in honouring the spirit of the child and not relying on coercion to control for predetermined outcomes.

Nieces and Niblets

In addition to our daughters Deanne and I are also the proud Auntie and Uncle to our three nieces/niblets¹⁰ - all sisters - aged 19, 13 and 12, who've lived with us for 8 and 5 years respectively. It's important for me to acknowledge their story and our efforts to introduce them to powwow as a way of life. Our eldest niece Chasity used to dance jingle with my partner when they were very young and living in Thunder Bay but when my wife left to pursue school in Toronto there was no one to take them to powwows anymore. They recently came out as bi and

¹⁰ A gender inclusive term for non-binary relations in place of 'niece' or 'nephew'

while they haven't danced since childhood, they have expressed some interest in learning more about grass dance. While they still come with us to powwows on occasion, it is mostly to connect with friends they know who will be attending, otherwise they opt to stay back with their kookum in the city. We also recently came into being the primary caregivers for Chasity's younger sisters, Alyssa (Miles) and Tiyonna. When they came to live with us they expressed an interest in powwows and attended many with us. We initially bought outfits for them so they could participate alongside us, and then moved to begin sewing regalia and constructing beadwork. After months of work in the off-season, and a lot of help from friends who contributed their own time to bead several components of their outfits, we finally suited them up at the first powwow of the summer in 2019. While they did dance on occasion, most of the time they were resistant to getting ready for Grand Entry and eventually opted to stay home most weekends with family. We tried to maintain patience and support for them to join the circle, and our youngest niece did opt to dance at several powwows and even competed alongside our eldest daughter in the Jr. Girls Fancy Shawl category. Our efforts to support our nieces to dance proved more challenging than expected and I have come to realize that dancing is not necessarily for everyone. While my sister-in-law did dance Fancy Shawl at many powwows for several years, my nieces didn't attend many powwows and as a result may have had less access, support, and connections to that way of life. It was important for my partner and I to provide them the opportunity and access. I'm grateful for my nieces because they've helped me see that dancing is not the only pathway to a good way of life through powwow. While I think those songs and dances call us all to participate or observe in the dance arena, the things my 13 year old niece gets by sipping lemonades from the stands and being in the community are still important learnings. Through sharing these stories of my family I can start to see the varied ways in which we've tried to teach our children about powwow as a way life, while not all successful in the sense that they all dance, it's vital for my partner and I to instill in them that they know they belong as Anishinaabeg.

Positionality: What are my responsibilities?

With most powwows in Ontario done around 6pm, there is usually a late-night overly caffeinated commute home that results in the dreaded “powwow hangover” the next morning. I can’t even count how many times I’ve pulled into Toronto in the early AM and had to unload sleeping children, regalia bags, all our items of value - and then I try to wind down and catch enough zzz’s to function the next day. I’ve since come to realize that the ‘powwow hangover’ is not just from sleep deprivation or the buildup of lactic acid in the legs from dancing, it’s also missing the feeling of connection to family, friends, community, land, ceremony and the drum after we’ve made our separate ways home. As a matter of fact, I’d say there is an extreme culture shock that occurs when you walk into a gas station or convenience store after you’ve spent two to three long days on the land dancing, visiting, feasting and feeling good about life. This feeling of longing, of feeling good, nourished even, despite the fatigue, is probably what contributes to people reloading their vehicles like a game of Tetris and getting back on the trail every weekend. As I move towards inviting other dancers and their families to share their knowledge and values and attitudes about education, pedagogy and jiingtamok, I recognize the great responsibility in honouring and handling those stories with great care and kindness. I recognize a great deal of privilege in my role as researcher and being able to attend school full-time while having the financial, family, social, and professional supports in place to pursue my life's work. My position as a dancer is something that I intend not to abuse in relation to the families who agree to share their stories with me. My responsibility as a researcher is to protect those families and their stories from misrepresentation, and potential harm. My responsibility in the dance circle is to honour and give back and the primary vehicle for doing so is through dance specials. This component of giving back will be a key piece for me to develop and deliver as a grass dancer in relation to other dancers. With my intention for this research being put to paper, it is now my responsibility to put out my intentions in a good way through ceremony, offering,

and prayer. The work of ceremony is as important as the dissertation itself within my journey as an academic and will require faculties of my being that the Faculty of Education may not engender. And so I close with my plan in place and go on to honour those stories, memories, teachings, and most importantly the ancestors who have come before and who fought, hid, and taught during dangerous times in order for us to have this good way of life.

As part of the reading I did for the literature review I learned more of the details about why the era of cultural prohibition in Canada took place. The efforts to establish anti-dance laws through the Indian Act that banned gatherings like jiingtamok, potlatch, and sundances (Shea Murphy, 2007). There was a fear that dancing, ceremony and hosting giveaways - core tenets within jiingtamok - were dangerous, wasteful, and an impediment to the assimilation of Anishinaabeg into the Canadian body politic. I find it more than fitting that in the years since the culture ban was lifted in Canada - 1951 - powwows have become an embodiment of radical resurgence for Anishinaabeg across Turtle Island. After all, what better way to disrupt the colonial project than to teach our kids to dance, sing, and pray as we always have? Simpson is clear in her assertion that the colonial project and resulting society in which we live adjacent to as Anishinaabeg requires radical projects, ideas, and actions to disrupt its ongoing grip on the minds, bodies, emotions and spirits of Indigenous people. By retelling my own story at powwow I've come to understand I too have agency as Anishinaabe grass dancer, father, uncle, and community member. Radical resurgence is about taking a divergent path towards an Anishinaabeg future, a vision for the coming generations that is deeply rooted in and informed by *Anishinaabewin*.

From vision into action: storying the data collection process

After defending my proposal in January of 2021 I received some beautiful feedback that encouraged me to stay aligned with the visiting methodology as much as possible during data collection. As mentioned above, COVID-19 had kept powwows from occurring during the

summer of 2021 in Ontario, and so I had to pivot to an online format. After receiving my ethics approval by late spring, 2021, I was able to approach several families through social media to inquire if they might be interested in participating in the project. I initially approached three families from the onset, the Kicknosways, Restoules, and Pheasants. All three families agreed to participate in the project and I sent each of them an email with a description of the project and the consent forms for their review and signature. It was my original plan to be visiting in person within the context of a powwow, which would have made protocols of offering *semaa* much simpler. In this instance I had asked for them to send me their address so I could mail them some medicines with the intention of asking for their participation in the project. It felt a bit strange to be standing in a line at the post office with tobacco in hand and letters in the other, but it was important that I still utilize the method of offering tobacco and asking consent, even if we were meeting online through a screen. The formalities of the consent forms, explaining the project, and why I was doing the research project were not as onerous as I had anticipated. Elaine Kicknosway, Nathalie Restoule and Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane all agreed to speak on behalf of their families and to share their stories with me as soon as we could schedule a time to talk. Elaine actually called me through Facebook video chat to hear more about the project and was ready to share her own *dijbaajimowinaan* immediately. I was a bit surprised and asked if we could switch to a Zoom video call so that I could record our conversation which she consented to. I went on to explain the project and shared the story of my oldest daughter picking up her baby blanket and shawl dancing with Elaine which did create space for her to speak briefly about her son Theland and her efforts to support his dancing. With each of the first sessions that occurred, Nathalie, Karen and Elaine all started by contextualizing their own relationship to powwow. These stories and experiences focused on their respective childhoods, key memories, and some of the challenges they had growing up and accessing powwow. For all three of the families, each of the initial sessions lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. My first visit with Karen seemed to diverge away from the focus on her own stories and

experiences and towards analysis of my own stories of learning to grass dance. I shared one story anecdotally which Karen found fascinating and I was concerned that the session missed the mark. I took notes and wrote brief reflections within my Google drive and iPhone depending on what I had available in between the first and second sessions. This time was important because it gave me time to reflect on the first *nbwaachwewin* sessions and what had been shared to that point. I found that each individual had only started to frame their children's learning in terms of powwow, and I knew that I wanted to create as much space in the follow up visits for stories to centre on the teaching and learning that happened for their kids as dancers. I had requested a visit with my supervisor in between the first and second sessions in order to debrief about my experience with Karen and how I might create space for more sharing of stories about each of the family's children's experience of learning at powwows.

Within the second visit I found that Elaine and Nathalie were much more comfortable and the sharing of stories flowed with ease. Theland had joined Elaine for the second visit and he mostly listened to Elaine's telling of his story learning to grass dance, but added some very remarkable reflections and stories from his own perspective toward the end of the session. I was satisfied with how the session with Nathalie went and we agreed that I would review the visit and request another session if it felt necessary. For Elaine and Theland I did request a third visit, only because I wanted to create more space for Theland to share more of his own experiences.

When it came time to meet with Karen I was happy to hear that she had debriefed our visit with her son Jesse, and that she had a number of stories she wanted to share about the way in which dancers learn, building off my own stories. I found the way in which the sessions unfolded with Karen were much more challenging, but ultimately rewarding. In many ways she was challenging me to bring my own experiences to the table, and in terms of the power dynamics it felt like I was the one being researched. Karen is also doing her PhD at the University of Alberta, and as a recognized dancer who carries Jingle Dress teachings, the way our sessions

went was mutually beneficial. We did story sharing and analysis at the same time, which proved helpful in guiding my thinking after the data collection phase of my project was complete.

By the start of summer 2021 I had completed all the data collection through seven nbwaachwewin sessions, two with Nathalie Restoule, two with Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane, and 3 with Elaine and Theland Kicknosway. I set out to transcribe the recordings over the course of the summer and started the analysis on my own before meeting with my supervisor in fall of 2021. I was fortunate to travel to several powwows in Quebec in August and September, where COVID restrictions had eased and some powwows were taking place. During those powwows I took notes and wrote reflections, of which excerpts are found within the introduction to the dissertation. Dr. Dion suggested I write out my story as a dancer, as a way to get back into the practice of writing and thinking about what had been shared with me at the start of the summer. The stories you find in the introduction of the dissertation are the first wave of writing I did post-data collection. I spent over a month writing out the stories and reflections of my families time on the abbreviated Powwow trail of the summer of 2021. The practice of storying my own time on the trail, sharing my own *dibaajimowinan*, helped in connecting to the stories of Nathalie, Karen, Elaine and Theland. By the time I met again with my supervisor, I believed I had identified key takeaways from their *dibaajimowinan* and I presented these narratives verbally and mapped them out with Dr. Dion. The more I spoke, the more I came to recognize that the stories they had shared with me before my time on the trail were framing how I came to experience powwows. There was a layering of stories, meaning making, a co-constructing of *dibaajimowinan* that supported each other in the telling. At the time I believed that I was interpreting their stories through my own lens, but as I walked away from my meeting with Dr. Dion I began to recognize that there was more to their stories than I had initially believed and that they had more to teach me. I found myself sharing the importance of stories around 'healing' and 'cultural revitalization' that day, but these readings of their stories glossed over the

finer details of what Nathalie, Elaine, Theland and Karen's stories were teaching me. I came out of the meeting feeling as though I had missed the mark, that I had not fully come to know the stories shared with me, and that I was insisting on retelling the meta-narratives that are already pervasive and present in Anishinaabe discourse. Dr. Dion encouraged me to identify eight excerpts of their stories from the transcripts to hone in on with my analysis, to come to 'know' the stories more intimately, and we scheduled a follow up meeting in late November.

It took several weeks before I felt as though I began to 'know' the stories that were shared. I read and re-read the stories. I would do beadwork and think about them, envisioning movements and references from each story. It was laboursome work and the more I was able to recite and think about their words without having to read the texts the more I recognized I was learning. Being able to retell the stories, recite details both aloud and on paper, were key indicators that I was synthesizing and forming relationships to *dibaajimowinan* of others which hadn't been realized within the data analysis yet. It wasn't until I reached this stage in my thinking that I was able to map out the stories in relation to each other. Several key ideas really resonated with me at that time, the importance of the adult/child relationship, the importance of extended relations (kinship), and that learning through the relationship of dance and song was much more complicated than a linear pathway of listening, seeing then doing. Dr. Dion and I met again and I visually mapped out the stories in relation to each other. This time the stories were cohesive, this time I was able to share what I had learned, I had listened and spent time in relationship to *dibaajimowinan*. I was given additional questions to think about, and was asked to take these stories and begin relating them to the literature. I felt at the time that the stories spoke for themselves, that the literature might misdirect or misrepresent the voices of Anishinaabeg. I was reluctant to bring in the literature in relation to my stories, the stories from the visits. And yet, there were some important aspects of the stories that I still was unsure about in my analysis, namely the notion of 'spirit', as well as the importance of 'community.' I came to

recognize that the notions of 'community', 'feeling' and 'spirit' were not addressed within my initial literature review and that others may have thought about these processes before. My earlier reluctance began to dissipate as I located newer writings by Cajete about the importance of community, and within this process of reading his works I appreciated the referencing of teachings in his writing. I revisited some of my earlier writings and began to recognize teachings that Karen, Elaine and Nathalie were not naming within their stories, but that had been referencing indirectly, namely Anishinaabeg life stage teachings, which in conjunction with the new literature I had located gave me an analytical framework that I had been missing up to that point. The texts and teachings that I refer to are extrapolated on and referenced within the subsequent data chapters and I will leave them to do their work within that context.

An important process which I came to identify and name throughout the analysis of the data was the notion of (re)visiting. As I spent time reading, thinking, and writing about all of the *debaajimowinan* from the visiting sessions, I noted that I would often hear the voices of those stories, I would envision the events of their stories in my own mind. Each time I heard their stories it felt like we were visiting again - hence (re)visiting. While not intentional at its onset, I recognize now that Vizenor's conceptualization of travel through temporal and spatial place via transmotion is experienced throughout the data analysis and process of (re)visiting through *dibaajimowinan*. The ability to move through story, to build relationship, over time, was an important anchor for me during the COVID lockdowns, as it felt like I was visiting again and again with Theland, Elaine, Nathalie and Karen. The words they shared continued to impact me and shifted my understanding of powwow as a place of teaching and learning. While the cumulative time we spent together could be measured in what was merely hours and pages of transcriptions, the processes of transmotion and (re)visiting resulted in over a year of engagement and meaning making together. While COVID interrupted my plan to visit with these dancers and their families over the course of the data collection process, words cannot express

how grateful I am for how the stories we shared were able to continue teaching me in unexpected and even surprising ways.

Chapter 4 Data Chapter

DIBAAJIMOWINAN - telling our stories

We will remember those places and our relationship to them through our active imagining of ourselves in place.

Goeman, 2008, p.32

The core aim of my research, to understand how teaching and learning occur within powwow as place, is rooted in stories. Goeman reminds us that stories are situated, that the language and words expressed don't merely reflect the actual events, but have the power to construct realities (Ibid). Powwow is a reality of vast significance to Anishinaabeg. I am reminded of a talk I attended by Haudenosaunee curator Rick Hill when I was much younger where he emphasized that 'art' is not conceptualized as separate from daily life (2005). I remember that time in my life, I was new to grass dancing, and was working on my beadwork within a meeting for the Harbourfront Centre. We were advising the planning of Planet Indigenous, an Indigenous international arts festival. As I sat there listening to a host of artists, experts, and curators, Tim Hill spoke and shared that there was not even a word for art within Indigenous languages. What was shared that day resonated strongly with me, and that resonance continues into my work today as I see all conceptualizations of 'dance' framed under the umbrella of an 'art' monolith within *zhaagnosh* worldviews, a visitors interpretation. The visitors' interpretation of Anishinaabeg ways of knowing and being have placed our dances and songs at the margins of valid 'art', powwow is 'cultural' dance, appreciated for its vitality, but siloed away from truer forms of 'art' practice. One need not look further than the funding *zhaagnosh* forms of dance, ballet, contemporary dance, receive to see what 'art' and 'dance' is valued in our territories. When powwow is framed by a *zhaagnosh* lens, a visitor's interpretation, than it will continue to

be marginalized, devalued, and misunderstood. If our understanding were to shift away from *zhaagnosh* framing of 'art' and towards *Anishinaabewin*, then powwows might be understood for their inherent value and generative qualities to Anishinaabeg.

I am compelled to reflect upon and address something shared by my adopted mother - Anishinaabe jingle dress dancer, educator, and author, Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane. When we spoke to each other I made it clear that I wanted to talk about the contemporary experience of powwow, that I wanted to focus on what powwow does for those within the event, the interstitial places that go unseen by those coming to see the spectacle of the event. In one of her stories Karen reminded me that powwows have not always been the place we see today. There was a time when it was the only safe place for our ancestors to "wear their Indian clothes." I am grateful for Karen's reminder, and she urged me to read her book, *Powwow: A Celebration Through Song and Dance*, to get a clearer picture of what she meant by that. I urge everyone to read her book as it provides an accessible entry point for understanding the importance and function of powwow for Anishinaabeg. While in many ways powwow is a recent cultural phenomenon, it carries a complex and complicated history. When Karen says it wasn't safe to wear our Indian clothes, she is referring to the era when Canada prohibited cultural practices - our dances, ceremonies, and songs - as an illegal activity from the late 1800s through to 1951. The only place we could be ourselves as dancers was hidden from the Indian Agent eyes, or by competing for spots in state sanctioned shows, the most famous being Buffalo Bill's Wild West show in the United States. Our dances were seen as threats to assimilationist efforts, something to be policed and discouraged by Indian Agents. I start with Karen's stark reminder of this history because powwow still remains a contentious space for many Anishinaabeg. To this day not everyone sees value in being on the powwow trail. During the era of the culture ban the state saw dancing as unproductive, as a barrier to 'work', and in many ways this Euro-centric belief persists with dancers being seen today as jobless, lazy, and

unmotivated. Avoiding their true responsibilities in life through frivolous dancing and traveling.

This idea couldn't be further from the truth. It is important that we take Goeman's words to heart - begin to construct our own realities and reshape the narratives around powwow - not only what it is, but why powwow as place is critical for Anishinaabeg.

"Safe travels hey? See you at the next one." I find myself reflecting more and more upon these two short phrases often exchanged when a powwow is over. Usually these two sentences are muttered between dancers, sometimes with a quick hand shake, a hug, or wave, as we leave the powwow grounds. We know we will see each other again on the trail. I am reminded of a teaching I was given from Alex Jacobs, Anishinaabe, who taught me that there is no word in Anishinaabemowin for goodbye. Instead we say 'I will see you again later' - *baamaapii giigiwaabmin miinwaa*. Even when someone has been called home by creator, we never truly say goodbye to that person, we know we will see them again when we too are called home to the spirit world. *Baamaapii giigiwaabmin miinwaa*, see you again later. I do not claim to 'know' the language, I am very much a language learner, however I recognize the importance of knowing the meaning behind the language. Sometimes it provides a context, a layer of understanding to an interaction within Anishinaabeg contexts. Contexts such as departing from a powwow. And so dancers often say, "see you at the next one", because that is customary, that is what our families have taught us to say, even within English vernacular we do not say goodbye. And still, there is something else that I believe dancers know about powwow that most do not. We've experienced a place that is of critical importance for us, and we know we'll be back again. We know we'll see the other dancers and their families again down the trail. The experiences within powwow as place, are something that I have long been observing, reflecting upon, and wanted to explore through the process of *nbwaachwewin* alongside other Anishinaabeg families. For within these lived experiences that take place in powwow as place there are processes of teaching and learning underway that go largely unnoticed to the casual

onlooker. Coulthard (2010) asserts that for Anishinaabeg, the notion of place provides a narrative of central importance, and that understanding our connections to a place can offer ways of “knowing, experiencing, and relating with the world” (p.79). In the following pages I hope to share how powwow as place is understood by dancers and their families through stories. These stories provide an opportunity to articulate why dancers know we’ll see each other again somewhere on the powwow trail, and how important powwow as place is for all Anishinaabe¹¹.

Story one - Nathalie

Nathalie Restoule is Anishinaabe from Dokis First Nation, Ontario. A jingle dress dancer, and mom of two young children, her son, Nova, is 4 years old and dances Woodland style, her toddler, Lennon, is 2 years old and hasn’t started dancing yet. I’ve known Nathalie for years on the powwow trail. Her beadwork and jingle dresses are always immaculate, with a focus on telling a story of relationship to place through her Anishinaabe florals. Beadwork is certainly a gift of hers, one that I’ve appreciated with each new powwow season as her children don new additions to their outfits. Before the pandemic when Deanne and I’s youngest daughter started to show an interest in dancing, I had approached Nathalie to bead a fancy shawl set for Biidaaban. The set has an orange base, with small growth flowers and a beautiful mint green leaf in the centre - a stunning portrayal of new life and energy fitting for a four year old and new dancer. I’m so grateful that she took the time to share her gift of storytelling through beadwork with our family. I am also grateful that she took time out of her home and work schedule to speak with me for the research project. After some catching up and visiting, remembering that

¹¹ To this point of the project I have utilized Anishinaabe as a term in reference to the confederacy of the Three Fires, Odawa, Ojibway, Pottawotami - Anishinaabe is the term for ourselves in the language. However, I also wish to use Anishinaabe in place of the zhaagnosh imposed terminologies (ie. Indigenous, Aboriginal, Native), and will be utilizing Anishinaabe interchangeably with ‘Indigenous’ from here forward. Looking to what I have been taught, Anishinaabe refers to the original peoples of Turtle Island.

we hadn't seen each other in over a year because of the pandemic, she spoke eloquently about her own memories as a child, how she supports her children to dance, and why she spends time beading and sewing for her kids.

I remember growing up... powwow was always in my life since I was a little girl. My mom always was working on our next outfit. It was almost a process. When she completed your outfit to last you for so many years, they were already starting your next outfit when you outgrow your other one. Like, my mom was always crafting and doing that. So, I've always kind of just seen that way of life around me... and I feel pretty fortunate to have that in my life. I guess my family is pretty artsy, so I think that's how it started – so, that gift of being artistic. So, it gave my mom always something to do. So, we were always watching her how to bead and create these different styles. So, my sister was traditional, and then I was shawl when I was smaller. So, a lot of the times with powwow, my mom would take me and my sister out of the community to have that experience. So, we would always travel, whether it was Sky Dome Pow Wow days or small traditional powwows within the area. But we never really had it in our community until later on, but I think, for me, to see all the colours and the dancers and all the movements really made me feel really happy and good. I still feel that way... I feel like I was pretty lucky. It was always there, but it was just that push and that reminder, "Don't lose that."

In sharing her story with me Nathalie started by examining her own childhood. She reflects back onto the times she observed her mom in the home, she noticed from a very young age the ongoing work, the labour that went into participating at powwows. Nathalie uses the word 'process' to identify the ongoing work her mom did to ensure her kids always had a regalia that fit. As a beadworker myself, and someone who has helped my partner sew outfits for our kids, I know the design, creation and assembly of just one outfit can take weeks to months at a time. They don't call it bead "work" for nothing; it's truly a laborious job to undertake and see through

to completion. Her mom was very wise to be starting the next beaded set or outfit for her kids before they outgrew the one they were currently using. The 'process' of creating is one that takes place year round for powwow families. The process of making something new, making time for repairs in between powwows, and the time to clean, store, and maintain outfits are all integral to the care of the individual and their regalia. Nathalie spoke about how important it was to watch her mom always crafting, working, and making in preparation for the trail. When they would travel to powwows, when she would see the dancers, the colours and movement, she knew that all of those families had put in time to be ready to be there in that place. Nathalie feels fortunate to have had her mother in her life, to show her this way of life, and it's something she values and expresses a desire to continue when saying "don't lose that." When I think about Nathalie today, a strong single mother, a beadworker, sewer, and cultural teacher in the community I come to understand and understand her gifts, and how she honed those skills of creation. As Nathalie continued to tell her story she finds herself in a new life-stage today as provider, as a mother, in the daily work of adulthood, and she has been putting her gifts of making into practice with her own children.

Well, for me, always watching Nova, he was always a storyteller. Even when he was young, he was actually telling me stories. It's so funny. I would always say, "...he's speaking the language." Because you know that baby talk, it just sounded like he was (speaking) Ojibwe. So, I'm always like, "Oh, my little storyteller." But us being Anishinaabe, that's our roots and where we come from so I'm Odawa, Ojibwe and Pottawotami. I wanted him to be able to share his story through that style of dance and be able to watch these young men and older men dance that style, of his people, his ancestry. So, it's really important too to uncover and be proud of your roots. And, dig deeper into that. What does it mean to be a woodland dancer? And, what comes with that? The responsibilities. As well as myself as a jingle dress dancer. Why am I a jingle

dress dancer? All of these things come in stages and not all at once. Just like when we build our regalia. And, I think that's part of the whole journey. As Nova grows older, he's only going to be turning four so I don't expect him to understand all of the history and teachings but it's just giving him that foundation to slowly ask questions or even if it's just, "What's this flower?" So, that's on his regalia so I could start those conversations with him and say, "That's medicine." So, I really try to translate different plants and medicines that are historical to us and that we use on his regalia as well and to be able to tell that story. Since he's only three, he probably asks questions like that. So, "Look at this flower." Or, "Why are they dancing?" Those are the questions that really start and are really the foundation.

Nathalie is very articulate in how she understands her children, describing her son Nova as a storyteller, even before he could communicate through any verbal language. Nathalie can clearly name her ties to the nations she belongs to - Odawa, Ojibwe and Pottawotami, as members of the 3 Fires Confederacy and the Anishinaabeg Nation. There is a clarity in seeing her role of helping Nova to "uncover and be proud" of who he is as Anishinaabe. She is there to answer his questions, she knows that the things he will ask probably won't be complex, but in many ways she is cultivating a space for curiosity and connection to his culture. She nourishes his curiosity, she gives him space to ask questions, and she answers them truthfully with what she feels is age-appropriate for what he needs to know. By putting medicines, florals, certain images on his outfit, Nathalie is creating space for him to begin knowing himself, his story, and as she puts it eloquently, "the foundation."

It kind of goes back to it doesn't matter if you have a fully beaded set or whatever, it's that aura that you bring as well that really brings meaning to all of those things. That's something I want to share with my son. He's still young but when I get him ready, I just say, "Wow, look at you. You're so beautiful." I really want to set that way of thinking for

him so that's just natural, that's just the way it is. So, I think as a mom, my role is to set him up for that way of thinking and to be able to be proud of those things. I think also getting dressed, and my mom was always like that too when getting you ready. It was almost like a story time. That's the perfect time for stories. "Oh yeah, see this piece. I'm going to let you wear this. This is who gave this to me. They gave this to me because whatever it is." It's almost that story time and that time to connect and make sense of everything. So, I think that's a perfect time to do that. And, like I said, I do that with Nova already, even if it's just, "Wow, you look so good today. You should be so proud of yourself." And, "See, mommy made this for you. Mommy worked really hard." I think that's how I'm starting to do that with my son. "Look at your moccasins. Oh no, your beads are coming off. Mommy has to fix that." Almost giving those teachings I guess in a way.

Nathalie shared a very intimate story that provides an example of the way she builds up the sense of self for her son in his regalia. She works hard to foster a positive experience with his outfit, answering all of his questions, giving him affirmations and words of encouragement to get dressed. Many powwow parents know that getting their children ready for a powwow can be difficult. They may not want to do their hair, they may not want to wear their outfit, but Nathalie has created a space for her son to connect to his outfit in a good way. Nathalie believes that her role as his mom is to create a space where he can be Anishinaabe, and continue to learn as Anishinaabe.

Story two - Elaine

Elaine Kicknosway is Nehiyaw, a mother, educator, social worker, and traditional dancer. There are many times over the years when we've traveled to Ottawa for the Solstice Powwow in June, one of our favourites, and we'd always make time to visit with Elaine and her family. It's not hard

to recognize her kindness and commitment to powwow over the years having watched her son Theland grow up on the trail. Now a young man, Theland is an accomplished grass dancer and singer (he's blown up on social media over the course of the pandemic too), he always dances hard, and I've really enjoyed watching him develop his own style over the years. Elaine is forthright in the telling of her story, she was a 60s scoop kid, a ward of the state raised by a Polish-Canadian family on the prairies. Elaine shares how difficult her life was, struggling with feeling disconnected from her Indigenous self, and knowing very little of her cultural identity as a Nehiyah woman. In her words she was 'raised out' of the community, so coming back as an adult was a very difficult step for her. She disclosed that she struggled with addictions in her early adult years and started seeking change. Elaine shared a story of going to a powwow many years ago where she met an Elder that helped her on her own *miikaans* (path).

I remember those powwows where there would be a talking circle in between, there would be a teaching time, there would be – if you wanted to speak to the elder one-on-one. As opposed to everybody on a pedestal, that are untouchable. I remember when I was in my mid-twenties, people were like, "Yeah, if you want to talk to the elder, they're over there. They're watching the powwow but they're over there." I remember, I went and saw Lillian... And, I remember I had such pressure, "Oh my God, I have to bring her tobacco. I didn't even know what that was." So much pressure. I just kind of threw it at her because I didn't know what to do. Nobody told me how to give tobacco to an Elder. And, she picked it up and she's like, "Okay, what do you want?" I was 26 and I was like, "Can you tell me who I am?" Who the hell am I because nobody told me." And, she was like, "Well, did they tell you your nation?" She automatically knew that I had been in care. Just even that... And, I was like, "Yeah, they told me I was Cree." "Did they say where you were from?" "Northern Saskatchewan." "What else did they tell you?" "Nothing." And, she was like, "Why don't you go over here? They're doing a little talking circle. You

don't have to say anything. You can just sit there." So, I did. And then, I went to another place. And, she said, "Why don't you go over there?" Different little places that you don't know that will save your life.

In this instance, Elaine's life was shifted by meeting Lillian - a kind, understanding, and attuned Elder - who already knew the story of Elaine. Lillian knew the questions to ask, and where Elaine needed to go in order to begin re-connecting to community. This first act of kindness grounded Elaine and altered her trajectory in life. It gave her a place to belong, permission to learn, to make mistakes, and to seek change.

While Elaine became more comfortable attending powwows, ceremonies, and other community events she increasingly saw them as a safe place, one she now describes as encouraging harm reduction. "This is what it's supposed to have always been like. Children and elders and drummers and everybody just being nice. Like not being hard." For Elaine it was also a sobriety space. She was taught not to drink or take any drugs while at powwows, that her spirit and mindset would be affected. At the same time she started going to Native AA groups and she started to learn about sweats, ceremony, and gained a new vocabulary for herself. She eventually got to the point of being sober for one year and started to attend a lodge. Elaine reflects back on the lack of self-esteem, lack of belonging, the detachment that can lead to feeling like we don't belong at powwow. She felt that way for many years and it wasn't until the kindness of another powwow family, and her in-laws, that she finally felt that she could participate. When I heard Elaine speak I came to appreciate how much work she had done to heal. She called the life she had built through powwow and ceremony her "healing world." For Elaine she spent a lot of time working to make her life better for herself and for her family. "I want to do it better. I want to have better experiences." She goes on to add,

I started really going back out west and asking a lot more Cree teachings within the powwow circle and a lot more protocol and the teachings within powwows so that I could understand the history of the grass, the history of the fancy. Because I always saw the fancy bustle when I was growing up. Fancy or the chicken, I always saw that. Women's traditional and the styles. The dance styles and how did I incorporate myself in there. So, it was really envisioning forward to make sure like when I became a parent, I wasn't going to raise him the way I was raised. And, I didn't know it was a him when I was thinking of my child but I didn't want him to be lost or disconnected.

As Elaine set out on her journey to reconnect, she too recognized a gap in her knowledge around powwow teachings, stories, and the dance styles in particular. She saw a good way of life for herself within the circle, and spent time building out her knowledge base to accommodate for her unborn child. As Elaine set out with this learning intent, she began to recognize and remember aspects of her childhood where Indigenous knowledge was already stored. As she attended more powwows the knowledge she carried was being awakened, her childhood experiences spurred her onward, and in many ways she was able to find the courage to seek out that change she needed. Elaine finished the telling of this story by reflecting on how far she had come in her journey. How she now uses her experience to ground her work as a mental health worker helping other individuals and families work at reconnecting to community.

***DIBAAJIMOWINAN* - ANALYSIS**

Through the process of *nbwaachwewin*, I am honoured to have been witness to all the *dibaajimowinan* shared with me within this project. While I too have shared stories within the *nbwaachwewin* sessions, I have opted to focus on what was brought forth by the other powwow families as a way of honouring and holding space for their voices before centering my own. I believe the stories from Elaine, Theland, Karen and Nathalie offer a milieu of theory and praxis

that is rooted within *Anishinaabewin*. Anishinaabeg theory comes from the lived experiences (Simpson, 2011) of the people. When we story our experiences outwards, externalize them through intention, thought and orality, we are making meaning and extricating knowledge together. I have immense gratitude for what was entrusted with me during my visits. As we now venture into the analysis of the stories, I ask for the patience and openness of the reader to engage with them for a second time. When an Elder or a grandparent shares a story time and time again, it would be culturally inappropriate to say “you’ve told that one before,” instead we must endeavor to put aside our ego and to listen again, to visit with those stories one more time. One of the most significant teachers in my life, Sylvia Maracle (Mohawk), would say that the hardest journey is to travel from the head to the heart (2010). That is why it is important to approach this second reading with respect for what has been shared, an openness to hearing story again, of (re)visiting, to try and open up the pathway from our cognitive ability and down towards our hearts. It is through our stories, it is through receptiveness to listen, that Anishinaabeg are able to continue their learning journeys.

Analysis: Story one - Nathalie

As I look again at Nathalie’s story, I am (re)visiting with her and her experiences. Within the initial visit we were constrained by the limitations of the online platform of course, and yet I am reminded of her energy that day. Her willingness to tell her story, to share what her experiences are and some of her teachings in a kind and generous way. I remember fumbling with my words, trying to explain what the project was about, and as I continued to speak I shared a story about my own kids dancing at powwows. The story about Niimin and her baby blanket. And once that story was shared the awkwardness of the platform was gone, we were able to visit again, and Nathalie knew what to say without any further prompting for the duration of our 45 minutes together.

I remember growing up... powwow was always in my life since I was a little girl. My mom always was working on our next outfit. It was almost a process. When she completed your outfit to last you for so many years, they were already starting your next outfit when you outgrow your other one. Like, my mom was always crafting and doing that. So, I've always kind of just seen that way of life around me...

Yeah, well, like I said, it's always kind of been around, and I feel pretty fortunate to have that in my life. I guess my family is pretty artsy, so I think that's how it started – so, that gift of being artistic. So, it gave my mom always something to do. So, we were always watching her how to bead and create these different styles. So, my sister was traditional, and then I was shawl when I was smaller...

So, a lot of the times with powwow, my mom would take me and my sister out of the community to have that experience. So, we would always travel, whether it was Sky Dome Pow Wow days or small traditional powwows within the area. But we never really had it in our community until later on, but I think, for me, to see all the colours and the dancers and all the movements really made me feel really happy and good. I still feel that way... I feel like I was pretty lucky. It was always there, but it was just that push and that reminder, "Don't lose that."

Within her story about childhood, Nathalie shares key details about a foundation of teaching and learning she was provided from an early age. When I recall the way Nathalie told her story, I could tell that her childhood was rooted in important memories of her mom's role in building a life on the powwow trail. Cultural continuity across generations, intergenerational cultural continuity, is what I heard and continued to learn about from listening to Nathalie in the sharing of her story. The ability to travel across temporal spaces, linkages between the work of her mother, her own work making regalia, and the impacts it has on Nova, is powerful medicine. I

can tell that Nathalie has already committed to this way of life on the trail, it was modelled in a good way for her, and she has built upon that work. As I listened to Nathalie share her story, and as I continue to reflect, it is the life stage teachings which also come to the fore of my mind. The teachings I have had the privilege of learning about discuss the importance of the parent/child relationship as central to the wellbeing of all Indigenous communities. When we think about how important that relationship is, I was told that within *Anishinaabewin* conceptualizations of what our communities should look like, the adult and the child sit across from each other at the fire. They sit across from each other because they are codependent on each other, the child relies on the adult to provide and protect for them throughout their development (Maracle, 2012). Of course in the simplest sense, parents and caregivers provide a home for the child, they provide nourishment, and a healthy attachment for the child to grow and develop. The adult is also responsible for providing the first place of teaching and learning, be that in the home, or elsewhere. Within Anishinaabe life stage teachings the timeframe of adulthood is also described as a time of doing (John Rice, Anishinaabe). Anyone who has been around and/or raised children knows that there is always something that needs doing when you have a busy home with little bodies running around. The labour and tireless effort of being a parent that provides the basic physical needs of a child is certainly work enough, however for Anishinaabeg parents there are additional considerations for the child that are also being addressed.

In Nathalie's story we see evidence of the ways in which her mother is taking up her roles and responsibilities as a caregiver for her children. Nathalie recalls the amount of effort her mom made to have regalia that fit her growth spurts and was ready for powwows. Her mom demonstrates the act of doing, in this case the sewing, beading, and creating of regalia for her children. Of course, there are no malls to go to when your kids feet grow out of their moccasins, there are no stores to pickup a new set of beaded hairties - so you either have to order these

from another beadworker, or you buy the supplies and make them yourselves. This notion of doing, having work to do, is something that aligns strongly with Leanne Simpson's conceptualization of Anishinaabeg as 'makers' (2017). That our ancestors were always engaged with processes of making, creating, items for not only their daily survival, but for their cultural practices. When Nathalie talks about the way making outfits "gave my mom always something to do," this is an understated but very important aspect of being a powwow family. The role of making is something that resonates strongly with me as a dancer, a beadworker, and as Anishinaabe. Simpson asserts that when we are making items for our daily life - a regalia or outfit for example - that we are connecting to our original instructions, living a life akin to our ancestors, and that being engaged in acts of creation are also radical acts of cultural resurgence shifting our focus away from consumption and towards creating. My Uncle John told me that when we walk the path put out for us by creator - *miikaans* - we are living a good life, *bimaadsiwin*.¹² As Nathalie's mom is sewing, beading, and taking her kids to powwows, she is not only walking her own *miikaans* through doing, she is providing a path for her own children to follow. That path is cultural continuity in action and it is rooted within Anishinaabewin, contributing to our collective cultural resurgence (Simpson 2011). For Nathalie she felt an intimate connection to her mother and the work she did in the home, which in turn fostered a strong foundation that would serve her later in her own life. Nathalie is provided with regalia, not just a handed down regalia, but one custom made by her mother. Nathalie is also taken to powwows across Anishinaabeg territory, as evidenced by her memories of smaller local gatherings and larger contest powwows like the one at Skydome - Toronto - in the early 2000s. For powwow families, the role we take on during the doing life stage as providers and makers is a critical component that builds out a foundation for our children to learn from and utilize later in

¹² John's Rice's spelling of "a good life"

life. Nathalie continues her story by focusing on her own role as mother to her two children, Nova and Lennon.

Well, for me, always watching Nova, he was always a storyteller. Even when he was young, he was actually telling me stories. It's so funny. I would always say, "...he's speaking the language." Because you know that baby talk, it just sounded like he was (speaking) Ojibwe. So, I always like, "Oh, my little storyteller." But us being Anishinaabe, that's our roots and where we come from so I'm Odawa, Ojibwe and Pottawotami. I wanted him to be able to share his story through that style of dance and be able to watch these young men and older men dance that style, of his people, his ancestry. So, it's really important too to uncover and be proud of your roots. And, dig deeper into that. What does it mean to be a woodland dancer? And, what comes with that? The responsibilities. As well as myself as a jingle dress dancer. Why am I a jingle dress dancer? All of these things come in stages and not all at once. Just like when we build our regalia. And, I think that's part of the whole journey. As Nova grows older, he's only going to be turning four so I don't expect him to understand all of the history and teachings but it's just giving him that foundation to slowly ask questions or even if it's just, "What's this flower?" So, that's on his regalia so I could start those conversations with him and say, "That's medicine." So, I really try to translate different plants and medicines that are historical to us and that we use on his regalia as well and to be able to tell that story. Since he's only three, he probably asks questions like that. So, "Look at this flower." Or, "Why are they dancing?" Those are the questions that really start and are really the foundation.

Within her *dibaajimowinan* Nathalie moved from recollections of her own childhood to sharing experiences as a mother of her own children. Her stories provide key understandings of not only the practice of being a powwow family, but also the ideas and teachings underpinning the why,

what and how teaching and learning occurs in relation to children. When Nathalie describes Nova as a storyteller, the way he speaks, moves, and communicates even non-verbally, I am reminded again of the importance of Anishinaabe life stage teachings. Anishinaabeg say that children choose their parents. When that little spirit sits with creator in the spirit world, they see the path ahead of them and choose the landing spot for their life to begin. I have also learned from Sylvia Maracle (2012) that we come into this world carrying specific things with us from the spirit world. It's a much larger teaching, but what is pertinent to Nathalie's story is the notion that all children come to this physical realm carrying a specific gift. One aspect of this teaching is that children are gifts unto themselves, we belong to them as parents, they teach us through our roles and responsibilities. We bundle those little gifts up, wrap them in blankets, we sing to them, rock them to sleep, feed and nourish them, we provide. Those bundles bring joy and love into our homes. John Rice and Sylvia Maracle call this time in our lives the good life. This time of life is hard work for certain, but it is a good life for both the adult and the child. The child is the gift, but so too does the child carry gifts with them. It is the responsibility of the caregiver, the adult, to observe, to listen, to know that part of their work is identifying what these gifts might be. For the gifts the child carry are how they will come to know themselves, it will illuminate aspects of their *miikaans* as Anishinaabeg, and in turn their gifts will contribute to the benefit of their community. When I hear Nathalie talk about her son as a storyteller, I am hearing an expression and articulation of Anishinaabe life stage teachings. Nathalie recognizes that part of her role as mother, parent, caregiver, is to watch, listen, and observe the ways in which Nova expresses himself and interacts with the world around him. Our children come from spirit, they are spirits, and they carry gifts. When we utilize this language, and articulate those words we come to see our responsibility as a sacred aspect of our being as Anishinaabeg. Cajete (2017) writes about the way in which children are positioned within Anishinaabe contexts, "...all children were considered special, sacred gifts from the creator. They were seen to have a special quality all their own which was respected and prized by the community. They were considered to have a

direct connection to special spirits in nature” (p.113). These gifts may not be readily apparent, and it is our responsibility as the adult, the provider, the nurturer, to put our children into places where those may emerge.

Within powwows, traditional dancers are often referred to as the storytellers. Within the duration of the song those dancers recount through movement and dance the work that they do for the community, family, and themselves. If you watch closely you’ll notice some dancers with their head down observing the ground, they are tracking game while hunting. You may see a dancer shoot a bow within the song, recounting a rite of passage. Some dancers carry medicine bags as they dance, demonstrating a relationship to medicines. Of course every dancer has different reasons for why they dance and what their story tells, but the movement carries purpose and intent. For Nathalie one of Nova’s gifts became apparent early on, when he learned to walk at a powwow, and that same weekend he danced in the arbor with those wobbly steps. Nathalie recognized that Nova was a dancer, and she was able to draw upon her own knowledge, skills, and experiences to begin supporting him on that journey of becoming a traditional dancer, a Woodland dancer. Nathalie observed her son had a gift of storytelling, not only through his verbal capabilities, but his movement to the drum as well. Cajete positions story as a central structure in the process of what he calls ‘Indigenous education’ (p.114). Within *Anishinaabewin*, storying can be exercised not only through telling of narratives through orality, but also through enacting, singing, creating, and dancing. Cajete calls these additional movement based contexts the creative foundation for Indigenous education. The core understanding of this role that caregivers carry, the role of not only providing and doing, but also being attuned to the gifts of their child, are what guide the actions of the family moving forward. As I heard Nathalie talk she began to explain what her next steps would be within the education of Nova at powwows. She first and foremost had to create an outfit for him, beading, sewing, doing the work of providing for him. She would have to teach him, or connect him to other dancers about the story

of that dance. She would now bring him to more powwows to experience further and explore his gift. She knows he will have more questions, and she will work to build out that repertoire over time, to build out his learning about that dance style and what having a regalia entails. Nathalie carried on with her story by sharing how important it is that Nova see himself within that outfit, and what she hopes it does for him.

It kind of goes back to it doesn't matter if you have a fully beaded set or whatever, it's that aura that you bring as well that really brings meaning to all of those things. That's something I want to share with my son. He's still young but when I get him ready, I just say, "Wow, look at you. You're so beautiful." I really want to set that way of thinking for him so that's just natural, that's just the way it is. So, I think as a mom, my role is to set him up for that way of thinking and to be able to be proud of those things. I think also getting dressed, and my mom was always like that too when getting you ready. It was almost like a story time. That's the perfect time for stories. "Oh yeah, see this piece. I'm going to let you wear this. This is who gave this to me. They gave this to me because whatever it is." It's almost that story time and that time to connect and make sense of everything. So, I think that's a perfect time to do that. And, like I said, I do that with Nova already, even if it's just, "Wow, you look so good today. You should be so proud of yourself." And, "See, mommy made this for you. Mommy worked really hard." I think that's how I'm starting to do that with my son. "Look at your moccasins. Oh no, your beads are coming off. Mommy has to fix that." Almost giving those teachings I guess in a way.

Nathalie is clear in her position that a powwow dancer does not require a regalia to dance, but at the same time provides a window into what an outfit can provide for her children. As Nathalie shared this part of her story I found myself reflecting on how important regalia can be as a device for teaching and learning. When her and Nova are getting dressed for Grand Entry, it

opens up possibilities for dialogue, for stories to be shared, and perhaps most important, for Nova to continue learning about his story - his *dibaajimowinan*. One of the ways in which she teaches Nova is through forging a relationship with his outfit. While she is the one who sets out the intention to create the outfit, beading the florals that ground him to his Anishinaabe teachings, she is also using that creative form to build out stories that Nova can see himself within. He sees the florals on his outfit and they contribute to an understanding of himself in relation to other aspects of creation. He is beginning the process of seeing himself as an interconnected human being, with connections to his family, to the land, to medicines, to song and dance. He is learning as Anishinaabe always have. Each item of his outfit carries a story, whether it's made by his mother, handed down through his family, gifted to him by another dancer, they all have significance and contribute to the story of himself. Nathalie reinforces Nova's story by sharing little teachings and *dibaajimowinan* as she gets him dressed for powwows. This time together provides an intimate relationship between mother and son, adult and child, that nourishes both parties. Nathalie is fulfilling her role as provider and maker, and Nova is being raised up in what my teachers would call the good life. Nathalie spends time building up a positive relationship to powwow, traveling to new places, calling her son beautiful, making regalia so he feels as shiny as possible. The process of making provides Nathalie with a method to fulfill her role as caregiver, to provide for her children, and to nurture his growth as a storyteller and dancer. Cajete (2017) reminds us that, "listening and thinking about stories is the first foundation of Indigenous education" (p.114). Within Nathalie's *dibaajimowinan* we learn there is a layered complexity to the ways stories are taken up and used to teach within Anishinaabeg pedagogy. Whatever the method of story employed, the goal is always the same, to nourish his gifts, and to provide "those teachings." Nathalie goes on to say how important it is for her family to be a part of the circle, "(it's) all part of the journey of finding your purpose or your identity, all that sort of stuff, right, that just make you who you are." Nova knows that he is

Anishinaabe, he sees it on his outfit, he has danced it at the powwow, and over time he will continue to grow beyond that foundation provided by his family. *Debwewin* - this is truth.

Analysis: Story two - Elaine

As I (re)visit Elaine's story, listening again to her *dibaajimowinan*, I find myself in awe and amazement of the bravery and determination she has exhibited while walking her *miikaans*. On the surface Elaine's story appears to expound the importance of access to culture, of connecting to community members, a narrative of healing and overcoming historical trauma both experienced first hand and inherited intergenerationally. I believe all of these interpretations to be true in the sense that Elaine was "seeking change" and in many regards found that change. She was able to find respite from colonial-based trauma, and she was able to start to reconnect to her Nehiyaw (Cree) self. Elaine's right to cultural continuity had been disrupted by the state, her cultural inheritance had been impacted, and it was within relationality, within her own self, that she was able to reclaim her continuity. By connecting with an Elder, she was able to begin filling in the gaps of her teachings, and she was able to find a place to be Nehiyaw within the powwow circle. All of these are important aspects of her story which I provide further explanation of below, but I also would argue that there are additional aspects of her story that are being overlooked within these narratives. The 'healing' process often is presented as a linear narrative, trauma occurs and is overcome through some modality that enables the person to find a healthier way of life. I believe the healing narrative oversimplifies the laborious and multifaceted work Anishinaabe undertake while walking their *miikaans*. The healing narrative not only absolves responsibility of the state and its role in perpetuating colonial-based interjections of harm, but it continues to de-emphasize the role land and place have in contributing to the wellbeing of Anishinaabeg. I will be looking to Karyn Recollet's conceptualization of 'land-ing' - the importance of "space for a self-reflective process of coming into deep personal ethical relationships with domains of land, water, sky, and spirit" (2019) - to

assist in my analysis of Elaine's *dibaajimowinan*. I believe examining her story using land-ing as an analytical lens can elicit how land and place are often removed within 'healing' narratives, and how this serves a colonial agenda at the expense of the core needs and desires of Anishinaabeg. Here is Elaine's story again:

I remember those powwows where there would be a talking circle in between, there would be a teaching time, there would be – if you wanted to speak to the Elder one-on-one. As opposed to everybody on a pedestal, that are untouchable. I remember when I was in my mid-twenties, people were like, "Yeah, if you want to talk to the elder, they're over there. They're watching the powwow but they're over there." I remember, I went and saw Lillian... And, I remember I had such pressure, "Oh my God, I have to bring her tobacco. I didn't even know what that was." So much pressure. I just kind of threw it at her because I didn't know what to do. Nobody told me how to give tobacco to an Elder. And, she picked it up and she's like, "Okay, what do you want?" I was 26 and I was like, "Can you tell me who I am?" Who the hell am I because nobody told me." And, she was like, "Well, did they tell you your nation?" She automatically knew that I had been in care. Just even that... And, I was like, "Yeah, they told me I was Cree." "Did they say where you were from?" "Northern Saskatchewan." "What else did they tell you?" "Nothing." And, she was like, "Why don't you go over here? They're doing a little talking circle. You don't have to say anything. You can just sit there." So, I did. And then, I went to another place. And, she said, "Why don't you go over there?" Different little places that you don't know that will save your life.

Elaine was in her late 20s when she found herself reaching out to Lillian at the powwow. I will reflect again upon the importance of the life stage teachings in relation to Elaine's story. I remember when John Rice shared with me how important the youth life stage is, he described it as the time on our *miikaans* where we are wondering and wandering. In many ways we are

trying to figure out our place in the world, we may travel, leave home for the first time, and during that time we reflect on who we are within creation. Even though she was by chronological age considered an adult, the age of majority, within *Anishinaabewin* she is within the youth life stage. When I heard Elaine's story I could identify with how uneasy she was attending the powwow, the amount of intimidation and anxiety that was present, what she described as 'pressure.' I heard some of the anxiousness that arises during the wondering/wandering years of life. I can attest to the pressure we put on ourselves to get 'it' right, when I started dancing in my early 20s, I too was nervous and unsure about how to approach folks within Anishinaabe and powwow community. Even now as I read the transcript of the story, I can visualize the interaction, I can feel the anxious energy. As Elaine said, she didn't even know how to offer tobacco to the Elder. And yet, she found a way to muster up the bravery to approach Lillian at the powwow. For those who are familiar with the 7 Grandfather teachings, they are a series of teachings that is associated with the life stages. Wisdom, love, respect, courage, honesty, humility and truth, span the life for Anishinaabeg, and act as guiding principles that inform our journey from child through to Elder. It was my sister, Maria Hupfield, who reminded me that courage is the teaching often talked about at the youth life stage (2022). It took a great deal of courage for Elaine to articulate what she wanted. In many ways she was exactly where she needed to be, and she did the right thing by offering that *semaa* (tobacco), even if it was tossed at Lillian. Lillian is an expert at teaching from a place of kindness, care, and response. The 'tobacco toss' was a pivotal moment for Elaine when she was feeling out of control, and the ability and awareness of Lillian to respond, to empower Elaine by asking her to start with what she does know - "did they tell you anything?" Was a life saving action. Right away Lillian is almost saying, 'I know it isn't your fault they didn't tell you, guide you', she validates Elaine's experience, responds to Elaine's desire to learn, all in one fell swoop. The encounter between Elaine and Lillian is a powerful example of Indigenous pedagogy in action.

Desire is a strong motivator within the learning process as exemplified by Elaine's *dibaajimowinan*. I believe that desire is something that Anishinaabeg have been conditioned to put aside within the monocultural society we find ourselves in today. We have been conditioned to believe that we do not deserve a good life, that the way in which we feel, live, and operate, is our lot in life. How many times have I heard folks mutter, 'it is what it is,' when confronted with difficult circumstances. The work of Karyn Recollet (2019) has provided me space to rethink these notions, that there is a space and place where Indigenous desire can exist. It takes a lot of wondering about what that desire might be, and that we may wander in our lives and find difficulty, but with courage we can seek what we desire and what we need as Anishinaabeg. Recollet reminds me in her writing that Indigenous desire should not be confused with consumptive desire. That there is something beyond tangible, physical wants, that motivate our actions. I believe what Elaine desired at the onset was to reconnect to her community, to other Nehiyaw, again that notion of cultural continuity. Burnette et al (2020) write about the ways in which cultural identity is linked to a sense of belonging, shared values, and engagement with cultural traditions - they describe the process as enculturation (p.3). I am reminded that Elaine is a 60s scoop child, raised outside of her Nehiyaw community and familial contexts. While Elaine did grow up in a space that provided food, shelter, stability, and benevolent adults, there were things her adopted Polish-Canadian family could not provide. The enculturation Elaine had received through her upbringing was informed by *zhaagnoshwin*¹³, an enculturation that fails to provide her with a core understanding of her Nehiyaw self and role within the community.

For Elaine the stakes were high as she approached Lillian, palms sweaty with tobacco in hand, would the Elder accept her? Did she belong? Would she do something to offend? These feelings and thoughts are all symptoms of an overarching discourse within our communities. Elaine's story is relatable for many Anishinaabeg, as many of us have been disconnected in

¹³ A non-Indigenous way of life, theory/praxis

some way shape or form from who we are and how we fit into our communities. In her recent book, *Intimate Integration : A History of the Sixties Scoop and the Colonization of Indigenous Kinship*, Allyson Stevenson summarily writes about the methods under which Anishinaabe kinship systems have been under assault by the Canadian state.

Rather than a source of support and strength, white social scientists and social workers viewed the extended family system as sources of retrogression and impediments to integration. The gradual weaning of Indigenous people from kinship obligations, and replacing the supports provided by family with the rationalized and regularized services provided by the state in the form of social welfare, education, child-rearing advice, day care, and public health services were idealized as the solution to poverty and separation that contributed to the marginalized place of Canada's First Nations.

(Stevenson, 2021, p.211)

Stevenson helps to articulate the goals of the Canadian state to impose a monocultural (Tam et al, 2017) definition of family and community unto Anishinaabeg. Nuclear family structures with gender binary parental roles - male/female - were the only model acceptable within this monocultural construct. *Kookums* (grandmothers) were deemed too old to raise young kids, Aunties were not the biological parents, single parent families were also undesirable and heavily monitored. With the imposition of this foreign family construct Elaine was left disconnected, and her cultural inheritance (Maracle, 2016) as Nehiyaw was disrupted. Disruption, whether through the removal of children from families via residential schools, through Children's Aid Services, or the other forms noted above by Stevenson, have all resulted in the disconnection of individuals from their kinship systems (extended family, community, clans). The imposition of monoculturalism has created painful environments - externally and internally (Brendtro, 2019) - for Anishinaabeg. The notion of being connected to family, the importance of that connection to

other family members, is one that repeatedly comes up in my teachings as well as the literature. Being able to retrace our stories, to position ourselves, and make meaning of who we are is described by Brokenleg as an honoured kinship bond (Brokenleg et al, 1991), relationships manufactured for persons to feel included in a great ring of relatives. Being honoured, feeling included, these are notions that Anishinaabeg require within their development. Within Elaine's *dibaajimowinan*, she struggled to find a place where she felt included as Nehiyaw, her foster family brought her to powwows and community events, but she was a bystander and struggled to feel included or connected. Brokenleg went on to develop an oft-cited model that addresses trauma and resiliency within Indigenous contexts, the Circle of Courage, wherein he asserts that belonging is one of the core humanistic needs that contributes to self esteem, to an understanding of a wholistic self. When engaging with Elaine's *dibaajimowinan* I hear her desire to not only find belonging for herself, but for her family moving forward.

I started really going back out West and asking a lot more Cree (Nehiyaw) teachings within the powwow circle and a lot more protocol and the teachings within powwows so that I could understand the history of the grass, the history of the fancy. Because I always saw the fancy bustle when I was growing up. Fancy or the chicken, I always saw that. Women's traditional and the styles. The dance styles and how did I incorporate myself in there. So, it was really envisioning forward to make sure like when I became a parent, I wasn't going to raise him the way I was raised. And, I didn't know it was a him when I was thinking of my child but I didn't want him to be lost or disconnected.

Elaine knew that for herself, and for her aspirations of being a mother in the future, that travelling back to her home territory and re-learning her teachings was crucial. As she came to understand her place, she began to enter into the next life stage, that of a young adult. This life stage is described as the time during our *miikaans* when we 'get ready'. The notion of getting ready can mean a vast array of things depending on the individual, but I believe that Elaine

recognized that for herself, getting ready meant travelling home, learning about powwow, connecting the fragments of knowledge she did have into a larger whole. All of this learning was set into motion with a desire in mind, that of starting her own family, and being prepared to provide for her yet unborn children. Cajete outlines that it is through an in-depth exploration of our personal and “cultural” origins that we can begin articulating our “connections” (2017, p.117). For Anishinaabeg contexts, these connections are articulated through our relations, our family members, extended family, our clans, community, and nation. The notion of belonging within this framework is an important one, as it describes the ways in which we are connected not only to family but inwards to our own self. The relationship to self is pivotal, and as Elaine moved through her life stages - at an accelerated pace mind you - she could then and only then be able to focus on her connections to community. It is through the living relationships to community where an individual comes to see themselves as an interdependent human being, and in turn to be recognized as one of the “people.” Collectivism is a key principle within *Anishinaabewin*. Our teachings speak a great deal about our roles and responsibilities, not only for ourselves, but how we pick up those responsibilities in relation to the collective. Elaine’s story is an important one because it demonstrates how an adult can be the age of majority, chronologically aged as an adult, but that they may still need time to walk their *miikaans* as Anishinaabe in order to learn their roles and responsibilities. While this process of walking on our *miikaans* can lead to a profound transformation of self, Cajete asserts that the process of these transformations brings anything but peace of mind, tranquility or harmonious adaptation. In many ways it puts our understanding of self into crisis, we are unsettled in our identity, and our foundations we had once known start to crack. These moments of (un)knowing are critical for Anishinaabeg in the learning process. Being unmoored from previous ways of knowing and being requires courage. Our life stage teachings already tell us that getting ready for change takes courage. This time of flux is essential nonetheless, as it allows for the creation of a new understanding, a consciousness informed by Anishinaabewin, which Cajete believes can lead to

harmony if only for a short time. Elaine was feeling these tensions, the ways in which she had understood the world and its foundations were overly influenced by the monocultural *zhaagnoshwin* framework. While her journey started with disruption from her *miikaans*, she had experienced the painful environments of colonial institutions, she was able to change that path when she offered that tobacco at a powwow. In this way I believe powwow holds potential as a restorative place (Brendtro, 2019) for Anishinaabe. When I think of Elaine's story I recognize that the motivations for why people come to powwow - why they seek to reconnect with community - are often coming from a perceived place of 'lack' or 'loss' of cultural practices. I challenge the healing narrative as one being rooted in deficit thinking, that oversimplifies and misnamed what Anishinaabeg are actually seeking. It is not 'healing' that folks are looking for when they come to powwow, it is seeking their *miikaans*, their path in life that creator promised them in the spirit world. I strongly believe that the 'healing' narrative has actually undermined and depoliticized another very important desire for Anishinaabeg which I will cover in my next chapter.

Concluding thoughts

Nbwaachwewin provided space for the sharing of stories, as Cajete reminded me, it is our *dibaaajimowinan* that provide a foundation for Indigenous education. Nathalie Restoule and Elaine Kicknosway provided sacred stories that help understand how *Anishinaabewin* offers teachings that inform our roles and responsibilities while walking our *miikaans*. Our *miikaans* is a journey of life in the broadest sense, but walking on a path that is illuminated by *Anishinaabewin* is what informs the process of teaching and learning at powwows. Through observation of her own home life Nathalie came to understand her role as an adult, a parent to her children. She is in the life stage of doing. Her role is to provide a foundation for her children - Nova and Lennon - to come to know themselves as Anishinaabe. She must also observe, listen

to and watch her children in order to identify the gifts which they carry from the spirit world. Not every child will be a dancer at the powwow, they may be called to other places in our nation, but when Natalie provides them with the opportunity to explore and see powwow as place she is fulfilling a critical responsibility as an adult walking their miikaans. When Nova asks questions, Nathalie answers, and where she doesn't know the stories or teachings, she connects Nova outwards to other dancers who can help him learn. It is a collective shared responsibility rooted in our kin-ship systems. Over time Nova sees himself as interconnected, part of the larger community and at a very young age he begins naming his relations, “(o)h, *that's my uncle or that's my auntie. That's my cousin.*” This is proof that Nathalie is walking her miikaans, and by doing so she is helping Nova walk and begin his life long learning as Anishinaabe. The story teaches all of us that teaching and learning from an Anishinaabe worldview is about fostering belonging and relationship, it's about recognizing someone's life path, their gifts, and then cultivating their abilities and capacities to develop.

Elaine was raised in a very different context than Nathalie, but this did not stop her from finding her path to cultural continuity and making connections. Elaine's miikaan called on her to travel. She had to leave her foster home, she wandered and wondered for many years until she was able to find Lillian. When she started to learn what her responsibilities were as an adult, she traveled back home to Saskatchewan, she revisited her past to connect to her present. There is a word in Anishinaabemowin for this concept, it is the word for sunrise, *biidaaban*. *Biidaaban* is the new day, dawn, when the previous day, present time, and the future are all connected (White. 2016). *Biidaaban* is a story and teaching. *Biidaaban* is transmotion (Blaeser, 2012), it allows us to travel in the slipstream (Recollet, 2019) between temporal and spatial planes, past, present and future. The type of traveling Elaine did was sacred and rooted in Anishinaabemowin. Within her journey back to her *miikaans* she utilized all her resources, her *dibaajimowinan*, which carried her back to the memories and stories of her childhood where she

had seen and knew powwow as place. An Anishinaabeg education is best understood with an understanding of Anishinaabe worldview, it's about belonging and relationship, it's about recognizing and responding to one's gifts, and cultivating the capacities of the learner. Even though she came to walk her *miikaans* later in life, Elaine's story demonstrates how the learning process, how an Anishinaabeg pedagogy might unfold for those who have been severed from their cultural continuity pathways. Cajete writes about the process of educating and enlivening the inner self as the life-centred imperative of Indigenous education, embodied in metaphor "seeking life" for "life's sake" (2016 p.369). Elaine connects that place of being from her past and actions it into the present - seeking, desiring change in her life - which in turn creates a new vision of a future otherwise seeming impossible. Recollet calls this slipstream thinking (2019), the ability to resist settler-colonial narratives of Indigenous disappearance and erasure while creating space for Indigenous geographies - producing an Indigenous futurity. I believe Elaine's *dibaajimowinan* can help lay a pathway others may learn from, to slipstream between past, present, and future and find their own *miikaans*.

When Anishinaabe share *dibaajimowinan* they are fostering Anishinaabeg futurities. An Indigenous futurity is something that may have seemed impossible, when we were restricted to our 'Indian clothes' on 'Indian days', when our movement was restricted to the reservation, when our families were and continue to be severed. Elaine and Recollet help me see how an Anishinaabeg futurity questions and complicates the inevitability of settler futurity and the associated narratives contained therein. I for one am fatigued by the narratives of harm and trauma, I desire for a futurity that is rooted in our teachings, in kindness, honesty, sharing and strength. In our life stage teachings. Where children learn to dance and share their gifts in a nurturing context. An Anishinaabeg futurity is one where we mustn't need to be 'resilient', or rely on the 'survivance' of ourselves and our ancestors, but to simply live *Anishinaabewin* for 'life's sake'. I believe the healing narrative is rooted in a settler futurity, the story of our trauma, hurt,

and pain, which has by and large been adopted by Anishinaabeg. I often hear Anishinaabeg refer to their 'healing journey', and powwows are often seen as playing a role in that journey. What I believe the healing journey has supplanted however, is the process of Anishinaabeg pedagogy, that we as Anishinaabe can find 'place', walk our *miikaans*, and become connected once again through reciprocal relationships. Healing is an important process of our journey as Anishinaabeg, however I believe it fails to describe the scope of all the processes of learning, unlearning, and (re)learning that occur in our relational pathways. In this way I choose not to use the terminology of 'healing' in the context of powwow, as it is an oversimplification of the labour being done within our community. It is a narrative that I believe aids and further embeds settler futurity stories of trauma and dislocation. We remain victims, lose our agency within this narrative, and I fear that when we are finally 'healed' the colonial state is exonerated. Powwows can help us move through difficult times, we find care at powwow as place, but framing powwows as a place of 'healing' alone is a major disservice to the myriad ways in which powwow as place nurtures Anishinaabeg. Nathalie and Elaine's stories have taught me that powwow can be a place for us to find our pedagogies again, to be connected to our cultural continuity, our *miikaans*, and most importantly to know ourselves. Powwow as place is a recuperation for many, it is (re)learning how to live as Anishinaabeg collectively. Powwow as place is also about picking up our responsibilities, coming to know our roles and ways in which we contribute to the intergenerational cultural continuity of our communities. When we fulfill our responsibilities, when we walk our *miikaans*, we create a temporal and spatial place, one of which is powwow, that allows teaching and learning to continue intergenerationally.

Chapter 5

DIBAAJIMOWINAN - telling our stories

The previous chapter delved into stories, *dibaajimowinan*, that taught me more about the importance of kin-making and relationality. Elaine and Nathalie's stories are exemplars for what Neal McLeod refers to in Nehiyaw as *wáhkôhtowin* (kinship) - a collective narrative memory that informs important relationships amongst human beings (Stevenson, 2021). The ways in which powwow continues to be taught across generations for Anishinaabeg is through specific relationships which inform our roles and responsibilities. The mechanisms of *wáhkôhtowin*, our kinship systems, are the foundation for teaching and learning to occur. The stories of the previous chapter also demonstrated the importance of powwow as place, wherein Anishinaabeg create opportunities for the radical resurgence of culture through these practices of kin-making. We are rebuilding our families and kinship at the powwow - choosing or being chosen as mothers, fathers, caregivers, cousins, 2-spirit relatives - all of which contribute to the collective narrative and process of relationality. Within this chapter, I will be sharing excerpts of *dibaajimowinan* which came from the second round of *nbwaachwewin* sessions. Within the first round of visiting the stories centred around how Elaine and Natalie came to be at powwow, and what they saw their role as within that space. The second round of visits saw a fundamental shift away from how they came to be at powwow and towards what they 'get' from attending powwows, which I believe helps understand why dancers return weekend after weekend. As the visiting continued, the stories began to flow more easily, and new relations were brought into the project. Elaine's son Theland joined for the visit, and Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane spent time reflecting with her family in between visits. I will endeavor to let their *dibaajimowinan* speak for

themselves as much as possible, but found that as they spoke about their experiences, we were able to build off the contextualizing of how they came to powwow. Akin to the previous chapter, I will be providing an overview of the visit with excerpts of their stories, followed by a (re)visiting of their *dibaajimowinan* with my own analysis. This chapter builds upon the foundations of powwow as place, and the ways Theland, Elaine and Karen shared their understanding of *miikaans*, how they contribute to processes of kin-making, and the embodied experience of dancing, were powerful narratives for which I am beyond grateful. Miigwech, for trusting me with your stories.

Story three - Theland

Animkii Wajiw is referred to as ‘the mountain’ in Thunder Bay. Alongside the sleeping giant, it is one of the most stunning and beautiful attributes of the land next to the urban sprawl of Port Arthur and Fort William. The mountain is a special place for Anishinaabe, there are many stories about the creation of the mountain, the role of *Nanaaboozhoo*, and in the 1970s Fort William First Nation started hosting an annual powwow halfway up the mountain at the lookout onto the city of Thunder Bay. It’s a powerful place to be in with a brand new powwow arbor built in recent years by Fort William. I caught up with Elaine and her son Theland on ZOOM while they were sitting atop *Animkii Wajiw* taking a break during his cross-country cycle to fundraise for MMIWG+2S. We had a good visit, we reminisced about dancing, about powwows and being able to see our extended kin. As Ontario was in the midst of COVID restrictions and gathering limits, there were still no powwows happening and we were all really missing it. I asked Theland and his mom if they had any stories about when he started dancing. Elaine asked Theland for his permission to start, which he nodded in agreement to and she went on to share the following:

(W)e went out to Lac Simon powwow. He was just little. He was about three. And, he basically was so intrigued with this one dancer from way up north and his name is Malik. I forget his last name. He is a grass dancer. His mom made him an old style with all the yarn. And, he was basically – whatever move Malik was doing, Theland did. So, it was just through that good sense, the good feels. And, Malik wasn't like, "Get away from me little kid. Or don't dance so close to me." Because he was so concentrated on dancing that style. So, he already had like a little traditional (regalia) that we kind of threw together as family. And then, when he was three, then he was like, "I want to be a grass dancer."

I felt extremely privileged to hear the co-telling of Theland's start as a dancer. His mom shared that they had initially cobbled together a traditional outfit, with a dog-soldier headdress, when Theland was very little. She had Thomas the Tank Engine beadwork made for him, and they went to several powwows until something shifted for Theland.

...you know, I danced that style (traditional) for a couple of years. But then, as time grew on, I started dancing like that one grass dancer that we had seen. And, every powwow we'd go, we'd see him and we would go up to him and we'd say, "Miigwech and thank you." And, give him some tobacco for letting me dance with him and be able to kind of show me. And so, I would always be watching him as a grass dancer, trying to copy his moves.

Theland went on to share that after he learned grass, around the age of 5 years old, he wanted to learn more about the other dance styles. He saw Dallas Arcand¹⁴ hoop dancing at a community event and sought out his own hoops. In his later childhood years he tried chicken

¹⁴ He is a 3 time World Champion Hoop Dancer from Alexander First Nation in Alberta, he is a dancing legend in the powwow circuit and celebrated performer across Turtle Island.

dancing and fancy bustle as well. Each style gave him more insight into their role in powwow, and as he continued to grow and learn he maintained his relationship to grass dancing, so that when he turned 13 and entered the teens category, he decided to stick with that style. As we kept visiting I was sharing how much I missed hearing the drum, and what it's like when you get a really good grass song. I've always had trouble identifying what it feels like when you get a beautiful song and everything seems to be just right. As I shared that notion with Theland he had the following story to share.

Yeah, it's a good feeling. And, sometimes it's hard to explain because it just comes out later like you were mentioning. And, you know, when you're dancing, you just – it's the right song, it's that right time. And, you know, you don't really worry about what else is happening around you. You're in that circle and you're dancing not only for yourself but your family. And, you know, it's actually interesting. I felt that feeling at Akwesasne. The last powwow we went to, my last contest that I ever danced, I got that feeling from that drum, Eagle Flight singers. And, it was crazy because – like 2019 was our last powwow, 10 years before that, I was dancing to Eagle Flight in Sarnia. And, I got videos of me dancing in this adult special. And, they gave me a tough time for wanting to dance in that special. They were like, "No, it's a men's contest." And, my cousin he was dancing at that time and he was saying, "No, no he's going to dance at the side. He's not going to be in the special." So, the committee was like, "Okay, okay. We'll let him dance then." And, I got that feeling. And 10 years later, same drum group at Akwesasne powwow and you know, it's that perfect song. Not like a perfect song but just a really great song and you just feel it. I don't know, if you video it, someone watches the videos, you feel like you're floating. And, I felt that during that song. I felt like I was floating. I felt like I was free. And, I wasn't dancing against anybody. It wasn't a contest. It was just me in that harbour. And, I was patting down the grass and I was just out there. I wasn't strained to

do anything. I wasn't told to do any dance move. It's not a routine. It's not something that we think about before. In that moment, whatever moves comes to your head, is what you're dancing to. And so, looking back on a video that was taken, that was one of the best dances that I felt that I had in a long time. And obviously, when we're out there, we're dancing like it's our last song. And, we always give it our best. That was actually my last time I danced in the powwow circle. I didn't know that at that time. I didn't know we were going to go in a lockdown, quarantine and everything. And so, I guess it's something that you look back on and you're like, "Wow, that was a really good song, a really good dance." That was the last time we danced in a powwow. So, I don't know, maybe it was like a sign or something saying, "What you're doing right here in this moment is just right. What you're doing right here in this moment is good for you and for the people who are around you." Everything in this moment is okay right now. Yeah, I don't know. I don't know if that answers it. It's like a vibe you get. It's like a feeling. It's hard to explain. You got to feel it for yourself.

As a grass dancer, sometimes you'll hear a song and know right away that it's 'gonna be a good one'. I was surprised to hear the way Theland described how he feels when dancing. He went back in his memory to the last powwow he had danced at in Akwesasne, a contest powwow, where he was given a grass song of significance to his own journey. The song was one he had danced to before, at a powwow when he was much younger, and he remembered how badly he wanted to dance when he first heard it. Hearing that song again as a youth, about to enter his adult stage of life, he now was able to put into words the way that he feels when dancing to that song. The words he uses are important, floating, free, Theland says 'I wasn't strained to do anything.' Theland uses these words, but also acknowledges that they do not provide a full explanation of what happens to him while he is out there dancing.

Story four - Karen

Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane, Anishinaabe from Wikwemikoong Unceded Territory on Manitoulin Island, is a jingle dress dancer, published author, and educator who currently resides in Alberta and teaches at Royal Roads University in Calgary. She is a well known and respected dancer who has travelled and danced all across Turtle Island. Karen raised her children on the trail - now fully grown and with families themselves. We've known each other for many years and she continues to support my family, encourages my partner and I as we develop as dancers, gives us places to stay, and introduces me as her son to other dancers on the trail. Karen is a gifted storyteller, and as we got into sharing stories about our families I was grateful to just be visiting after going some time without seeing each other. Karen talked a lot about the challenges of being a single mom raising her kids in Wiikwemkoong. Not only was it a challenge from a socio-economic standpoint, but like many parents, she found parenting her kids through their youth stage of life was an ongoing challenge as well. She found a lot of support from Della Lovejoy, who adopted Karen as her daughter over the years powwowing together. Della urged Karen to go to powwows, bring her kids, and gave her places to stay. Karen explained that Della showed her how to be on the trail, how to treat people, and over time Della helped raise Karen's kids, too. This tangible support made a world of difference for Karen, and without Della's support she likely wouldn't have continued powwowing with her kids. As we continued to visit our talk shifted to her children; Matthew and Jesse are grass dancers, and Sophie is a jingle dress dancer. Over the years I have become good friends with her youngest son Jesse. I shared with Karen a story about dancing alongside Jesse and overstepping at the powwow in Ottawa one year, which means missing the ending of the song.

To me, it's still getting at this issue of how do we pick up things? How do we learn? How do we transmit knowledge? What is our role within those spheres or within ceremony or powwow? It's almost like, in a way, how do we support people who are trying to learn? I

used to joke about that too with Jesse because he'd be like, "Oh, you didn't catch that ending." I was like, "Jesse," I was like, "I've (only) been dancing 12 or 13 years. I just entered teens. I'm going to miss them sometimes." He'll just laugh at me. He'll be, "Oh, I heard you over-stepped." I was like, "Yeah, I don't know every song."

Karen didn't immediately respond to my story within our visit, she just listened and nodded. It wasn't until we visited again in the coming weeks that she brought it back up, the notion of how dancers come to learn songs.

So, when I'm teaching my children about receiving a song, part of it is provide opportunities of where they can learn. No, as a mom, as a dancer, as hopefully one that passes culture, I've provided opportunities where my children can have the learned, lived experience. That is what is key, to have the learned, lived experience of this particular knowledge, whatever it be. Like, when Jesse was learning grass dance, I made sure that we were at a camp where we stayed with grass dance – for lack of a better term – extraordinaires. When me and Sophie... when she was learning about jingle dress, we just danced in those areas of Minnesota and of being at Lake of the Woods. So, I can tell by how you responded to Jesse... and you said, "I don't know all the songs." Well, it's not about knowing all the... and Jesse wouldn't know how to respond. He just said that to you and then he laughed or whatever. It's not about knowing the songs. It's about knowing the spirit of those songs. So, regardless whether the song was created last night or 100 years ago, it generally is the same type of song so that you would catch the end. When he stands around the men and I've allowed those opportunities, he has learned that... in all my whatever I did with my children, it never was my intention to groom them to become champion dancers. We travelled across the land so they know the stories of the people, of the dances, of the nation. And, that's partly why I said to you last week, "You really should just go out there and be."

Karen emphasized how important it is to learn the songs when dancing, but not through rote memorization. The movements are not routines, while there are conventions of movement, the dance styles are not intended to be choreographed in a specific way for every song. It's not about knowing the songs, it's about knowing the spirit of the song, she told me. She mentioned a piece she had written for Windspeaker, "What's in a song," and urged me to go read it after we were done visiting. It told the story of her building a relationship to the song, to the drum, to the singers, and how a dancer should be able to dance to any song. One of the key things Karen shared with me through our visits for this project was the concept of the 'dance spirit.' She noted that many younger dancers come and ask her how to get started as a jingle dress dancer, and she tells them, "(y)ou need to go to Treaty 3 (the original territory of the jingle dress) and just dance on the land." I wonder how many of those dancers have taken her up on this advice? With their initial stories shared above, I now move into a deeper analysis and (re)visiting of the stories from Theland and Karen.

Dibaajimowinan - analysis

Analysis: Story three - Theland

The opportunity to visit and listen to *dibaajimowinan* from mother and son was a unique experience for myself as a researcher. The way in which the storying occurred was very much a collective experience, with myself, Theland and Elaine all weaving narratives together and building out our understandings together. With Theland joining for the second *nbwaachwewin* session, I saw a transition from Elaine initially carrying the narrative impetus about her own journey as making space for Theland to self voice his story. Elaine started by reflecting on the previous visit, by articulating a concept that captures her miikaans beautifully.

What they say, "Let him go as he guides this journey." Because he's 18 now. But in my world, he'll always be the son that prenatally I nearly lost three times. It took him a long time for him to get here because we couldn't carry well. So, we always hold that. We're looking at somebody that almost wasn't here three times. So, because I didn't carry him well. So, that's that place of, "I want to carry." Even in places that will shock you, I want to carry that better. So, powwow is part of that small part. It's a big part but it's a small part of carrying better.

Elaine is sharing a powerful story that comes at such a timely junction in Thelands life. As he is entering young adulthood his mother speaks to him about what she was trying to achieve for her son. Carrying better. I could not think of a more ideal way to describe the *miikaans* of a parent/caregiver/mother. Especially given the context of Elaine's difficult upbringing. As I sit here visiting again with this exchange between mother and son I am reminded of other notions of carrying our children. Of course, when Deanne and I started our family we would strap our daughters into their *tikinagan*, cradleboard. When children know what it feels like to be bundled up, to listen to the sounds of our gatherings, to feel safe, and to belong, these are critical aspects that contribute to the adults' role. We would carry our children in that *tikinagan*, later we'd use a stroller, but always our responsibilities steadfast in our commitment to nurture and protect. We were told we carried our children too much, that we were spoiling them, but providing security and carrying our children is something we were unwavering on. Brendtro et al. describe the importance of attachment for child development, as a close emotional bond that is crucial in the formative years. He adds, "(s)ocial bonds release a rush of oxytocin and other pleasure chemicals that create well-being and even elation" (1991, p.7). We knew we wanted our kids to have memories, or at least pictures of themselves in that *tikinagan*. At times we physically carry our children, in many ways that labour continues as they continue to outgrow that *tikinagan*, as they outgrow the stroller, as they get too big to put on our shoulders, the work

of carrying does not end, it just shifts. Elaine's notion of 'carrying better' acknowledges how important it is that children are continually supported, protected, provided for, and given spaces to grow throughout their life stages and development. She brings Theland to powwow, to ceremony on the land, she is raising her own child and reversing the sense of loss and disconnect she experienced through the 60s scoop, all the while contributing to the collective sense of dignity within her role as caregiver. As I consider what I have learned from Elaine's contributions through story, I recognize that the notion of 'carrying better' is analogous with and can inform Anishinaabeg pedagogy, not only as praxis, but as theory.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Elaine underwent a transformation to shift her own understandings of what family, community, and belonging mean within Anishinaabewin. Elaine alludes to challenges carrying her son through the term of her pregnancy, but in a broader sense she is also concerned about how she will carry him through into his childhood, youth and young adulthood. Bringing your child to the powwow is a crucial first step, but it is not enough alone, the child requires guidance and support in building out their understandings. Through Elaine's story I recognize how crucial the adults role is in relation to the child. Elaine shared stories about bringing Theland to sit at the drum at community events and Indigenous agency culture nights, but always ensuring she got him home on time for sleep and school the next day. She provided a reliable structure, consistency, access, and in turn fostered belonging. Ball and Simpkins (2004) explain that Indigenous children "need a careful balance of teachings about their traditions, tribal values, and languages. Tribal children need to experience and recognize that their centre of strength and identity comes from feeling and understanding the sacred meanings behind their tribal practices" (p.485). Elaine understood that from a young age, if she brought Theland to the powwow, if she fostered belonging for him, that something special might occur.

(W)e went out to Lac Simon powwow. He was just little. He was about three. And, he basically was so intrigued with this one dancer from way up north and his name is Malik. I forget his last name. He is a grass dancer. His mom made him an old style with all the yarn. And, he was basically – whatever move Malik was doing, Theland did. So, it was just through that good sense, the good feels. And, Malik wasn't like, "Get away from me little kid. Or don't dance so close to me." Because he was so concentrated on dancing that style. So, he already had like a little traditional (regalia) that we kind of threw together as family. And then, when he was three, then he was like, "I want to be a grass dancer."

Elaine recognized how important it is for her to curate a space for Theland. It is not her responsibility alone, it is the culmination of roles of those in attendance at the powwow who contribute to the collectivism of Anishinaabeg education. The importance of human communities is underscored by Cajete, citing the biological relations of family, clan and nation - that these connections ensure our survival (2016, p.366). Our interpersonal relationships, human-to-human are crucial for learning to occur. Within Elaine's story about Theland we are seeing a clear shift from reliance on his biological relations to learn outwards to an extended kin-system. In the context of First Nations communities, it is accepted that no one knows all, but everyone has something to offer (Ball and Simpkins 2004, p.487). The process of teaching and learning that occurs through relationality and kin has been articulated as communal education (Cajete 2016, p.369), a process rooted in culturally defined constructs, wherein the main criteria is socializing the individual to the collective culture of a group. The mechanism of Anishinaabe teaching and learning at the powwow comes through these processes of kin-making. Theland is able to watch, observe, and try movements of the other dancer, a stranger at first, but also familiar and part of his kin-system. In his earlier writings Cajete outlines how important it is for an 'American Indian person' to know the nature of relationship, responsibility, and participation

in the lifeways of one's people (1994, p.165). I believe our extended powwow family can be referred to as a community unto itself and that this community is foundational in creating powwow as place. Powwows occur in many places, but it is not only the activity itself, it is the people that foster a radical space of kin-making and it is through that place which Theland is able to learn.

When she uses the phrase - 'the good feels' - to describe Theland's experience Elaine demonstrates an understanding of what Ball and Simpkins have identified as another core principle for Anishinaabeg education, the role of feeling. *Anishinaabewin* emphasizes that life is experienced through the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual self. These concepts have been mapped out in several nations on medicine wheels, it is where I first came to understand the notion of wholism (Maracle, 2010). When Theland moves his body to the drumbeat, he is embodying a process of learning that Anishinaabeg have known since time immemorial. He demonstrates a physical awareness and cognitive ability when he observes and emulates the movements of the other dancer, but as Elaine points to, perhaps most important is the way he feels when he dances. Elaine saw that he felt connected to grass dance and to the drum. From a very young age, Theland is able to self advocate for himself, all of which is made possible by Elaine having done the work beforehand to reconnect to her own place within the community, walking her *miikaans*. In many ways Elaine's *dibaajimowinan* at this juncture mirrors Nathalie's within the previous chapter, which I would argue is no coincidence unto itself. I am fortunate that Theland picks up where Elaine left off, whereas Nova's story is just entering his childhood, Theland's story moves from childhood into his youth.

...you know, I danced that style (traditional) for a couple of years. But then, as time grew on, I started dancing like that one grass dancer that we had seen. And, every powwow we'd go, we'd see him and we would go up to him and we'd say, "Miigwech and thank you." And, give him some tobacco for letting me dance with him and be able to kind of

show me. And so, I would always be watching him as a grass dancer, trying to copy his moves.

Theland has been provided with teachings, or he's observed teachings, that are powerful assets for his growth through the life stages - *miikaans* - at powwows. Theland has acquired knowledge about the importance of reciprocity within *Anishinaabewin*. By offering *semaa* and asking for ongoing permission to learn from the older grass dancer - Malik - he is demonstrating an ethics of ongoing consent within the learning relationship. Theland is also demonstrating the core teaching of gratitude, expressing thankfulness and saying *miigwech* for not only what he has learned, but to the individual who has agreed to share their knowledge with him. At the core of this process is a deeper learning that Theland is building out which is foundational in his understanding of learning within *Anishinaabewin* contexts. Reciprocity and relationship are core tenets of Indigenous pedagogy (Kirkness and Barnhardt, 1991), something that I spent years reading, researching, and writing about myself. The core of my own learning journey as grass dancer was predicated on relationships to other grass dancers, knowledge holders in the powwow circle, whom I had come to know over time, shared experience, and offering *semaa* to help me on my learning journey (Hupfield, 2015). Within his own *dibaajimowinan* we see Theland learning how to utilize the same core principles and process to continue fulfilling his own desire to learn. For Ball and Simpkins, they emphasize a similar conclusion, that teaching and learning are not only about the passing down of facts or knowledge, they are as much about being in relationship to others - recognizing we are in relation to a community that is larger than us (2004). Put another way, the process of how we learn, and with whom, is just as important as what it is that we are learning.

Something else Theland talked about within his *dibaajimowinan* is how important it was that he learn the other dance styles. Reflecting on Anishinaabe life stage teachings, John Rice taught me that the second stage of life after the infant/toddler stage is the 'fast' life where we learn

about the value of 'love.' When Theland talked about dancing at this age he shared how he wanted to try every style of dance, how much he loved dancing, even practicing moves in the aisles of Walmart. His parents connected him with other dancers in the community who helped him assemble different regalia. Theland also shared how he wanted to dance every grass dance song at the powwow, but sometimes it was for a specific age category or special that he was not permitted to dance. His parents had taught him to watch, listen, and respect what's happening in the circle and wait for when his song and age group were announced by the MC. The fast life. Always moving, learning, pushing to try things, not only curious, but desiring knowledge. I didn't know Theland at his younger age, but I have seen young dancers just jamming out hard at the sidelines during specials or the adult categories. It's a truly beautiful thing to witness. When Theland spent so much time trying to learn hoop dance, chicken, fancy bustle, over the course of his childhood he had danced all of the masculine (mens) styles within powwow. Certainly he was able to learn quickly and apply his knowledge of reciprocity and relationship in order to learn these other forms of dance, however, I wouldn't read Theland's efforts to learn 'all' the dance styles as rooted in ego or consumption of knowledge for knowledges' sake. No, I believe he was simply enacting his life stage, his *miikaans*. During his years as a child he was living the 'fast' life, what my relative John Rice would describe as a time of great growth, discovery, and movement. Within *Anishinaabewin* they say that the child moves, plays, learns, at a rate unlike any other within their *miikaans*. By trying out and dancing all the dance styles Theland is simply doing what any Anishinaabe child should do when they feel connected, and safe to explore and learn. In this way a child can fulfill their gift to community. Theland affirms that he is a dancer through this process. By the time he enters into his youth life stage he affirms that he wants to stick with grass dancing and hoop dancing and he puts the other styles aside. Brokenleg's circle of courage asserts that when a child feels attached, nurtured, connected, and safe, that they will move towards 'mastery', the development of cognitive, physical and social competence (Brokenleg et al, 1991). Theland demonstrates through his story that he had the ability, requisite

knowhow, and space to acquire these dance styles and their teachings in a good way. He is living the fast life, but this life stage is helping him learn how to learn within Anishinaabeg contexts. Nila Rinehart writes on the process of child development from an Indigenous lens stating that, “interconnectedness is essential for tribal children’s social and emotional development, and it is the centerpiece for the development of the self. Language, culture, and the home environment tell children who they are and how to construct their learning. It is from these incredible eyes that tribal children see and interpret the world” (Ball 2004, p.494).

Theland’s story is an important one because it shows the possibility for children and learners to develop their own ‘eyes’, something that was possible through the temporal and spatial place called powwow.

As I continued to listen to Theland tell his story, I was curious if he had any thoughts on what he experiences when he dances, how would he describe those ‘good feels’ that his mother had alluded to earlier in the *nbwaachwewin*.

Yeah, it’s a good feeling. And, sometimes it’s hard to explain because it just comes out later like you were mentioning. And, you know, when you’re dancing, you just – it’s the right song, it’s that right time. And, you know, you don’t really worry about what else is happening around you. You’re in that circle and you’re dancing not only for yourself but your family. And, you know, it’s actually interesting. I felt that feeling at Akwesasne. The last powwow we went to, my last contest that I ever danced, I got that feeling from that drum, Eagle Flight singers. And, it was crazy because – like 2019 was our last powwow, 10 years before that, I was dancing to Eagle Flight in Sarnia. And, I got videos of me dancing in this adult special. And, they gave me a tough time for wanting to dance in that special. They were like, “No, it’s a men’s contest.” And, my cousin [00:43:44], he was dancing at that time and he was saying, “No, no he’s going to dance at the side. He’s not going to be in the special.” So, the committee was like, “Okay, okay. We’ll let him dance

then.” And, I got that feeling. And 10 years later, same drum group at Akwesasne powwow and you know, it’s perfect song. Not like perfect song but just a really great song and you just feel it. I don’t know, if you video it, someone watches the videos, you feel like you’re floating. And, I felt that during that song. I felt like I was floating. I felt like I was free. And, I wasn’t dancing against anybody. It wasn’t a contest. It was just me in that arbor. And, I was patting down the grass and I was just out there. I wasn’t strained to do anything. I wasn’t told to do any dance move. It’s not a routine. It’s not something that we think about before. In that moment, whatever moves comes to your head, is what you’re dancing to. And so, looking back on a video that was taken, that was one of the best dances that I felt that I had in a long time. And obviously, when we’re out there, we’re dancing like it’s our last song. And, we always give it our best. That was actually my last time I danced in the powwow circle. I didn’t know that at that time. I didn’t know we were going to go in a lockdown, quarantine and everything. And so, I guess it’s something that you look back on and you’re like, “Wow, that was a really good song, a really good dance.” That was the last time we danced in a powwow. So, I don’t know, maybe it was like a sign or something saying, “What you’re doing right here in this moment is just right. What you’re doing right here in this moment is good for you and for the people who are around you.” Everything in this moment is okay right now. Yeah, I don’t know. I don’t know if that answers it. It’s like a vibe you get. It’s like a feeling. It’s hard to explain. You got to feel it for yourself.

As I listened to Theland talk I knew exactly what he was trying to articulate. I’ve felt something similar at powwow as place, not every song will engender this feeling, but sometimes things seem to line up and finding language to describe what takes place for dancers has eluded me over the years. Perhaps the movement of grass dancing is a language unto itself, and his movement tells a story of floating, of freedom, and of agency. Theland’s story demonstrates the

possibility of Indigenous futurisms, wherein the bodies of Anishinaabeg children are emancipated. There are conventions of movement, there are protocols, but when Theland explores his language of movement on the dance arbor, his movement is unencumbered. Within the colonial construct of the nation state, the Indian Act, culture bans, and other structural ‘-isms’ that continue with their impositions onto Anishinaabe bodies, when Theland talks about just being out there patting down the grass it is a prolific action. He qualifies what he describes as being more than movement of his body, he practices dancing sure, but he doesn’t have a memorized grass dance routine for each song. It’s as if he is dancing from a place other than his cognitive self, what the medicine wheel teachings describe as our mental being. I believe what Theland is describing in his *dibaaJimowinan* is an embodied way of knowing, connected to his movement, the song from Eagle Flight, and a relationship to place. Within his telling of the story he identifies a special connection that he has to the drum group, he is able to slipstream (Recollet, 2019) back in time to another memory of dancing grass at a powwow in Sarnia when he was 10 years old and first heard this song. He remembers how he had connected immediately in the first listening, he was compelled to dance on the sidelines. When he heard that same song again 8 years later in Akwesasne he immediately re-connected to it. As he dances he floats, pats down the grass, his movement comes with ease. As a dancer entering my senior adult years, closing in on 40, I recognize how special those moments can be. I searched through literature and found that Gregory Cajete’s writings about the development of Indigenous leaders were the closest semblance to what Theland described. Cajete wrote that the ultimate goal of Indigenous education should not be “the individual writ large” but rather communion with our deeper spiritual self and that of our “relations” (2017.p.124). When I found Cajete’s writings I saw a connection between his writing about the goals of education and how they might apply to *Anishinaabewin* and powwow as place. As discussed already, the child is already understood as spirit, as a gift, but it is only through connection to community, to others, and to culture, that they are able to ‘commune’ with their spiritual self as Cajete has put it. The

feeling of floating, of dancing to that 'one' song, or perhaps there are many songs, is a wholistic experience that teaches me to focus on the importance of body and spirit in conjunction with teaching and learning processes. Theland has shared how song and dance are intricately interwoven, and the way in which dancers utilize their senses, the feeling of movement as they connect to song. I will endeavor to further address the role of spirit as we move into the next *dibaajimowinan*. Before we move forward though, I wish to again express gratitude for Elaine and Theland's stories as they show the possibility of teaching and learning through *Anishinaabewin*, and what is possible when we 'dance our teachings' as Elaine put it. As I have re-visited with Elaine and Theland through their *dibaajimowinan* I see that they too are walking their *miikaans*, that path creator set out for them, in a good way.

Analysis: Story four - Karen

I wanted to visit with Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane for my project because she has helped me come to understand pedagogy from a perspective informed by *Anishinaabewin*. It was Karen who I interviewed during my Masters at York University. At that time she taught me about the importance of relationship building within Anishinaabe pedagogies. She also taught me that teaching and learning is a reciprocal relationship, it takes time, and that operating from a place of *Anishinaabewin* requires humility, consent and to be non-impositional. Put into practice, when Anishinaabe enter into teaching and learning spaces, we must be self aware of ourselves, and as we engage with powwow as place, other dancers, and head staff, it is critical that we set aside ego. If one starts a learning process within Anishinaabe spaces looking to 'learn' as the primary focus, then they are already making a key mistake. The emphasis should be on relationship building from the onset - with humility, local protocols, and visiting at the core of the journey - these are principles and practices that help root teaching and learning within *Anishinaabewin* (Hupfield, 2015). The longer one has been walking their *miikaans*, the more likely they are to know the protocols, to know themselves as Anishinaabe, and to be able to

operate within an Anishinaabeg learning place - such as powwow. Over the years I have come to apply the concept of *miikaans* to my own journey in a literal sense, meaning, as a dancer who came to powwow in my adult life I see myself as having walked that *miikaans* for the same time as a teenager who's been raised on the trail since their birth. As Karen and I visited together for the second time I found this idea came up in our discussion of teaching and learning, when I shared a story about learning the songs. I shared the following with Karen,

To me, it's still getting at this issue of how do we pick up things? How do we learn? How do we transmit knowledge? What is our role within those spheres or within ceremony or powwow? It's almost like, in a way, how do we support people who are trying to learn? I used to joke about that too with Jesse because he'd be like, "Oh, you didn't catch that ending." I was like, "Jesse," I was like, "I've been dancing 12 or 13 years. I just entered teens. I'm going to miss them sometimes." He'll just laugh at me. He'll be, "Oh, I heard you over-stepped." I was like, "Yeah, I don't know every song."

Karen listened to me as I spoke and she didn't immediately respond to my story within our visit, but as I looked at her on the screen I knew she was thinking deeply about what I had said. It wasn't until we visited again a couple weeks later on ZOOM that she commented on my story about overstepping. It helped her reflect on how she went about teaching her own kids on the trail, what her intentions were when travelling to all those powwows, before speaking to the ways in which she understands learning happens at powwow as place.

So, when I'm teaching my children about receiving a song, part of it is provide opportunities of where they can learn. No, as a mom, as a dancer, as hopefully one that passes culture, I've provided opportunities where my children can have the learned, lived experience. That is what is key, to have the learned, lived experience of this particular knowledge, whatever it be. Like, when Jesse was learning grass dance, I

made sure that we were at a camp where we stayed with grass dance – for lack of a better term – extraordinaires. When me and Sophie... when she was learning about jingle dress, we just danced in those areas of Minnesota and of being at Lake of the Woods. So, I can tell by how you responded to Jesse... and you said, "I don't know all the songs." Well, it's not about knowing all the... and Jesse wouldn't know how to respond. He just said that to you and then he laughed or whatever. It's not about knowing the songs. It's about knowing the spirit of those songs. So, regardless whether the song was created last night or 100 years ago, it generally is the same type of song so that you would catch the end. When he stands around the men and I've allowed those opportunities, he has learned that... in all my whatever I did with my children, it never was my intention to groom them to become champion dancers. We travelled across the land so they know the stories of the people, of the dances, of the nation. And, that's partly why I said to you last week, "You really should just go out there and be."

Karen is working on her PhD in Education at the University of Alberta, so I know she already thinks a lot about how Anishinaabeg 'come to know.' In many ways I see Karen as walking her miikaans and within the knowledge gathering life stage and approaching the purpose life stage where the culmination of life experiences in relation to teachings, stories, and ceremonies help that person reach an understanding of 'truth.' What I mean by the notion of truth, is that an individual does not come to know a universal truth, moreso a relational truth informed by their place in collectivism, in family, community and nation. Karen shared with me that she had an adopted mother on the trail when she was younger. Della Lovejoy, who spent years mentoring Karen, supporting, and even disciplining Karen's children on the trail when needed. I share all this because within Karen's own *dibaajimowinan* there are deep teachings, philosophies, and understandings of powwow as place. When I heard Karen talking about learning through powwow as place, she focused on the importance of a 'lived, learned experience', that her

daughter Sophie learned about and danced jingle in Lake-of-the-Woods, Ontario and across Minnesota. Travel to powwows is what enabled her children to learn stories, about the dance styles, and most importantly to be on the land. Karen is talking about an embodied learning process, more than experiential learning, she also mentions the importance of spirit. It was when I read Cajete's work that he also mentioned the importance of place, what he called the living place (2016, p. 37). According to Cajete's teachings, the learner's extended family, clan, and community context are what provide the source of teaching within a living place. When these constructs are in place, the living place provides opportunity for learning in all junctures, be they natural, land-based, social, or spiritual aspects of everyday life. Within *Anishinaabewin*, living and learning are fully integrated. When Karen and her children travel to Lake-of-the-Woods they are in the place where jingle dress dancing originated from, they live their life as dancer, but in doing so they learn more deeply about the significance of that dance style. The more time they spend in that place, the more stories they will hear about the dance and the dress, the more they will hear side-step songs composed for ceremony, longhouse and powwow. During the time they spend there they will visit, feast, and come to know, and be known, to the Anishinaabeg of that place. These are the ways in which Karen's description of the lived, learned experience and Cajete's notion of the living place come to be enacted. *Living place* provides pedagogy for Anishinaabeg to teach and learn. A pedagogy informed by the concept of living place is fundamentally different from the way teaching and learning occurs within non-Anishinaabe contexts. While it is not impossible to teach jingle dress through story, through slipstream thinking, and abstraction, it is difficult to engender the spirit of a living place pedagogy.

The role of spirit

Spirit is an important concept that came up time and again throughout the *nbwaachewin* sessions. When spirit is talked about it is referring to Anishinaabe life stage teachings, the understanding that Anishinaabeg travel to *Shkagamik-kwe* (mother earth) from the spirit world, we are spirit during our walk on our *miikaans*, and when we pass away our spirit journey's home to creator and the spirit world again. Spirit is therefore an important conceptualization within *Anishinaabewin*, we see it articulated in my territory as wholism, spirit is one of the four components of self. When Karen and I were visiting she had suggested I take time to read an article she had written for Windspeaker magazine, where she wrote about spirit in her piece titled *It's all in the song*. Karen wrote a story about a powwow she had attended where she danced to a side-step the singers had made an error on. The other dancers were complaining to her afterwards that they should get another song for their contest, but Karen responded, "A good dancer can dance to any song. The spirit of that song was present and carried me through the dance, (didn't notice) that the tempo hadn't changed, or that they left out the honor beats." One of the singers even came up to Karen and apologized for the song, and writes,

I said it was honorable how each time they set up, it was obvious their respect they had for one another, and for the drum. It was obvious they sang for the love of the songs and not for the contest. I told him, this was my reason for starting near their drum when the song started, so that I could feel that reverence, so I could feel the spirit of their song. When that song came within me, I didn't notice the missed beats, the tempo change, all I know is at the end of the song, my feet landed back on earth. He shook my hand again, thanked me and he looked content. (Pheasant, 2006)

When Karen wrote, "at the end of the song, my feet landed back on earth," I thought of Theland's story about dancing to the Eagle Flight song. He said he felt like he was floating, and

here again Karen describes the same feeling. Karen's stories helped me understand more fully what happens to dancers when they connect to a song. There is a feeling of ease, floating, which Karen described as her 'dance spirit.' After I thought more about what she had shared, I started to recognize that this feeling of connection, where things are aligned through movement, song and dance, are what dancers have the possibility of experiencing at powwow as living place. I cannot say for certain that every dancer has felt this connection to their dance spirit, as Karen and Theland have described, but I would argue that this is why dancers travel from powwow to powwow over the course of their lives. Marie Battiste has written about the importance of nourishing our learning spirit through education, the dance spirit is one facet of who we are that can also be nourished. You can drive home for hours after a powwow, get up for work the next day and be physically exhausted, but if you have nourished your dance spirit, you are more likely to feel good. Looking to Cajete, he writes that for Anishinaabeg, "the highest value was placed in being in resonance with the dynamic balance of relations between humans, nature, the cosmos, other beings, and spirits of the past, present, and future (2016. p.365)." This notion of resonance is instrumental moving forward, as I believe dancers seek resonance amongst their relations - interpersonally with family, community - but more importantly, between self and spirit.

Karen told me that learning songs at powwows is not only about listening and remembering, but knowing the song within that element or in that space of powwow, so that the spirit of the song takes you and the song carries you. Approaching learning through connection, through resonance between the movement of the dancer and the beat and composition of the vocals and drumbeat. When this resonance is achieved, only then is it possible to slipstream across and through spatial and temporal place where we nourish that dance spirit. Karyn Recollet's notion of slipstream allows me to think of dancing as this weightless action, where our dance spirit is what moves us, hence the description of floating and landing back on the ground from

Karen. The song is what carries the dancer. What Karen was trying to teach within our *nbwaachwewin* was that there is an intelligence, a way of knowing embedded within my body as a dancer. The key to not missing the ending of songs, or staying on beat, is to unlock this intelligence, which she cited from Tyson Yunkaporta as haptic knowledge (2019). We can use our bodies consciously and meaningfully, with intention and within a living place such as powwow, haptic knowledge enables a wholistic learning approach. Resonance through haptic knowledge is what connects the dancer to the song. While grass dancing can be compartmentalized into specific movements to learn how to dance, for Karen that's only a starting point. For Karen, learning to dance comes from a different pedagogical stance and knowledge system entirely. One that she articulates as relational, innate, rooted in understandings of spirit, and comes from lived, learned experiences.

Through all of the stories that were shared, there remains a core element of powwows that is often understated, but essential in its contribution to powwow as place. When I was listening to Karen share her story, her role in the powwow trail is often as a knowledge carrier, and she mentions that many younger dancers - jingle dress in particular - will seek her advice. I recognize that she has played that role, mentor, and mother, in a very substantial way in my own journey. She shared with me her most common response to newer dancers on the trail, "I often say some (dancers) that really want to learn how to do jingle, I said, "You need to go to Treaty 3 and just dance on the land". Knowing Karen, and considering her framework of teaching and learning shared within this project and my Masters, I recognize that she is speaking on one hand to the notion of haptic knowledge. She encourages dancers, and has encouraged me to travel to places where specific dance styles have originated. She advises jingle dress dancers to travel to Anishinaabeg territories where the jingle dress originated from. She advised me to travel to the prairies to dance grass. To go to a living place, wherein not only the people talk about those teachings, but to be in relation to the land and "just dance." Karen

Recollet's notion of land-ing (2019), that Indigenous folk desire the restoration of kin and relationality to land, helps situate my understanding of Karen's advice further. When Elaine shared her story in the previous chapter about seeking change, part of what I believe she was seeking was a place of land-ing. She sought change from a difficult life, what we all seek is connection, a soft place to be, to dance, to be Nehiyaw. Recollet reminds me in her writing that within our creation stories, it was *giizhigo kwe* who was lowered onto the back of the turtle, and they too were seeking a place for land-ing. When I utilize slipstream thinking it provides space for me to travel back to the stories of my ancestors and re-learn why it is that I dance. We are seeking a place for land-ing, whether it is a literal relationship to land, to facilitate haptic knowledge from foot to the blades of grass underfoot, our moccasins have always desired soft(er) places to land. When the grass dancer pats down that grass they are fulfilling a responsibility to their community members, they are providing safety and security, they are ensuring their kin also have a safe place to dance. When Karen urges me to go dance on the land, I listen, and I plan, and I go, with kids in tow. If you've ever danced in Treaty 3 - been carried by a song and land-ed upon the grass after the final drumbeat sounds - then you may come to know powwow in the way Karen speaks of. That is something I desire and wish to know, too.

Conclusion

Resurgence is a concept that I'd like to bring forth again as I conclude herein. Hall et al have asserted that, "for Indigenous Peoples, wellness is rooted in several determinants: in land-based recovery, in original governance systems, and in their resurgences... This work is not simple and it requires the return of a land base upon which to accomplish those resurgences (2020, p.100)." As I listened to Theland, Elaine and Karen share their stories, and as I (re)visited with them, I found a resonance between Hall et al's quote and their *dibaajimowinan*. Elaine and

Theland taught me that our learning journey on the trail is critical in coming to know ourselves in relation to others. Over time Theland was able to see his role in the community as a dancer, and recalled how important it was for him to be supported by his aunties and grandparents who helped along the way. He now enters into the world as a young adult, his wondering and wandering life stage ahead of him, but in many ways he is already equipped to answer those questions of who he is and what gifts he has. The question he will set out to answer now is how he might use his knowledge of self, his gift of dancing, to give back to his community. While I am not asserting that all children should be expected to dance - powwow dancing is not everyone's gift - Theland's story shows how we might rethink the importance of powwow as place unto itself. For Anishinaabe, powwow provides the possibility of a living place where children have opportunities to learn about spirit, self, and kin-relations. These places are few and far between and we need more opportunities and living places that foster learning from this place of *Anishinaabewin*.

Karen emphasized how important it is to centre learning on the land, and within a wholistic framework on the powwow trail. She spoke at length about the need to utilize not only our cognitive abilities when learning about powwow song and dance, but the importance of our dance spirit. Incorporating spirit into the discussion is no small feat after years of the education system has conditioned us to think about learning in a rational, measurable, and *zhaagnoshwin* informed approach. I remember telling my children's grade 1 teacher years ago that I expect them to think about the spiritual wellbeing within the classroom, and if they notice any gifts coming to the fore to let me know. I got some chuckles and amused looks in return, which I empathize with, but it also shows that Anishinaabeg children are not being considered within a wholistic framework at the schools they attend. Our children would be better served if educators who work with Anishinaabeg children received stories and teachings within their pre-service and later in professional development about the importance of nourishing their spirit and nurturing

their gifts. This is not to assert that powwow dance be incorporated into curriculum for Indigenous children, nor that all children are dancers because they certainly are not all going to dance, but to emphasize the objective of locating responsibilities and roles that are rooted in a core understanding of the child's gifts. Teachers would also be well served to situate themselves within *miikaans*, to see their own place on the life stage teachings, as this will help reframe the relationship away from paternalistic approaches to one that is rooted in *Anishinaabewin*. I have walked through many classrooms and schools over the years of being involved in education research, and I cannot even count how many posters and recitations of the teachings I have heard and seen, but are children, and especially the adults being asked to reflect on what their role is in relation to the students they serve? In summary, powwow as place is more than a cultural celebration, it offers a living place for land-ing (Recollet 2019), kin-making, and for Anishinaabeg to walk our *miikaans*. Leanne Simpson wrote about the importance of radical resurgence (2017), her work still rings true and has heavily influenced my desire to look at powwow as a site of teaching and learning. Through the *dibaajimowinan* of these dancers I have come to see a radical resurgence unto itself, one rooted in *Anishinaabewin* that teaches us about the importance of kin-making, walking our *miikaans*, time travelling/slipstreaming, storytelling, dancing and singing, as the foundations of teaching and learning for Anishinaabeg at the powwow.

Chapter 6: Dissertation Conclusion

Niin Dibaajimowinaan - My story - Summer 2022

As I sit down to write my reflections on what I've learned about teaching and learning at powwow as place, it is the summer of 2022, COVID-19 has given us some reprieve in Ontario and powwows are taking place again. My family and I travelled to the Summer Solstice powwow in Unceded Algonquin Territory near Ottawa this past weekend. It was beautiful to see everyone's families again, all of the kids were now much taller, had aged up a category, and many had new outfits or beadwork. There were even little siblings and new families that we haven't met yet. Solstice powwow was a hot one, happening a couple days after June 21st the temperatures pushed towards 40 degrees celsius and grandfather sun sure made his presence felt. The dancers all danced hard nonetheless, the drums sounded beautiful, and the sights and smells of the powwow were a visceral balm for the spirit. It felt so good to be able to visit with the other powwow families again.

Something I heard the MC talk about on the second day of the powwow made me pause in thought, Adrian Dion Harjo (Kickapoo and Seminole) was reflecting on when he was a young dancer and would be powwowing weekend after weekend, year after year. His grandmother had

been watching him live this 'powwow life' and finally confronted him and asked when he was going to get a 'job', go to 'school', or join the 'army', to make something of his life other than being a dancer. She told him at that time, "powwows will always be there." I've heard many folks say this same refrain over the years. As Adrian told his story about what his grandmother had told him, he left a very intentional pause and as we sat there together in an era of uncertainty surrounding the pandemic he added, "welllll... now we know powwows may not always be there." It is very true that we don't know what the future holds, and I still have to take solace that Anishinaabeg have had to put their ceremonies, their songs, and dances away from the public eye in the past. We will do what we must for cultural survivance in those times of difficulty. When there are difficult times, Anishinaabeg have summoned great resiliency and sacrificed to ensure our ways of knowing and being remain resolute. My dream is that more of our community members see how important our ways of knowing and being are, that a critical discourse can emerge and more Anishinaabeg families might enter the dance arena rather than watch from the sidelines. Survivance has had its time and place for our nation, it is not enough to survive, we need structural and systemic action to ensure our futurity as a people. That the knowledge, the teachings, the movements, and access to land are in place for not only the future generations, but our young ones today. Changing narratives and outlooks towards powwow, the attitudes that even our own community still carries as evident by Adrian's story, are critical in creating change and fostering powwow as living place. Yes, it has been a long time without dancing together, on that weekend in Ottawa all of the Anishinaabeg in attendance knew something very special was taking place at Solstice powwow, something that we had all missed very much. We have much to do collectively to ensure the movement beyond a survivance mentality and to a place of agency and movement.

I felt good being able to watch my daughters dance again in the arbor. My oldest donned her fancy shawl outfit, new beadwork in hand. She's 10 years old and as tall as her mother now, her

moccasins are bigger and she's definitely not done growing. This past weekend I watched my 5 year old don her full outfit, go out and dance with the other tiny tots. She would lovingly ran out to give me and Deanne hugs in between our contest songs and offer us water. After dancing my grass songs I'd feel little arms wrapped around my legs and look down to see a big smile. I was also fortunate to see Theland and Elaine in person for the first time in several years. The Kicknosway's hosted the 'Giving Back to the Circle' Grass Special, to acknowledge Theland's transition into a new life stage. The special had a beautiful giveaway, his family had collected giveaway items for the other grass dancers, and many of his regalia items from his younger days were gifted to the other young dancers in attendance. Theland's story was shared over the mic, the reasons why he was hosting the special, the things he was grateful for receiving from the circle and what he hoped to give back. He danced two pushups (half) of a beautiful grass song by Black Bear, and invited all the other grass dancers to join him in honouring and sharing for the duration of the song. The contest they hosted was for the adult grass dancers, and at the end of the special his family picked dancers they wanted to acknowledge for their dancing and style. The whole time the songs were sung, five of them in total, there were two young boys dancing grass on the side of the dance arbor. The family noticed and called those young dancers up, acknowledged them on the microphone, noting that was exactly what a young Theland used to do when he was their age. Afterwards I was able to congratulate him for hosting the special, and while I stood there in Theland's presence I told him, "welcome brother." The Theland I used to know, the teenager, was now a young man, one that I hope will be dancing together with for many years to come. Now that powwows are back on, I am grateful to have seen all of the growth, teens becoming adults, tiny tots becoming juniors, there is much to be grateful for as we gather again and dance together. I also reflected on those stories that were shared with me for the project herein, during the time when the big drum stopped sounding and the bells and jingles stopped making sound in unison. While the powwows stopped in our region of Turtle Island during the pandemic, I am grateful that the sharing of stories and the

growth of our community continued unabated.

Dibaajimowinan as introspection

As I reflect on the journey of my own inquiry project herein, I am again reminded of how my own story was initially shared and nurtured within the academic setting. That story told my experience in coming to know myself as both Anishinaabe and as a grassdancer. The way in which I came into powwow was later in my life, which I used to see as a deficit and barrier to my growth as a grassdancer, I wished my context had been different and I had always been a part of that space. And yet, as I think about my own story, I have learned more about my own self. The process of introspection has been critical to coming to know myself as Anishinaabe. The process of *dibaajimowinan* - telling our story - is one that affirms self, it makes meaning of the world as we experience it, and it helps us situate self in relation to others. By the end of my Masters I came to recognize that being an Anishinaabe academic and a grass dancer were not mutually exclusive, in many ways they supported each other, giving me opportunities to think about dance which I had experienced but never been able to articulate before. I also affirm that the ontological and epistemological frameworks I carried as Anishinaabe, my understanding of *Anishinaabewin*, are what gave me the pedagogical opportunities to become a grassdancer. I had to apply the teachings and knowledge I carried, put theory into praxis, and live them within the powwow circle to continue my own path of learning - my own *miikaans*. By offering tobacco and seeking help, by expressing gratitude through ongoing relationships, enacting ethics and acts of care (taking care of my teachers at powwows, bringing them water after dancing), and most importantly, taking care of my regalia and bundle items through ceremony and feasting, I have found these interconnected relations form my own constellation of care. Most importantly I had to refocus my attention on fostering relationships, expressing those good words and feelings to those who I value so much. I don't believe that we should have to have something

removed to recognize how valuable it is to us. I already was grateful for my life on the trail, but some time away helped me further understand what powwow as place provides for dancers and their respective families. These reflections and introspections were not possible to the extent that they unfolded without spending time in relation with others. Documenting and sharing the stories of my peers in the dance arbor has also been a generative and affirming experience. Many of the challenges I have had as a grassdancer in Anishinaabeg territory, Elaine, Theland, Nathalie and Karen have also experienced in some way, shape, or form with their own respective dance styles. There are many reasons why we dance, and what we learn, and how we learn through that process is what I am most excited about learning from all of them. Of course, as with all stories, there were many things that were shared which I regret not having space or time to address. Before I move onto highlighting some of the key learnings from the inquiry project itself I wish to share some thoughts about the challenges of using *dibaajimowinan* as a research method and the core source of data collection.

The sharing of stories: ethics of relationality and reciprocity as Anishinaabe academic

While I express gratitude for the analysis process on a whole, from a place of *Anishinaabewin*, I found it extremely challenging and counterintuitive to try and distil a story down to its core elements. I recall meeting with my supervisor after the data collection process (also a cringe-inducing way of describing the *nbwaachwewin* sessions) and she asked me what I was learning from the stories. I talked for several hours and mapped out a number of narratives that felt important to me. I could've kept talking but Dr.Dion had another meeting to attend at the time. I recall asking her if I should do another round of visits, to which she looked at me and said, "hmmm... no I think you have more than enough to work with." I struggled with what I imagine is a time old tradition for PhD students to try and write everything within their dissertation at once.

However, it wasn't because I was struggling at determining what was critically important to highlight, it was because there was value in each of the stories and I had committed to honouring what was shared with me in a good way. Each time I heard the stories shared during the *nbwaachwewin* sessions I found there was more knowledge contained than can be conveyed within any sort of reductive thinking process. In many ways I resisted the process of distilling down the stories and quoted large excerpts of the stories to do their own 'work' of making meaning for the reader. As I shared those narratives with Dr. Dion I also came to recognize that yes the stories made sense to me, but she also reminded me that I was living the life of a dancer and could interpret and make meaning of those stories. Something that a non-powwow dancer, or non-Indigenous person, may struggle immensely at doing. I had offered those families *semaa* and they went above and beyond in sharing. I eventually had to reconcile that there will be time to do more projects, more initiatives and writing to carry out, as Dr. Dion puts it, to continue my 'life's work.' The work of trying to articulate all the ways in which teaching and learning take place for Anishinaabeg is more than a doctorate program could address.

At this point in time I am still struggling with the notion of reciprocity as researcher. I believe this is what compelled me to try to honour *dibaajimowinan* and cram as many stories into the dissertation as I possibly could. It was not a lack of discernment or analytical ability, but coming from a place of understanding my positionality as Anishinaabe academic and carrying an immeasurable amount of responsibility to give back. How does one honour the gift of story shared with such generosity? Within my proposal for the project I had indicated the possibility of hosting a giveaway or dance special to honour the families who have contributed to the project. This work is indeed part of my responsibility as Anishinaabe academic, and with powwows back in swing, I will be planning and carrying out that giveaway, honouring and gifting those families in a way that aligns with the ethics of powwow as place. It is for this reason that I find great tension with the process of *nbwaachwewin* and the expectations of my research production as

Anishinaabe academic. My experience within the data analysis process has shown me that stories are meant to be spoken, shared, and listened to, and each time we hear those stories there will be another piece that we find meaning within. We (re)visit not only the stories, but the people who tell them, when we spend time doing data analysis. In many ways I have tried to uphold and honour the stories shared with me. One of my challenges, as with most 'research', is identifying excerpts or stories that resonated the most at this juncture in time with who I am and what I know at this stage in my own life. I imagine that if I were to (re)visit with these stories again in 10 or 15 years, my readings of the transcripts would be vastly different. My experiences, and my own *dibaajimowinan* would reframe how I interpret and make meaning. And of course, there are many other beautiful stories that were shared which I hope to visit again, to perhaps expand upon, write out into other projects. I was fortunate to have such gifted storytellers agree to share with me in the *nbwaachwewin* sessions. I was open to there being more individuals and family members to come forward and share, but in the end there were four who came to the fore within the *nbwaachwewin* sessions, Nathalie, Elaine, Theland and Karen. With this number in mind, it seems fitting to provide my overview and reflections with the following four conceptualizations of teaching and learning that occur at powwow as place.

Powwow as enacting Anishinaabeg roles and responsibilities

The number of times I have seen a child wander out onto the dance arbor while a contest song is taking place is innumerable. What I see as the child simply behaving in a way that is age appropriate, to be curious, excited, and wanting to feel the presence of or be close to the dancing, others may see as disruptive to the dancing or potentially unsafe to the child. Certainly there are times when the Arena Director, the person responsible for guiding the activity in the dance arbor, will have to scoop up a kid and bring them back to the sidelines, but this is usually as a last resort. The child within powwow as place is encouraged to explore, to push some of

those limits. After spending time visiting with Nathalie Restoule and talking about her young children finding their footing as dancers, I now can articulate that children are expected to enact their roles and responsibilities as Anishinaabeg. The child's role is understood from a framework informed by *Anishinaabewin*, namely life stage teachings, which frame children as gifts from creation, close to spirit, and living the good and/or fast life depending on their age. I can attest to witnessing how fast those children can run out into the dance arbor when they want to. My own daughter ran into the arbor during a tiebreaker song at Six Nations powwow that her mother was a part of. Within an *Anishinaabewin* framework, the child leads their learning, and of course the adult carries a role and responsibility within that relationship. For Nathalie as a mother of two, she sees her role as providing opportunities for her children to not only be at the powwow, but to experience it first hand. Nova, her son, showed an aptitude for dancing at a very young age. Learning to walk and dance in the same weekend, at the powwow, Nathalie observed and understood her role was to not only keep taking her son to powwows but to set out and make him regalia. Another role Nathalie understood, modeled by her own mother during Nathalie's childhood, was to provide opportunities of continued learning. This meant introducing Nova to other dancers, preparing him and sending him out during the songs for his dance style, and spending time dancing alongside the other dancers. She also knew many singers at the big drum and would create opportunities for Nova to sit with them, his extended family, his powwow family. Creating regalia, fostering relationships to others, these are all aspects of labor and work unto itself, what the adult life stage teachings describe as the time of 'doing'. Nathalie's *dibaajimowinan* taught me about the roles and responsibilities of children and adults to learn from each other, and to support each other's growth. While I believe these processes of relationality and teaching/learning do occur without Anishinaabewin as a framework, when a child receives care, nurturing, and attention from their caregiver(s) it provides a strong foundation in the powwow circle for them to have a good life, to live and learn during their fast life, and if it's a gift of theirs, to dance.

Powwow as more than healing: (re)connection to *miikaans*

Spending time visiting and (re)visiting with Elaine Kicknosway was moving and inspirational for me personally. I had known of her experiences growing up from the posts she makes through her social media, but I hadn't sat down to share and listen. When I was early in the planning stages of the project, I knew I wanted to focus on the strengths of powwow from an Anishinaabe lens. There are narratives that exist about powwow as a place of healing, which it certainly is and can provide to folks. However, I was wary of perpetuating powwows as a place for Anishinaabeg to go and 'heal' from colonial trauma as a singular narrative. Elaine was forthright with her *dibaajimowinan*, a 60s scoop survivor, raised outside of her own community, she grew up and struggled with identity, experienced pain, and turned to self-medicating to cope. She shared a brave story about her work to 'carry better', not only for her own wellbeing, but for her plans to start a family. Finding an Elder who knew her story, who accepted her as is, but most importantly, gave her permission to move into a new phase of her life, what Anishinaabeg life stage teachings call the time when we 'get ready' for adulthood. Even though Elaine was an adult by age, in many ways she had work to do to prepare and learn about herself as Nehiyaw. Elaine travelled back to her home territory, began seeking knowledge, and found a place to (re)connect through involvement at powwows. At a cursory glance, Elaine's story fits into the 'healing' narrative perfectly. Despite the imposition of colonial policy, the disruption of her cultural inheritance, she was able to reconnect and begin to 'carry better.' I believe this only tells part of the story though, as Elaine found (re)connection not only to culture, but to the people at powwow, an extended family and network of care, what Cajete describes as key 'connections' that contribute to the wellbeing of Anishinaabeg. Within Anishinaabeg contexts, healing is a core component within our pedagogies, our educational models, and processes of learning at large. What is most powerful about Elaine's story is it demonstrates the agency we have as Anishinaabeg to generate knowledge for ourselves, to seek learning through (re)connection.

She did more than set out to heal, she set out to learn. At the onset of my work I wanted to push back on the settler view of powwow as celebratory cultural expression through dance, and what I learned from the process of *nbwaachwewin* and listening to Elaine's *dibaajimowinan* have taught me so much more than I could have anticipated. Powwow is about (re)connection to self, to community, to the land, and beyond. These are all contributions to Anishinaabeg well-being that contribute and motivate us to continue learning and teaching about powwow as place. Anishinaabeg are doers. Anishinaabeg are makers. Anishinaabeg are educators, teachers, and pedagogues.

Powwow as feeling - movement and wholism

Elaine's son, Theland Kicknosway, was an unexpected but extremely important voice to have within the *nbwaachewin* sessions. What started with Elaine's telling of her own story, was able to transition into the spoken words and experiences of her now adult son Theland as the visiting sessions continued. There were many beautiful observations and experiences shared through Theland's own *dibaajimowinaan*, one of which was the way in which he echoed Nathalie's story about her son Nova. Not to say that these two distinct dancers had the same process of entering the circle, but there are similarities and to hear the story told from the perspective of a young adult, having just aged out of the teen category at powwows and entering a new life stage was revelatory. To hear the story of a dancer learning from an incredibly young age, remembering the way in which he saw a dance style that captivated him, the desire he had as Anishinaabeg, and then the agency and structure of support he had from his family to learn helped in demonstrating one of the most powerful ways in which we first connect to a dance style. Resonance with the movement, what was described as 'mimicking' or 'copying' the dance, and feeling safe and secure to try that movement is a beautiful thing to witness. Theland talks about how he would offer *semaa* and other gifts to Malik, the other dancer who he was learning

from. Demonstrating reciprocity from a very young age, and ensuring to take care of the relationship in order to continue learning. Theland also shows us the way in which young dancers live the fast life, as he acquires new dance styles, becomes a hoop dancer, and eventually by his teenage years comes back to being a grassdancer. As Theland and I were visiting I asked him if he missed dancing during the COVID restrictions, and when the last time he danced was. The story he shared about dancing grass at Akwesasne powwow in 2019 to Eagle Flight surprised me. Not that he described the way he felt during the song, but that he could recall the way he felt when he first heard the song years previous. This shows us the power of transmotion (Blaeser, 2013) and slipstream thinking (Recollet, 2019), the ability to travel through spatial and temporal space to further one's own learning. At such a young age, Theland has built out a constellation of connections not only to those around him, but to an internal space that I argue maps out a wholistic worldview. Theland is embodied through his relationship to song, thru dance, he is now utilizing all aspects of his being to learn.

Grassdancing has also given Theland the ability to travel to new geographical places, to travel through time through story and memory, and in doing so he comes to a place of knowing that is rooted in *Anishinaabewin*. When Theland described dancing as something felt, recognition that his body moves in a way that is effortless during specific times, it helped articulate a fuller understanding of what dancing achieves and can teach us as Anishinaabeg.

Powwow as lived place: accessing the dance spirit

When it came time to visit with Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane during the data collection phase of the project, the dialogue and types of stories sharing were vastly different from the others. As mentioned, I felt like in many ways I was the one being 'interviewed', being asked to share my own *dibaajimowinan*, something that puzzled me initially. I came out of the first session wondering if I had done something incorrect, one of the things Karen told me was maybe I

wasn't the right person to be visiting with for the project. That perhaps I should be talking to folks who are just learning about powwow, and she then went on to describe some of the mistakes she's seen dancers make. Alarmed, I debriefed with my supervisor and was encouraged to try to visit again, to trust the process, and to not feel shy about sharing my own stories. Karen is an elegant speaker, storyteller, and dancer, and she has supported me on my journey as a dancer over the years pre-dating my decision to start my graduate studies. During the second visit we talked at length about my own challenges in learning songs, missing the end of songs, something I believed was simply coming from a relative lack of repetitions in comparison to the more seasoned grassdancers. Karen was quick to assert that learning songs had little to do with rote memorization, and that learning within powwow as place is more about connecting to spirit. The spirit of the drum, the singers who composed or are rendering the song, and more introspectively, to our own dance spirit. She urged me to read a piece she had written years previous for Windspeaker Magazine, and we continued to share stories about the way we understood processes of teaching and learning at powwows.

In many ways Karen was almost puzzled by the way I was talking about learning at powwows. Karen asserted that trying to break down the elements of powwow into smaller themes and processes of learning is counterintuitive to how teaching/learning occurs on the trail. For Karen's own children she described the importance of a 'lived learned experience', that she brought her kids on the trail with her, ensured she made camp near families she respected, and through a non-impositional approach her children became increasingly seasoned dancers. Today I recognize her sons as champion grassdancers, her daughter is also a champion jingle dress dancer and educator, but it was never Karen's intention to foster these outcomes. She believes that dancing on the land, spending time in powwow as place, showing up early, camping together with other families, that all of these contributed to a deeper and innate understanding of powwow as a way of life. What Karen describes is a purposeful project unto itself, a project of

place-making that Anishinaabeg have been doing since time immemorial. Cajete describes a similar process to the one articulated by Karen within her *dibaajimowinan*, wherein he highlights the importance of teaching and learning through a 'living place.' Powwow as place can be understood as a living place, one where dancing takes place not merely for the spectator, nor simply for healing or ceremony, dancing fosters a dynamic worldview that is based in feeling, spirit, and fosters interconnectedness. Karen's stories, her lens as a dancer, grandmother, knowledge holder, and mentor, were ultimately what helped me articulate the importance of a living place pedagogy for Anishinaabeg. I believe the following are key aspects of a living place pedagogy: land, connection and spirit. When these foundational aspects are accounted for in a learning context such as powwow as lived place, we see greater vitality, wholistic wellbeing, and growth taking place for Anishinaabeg.

Summary: Anishinaabeg places and the nurturing of learning

As I sit here and offer my closing thoughts about Anishinaabeg pedagogy, powwow as lived place, I am reminded of a time when my family and I attended a powwow in Akwesasne in 2019, pre-pandemic. It was after I had been encouraged by one of my professors in a course to attend powwows and really take note of the events within the space.

After Grand Entry we stood there waiting to be excused by the MC. The MC that weekend was Bill Constance, a traditional dancer and singer who had been on the trail for many years. He shared a story that day which has stuck with me for years. As I stood there with my kids he was commenting on how beautiful it was to see our young ones dancing in, with all their colours and beautiful regalia. He was reminded of a story told to him by Alex Skead, a well renowned singer and drumcarrier from Treaty 3. "I don't know if youse have seen when that tobacco gets offered to the drum before? Some singers will place that tobacco on the drum and as they sing, you'll notice it bouncing around the

middle and it will eventually go to the sides while they sing that song. Alex Skead told me one time that the creator sees us when we dance in like this here today, and what we look like in our regalia is those small pieces of tobacco bouncing and moving. It makes creator happy to see that. When I seen youse coming in here today that is what I was reminded of.”

The experience I share took place just as I was beginning to work on my proposal, but the teachings shared by Bill really resonated with me that weekend and carried me through the writing process. I remember listening to Bill that day with my kids and I knew exactly what he was referring to. Anishinaabeg are those little bits of *semaa* - medicine - dancing in the dance arbor. Our movement on the powwow trail is a way of life, but what I have also come to learn after reflecting on the stories shared through the *nbwaachwewin* sessions is how the powwow trail helps us walk along our *miikaans*, the path creator set out for us. When Bill talks about seeing us dance makes creator happy, I believe it is because we have found our *miikaans* we were shown when we first sat with creator in the spirit world. When we find our pathway, when we walk what some folks call the ‘red road’, *miikaans*, or *mino-bimaadiziwin*, it creates opportunities for our children (and ourselves) to learn within an Anishinaabeg lived place. I want to clarify, powwow is not the only way to walk our *miikaans*, but these stories show how powwow as place can provide opportunities to learn about the teachings, our roles and responsibilities, and how to build relationships from a place of reciprocity and humility. My partner and I have our reasons to dance that are tied to our own *dibaajimowin* (stories), it’s shown us a good way of life, and we want to encourage our children to grow up within the Anishinaabeg community, to have access to cultural learning that neither of us did growing up. We want them to experience belonging not only in the family but at the community level because not everyone in our family has felt connected to community or had access to cultural knowledge. My mother was a residential school survivor, and my partner’s mother is a 60s

scoop survivor. Our mothers both were put into difficult contexts that separated them from family and severed access to much of the cultural knowledge and inheritance they were owed. In turn there were limitations on what our mothers could teach us directly about powwow, however the love, support and encouragement they gave each of us to seek a good way of life is something that they both shared as well. Our parents did the best they could with what they had, and now my partner and I are trying to do the work for our kids. I can now see that Anishinaabe *miikaans* is what helped me and my partner to shift our story, that our kids might now come to know Anishinaabewin on the trail, something that feels different and nurtures their development.

Anishinaabeg conditions for learning

I sat with my supervisor a little while ago as we reviewed the first draft of my dissertation. I was excited and somewhat anxious to hear her thoughts. As Dr. Dion often does in a meeting, before speaking about her thoughts and reflections she started with a question for me, “What are the four things you learned?” she asked. Most times I meet with Dr. Dion they ask me to talk about where my writing is at through an oral format, so I was somewhat prepared mentally for this question. I went on about the stories, about the summary of each of the four *dibaajimowinan* that had been entrusted to me. I shared how important relationality is within learning, the importance of our connections built to others, about learning about self, and how dance and the dance spirit can lead us to learn in a way that is really special. Dr. Dion listened nodding, affirming and smiling, then added, “Okay that’s great, I wanted to make sure what I read and what you told me were aligned.” I sighed with relief, I wanted to talk more about what she thought and where I might focus myself to work towards the final phase of my project. After she shared her notes and feedback we were able to visit and share about why the project herein can help push the agenda of Indigenous education at large, and why powwows should be seen as a vital cog in the growth and development of Anishinaabeg across Turtle Island. I am left thinking

about how important the conditions of learning are, what principles, concepts, and teachings inform an Anishinaabeg pedagogy such as the one I had come to know through powwow as lived place. Within the stories each shared by Nathalie, Elaine, Theland and Karen, were underpinning concepts that support learning to occur for Anishinaabeg. I can't help but think about Nathalie's story about her son Nova. How he took his first steps in the dance arbor, and the way in which she nurtured his learning through providing a safe environment build around curiosity, comfort, and safety - a gift-centred pedagogy. Elaine's story also comes to the fore. Her story taught me the importance of doing the work, of seeking knowledge, of Indigenous desire. Of course, Lillian plays a crucial role, not unlike Nathalie to Nova, in being receptive to Elaine's questions, of not only listening but responding and guiding Elaine in a gentle way - a relational pedagogy. Theland's story illuminates the importance of knowing yourself in relation to others, of trusting our own self, and trusting our embodied learning and knowledge making, what Karen described in our visit together as haptic knowledge. Our body is a pathway to knowledge, just as much as our mind is a vessel to take us to places of knowing, so too does our body know, feel, and teach us how to connect through dance and song. A movement-based pedagogy. Karen's story helped to close the circle, as she spoke to me about how limiting it is to think about song as mere memorization, I came to understand the role spirit plays within the learning process - dance-spirit-based pedagogy. As I walked away from that meeting with Dr. Dion I felt light on my feet, it was validating and empowering to be ever closer to my goal of understanding how Anishinaabeg pedagogy works and feels through powwow as place.

Key elements of Indigenous/Anishinaabeg Pedagogy

While I am remiss to essentialize the depth and richness of my learning journey over the past several years, I also recognize the importance of conveying my learning from the project within an accessible format. What follows are the key elements of Anishinaabeg Pedagogy informed

by the *dibaajimowinan* of the project. This is in no way meant to be an exhaustive nor all-encompassing description of Anishinaabeg pedagogy, there are many forms of learning, places, and approaches employed that are not represented by the experiences that come from powwow. These are the elements of Anishinaabeg learning places that I have come to know:

- “Gift pedagogy” - an Anishinaabeg learning place starts with a safe, loving, and nurturing environment; informed by cultural understandings of one’s gifts, helping to create a protected place for curiosity, exploration, and growth to occur
- “Relational pedagogy” - an Anishinaabeg learning place occurs within and through the building of reciprocal relationships; through said relationships the desire and receptiveness to learn is fostered and guided; people are taught/come to know their responsibilities to each other, further developing notions of connection, collectivism and recognition of self
- “Movement pedagogy” - an Anishinaabeg learning place is informed by physical movement; synchronistic relationships to place through lived/learned experience further develop an understanding of self in relation to community and creation
- “Spirit pedagogy” - an Anishinaabeg learning place is informed by recognition of the presence of spirit; that learning is rooted in notions of wholism, beyond cognitive and/or embodied learning processes alone; that relationships to past, present and future ancestors can be fostered through a myriad of spatial and temporal channels and modalities, including song and dance.

Anishinaabeg as knowledge makers

Something that Dr. Dion and I often discussed in our meetings together, is the critical importance of Anishinaabeg knowing themselves as makers. As noted in my literature review

Simpson has written about the notion of Anishinaabeg as makers. By and large Simpson is referring to the process of tangible creations, of working the land with our hands, of scraping hides to clothe ourselves, of tapping trees and nourishing our bodies and minds through action. Dancers are also makers, they produce immaculate regalia, beadwork, applique designs, and tie porcupine hair to make roaches for the outfits. All of this is important work, to be a maker, and not a consumer. To work with materials that can go back to the land, and to recycle the beads, is something I strive to do. The outfits I don't wear anymore I give to other dancers. They remain a part of my bundle until I gift or trade them to another dancer in the hopes it will help them on their dancing journey. And yet, the production and work itself is rooted within knowledge that is embodied. Simpson's work, in conjunction with the *dibaajimowinan* shared herein have helped me to see my creative work as a grass dancer as essential in coming to knowing my own self, and fulfilling my own roles and responsibilities to my community. Collectivism and community are critical components of learning within Anishinaabeg contexts. Anishinaabeg are knowledge makers. The pedagogy is rooted within *Anishinaabewin*, and if we walk that path set out by creator, we will in turn create places for knowledge to be made and shared. There are additional aspects of the project which came to the fore and were not within the scope of the work at this time. The development of skills and capacities, beadwork and dance perhaps most clearly articulated herein, are key aspects of Anishinaabeg pedagogy that require further sharing and visiting to articulate and contribute within community and academic contexts. The attention to detail that dancers carry, learning through observation, application, sequencing of events at powwow, and movements of dancing itself, all carry critical importance. These are some of the more nuanced aspects that take time to learn, the way in which a grass dance song comes out of the PA system, sounds from the singers voices, and responding as a dancer for example are also were spoken to but fell outside of the primary focus of the writing and analysis herein. As development continues and dancers further their body awareness, understand life stages, social and relational principles, while fostering emotional development

and spiritual awarenesses are key examples of the ways in which Anishinaabeg produce knowledge, we are knowledge makers, theorists and practitioners who carry immense responsibility in ensuring intergenerational cultural continuity. The work is needed now more than ever, as we see an influx of more dancers, larger scale gatherings, the principles upon which we organize ourselves in places of learning and teaching require greater discourse. To ensure that powwow might foster its integrity as a core pillar contributing to *mino-bimaadiziwin*, a good way of life, we must as a people re-centre our own values, teachings, stories and most of all our pedagogies. How we come to know, what we learn and why we dance is just as important, if not more so, than what we do in that circle. We can have the deadliest and cleanest regalia, but if we dance from a place that does not centre growth and knowing of self through wholism and the dance spirit, then I would question what it is we want to see in our communities. As I watch my daughters dance in the circle, I watch as Theland completes his first season in the adult category, I see those young dancers watching him and dancing on the sidelines, I have to believe we are up to the task.

Powwow as place, Anishinaabeg pedagogy, and possible applications to non-Indigenous educational contexts

Powwow has provided my own self with a clear direction and purpose in life. It's not just about what you learn at powwow at place, it's what stays with you. You miss the people, the place, because of how generative it is for your entire being and most importantly you have a place. You recognize and are recognized by others. Powwow is not perfect, far from it, there are a great deal of problematic and harmful things that occur within (reinforcement of the gender binary, poverty and lateral violence surrounding contests, predatory behaviour of men and lack of criminal reference checks for headstaff etc), all of which require increased scrutiny and addressing through powwow committees and attendees. Is it that powwows are flawed

colonized environments that have limitations, or is it the folks who bring in their trauma, hurt, and projections of pain to that place to cause harm? With all of that being said, I still believe powwow as place creates possibility for being nurtured and cared for. If the place is grounded in Anishinaabewin, powwow is a place of immense learning and growth. Without trying to go into a large diatribe about what is 'traditional,' I also see value in contests within powwow where we are pushed to grow and learn our culture. The specials hosted by powwow committees and families are not intended to divide dancers, but to request that dancers give their gifts of dance to help the community. To dance hard for the people. The prize moneys and giveaways and acknowledgements are a way of bringing those folks together, *zhoonyahwin* (capitalism/money) is a part of the world and way we live today. Dancers travel great distances, they require *zhoonyah* (money) at the powwow to eat, the components of their regalia have costs associated with them. In my territory we have seen divide between 'traditional' and 'contest' powwows, leading some to assert that one is less valid than the other, that 'dancing for money' is all that happens at powwows. This is an extremely limiting oversimplification of what occurs at powwow as place. The reality is all powwows have protocol, ceremonial aspects that occur before, during, and after. All powwows are traditional. It is not the act of making a powwow into a contest that makes it less valid, it is the values, beliefs and behaviours that some folks bring to powwow that can turn a powwow away from what are its core functions, to dance, sing and pray for a good life. Most of the dancers I have come to know see powwow as a way of life. Even contest powwows push them to grow and to learn, when they place and their peers do not, they will gift them with some of their winnings as an act of acknowledgement, connection, and collectivism. These are embodiments of kindness, care, and support which often go unrecognized. To see and be seen, to give back to the community through the role of dancing is a gift of which I am truly grateful to have the ability to share and give back. Dancers give and get something back from powwow as place, there is a reciprocity that is often unseen or perhaps

not acknowledged enough, and I am left to wonder if these notions of reciprocity, collectivism, and relationality are something that non-Indigenous educational contexts can also reckon with.

It was during my time in coursework, during my Masters and PhD programs, that I came to see schools as harmful places to Anishinaabeg students. Certainly the vestiges of a colonial education system remain within schools. Despite efforts of anti-racism, increased Indigenous content in curricula, more Indigenous educators, and an increased presence of Indigenous community during the post-TRC era of education, I continue to see tensions in the field of Indigenous education. At the core of my concern is the continued focus on demonstrable and tangible changes, the new textbooks and library purchases, the inclusion workshops, guest speakers in schools, and still at the centre of the school are *zhaagnoshwin*, epistemologies and ontologies, which inform pedagogical frameworks and practices. When I consider my learning from the project herein, I see the components of a wholistic framework that centres *Anishinaabewin*. The child is the gift from creation, and so too do they carry gifts which inform their roles and responsibilities as they develop, learn, and grow. The child is provided an Anishinaabeg learning place to explore, to ask questions, to watch, to try, and most importantly to feel. The trajectory of learning at powwow follows a pathway that starts with their body, their feeling, their movement. In many ways the cognitive process of meaning making is secondary, or at the very least not at the forefront of the learning process. It is the responsibility of the adult to observe the child and nurture the learning trajectory. Most importantly it is to build connections outwards from that initial relationship of teacher/learner to the community and beyond. It is the collective knowledge that builds out the learning over time, the relationships formed with others. This model is acutely different from a *zhaagnosh* model, which sees relationships built around a single educator and many students. As a father I find it difficult to identify the gifts of my own children, who I observe and provide for everyday. Attunement, attentiveness, and the framework of knowing a child informed by understanding children as

sacred and carrying gifts, might shift their pedagogy and re-centre the critical importance of relationship. I am not suggesting there are shortcuts to relational learning either, and in many ways the school system is setup in a manner that interferes with relationship building informed by Anishinaabewin. How are you going to come to know your students gifts, the abilities they carry, what their roles and responsibilities are within our community if you are overburdened with limited prep-time, curricula expectations, behavioural concerns, and inclusivity. I do not envy educators one bit, the work is daunting. And yet, the more relationality can be centred in the classroom, I believe the greater the possibility of learning is possible. Unfortunately there are no shortcuts with relationship building. It is not as simple as making posters about their interests, assigning writing about their summers, or buying the class pizza every Friday as a reward for good behaviour. I find myself still questioning whether a teacher can meet the needs of the Anishinaabeg child given the place in which they teach. If a classroom could operate in an adult/child ratio close to 1:1, where relationships are not disrupted with the changing of adults on a year to year basis, there may perhaps be a greater opportunity to foster the gifts of the child. Within the current context of the *zhaagnosh* school system can a child be truly seen by their teacher? I have my doubts, and in many ways the divided attention of the adult can only serve to make relationship centred pedagogy increasingly difficult. A model where other aunties, uncles, grandparents, caregivers, can be present and have ongoing relationships with the child, that they may track the gifts and development of the child from a wholistic standpoint may see more positive outcomes for Anishinaabeg students in the *zhaagnosh* school system. The central focus in schools must focus away from constant measurement of what the children are learning, and more towards an assessment of how the adults foster connection, build relationships, and bridge Anishinaabeg students towards knowing themselves and feeling nourished in body, mind, emotions and spirit.

While I recognize and have observed an increase in powwows occurring at schools, these are generally in the places of a pre-existing Indigenous student population. It is not the intent of the project to assert that powwows become an annual or regular event at all schools, but certainly at schools with higher populations of Anishinaabeg students, based on the *dibaajimowinan* contained herein it is not a leap to suggest that there may be more benefits than are observed on the day of the event itself. The ability to gather and invite community, caregivers, family, and dancers together alongside school staff and administrators is important. When the drum sounds and we dance intertribals together, the principal has just as much learning taking place as the child, in many ways the drum and powwow as place is an equalizer and diminishes the power dynamics that underpin most schools. Being able to connect through song, dance, food, and visiting, are all critical in fostering community and collectivism. When powwow occurs at a school the possibility for Anishinaabewin to become the central pedagogical framework must not be underestimated, if only for that short timeframe. Thus leading me to call on *zhaagnosh* school systems and administrators to work alongside Indigenous community to resource, plan, and coordinate powwows on a regular basis. Annually, biannually, and/or outside of school hours are all important considerations in fostering powwow as a learning place. An afternoon of song and dance is nice, but typically powwows go from noon to 5pm, have a supper break, and then continue afterwards. One day is nice, two days is better. Finding a way to navigate unions, staff commitments, hours, is critical in ensuring the fostering of Anishinaabeg places of learning. Not every student is going to be a dancer, not every child will be a singer, but the connection, relationality, and fostering of safe(r) spaces to learn within a context informed by *Anishinaabewin* is critical.

Conclusion

This past year was harder than anticipated as a dancer. COVID seems to have settled down for the time being, and in Ontario we see powwows being hosted again. My children line up for tiny tot money, my daughter was crowned as Junior Miss Wikwemikong, and my wife has danced strong all season long. There were personal setbacks too, I injured my achilles tendon at Salamanca powwow, my first significant injury caused by grass dancing in all my years of dancing. I have been watching from the sidelines this summer, and still as a spectator and as a powwow dad/uncle I have been finding other ways to find nourishment. I find myself entering a new life stage, as I get closer to my 40s, the wear and tear of dancing for years is maybe telling my body that I indeed am a Sr. Adult category grass dancer - an age category set aside at many powwows for dancers in their late 30s to mid 50s. While I don't have to dance with the Theland's on the trail every weekend, my calves get a lot tighter, I need a lot more stretching, and my recovery time is longer than ever before. While the bounce of my dance may not be as strong as before, my drive to move my body to the drum and feel connected to those deadly songs still remains strong as ever. Perhaps it's a good time to also reflect on the life stage I find myself moving through as an adult and caregiver, my children are getting older and there is a new phase of life coming to the fore. I have been preparing for this change by creating new beadwork. A process I began to design and implement over the past year and a half. Based on the relationship with Nathalie, I asked her to design the florals for my new beaded set. I sent her blank tracings and cut outs of my beadwork patterns and she sent me back beautiful florals adorning all the pieces. With the time crunch of school, parental responsibilities, and with powwows coming back, I set out to have the new beaded set ready for Summer 2022. I hired my friend Doug Turner to help with the larger pieces, while I have focused on the medallions, moccasins and accessories. I continue to work on the beaded set and plan to dance it out in the spring of 2023. I find myself moving through the time of growth and energy, when my old

beaded set had bright colours and contrasts, my new set utilizes more earthy tones and florals designed by Nathalie. It feels appropriate as my accessories switch from a bright neon green, to the use of autumn yellow and golden beads. Like *mitig* (a tree), the leaves change colour with the seasons, and so too will my outfit focus on a new time of affirmation and greater understanding of my role as dancer. This season I have enjoyed watching with great pride and joy as Theland and the younger grass dancers take on the mantle of dancing their style in the circle. They too will start new families soon, some of them already have. They will travel, dance, compete, and continue to learn. I am beyond grateful and look forward to the next phase of my dancing journey, working on my new beaded set with help from my partner and those other dancers whose work I adore. I hope to be dancing long into my final life stage. Miigwech. Mii'we.

Works and People Cited

Absolon, K. E. (2022). *Kaandossiwin : how we come to know : Indigenous re-search methodologies* (2nd edition.). Fernwood Publishing.

Absolon, K., & Willett, C. (2005). *Putting Ourselves Forward: Location in Aboriginal Research*. In L. A. Brown & S. Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance revisiting critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches* (2nd Edition). Canadian Scholars' Press.

Anderson, K. Métis. University of Guelph. Oral storytelling. personal communication. 2018.

Archibald, J. (2008). *Indigenous storywork : educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit*. UBC Press.

Axtmann, A. (2001). Performative Power in Native America: Powwow Dancing. *Dance Research Journal*, 33(1), 7–22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1478853>

Ball, J., & Simpkins, M. (2004). The Community within the Child: Integration of Indigenous Knowledge into First Nations Childcare Process and Practice. *American Indian Quarterly*, 28(3–4), 480–498.

Blaeser, K. (2013). Wild Rice Rights: Gerald Vizenor and an Affiliation of Story. In N. Sinclair, H. Stark, & J. Doerfler (Eds.), *Centering Anishinaabeg studies : understanding the world through stories*. Michigan State University Press.

Brendtro, L. K. (2019). Pathways from pain to resilience. *International Journal of Child, Youth & Family Studies IJCYFS*, 10(2–3), 5–24.

Brokenleg, M., Brendtro, L. K., & van Bockern, S. (1991). The Circle of Courage. *Beyond Behavior*, 2(2), 5–12.

Browner, T. (2004). *Heartbeat of the people : music and dance of the northern pow-wow* (1st pbk. ed.). University of Illinois Press.

Burnette, C. E., Lesesne, R., Temple, C., & Rodning, C. B. (2020). Family as the Conduit to Promote Indigenous Women and Men's Enculturation and Wellness: "I Wish I Had Learned Earlier." . *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 17(1), 1–23.

Cajete, G. (2000). Indigenous Knowledge: The Pueblo Metaphor of Indigenous Education. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/utoronto/detail.action?docID=3412130>.

Cajete, G. A. (2016). Indigenous education and the development of indigenous community leaders. *Leadership*, 12(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715015610412>

Cajete, G. A. (2017). Children, Myth and Storytelling: An Indigenous Perspective. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 7(2 SAGE Publications), 113–130.

Cajete, Gregory. (1994). Look to the mountain : an ecology of indigenous education . In *Look to the mountain : an ecology of indigenous education* (1st ed.). Kivakí Press.

Coulthard, G. (2010). Place Against Empire: Understanding Indigenous Anti-Colonialism. In *Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory* (Vol. 4, Issue 2).

Debassige, B. D. L. (2012). Re-searching, expressing (literacy), and journeying in indigenous education : coming-to-know Anishinaabe mino-bimaadiziwin and the oshkabaywis-academic . In *Re-searching, expressing (literacy), and journeying in indigenous education : coming-to-know Anishinaabe mino-bimaadiziwin and the oshkabaywis-academic*. Thesis (Ph.D.)—York University, 2012.

Dion, S. D., Johnston, Krista., & Rice, Carla. (2010). Decolonizing our schools : Aboriginal education in the Toronto District School Board. In *Aboriginal education in the Toronto District School Board*. illustrations.

Doerfler, J. (2013). A Philosophy for Living: Ignatia Broker and Constitutional Reform among the White Earth Anishinaabeg. In J. Doerfler, N. J. Sinclair, & H. K. Stark (Eds.), *Centering Anishinaabeg studies : understanding the world through stories* (pp. 173–190). Michigan State University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.14321/j.ctt7ztcbn.18>

Ermine, W. (1995). Aboriginal Epistemology. In *First Nations Education in Canada: The circle unfolds*.

Goeman, M. (2008). From Place to Territories and Back Again: Centering Storied Land in the discussion of Indigenous Nation-building. *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 1(1).

Goulet, L. M., & Goulet, K. N. (2014). *Teaching Each Other: Nehinuw Concepts and Indigenous Pedagogies*. UBC Press.

Grande, S. (2004). *Red critical theory : Native American social and political thought*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Hall, L., Shute, T., Nangia, P., Parr, M., Montgomery, P., & Mossey, S. (2020). *Indigenous Fathering and Wellbeing: Kinship and Decolonial Approaches to Health Research*. DRHJ/RDRS, 3, 97–112.

Hill, R. Tuscarora. Six Nations. Oral teaching: Indigenous conceptualizations of 'art'. personal communication. 2005.

Hupfield, M. Anishinaabe. Wasauksing First Nation. Oral teaching: Anishinaabe life stage teachings - courage. personal communication. 2022.

Johnson, J. (2013). *Dancing into Place: The Role of the Powwow within Urban Indigenous Communities* (pp. 216–230).

Johnston, Patrick. (1983). *Native children and the child welfare system* . In *Native children and the child welfare system*. Canadian Council on Social Development in association with James Lorimer & Co.

King, L. Anishinaabe. Oral teaching: Anishinaabemowin. personal communication. 1994.

Kirkness, V. J., & Barnhardt, R. (1991). *First nations and higher education: The Four R's — Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility*. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 30(3).

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies characteristics, conversations and contexts*. University of Toronto Press.

Kwandibens, E. Anishinaabe. Sandy Lake First Nation. Oral teaching: dance teachings, regalia. personal communication. 2014.

Lalonde, C., & Chandler, M. J. (2011). Cultural Continuity Reduces Suicide Risk Among Aboriginal Peoples.

Lambe, J. (2003). Indigenous Education, Mainstream Education, and Native Studies: Some Considerations When Incorporating Indigenous Pedagogy into Native Studies: Document View. *American Indian Quarterly*, 27(1/2), 308.

Leddy, L. (2010). Interviewing Nokomis and Other Reflections: The Promise of Community Collaboration. *Oral History Forum d'histoire Orale*, 30(Special Issue-Talking Green: Oral History and Environmental History).

Maracle, L. Stolo. Toronto. Oral teaching: storytelling. personal communication. 2007.

Maracle, S. Mohawk. Tyendinaga. Toronto. Oral Teaching: Wholism. personal communication. 2010.

Maracle, S. Mohawk. Tyendinaga. Toronto. Oral Teaching: Life Stage teachings. personal communication. 2012.

Maracle, S. Mohawk. Tyendinaga. Toronto. Oral Teaching: Life Stage teachings. personal communication. 2016.

Murphy, J. S. (2007). *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories* (NED-New edition). University of Minnesota Press.
<https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctttsk8j>

Pheasant, K. J. (2006). It's all in the song. *Windspeaker*, 24(3), SS2.

Pheasant-Neganigwane, K. Anishinaabe. Wiikwemikoong. Oral teaching: relationship and reciprocity in powwow. personal communication 2014.

Pheasant-Neganigwane, K. (2020). Powwow : a celebration through song and dance. Orca Book Publishers.

Pitawanakwat, B. Anishinaabe. Birch Island First Nation. Mill Lake. Anishinaabemowin knowledge. personal communication. 2020.

Price, J. (2007). Tukisivallialiqtakka: The things I have now begun to understand: Inuit governance, Nunavut and the Kitchen Consultation Model. University of Victoria.

Recollet, K. (2019). Choreographies of the Fall: Futurity Bundles & Land- ing When Future Falls Are Immanent. Theater (New Haven, Conn.), 49(3), 89–105.

Rice, J. Anishinaabe. Wasauksing First Nation. Lives in Barrie. Life Stage Teachings. personal communication. 2011.

Shea Murphy, J. (2007). The people have never stopped dancing Native American modern dance histories. University of Minnesota Press.

Simpson, L. B. (2011). Dancing on our turtle's back : stories of Nishnaabeg re-creation, resurgence and a new emergence. Arbeiter Ring Pub.

Simpson, L. B. (2017). As we have always done : Indigenous freedom through radical resistance. University of Minnesota Press.

Sinclair, R. (2007). Identity lost and found: Lessons from the sixties scoop. First Peoples Child & Family Review, 3(1), 65–82. <https://fpcfr.com/index.php/FPCFR/article/view/25>

Smith, L. T. (2012). Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. Bloomsbury Academic & Professional.

Stevenson, A. (2021). *Intimate Integration : A History of the Sixties Scoop and the Colonization of Indigenous Kinship*. University of Toronto Press.

Tam, F. L. C., & Kohen, D. E. (2017). Indigenous families: who do you call family? *Journal of Family Studies*, 23(3), 243–259.

Teekens, S. Anishinaabe. Oral teaching, big drum and songs. personal communication. 2006.

Toulouse, S. Anishinaabe. Oral teaching: Anishinaabemowin, kinomaagegamig. personal communication. 2017.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada interim report. (2012). Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Valaskakis, G. Guthrie. (2005). *Indian country essays on contemporary native culture*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Vukelich, J. Anishinaabe. Oral teaching: 7 generations teaching, aanikoobijigan. personal communication. 2018.

Waziyatawin, & Yellow Bird, M. (2005). *For indigenous eyes only : a decolonization handbook*. School of American Research.

White. M. Anishinaabe. Chi'geeng First Nation. Oral teaching: biidaaban. personal communication. 2016.

Willinsky, J. (1998). *Learning to divide the world : education at empire's end*. University of Minnesota Press.

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony : indigenous research methods*. Fernwood Pub.

Young, G.A. (1981). Powwow power: perspectives on historic and contemporary intertribalism. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Indian University, Bloomington, IN.

Yunkaporta, T. (2019). Sand talk: how Indigenous thinking can save the world . Text Publishing Company.