

**UNDERSTANDING ANISHINAABEK G'GIKENDAASWINMIN  
(KNOWLEDGE) ON N'BI (WATER), NAAKNIGEWIN (LAW) AND  
NOKOMIS GIIZIS (GRANDMOTHER MOON) IN THE GREAT LAKES  
TERRITORY FOR WATER GOVERNANCE**

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## Abstract

The Canadian settler state lacks a gender balance in N’bi governance and decision making. Little documentation articulates Anishinaabek understandings of reconciliation and how reconciliation can assist with reconciling different legal orders and governance structures which includes Nokomis Giizis (grandmother moon). Drawing on Anishinaabek from the Great Lakes territory, this research explores how does Anishinaabek law construct the role of women in N’bi decision making; can the broader discourse in Canada about reconciliation assist with improving humanity’s relationship to N’bi; how can the concept of reconciliation assist with reconciling different legal orders, and governance structures; what are the relationships and responsibilities between Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis and how can these relationships inform N’bi governance including women’s roles. This study utilized an Anishinaabek Research Paradigm (ARP) that employs Indigenous Intelligence as a conceptual framework for qualitative Anishinaabek analysis of data throughout the study. G’giikendaaswinmin shared through conversations, key informants and a focus group are provided into three separate manuscripts. Manuscript One: Indigenous Water Governance: Anishinaabek naaknigewin (law) Constructs the Role of Anishinaabek kweok (women) in N’bi (water) Decision Making supports and expands on existing literature of kweok as N’bi carriers with roles and responsibilities to and specific knowledge of N’bi. It demonstrates that men have a role in N’bi governance and reveals how Anishinaabek naaknigewin constructs the role of kweok in N’bi decision making. Manuscript Two: N’bi Can Teach us about Reconciliation demonstrates how N’bi can teach humanity about reconciliation which could address environmental conflict. It reveals that Anishinaabek understanding of reconciliation is different than mainstream society and is about relationships between Anishinaabek and non-Indigenous but also about relationships with N’bi. Manuscript Three: Relationships and Responsibilities between Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis (Grandmother Moon) can Inform N’bi (water) Governance establishes that Anishinaabek understand the relationships and responsibilities to Nokomis Giizis through the cycles of both kweok and Nokomis Giizis that is guided through Anishinaabek naaknigewin. In brief, this study supports and expands that

kweok need to be involved in water governance based on their knowledge and relationships with N'bi and Nokomis Giizis.

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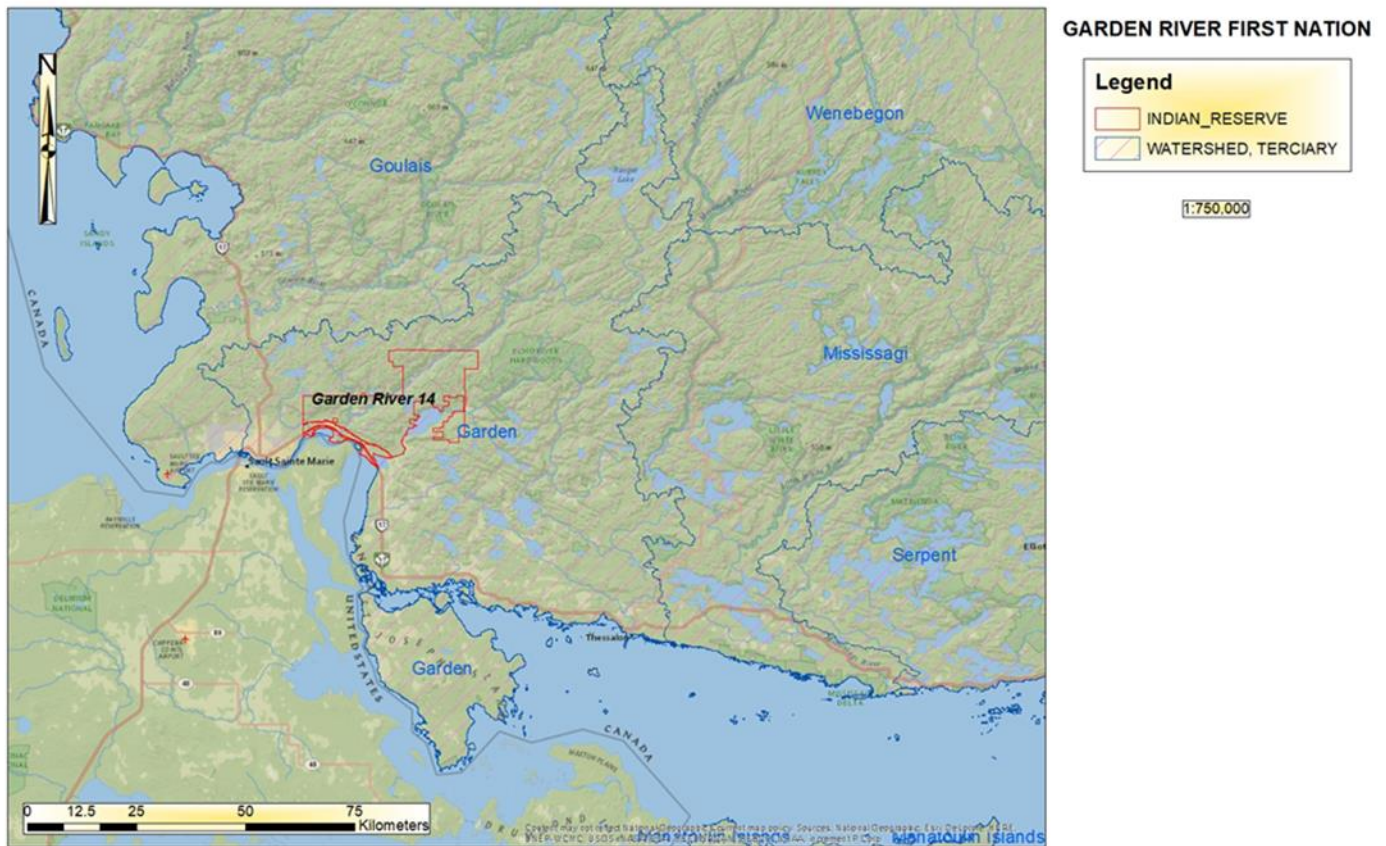
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## E-yaawyaanh (Who I am)

Nanaboozhoo, Susan Chiblow nidizhnikaaz. Ogamah annag indigo. Ajijaak nidoodem.

Ketegaunzeebeezeing nidoonjibaa. Anishinaabe kwe endow. Ketegaunzeebeezeing nindaa noogom. I grew up at Bell's Point on the most westerly side of Garden River First Nation with access to the St. Mary's River and the Root River. These are the waters and lands that govern me. N'bi (waters) has always been important and influential in my life. I would often watch the rivers, listening to the sounds, feeling the connection. I could feel the sounds of the N'bi, understanding that N'bi is healing and comforting. I have furthered my understanding of N'bi by participating in N'bi ceremonies, Water Walks, and discussing N'bi issues with Elders and language speakers.

Within many Indigenous communities, we identify ourselves as a form of respect in sharing who we are, where we are from, and who our ancestors. This helps establish trust and builds relationships. As an Anishinaabe kwe, behaving respectfully is integral to holding myself accountable to Anishinaabek teachings and law, which is much more rigorous than what was being asked of me from university-based ethics. One component of transparency and accountable ethnicity is embedded within my understanding of my expected responsibility to ensure a long healthy life for Mother Earth. I understand I am part of Creation with specific roles and responsibilities stemming from my name and clan. I therefore respect my teachings of spirit comes first by making an offering (the offering was given to the water) and introducing myself in Anishinaabemowin.



Garden River First Nation. The waters and lands that govern me.

I live in my Anishinaabek ancestors' territory of the Great Lakes which informs my placed-based research. I am a descendent of Shingwauk through both sides of my family. My ancestor on my father's side (John Bell) married Marie, Shingwauk's daughter. My ancestor on my mother's side (Charles LaRose) married one of Shingwauk's granddaughters. Shingwauk was a strong negotiator, instrumental in the signing of the Robinson Huron Treaty, to which I am also a part of. More broadly, my community is the Anishinaabek of the Great Lakes. These two marriages provided John Bell and Charles LaRose with membership to Garden River First Nation. It is known that without the marriage to Garden River First Nation kweok, an individual could not gain membership to the reserve.

Shingwauk was instrumental in the negotiating of the Robinson Huron Treaty and insisted that education be a part of it. He had a vision of a Teaching Wigwam (house/building) where a space would be created where Anishinaabek and Settlers could learn together. I am living my ancestor's vision. My Nokomis told me a long time ago "Go and learn from them, learn their ways, then come home and work for your people". I continue to listen to my Elders, knowledge holders, and people. Following the instructions of my ancestors Elders, and knowledge holders, I participated in ceremony asking for guidance. The guidance that came was to be who I need to be, to be a good ancestor. Being a good ancestor has driven my personal quest to inform the world one person at a time of the immediate need to stop the destruction to the land, the waters, the air so that those who are yet to come will have all Creation to experience this journey in the human form.

It has taken many years of persuading from family, friends, and colleagues to pursue a doctorate. I did not like educational institutions due to numerous racial experiences faced in elementary school, high school, college, and universities. I was often asked to leave history, geography, social sciences, and science classes. I was labeled as disruptive because I would not tolerate inaccurate descriptions and information about Indigenous Peoples. Many non-Indigenous students feared me just because I spoke up as an Anishinaabe, leaving me feeling isolated and not understood. Hushed but audible racial remarks often flowed consistently in the hallways and classrooms in private conversations which also included the teachers.

Participating in N'bi ceremonies and Water Walks has provided me with many opportunities to learn from other Anishinaabek kweok. With kweok being birth water carriers, their knowledge is intrinsic to research on N'bi governance. I utilized their knowledge in exploring kweok relationships to N'bi and how these relationships can inform water governance. With my experiences as an Anishinaabe with N'bi, I chose my over-arching focus to be on N'bi and kweok. More specifically, I chose to explore reconciliation and relationships to N'bi as one of my primary topics because Canada released the Final



Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2105. This report documents what the Commission did and how it went about its work, as well as what it heard, read, and concluded about residential schools in Canada. The report documents 94 Calls to Action categorized in several different themes such as child language and culture. The Calls to Action are not specific to kweok and their knowledge. One year later, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) began, releasing its final report in 2019 which included 2SLGBTQQIA people. The final report for MMIWG has several themes listing well over 18 Calls for Justice. The Calls for Justice address human and Indigenous rights and governmental obligations, culture, health and wellness, human security, and justice to list a few. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the National Inquiry into MMIWG have commendable Calls to Action and Calls to Justice but relationships to N’bi and lands are not detailed. Exploring reconciliation and relationships can assist with understanding how Anishinaabek naaknigewin in relationship to Nokomis Giizis can support the well-being for N’bi, other beings and humanity.

As an Anishinaabe person, I understand that Anishinaabek naaknigewin is based on relationships and responsibilities. There are layers of Anishinaabe naaknigewin with one-layer Natural Law being based on the earth for human behavior learning from the natural realm such as Nokomis Giizis phases and cycles. I therefore chose to explore Anishinaabek naaknigewin based on relationships and responsibilities from Nokomis Giizis.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	ii
<b>Acknowledgements E-yaawyaanh (who I am)</b>	iv
<b>E-yaawyaanh (who I am)</b>	vi
<b>Table of Contents</b>	x
<b>List of Figures</b>	xii
<b>Terminology</b>	xiii
<b>Chapter One: Enjimaajtaamgak (where it begins)</b>	1
Research context and problem rationale	1
Indigenous Water Insecurity: The Failure of Colonial Water Governance	1
Great Lakes and Water Governance	5
Indigenous Women and Water Governance	6
The Need for Indigenious Led Reconciliation	9
Indigenous Legal Systems and Knowledge	12
Research Participants	13
Literature Review	19
N’bi Governance and Anishinaabek Kweok	26
Reconciliation and Relationships to N’bi	30
Anishinaabek Naaknigewin (law) and Nokomis Giizis	34
Complexities of Water Governance	36
Methods: Indigenous Research	39
Organization of Dissertation	40
<b>Chapter Two: Indigenous Water Governance: Anishinaabek Naaknigewin (Law) Constructs the Role of Anishinaabek Kweok (Women) in N’bi (Water) Decision Making.</b>	43
Chapter Overview	43
Introduction	45
Context	48
Anishinaabek Kweok	48
Anishinaabek Naaknigewin	50
N’bi Decision Making	51
Methods: Anishinaabek Protocols	52
Voices of Anishinaabek Participants	54
Roles and Responsibilities of Women for N’bi	54
Water Carriers	55
N’bi Relationships	57
Ceremony	58
Carrying the Voice of N’bi	60
Barriers for Kweok in N’bi Decision Making	62
Loss of Culture and Teachings	62
Opportunities for Kweok in N’bi Decision Making	63
Realizing Responsibilities: Water Walks	64
Safe Space for Kweok	64
Anishinaabek Naaknigewin	65
N’bi Teachings as Naaknigewin	66
Naaknigewin is a Responsibility for all Life	67
Conclusion	68
References	71
<b>Chapter Three: N’bi (Water) Can Teach us about Reconciliation</b>	76

Chapter Overview	76
Introduction	77
Setting the Context on Reconciliation	79
Understanding Indigenous Concepts of Reconciliation	82
Indigenous Legal Traditions and Reconciliation	84
Situating Research: Anishinaabe Research Paradigm (Methodology)	87
Results and Findings	89
Anishinaabek Concept of Reconciliation in Anishinaabemowin (language)	90
Reconciliation with Self through N’bi	91
Correcting the Wrongs	93
Reconciling different Legal Orders and Governance Structures	94
Learning from N’bi about Reconciliation	96
Discussion	98
Conclusion	101
Anishinaabemowin and Reconciliation	103
Correcting the Wrongs	104
Reconciling Different Legal Orders and Governance Structures	104
Learning from N’bi about Reconciliation	105
References	106
<b>Chapter Four: Relationships and Responsibilities between Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis (Grandmother Moon) Informs N’bi (Water) Governance</b>	115
Chapter Overview	115
Introduction	116
Positionality	119
Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis	121
Anishinaabek Naaknigewin	122
Colonial Exclusion of Women from Water Governance	124
Methods and Study Area	125
Results: Voices of the Participants	127
Relationships and Responsibilities between Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis	127
Anishinaabek Naaknigewin for Nokomis Giizis	129
Discussion	130
Conclusion	133
References	135
<b>Chapter Five: Gaa-igkendmaanh (what I learned)</b>	141
Contributions to Scholarship	143
Aapiish waazhaaying (where we are going)	148
<b>Glossary of Terms</b>	150
<b>Bibliography</b>	151
<b>Appendices</b>	162
<b>Appendix A: An Anishinaabe Research Methodology that Utilizes Indigenous Intelligence as a Conceptual Framework Exploring Humanity’s Relationship to N’bi (Water)</b>	162
<b>Appendix B: Interview Guide</b>	176

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1. Map of the Great Lakes Territory (Great Lakes Map)

Figure 2. Map depicting the Anishinaabe Migration

Figure 3. Map of Great Lakes Ecosystem Stress

Figure 4. Great Lakes Areas of Concern

# **Terminology**

## **Indigenous Water Governance**

Indigenous water governance is employing Indigenous worldviews. Wilson et al. (2021) states, “Indigenous water governance tends to centre on the understanding that water is a more-than-human person or a living entity to which there are relational responsibilities, a principle central to Indigenous sovereignty, livelihood and survival” (p. 3). Indigenous water governance is knowing that water can and does govern itself and is about relationships, responsibilities, and reciprocity (Chiblow, 2019). I use Indigenous water governance through this dissertation when referring to how Indigenous Peoples relate to water.

## **N’bi Water Governance**

N’bi water governance is based on Anishinaabek understanding that water is alive with spirit, is medicine, is sacred, and is life (Arsenault, 2021; Chiblow, 2019 & 2021; McGregor et al., 2020; Craft, 2014; Anderson, 2010; King, 2007; Blackstock, 2001). N’bi is considered a living relation and is a source of identity (Cave & McKay, 2016). N’bi water governance emphasizes responsibility to water as a living entity (Wilson, 2020).

## **Water Governance**

Water governance is based on colonial concepts of management and control of water. Bakker (2003) explains that water governance is based on institutions, actors, and societies deciding on how water is to be used, by whom, and under what circumstances. The Global Water Partnership defines water governance as, “the range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources, and deliver of water services, at different levels of society” (p. 7). I use water governance in this dissertation when referring to colonial systems of control and management.

## **N’bi**

N’bi refers to the waters which includes lakes, rivers, ground water, rains, and streams. N’bi is the Anishinaabek word for water. I use N’bi when referring to Anishinaabek g’giikendaaswinmin.

## **Water**

Water is known as two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom (H<sub>2</sub>O) in western science. I use the term water when explaining the colonial worldview of water as Linton (2010) explains that the dominant way of relating and knowing water is an abstract measurable quantity reducing it to a unit of H<sub>2</sub>O. The colonial worldview does not see water as a live with spirit.

## **Reconciliation**

Reconciliation is about restoring relationships. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) stated, “Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country” (p. 6). Reconciliation has been used in a variety of ways (Borrows & Tully, 2018). I use reconciliation to describe respectful relationships between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Peoples and relationships between people and the natural world.

## **Anishinaabek G’giikendaaswinmin**

Anishinaabek g'giikendaaswinmin is specific Anishinaabek knowledge systems. It has been known more widely as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK), and more recently as Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Since this project is primarily based on Anishinaabek knowledge from the Great Lakes territory, I used Anishinaabek g'giikendaaswinmin to describe Anishinaabek knowledge.

# Chapter One

## Enjimaajtaamgak (where it begins)

### Research context and problem rationale

*“[W]omen could provide a unique and valuable perspective on the emergent water crisis” (Altamirano-Jiménez and Kermoal, 2016, p. 6).*

It is the writing of the work that poses the largest problem: what to include and what to exclude, how to do justice to the complexities and nuances in ways that will not distract from the important matters at hand, will not overwhelm the reader, or overwhelm the writer for that matter. One truth I always refer to is the fact that as Anishinaabek, we were here occupying these lands, governing ourselves with our own laws, and lived responsibility with all Creation through respect and reciprocity. Truth needs to be taught which includes the roles and responsibilities of Anishinaabek kweok (women) N’bi governance.

### Indigenous Water Insecurity: The Failure of Colonial Water Governance

Contemporary Canadian water governance is failing Indigenous peoples, including the Anishinaabek. Arsenault (2021) explains how government legislation has failed over the past few decades causing water insecurity. Water insecurity is “the lack of adequate and safe water for a healthy and productive life—is one of the greatest threats facing humans in the coming century” (Wutich, 2010, p. 1). Latchmore et al. (2018) explain, “Local water (in)security is a result of a myriad complex interactions between water resources, drinking water and sanitation (including wastewater) infrastructure and management, community health and wellbeing, access and equity, economic activities, energy, and the environment” (p. 894). It has been recognized in research and policy that “Indigenous communities often experience a disproportionate burden of water insecurity compared to non-Indigenous populations” (Wilson et al., 2019, p. 251). Several scholars have recognized that Indigenous Peoples experience acute disparities in

drinking water (Arsenault, 2021; Awume et al., 2020; Mitchell, 2019). Black & McBean (2017) quote Justice O’Conner stating that water quality and quantity in First Nations are not comparable to most Canadians. Arsenault (2021) states, “There are many First Nation communities that have been impacted by water insecurity over the past few decades” (p. 2) which have also generated “interests by researchers and scientists due to the severity of their water insecurity” (p. 2). Indigenous scholars have raised concerns about the settler colonial states critically assessing why government interventions, and legislation have largely failed over the last decade (Arsenault, 2021; Wilson, 2021; McGregor, 2014; Phare, 2009). These failures have affected the health of Indigenous communities. Arsenault (2021) reveals, “By the year 2016, linkages between water insecurity and the health, education, social, and just issues within Indigenous communities began being identified” (p. 5) Indigenous Peoples affected by water insecurity are more vulnerable than the rest of Canada (Talaga, 2017). The Ontario Minister of the Solicitor General (2016) determined the deaths of seven youth had mental and social health issues impacted by water insecurity in First Nation communities (Ontario Minister of the Solicitor General, 2016). Taylor et al. (2019) states, “Settler state water governance systems at all scales have failed Indigenous peoples” (p. 1).

The settler state water governance is “a collection of systems and processes involved in decision-making about the use, conservation, and protection of water (Emanuel & Wilkins, 2020; Bark et al., 2012). Water governance “[I]n Canada is characterized by a high degree of fragmentation in a decentralized state” (Bakker & Cook, 2011, p. 275) that has implications for Anishinaabek communities. Access to clean drinking water is high on the list of priorities for First Nations in Canada. Indigenous Services Canada (2022) website updates water advisories stating that 128 long term drinking water advisories have been lifted since 2015 but 26 long term drinking water advisories are still in effect in 29 communities (Government of Canada, 2022). Alcantara et al. (2020) explain that the lifting the boil water advisories is step in the right direction but “it remains unclear whether these efforts will lead to long-term improvements to First Nations water conditions” (p. 158) and Staryzk et al. (2021) explain how ending



boil water advisories is regrettably inadequate. Several scholars have indicated that the fragmented water governance systems are to blame for lack of clean drinking water in First Nations (Arseneault, 2021; Irvine et al., 2020; Alcantara et al., 2020). Water governance is complex and multijurisdictional (Arseneault, 2021; Irvine et al., 2020; Bakker & Cook, 2011). There are several government levels involved in water governance in First Nations. Irvine et al. (2020) states, “Municipal, provincial, and federal governments all hold some degree of decision-making power when it comes to drinking water” (p. 2). The complexity is further driven by the federal government acting as legal authority to First Nations (Alcantara et al. 2020; Bakker & Cook, 2011). Latchmore et al., (2018) explains, “[D]rinking water in Canada is under provincial/territorial jurisdiction, while First Nations communities are under federal jurisdiction” (p. 893). Throughout the last decade, the federal government has initiated multiple plans and associated water programs to address the water crisis in First Nations (Black & McBean, 2017). The increased awareness of the water crisis in First Nations became public through the Walkerton Inquiry. Due to a water-borne outbreak in Walkerton, Ontario, a public inquiry was held to determine the causes (The Honourable O’Connor, 2002). The Chiefs of Ontario (2001) submitted Drinking Water In Ontario First Nation Communities: Present Challenges and Future Directions for On-Reserve Water Treatment in the Province of Ontario to address drinking water issues in First Nation communities. This Submission stated that there was a need to ensure that adequate water and sewage systems were in place (Chiefs of Ontario, 2001). The Submission states,

Change is clearly needed. The federal government’s policies need to be overhauled, more resources need to be dedicated to the goal of ensuring safe and reliable drinking water in First Nation communities, and First Nation people need to be permitted to meaningfully participate in the search for sustainable solutions in their communities (Chiefs of Ontario, 2001, p. 3).

Not much has changed since 2002 as lack of regulatory framework with minimal First Nation involvement in water decision making continues to remain a challenge with respect to water (Arseneault,

2021; Black & McBean, 2017). Several reports and assessments were compiled by governments followed by a First Nations Water Management Strategy (Black & McBean, 2017). The Office of the Auditor General released a review of the First Nations Water Management Strategy in 2005, criticizing the absence of a regulatory regime for First Nations water systems (Auditor General, 2005). Bill S-11 the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act was introduced in 2010 and enacted in 2013 (Arsenault, 2021; Black & McBean, 2017). This Bill was met with heavy criticism and was not passed due to the dissolution of parliament (Black & McBean, 2017). Shortly after, in 2012, Bill S-8, another Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act was passed which also met heavy criticism due to the lack of adequate First Nation consultation, weak protection of Aboriginal rights, and failure to address the resource gap (Arsenault, 2021; Thornton, 2012). Starzyk et al. (2021) explain, “It’s 2021, and water is still a concern” (p. 3). Indigenous organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations have recently been working to repeal Bill S-8 (Assembly of First Nations, 2017, 2018). Irvine et al. (2020) state, “Historically, federal and provincial initiatives to tackle drinking water challenges in First Nation communities have not addressed the underlying concerns First Nations people hold, some of which include treaty rights, decision making and governance structures, as well as the jurisdictional authority and responsibilities held by First Nations to care for their water” (p. 2).

First Nation’s responsibilities to water includes cultural and spiritual protocols. Irvine et al. (2020) explains, “Cultural and spiritual protocols, as well as Traditional Knowledge have also been cited as important perspectives that are imperative to First Nations drinking water governance but have yet to be adequately incorporated into governance models” (p.2). Several scholars such as Nicole Wilson, Racheal Arsenault, Deborah McGregor have produced recommendations on how to improve water governance. For example, Wilson et al. (2021) discusses how settler colonial states are hostile to Indigenous water rights and neglect service provision to Indigenous communities and Arsenault (2021) explains how water is sacred, a gift to all people with the responsibility to respect, conserve, and protect the waters for future generations so they are able to enjoy access to water quality and quantity. Starzyk et al. (2021) quote an

Elder as saying, “the most precious gift” is water (p. 1). Despite the continued research and recommendations on water governance, “water resources management is far from being sustainable” (Pahl-Wostl, 2020, p. 397) especially for Indigenous Peoples. Regardless of the several initiatives by the settler government trying to improve water governance in Indigenous communities, the state of the water resources provides more reasons for concern than optimism (Pahl-Wostl, 2020).

## **Great Lakes and Water Governance**

Water governance in the Great Lakes was initially based on the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty (Clamen & Macfarlane, 2020). The intent of the Treaty was to ensure “boundary waters and water flowing across the boundary shall not be polluted on either side to the injury of health or property on the other side” (Krantzberg, 2020, p. 370). This Treaty created the International Joint Commission (IJC) with the intent it would prevent and resolve disputes over the boundary waters of the United States and Canada (Whorley, 2020). The IJC did not engage with First Nations and “the fact that millions of Indigenous Peoples lived along the boarder-land, had occupied the waterways andlands in question for thousands of years, and were (and remain) significantly impacted by the health and well-being of the waterways, was fundamentally ignored in the BWT” (Ettawageshik & Norman, 2020, p. 434). Further, Ettawageshik & Norman (2020) state, “In fact, the International Joint Commission (IJC) itself recognizes that for the first ninety years after the Boundary Water Treaty (BWT) was signed, the IJC was specifically instructed not to engage with Tribes and First Nations – the impact of which is still felt today” (p. 434). With the blatant ignoring of the Indigenous Peoples living in the Great Lakes, the waters have been and continue to be contaminated (Krantzberg, 2020). Benedickson (2020) explains the historical contamination of water quality and the complexities in addressing the contamination. Due to historical contamination, the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) was signed in 1972 with the intent to to improve the Great Lakes water quality (Read, 2020) which lacked Indigenous involvement (Ettawageshik & Norman, 2020). Stemming from the GLWQA, the first Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and

Ecosystem Health (COA) was signed in 1971 between the provincial and federal governments which set goals and objectives to restore and protect the Great Lakes (McGregor, 2011). First Nations engaged in several dialogue initiatives through the Chiefs of Ontario<sup>1</sup> over the last decade to be included in the Agreements. The COA was amended in 2007, set to expire in 2010 but was extended to 2011 and again to 2012 which then expired (McGregor, 2013). In 2013, Environment Canada set out to engage First Nations about the COA hosting a meeting where First Nations expressed their concerns with the COA and Environment Canada agreed to work with the Chiefs of Ontario to develop a First Nations Annex (McGregor, 2013). In 2014, the COA has Annex 13: Engaging First Nations (Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health, 2014). In 2021, Canada and Ontario signed the ninth COA (Ontario, 2021). The COA (2021) preamble states, “AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada is committed to advancing reconciliation with First Nations and Métis peoples through renewed nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationships based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership” (Canada Ontario Agreement on the Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health, 2021, p. 5). The 2021 COA does not mention Indigenous women in the agreement. While this is certainly a success to include First Nations, much work needs to continue which includes ensuring Anishinaabek women and their water knowledge is included as it has long been stated that a paradigm shift needs to happen for truly sustainable water governance (Pahl-Wostl, 2020).

## **Indigenous Women and Water Governance**

The rationale for this inquiry stems from the lack of gender balance in N’bi<sup>2</sup> (water) policies, strategies, and governance (Jiménez-Estrada & Daybutch, 2021; Varcoe et al., 2019). Typically, Anishinaabek

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<sup>1</sup> The Chiefs of Ontario is a coordinating body for the 133 First Nations in Ontario. For more information see their website at <https://chiefs-of-ontario.org/>

<sup>2</sup> I will be using Anishinaabemowin (Anishinaabek language) throughout the document. I am a learner of Anishinaabemowin and am not a fluent language speaker. Fluent Anishinaabemowin speaker Patricia M. Ningewance (2009) explains there are different dialects in different communities, and I use the language from

kweok are excluded from colonial government's decision making and management frameworks for water (Wilson, 2020; Von der Porten et al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2013). This includes colonial governments ignoring Anishinaabek legal systems that have sustained Anishinaabek for thousands of years (Askew, 2018; Youngblood Henderson, 2002). Jacob et al. (2020) states, "This cycle of colonial domination and trauma is secured through ongoing processes of violence that dispossess Indigenous peoples of their traditional homelands, cultural practices and teachings, languages, and knowledge" (p. 2). Indigenous cultural practices, teachings, language, knowledge, and laws have sustained Indigenous Peoples (Atlas et al., 2020).

Indigenous women have special responsibilities to N'bi as they are the carriers of life (Anderson, 2010). Anishinaabek are often the first to take notice of the degradation of the waters, and the first to suffer due to their close relationships with the waters (Chiefs of Ontario, 2008; Craft, 2014; McGregor, 2001). Wilson et al. (2019) state, "Indigenous communities often experience a disproportionate burden of water insecurity compared to non-Indigenous populations" (pg. 2). Many Indigenous worldviews treat water as a life source for all, a living entity, and a spirit, not something to be owned or acquired (Craft, 2014; Wilson et al., 2019, 2021). The *Indigenous Peoples Kyoto Water Declaration* (2003) affirms water is living and has a connection to all life. Academic research corroborates the healing powers of waters and state that water heals you and water is a medicine (Craft, 2014; McGregor, 2015; Wilson, 2019). Muru-Lanning (2016), for example, refers to water as a gift with curative powers. Understanding Indigenous women's worldviews and responsibilities to the waters is a step towards reconciliation.

Nokomis Giizis and Anishinaabek women have a distinct relationship. Fluent Anishinaabemowin speaker Emma Meawasige explained that Giizis is the sun, Dibiki Giizis is the night sun (E. Meawasige, personal

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conversations with fluent language speakers in the Robinson Huron Treaty territory. In some instances, when quoting or referencing, I use the spelling provided in the document referenced. There is an Appendix with the Anishinaabemowin to English translations.

communication, 2020). Through participation in full moon ceremonies, Dibiki Giizis is referred to as Nokomis Giizis and is part of Anishinaabek temporal multiplicity which is learned from the lunar cycle (Awâsis, 2020). Many Aboriginal cultures engage in full moon ceremonies as a way of acknowledging the responsibilities of Nokomis Giizis (Blackstock, 2001). The Full Moon ceremonies I have participated in honour the connection Anishinaabek women have to Nokomis Giizis. The connection includes women's water with Nokomis Giizis. These connections and responsibilities Anishinaabek women have to Nokomis Giizis have been affected by colonization. Anderson (2000) explains how Indigenous women's roles and responsibilities have been devalued, distorted, and almost erased. This dissertation in addressing colonization specific to women and exploring the relationships and responsibilities between Anishinaabek women and Nokomis Giizis under Anishinaabek law will assist in addressing Anishinaabek women's roles in water governance.

The ultimate goal of the colonial settlers was to eliminate Indigenous Nations as distinct political and social entities (Diablo, 2017). According to John A. Macdonald, (The First Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada), "[t]he great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change" (First Nations and Indigenous Studies, 2009, pg. 1). Included in this goal, was the elimination of women's roles, responsibilities, and knowledge. Kuokkanen (2019) states, "Early colonizers recognized the crucial role of women in reproducing societies, not only through giving birth but as importantly, through collective identity, culture, and language" (pg. 188). With women's distinct roles and responsibilities, they are central to the collective continuance of Anishinaabek communities (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). Indigenous women are the keepers of culture, carriers of life, caretakers of the Nation, advisors to the men, the teachers, and were/are highly valued as the givers of life (Sayers and MacDonald, 2001; St. Denis, 2017). Eliminating women's role, responsibilities, and knowledge had the potential to eradicate Anishinaabek worldviews

and responsibilities to the lands<sup>3</sup>. Jiménez-Estrada and Daybutch (2021) explain how colonization has affected women's roles as stewards and protectors of life, but the roles and responsibilities have never truly disappeared.

### **The Need for Indigenous Led Reconciliation**

Colonial policies, strategies, and governance have asserted control over Indigenous Peoples and their lands forcefully relocating Indigenous Peoples and replacing their existing forms of governance (TRC, 2015). “The Canadian government pursued this [referring to the Statement on Indian Policy] policy of cultural genocide because it wished to divest itself of its legal and financial obligations to Aboriginal people and gain control over their lands and resources” (TRC, 2015, pg. 3). This has caused disputes over resource development/extraction, rural development, interference with Indigenous sacred sites, dam building, land-disputes, harvesting, hunting, fishing, but the fundamental conflict is about land (The Honourable Linden, 2007). The conflicts stem from extreme frustration of Indigenous Peoples with national, regional, or local situations with violence occasionally erupting (Coates, 2015). The conflict is not new as Hele (2016) explains an “attack” on Mica Bay by Shingwaukonse and other Anishinaabek leaders demanding the mining stop and presented Lord Elgin, governor of the Canadas with these words,

Father,  
Can you lay claim to this land? If as, by what right? Have you conquered it from us?  
You have not; for when you first came among us you children were few and weak,  
and the warriors of the Chippewas stuck terror to the heart of the pale face. But you  
came not as an enemy, you visited us in the character of a friend, you have lived as  
our guest and your children have been treated as our brothers. Have you purchased it  
from us, or have we surrendered it to you? If so, when? And how? And where are  
the treaties? (p. vii).

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<sup>3</sup> I use the word “lands” as being all inclusive to all life, the waters, animals, skyworld, birds, etc.

Conflicts continue today as Coates (2015) explains that each year there are dozens of conflicts such as Caledonia, Ontario and Elsipogtog First Nation, New Brunswick and “Aboriginal protests have generated a great deal of national and international debate, often because of the violence or threatened violence associated with the protest events” (p. 84). Curran (2019) states, “Conflicts between nation state governments and Indigenous peoples often manifest as disputes over water governance” (p. 1). Far too often, Indigenous Peoples are frustrated with government (in)action or development. Anishinaabe scholar Brittany Luby documents an entire book of the frustrations felt by Anishinaabek due to the construction of dams (Luby, 2020). The Canadian government commissioned the Ipperwash Inquiry to examine the events surrounding the death of Dudley George who was shot during a protest by Aboriginal people at the Ipperwash Provincial Park in September 1995 (Honourable Linden, 2007). The Honourable Sidney B. Linden (2007) explains how Aboriginal occupations and protests are common with little to no warning when they will occur and the fundamental conflict is about land which “continue to exist in Ontario, more than a decade after Ipperwash (p. 79). The Honourable Sidney B. Linden (2007) states an important truth,

Building a better relationship with Aboriginal peoples requires that governments and citizens recognize that treaties with Aboriginal peoples are the foundation that allowed non-Aboriginal people to settle in Ontario and enjoy its bounty. Nearly all of the lands and inland waters in Ontario are subject to treaties between First Nations and the British and Canadian governments. These treaties are not, as some people believe, relics of the distant past. They are living agreements, and the understandings on which they are based continue to have the full force of the law in Canada today (p. 80).

Indigenous led reconciliation can address historical and continued conflict. Indigenous Peoples have their own understandings of how to address conflict for reconciliation which includes restitution and correcting the wrongs (Jurgens, 2020).

Reconciliation has been a “buzz” word with the Canadian government since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reported their findings. Anishinaabek have been talking about reconciling relationships with the lands which includes N’bi as a component of re-connecting to their responsibilities. The Truth and



Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) states, “To the Commission, reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country” (pg. 6). Anishinaabek language speakers explain that reconciliation is not a word in our language. So, what does reconciliation mean to Anishinaabek? Craft and Regan (2020) declare that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission found conflicting views between Crown perspectives and Indigenous understandings of reconciliation. The colonizer’s assimilation attempted to eradicate and erase Anishinaabek by simply rewriting history and their identity. Starblanket and Coburn (2020) explain the eradication was a movement by Canada to erase Indigenous Peoples and their ways of knowing and being. The eradication and erasure of Anishinaabek included exploiting and devaluing Indigenous women and their roles and responsibilities (Bugler et al., 2021). This created a disconnect to the relationships women had with N’bi. The relationships women had with all life, including N’bi, also need to be reconciled.

Anishinaabek have been discussing their relationships to N’bi in different forums due to increased contamination of N’bi. In 2002, the Walkerton tragedy occurred causing Canadian governments to examine their legislative policies as it relates to N’bi. Due to the Walkerton tragedy, the conditions of N’bi in First Nation communities became more publicly known. In response, the Chiefs of Ontario produced the Water Declaration of the Anishinaabek, Muskegowuk and Onkwehonwe in Ontario (2008) to state their position. At the same time, the United Nations Generally Assembly (2002) was discussing the right to water and,

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted General Comment No. 15 on the right to water. Article I.1 states that "The human right to water is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity. It is a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights". Comment No. 15 also defined the right to water as the right of everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable and physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses. (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2002).

Awareness of the water crisis, recognized globally, has resulted in several efforts at the national, provincial, and local levels. The Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health (COA) (2021) recognizes the significance of the Great Lakes to Indigenous communities and commits to advancing reconciliation. The COA provides opportunities for the development of Anishinaabek knowledge in water governance advancing reconciliation. Locally, Anishinaabe N’bi Water Gatherings, which stemmed from a Social Sciences and Humanities Research (SSHRC) grant, focused on how humanity can reconcile its relationships to water (Craft, 2014). These gatherings provide opportunities to learn about responsibilities to N’bi through active participation in the gatherings, which is a form of reconciliation in understanding the relationships to N’bi, Anishinaabek law, and Nokomis Giizis.

### **Indigenous Legal Systems and Knowledge**

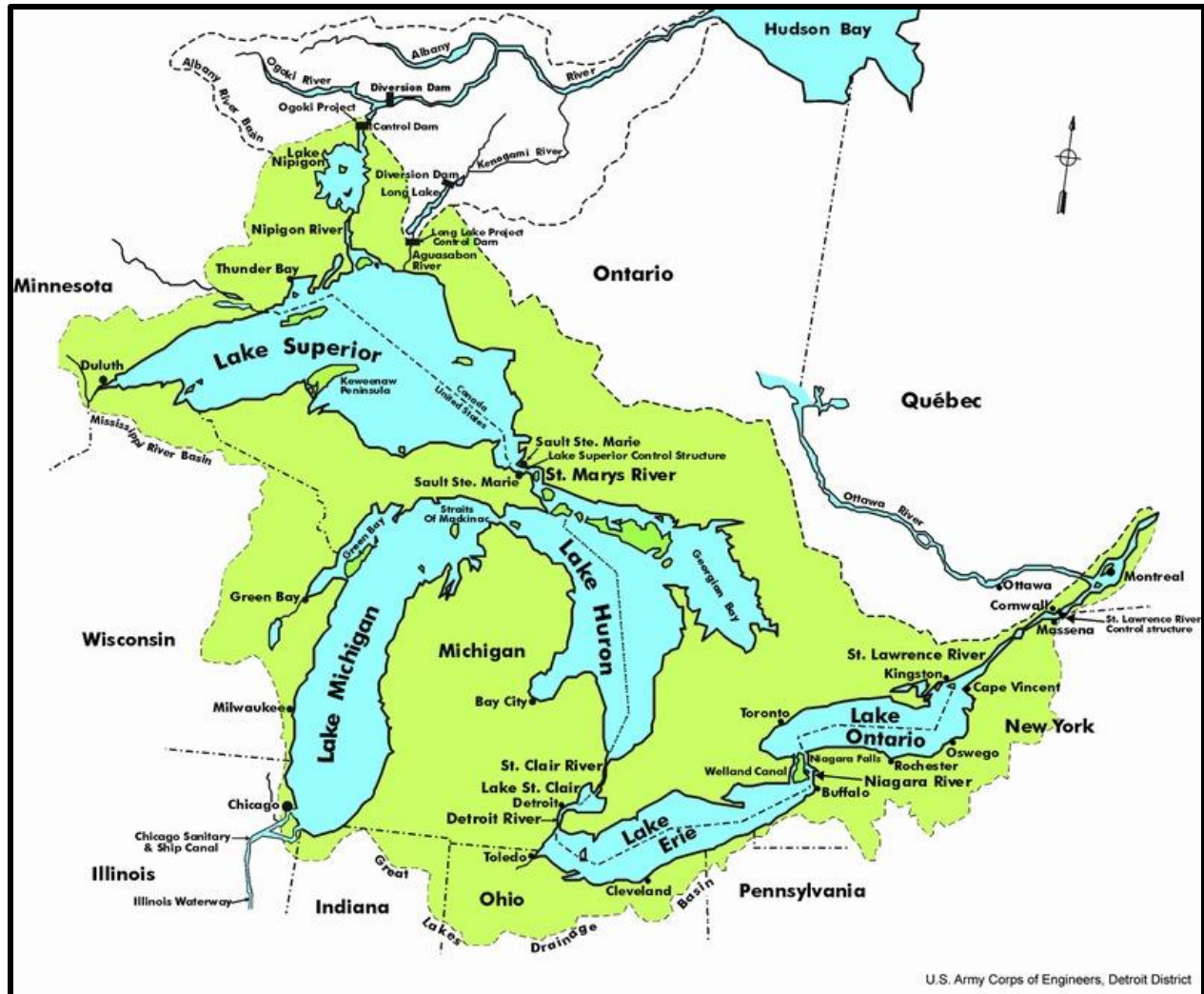
Anishinaabek have lived governing themselves based on their worldview and governance system in the Great Lakes territory since they were placed on Turtle Island by the Creator. The kendaaswin (knowledge) obtained from living in this territory are rooted in laws, cultural and spiritual beliefs, and management practices that promoted only taking what is needed (Atlas et al., 2020). The Anishinaabek worldview and governance system are embedded in Anishinaabemowin and are transmitted orally through storytelling (Doerfler et al., 2013; Johnston, 2010). G’gikendaaswinmin (our knowledge) ties together Anishinaabek history, identity, spirituality, and territory, while preserving culturally unique ways of seeing and relating to the world (Corbiere, 2011; Coughene, 2015; Huaman & Naranjo, 2019; Ningewance, 2017; Noodin, 2014; Pitawanakwat, 2018). Anishinaabek worldview and governance systems have survived despite attempts to eradicate them.

Indigenous legal systems are representative of a society and the relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the lands (Anaya, 2007; Craft, 2014, 2018). They provide an important context and significant detail for understanding and explaining humanity's obligations to lands and waters (Borrows, 2010). There is a growing recognition of the importance of Indigenous legal systems to the cultural, economic, and social health of Indigenous peoples. These systems guided interactions and relationships between the people and all creation and sustained relationships (Awāsis, 2020; Borrows, 2010; Mills, 2010). The Anishinaabek legal system is referred to as *naaknigewin*, which means clear sighted judgement is provided, decision making is visionary, and positive good relations in all relationships (Craft, 2018). These laws tend to speak of responsibilities rather than rights (Borrows, 2010; Napoleon and Friedland, 2015). Anishinaabek law is not something new. Craft (2014) quotes Niizhoosake Copenace informing, "Anishinabek law has always been here and comes from the Creator" (pg. 12). Anishinaabek law guided relationships with all life prior to contact. Exploring Anishinaabek law in a modern context has the potential to address water governance and explore relationships between humanity and N'bi.

## **Research Participants**

The purpose of *ndakenjigwen* (the act of doing, the act of searching for something you need to know; the "N" signifies it is mine and I use this word for "research") is to explore humanity's relationship to N'bi and how improving this relationship can support the well-being for N'bi, other beings, and humanity. Specifically, *ndakenjigwen* focuses on Anishinabek *g'giikendaaswinmin* and concepts related to N'bi governance and Anishinaabek *kweok*; reconciliation and relationships with N'bi; and Anishinaabek law and *Nokomis Giizis*. Following the instructions provided by Anishinaabek Elders, I will focus on Anishinaabek from the Great Lakes region which is inclusive to my territory (see Figure 1). I will also focus on grassroots peoples, *mishoomsinaanik* (grandfathers), *gookmisnaanik* (grandmothers), traditional knowledge holders, people who are often left out of the conversation on such matters.

Research participants were invited to participate by virtue of their work relating to water. Some participants were involved in Great Lakes Water Walks, led by the late Grandmother Josephine Ba Mandamin (see <http://www.motherearthwaterwalk.com/>). Other worked in organizations, such as Chiefs of Ontario and worked on water related issues such as unsafe drinking water and wastewater systems. Others worked in academic institutions and their research focus was on water, laws, and governance. An example is the Treaty #3 Nibi (Water) Declaration (see <http://gct3.ca/nibi-water-declaration-unanimously-supported-at-the-anishinaabe-treaty-3-chiefs-national-assembly/>) stemming from several gatherings funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) initially through the University of Victoria. Some of the participants that were involved in the creation of the Treaty # 3 Nibi Declaration were also part of the study. Other participants were ceremonial leaders and bundle carriers such as carriers of the water ceremonies. Not all participants were Anishinaabek as a few identified as Métis and Mohawk. These participants were chosen due to the years of work with women, water, law, and governance. Men were also invited to participate, even though my research focuses on women because of their ceremonial involvement in the creation of the Water Declaration of the Anishinaabek, Muskegowuk, and Onkwehonwe in Ontario. Other men were invited because of their expertise in storytelling and involvement with women's initiatives such as Water Walks. A few participants referred me to Anishinaabe female knowledge holders of Full Moon Ceremonies and their commitment to educating people in educational institutions. Some of the participants do not live in the Great Lakes territory but have either worked in the territory or were originally from a community in the territory.



**Figure 1: Map of the Great Lakes Territory (Great Lakes Map)**

With the broader purpose stated above, there are three specific dissertation objectives:

1. N’bi governance and Anishinaabek kweok: How does Anishinaabek law construct the role of women in decision making about N’bi?
2. Reconciliation and relationships with N’bi: Can the broader discourse in Canada about reconciliation assist with improving humanity’s relationship to N’bi?; how can reconciliation assist with reconciling different legal orders and governance structures?; and how can the concept of reconciliation assist with addressing environmental conflicts?

3. Anishinaabek law and Nokomis Giizis: What are the relationships and responsibilities between Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis and how can these relationships and responsibilities inform sustainable N'bi governance including women's roles in N'bi governance decision making?

In this dissertation, I argue for the inclusion of Anishinaabek kweok in N'bi governance decision making. Anishinaabek kweok have unique knowledge based on their relationships with N'bi. Anishinaabek kweok understand that water is alive with responsibilities for the well-being of all life and women are primarily responsible for water (Arsenault, 2021; Chiblow, 2019; McGregor et al., 2020). The relationships Anishinaabek kweok have with N'bi can inform decision making and assist with improving humanity's relationship to N'bi.

Anishinaabek kweok have their own understandings of how to obtain reconciliation. The TRC's definition of reconciliation as an on-going process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships needs to honour Anishinaabek kweok knowledge and relationships to N'bi. McGregor (2018) explains how many reconciliation initiatives have been launched, but there remain considerable discussions on what form reconciliation should take. Elders in the TRC (2015) explained that reconciliation includes reconciling relationships with the natural world. I argue that inclusion of Anishinaabek kweok in reconciliation discussions can assist with reconciling different legal orders and in addressing environmental conflict.

Anishinaabek kweok have knowledge on relationships and responsibilities to Nokomis Giizis. Lavelley (2006) explains how Grandmother moon and women are directly in relationship with one another. These relationships and responsibilities can inform sustainable N'bi governance. Todd (2016) discusses relationships with humans and other life as responsibilities informed by Indigenous legal orders. The grandmothers in Anderson's (2010) paper reiterate the relationship, the connections to the sky world, and

discuss women's responsibilities for the waters. In this dissertation, I explore the relationships and responsibilities to Nokomis Giizis and how this can inform water governance.

This dissertation has been prepared in a manuscript style, presenting three stand-alone articles written for publication in peer-reviewed journals. In addition to outlining the research context, problem rationale, purpose and objectives, this Enjimaajtaamgak chapter provides additional conceptual and contextual information to supplement the research that is presented in the manuscripts. It also provides a Terminology Section on concepts. The remainder of this chapter presents an outline of N'bi governance and Anishinaabek kweok, reconciliation and relationships with N'bi, and Anishinaabek law and Nokomis Giizis literatures, a proposed synthesis of these bodies of literature, and the empirical context for the research. An overview of the methods used for my dissertation is then presented, followed by an explanation of researcher position and the structure.

**Box 1. Anishinaabek in the Great Lakes Territory**

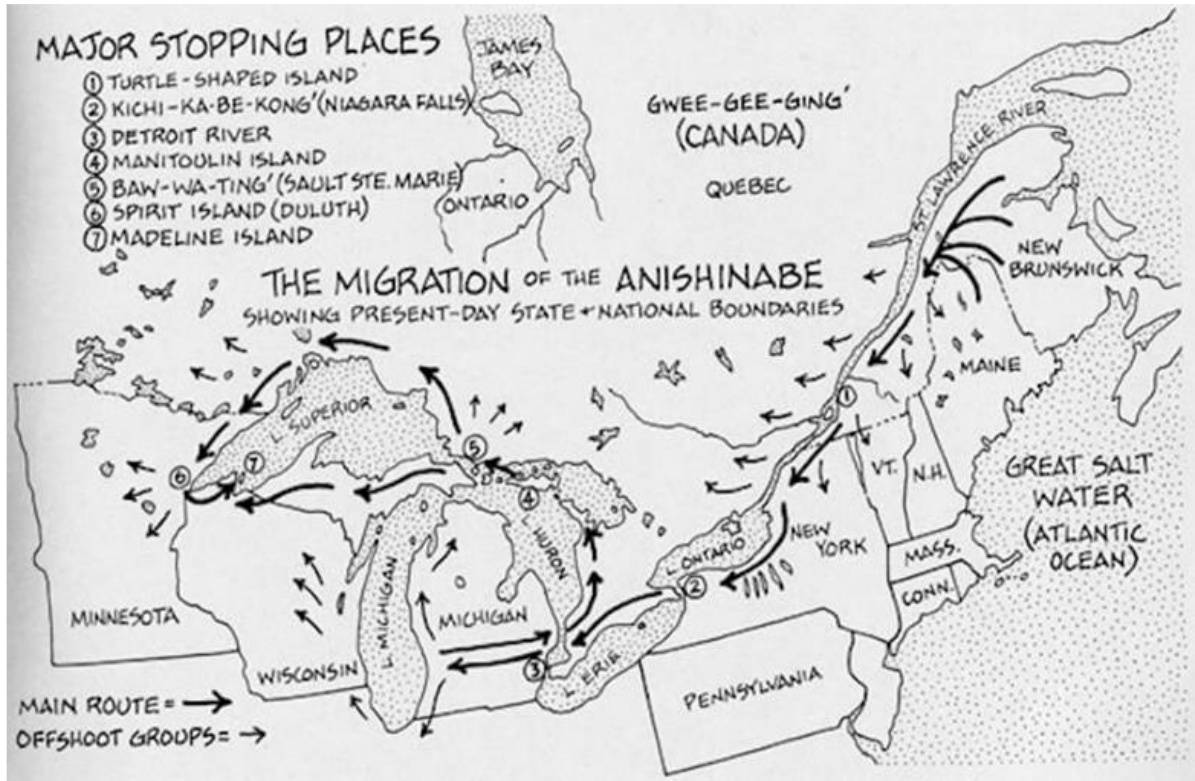
*“Father...these lands where our fathers and their father’s fathers lie buried”*. (Anishinaabeg Leaders from the North Shores of the Upper Great Lakes, 1849).

Anishinaabe is the Ojibway word for one of the people or original people and it is how peoples from the Great Lakes Territory identified themselves. Anishinaabek did not use the word, Indian, Aboriginal, and Indigenous when describing themselves. Johnston (2004) explains how difficult it is to identify a people when French and British recorded names kept changing. What is now known as the Great Lakes was the territory that Anishinaabek have identified as their homelands.

The Great Lakes territory has been home to the Anishinaabek since the “Great Migration”. Anishinaabek are not descendants of a theorized human migration from Asia. Anishinaabek have Creation stories telling of origins. These stories do not mention a migration from Asia but rather mention through oral tradition and recordings on birch bark scrolls that the Anishinaabek originally came from eastern North America (Garden River First Nation Community Plan, 2013) to the Great Lakes territory. The Original Creation story of the Anishinaabek as told by Jim Dumont (2018) explains how the Creator placed the four colors of man in each of the four directions with the Anishinaabek being placed in the East. From the East, there were 7 major stopping places where some Anishinaabek stayed. The following map depicts the Migration journey of the Anishinaabek with the 7 major stopping places.



“We have always been here”. (Venne, 2013)



**Figure 2. Map depicting the Anishinaabe Migration** – from The Mishomis Book, 2010, pg. 99.<sup>4</sup>

*Our present day thinking is inclusive of the legacy of our ancestors and of what our ancestors are waiting for us to do. Our thoughts also include the future generations, recognizing that they are already looking back towards us with the awareness that our decisions and our actions are impacting them. It is a living past, a living future, and we are the living connection in between. Indigenous Intelligence is active on all these levels.* (Dumont, 2006)

## Literature Review

There is currently a lack of gender balance in N’bi policies, strategies, and governance. Anderson et al. (2013) suggest current approaches discount Indigenous women and ignore a “valuable perspective on

<sup>4</sup> This map is the Mediwin version of Anishinaabek history.

water that could help to identify new ways of managing water” (pg. 12). The continuous ignoring of Anishinaabek kweok is embedded in colonialism, is historic, and persists today (Jimenez-Estrada & Daybutch, 2021). The historic disregard for Anishinaabek kweok knowledge stems from the original settlers who “explored” the lands. These observations and experiences belonged to European men whose interactions and assumptions were based on their cultural views of gender which reflected the role of women in European societies (Smith, 2012). These white explorers displaced Anishinaabek kweok by trying to erase g’giikendaaswinmin systems and legal and political realities (Chiblow & Jiménez Estrada, 2021; *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, 2019). The negative impacts of colonization, settler institutions, and the general attitudes of settler society on Indigenous women is well documented (Anderson, 2010; Daschuk, 2012; Jiménez-Estrada & Daybutch, 2021; Palmater, 2015). The negative impacts of undervaluing Indigenous kweok have eroded Indigenous kweok roles and responsibilities to water and all life. Anderson et al. (2013) explain how limited attention has been paid to gendered impacts of current government water management policy and Chiblow (2019) describes how the continuous ignoring of Anishinaabek kweok is entrenched in colonialism. Kweok voices have been silenced by colonial mindsets and eliminated from self-governance, including N’bi management and governance. As Sayers and MacDonald (2001) state, “There is a voluminous amount of literature on self-government in general...[U]nfortunately, almost all of this material is lacking in any sort of gender analysis...and therefore did not and could not address issues specific to First Nations women” (pg. 9). Many Anishinaabek kweok are re-establishing their relationships with, and responsibilities to N’bi through Water Walks and N’bi ceremonies (Chiblow, 2020; McGregor, 2020). The Indigenous Women’s Anti-Violence Task Force (IWAVTF) host a variety of community events including International Water Day ceremonies to raise an awareness of the roles and responsibilities of Indigenous women (Jiménez-Estrada & Daybutch, 2021). An Elder once told me that it is the kweok who will make the necessary changes to stop the destruction to N’bi and the lands (J. Pine, personal communication, 2019).

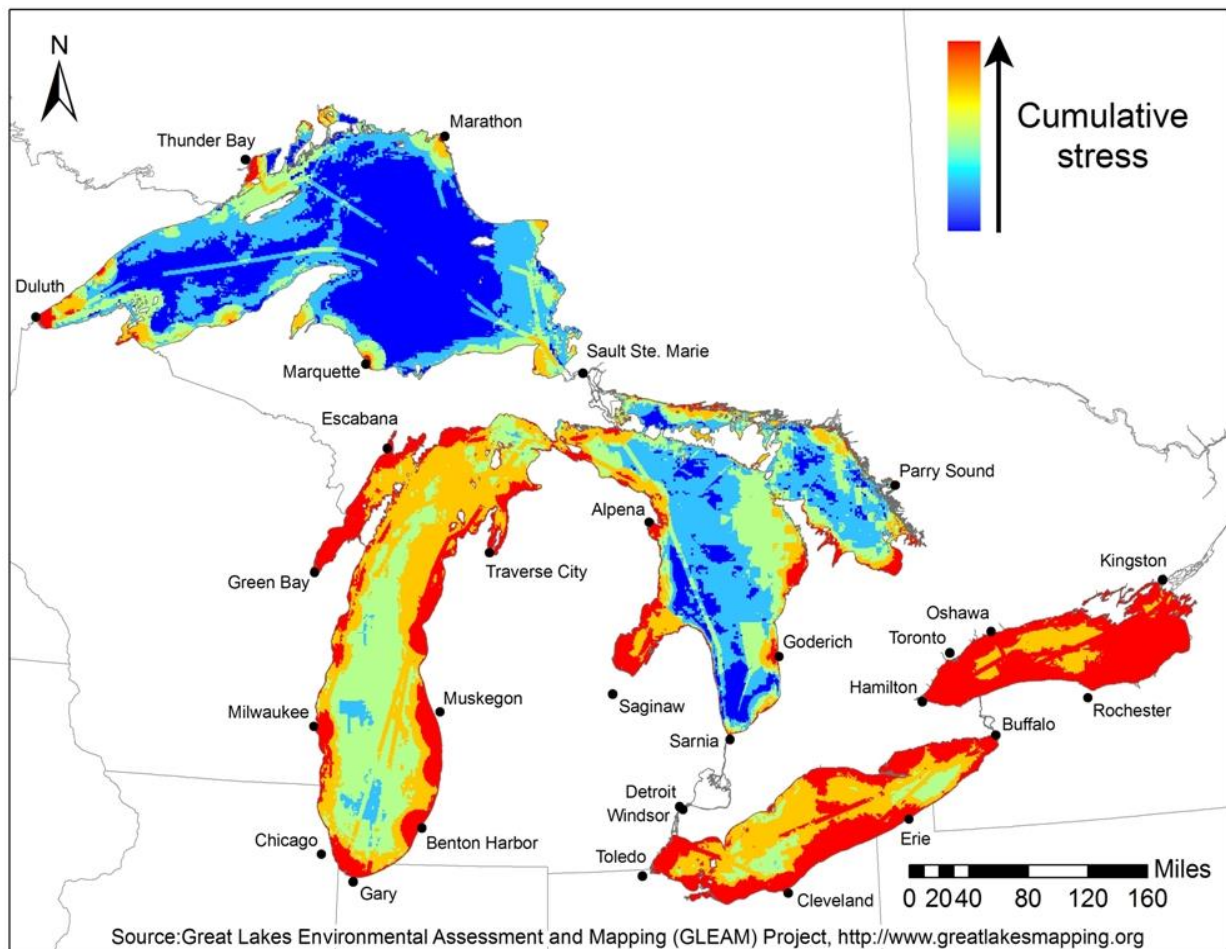
Indigenous Peoples in Canada have historically been excluded from colonial government's decision making and management frameworks for water (Sanderson et al., 2020), which disproportionately impact their health and their relationships to water (Wilson et al, 2021). In fact, the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada (2015) states,

For over a century, the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. (pg. 1).

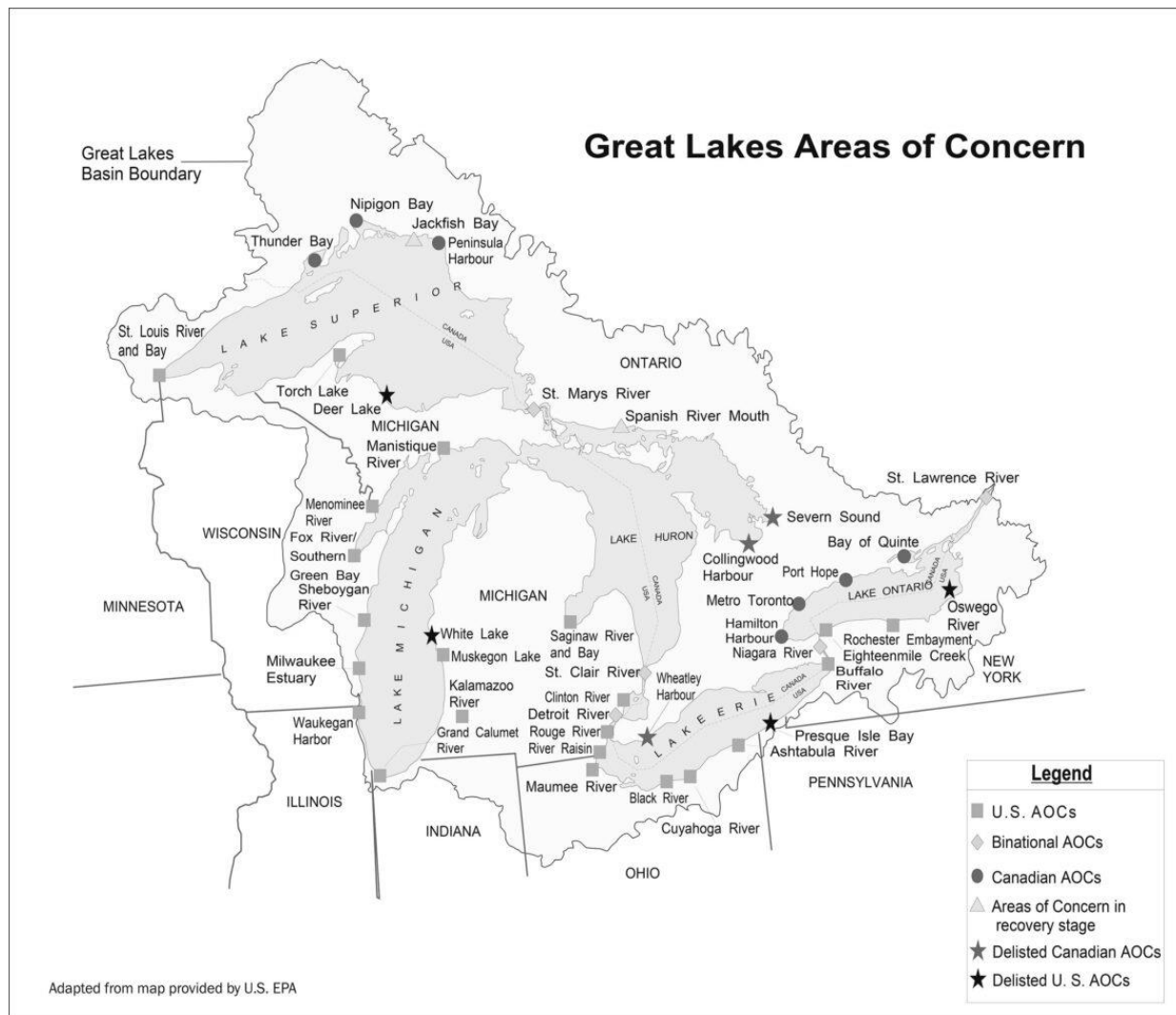
Indigenous kweok relationships to N'bi have been devastated by this goal. There are several government reports that discuss reconciliation, such as the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996), the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (2015), and the Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) (2019). In fact, the Final Report of the TRC quotes Elder Mary Deleary (2015) stating, "The work of reconciliation must continue in ways that honour the ancestors, respect the land, and rebalance relationships" (pg. 9). The MMIWG (2019) discusses the overall well-being as inclusive to restoration, reclamation, and revitalization of cultures and identities. Included in restoration, reclamation, revitalization, reconciliation, and rebalancing relationships is understanding Anishinaabek law as it relates to responsibilities to Nokomis Giizis.

Responsibilities and relationships are embedded in Anishinaabek g'giikendaaswinmin (our knowledge specific to Anishinaabek). G'giikendaaswinmin is based on reciprocity, respect, relationships, responsibility (Sinclair, 2013; Kimmerer, 2013; Bell, 2013, Archibald, 2008). Kimmerer (2013) explains that Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is about relationships based on principles of reciprocity and respect. Anishinaabek g'giikendaaswinmin is also known as Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) or Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in other forums and Canadian legislation. For example, the *Species at Risk Act* explains that the best available information on the biological status of a species includes aboriginal

traditional knowledge (SARA, 2002) whereas the *Impact Assessment Act* rationalizes that an impact assessment takes into account Indigenous knowledge (IAA, 2019). More recently, the COA (2021) has also acknowledged that Indigenous knowledge systems can assist with efforts to restore, protect, and conserve the Great Lakes. Regardless of what Anishinaabek g’giikendaaswinmin has been called, it has developed over millennia, is based on principles, and stems from multiple sources such as storytelling, ceremonies, visions and dreams, learning from Elders, and contact with non-human entities (Gonzales, 2020; Kimmerer, 2013; Geniusz, 2009; Johnston, 2003). Anishinaabek g’giikendaaswinmin is based on responsibilities to relationships for and with all life.



**Figure 3. Map of Great Lakes Ecosystem Stress (Great Lakes Environmental Assessment and Mapping (Allan, D.J., Smith, S., & McIntyre, P. 2012).**



**Figure 4 – Great Lakes Areas of Concern (Porter, 2021)**

Figure 3 is an image of the environmental stresses, based on the combined influence of 34 different environmental threats for the Great Lakes. Figure 4 is the Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOC)8 as listed in the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA). Both of these figures are a clear indication of the conditions of the Great Lakes caused by human activities. The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (2012) states, “the purpose of this Agreement is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Waters of the Great Lakes” (GLWQA, 2012). The GLWQA is a “protocol amending the Agreement between Canada and the United States of America on Great Lakes Water

Quality, 1978, as amended on October 16, 1983, and on November 18, 1987, signed September 7, 2012, and entered into force February 12, 2013” (GLWQA, 2012). From the GLWQA, the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem (COA) was born. The COA is “the mechanism by which Canada delivers on its obligations under the Canada–United States Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA)” (COA, 2014, p. 1). The COA sets goals and objectives to restore and protect the Great Lakes basin ecosystem and is supposed to protect the waters. From the COA, the Great Lakes Charter was born which lists several principles the governors of the states and premiers of the provinces are supposed to follow to protect the waters of the Great Lakes (GLC, 1985). From the GLC, the Great Lakes Charter Annex was born in 2001 which is supplement agreement to the GLC (2001). The GLC Annex (2001) states,

The Great Lakes Governors and Premiers reaffirm their commitment to the five broad principles set forth in the Great Lakes Charter, and further reaffirm that the provisions of the Charter will continue in full force and effect. The Governors and Premiers commit to further implementing the principles of the Charter by developing an enhanced water management system that is simple, durable, efficient, retains and respects authority within the Basin, and, most importantly, protects, conserves, restores, and improves the Waters and Water-Dependent Natural Resources of the Great Lakes Basin (p. 3).

Regardless of all the regulations, policies and agreements, the waters are contaminated. In fact, the Agreements have not recognized Anishinaabek g’giikendaaswinmin until recently. The COA (2021) was revised to include, “WHEREAS Traditional Ecological Knowledge may assist efforts to restore, protect and conserve the Great Lakes, and the Parties endeavor to consider this knowledge in all cases when it has been offered” (p. 6). As this is an attempt to include Indigenous knowledge, the above statement whereas declares “may” which means it may not be considered. These types of Agreements still fail Anishinaabek, their knowledge systems, and responsibilities to N’bi affecting the relationships Anishinaabek have with N’bi.

Anishinaabek have/had a distinct legal system for ensuring appropriate relationships with N’bi.

Anishinaabek did not manage N’bi separate from government regulations which control what can and cannot go into N’bi (Chiblow, 2019). The colonial governments have largely ignored Anishinaabek legal systems by drafting water legislation/policy/guidelines, such as the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality (2019), which allow N’bi to be poisoned (R. Owl, personal communication, 2019). For example, Wilson (2019) justifies that Indigenous water laws have been suppressed through historical and ongoing settler colonialism. Marshall, et al. (2020) state, “While practitioners explained that the definition of Source Water Protection (SWP), “according to the Clean Water Act, is to protect municipal drinking water systems, and nothing else”, practitioners pointed out “that’s not how the Elders and First Nations saw it, because they see it as just protecting the water period” (p. 9). Elder Willie Pine talked about a time when he could dip his cup into the lake and drink from it but today that is not so (W. Pine, personal communication, 2017). N’bi has been violated and continues to be violated (see figure 3 & 4). Bakker et al (2018) attribute the poisoning of the waters to competing jurisdictional priorities, lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities, and a failure to cooperate which has resulted in systemic governance gaps. As previously mentioned, there are several different agreements for the Great Lakes alone. Wilson et al. (2021) explains that the imposed settler colonial view excludes “Indigenous cultural, spiritual and physical health as well as the health of water itself” (p. 3) in water governance. The current water governance structure disregards Anishinaabek laws.

Anishinaabek laws include the six seasons and the 13 Nokomis Giizis as guides to activities and for N’bi governance. For example, the Ontario Literacy Coalition (2014) explains how June is Ode-imini-giizis (Strawberry Moon) representing the time to harvest strawberries but also a time of reconciliation, learning to let go of judgement. Schaefer (2006) explains that humanity was to humbly learn how to live on Turtle Island through observing all kingdoms, including the moon. Living well includes understanding relationships with N’bi. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) stated, “Reconciliation is going to take hard work” (p. 364). This hard work includes understanding and working to implement

Anishinaabek laws as one component of reconciliation which includes understanding Nokomis Giizis responsibilities in N’bi governance. Also, reconciling Anishinaabek relationships and responsibilities to Nokomis Giizis can provide insight on living sustainably with all of life through better governance. Sherry Lightfoot (2020) explains that reconciliation is an ongoing process to heal from a difficult past and creating a healthy and respectful relationships going forward through a systemic solution. Anishinaabek kweok have knowledge that can assist with moving forward.

### **N’bi Governance and Anishinaabek Kweok**

N’bi is considered a living entity by Anishinaabek (LaValley, 2006). Wilson (2019) corroborates the view of water as a living entity and indicates a need for a shift in concepts of what water is. Colonial cultures typically see water as a resource or a commodity (Bakker, 2010; Barlow, 2001; Linton, 2010; Wilson et al., 2021) in stark contrast to Anishinaabek understanding that N’bi is alive (Anderson, 2010; Craft, 2014; Chiblow, 2020). Linton (2010) explains, “H<sub>2</sub>O consists of an oxide of hydrogen H<sub>2</sub>O or (H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>x</sub> in the proportion of two atoms of hydrogen to one atom of oxygen, and is an odorless, tasteless” (pg. 14). This definition and understanding of N’bi flows against Anishinaabek g’giikendaaswinmin, as N’bi is alive with responsibilities to life. Blackstock (2001) explains, “Water is a meditative medium, a purifier, a source of power, and most importantly has a spirit” (pg. 5). Several articles also state that water is life, water contains knowledge, water is sacred, and water is alive with a spirit (Anderson, 2010; Arsenault, 2021; Blackstock, 2001; Cave & McKay, 2016; Chief et al., 2016; Chiblow, 2019, 2021; Craft, 2014; Chiefs of Ontario, 2008; Diagle, 2018; Gillio-Whitaker, 2019; Indigenous Peoples Kyoto Water Declaration, 2013; Joe, 2012; King, 2007; McGregor, 2001, 2012; Sanderson et al., 2020). N’bi is considered a living relation and is a source of identity (Cave & McKay, 2016). The colonial understanding of what “water” is, is the opposite to what Anishinaabek understand (Chiblow & Jiménez Estrada, 2021). The Anishinaabek view N’bi as a living entity that can manage itself.



Altamirano-Jiménez and Kermoal (2016) state, “[W]omen could provide a unique and valuable perspective on the emergent water crisis (pg. 6). Current water governance has rendered Anishinaabek kweok knowledge as invisible and simply not useful. Altamirano-Jiménez and Kermoal (2016) explain that ignoring Indigenous women’s knowledge undermines their participation in complex socio-environmental community processes. Colonization has forced disconnections of the role of women in water governance, but this is not to say that it has paralyzed them. For example, Grandmother Josephine Mandamin began the Mother Earth Water Walks to create an awareness of the conditions of the waters and the responsibilities humans have to the waters (Anderson et al., 2013). “Women are the first environmentalists” (Cook in LaDuke, 1999, pg. 108). Kweok are the first environmentalists because they carry the birth water (Arsenault, 2021). They have a unique relationship with N’bi as the carriers of life (Chiblow & Jiménez Estrada, 2021). Colonialism has attempted to erase kweok’s relationship to N’bi. McGregor (2020) states, “Western knowledge has sought to undermine alternative ways of knowing and living in the world” (pg. 116).

Anishinaabek kweok have been oppressed since the time of arrival of the colonizers. The Commission on the National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) (2019) heard testimonies from women who argued their oppressions are primarily based on colonialism and racism. With the imposition of the colonial laws, institutions, and governments, Anishinaabek kweok roles and responsibilities have been eroded and are typically ignored. The MMIW: Reclaiming Power and Place, Final Report, Volume 1a (2019) dedicates a chapter to colonization as a gendered oppression and provides a brief overview of some of the historical events and contexts that are at the root of the violence against Indigenous women. The colonial system removed traditional structures of governance, including women’s responsibilities and attempted to dehumanize Indigenous peoples, especially women. The MMIW Final report (2019) quotes Kwagiulth (Kwakwaka’wakw) scholar Sarah Hunt explaining:

Colonialism relies on the widespread dehumanization of all Indigenous people – our children, two-spirits, men and women – so colonial violence could be understood to impact all of us at the level of our denied humanity. Yet this dehumanization is felt most acutely in the bodies of Indigenous girls, women, two-spirit and transgender people, as physical and sexual violence against us continues to be accepted as normal. (pg. 230)

Simply put, the colonial government imposed its own governance structures, laws, and institutions on Anishinaabek to eradicate the Anishinaabek so they could occupy the lands. Jacob et al. (2020) states that the violence from settler colonization has produced trauma and explains, “Settler colonialism uses its own meanings, which we refer to as its logics, along with those of white supremacy, capitalism, and hetero-patriarchy, to justify the destruction of the earth, the extraction of resources, and the exploitation of humans and all beings indiscriminately” (pg.1). This has caused undue stress and trauma on Anishinaabek, especially the kweok. Jiménez-Estrada and Daybutch (2021) explain how women always performed roles as stewards and protectors of life until colonization negatively affected the roles of Indigenous women, although never disappearing. The imposition of colonial ways of life, the oppression of kweok is still felt today. Nickel (2020) explains how racism continues to affect Indigenous women. However, with inquiries such as the MMIWG, recommendations have been shared on how kweok, with their unique relationship to and with the lands, can be restored to their rightful place, establishing balance.

As Anishinaabek, we refer to the earth as our Mother because she provides us with everything we need. Benton-Bania (2010) states, “She is called Mother Earth because from her come all living things”. (pg. 2) In conversations with several Elders, they have said that Mother Earth is our pharmacy, our kitchen, our university, and she provides us with everything (J. Jones, personal communication, 2018; R. Owl, personal communication, 2019; W. Pine, personal communication, 2019). Both kweok and Shkakimi kwe (Mother Earth) are considered feminine by Anishinaabek which means the women made rules of conduct towards all life including N’bi as the decision makers, teachers, and givers of life (Chiblow & Jiménez Estrada, 2021). The settler-colonial misogyny has refused to acknowledge women’s roles in governance,

N’bi governance, and has created a disconnect to N’bi. Cave & McKay (2016) quote Nehiway Spillett as saying “The status of Indigenous women has been under attack since the colonization of our territories” (pg. 67) and Whyte & Cuomo (2016) explains how colonial economies disrupt relationships such as Indigenous gender systems. Calverly (2016) explains how men obtained access to territories through the hunter marrying into the family which demonstrates women’s responsibilities to the lands. Schaeffer (2006) states,

In accord with inherent authority within a family, traditionally the women elders, the grandmothers, were the ones who were looked up to as guardians to watch over the physical and spiritual survival of the family, and thus the tribe. They became the keepers of the teachings and rituals that allowed the tribe to flourish, and they upheld the social order. (pg. 5)

Our Anishinaabek families were sustained by strong kin relations in which women had significant authority (Anderson, 2010). With the invasion of the settlers, the colonial governments implemented the Indian Act. This caused the loss of status for Indigenous women marrying non-Indigenous men (Chiblow & Jiménez Estrada, 2021). This loss of status was ultimately another ploy to remove the Indian from the lands so that there would eventually be no more status Indians (National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women & Girls, 2019). The colonial rules intent was to destroy the kin relations women had within communities. Wilson et al. (2019) explain that Indigenous peoples identify historical and on-going colonialism as the most important factor affecting their well-being, along with displacement from the lands. Women’s knowledge is suppressed and, if not honored, the imbalance of male and female energies could cause the destruction of Mother Earth (Chiblow, 2020; Schaffer, 2006). As long as the waters flow honors women and their life-giving powers in treaty making (Craft, 2014). King (2007) reminds that these words were not mere coincidence when our Ancestors made the treaties. Women are guided by compassion and love (Schaffer, 2006) and therefore have significant epistemic insight into how N’bi can govern itself. More specifically, can re-establishing and supporting Anishinaabek women’s knowledge assist in understanding how N’bi governs its relationships through living its responsibilities?

## **Reconciliation and Relationships to N’bi**

Reconciliation continues to fail because it rests on a foundation of systemic racism. It is predicated on the denial of Indigenous Peoples’ inherent rights and the willingness of the Canadian State to use violence to suppress Indigenous rights (McIvor, 2021, p. 168)

In the Final Report of the National Inquiry into MMIWG, Volume 1a, (2019) Shawn Wilson, an Opaskwayak Cree researcher from northern Manitoba, states, “[T]hat relationships are central to Indigenous ways of knowing...We are connected to our ancestors, to the land where we come from... we are the sum of all the relationships that shape our lives” (pg. 96). Anishinaabek understand the importance of relationships with all Creation and that knowledge is held in these relationships (Dumont, 2006). Wilson and Laing (2018) state, “We come from the Earth and we rely on the earth to sustain us” (pg. 144) and when we refer to the Earth as our Mother, we are saying we have a deep and loving relationship with the land and waters we depend upon (Wilson and Laing, 2018). Many Elders have continuously stated we need to reconcile our relationships to the lands and N’bi so we can fulfill our responsibilities (TRC, 2015). With the impacts of colonization, what does reconciliation with N’bi look like? I wish to focus on the questions, “What does reconciliation mean, how do we do it, and can N’bi teach us about reconciliation?” referring specifically to Anishinaabek from the Great Lakes territory.

Reconciliation is about restoring relationships and, according to the TRC (2015), “It is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples” (pg. 6). Reconciliation is not a new concept as several government commissions provide recommendations on how the Canadian government can reconcile its relationship with Indigenous Peoples, including the Anishinaabek. The history of what reconciliation looks like is in the following reports: (i) The Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996); (ii) The Report of the Walkerton Inquiry (2002); (iii) The Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry (2007); (iv) The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission of Canada (2015); and (v) The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019). The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007) also contributes to how reconciliation can be implemented. Each report will be briefly described below:

(i) The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) prepared a report in 1996 on their findings from several meetings concerning government policies with respect to Aboriginal Peoples. The RCAP (1996) stemmed from “the demise of the Meech Lake Accord and the confrontation at Kanesatake (OKA)” (pg. 2). The Royal Commission was tasked with investigating the relationship among Aboriginal Peoples (Indian, Inuit, and Metis), the Canadian government, and Canadian society as a whole. Much of what is written about reconciliation in RCAP refers to “the 4 basic principles of a renewed relationship being mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing and mutual responsibility” (pg. 677). The renewed relationship is about restoring relationships among Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian government, which also means Anishinaabek restoring their relationships with the lands and N’bi.

(ii) The Walkerton Inquiry (2002) stemmed from contamination of Walkerton’s drinking water system where “Thousands became sick and seven people died from consuming the drinking water” (pg. 2). This report dedicates Chapter 15 to First Nations and revealed that there are inherent environmental and social injustices that result in First Nation peoples not having access to clean drinking water in comparison to other people in Ontario. Chapter 16 in the report lists 5 recommendations specific to First Nations. The Walkerton Inquiry called for the involvement of First Nations watershed planning processes to protect source waters. This recommendation is based on relationships between multi-stakeholders in a watershed area working together to protect N’bi through source water protection planning. This recommendation is specific to reconciliation between peoples living in a watershed area, but also, it is about Anishinaabek Peoples restoring their relationships with N’bi. As Art Petahtegoose stated, “We must first reconcile our

relationships with the lands” (A. Petagoose, personal communication, 2017) and that to me is one of the most important and primary aspects of reconciliation.

(iii) The Ipperwash Inquiry (2007) stems from a “land dispute over the Ipperwash Provincial Park” (pg.

1). Recommendations in this report are also about reconciliation as many of the recommendations refer to the provincial government working better with Aboriginal Organizations. More specifically,

Recommendation 37 states,

[T]he provincial government should establish and fund an Ontario Aboriginal Reconciliation Fund. The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs should work with First Nations and Aboriginal organizations to determine the mandate, governance structure, funding guidelines, and administrative structure of the fund. The provincial government should commit sufficient resources to the fund to enable it to achieve its objectives. (pg. 104)

The governments need to commit to supporting reconciliation through action. Joseph & Joseph (2019) state, “Reconciliation needs to pair intention with doing in order to be effective” (p. 4).

(iv) The Truth and Reconciliation Report (2015) explains that there are various understandings of what reconciliation actually is and what it means to different people, communities, institutions, and organizations. The Commissioners of the Report (2015) established, “Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country” (pg. 6) and “words of apology alone are insufficient; concrete actions on both symbolic and material fronts are required...(TRC Final Report, vol 6, Reconciliation, p. 82). I have attended gatherings with Elders when reconciliation was being discussed and many explained that as Anishinaabek we first must reconcile our relationships with the lands and N’bi. Zurba and Sinclair (2020) quote Paulette Regan stressing that reconciliation is “contingent on the land-based resurgence of Indigenous cultures, languages, knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, and governance structures” (p. 148). Grassroots

people have indicated reconciliation needs to happen in phases and the first phase is supporting Anishinaabek reconciliation to the lands. The Commissioners of the TRC (2015) stated,

The Commission believes that the revitalization and application of Indigenous law will benefit First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, Aboriginal–Crown relations, and the nation as a whole. For this to happen, Aboriginal peoples must be able to recover, learn, and practice their own, distinct, legal traditions. (pg. 205)

The Commission recognized the need to support Anishinaabek in recovering and practicing their own legal traditions which will assist their distinct process of reconciliation. At a Traditional Knowledge Keepers Forum sponsored by the TRC (2015), Anishinaabe Elder Mary Deleary spoke about the responsibility for reconciliation that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people carry. She emphasized that the work of reconciliation must continue in ways that honour the ancestors, respect the land, and rebalance relationships. She said,

I'm so filled with belief and hope because when I hear your voices at the table, I hear and know that the responsibilities that our ancestors carried ... are still being carried ... even through all of the struggles, even through all of what has been disrupted ... we can still hear the voice of the land. We can hear the care and love for the children. We can hear about our law. We can hear about our stories, our governance, our feasts, [and] our medicines.... We have work to do. That work we are [already] doing as [Aboriginal] peoples. Our relatives who have come from across the water [non-Aboriginal people], you still have work to do on your road.... The land is made up of the dust of our ancestors' bones. And so to reconcile with this land and everything that has happened, there is much work to be done ... in order to create balance. (pg. 9)

Craft and Regan (2020) state that the reconciliation also includes a decolonizing process that embodies resistance, resurgence, and solidarity. It is more than just an apology; it is concrete actions.

(v) The Final Report of the National Inquiry into the Murdered and Missing Women and Girls (MMIWG) (2019) was mandated to investigate all forms of violence against Inuit, Métis and First Nations women and girls, including 2SLGBTQIA people. In an MMIWG Interim Report (2019), the Commission

recommended the immediate and full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007) as a framework for reconciliation.

Dating back to 1996, the several fore-mentioned reports describe reconciliation and have recommendations on how to implement it. The TRC (2015) stated, “In 1996, the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples urged Canadians to begin a national process of reconciliation that would have set the country on a bold new path, fundamentally changing the very foundations of Canada’s relationships with Aboriginal Peoples” (pg. 7). The new path needs to include a surge to include Anishinaabek naaknigewin and worldview. MacDonald (2020) repeats the TRC in regards to Indigenous law establishing common ground for reconciliation.

### **Anishinaabek Naaknigewin (law) and Nokomis Giizis**

Naaknigewin is based on Anishinaabek worldviews which comes from the spirit. John Borrows, Anishinaabe legal scholar (2010) explains, “Some Indigenous laws have sacred sources...legal traditions based on spiritual principles form an important part of most every culture’s legal inheritance” (pg. 24). Borrows (2002) continues, “Indigenous law originates in the political, economic, spiritual, and social values” (pg. 13). Anishinaabek naaknigewin is also based on spirit. Dumont (1993) explains that “the Euro-Western concepts oppose the concepts of spiritual compacts and the Aboriginal worldview” (pg. 84) and Craft (2018) states, “Legal relationships between beings are structured on the basis of spirit... all of it is sourced in spiritual law” (pg. 57). The spirit is as old as life itself meaning Anishinaabek naaknigewin is also old as life.

Anishinaabek naaknigewin is not something new; it is embedded in our language, in the lands, in our stories and held by knowledge holders, Elders, women, the lands, and ceremony (Borrows, 2010; Askew



2018). McNeil (2018) affirms that Indigenous Peoples in North America had their own bodies of law. Craft (2018) shares Dumont's understanding that the Great Spirit gave laws to the Anishinaabek to govern relationships to live in harmony. Anishinaabek naanknigewin is about governing relationships and responsibilities of Anishinaabek. Knockwood (2018) states, "[L]egal traditions are rooted in teachings from the Ancestors" (pg. 64). Walters (2017) reiterates that the Indigenous legal traditions stem from the beginning of time and Borrows (2010) explains, "First Nation legal traditions were the first laws of Turtle Island" (pg. 21). These are still very relevant today (Borrows, 2010). Anishinaabek naanknigewin is about relationships and responsibilities which have always guided the Anishinaabek on Turtle Island.

Borrows (2010) highlights that Anishinaabek legal traditions are drawn from other places other than courts, legislatures, and lawyers and are based on spiritual principles. Anishinaabek naanknigewin is drawn from the world around us, including the star world (Craft, 2013). This emerging body of work on Indigenous laws and Anishinaabek naanknigewin so far has not addressed how such laws informed relationships to Nokomis Giizis – in particular the 13 Nokomis Giizis (The Anishinaabek calendar).

Anishinaabek have followed the Nokomis Giizis calendar for thousands of years. Elder Eddie Benton-Banai (2010) explains how the moon was created in the beginning of time to guide the Anishinaabek. The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres created a guide of Life Teachings, The Thirteen Grandmother Moons (2014) which explains that Nokomis Giizis is feminine. It provides teachings on the Turtle shell having 13 platelets to represent Nokomis Giizis and to remember how the world was created sustaining the Anishinaabek through Nokomis Giizis' cycles (Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centre, 2014). The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) website explains that Nokomis Giizis' cycles guiding the tides have been documented by different cultures for thousands of years (National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 2019). Wilson and Laing (2018) state, "When we say Grandmother Moon, we are understanding and acknowledging that the moon impacts bodies of water, that we, as humans, are constituted of water, so, of course, the moon impacts us" (pg. 144). Several

Elders have shared their knowledge on Nokomis Giizis' teachings, such as grassroots grandmothers' Jeannette Commanda and Emma Meawasige by naming each Nokomis Giizis and providing activities under the Nokomis Giizis (personal communication, 2017). Nicholas (2020) created *Eating with the Seasons*, Anishinaabeg, Great Lakes that explains each Nokomis Giizis. Anderson et al. (2013) explain that many Aboriginal cultures engage in full moon ceremonies and quotes Jan Longboat, a Mohawk traditional teacher who remarks, "[W]e were taught to celebrate every twenty-eight days when she [grandmother moon] comes to show her full face and remind us of our role and responsibility as a woman" (pg. 15). Anderson et al. (2013) further elaborates on Jan Longboat sharing teachings about how Nokomis Giizis looks after all the waters and Nokomis Giizis will always take care of us because she orchestrates the waters and life. Nokomis Giizis and Anishinaabek kweok have special relationships that guides the roles and responsibilities. Schaefer in *Grandmothers Council the World* (2006) explains, "[W]omen carry the ancient knowledge...because their bodies are subject to the great cycles of the moon" (pg. 133). Understanding responsibilities to Nokomis Giizis can assist with constructing water governance decisions.

I have discussed with Elders the importance of Nokomis Giizis in relation to women and how these interactions guide us. The discussion focused on regulations and what happens during Nokomis Giizis cycles that informs humans of what they can harvest and when. More specifically, I want to focus on the relationships and responsibilities under each Nokomis Giizis and explore how these relationships and responsibilities inform Anishinaabek kweok decision making in sustainable N'bi governance.

### **Complexities of Water Governance**

The Global Water Partnership (2003) describes water governance as "the range of political, social, economic, and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources, and the delivery of water services, at different levels of society". In Canada, water governance is complex and

fragmented (Bakker, 2011; Davidson & von der Porten, 2015). Wilson et al. (2021) explains, “Canada’s fragmented and colonial water governance system, where federal, provincial and municipal governments claim different scales and kinds of authority over water” (p. 5). Simms et al. (2016) explain, “The existing colonial water governance systems is predicated largely on provincial government control over decisions related to water access and use, and the Canadian government (referred to as the Crown) asserts exclusive ownership of all ground and surface water” (pg. 4). The federal government is responsible for reserve lands while the provincial government develops and implements water governance, they have no jurisdiction on reserve lands (Wilson et al., 2021). The Chiefs of Ontario, Part II Submissions to the Walkerton Inquiry Commission (2001) states, “[T]he federal government appears to exercise control over First Nations’ water treatment infrastructure primarily through policy directives and spending conditions rather than through explicit statutory or regulatory provisions.” (pg. 25). The Government of Canada’s Water governance: federal policy and legislation website states,

“When it comes to water governance in Canada, the federal government has jurisdiction related to fisheries, navigation, federal lands, and international relations, including responsibilities related to the management of boundary waters shared with the United States, including relations with the International Joint Commission. To fully understand the federal government's role in water management in Canada, it is important to first understand the interests and mandates of the departments involved in program delivery. Within the federal government, over 20 departments and agencies have unique responsibilities for fresh water. As all levels of government hold key policy and regulatory levers which apply to water management, a central challenge is to ensure that these levers are developed and used collaboratively.” (Introduction)

The website lists 12 different Acts from the Canada Water Act to the International Boundary Waters Treaty Act that are involved in water governance. Davidson & von der Porten (2015) state, “[W]here at least 20 federal agencies have responsibilities regarding water management, covered under 11 different pieces of federal legislation” (p. 157). The Province of Ontario: Water management: policies, guidelines, provincial water quality objectives website states,

“This 1994 publication contains the Ministry of the Environment and Energy policies and guidelines for the management of the province’s water resources. It gives direction on how to manage the quality and quantity of both surface and ground waters. There are many other important aspects of water management that do not fall under the jurisdiction of the MOEE, but are the responsibility of other provincial and federal jurisdictions, most notably the Ontario Ministries of Natural Resources, Health and Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Conservation Authorities and the Federal Departments of Fisheries and Oceans and Environment Canada”. (Introduction and MOEE’s Legislative Authority)

It is apparent when the federal government lists numerous water Acts with several different departments having responsibilities in water management, Canadian water governance is complex. To add to the complexity, the province of Ontario also has water governance policies within several different departments. Bakker and Cook (2011) explain how water governance in Canada is highly fragmented which has created a series of gaps, overlaps, and challenges. To further complicate water governance in Canada, Indigenous Peoples have treaties and aboriginal rights and title (Borrows, 2019). Morellato (2008) explains that the federal and provincial governments of Canada have a duty to consult and accommodate Aboriginal interests when it comes to the development of government legislation. The Chiefs of Ontario Part II Submission to the Walkerton Inquiry (2001) explains how the federal government downloads responsibility for water treatment to First Nations without adequate funding or fulfilling its fiduciary responsibility to consult and accommodate. This adds to the complexities and fragmentation of water governance in Canada and in First Nations.

To address the complexities and fragmentation of water governance, the government of Canada initiated the creation of a Canada Water Agency (CWA) in 2020 with the intent of improving freshwater management practices and coordination across Canada (Chiefs of Ontario, 2021). The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson P.C., M.P., Minister of Environment and Climate Change stated, “The time is now to create a Canada Water Agency, to work with our provinces, territories, Indigenous communities, local authorities, scientists and interested Canadians, to find the best ways to keep our water clean and well-managed” (Government of Canada, 2020, pg. 4). In the Toward the Creation of a Canada Water Agency,

Stakeholder and Public Engagement What We Heard Report (2021) one of the major areas of convergence pointed to reconciliation between Canada and Indigenous Peoples. The Report (2021) explains the important role CWA could play to include Indigenous science and knowledge in decision-making to address freshwater governance as reconciliation. While this is a very important area to address, it is not the first-time governments of Canada have heard this. In the Chiefs of Ontario Part II Submission to the Walkerton Inquiry (2001), it is clearly articulated that in 1996, the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) made recommendations regarding the inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge for water management. The Chief's Submission (2001) explains how these recommendations have not been addressed adequately and provides recommendations on this can be met. With the development of the CWA, it remains to be seen whether Indigenous science and knowledge will be included in water decision making.

## **Methods: Indigenous Research**

Indigenous research holds the potential to regenerate and revitalize the life of Indigenous peoples and communities along with the “knowing” that sustains their ongoing vitality (Johnston, McGregor, and Restoule, 2018, pg.2).

The overall approach to the inquiry I employed is an Anishinaabek Research Paradigm (ARP) that utilized Indigenous Intelligence (Dumont, 2006) as a conceptual framework for qualitative Anishinaabek analysis of data. I continuously drew on Anishinaabek protocols throughout the study moving beyond the University requirements for ethics. Drawing on Anishinaabek protocols enabled “standing with” the participants in an act of inquiry, in knowledge, and continued relationships (TallBear, 2014) rather than studying them. I utilize the ARP centering on research that promotes research prioritizing the aspirations, needs, and values of Anishinaabek and our knowledge (Johnston et al. 2018). The entire methodology section, An Anishinaabe Research Methodology that Utilizes Indigenous Intelligence as a Conceptual Framework Exploring

Humanity's Relationship to N'bi (Water) is published in the International Journal of Qualitative Methods and attached as an Appendix.

My main goal of this study was to explore humanity's relationship to N'bi and how improving these relationships can support the well-being of N'bi, other beings, and humanity. I chose to study with primarily Anishinaabek from the Great Lakes territory since I am from this territory, my ancestors are from this territory, and future generations will be in this territory. Jim Dumont (2006) explains that the future generations are already looking back toward us with the awareness that our decisions and our actions are impacting them. I understand that I am responsible for the Great Lakes territory which drives me to be a good ancestor in decisions I make and how I conduct myself.

Since specific details on how I conducted this study can be found in *An Anishinaabe Research Methodology that Utilizes Indigenous Intelligence as a Conceptual Framework Exploring Humanity's Relationship to N'bi (Water)* published in the International Journal of Qualitative Methods (DOI: 10.1177/16094069211058017), the entirety is not added to this section (Chiblow, 2021).

## **Organization of Dissertation**

There are four remaining chapters in this five-chapter dissertation. Chapters Two, Three and Four are written as stand-alone manuscripts that address objectives of the overall research project. The rationale for three manuscripts is based on three lines of inquiry that are interconnected and interrelated. I present the manuscripts in order for which they were written. Because of the stand-alone manuscript format of the

thesis, there is some repetition among the chapters. The intent is to publish each of the three chapters as stand-alone articles as the methodology section has already been published as previously mentioned.

Chapter Two presents the paper entitled *Indigenous Water Governance: Anishinaabek Naaknigewin (Law) Constructs the Role of Anishinaabek Kweok (Women) in N'bi (Water) Decision Making*. This manuscript presents the roles and responsibilities of Anishinaabek women in N'bi decision making; how Anishinaabek women take care of N'bi; Anishinaabek laws for N'bi; and the opportunities and barriers to Anishinaabek women in current N'bi decision making. It presents data gathered from interviews and one focus group relating to the theme of N'bi governance and Anishinaabek women. One component of this Chapter was to produce a policy paper on Anishinaabek women and in N'bi governance and a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of three different women's council/group, but due to COVID 19, the groups were not part of the study, and instead individual members of the groups were interviewed. This manuscript will be submitted to Geoforum.

Chapter Three presents the paper entitled *N'bi (Water) Can Teach us about Reconciliation*. This manuscript presents how N'bi can teach humanity about reconciliation. It explains that Anishinaabek understanding of reconciliation is different than non-Indigenous Peoples. It presents the data gathered from the participants relating to the theme of reconciliation and relationships with N'bi. It focuses on can the broader discourse in Canada about reconciliation assist with improving humanity's relationships to N'bi. This manuscript has been submitted to Journal of Great Lakes Research.

Chapter Four presents the paper entitled *Relationships and Responsibilities between Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis [Grandmother Moon] Informs N'bi [Water] Governance*. This manuscript presents roles and responsibilities of Anishinaabek women and Nokomis Giizis; what are the Anishinaabek law for Nokomis Giizis; what actions need to take place to reconcile relationships with Nokomis Giizis. It presents data gathered from the participants relating to an overarching theme of Anishinaabek law and

Nokomis Giizis. This manuscript will be submitted to *AlterNative: an International Journal of Indigenous People*.

Chapter Five summarizes the major research findings presented in Chapters Two, Three, and Four, and brings together the overall contribution of the research. This chapter braids the three manuscripts together coherently. It reflects on humanity's relationship to N'bi and how improving this relationship can support the well-being for N'bi, other beings, and humanity. It ties recommendations for N'bi governance and the inclusion of Anishinaabek women in N'bi decision making. This chapter addresses the final research objective, outlines limitations of the research, and identifies areas for further research that stem from this study. Appendices at the end of the thesis provide the interview guide used in data collection. This chapter also points to the scholarly contributions of the research to the field. It will include how this research will be mobilized to benefit the communities.



## **Chapter Two**

# **Indigenous Water Governance: Anishinaabek Naaknigewin (Law) Constructs the Role of Anishinaabek Kweok (Women) in N’bi (Water) Decision Making.**

### **Chapter Overview**

N’bi (water) is significant to Indigenous ways of life. Indigenous peoples maintain distinct and multifaceted relationships to N’bi, yet colonialism has discounted their ways of knowing, being, seeing, and relating to N’bi (McGregor, 2021). In particular, Anishinaabek kweok (women) have been excluded from N’bi decision making with the introduction of colonial water policies and legislation. Jiménez-Estrada and Daybutch (2021) describes how Anishinaabek women’s roles along with the traditional ways of governance were undermined by colonialism eliminating women as valued and esteemed. The traditional ways of governance included Anishinaabek naaknigewin (law) for governing roles and responsibilities to N’bi.

Through this study from the Great Lakes territory, this article examines the lack of Anishinaabek kweok in water policies, strategies, and water governance specifically focusing on how does Anishinaabek naaknigewin construct the role of kweok in N’bi decision making. This paper is specific to reporting critical insights into N’bi governance and Anishinaabek kweok from Anishinaabek kweok, grassroots peoples, mishoomsinaanik (grandfathers), nokmisinaanik (grandmothers), and traditional knowledge holders. This study utilized Anishinaabek protocols employing a qualitative Anishinaabek analysis for the data gathered (Chiblow, 2021). It documents Anishinaabek kweok knowledge on N’bi governance,

Anishinaabek naaknigewin, roles and responsibilities, and barriers and opportunities for inclusion of Anishinaabek kweok supported by the male participants.

This study supports the larger body of literature of kweok are N'bi carriers with responsibilities to N'bi based on their relationships with N'bi. It expands on roles and responsibilities to N'bi by demonstrating that men have a role in N'bi governance and reveals how Anishinaabek naaknigewin constructs the role of kweok in N'bi decision making. Recommendations internally and externally for relationships to N'bi, the recognition of kweok knowledge being valid, and the creation of safe space for kweok are instrumental in reframing N'bi governance.

The voices of the participants generated from this study produced themes of roles and responsibilities of kweok for N'bi; barriers for kweok in N'bi decision making; opportunities for kweok in N'bi decision making; and Anishinaabek naaknigewin. It was specified that women are the water carriers because women carry the first water environment and are therefore responsible to protect N'bi. This study affirms other scholarly work that all life is connected through N'bi and kweok have specific roles and responsibilities to N'bi in ceremony. Included in this responsibility is to carry the voice of N'bi. Barriers stemming from loss of culture and teachings due to colonization was identified but also, opportunities such as Water Walks were recognized. Irrevocably, Anishinaabek naaknigewin informs N'bi governance based on the spiritual, physical, mental, and social levels.

The scholarly contribution of this study supports and affirms previous work done by many scholars such as Kim Anderson and Aimée Craft. The recommendations are not new. What is needed is a significant shift to reorientate humanity's attitudes towards N'bi by renewing our relationships with N'bi.

## Introduction

A perennial question lingers; the question is, there is no more water, what we have is all there is, should we decide to care, respect, and protect N'bi for all life?

In Canada, Indigenous Peoples have undergone significant changes as a result of long-term social and economic pressures, cultural genocide, dispossession, subordination, and colonization. Varcoe et al. (2019) states:

These studies illustrate that colonization has eroded Indigenous ways of living and destabilized large proportions of population through racism, oppression, and loss of resources, autonomy, and culture. Research also shows that colonialism has affected and continues to shape Indigenous peoples' life experiences and myriad ways of violence has become rooted in historical, political, and socioeconomic contexts of their lives" (pg. 3).

Historical and settler colonization has caused multiple forms of intergenerational social and ecological suffering (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), 2015). The forced assimilation into a foreign society has created barriers and degraded Indigenous Peoples' responsibilities to their territories.

Prior to colonization, Anishinaabek (Anishinaabek is plural, also spelt Anishinabeg and Anishinaabe when singular – see Glossary for translations) communities were flourishing and relied on the lands to maintain deep cognitive, spiritual, physical, and cultural relationships (Borrows, 2018). These relationships were maintained through legal, governance and knowledge systems and formed the cornerstone of Anishinaabek ways of life (Richmond & Cook, 2016). But, the ultimate goal of the colonial settlers was to eliminate Indigenous Nations as distinct political and social entities (Diabo, 2017), especially kweok roles and responsibilities. Kuokkanen (2019) states, "Early colonizers recognized the crucial role of women in reproducing societies, not only through giving birth but as importantly, through

collective identity, culture, and language” (pg. 188). With distinct roles, responsibilities, and knowledge women are central to the collective continuance of Anishinaabek communities (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). Eliminating women’s knowledge has the potential to eradicate Anishinaabek worldviews and responsibilities to the lands. Jiménez-Estrada and Daybutch (2021) explain how colonization has affected women’s roles as stewards and protectors of life and that their roles and responsibilities have never truly disappeared. “[A]lthough Indigenous women’s knowledge has continued to exist and guide their lives, it has remained largely invisible” (Altamirano-Jiménez & Kermoal, 2016, pg. 12).

By confronting legacies of trauma, which are often seen as cultural genocide, Indigenous women are creating awareness and restoring their responsibilities to the lands, N’bi (water), and all life. For example, the National Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) was founded to promote, enhance, and foster the entire well-being of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women. Other initiatives, such as Mother Earth Water Walks, have increased awareness of Indigenous women’s roles and responsibilities (McGregor, 2015). These Walks were envisioned as an action by Grandmother Josephine Mandamin Ba with the primary purpose of raising awareness of the responsibilities and connections between people and N’bi, especially women. McGregor (2015) explains, “This action was taken in response to decades and even centuries of rising pollution levels in the Great Lakes and elsewhere, and the increasing need for people everywhere to take action to protect the waters by renewing their responsibilities towards them” (pg. 74). The Walks included walking around each of the Great Lakes, the St Lawrence Seaway, and the Mother Earth Water Walk from the four directions. This is one example of women taking seriously their governance responsibilities to care for N’bi.

Water governance can be described as political, social, economic and administrative systems that influence water’s use and management. Wilson (2014) quotes Karen Bakker’s definition of water governance as “the range of political, organizational and administrative processes through which

communities articulate their interests, their input is absorbed, decisions are made and implemented, and decision makers are held accountable in the development and management of water resources and delivery of water services” (pg. 1). However, Indigenous conceptions of water governance move beyond the limits of that definition as Indigenous Peoples value water as a living entity that carries deep spiritual and cultural meaning and governs itself (Chiblow, 2019; Wilson, 2014). Anishinaabek understand governance is based on responsibilities, specifically women’s responsibilities.

Responsibilities to N’bi are also documented in several declarations such as the Declaration of the Anishinaabek, Muskegowuk, and Onkwehonwe of Ontario (2008). This Declaration stems from several years of dealing with water issues in First Nation communities, such as contamination and lack of safe clean drinking water. The Water Declaration speaks to responsibilities and action:

The Anishinaabek, Mushkegowuk, and Onkwehonwe in Ontario met in Garden River First Nation to discuss their perspectives on the waters including water quality, water quantity, safe drinking water and models for a path forward. Central to the discussions were ceremony and spirituality as the Anishinaabek, Mushkegowuk and Onkwehonwe reflected on their own inherent responsibilities and intimate relationships to the waters. (pg. 1.)

Anishinaabek kweok have unique knowledge based on their relationships with N’bi. Anishinaabek kweok understand that water is alive with responsibilities for the well-being of all life (Chiblow, 2019; McGregor et al., 2020).

The rationale for this inquiry stems from the lack of gender balance in N’bi policies, strategies, and N’bi governance (Chiblow, 2019). Typically, Anishinaabek kweok (women) are excluded from colonial governments’ decision making and management frameworks for water (Von der Porten et al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2013). In response to responsibilities and taking action as an Anishinaabe kwe (woman), this study focuses on N’bi governance and Anishinaabek kweok, specifically, how does Anishinaabek

naakingewin (law) construct the role of women in decision making about N’bi? In this article, I argue for the inclusion of Anishinaabek kweok in N’bi governance decision making based on Anishinaabek naakingewin. The relationships Anishinaabek kweok have with N’bi can inform decision making and assist with improving humanity’s relationship to N’bi.

This contribution is based on empirical research conducted in 2020 through conversations with participants (Chiblow, 2021).

## **Context**

In the following sections, a brief literature review is provided on Anishinaabek kweok, Anishinaabek naakingewin, and N’bi decision making. Previous research points to the view that Indigenous Peoples have a very specific ontological understanding of N’bi compared to the dominant discourse of water as a resource. The literature is immense, reflecting years of empirical work by numerous scholars and a diversity of articles to draw from. For example, Anishinaabe scholar Deborah McGregor has written several articles on water including *Traditional Knowledge: Considerations for Protecting Water in Ontario* (2012) listing several foundational messages such as “Water is alive. It is a being with its own spirit” (pg. 10). More recently, Anishinaabe/Metis scholar Aimée Craft produced *Navigating Our Ongoing Sacred Legal Relationships with N’bi (Water)* (2018) drawing on “Nibi Inaakonigewin (Water Law Principles)” (pg. 59), such as “Water has a spirit, We do not own water, Water is life...” (pg. 59).

## **Anishinaabek Kweok**

*Indigenous women have suffered the loss of culture, lands, children, membership, and their traditional roles as First Nation women. (Chiblow & Jiménez Estrada, 2021)*

Anishinaabek kweok responsibilities range from being the backbone of Indigenous communities, keepers of the culture, carriers of life, to caretakers of the Nation (St. Denis, 2017), to name a few. One of the responsibilities Anishinaabek kweok have is to bring forth life to ensure the continuum of family and community (Craft & King, 2021). These responsibilities are guided by unique kendaaswin (knowledge) passed on through countless generations. Prior to colonization, Anishinaabek kweok were respected for their kendaaswin and were held in the utmost respect (Jiménez-Estrada & Daybutch, 2021).

This project is specific to Anishinaabek of the Great Lakes territory (see figure 1). The Great Lakes territory guides our governance structures as the land is our teacher (Johnston, 2011). Anishinaabek kweok actively resist the effects of colonization by continuously establishing and maintaining their relationships and responsibilities to the lands through inawendiwin (relating). Reo (2019) quotes the Seven Generations Education Institute and explains that inawendiwin is our way of relating to all of Creation and honors the interconnectedness of all our relations. The relations and relationships honored are based in place, such as the Great Lakes territory. Reid et al. (2019) explains how, imbued with memories and generational experiences, place identity is important to human activities. Since I am from the Great Lakes territory, my relationships, cultural and spiritual beliefs, and responsibilities are governed by this territory. Atlas et al. (2020) describes how Indigenous laws, knowledge, cultural and spiritual beliefs, and management systems are land based. The relationships established with N’bi, from living and having ancestors from this territory, provide attentive Anishinaabek kweok with unique knowledge that can contribute to N’bi governance.

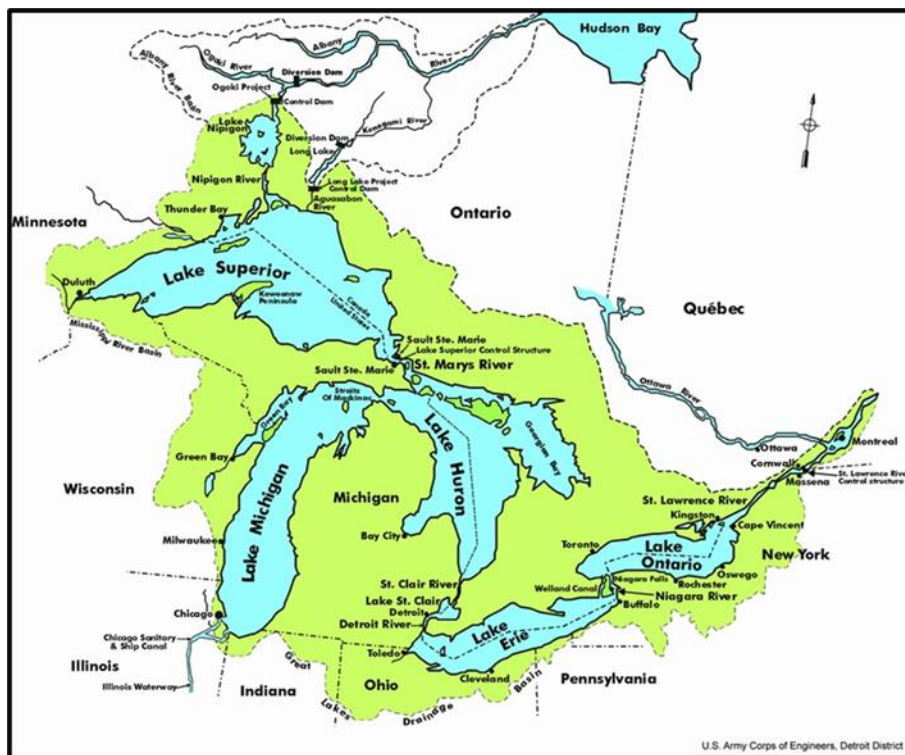


Figure 1. The Great Lakes Territory.

### Anishinaabek Naaknigewin

*This is just like Anishinaabe law. It's a relationship of principles that are given to us by the Creator and modelled in our environment. (Craft, 2018, pg. 53)*

Anishinaabek naaknigewin is not something new: it is embedded in our language, in the lands, in our stories, and held by knowledge holders, Elders, kweok, and ceremony (Borrows, 2018). Anishinaabek naaknigewin is about governing relationships and responsibilities to all life. Walters (2017) posits that the Indigenous legal traditions stem from the beginning of time. Borrows (2010) explains that First Nation legal traditions were the first laws of Turtle Island and are still very relevant. Anishinaabek naaknigewin has always guided the Anishinabek in the Great Lakes territory.



Indigenous scholar Aimée Craft expresses:

Laws govern interactions between beings. In Anishnaabe law, we expand our understanding of “beings” to include life forms such as animals, plants, rocks, in other words anything that has spirit. Spirits are considered beings with whom we interact. Anishinaabe law considers the interactions between and within these beings and understands them to be governed by spiritual, natural and customary laws. Sacred law is the law that is handed down to us by the spirit. Natural law is dictated by what we observe in nature and that “behaviour” which we model ourselves by. (Craft, 2014, pg. 44)

Anishinaabek naaknigewin is inclusive of all relationships including N’bi which guides N’bi decision making.

### **N’bi Decision Making**

In today’s N’bi decision making and governance, there is a lack of gender balance. In fact, “environmental dispossession, including colonial policy and regulations such as the Indian Act” (Richmond, 2018, pg. 175) have solidified the systemic sidelining of women in N’bi decision making. Anderson et al. (2013) suggests current approaches discount Indigenous women and ignore a “valuable perspective on water that could help to identify new ways of managing water” (pg. 12). The continuous ignoring of Anishinabek kweok is embedded in colonialism, is historic, and persists today (Wilson, 2019). Canadian water acts, regulations, and policies are built on a colonial worldview of N’bi as a resource (Bakker, 2010; Linton, 2010). This colonial worldview is in direct conflict with Anishinaabek worldview of N’bi as a relative which is alive with agency, is medicine, is sacred, and brings forth life (Chiblow, 2019; Diagle, 2018; Cave & McKay, 2016; Chief et al., 2016; LaBoucane-Benson et al., 2012; McGregor, 2011; Richmond, 2018). Canadian water governance is complex and fragmented. Simms et al. (2016) explain, “The existing colonial water governance systems is predicated largely on provincial government control over decisions related to water access and use, and the Canadian government

(referred to as the Crown) asserts exclusive ownership of all ground and surface water” (pg. 4). Bakker and Cook (2011) explain how water governance in Canada is highly fragmented creating a series of gaps, overlaps, and challenges. Included in the fragmentation is the exclusion of Anishinaabek kweok knowledge on N’bi and responsibilities to N’bi decision making.

## **Methods: Anishinaabek Protocols**

This paper reports findings generated from a wider study of n’dodneaahnon chikendaaswin (I am searching for knowledge) into Anishinaabek g’giikendaaswinmin (our knowledge) from the Great Lakes territory. The paper focuses on N’bi governance and Anishinaabek women; reconciliation and relationships to N’bi; and Anishinaabek naakingewin and Nokomus Giizis (grandmother moon). The following is a summary of the methodology employed for this research (see Appendix A for full methodology section).

This paper is specific to reporting critical insights into N’bi governance and Anishinaabek kweok from Anishinaabek kweok, grassroots peoples, mishoomsinaanik (grandfathers), nokomisinaanik (grandmothers), and traditional knowledge holders. Participants were invited to participate and included Anishinaabek who are specifically focused on N’bi activism, N’bi art, Mother Earth Water Walks, reconciliation, Anishinaabek naakingewin, Nokomis Giizis, and ceremonies to advocate and educate for the healing of Anishinaabek, the healing of the lands, and for responsibility-based governance from the Great Lakes territory. In a few instances, the snowball method (Patton, 2002) was used to recruit women who are not Anishinaabek and people who were not women but are Indigenous and still from the Great Lakes territory. They were recommended by Anishinaabek participants, so they too are part of the study. These participants represent a very small number of leaders who are responding to the degradation of N’bi in the Great Lakes territory. A total of 28 participants were involved in the research. There was one

focus group which consisted of five kweok. Initially, more focus groups were planned, but due to COVID 19 and stay-at-home orders, participants from the focus groups became key informants through telephone or Zoom calls. Many participants were known to me through work experiences, ceremonies, water walks, and N'bi demonstrations but some did recommend other individuals to contact. The focus groups were women's councils, groups, and women's commissions but again due to COVID 19, organizations for the council and women's commissions contacted the women to determine if they were willing to participate as key informants. The data gathering happened during the months of January to June 2020.

The data was audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed utilizing a qualitative Anishinaabek analysis (Chiblow, 2021). This approach and analysis to coding is founded on Jim Dumont's (2006) Indigenous Intelligence. Specifically, it is based on bisindaage (to listen to someone; spirit); ozhibii'igi (write things down; emotional); nanaagadawendam (I consider, notice, think, reflect, realize; mind); and nisidotaagwad (it is understood; physical). The first phase of bisindaage was allowing myself to feel and imagine several times what was being said prior to transcribing verbatim. The second phase of ozhibii'igi was transcribing verbatim what was being shared by allowing myself to stay attuned to the spiritual significance. The third phase of nanaagadawendam was reading the transcripts, reflecting, and coding verbatim to find similar phrases, thoughts, words, and differences. The fourth and final phase of nisidotaagwad was the totality of myself generating creative expressions through this experience.

The creative expressions generated in this article are formed from many who shared their knowledge through the offering of asema (tobacco). The Anishinaabek protocol of offering asema includes being accountable to participants and their knowledge. Wilson and Restoule (2010) explain how offering of asema activates relationships which is a great deal of responsibility and ensures we strengthen and uplift those we are doing research with. As Anishinaabek, we are not separate from the knowledge but rather participate in relationship to what we are learning (Wilson, 2019). In maintaining the knowledge

relationship and the responsibility to strengthen and uplift participants, I use many direct quotes from the participants to honor their knowledge and their willingness to share.

## **Voices of Anishinaabek Participants**

The major findings of the thematic analysis that emerged is presented in this section. Herein, elements of Anishinaabek naakingewin and N'bi decision making, along with barriers and opportunities, are presented from the participants' perspectives. Their combined and complex individual impacts in relation to N'bi governance and Anishinaabek kweok in the Anishinaabek territory of the Great Lakes are also illustrated. Each participant shared knowledge in each theme but due to the scope of the paper and out of respect to each participant, I try to use the voice of each participant at a minimum of once throughout the section. Each participant provided consent to use their names with their knowledge. The participants' voices are categorized into; 1. Roles and responsibilities of women for N'bi; 2. Barriers; 3. Opportunities; and 4. Anishinaabek naaknigewin.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Women for N'bi**

There are all kinds of protocols and responsibilities for women around water ceremony, making offerings to the water itself or beings that live in the water, or beings that govern the water. (Leora Gansworth)

Anishinaabek kweok roles and responsibilities are tied to several aspects of life, such as bringing forward life. Carrying birth water is a role that constructs responsibility to N'bi providing kweok with unique knowledge as keepers of N'bi. Kweok have a unique relationship with N'bi which can inform N'bi governance. Interviewees agreed that kweok are keepers of N'bi as water carriers based on the

responsibility of bringing forth life through birth water. They also shared knowledge on the unique relationship kweok have with N'bi; the roles and responsibilities of kweok in ceremony; and kweok carry the voice of N'bi.

## **Water Carriers**

Our roles and responsibilities is to be the keepers of the water. We have that gift to give life and it is all about the water, the child being nourished, nurtured, and protected in that water. We are all born through water. (**Barbara Day**)

Women carry water with childbirth. We are the keepers of water and it is our job to protect the water and to make sure everybody is protecting the water. (**Rachel Arsenault**)

I do know that women are the givers of life and that water is where we come from and it is important that we take care of that. (**Christine Agawa**)

What I heard from a lot of women and men is that women because we are the carriers of life, we, being the only species between men and women to bear children, that we are the caretakers of the water because when the baby is inside, it is growing in that chamber of water. So, us women, we are the carriers of life, we are the ones that keep the babies healthy for those 9 months in a chamber of water. Our role is to take care of the water. (**Mona Jones**)

Women are the first environment...responsibility in caring life and water, in the womb and in the water, that spiritual connection of that new little life with water and how that is

a very powerful relationship between mothers and babies, and water is a huge part of that.

**(Beverly Jacobs)**

Participants tie kweok responsibility, the role of carrying birth water, and bringing forth life as a reason to ensure N'bi is protected. The responsibility of women bringing forth life mirrors spring waters rushing bringing forth life.

Women are keepers of the water simply because they actually carry a child and the child is in water and when it is making that 9-month journey from the spiritual world to this world and it all starts there, so when that embryo life begins to develop, it is in that water and that water sustains life. **(Rhonda Hopkins)**

A lot of what came out was about connections between women and water around responsibilities for life giving. How new life is carried in the women and how water ushers in new life, so when the waters break both in the human body but also in mother earth in the spring when the waters start rushing, new life comes to be. **(Kim Anderson)**

The responsibility of carrying life in birth water is what connects all women to N'bi but also connects all humans to N'bi as all humans are born through birth water.

Respect the water...That is where we all lived and were born from. **(Hilda Atkinson)**

The men who participated in the study, concurred with the women.

Your birth water - they are the carriers of birth water and that is what gives us life.

**(Dennis Councilor)**

They are the life giver (**Isaac Murdock**)

These findings support the larger body of literature positioning women as water carriers. Examples of the literature are the Water Declaration of the Anishinaabek, Mushkegowuk and Onkwehonewe in Ontario (2008) and more recently Aimée Craft (2014) states, “women are responsible for water” (pg. 30). Responsibilities for N’bi are based on relationships.

### **N’bi Relationships**

“Water is everything for all life – we would all die without water.” (**Carol Gingras**)

Anishinaabek understand that without N’bi, all life would perish. N’bi does not need humans to live its roles and responsibilities. Unfortunately, this is not commonly known and contributes to water scarcity and the global water crisis. Chen et al. (2013) state, “When dominant cultures are undergirded by anthropocentric logics of efficiency, profit, and progress, waters are all too often made nearly invisible, relegated to a passive role as a resource, and subjected to containment, commodification, and instrumentalization.” (pg. 3). Anishinaabek are asserting their ways of seeing, relating, knowing, and being as a responsibility to protect N’bi.

We are all connected through N’bi and to each other, to the plants, the animals, birds, to all life through N’bi. N’bi in a territory interchanges with your body from the plants, animals, birds, our ancestors, and the sky world and continues the interconnection to all life.

We are all water and so all the waters are connected to each other, they are all actually just one. (**Christi Belcourt**)

We are all connected to water. (**Nancy Rowe**)

So that leads me to the next point about water and water governance – is that we say water is life and we know that water is life, and we continue to operate like that but the core part of it is our duty as Anishinaabe is to protect and sustain life and to send life into the future. That relates to water but that relates to everything. (**Vicki Monague**)

N’bi relationships has been documented in a variety of contexts by several scholars such as Karen Bakker et al. (2018), Nicole Wilson (2018, 2019). My empirical research connects the already documented research by explaining how all life is connected to N’bi, connecting us to each other and to all life, and to the responsibility of sending life into the future. The Nibi Declaration of Treaty #3 Toolkit (2019) explains, “We need Nibi in order to live a good life” (pg. 17). Furthering the research, Vicki Monague explains Anishinaabek duty is protecting and sustaining life, sending life into the future. This duty stems from the Creator’s instructions often taught through ceremony.

## **Ceremony**

Ceremony is an activity that honors the spirit and can also be for healing and cleansing. An example is an offering to N’bi, the spirit of N’bi. Spiritual is living/being ceremony, following the instructions given by the Creator. Spirit is at the centre of everything we do and that is what makes us spiritual (Dumont, 2006). The spiritual relationship to N’bi is often expressed in ceremonial practices. Relying on N’bi includes specific ceremonies that acknowledge N’bi living responsibilities in bringing forth life and sustaining life.

Do the water ceremonies four times a year to give thanks to the water. (**Linda Toulouse**)



They made their tobacco offerings. (**Joyce Morningstar**)

In these ceremonies, kweok have specific roles and responsibilities as the caretakers of N’bi, but men also support the women in their roles. Maintaining balance between women and men for N’bi and fire among others is integral in protecting N’bi. The following participants express their knowledge of ensuring women and men are part of ceremony, continuing the balance in life.

Having that balance and the fire being the men’s role and the water beings the women’s role to pray for that water. (**Barbara Day**)

My brother came down as well, not always do the men join us. We were lucky enough to have a male who could come and support the offering to the river and to the spirits of the river, and to the beings and to the life that is in the river and the land around there.

(**Laura Horton**)

We went to sweat for direction on it and we also had a male, some of our men in our territory help. (**Pricilla Simard**)

Several scholars have documented Indigenous women’s roles and responsibilities to N’bi such as Kim Anderson (2010, 2011), Patricia Hania (2019), Gina Starblanket and Elaine Coburn (2020), the list is extensive. This research furthers Anishinaabek kweok roles and responsibilities by including the roles and responsibilities of men. **Dennis Councillor** substantiated the kweok participants by furthering,

“I heard an old man sing that old song one time and women gathered around that drum as he sang. They protected the heart of that beat”.

The drum is one item in different ceremonies. This research explains the importance of balance for the protection of N'bi, that both female and male have a role with men supporting women carrying the voice of N'bi.

### **Carrying the Voice of N'bi**

Kweok have many responsibilities to N'bi. One specific example of kweok responsibility is to represent N'bi in Anishinaabek ceremony by carrying the voice of N'bi.

As women, as ones who have the ability to carry life, to be life carriers, we have a very profound connected relationship with water and a very unique and special understanding of water and perhaps even further – profound abilities to engage and listen and hear water and so we are able to also have the responsibility to speak for water and facilitate the voice of water to come through in our interactions with other human beings as we make decisions as collectives and as communities that may impact the water. I am sure every decision in its way impacts water and so women hold a very specific role in that regard and must be the ones to bring forward that voice. (**Jessica Keeshig Martin**)

In carrying the voice of N'bi, Anishinaabek kweok also have many ways of learning teachings, protocols, and ceremony. Carrying the teachings, protocols, and ceremonies for N'bi is another responsibility and role of Anishinaabek kweok.

What I kind of remember as a common practice whether you are Anishinaabe in Oklahoma or in Michigan or Ontario, that often time somebody's entry point into knowledge of water or appreciation of water or the engagement with water in ceremony is through women, whether it is women in your families or other women in your

community. It is almost always or often times Anishinaabek women that do that service, that gateway, that sort of person who really excites you about water and gets you thinking about its importance to us as well as the ecology. (**Kyle Whyte**)

Anything I am going to share with you are words that I have heard from our older people from around here. The late Steve Forbister from Grassy Narrows – I remember him saying that when the water here on the earth were being made and even with us, he was saying that these 4 star women stood up way back when and they are the ones who accepted that responsibility to care for that water when creation was being asked. These 4 star women stood up and said, I will look after the waters those waters... and so to me, that is where we knew our responsibilities, that is how we know because those star women tell us and that is what they said, if you want to know, if any human being wants to know but most especially the women, and they said ask us and we will tell you. We will tell you because we have made that promise, that commitment to look after that forever, so to me, that is transferred to us as human being women and that is why we continue to do that, why we still continue to look after those waters. (**Sherry Copenace**)

Kweok's role is listen to N'bi in order to carry N'bi voice. More specifically kweok are the voice for N'bi which also includes teaching others. In teaching, Anishinaabek understand the importance of acknowledging the sources of knowledge and recognize sources of knowledge are not just humans (McGregor, 2020; Craft, 2014; Borrows, 2018).

In conducting this research, it adds to the scholarly articles by Kim Anderson (2010) and Aimée Craft (2014) to mention a few, that kweok roles and responsibilities are carriers of N'bi voice. Through their unique relationships to N'bi, kweok are the voice of N'bi. Unfortunately, many barriers have been created to exclude kweok.

## **Barriers for Kweok in N’bi Decision Making**

We are excluded from being involved because of the Indian Act and colonization. (**Myrle Ballard**)

With the introduction of colonization, Anishinaabek kweok have faced multiple barriers in N’bi decision making, such as loss of culture and teachings (Arsenault, 2021). The first barrier is historical and ongoing. Jacob et al. (2020) state, “At present, we see and experience traumatic consequences from past, as well as ongoing, settler colonial violence” (pg. 1). It also has caused and continues to cause the loss of culture and teachings.

### **Loss of Culture and Teachings**

Colonization has displaced First Nation communities from their traditional territories. This has caused a loss of culture and a loss of relationships with N’bi, the lands, language, and traditional foods.

We are up against a 100 years of colonization, Christianization, patriarchy, misogyny, and hegemony. And that is what they wanted – was to separate us from the water and the animals, and our relationships. (**Shelly Essaunce**)

Because of colonization and the sort of path our people have been forced to take. We have come to forget some of these teachings, and that connection of having male and female balance. (**Angela Trudeau Day**)

The loss of culture and teachings has been expressed by several scholars, such as John Borrows, and it has been documented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2018. Anishinaabek N’bi relationships has been damaged by colonization. This research contributes to the already documented articles and reports on how colonization has caused the loss of culture, teachings and relationships.

The barriers created by colonization are immense in scope and include the barriers for kweok in N’bi governance and decision making. For example, current water governance systems are based on a colonial worldview and ontologies of water (Wilson, 2014). This barrier has been created and enforced by colonial systems, including colonial legislation (Marshall et al. 2020). Colonization ignores Anishinaabek naakingewin excluding kweok in N’bi decision making. Regardless of the immensity of the barriers, participants willingness to offer viable solutions is astounding and an act of strength and compassion.

## **Opportunities for Kweok in N’bi Decision Making**

I think it is really important for everybody to take care of the water in their own way.

**(Rhonda Hopkins)**

Even through the atrocities inflicted on Anishinaabek such as residential schools, participants are still able to focus on opportunities such as realizing responsibilities through Water Walks and the creation of safe space for kweok enabling them to share their knowledge on kweok roles and responsibilities in N’bi governance.

### **Realizing Responsibilities: Water Walks**

**Vicki Monague** shared that the Water Walk began to educate people about the need to protect N’bi. This relates to everyone as everyone has a responsibility to protect N’bi.

She stated,

I think how you govern a Water Walk is how we should protect the water, because we tried to make sure everybody was included in it. We didn’t want to turn anyone away from walking with the water...we loved them unconditionally and that they would have a place to stand with the water...in terms of governance overall, not just the water, how we have to approach it is to make sure that people have a place within our societies and within this broader discourse of water protection and water governance.

**Linda Toulouse** reiterated and expanded on the importance of Water Walks by asserting:

“I think the Anishinaabe kweok, what they have been doing with Josephine – the Water Walks and the ceremonies are very important.”

Water Walks are an expression of Indigenous N’bi governance. They teach and are about roles and responsibilities to N’bi, inclusive of everyone. The Water Walks are based on spiritual and cultural protocols, recognizing water is alive and is life in need of protection. This research furthers current scholarly work such as Deborah McGregor and Kyle Whyte by conveying how the Water Walks are an expression of N’bi governance.

**Safe Space for Kweok**

There is a need to have safe space created where kweok can feel safe to ask questions and learn from each other. It would provide opportunities to share N’bi stories, language, and teachings.

**Elizabeth Webkamigad** stated, “I think that creating that safe space that you are safe to talk, for people to feel welcomed, for people to ask questions, and where people are not feeling shamed or belittled...we need to remember to be patient, kind, and loving”.

**Simone Senogles** described a program they started for women, “we had a listening session with women, where they chose what they wanted to learn about: how can we protect our homelands and take up our responsibilities as women as keepers of water...they learned from each other”.

The male participants also referred to safe space for kweok. **Issac Murdock** stated, “We need to create space for our women”.

Jiménez-Estrada and Daybutch (2021) explain that creating safe space will assist with systemic types of violence and allow the spaces to restore values and teachings. This work furthers scholarly work such as Jiménez-Estrada and Daybutch (2021) by including the need to create safe space for kweok in N’bi decision-making. Safe space creation described above will ensure kweok are able to learn from each other about their roles and responsibilities to N’bi and about the protection of N’bi through Anishinaabek naaknigewin.

## **Anishinaabek Naaknigewin**

Anishinaabek naaknigewin is based on Anishinaabek worldview. Naaknigewin guided Anishinaabek responsibilities to creation and each other. Borrows (2002) states, “Indigenous law originates in the political, economic, spiritual, and social values” (pg. 13). Naaknigewin is based on spiritual compacts and the Aboriginal worldview (Dumont, 1993). The following participants demonstrate how naaknigewin informs governance based on the spiritual, physical, mental, and social levels which includes water governance.

**Jessica Keeshig-Martin** explained “Our Anishinaabe law comes from creation and to understand that law, we get those understandings from again, taking guidance from the water itself, our personal relationships with water.”

**Aimée Craft** justified that naaknigewin is a decision maker by stating “It is definitely connected to Anishinaabek knowledge and the philosophy of interconnections of relations but also understanding that the environment governs itself...the path is changed by the river itself, it controls its flow and can be influenced by outside factors, but it is still ultimately the decision maker in relation to flow”.

Anishinaabek naaknigewin is based on relationships with responsibilities to N’bi. It is knowing that N’bi governs itself. Aimée Craft (2018) states, “We are not at the precipice of understanding that water itself has and is life, and that it is an independent legal actor with whom we are in relationship” (pg. 55). N’bi is its own decision maker and can teach about Anishinaabek naaknigewin.

### **N’bi Teachings as Naaknigewin**

**Joyce Morningstar** rationalized how teachings about N’bi came from her grandparents:



“but they always made sure we never threw anything in the water that was not clean...if it didn’t belong in there, then you don’t put it in there”.

**Debby Danard** stated, “learning about water is like a law”. It is a responsibility to teach about N’bi, to have respect for N’bi, and to respect that duality that N’bi has.

There are consequences when naakingewin is broken as **Isaac Murdock** declared,

“[T]hey always said never to dig deeper than a hand width. That is natural law because that power, if we dig it up can destroy all our water, it can destroy everything. Those are water spirits down there, those underground spirits and they roam around those waters and live in taverns underneath and if we disrupt that, you know then there could be a massive consequence.”

Included in naaknigewin is the responsibility to care for N’bi. **Barbara Day** affirmed, “There are laws for water...and when you talk about Natural law, it is all our responsibility to care for the water”. The knowledge of naaknigewin is embedded in what Anishinaabek know and how Anishinaabek live. **Leora Ganswoth** stated, “those laws around ceremony and teachings come or are flowing from that” when she was referring to the Midewiwin (Medicine Society) passing on teachings and protocols for ceremony.

In some instances, naaknigewin is not written but is viewed and understood when doing activities such as the Water Walk. **Sylvia Plain** explained,

[T]his is the natural law. Everything planning its role in coming together. When we were doing the Water Walk, it was a hawk that was there every morning following us and walking by the horses. Seeing them along the road acknowledging what we were

doing...when we were doing our role, everyone called the other living beings recognized and acknowledged. They knew exactly what we were doing.

### **Naaknigewin is a Responsibility for all Life.**

Embedded within N’bi teachings is N’bi naaknigewin. The teachings are imbued with spirit based on relationships with N’bi. Craft (2018) shares Dumont views, “The Great Spirit gave laws to the Anishinabek to govern relationships, to live in harmony, centering Anishinabek law on relationships” (pg. 56) which “are structured on the basis of spirit” (pg. 57). This research contributes to Aimée Craft and John Borrows knowing that N’bi can govern itself and also furthers their work by exploring how disrupting N’bi naaknigewin and governance has consequences for all life.

## **Conclusion**

By suppressing the inclusion of women in decision making, “half the world’s brainpower and change-making – sets us up for failure” (Johnson & Wilkinson, 2020, pg. xx).

The goal of this paper was to inquiry into the lack of Anishinaabek kweok in N’bi policies, strategies, and N’bi governance, specifically focused on how does Anishinaabek naaknigewin construct the role of kweok in N’bi decision making. This study of the Anishinaabek kweok in the Great Lakes territory reveals roles and responsibilities stemming from kweok being water carriers and based on their relationship as carriers of N’bi voice. Analysis of the roles and responsibilities shows the barriers and opportunities for kweok in N’bi decision making. Anishinaabek kweok are engaging in Anishinaabek N’bi naaknigewin through N’bi teachings. They promote N’bi can and does govern itself.

This original research study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, it supports the larger body of literature of kweok are N’bi carriers with responsibilities to N’bi based on their relationships with N’bi. Participants explicitly stated kweok are N’bi carriers due to the role of carrying life in a water lodge. This role equates to the responsibility of protecting N’bi, which supports kweok as N’bi voice. This research reinforces how colonization has had devastating effects on kweok and caused loss of culture and teachings. It corroborates N’bi can and does govern itself by unequivocally affirming N’bi is a decision maker in its own flowing path. Also supporting the literature is that Water Walks are an expression of N’bi governance. The Water Walks are based on spiritual protocols. They connect roles and responsibilities to N’bi and demonstrate how water should be protected.

Second, this paper expands on roles and responsibilities to N’bi by demonstrating that men have a role in N’bi governance. This role is to support kweok in Water Walks and in N’bi ceremony. Kweok and men’s roles and responsibilities sustain balance through living roles and responsibilities. This study also furthers Anishinaabek roles and responsibilities of protecting and sustaining life into the future as a core duty. Living the role and being the responsibility of protecting N’bi ensures the continuation of all life.

The research reveals how Anishinaabek naaknigewin constructs the role of kweok on N’bi decision making. Anishinaabek naaknigewinis founded on and guides and connects roles and responsibilities to N’bi. “Anishinaabek inaakonigewin sees water as a living, spirited being” (Craft 2018, pg. 55). Anishinaabek naaknigewin informs us that N’bi is life, we are born from N’bi and we are composed of N’bi (Craft, 2018). Kweok have a special relationship with N’bi as the carriers of N’bi, being N’bi voice. A gap has been created in N’bi decision making by excluding kweok. This study produced recommendations to address this gap.

The following recommendations from the research participants that are internal and external are:

Reclaiming or restarting our relationships to N’bi is a starting point for N’bi governance. Nurturing the relationships is an ongoing commitment and includes knowledge mobilization and transformative activities such as Water Walks. Participants explained that Water Walks are informative actions led by kweok and are inclusive of all people, as all humans come from the N’bi lodge. Decision making by Anishinaabek kweok is a strategy for dismantling current colonial water governance, policies, and decision making. We need to work together to push educational institutions to recognize kweok knowledge as valid. Ensuring kweok can continue to send life into the future, there is a need to create safe space where kweok can lead without interference and learn their roles and responsibilities about N’bi naakingeiwn. Creation of safe space will assist with restoring balance between kweok and men. The recognition of kweok responsibilities is crucial in restoring balance to N’bi governance. Equally important is that everybody has a responsibility to learn about N’bi and protect N’bi. This requires a significant shift to reorientate public attitudes and government policies. It is time to renew our responsibilities and relationships to better inform N’bi decision making both internally and externally for the collective continuance of humanity.

These recommendations are not new. For example, Giselle Lavalley (2006) prepared a report for the Chiefs of Ontario with recommendations from participants at four main First Nation cultural groups workshops. These recommendations include First Nations being involved in water decision making, the need for education on N’bi, and N’bi is a relation connecting all living things to life that needs to be cared for.

Ultimately, the shift is about making a choice. The time is upon us to make the choice for the continuation of humanity, and the choice is simple – stop poisoning life through N’bi. It is time to reconcile our relationships to N’bi and each other. It is time to stand together, supporting each other, and bring kweok knowledge into N’bi governance. This involves collaboration across cultures, borders, and even species to

ensure life continues through N’bi. Back to the perennial question lingers; the question is, there is no more water, what we have is all there is, should we decide to care, respect, and protect N’bi for all life?

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## **Chapter Three**

### **N'bi (Water) Can Teach us about Reconciliation**

#### **Chapter Overview**

This chapter responds to the Elders and Traditional holders involved in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015b) and their advice that meaningful reconciliation must involve building good relationships between peoples and with the natural world. In my contribution, I will build upon the concept of reconciliation with the natural world, with a specific focus on the N'bi (water). I ask, can the broader discourse in Canada about reconciliation assist with improving humanity's relationships to N'bi? More specifically, I ask:

1. How can reconciliation assist with reconciling different legal orders and governance structures?
2. What are Indigenous, more specifically, Anishinaabek concepts of reconciliation?
3. What can we learn from N'bi about reconciliation?

I show that N'bi can teach humanity about reconciliation. N'bi can guide and provide insights into reconciliation with the natural world that people can then emulate in their relationships with each other. I contend that Anishinaabek have their own concepts of reconciliation that include living in harmony and balance with the natural world. My research shows that mainstream, colonial society needs to understand Anishinaabek concepts of reconciliation to truly reset the relationships called for in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report (2015b). This empirical study demonstrates that N'bi can teach people about fair and equitable relationships with each other and can inform the pathway to reconciliation. It demonstrates the importance of reconciliation with the natural world which will assist humanity in reconciliation among peoples. Learning from N'bi can also inform reconciliation among different legal

orders and governance structures by contributing to reconciliation with self, among peoples, and with the natural world.

This study contributes to scholarly work completed by other reconciliation scholars, such as Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully (2018); Aimee Craft and Paulette Regan (2020); and Karen Drake (2017). It contributes to this work by engaging in empirical research to demonstrate how reconciliation can be achieved with the natural world. I indicate that moving toward Indigenous concepts of reconciliation is everyone's responsibility. I contend that humanity can learn important lessons from N'bi about ethical and reciprocal relationships with each other and the natural world.

## **Introduction**

In May 2021, 215 children's remains were found in an unmarked grave at the former Kamloops Indian Residential school (CBC, 2021), resulting from the settler state of Canada's residential schooling system. I live with the aftermath of these schools and hear the anger of Indigenous youth arising from the historical and continued genocidal policies of the settler state of Canada. It seems now, more than ever, Indigenous Peoples and Canada need to take action to move forward in peace and friendship.

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015b) revealed, "For over a century, the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada" (TRC, 2015b, pg. 1). The marginalization of Indigenous Peoples in Canada came into the spotlight in 2015 when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reported the findings of several years of gathering and documenting statements about residential schools from the survivors of those schools. The residential schools were part

of Canada's overall assimilation policy and amounted to cultural genocide (TRC, 2015b). Through these policies, colonial and later Canadian governments envisioned access to all the lands without interference from the original inhabitants, the Indigenous Peoples. Testimonials reveal that these schools utilized corporal punishment, sexual, physical, mental, and spiritual abuse, unauthorized nutrition experiments, and the devaluing and debasement of Indigenous ways of knowing, relating, speaking, and being (George, 2020). The TRC (2015a) provided 94 Calls to Action to address reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies in Canada. The Calls to Action range from child welfare to justice, public education, sport and wellness, health, training for public officials, apologies, business, and media (TRC, 2015a).

My empirical study on Anishinaabek water governance provides guidance on how N'bi can teach us about reconciliation, which has the potential to guide reconciliation with the natural world. This study is specific to the Anishinaabek from the Great Lakes territory (see Fig. 1). It investigates what is reconciliation from an Anishinaabek perspective, where does reconciliation begin, how do we correct the wrongs inflicted on Indigenous Peoples, and how to reconcile different legal orders and governance structures. Lightfoot (2020) explains that reconciliation is hard work, is a long-term on-going process that creates healthy and respectful relationships based on equality and mutual respect, and is about healing. Reconciliation is about envisioning a shared future (King & Maiangwa, 2020). This shared future includes understanding human systems are part of the natural world and marks a turning point for all levels of government and Canadian society to salvage what is left of the natural world by beginning to rebuild our relationships to one another and to the natural world as a part of reconciliation (Enns & Littlechild, 2018).



Figure 1: Map of the Great Lakes Territory

## Setting the Context on Reconciliation

Reconciliation is about restoring relationships and, according to the TRC (2015a), “It is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples” (pg. 6). It is not a new concept as several government commissions have provided recommendations on how the Canadian government and settlers can reconcile relationships with Indigenous Peoples, including Anishinaabek. For example, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), released over 25 years ago, refers to reconciliation as “the 4 basic principles of a renewed relationship being mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing and mutual responsibility” (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, pg. 677).

The Ipperwash Inquiry (2007) stemmed from the federal government's refusal to return Ipperwash Provincial Park to the Stoney Point First Nation after appropriating it as a military training site in 1942 and promising its return after World War II. The Inquiry examined the events leading up to the death of Dudley George who was shot while occupying the Ipperwash Provincial Park in September 1995 (Ipperwash Inquiry, 2007). In response to the Inquiry recommendations, the Province of Ontario renamed the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs to the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation to reflect its commitment to improving relationships and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in Ontario (In the Spirit of Reconciliation, 2018).

Stemming from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015a) Call to Action #41, a public inquiry was launched to investigate the historical and ongoing violence against Inuit, Métis, and First Nation women and girls (Bugler et al., 2021), called the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). The MMIWG Inquiry included acts of violence and "genocide against First Nations, Inuit and Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people" (National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019, pg. 1). This Inquiry produced over 200 Calls to Justice stating, "An absolute paradigm shift is required to dismantle colonialism within Canadian society, and from all levels of government and public institutions" (National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019, pg. 60). The Calls to Justice are based on decolonizing and reconciling relationships. For example, Call to Justice for All Canadians, 15.7 states,

Create time and space for relationships based on respect as human beings, supporting and embracing differences with kindness, love, and respect. Learn about Indigenous principles of relationship specific to those Nations or communities in your local area and work, and put them into practice in all of your relationships with Indigenous Peoples (National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019, pg. 85).

Learning about Indigenous Peoples' histories with the settler state of Canada and respecting Indigenous Peoples' aspirations is an important part of reconciliation. Ladner (2018) explains how "many Canadians live comfortably without knowledge of their own history" (pg. 248). Several scholars have written about reconciliation and what the term means. For example, John Borrows (2018) explains that reconciliation is used in a variety of ways and has different meanings depending on who is using the term. Jeffery G. Hewitt (2014) quotes Val Napoleon stating that reconciliation has various definitions. For example, Borrows & Tully (2018) state, "Some say reconciliation between settlers and Indigenous peoples is an end state of some kind...Others argue it is more akin to an ongoing activity" (pg. 4). O'Neil (2020) states, "Critics of the term would have us ask whether "reconciliation" has become a buzzword spoken in abstraction from the ongoing reality of dispossession or used as a rhetorical replacement for the resurgence of Indigenous lifeways that run counter to and embody alternatives to Canada's settler colonial structures" (pg. 77). Instead of debating what the term means, we might want to consider the aspirations assigned to the term and whether these aspirations actually address the injustices that persist today (O'Neil, 2020). To begin to reconcile, the settler state of Canada, needs to understand the aspirations of Indigenous Peoples in establishing and maintaining respectful relationships.

Craft and Regan (2020) add reconciliation includes, "Reparations must be made on several fronts, ranging from apologies and monetary compensation to establishing decolonial processes to return lands and dismantle structures of oppression and power that have led to the cultural genocide that has been perpetrated against Indigenous peoples in Canada for over a century and a half" (pg. xi). To support this call, the TRC (2015a) principle 8 states, "Supporting Indigenous peoples' cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential" (TRC, 2015a, pg. 4).

Furthermore, at a Traditional Knowledge Keepers Forum sponsored by the TRC (2015), Anishinaabe Elder Mary Deleary spoke about the responsibility for reconciliation that both Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal people carry. She emphasized that the work of reconciliation must continue in ways that honour the ancestors, respect the land, and rebalance relationships. She said,

I'm so filled with belief and hope because when I hear your voices at the table, I hear and know that the responsibilities that our ancestors carried ... are still being carried ... even through all of the struggles, even through all of what has been disrupted ... we can still hear the voice of the land. We can hear the care and love for the children. We can hear about our law. We can hear about our stories, our governance, our feasts, [and] our medicines.... We have work to do. That work we are [already] doing as [Aboriginal] peoples. Our relatives who have come from across the water [non-Aboriginal people], you still have work to do on your road.... The land is made up of the dust of our ancestors' bones. And so to reconcile with this land and everything that has happened, there is much work to be done ... in order to create balance. (pg. 9)

In creating the balance, it is incumbent upon non-Indigenous Peoples to learn the true history of Indigenous Peoples and what the settler state of Canada has inflicted upon Indigenous Peoples. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) and the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Girls and Women (2019) provide specific guidance for the education of non-Indigenous Peoples in Canada along with newcomers to Canada. Some institutions are mandating students to learn the history and legacy of residential schools, yet others complain that learning about Indigenous Peoples in an institution violates their academic freedom (Drake, 2017). Drake (2017) argues that learning about Indigenous Peoples is a prerequisite to reconciliation.

### **Understanding Indigenous Concepts of Reconciliation**

What exactly is 'reconciliation'? Several scholars such as John Borrows, and James Tully (2018) discuss reconciliation as contestable with different meanings, dependent on how the term is used and who is using the term. In fact, they specifically state,



[S]ome say reconciliation between settlers and Indigenous peoples is an end state of some kind: a contract, agreement, legal recognition, return of stolen lands, reparations, compensation, closing the gap, or self-determination. Others argue that it is more akin to an ongoing activity. Some say reconciliation embodies a relationship stretching back 12,000 years, an existential mode of being with one another and the living earth. It has been associated with treaty relationships since early contact. For some it is the path to decolonization, for others a new form of recolonization. Some insist reconciliation must be resisted, while others see it as an essential process for ongoing relationality. (Borrows and Tully, 2018, pg. 4)

The TRC (2015a) explains that Elders and Knowledge Keepers have stated, “[T]here is no specific word for reconciliation in their own languages, there are many words, stories, and songs, as well as sacred objects such as wampum belts, peace pipes, eagle down, cedar boughs, drums, and regalia, that are used to establish relationships, repair conflicts, restore harmony, and make peace.” (pg. 17). In other words, as Indigenous Nations are diverse in Canada, concepts of reconciliation will be just as diverse. For example, Anishinabek reconciliation will be distinct from Cree concepts, although they will no doubt share common characteristics. My study focused on Anishinabek concepts of reconciliation. Another aspect of reconciliation raised by the TRC (2015a) that is often not considered in mainstream concepts of reconciliation is incorporating the natural world in the conversation on what reconciliation means and how to get there. For example, Stephen Augustine “[S]uggested that other dimensions of human experience – our relationships with the earth and all living beings – are also relevant when working towards reconciliation” and Elder Crowshoe stated that, from an Aboriginal perspective, reconciliation requires “reconciliation with the natural world” (TRC, 2015a, pg. 18). Indigenous Peoples understand reconciliation to include reconciling relationships between peoples but also with the natural world. Anishinaabek understand all life such as, the waters, the lands, animals, are imbued with spirit and are interconnected (Archibald, 2008; Craft & King, 2021; Richmond, 2018; McGregor et al., 2020; Dumont, 2006; Tobias J.K & Richmond, 2014; Diver et al., 2019). There is a distinct concept of reconciliation from Indigenous Peoples.

Craft & Regan (2020) also point out that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission found conflicting views between Crown perspectives and Indigenous understandings of reconciliation. How can Indigenous peoples and the colonial state of Canada and settlers reconcile if there are different perspectives and understandings of what reconciliation actually means and how reconciling relationships needs to happen? MacDonald (2020) states, “We need to understand as settlers that Indigenous views of reconciliation may be incommensurable with the status quo of the settler state” (pg. 9). Indigenous Peoples understand the interconnectedness and interrelatedness between all life and humans whereas “settler colonialism aims to separate the land from the rest of Creation” (Starblanket & Stark, 2018, pg. 190). Starblanket & Stark (2018) clarify that a shift away from the human-centred world view towards a relational way of being inspired by interconnectedness is needed.

### **Indigenous Legal Traditions and Reconciliation**

The TRC (2015) acknowledged the importance of learning from “Indigenous conceptions of reconciliation, stating that these notions, which are based on worldview, oral history traditions, and practices, have much to teach us about how to establish respectful relationships among peoples and with the land and all living things” (McGregor, 2018a, pg. 2). Reconciliation is inclusive of reconciling relationships among peoples and to the natural world. The TRC also introduced different aspects of Indigenous concepts of reconciliation that include the Indigenous laws, knowledge, protocols and values. The revitalization of Indigenous law is central to achieving reconciliation as the TRC (2015a) stated,

The Commission believes that the revitalization and application of Indigenous law will benefit First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, Aboriginal–Crown relations, and the nation as a whole. For this to happen, Aboriginal peoples must be able to recover, learn, and practice their own, distinct, legal traditions. (TRC, 2015a, pg. 205)

The Commission (2015) recognized the need to support Indigenous Peoples in recovering and practicing their own legal traditions which will assist their distinct processes of reconciliation. Settlers need to understand that Indigenous Peoples were here occupying the lands under their own laws and governance systems. Ash (2018) states,

We did not sell or give up our rights to the land and territories. We agreed to share our custodial responsibility for the land with the Crown. We did not abdicate it to the Crown. We agreed to maintain peace and friendship among ourselves and with the Crown (pg. 35).

International legal expert and Cree lawyer, Sharon Venne (2017) explains, (We) [W]ere never discovered; we were not lost. We were not conquered. Our territories were not terra nullius – lands without people (pg. 16).

The relationships and connections Indigenous Peoples have with the lands are based on legal orders and governance structures that maintain balance and harmony (McNeil, 2018). Borrows (2018) explains that Indigenous laws are rooted in long term relationships with the lands and Indigenous law is drawn from these relationships and connections. Indigenous law embraces ecological protection and guides relationships with each other and the natural world (Tully, 2018). Indigenous law continues to function in Indigenous societies through people's actions and in self-determination. Indigenous laws are based on relationships stemming from specific geological landscapes, ecosystems, and peoples embedded in the lands and languages (Youngblood Henderson, 2002). These laws governed Indigenous People's relationships with the lands. Magen (2015) explains, "Legal orders are collections of norms, be it the law of nation-states, supranational entities or international law." (pg. 24). The attempted erasure of Indigenous Peoples' laws has created lack of access to and erratic management of lands and waters through colonial driven policies and laws which have regularly ignored Indigenous Peoples' laws and ways of knowing (Mills, 2018).

Anishinaabe scholar John Borrows (2018) explains that reconciliation includes a collective reconciliation with the Earth simultaneously with resurgence of “Indigenous laws, governments, economies, education, relations to the living earth, ways of knowing and being, and treaty relationships” (pg. 69). Reconciliation is about relationships with the natural world and requires support, as stated in the 2007 Ipperwash Inquiry. Lightfoot (2020) describes reconciliation as “difficult and necessary journey we must all take together, far into the future” (pg. 277) and requires support.

Reconciliation includes decolonization. Craft & Regan (2020) explain that “reconciliation is not only the ultimate goal but a decolonizing process of journeying in ways that embody everyday acts of resistance, resurgence, and solidarity, coupled with renewed commitments to justice, dialogue, and relationship building” (pg. xi). The TRC (2015a) lists 18 Calls to Action regarding justice, ranging from policy reform to the recognition and implementation of Aboriginal justice systems. Justice is more than just criminal policies. O’Neil (2020) clarifies, “[T]hat the TRC goes beyond singular concern with the question of economic justice to an even more demanding and ultimately decolonizing framework that challenges Eurocentric models of conflict resolution and instead centres Indigenous legal orders, knowledge systems, and relationships to the natural world as inseparable from the reconciliation process” (pg. 80). He further remarks, “The TRC’s call to decolonize Indigenous-Crown relations and establish genuine nation-to-nation relationships is thus a call to transform not only the economic and political but also the social, legal, and cultural relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers on the basis of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence on and with the land” (2020, pg. 80). Reconciliation includes reconciling with Indigenous legal orders and governance structures.

In summary, there is a woefully neglected truth that the Canadian legal system must confront: Indigenous legal orders and Indigenous laws exist (Borrows, 2020) and the revitalization of them is required to achieve reconciliation. Indigenous legal systems are diverse and resilient, and they exist despite overt and racist attempts by Canada’s governments and its legal system to ignore, subvert and even prohibit them

(JFK Law, 2016). In the following sections, I describe Anishinaabek conceptions of reconciliation with people and the natural, based on views shared by research participants from my empirical study.

## **Situating Research: Anishinaabe Research Paradigm (methodology)**

My Anishinaabek Research Paradigm (ARP) emerges to address decolonizing research. Since colonization, research on Indigenous Peoples has been extractive and, in many instances, racist (Smith 2012). Unethical research on Indigenous Peoples has been detrimental, done without their consent, used to perpetuate control over or disempower Indigenous Peoples, and research being on rather than with or for (Chiblow, 2020; Haitana et al, 2020; Lambert, 2014; Martin 2003; Reid, 2020; Smith, 2012). This has caused mistrust and the need to create processes reliant on Anishinaabek protocols.

The ARP I employ is based on asema (tobacco) first, as spirit comes first in Anishinaabek protocols. Wilson & Restoule (2010) state, “Many relationships are activated when tobacco is part of a research methodology” (pg. 29). Embedded in Anishinaabek protocols are reciprocal duties and responsibilities between human and the natural world (McGregor et. al, 2020). These duties include responsibility, respect, relationality, reflection, relevance, and refusal (Archibald, 2008; Chiblow, 2020; Debassige, 2010; Johnston et al., 2018; Kimmerer, 2013). Anishinaabek protocols are grounded in our relationships to the lands, our ancestors, and future generations. The relationships form g’giikendaaswinmin (our knowledge, referring specifically to Anishinaabek) as Anishinaabek were and are always searching for g’giikendaaswinmin.

The g’giikendaaswinmin in this study is primarily from Anishinaabek kweok (women), grassroots peoples, mishoomsinaanik (grandfathers), nokoomisnaanik (grandmothers), and traditional knowledge holders from the Great Lakes territory (see Figure 1). A total of 28 participants and one focus group

consisting of five kweok participated in a conversational style design as this falls within Indigenous worldviews (Starblanket al., 2019). The conversation method provides participants with greater control on the knowledge they are sharing (Kovach, 2009). Most participants were known to me from previous work, Water Walks, and ceremony. The conversations were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Due to COVID 19, some conversations were conducted via ZOOM or by telephone. I employed Anishinaabe scholar Jim Dumont's (2006) Indigenous Intelligence ways of seeing, relating, knowing, and being as an analytical tool for a qualitative Anishinaabek analysis. It utilizes bisindaage (to listen to someone; spirit); ozhibii'igi (write things down; emotional); nanaagadawendam (I consider, notice, think, reflect, realize; mind); and nisidotaagwad (it is understood; physical) and recognizes there are multiple ways of gathering and understanding knowledge. Phase one of bisindaage enabled me to feel and imagine several times what was being said. Phase two of ozhibii'igi was transcribing verbatim. Phase three of nanaagadawendam was reading, reflecting, and coding similar phases, thoughts, words, and differences. The final phase of nisidotaagwad generated a way of seeing, relating, thinking, and being through the experience of my total being understanding the knowledge given by the participants.

Participants chose to have their names revealed for the knowledge they shared. Research participants were invited to participate by virtue of their work relating to water. Not all participants were Anishinaabek as a few identified as Métis and Mohawk. These participants were chosen due to the years of work with women, water, law, and governance. Men were also invited to participate, even though my research focuses on women, because of their ceremonial involvement in the creation of the Water Declaration of the Anishinaabek, Muskegowuk, and Onkwehonwe in Ontario (2008). Other men were invited because of their expertise in storytelling and involvement with women's initiatives, such as Water Walks.

One of my objectives was to understand what reconciliation means for Anishinaabek. I have been told by Elders and through ceremonies to get an education so that I can help our people. In order to help our

people, I need to understand what their concept of reconciliation is. Through my participation in water ceremonies and Water Walks, I have learned the importance of educating people on the Anishinaabek worldview of N'bi. I furthered this education to explore what can we learn from N'bi about reconciliation since the Water Walks was a form of reconciling my relationship to N'bi. I also wanted to understand if reconciliation can assist with reconciling different legal orders and governance structures to address Canadian water governance.

The following section presents the perspectives shared by the participants. I use direct quotes from the participants to accurately capture their voices. Linda Smith (2012) describes research with Indigenous Peoples as recognizing historical unethical research. By using direct quotes from the participants, I aim to address unethical research by lifting their voices and the knowledge they share by standing with them (TallBear, 2014). The main objective of the research was to draw on participant knowledge about how N'bi can teach humanity about reconciliation. Historically, research has been extractive, used to perpetuate control over Indigenous Peoples (Lambert, 2014; Ried, 2020; Starblanket et al., 2019). Decolonizing research calls for research to emerge from Indigenous ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and being (Chiblow, 2021). The following section ensures this research arises from the voices of the Indigenous participants.

## **Results and Findings**

My analysis revealed that Anishinaabek have concepts of reconciliation, these include the following characteristics: reconciliation begins with self; correcting the wrongs; reconciling different legal orders and governance structures; and N'bi can teach humanity about reconciliation. Differing worldviews contribute to diverse concepts of reconciliation as demonstrated by the participants. Reconciliation begins with self for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples with a need to correct the wrongs inflicted on

Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous legal orders and governance structures are different from mainstream society and are based on differing worldviews which need to be understood and addressed prior to reconciliation. Participants shared knowledge that N’bi can assist with reconciliation from an Indigenous worldview.

### **Anishinabek Concept of Reconciliation in Anishinaabemowin (language)**

Some of the participants are fluent language speakers and offered a nuanced understanding of reconciliation. In discussions about reconciliation with the fluent language speakers I asked, “Can we say reconciliation in our language?” They explained that the language is action-based, and it is complex to translate English words into Anishinaabemowin. They described words that could convey the concept of reconciliation. For example, Mary Wemigwan offered the word gweksidoon and gweksidj’geng as concepts of reconciliation. She explains “Gweksidoon means putting things right with your words from your mouth – having things the right way or gweksidj’genge is us putting things right or gweksidj’ged is s/he putting things right and gwekkaadzi is to live the right way, to change your life to live the right way in balance”. Mary Wemigwan clarifies this and includes correcting things and making offerings, action-based reconciliation is something that you do. She furthers the complexities of Anishinaabemowin by explaining, “The ones that speak the language understand the word gweksidoon, gwekkaadzi as the feeling of gweekkadzi is to live the right way, doing things the right way”. Another fluent language speaker, Dennis Councillor from the Treaty # 3 territory was also asked if there is a word for reconciliation in Anishinaabemowin. He explains, “Kookchiigahin is to set things straight and naahatakoochigahin would be the closest interpretation to it. He further states, “Naahatocookchigahin is to think about setting things straight and has a lot to do with judgement, direction, and guidance but chibaakinaaknigewin is to find a solution to the problem.”



Furthering the complexities, Aimée Craft explains that in her research she has engaged fluent language speakers and Harry Bone, an Elder she works with, described reconciliation as “agodiwin”. Aimée states, “We might want to think about Harry’s concept of reconciliation, which is agodiwin, the agreement to work together”. The commonality of the Anishinaabemowin concepts of reconciliation from each speaker is founded on action and is solution oriented. For example, fluent Anishinaabemowin Linda Toulouse affirms the action of gweeksidoon by stating, “When you say sorry to someone by putting things right with your mouth, it isn’t any good if you don’t follow up to take action to fix it”.

To fully understand Anishinaabemowin concepts of reconciliation, one must learn or become familiar with Indigenous languages. Some of the beginner language learners expressed the importance of learning Anishinaabemowin. For example, Leora Gansworth stated, “The language just opens up so much and it is healing even to hear it, it is so important to begin to learn the language”. Fluent language speaker Myrle Ballard expressed, “Because our words have governance in them, and I always struggle with ways to describe our governance systems so our language can only truly be understood if you are a language speaker”. Some concepts simply cannot be adequately expressed through translation.

Anishinaabek concepts of reconciliation conveys action. The fluent language speakers explained the complexities of translating an English word into Anishinaabemowin. These fluent language speakers exemplify the complexities of understanding reconciliation from a fluent Anishinaabemowin speakers’ perspective. The concept of reconciliation in Anishinaabemowin is about setting things right after the harms have occurred. Also, the words described by the fluent language speakers vary but convey living in balance, finding a solution, and working together to find that solution. Learning Anishinaabemowin is important to understand Indigenous worldviews. Learning Anishinaabemowin begins with self-taking, responsibility-taking action.

### **Reconciliation with self through N’bi**

Reconciliation begins with reconciling with oneself for Indigenous Peoples. Colonization has had devastating effects on Indigenous Peoples and has eroded Indigenous worldviews (Jacob et al, 2020). Christine Agawa explains, “We have been oppressed for so long”. The importance of reconciling with oneself as Indigenous Peoples addresses colonization. Laura Horton clarifies, “Reconciliation is that call to your own personal action, to be responsible for your own behaviour”. Nancy Rowe explains, “I would like to return to the practices of tobacco offerings to the grandmothers when I am in their territory”. Participants stated the importance of Indigenous Peoples learning their ways of life. Simon Senogles described a series of workshops for women to learn their responsibilities because this is what they were asking for. Laura Horton explained, “Working with our People is really the biggest thing, making sure kids know that they are sacred and that the water is running through them”. Learning and practicing Anishinaabek ways of life will benefit future generations. Reconciliation is recovering from colonization.

Recovering from colonization also means healing with ourselves and N’bi. Pricilla Simard states, “Reconciliation is about forgiveness, about moving forward and getting out of our grief, it is about healing that needs to take place”. Reconciliation can start with healing oneself through N’bi. Sherry Copenace explains, “Maybe something in our life is not going right, so we will make an offering to that water to make those amends, to make those words of appeasement and actions of appeasement so that is how we correct it”. Actions of appeasement is a form of correcting the wrongs happening in your life and is a form of reestablishing relationships with N’bi as a healing process. Kyle Whyte informs, “The establishment or repair of kinship relationships enables their survival and are moral bonds between either humans or non-humans”. Isaac Murdock clarifies, “Reconciliation is really our relationship with the land and waters and that is where true reconciliation happens”. Reconciliation can be healing through restoration of relationships with N’bi, but it needs to start with oneself for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples.

Non-Indigenous peoples need to do their own work to learn what the aspirations of Indigenous Peoples are and whose lands they are on. Leora Gansworth explained, “This lady was asking me what can the non-native communities do, and told her you have to figure that out and approach the native people that live near you and ask them how you can work together”. It includes, “The willingness to understand and be accepting of different viewpoints, worldviews, and ideologies” as Jessica Keeshig Martin describes. People are responsible for educating themselves. One way to generate awareness is through the education system. Elizabeth Webkamigad rationalizes, “What is going to help is education...that people are informed...understand a little bit more, creating an awareness in their own thinking, in their own interactions and that becomes generational”. Reconciliation means non-Indigenous Peoples taking the initiative to learn from Indigenous Peoples.

Reconciliation begins with self for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. For Indigenous Peoples, it is about healing from colonization through learning Indigenous ways of life. Water is medicine (Wilson, 2019) and can help heal Indigenous Peoples from colonization through making offerings to make amends and appeasements. Non-Indigenous Peoples also have a responsibility to learn about Indigenous Peoples from Indigenous Peoples. Reconciling with self for non-Indigenous Peoples includes correcting the wrongs.

### **Correcting the wrongs**

Reconciliation is more than words; it is correcting the wrongs. Barbara Day explains, “To me reconciliation is not just lip service and apologizing; it is doing something about it”. Participants were passionate in stating what first needs to be corrected by the government before reconciliation can begin between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. Elder/Grandmother Nancy Rowe has been denied access to the Anishinaabe way of living. She states, “I have never eaten a sucker or harvested rice because I don’t have access to water and education comes from these through our teachings”. She wants

“to be able to go to the Credit River and not worry about the Ministry or Conservation Authority”. Nancy does not want to be harassed when accessing the waters that are not part of the reserve but are still part of the original homelands. She feels that reconciliation is reclamation, which includes her ability to access the waters for the Anishinaabe way of life. Being able to access the lands and waters is an important part of reconciling our relationships to the waters. Reclamation involves Anishinaabek ability to access N’bi for their relationships, responsibilities, healing and learning their way of life.

Anishinaabek understand the importance of having lands for reconciliation processes. When asked about their concept of reconciliation, participants shared that reconciliation is correcting the wrongs by giving land back. Christi Belcourt stated, “Give us back our land- give us back everything you stole from us”, and Kim Anderson explained, “We have to talk about where is the land”. Nancy Rowe explained how she needs to be able to access the waters to continue to live her Anishinaabek way of life. Without access to the lands or waters, reconciling relationships with N’bi is going to be difficult. Correcting the wrongs includes returning the lands so Indigenous Peoples can reconcile their relationships with the lands and waters healing from colonization. Beverly Jacobs emphasizes, “We need land-based healing” and this requires land back through reconciliation.

Correcting the wrongs is going to be difficult. Without the lands or waters, Indigenous Peoples may find healing from reconciliation challenging. It may also prove challenging for Indigenous Peoples to reconcile their relationships with the lands and waters.

### **Reconciling different Legal Orders and Governance Structures**

Reconciling different legal orders and governance structures is significant for Indigenous Peoples reconnecting to self, the lands, and among peoples (Borrows & Tully, 2018). Indigenous legal orders and governance provide harmony with Creation and humankind for the well-being of the natural world

(Dumont, 2010). Reconciliation is hard work and will require all humanity to be accepting of one another (Lightfoot, 2020).

Differing views of what legal orders and governance structures are may impede reconciling different legal orders and governance structures. For example, Jessica Keeshig Martin states, “Our Anishinaabe law comes from creation...the laws are embedded in all of those relationships”. Vicki Monague expresses, “Our governance system is the land, the clans come from the land and are our first teachers”. Colonial legal orders and governance structures are based on commodifying the lands and waters (Debby Danard). “Differing worldviews and the differences in ideologies are at the heart of the issues” (Jessica Keeshig Martin). Reconciliation is difficult and may not be able to address different legal orders and governance structures because “they (meaning non-Indigenous peoples) are not steering in any particular way – just in circles” (Sylvia Plain). Sylvia is from Aamjiwnaang First Nation, is a community ambassador, Water Walker, researcher, birch bark canoe builder, and founder of the Great Lakes Canoe Journey. She explains how her analogy is two different oars are needed to steer a vessel and the non-Indigenous are paddling with one oar not willing to accept the other oar from Anishinaabek. Sylvia states, “My interpretations of two-row wampum analogy is these two vessels, we have been holding the second one and they know but are just insistent on that one paddle”. The oars in the vessel represent two different legal orders and governance structures or ways of knowing, and if the non-Indigenous Peoples refuse to accept the Anishinaabek oar, “They will continue to steer in no particular way, just in circles” (Sylvia Plain).

The non-Indigenous Peoples have an opportunity to learn from Anishinaabek, to understand Anishinaabek legal orders, and that governance structures are based on responsibility to the natural world, not extraction, consumption, or individual gain. In many instances, the non-Indigenous are not willing to learn, according to Sylvia Plain. They are not willing to accept the other oar that is needed to steer the vessel in one direction. Legal orders and governance structures need to be reconciled by “sitting down

with us, listening to us and they [non-Indigenous Peoples] are going to have to bring back our Anishinaabek laws,” explained Dennis Councillor. We can start with “incremental changes” stated Angela Trudeau Day explaining “our worldview” furthered Mona Jones as a beginning for reconciling different legal orders and governance structures.

Reconciling different legal orders and governance structures entails accepting the other oar from Indigenous Peoples. If non-Indigenous Peoples are not willing to accept the other oar, reconciliation may not be accomplished. Indigenous legal orders and governance ensured harmonious relationships for the well-being of the natural world. Incremental changes will be needed to address reconciling different legal orders and governance structures. One incremental change for humanity is to understand what N’bi can teach us about reconciliation.

### **Learning from N’bi about Reconciliation**

The very nature of N’bi is to support the continuance of life (Danard, 2013). Indigenous Peoples have been learning from N’bi since the beginning of creation (Danard, 2013). People can learn important teachings from the N’bi.

N’bi therefore can provide inspiration for reconciliation with the natural world. Mona Jones states, “Everything on Mother Earth needs water...without water nothing survives”. It does not distinguish between species and continues to provide life to all the natural world. Nancy Row explains, “We are all connected to water”. N’bi demonstrates everyone is involved in reconciliation as N’bi is inclusive of everyone. Carol Gingras rationalizes, “Water is everything for all life”. N’bi teaches us to be inclusive for reconciliation, and we are all part of reconciliation. Barbara Day explains, “We need to be reminded that we are part of that [water], not above it”. N’bi has instructions from the Creator that it follows every day, such as providing life to all the natural world. Jessica Keeshig Martin states, “We need to be more in

harmony with water rather than ignoring and doing what we think is best”. N’bi can teach us to live in harmony through reconciliation. Christie Belcourt clarifies, “We are all water” and “that is where we all lived and were born from,” explained Hilda Atkinson. Debby Danard furthers, “We are all in this Creation together”. All humanity is connected as we all come from N’bi. N’bi can teach humanity that we all need to do the work and need to be inclusive for reconciliation to heal relationships. N’bi provides for all life and never discriminates among human races or species. N’bi is constantly and consistently giving.

Water is medicine, can heal relationships, and teaches us about unconditional love. Dennis Councillor states, “That water is medicine”. Aimée Craft furthers, “You put intention into that water and that intention goes into your body”. Aimée is describing how water can heal your body when you put good intentions into the N’bi. Christie Belcourt expands, “You lift that water up and change it to medicine and since all the planet is covered in water, your intentions can travel through that water to everything”. Your intentions travelling through N’bi can assist with healing relationships. N’bi teaches us to love unconditionally. Vicki Monague explains, “Water was standing up for me”. She explains how, on her personal journey of healing, that she thought she was standing up for the water but realized how the water was standing up for her in her healing. She furthers, “We know water is life and provides life”. N’bi does not stop providing life regardless of what humanity actions. Dennis Councillor explains, “We pollute the waters” and yet water continues to provide life. N’bi teaches us love is unconditional. N’bi can also heal our relationships to one another and to all life through honouring N’bi.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015a) explained that we need to reconcile with the natural world. Honouring N’bi is one way we can reconcile our relationships with the natural world. Laura Horton explains, “Support the offerings to the river and to the spirits of the river” as one way to honour N’bi. Linda Toulouse describes, “There are four times we make offerings to the waters” to honour the waters for living its responsibility of providing life to all the natural world. An other way to honour the water is to participate in Water Walks. Vicki Monague gave details, “We tried to include everybody in

our Water Walks...so they would have a place to stand with the water”. This activity in honouring N’bi provides an opportunity for everyone to honour N’bi and to understand all humanity is connected to N’bi. Barbara Day explains, “We have to take care of the water and nurture those relationships again, to be reminded that we are part of it, not above it”. Understanding all humanity is connected to water is “respecting the water...that is where we all lived and were born from” addilda Atkinson. Sylvia Plain furthers, “The waters want to be acknowledged” and respected, just like peoples do. Respecting and acknowledging N’bi is understanding N’bi can teach humanity about reconciliation. N’bi is inclusive by providing life to all the natural world. N’bi teaches unconditional love and how to heal our relationships because N’bi is medicine. Honouring N’bi for all that it does is one way to reconcile our relationships to N’bi. N’bi provides guidance on the values of inclusiveness, non-discriminatory, unconditional love, and healing which are also necessary to support reconciliation.

## **Discussion**

How can reconciliation assist with reconciling different legal orders and governance structures? What are Indigenous, more specifically, Anishinaabek concepts of reconciliation and what can we learn from N’bi about reconciliation? The findings demonstrate Anishinaabek have concepts of reconciliation: reconciliation starts with self; reconciliation involves correcting the wrongs; reconciling different legal orders and governance structures is necessary but may not be achievable; and N’bi can teach us about reconciliation. Each theme is elaborated on below.

Anishinaabek have concepts in Anishinaabemowin conveying reconciliation that are nuanced. Erdrich (2013) describes that Anishinaabemowin when translated into English may not translate the original expression. O’Neil (2020) explains how Indigenous Peoples in their languages have many concepts that resolve conflict and restore good relations among peoples. These concepts express Anishinaabek



worldviews. The TRC (2015a) states, “The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples similarly noted the connection between Aboriginal languages and what is called a distinctive worldview” (pg. 152). For example, Anishinaabek worldview is that N’bi is alive with spirit, is medicine for healing, and carries knowledge (Arsenault, 2021; Craft & King, 2021; Latchmore et al., 2018; McGregor, 2022; Pahl-Wostl, 2020; Wilson, 2020). Anishinaabek concepts of reconciliation in Anishinaabemowin is based on action-moving toward right relationships. The TRC (2015a) labeled the recommendations as “Calls to Action” with the intent of conveying “actions” are needed for reconciliation to be successful. Included in the Calls to Action (TRC, 2015a) is the need for language revitalization.

Reconciliation starts with self was identified by the participants. Reconciliation is an action that begins with self (Tully, 2018). “Before our minds and hearts are cleansed of the stains of colonization...we need to do the inner work” (Mills, 2018, pg. 138). Indigenous Peoples need to recover from colonization and heal. It is about “realizing one’s vision and purpose and assuming responsibilities accordingly” (McGregor, 2013, p. 80). The TRC (2015a) states, “Reconciliation calls for personal action” (pg. 316). This recovery process should include all Canadians acknowledging the damage done and reconciling with themselves of the true history (Ladner, 2018). All peoples need to do the work to understand who we are (Mills, 2018). It has been said numerous times that settlers must learn and understand Indigenous Peoples in order for reconciliation to begin (Craft and Regan, 2020; Borrows and Tully, 2018). “It’s stunning how many Canadians I meet who have no idea what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was about” (Mills, 2018, pg. 147). Reconciliation starts with self for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples.

Reconciliation requires much more than words of an apology (Ash, 2018). It requires focused work (Borrows, 2018). The loss of land has profoundly uprooted a land-based life. Tobias & Richmond (2014) explain that land-based life included the social, spiritual, physical, and cultural well-being that nurtured and maintained good health for Indigenous Peoples. Richmond (2018) states that access to the lands of Indigenous Peoples’ territories has been reduced and fundamentally altered. Participants were adamant

that, without land, they cannot reconcile their relationships to the lands which is fundamental to reconciling different legal orders and governance structures. Tully (2018) explains that our relationships with the living earth is too interdependent and entangled to treat reconciliation separately.

The third theme of reconciling different legal orders and governance structures was raised in the context of differing worldviews as an impediment to reconciliation. Colonial worldview often ignores spiritual, moral, and ethical considerations when making environment decisions (Sanderson et al., 2020). For example, colonial understanding of water is a “resource” or “commodity” to be bought and sold, that can be controlled by people (Arsenault et al., 2018; Chiblow, 2019; Bakker, 2010; Wilson et al., 2021). Indigenous legal orders and governance structures guide harmonious relationships with the natural world. Anishinaabek legal orders and governance structures situate Anishinaabek in Creation and ensure good relations with the natural world (Mills, 2016). Settler colonial law is based on natural persons or legal entities (Magen, 2015). The differing worldviews need to be reconciled for reconciliation. Indigenous legal orders and governance structures need to be respected for reconciliation with the self, among people, and with the natural world.

One potential way to address differing worldviews is to understand that we all come from water and have water in our bodies. Craft & King (2021) explain, “We are born of water and are primarily composed of it” (pg. 5). Participants in this study provided insights on how to reconcile with N’bi. N’bi is a healer, does not stop providing life, and is inclusive of all the natural world. Danard (2013) rationalizes, “If we are listening [to the water] we can hear the teachings. N’bi teaches humanity how to reconcile with the natural world and with each other.”

This study demonstrates that Anishinaabemowin have concepts of reconciliation that are based on action and seeking right relationships when harm has been done. Reconciliation begins with self but correcting the wrongs inflicted on Indigenous Peoples is an important part of reconciliation. Anishinaabek have their

own legal orders and governance structures that are significant, and these inform how reconciliation with the natural world can occur. Non-Indigenous Peoples have their own work to do to understand Anishinaabek legal orders and governance structures. Reconciliation needs all humanity and learning from N’bi how to reconcile can be a starting point. We all need water to live, water binds people together.

## Conclusion

Wilson & Hughes (2019) state, “Knowledge can’t be discovered or owned but instead it reveals itself, is experienced, is shared (pg. 9).

*In the writing of this paper, I put my asema out in the morning as I usually do. N’bi and reconciliation was in the back of my mind that morning. As I sat by a tree marveling at the world’s beauty, someone showed me how we as humans are connected through the waters to all life. I was shown the flow of the waters through humans’ bodies, through the plants, the animals, the trees and so on connecting us to all of the natural world in the past, present and into the future. I was shown how I am connected to my ancestors and how future generations will be connected to me in the territory of Garden River First Nation. What I was shown has demonstrated to me how to reconcile my relationship to the past, the present, and my responsibilities to the future. I now understand my deep seeded connection to these lands that I share with my ancestors and will share with future generations. This connection stems back to the beginning of time. This connection is through the waters. I also understand reconciling relationships begins with self and this gift of seeing how all humanity is connected through water, how I am connected to the lands through the waters, is a responsibility for me to continue to protect the waters for those future generations as part of my on-going journey of reconciliation.*

This research is unique to the Great Lakes territory of the Anishinaabek and has contributed to broadening the concept of reconciliation. Indigenous concepts of reconciliation involve reconciling with self, seeking

right relationships when hard has been done, correcting the wrongs, reconciling different legal orders that inform how we are live with the Earth, and learning from N’bi about how to support life and accept each other. Participants in this study offered recommendations that can assist with reconciliation. The following are the recommendations.

## 1. Recommendations for Indigenous Peoples

Reconciliation begins with self. Lamalle (2021) rationalizes that we first need to reconcile with ourselves. “Before our minds and hearts are cleansed of the stains of colonization...we need to do the inner work” (Mills, 2018, pg. 138). Indigenous Peoples can take action in learning their responsibilities and about their ways of life which includes practicing Anishinaabek ways of life which can assist with reconciliation. Joseph & Joseph (2109) explain that reconciliation needs action to be effective, and the first step for Indigenous Peoples is to claim identity, language, and culture. Doerfler (2013) states, “We have to remember our responsibilities to both our ancestors and to future generations; learning about our past and acting accordingly is an act of survivance” (p. 185). Reconciling with self includes healing from colonization. Breen et al., (2019) explain that reconciliation is healing without ourselves, within our families, and our communities. Healing from violence perpetuated on Indigenous People, on our lands, and ways of being requires healing with self (Wilson, 2019). Healing begins with decolonization on our own terms by taking actions to reconnect with N’bi and to our culture (Coulthard, 2019). Blackstock (2001) explains, “The Elders have said that when you are “weighed down with a lot of grief, life is becoming unmanageable, or going through a lot of pain, our grandmother and auntie and my mother would say go to the water” (p. 4). Participants offered actions to address healing, such as making offerings to N’bi for repairing relationships with N’bi. Repairing relationships extends beyond Indigenous Peoples to non-Indigenous Peoples as well all need N’bi.

## 2. Recommendations for non-Indigenous Peoples

Reconciliation for non-Indigenous Peoples begins with reconciling with self through taking action to learn about Indigenous Peoples and the true history of Canada. The TRC (2015a) states, “Reconciliation calls for personal action” (pg. 316). This recovery process should include all Canadians acknowledging the damage done and reconciling with themselves of the true history (Ladner, 2018). Arellano, et al. (2019) state, “[O]ne important element of the TRC’s 2015 Calls to Action was for the development of public education strategies to enable Canadians to learn about the history of Aboriginal Peoples” (pg. 389). We can’t leave it up to governments to develop these strategies as participants reminded there are many ways to learn about Indigenous Peoples, such as books and conferences. Jurgens (2020) states that education should present Indigenous Peoples as Peoples who had territories with rich linguistic and cultural heritage. Reconciliation is understanding ourselves as inhabiting relations of interdependence with one another and the world we live in (Starblanket & Stark, 2018) and “Humans are part of the cycles of the earth, and we all bear responsibilities with them” (p. 195, Starblanket & Stark, 2018, p. 195).

### **Anishinaabemowin and Reconciliation**

Reconciliation means different things to different peoples (Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018, p.7). Languages create and shape ways of looking at the world, and our values are not disconnected from the political (Meighan, 2021). Indigenous Peoples view language and culture as one aspect of a way of life (McGregor, 2004). Anishinaabemowin generates concepts of reconciliation based on Anishinaabek worldview. Diver et al. (2019) explains, “Many Indigenous world views position people as just one part of the natural world, co-existing in a web of relations that includes land, water, animals, and other non-human entities, including spirit beings” (p. 4). It is about changing your life to live in balance with all the natural world. Borrows (2018) explains that earth-based relationships are recognized by Indigenous languages and are about living well in the world, and with the world. Anishinaabek concepts of reconciliation include correcting the wrongs.

## **Correcting the Wrongs**

Johnston (2006) states “For millennia, the Great Lakes region has been home to indigenous people” (p. 3). Learning and listening to the language of the land (Nelson, 2013) is one-way Indigenous Peoples lived Anishinaabek roles and responsibilities. Indigenous Peoples’ ability to reconcile with self includes having the lands and waters to begin reconciliation. Jurgens (2020) states, “Restitution is the act of restoring what has been take away and redress is the acting of making things right” (pg. 131). Participants were adamant about having access to the lands and waters to continue to practice Anishinaabek way of life. Turner & Spalding (2018) explain, “Governments need to better recognize their own responsibilities to understand the significance of First Nation landscapes and to recognize ongoing requirements for lands and resources in terms of people’s identity, health, and well-being” (pg. 283). Some participants furthered the access by stating that land needs to be given back to the Anishinaabek. George (2020) states, “[A]nd the return of stolen lands” (pg. 103). The TRC (2015a) affirms land back by clarifying, “By establishing a new and respectful relationship, we restore what must be restored, repair what must be repaired, and return what must be returned” (pg. 6). This means taking action to return lands to Indigenous Peoples. MacDonald (2020) explains, “[C]ommensurate with the restoration of Indigenous lands, cultures, laws, languages, and governance traditions” (pg. 8) as an action to correct the wrongs.

## **Reconciling different Legal Orders and Governance Structures**

This study explored reconciling different legal orders and governance structures. It has demonstrated that reconciliation will be difficult for reconciling different legal orders and structures. Borrows (2018) maintains that colonial legal orders and governance structures continue to be a significant obstacle for Indigenous Peoples living a good life.

Participants explained that reconciling different legal orders and governance structures may not be attainable as non-Indigenous Peoples are not willing to accept the other oar that is filled with Indigenous ways of knowing, legal orders, and governance structures. Participants provided insight on incremental changes that can address reconciling different legal orders and governance structures. Indigenous legal orders and governance guide humanity's relationships with the natural world. Indigenous legal orders and governance structures include listening with the heart to remain in harmonious relationships to N'bi. Archibald (2008) explains that listening is with "three ears, two on the side of the head and one in the heart" (p. 76). The heart contains love which is based on caring for harmony and well-being in relationships (McGregor, 2015). Kimmerer (2013) describes how love for the earth transforms relationships to protect, defend, and celebrate all that the earth provides. The legal order of N'bi is to continue to provide life which can teach humanity about reconciliation.

### **Learning from N'bi about Reconciliation**

N'bi can teach humanity about reconciliation. Anishinaabe Elder and Water Walker Josephine Mandamin (2012) explains, "I can feel the water, I can hear the water, I can sense the water, you can do all of that too, if you listen to it" (pg. 13). N'bi has much to teach us if we listen. Anderson (2010) shared that an Elder stated "let it teach us" (pg. 29), referring to allowing the waters to teach us how to be respectful in the world. Participants shared that all the natural world and humanity needs water to live and that we are all water. Claude and Manandhar, in their letters to the Water Voices from Around the World, state, "We are conceived in water, in water we exist for nine months of life" and "water clears a way for the baby to come out on this earth" (as cited in Mark, 2007, p. 39). Water is inclusive of all life and teaches humanity be inclusive of all the natural world for reconciliation. Participants described how humanity can begin to reconcile its relationship with the natural world through honouring the waters and participating in Water Walks.

The Water Walks were established through love for N’bi and educated people on the connection between peoples and N’bi (McGregor, 2015). Participants explained that Water Walks are open to everyone. This symbolizes that N’bi is inclusive and loving. N’bi is a medicine with healing properties (Arsenault, 2021; Craft & King, 2021). Everyone can learn from N’bi about being inclusive and loving in reconciling with themselves, between peoples, and with N’bi. Borrows (2018) states that love is necessary for reconciliation. He explains, “It is needed now more than ever, and love can be used to strengthen how we act towards one another in ways that bind ourselves more tightly to respecting the earth” (pg. 55). My empirical research has contributed to Indigenous concepts of reconciliation, with a focus on Anishinaabek concepts that guide the call for reconciling with the natural world. I have shown how reconciliation can be drawn from relationships with N’bi. The relationship is founded on principles of respect, responsibility, and reciprocity. N’bi can assist with reconciliation but that requires ethical, reciprocal, respectful relationships. Indigenous concepts of reconciliation can be the foundation for reconciling with the natural world and with each other.

Anishinaabek reconciliation informs us that humanity’s understanding of their reciprocal relationships with N’bi will advance their knowledge. Understanding that N’bi connects us to the natural world informs us that all life is interconnected and interrelated. N’bi continues to live the responsibilities given by the Creator by being a constant provider to all life regardless of race or culture. N’bi has the potential to teach us about reconciliation. Without N’bi living its responsibilities, humanity will cease to exist.

Reconciliation is our collective ACTIONS with N’bi. All humanity needs to be ACTION as the Anishinaabek are and will continue to do their own work. The lingering question is – are you willing to do your work and be the ACTION?



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## **Chapter Four**

# **Relationships and Responsibilities between Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis (Grandmother Moon) Informs N’bi (Water) Governance**

### **Chapter Overview**

Efforts continue to evolve for sustainable and inclusive water governance in Canada. All humanity relies on N’bi for life yet contrasting views and knowledge on N’bi still elude water decision making. Far too often Indigenous women are left out of water governance regardless of their relationships and responsibilities to and for N’bi. Indigenous women, more specifically Anishinaabek women understand the relationships and responsibilities Nokomis Giizis (Grandmother Moon) has with N’bi through the cycles of both women and Nokomis Giizis and how this is guided through Natural law.

This study sought to answer: what are the relationships and responsibilities between Anishinaabek women and Nokomis Giizis? and how can these relationships and responsibilities inform water governance including women’s roles in water governance decision making. This study was specific to the Great Lakes territory and was motivated by my relationship to Nokomis Giizis as an Anishinaabek kwe.

Scholarly work advocating for inclusion of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge in water governance has been conducted by Indigenous scholars such as Deborah McGregor, Brittany Luby, and Kim Anderson. I further the scholarly work by providing a nuanced understanding of N’bi and the

relationships and responsibilities between kweok and Nokomis Giizis. This relationship is based on reciprocity and the cycles both kweok and Nokomis Giizis have.

## Introduction

Anishinaabe [Ojibway] people have ways of understanding the world, in part through complex legal systems that draw on sacred and customary forms of law. Relationships and responsibilities guide this understanding (Craft, 2016, p.1).

This paper explores how Anishinaabek kweok (women) relationships and responsibilities with Nokomis Giizis (Grandmother Moon) can inform N’bi (water) governance based on Anishinaabek naaknigewin (law) in the Great Lakes Indigenous territories located in what is now called Canada and the United States of America. It provides highlights from an empirical study conducted in 2020 with primarily Anishinaabek kweok, grassroots peoples, mishoominsinaak (grandfathers), nokomisnaanik (grandmothers), and traditional knowledge holders. My research sought to answer the questions: what are the relationships and responsibilities between Anishinaabek women and Nokomis Giizis? and how can these relationships and responsibilities inform water governance including women’s roles in water governance decision making. I chose the Anishinaabek from the Great Lakes territory as the research area because this is my territory, my ancestors, future generations’s territory and I have obligations to care for this territory. The participants provided insights into N’bi (water) governance extending beyond the Earth to Nokomis Giizis and the sky world, revealing an Anishinaabek ontology of water that is far broader than typically evident in conventional water governance.

When I use the term N’bi governance, I mean Anishinaabek concepts of water governance based on Nokomis Giizis cycles and Anishinaabek naaknigewin. In contrast, when I use the term water governance, I am referring to the conventional Euro/Anglo-Canadian understanding of water and water

governance based on water as a “material substance or commodity, something quantifiable, manageable and ultimately available for unsustainable human use” (Wilson et al., 2021, p. 3).

Indigenous knowledge known as Anishinaabek g’giikendaaswinmin (our knowledge referring to Anishinaabek) has sustained relationships and responsibilities to all life since beginning of Creation. Terms such as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), Indigenous knowledge (IK), and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) may serve as synonyms for Anishinaabek g’giikendaaswinmin. Many scholars state that Anishinaabek g’giikendaaswinmin is “more than a body of information, it is a suite of relationships” (Kimmerer, 2013a, p. 50) based on multiple sources, including the non-human. Johnston et al. (2018) explains, “Indigenous knowledge originates in oral sources (conversations, stories, traditional teachings) in the day-to-day practices of Indigenous Peoples (researchers and non-researchers alike) according to Indigenous worldviews and including insights from the spirit world” (p. 4).

Indigenous knowledge, developed over millennia grounded in relational schemas with principles of reciprocity, respect, responsibility, and relationships, has sustained the People. Gonzales (2020) states, “Traditional knowledge in my lifeway is one of a giving economy of generosity and sharing, based on values that align with what I consider the five R’s of reciprocity, respect, responsibility, relationship, regeneration” (p. 4). Miller (2013) clarifies that an Anishinaabek worldview emphasizes reciprocal relationships between Anishinaabek and the natural world around them. Potawatomi scientist and grandmother Robin Kimmerer (2013b) explains the principles of respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and relationships when working with sweetgrass; how you don’t pick the first plant you see, how you maintain the area, how making offerings is a responsibility to the plant; and how the relationships between the plant and human are formed. Living the principles is a responsibility to Creation. McGregor (2014) clarifies, “Anishinaabek knowledge emphasizes proper conduct with all Creation, the relationships and responsibilities to the natural world/environment that must be honoured in order for life to be sustainable” (p. 494). In other words, Anishinaabek g’giikendaaswinmin is about living these

responsibilities to each other and the natural world with humility (McGregor, 2013, 2021) in a sustainable way.

Sustainable water governance refers to the processes through which colonial governments, societies, and institutions decide on how water is to used, by whom, and under what circumstances (Wilson et al., 2019). The use of water by governments has created water contamination leaving water unsafe for human consumption. Rachel Arsenault (2021) explains how contamination and extractive development projects have impacted the waters creating unsafe conditions for Indigenous communities. Wilson (2020) explains how Indigenous peoples are “frequently excluded from settler colonial governance frameworks” (p. 93.; von der Porten and De Loë, 2014; Arsenault et al. 2018; Bakker et al, 2018). The exclusion of Indigenous peoples from water governance frameworks has disrupted water’s ability to fulfil their responsibilities in giving and supporting life (Luby et al., 2021; McGregor 2015). Indigenous peoples understand sustainability means respecting and honouring the waters so they too can live their responsibilities (McGregor, 2014). Sanderson et al. (2020) states, “Indigenous Peoples have much to teach the world about sustainable practices...” (pg. 72). The exclusion of Indigenous Peoples elevates the need to continuously advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge on N’bi.

Indigenous peoples’ knowledge relating to water contrasts with the dominant mainstream society (Wilson et al., 2021). Unlike colonial understanding of water as a “resource” or “commodity” to be bought and sold, that can be controlled by people (Wilson et al., 2021; Arsenault et al., 2018; Chiblow, 2019; Bakker, 2010), Indigenous peoples view water as a living entity alive with spirit, water is sacred, and is a relative (McGregor et al., 2020; Yazzie et al., 2018; Chief et al., 2016; Craft, 2014). Indigenous peoples recognize that all life needs N’bi to survive. Anishininaabe Debby Danard (2013) explicates that water governs us. She states, “We are governed by the water” (p. 119). Anderson (2010) disclosed the grandmothers' statement that "we are water, and we need water to stay alive" (p. 7). This situation created inequity and injustice in Canadian and global water governance, indicating a state of crisis (Arsenault et al., 2018).

Indigenous peoples are disproportionately impacted by such inequity and injustice (McGregor, 2001; Wilson, 2021) putting Canada in a state of crisis with threats from high-risk water systems to Indigenous Peoples (McGregor, 2001; Wilson et al., 2021). Current water governance ignores Indigenous knowledge on N’bi. Sanderson et al (2020) explain, “Decisions on water often ignore spiritual, moral, and ethical considerations...” (pg. 73) from Indigenous peoples. Excluding or ignoring Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge on water has contributed to water insecurity more broadly.

Water well-being was/is a responsibility of Indigenous women based on women’s ability to bring forth life (Craft, 2014; Chiblow, 2019). The Chiefs of Ontario (2018) in their Water Declaration explain, “The Anishinaabek, Muskegowuk, and Onkwehonwe women are the keepers of the waters, as women bring babies into the world carried on the breaking of the water” (p. 1). Carrying a baby in the water lodge and bringing forth that life through birth water constructs a responsibility to N’bi providing kweok with distinctive knowledge as keepers of N’bi. Cave and McKay (2016) state, “Indigenous women share a sacred connection to the spirit of the water through their role as child bearers and have particular responsibilities to protect and nurture water” (p. 64). The responsibility to protect and nurture N’bi is based on Indigenous women’s knowledge and for Anishinaabek, it is women who speak for N’bi. (McGregor, 2020; Chiblow, 2019; Craft, 2018). As Anishinaabek women are the voices for and carriers of water, they maintain distinct knowledge on water which expands into the sky world to include Nokomis Giizis (Lavalley, 2006). Sustainability can be reached only through inclusion of kweok and their knowledge in achieving ethical relationships with N’bi. Men and other fluid genders have a role in caring for N’bi, but my research focused specifically on the role of women.

## **Positionality**

Nanaboozhoo, Sue Chiblow indizhinikass, Jijuak indoodem, Ketaguanzeebing indoonjiba, Anishinaabe Ojibway endow. Ketaguanzeebing indaa noogom, Anishinaabe aki indoojibaa. I position my name, my clan, where I am from, who I am, where I live, and in the larger context, I am in Anishinaabek territory. I am interconnected/interrelated to these lands through my ancestors, N’bi, and future generations. This work is a continuum of ndod ne aah non chi kendaaswin (I am searching for knowledge). I have worked professionally with Indigenous peoples and water for over two decades and have observed and experienced the exclusion of kweok from water governance decision making and discussions.

My research engaged with the questions: what are the relationships and responsibilities between Anishinaabek kweok and Nokomis Giizis? How can these relationships and responsibilities inform water governance including women’s roles in water governance decision making? I chose the Anishinaabek from the Great Lakes territory because this is the land/waters of my ancestors and future generations of which I have obligations to care for.

I will explain Anishinaabek naaknigewin, Anishinaabek kweok responsibilities to Nokomis Giizis, and the exclusion of kweok from current water governance are central to my research. In the following sections, I provide a brief context for understanding the role Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis, Anishinaabek naaknigewin, and exclusion of kweok from water governance; detail the methodology section; and then highlight Anishinaabek g’giikendaaswinmin on how Anishinaabek kweok relationships and responsibilities with Nokomis Giizis can inform N’bi governance based on Anishinaabek naaknigewin. This paper contributes to scholarship advocating for the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge in water governance by Indigenous scholars such as Deborah McGregor, Brittany Luby, Nicole Wilson, Kim Anderson, and Racheal Arsenault. The paper advances the contribution of Indigenous knowledge to water governance by providing a nuanced understanding of N’bi and the relationships and responsibilities between kweok and Nokomis Giizis based on Anishinaabek naaknigewin; primarily in the Great Lakes territory.

## **Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis**

Anishinaabe Elder/grandfather Eddie Benton-Banai (2010) explains how the moon was created in the beginning of time to guide the Anishinaabek. To honour Nokomis Giizis, the Anishinaabek host ceremonies that respect humanity's relationships and responsibilities to Nokomis Giizis. Nokomis Giizis is part of Anishinaabek time of the 13 moon calendar and is "learned from the land and inherent in the natural flow of time – the creation of the multiverse, the change of seasons, the earth's solar rotation, and the lunar cycle" (Awâsis, 2020, p. 832). Nokomis Giizis forms a central feature of Anishinaabek teachings to live well, as recently reflected in The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (2014) Guide of Life Teachings, *The Thirteen Grandmother Moons*, which describes Nokomis Giizis as feminine. Nokomis Giizis and Anishinaabek kweok (women) have a special relationship that guide their roles and responsibilities to N'bi. Schaefer (2006) in *Grandmothers Council of the World* explains, "[W]omen carry the ancient knowledge...because their bodies are subject to the great cycles of the moon and stars, women's wisdom is connected to the very heavens" (p. 133) as "women have been gifted - we are all knowing, the creators and makers of life, the seed carriers of the children of the Earth (p. 134).

Metis scholar, Kim Anderson, (2011) explains, "Many Aboriginal cultures engage in full moon ceremonies as a way of giving thanks for these responsibilities and cycles and the waters that are connected to them" (p. 15). Anishinaabek have a relationship and responsibility to Nokomis Giizis that guides activities undertaken at particular times of the year. These relationships are embedded in stories, teachings, songs, and ceremonies for countless generations (Chiblow, 2020). For example, June is Ode-imini-giizis (Strawberry Moon) representing reconciliation, letting go of judgement but also a time to harvest strawberries (Ontario Native Literacy Coalition, 2014; Awâsis, 2020). Each Nokomis Giizis "is named for an important seasonal event or harvest that takes place during that moon" (Donatuto et al., 2020, p. 5). The knowledge stems from the beginning of creation. Anishinaabek kweok have unique knowledge of the cycles of Nokomis Giizis as "water is associated with Grandmother moon, and links the

moon with women” (Lavalley, 2006, p. 20). Wilson and Laing (2018) state, “When we say Grandmother Moon, we are understanding and acknowledging that the moon impacts bodies of water, that we, as humans, are constituted of water, so, of course, the moon impacts us” (p. 144). The relationship and responsibilities kweok have to Nokomis Giizis is based on Anishinaabek relational worldview.

Anishinaabek relational worldview understands all life is imbued with spirit and we are in relationship with responsibilities to all of life. Indigenous scholar Aimée Craft (2018) states,

Anishinaabe nibi inaakonigewin (water law) tells us that water is life – nibi onje biimaadiisiwin. We are born of water, and we are primarily composed of water. Not only does it give and take life, it is also a living being in and of itself that relies on a larger web of relationships to be well and to bring wellness to other beings”. (p. 56)

Responsibilities to N’bi and the responsibilities N’bi has to all life is an expression of Anishinaabek relational worldview. Anishinaabe Jim Dumont (2006) explains that humans are in a direct relationship with the total environment based on Anishinaabe circular worldview meaning we are in relationships with all life. This worldview also contends that water is alive with spirit, has responsibilities, and is primarily women’s responsibility to speak for N’bi and be caretakers of N’bi because women carry birth water with the ability to bring forth life (Arsenault, 2021; Blackstock, 2001; Chiblow, 2019; Craft, 2014; Denard, 2013; McGregor, 2001 & 2012; Olson, 2013; Sanderson et al., 2020). Anishinaabek relational worldview forms the basis of N’bi governance. I understand N’bi governance to be inclusive of all life with responsibilities to all life governing relationships based on original instructions given by the Creator.

### **Anishinaabek Naaknigewin**

The legal relationships and responsibilities Anishinaabek maintain extend beyond the Earth to the sky world including Nokomis Giizis understanding her responsibilities and relationships to N’bi (Lavalley,



2006). Anishinaabek naaknigewin is not something new; it is embedded in our language, the lands, the sky realm, in our stories, and held by knowledge holders, Elders, women, the lands, and ceremony. (Johnston, 2010; Kimmerer, 2013a). It is as old as time and encompassing more than just rules of conduct (Walters, 2017; Craft, 2013; Napoleon and Friedland, 2015). Anishinaabek legal scholar, John Borrows (2018) states “Indigenous laws flow from specific landscapes, ecosystems and peoples” (p. 2). He further suggests that laws “might be created by clans, flow from experiences with glaciers or rivers, or be sources in custom and grassroots practices.” (p. 2). Craft (2018) shares Dumont’s understanding that the Great Spirit gave laws to the Anishinaabek to govern relationships to live in harmony. Anishinaabek naaknigewin is about governing relationships and responsibilities of Anishinaabek based on Anishinaabek worldview which comes from the spirit. Borrows (2010) explains, “Some Indigenous laws have sacred sources...legal traditions based on spiritual principles form an important part of most every culture’s legal inheritance” (p. 24). Anishinaabek naaknigewin is also based on spirit. Dumont (2006) describes, “Our ways of living comes from the spirit; it is spirit-centered; it is spirit-motivated.” (pg. 8). Relationships between all beings are structured on the basis of spirit (Craft, 2018). Anishinaabek naaknigewin are drawn from the world around us including the star world teaching us how to relate to one another through law (Stark, 2013). Tully (2018) states, “[N]on human living systems have sustained themselves and co-evolved over 3.8 billion years...” (p. 86). Mills (2010) explains how Anishinaabek have sustained their relationships by adhering to Anishinaabek naaknigewin.

Anishinaabek naaknigewin has different levels or types of law. For example, Anishinaabe Grandmother Sherry Copenace (2018) lists the four different laws as sacred, ancestor, natural and human founded on spiritual, sacred, and ethical principles. Craft (2018) explains that natural law stems from the earth and all other beings in Creation. Natural law as is a blueprint for human behavior connecting us to the teachings of the natural and spiritual realms and all beings (Copenace, 2018). Natural law does not exclude anyone, rather it is inclusive of all life on earth.

## Colonial Exclusion of Women from Water Governance

Anderson et al., (2013) shows how approaches to water governance ignore women's valuable perspectives on water, ignoring the Anishinaabek worldview of N'bi as a relative, alive with agency, a medicine, and sacred (Chiblow, 2021). The lack of kweok voice in N'bi governance and decision making, the exclusion of Anishinaabek naaknigewin despite the fact that Anishinaabek have been governing their responsibilities since time immemorial has been discussed extensively in existing literature (Danard, 2013). Wilson and Inkster (2018) explain how Indigenous Nations had pre-existing legal orders guiding them on their responsibilities to the waters and these legal orders are not reflected or represented in water governance. The current colonial laws "systematically destabilize Indigenous women's traditional knowledge, leadership, and Indigenous governance resulting in a silencing effect upon women's voices in mainstream governance processes" (Hania, 2019, p. 526). The blatant exclusion of Anishinaabek kweok in water governance processes has caused N'bi to be made "nearly invisible, relegated to a passive role as a resource and subjected to containment, commodification, and instrumentalization" (Chen et al., 2012, p. 3). N'bi is struggling to survive, to live responsibilities of providing life. Danard (2013) explains that the implications of N'bi as a resource has resulted in Mother Earth's right to water as a source of life becoming a huge profit which has/is disrupting N'bi responsibilities.

My empirical study examines relationships and responsibilities between Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis and how these relationships can inform N'bi governance based on Anishinaabek naaknigewin. I primarily focus on women's knowledge as it relates to Nokomis Giizis and N'bi in the Great Lakes territory.

## Methods and Study Area

The findings in this paper were generated from a wider study of n'dodneaahnon chikendaaswin into Anishinaabek g'giikendaaswinmin (our knowledge) from the Great Lakes territory. I focus on Anishinaabek, Nokomis Giizis and N'bi, and how all three can inform N'bi governance within the broader context of Anishinaabek naaknigewin.

Anishinaabek kweok, grassroots peoples, mishoomsinaanik, nokomisinaanik and traditional knowledge holders, most of whom were known to me prior to the study, all provided critical insights. Together, we explored how these relationships inform N'bi governance based on Anishinaabek naaknigewin to move toward Anishinaabek sustainable N'bi governance. Anishinaabek kweok, grassroots peoples, mishoomsinaanik, nokomisinaanik and traditional knowledge holders who are focused on N'bi activism, N'bi art, Mother Earth Water Walks, reconciliation, Anishinaabek naaknigewin, Nokomis Giizis, and ceremonies to advocate and educate for the healing of Anishinaabek, the healing of the lands and waters, and for responsibility-based governance from the Great Lakes territory were asked to participate. The snowball method (Patton, 2002) was used to recruit a few Indigenous women who are not Anishinaabek but are from the Great Lakes territory. Anishinaabek participants recommended that they be part of the study. Together, the 28 participants involved in the research represent a very small number of leaders who are responding to the degradation of N'bi in the Great Lakes territory. Although one focus group consisting of 5 kweok was held, other planned focus groups were cancelled due to COVID 19. Instead, participants became key informants with in-person conversations (Starblanket et al., 2019). Because of COVID 19 and the stay-at-home orders, organizations for women's councils, and women's commissions contacted the women to determine if they were willing to participate instead as key informants. This move increased the number of conversations. The data were gathered between January and June 2020.

The data from conversations (Kovach 2009), the single focus group, and key informants were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed utilizing a qualitative Anishinaabek analysis. The qualitative Anishinaabek analysis is founded on Jim Dumont's (2006) Indigenous Intelligence. Specifically, it is based on bisindaage (to listen to someone; spirit); ozhibii'igi (write things down; emotional); nanaagadawendam (I consider, notice, think, reflect, realize; mind); and nisidotaagwad (it is understood; physical). The first stage of bisindaage was allowing myself to feel and imagine several times what was being said prior to transcribing verbatim. The second stage of ozhibii'igi was transcribing verbatim what was being shared by allowing myself to stay attuned to the spiritual significance of what was said. The third stage of nanaagadawendam was reading through the transcripts, reflecting, and coding verbatim transcripts to find similar phrases, thoughts, words, and differences. The fourth and final stage of nisidotaagwad was the totality of myself generating creative expressions through experience (Chiblow, 2021). This approach is distinct to my understanding of Indigenous Intelligence which all came through ceremony and visions.

The original expressions generated in this article are formed from many who shared their knowledge through the offering of asema (tobacco). The Anishinaabek protocol of offering asema holds me accountable to standing with (Tallbear, 2014) participants and their knowledge as a means of ensuring ethical research conducted with Indigenous Peoples (Reid, 2020). Wilson and Restoule (2010) explain how offering of asema activates relationships which involves a great deal of responsibility and ensures we work to strengthen and uplift those we are doing research with. As Anishinaabek, we are not separate from the knowledge but rather participate in relationship to what we are learning (Wilson & Hughes, 2019). Participants agreed to be named in the research and I feel this is essential in honouring their knowledge and maintaining knowledge relationships and responsibilities to strengthen and uplift the participants honouring the words shared.

## **Results: Voices of the Participants**

My analysis revealed two broad themes relating to relationships and responsibilities necessary to move toward a path of sustainable water security, these are: the importance of reciprocal relationships between Anishinaabek kweok and Nokomis Giizis in caring for N’bi: and recognition of Nokomis Giizis as a source of Anishinaabek naaknigewin. These findings reveal what actions need to be taken to inform water decision making which from an Anishinaabek perspective means “caring for N’bi” as N’bi cares for us (McGregor, 2020). The insights from each theme are reported below.

### **Relationships and Responsibilities between Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis**

Interviewees shared their knowledge on kweok having unique relationships with Nokomis Giizis. These relationships are associated with women as carriers of water. Many interviewees explained relationship to Nokomis Giizis is based on her cycles. For example, Shelly Essaunce postulated, “Women generally have the 28-day cycle intricate to the full moon every 28 days connecting us to the moon”. Isaac Murdock substantiated by stating, “The moon starts to collect water from the earth, and it goes through that umbilical cord through all of our women”. The women mirroring the moon as water carriers corroborate the special relationship kweok have with Nokomis Giizis. Leora Gansworth further supported the relationship between Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis by explaining, “There is a powerful connectivity to the moon because when I think about women and our moon time, your moon time is how our bodies reveal ourselves inside out, the inside of your body literally comes out and during the full moon as well, the full moon is on display”. This relationship connects kweok to the moon through the shared cycles of the moon and responsibility is understood to come from Nokomis Giizis. For example, Elizabeth Webkamigad stated “The moon governs our women and our cycles...all the connectedness to everything and each is a responsibility to ensure that all is taken care of and respected”. Angela Day emphasizes,

“Full moon ceremonies is a responsibility” and is based on the relationship kweok have with Nokomis Giizis through her relationship with N’bi and though kweok’s relationship with her and N’bi.

Vicki Monague stated, “Our grandmother has a connection to the water and is the only being, the only entity in Creation that has the power to move entire oceans”. Nokomis Giizis has a unique relationship with N’bi and “I know that she has strong ties with women” (Pricilla Simard). Beverly Jacobs explains “They talk about the responsibility to water, to the tides, to women, and to women and birthing and that is where the source of women’s roles and responsibilities are coming from the teachings of the moon”. Naaknigewin flows through kweok connecting kweok to N’bi and Nokomis Giizis. Christine Agawa stated, “[I]s a powerful connection women have to the moon and getting back to honouring, recognizing, and acknowledging the work that she does for the earth”. Kweok are in relationship with Nokomis Giizis and “The moon has closer ties to the waters and our well-being” (Mona Jones). N’bi brings life through women’s water. Rhonda Hopkins states, “Women are the keepers of the water” and Nokomis Giizis controls the waters. Both are interconnected and interrelated to N’bi decision making through their roles and responsibilities to N’bi.

This may mean we are all governed by N’bi and Nokomis Giizis, whether conscious of it or not, not the other way around that is typically understood as humanity governs N’bi. My research presents humanity as in relation to N’bi, not a superior being to N’bi, charged with governance and management.

The knowledge shared provide insights into the distinct relationship and responsibility that kweok have in their relationship to Nokomis Giizis and how their insights are needed to advance sustainable and ethical relationships with N’bi. The spiritual and lawful relationship is based on the cycles of women and Nokomis Giizis stemming from Nokomis Giizis naaknigewin.

## **Anishinaabek naaknigewin for Nokomis Giizis**

Anishinaabek naaknigewin has guided Anishinaabek for millennia enabling sustainable relationships with the natural world, including N’bi. Aimée Craft reasoned, “You have those spiritual instructions, you have natural laws, customary laws, and human made laws and we have observed these laws in nature and over time they have become part of our custom, so we call the moon those things”. This has created relationships and responsibilities to Nokomis Giizis. Sherry Copenace explained,

One law is when she [the Moon] accepted that she would take those stories and she still transfers to those of us who still remember. She still has that law for looking after those tides, working with those tides, and how she works with us. That is law. Even the 13 moon cycle is law itself, and how she completes that annual cycle. There are teachings in every one of those full moons, that is law”.

This knowledge indicates how Anishinaabek naaknigewin is as old as the beginning of time but just as relevant today. Barbara Day stated, “Nokomis Giizis has been influencing the water tides since the beginning of time”. It informs the responsibilities of Nokomis Giizis to humankind and the reciprocal responsibility humans have - to remember and embrace those stories as knowledge and naaknigewin. Anishinaabek Naaknigewin is how she – Nokomis Giizis looks after and works with the water similar to what kweok have done and are doing. Kim Anderson explains, “I think she is happy when she sees women gathering, when her face is full, the responsibility to gather, pay respect, give thanks and to acknowledge or being aware of those cycles.” Nokomis Giizis cycles are law with teachings embedded in each cycle. Anishinaabek naaknigewin for Nokomis Giizis is found in her cycles and relationship she has to N’bi. Kweok, N’bi and Nokomis Giizis are interconnected through Anishinaabek naaknigewin.

The insights provided in this theme is Anishinaabek have naaknigewin for Nokomis Giizis who also has her own naaknigewin. Nokomis Giizis has distinct relationships to N’bi and kweok have a reciprocal interconnected relationship with Nokomis Giizis. Despite colonial disruption, Nokomis Giizis reminds

Anishinaabek of who they are and their responsibilities to the natural world including how to care for N'bi. This is a natural law coming from the natural world, including Nokomis Giizis and are important to understand for establishing reciprocal relationships with N'bi.

## **Discussion**

In response to my research questions: what are the relationships and responsibilities between Anishinaabek women and Nokomis Giizis? And how can these relationships and responsibilities inform water governance including women's roles in water governance decision making, the findings affirm that kweok have unique relationships to and knowledge of Nokomis Giizis reflected in naaknigewin. This reciprocal relationship is kweok honouring Nokomis Giizis through moon ceremonies and acknowledging her responsibility to N'bi. Kweok are interconnected to N'bi and Nokomis Giizis through each other's cycles and relationships to N'bi. This relationship based on Anishinaabek naaknigewin can be applied in N'bi governance to generate the well-being of N'bi and all beings.

One important way to generate the well-being of N'bi and all beings is including kweok's knowledge into current N'bi governance. When kweok are involved in forming N'bi policy, they can influence the vision and objectives as well as decision making in N'bi governance in ways that strengthen humanity's relationship to N'bi. Anishinaabek kweok knowledge and relationship with Nokomis Giizis can be used to generate the well-being of N'bi and all humanity. We need to approach N'bi with humility and recognize there are forces at play that are much larger than humans. Sherry Copenace reminded, "She can tell you much more than any human being could...I am just a helper, everything you need to know is really with her". We need to approach our relationship with N'bi, not as managers and governors, but embrace our roles as co-existing with N'bi by engaging in a set of reciprocal relationships that naaknigewin can/should guide.



From the study, it has become clear that kweok have a unique responsibility to, knowledge of, and connection to Nokomis Giizis who governs N’bi. This responsibility generates a role in protecting and preserving N’bi today and tomorrow, for future generations just as Nokomis Giizis has done since the beginning of time by continuing to honour Nokomis Giizis. Kweok’s distinct knowledge is based on the ongoing relationships with Nokomis Giizis generating the responsibility to participate in N’bi policy, law-making, and governance as the voice of N’bi. Anishinaabek kweok are water advocates, protectors, and have gained authority from Nokomis Giizis to ensure N’bi for future generations and all life.

Scholars have stated that the current discourse on water by governments would do well to attend to Anishinaabek knowledge and naaknigewin which could help with humanity’s relationship to N’bi (McGregor, 2001; Anderson et al., 2013; Craft, 2014; Zenner, 2020; Christian & Wong, 2017). Kweok knowledge and Anishinaabek naaknigewin can help global society see what is needed for transformative changes to current N’bi policies and legislation. Anishinaabek naaknigewin can generate well-being of N’bi and humanity if implemented in current N’bi governance.

This study has shown how Nokomis Giizis continues to live her responsibilities in her relationships to N’bi. She continually moves N’bi and moves through her own cycles, just as kweok move through their cycles and bringing forth new life with N’bi. Indigenous women are standing up for N’bi through Water Walks and affirming their relationship with Nokomis through ceremony. Indigenous women have worked hard through collective resistance to protect N’bi (Anderson, 2000; McGregor et al., 2020). The fortitude of both Nokomis Giizis and kweok in continuing to live their responsibilities is testament to include kweok in N’bi decision making. The relationship between Nokomis Giizis and kweok at every level and scale are required if we, as humanity, are to live well with N’bi to support the continuance of life. The

relationships, responsibilities, and knowledge of Nokomis Giizis and N’bi can remind humanity that we are not in charge of N’bi but rather have the responsibility to live well with Nokomis Giizis.

Understanding this humility can inform sustainable N’bi decision making.

This research helps us to better understand our place in the natural world – that is we are a part of nature, not above it. We need to be able to relate to and work with Nokomis Giizis guided by naaknigewin and knowledge to ensure transformative paths that lead to sustainable relationships.

Furthermore, Nokomis Giizis is and has been capable of being in relationship with responsibilities to N’bi. In fact, Nokomis Giizis regulates N’bi (Anderson, 2000). Kweok’s birthing waters and cycles are regulated by Nokomis Giizis and as such, kweok have and are holders of this knowledge through the ability to bear children through birth water (Craft et al., 2021). This ability is interconnected with naaknigewin of Nokomis Giizis and is referred to as Natural law. Borrows (2010) reminds us that Indigenous legal traditions are built upon Natural law which pertain to the relationships among humans as well as responsibilities with all life. Anishinabek kweok have the knowledge of the Natural law for Nokomis Giizis and this knowledge directly relates to N’bi governance. Key point is kweok need to be included in current N’bi governance which can also address humanity’s relationship to N’bi. Humanity needs to employ these laws in N’bi governance and water governance more broadly.

Exploiters and entrepreneurs have relationships to N’bi based on N’bi as a resource. The Indigenous Peoples that follow customs, ceremony, and traditions understand N’bi is a living being with responsibilities to all life. All humanity needs to reaffirm their relationships and responsibilities to N’bi. Anishinaabe scholar Deborah McGregor (2005) reminds that in the “recognition of the environmental crisis and realization that Western science alone could not solve this problem” (p. 104) and that those “cultures that were sustainable for thousands of years” (p. 104). If N’bi is to continue to live its responsibilities, humanity needs to pursue a more responsible and informed it’s relationship with N’bi to

address the challenges faced globally, nationally, regionally, and locally in relation to N’bi governance. No one is exempt for caring and respecting N’bi. Anishinaabe legal scholar Rayanna Seymour-Hourie (2021) explains that we all have “obligations to have a good relationship with N’bi and contribute to N’bi’s healing” (Craft et al., p. 30), and McGregor (2015) affirms this with “people must relate to water in order to live” (p. 71). Kweok knowledge can play a key role in educating about humanity’s relationship to N’bi. It has become well known that current water governance in Canada is in a state of crisis, it is fragmented, and lacks Indigenous perspectives (Wilson, 2019; Hania, 2019). Settler governments must turn to kweok knowledge, Anishinaabek naaknigewin, and Nokomis Giizis to address the crisis. As N’bi and Nokomis Giizis continues to live its responsibilities, humanity has much to learn in terms of sustainable N’bi governance. If the crisis is not addressed, N’bi will not be able to live its responsibilities causing life to cease to exist.

## **Conclusion**

This research is unique to the Anishinaabek territory of the Great Lakes region and has contributed to re-theorizing water governance. There is an on-going need to address current political discourse of water governance practices which conceal uneven social-ecological risks and block opportunities to articulate and redraw water-related decisions. Wilson et al. (2019) explains that re-centering politics on water governance is an ongoing effort to create a water ethics narrative or Indigenous legal framework that can offer hope to the future of water decision making. The Indigenous participants in this study make it clear they are in a position to inform this process. Indigenous women are standing up and taking action to protect N’bi through various activities such as Water Walks. Various Anishinaabek women’s groups are re-establishing themselves as decision makers, educators, and caregivers of N’b as did the kweok who participated in this research. Altamirano-Jiménez (2021) explains, “Women’s bodies coming together are central to protect Indigenous identity through the protection of other beings and entities” (p. 221),

including N'bi. Kweok coming together are fundamental for protection of N'bi for all humanity. The knowledge and relationships kweok have with Nokomis Giizis and naaknigewin can inform water governance.

This research involved Anishinaabek kweok knowledge on how humans can govern their attitudes and behaviours with N'bi by looking at Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis laws. It included Anishinaabek women's thoughts and practices including legal and governance elements. Wilson and Inkster (2018) explain how rethinking current water governance needs to question who can speak on behalf of water, complicating concepts of the ability of humans to govern or act on behalf of water. Anishinaabek understand N'bi and Nokomis Giizis have a distinct relationship and govern themselves. It is about how humans interact in relationships to N'bi and Nokomis Giizis. The knowledge that all life on earth sustains itself and would continue to do so if humans were to disappear. It must then be understood that human interference with N'bi contributes to the destruction of N'bi, ultimately destroying humanity's relationships and responsibilities to N'bi and Nokomis Giizis. Humanity must therefore realize their responsibilities and re-establish relationships to N'bi and with Nokomis Giizis for N'bi and Nokomis Giizis to live their responsibilities in providing and sustaining life.

It is not new that researchers and Indigenous Peoples have stated they need to be involved in water governance. Yet, it remains elusive to the Canadian government to take action by including kweok. Humanity needs to understand they rely on N'bi for life and this reliance extends beyond earth to Nokomis Giizis. It is humanity's responsibility to understand their relationships with Nokomis Giizis, to act ethically in relationship with N'bi and to be inclusive in water governance.

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## Chapter Five

### Gaa-igkendmaanh (What I Learned)

*I was at a Nokomis Giizis Ceremony that was being conducted by Barbara Nolan who is a fluent Anishinaabemowin speaker. She is simply amazing, always promoting the language, has her own website where you hear her teaching and talking Anishinaabemowin. Barb is also the recently appointed Language Commissioner of the Anishinaabek Nation advocating for the language. After the ceremony was done, we were sitting in the gazebo enjoying the fire. Barb looks at me and says, “Sue, you are in a canoe often. I need you to put me in the canoe and paddle me around so I can speak the language on what we are doing.” Of course, I smile and respond that I would love to do that because I want to better understand the language and what a better way to do it – in a canoe on N’bi. A few months go by, and I am part of my son-in-law’s doctoral research project along with Barb. Barb tells us she knows where we can submit a proposal to do language learning in our community which pretty much means she is telling us to write a proposal. Paul and I meet and have a discussion on what we could do for this proposal, and I remembered the canoe request from Barb. Paul and I draft the proposal with a list of activities that are land and traditional food based. I send the proposal to Barb, and she wants to meet immediately. We meet and she is very excited and happy about the proposal we drafted especially because it is about our foods which we will harvest from the land, video recording all the activities in the language.*

I share this story because it is part of what I learned and want to continue to learn. Many participants in this study fluently speak the language and I visit often with Elders who are fluent language speakers. All of them help me learn. The language in this paper is part of that learning. The learning from the lands in the language teach about naaknigewin, roles and responsibilities, and relationships. It is all embedded in the language and one of my goals is to continue to participate in land – language – based activities.

Learning and doing are two different things. An Elder once told me that no idea is a new idea, what is new is what you do with the idea. Anishinaabemowin is action based, it is about doing. Elders and participants in this study reminded me that words are not enough; action is required with the words. I was reminded I need to be the doing, to participate. This participation means to continue to be at/in ceremony, and that asema comes first in all that we do. I participate regularly in different ceremonies and need to truly understand that life is ceremony - to embrace life and be ceremony, always recognizing that the spirit in this human vessel is always experiencing life.

Life on the land is learning and learning comes from Nokomis Giizis. I have always felt a connection to the sky world, marveling at the beauty and how annagokaa (stars) seems to be a huge blanket, comforting and hugging me constantly. My spirit names are associated with the sky world and this is probably why I feel this connection. I was reminded that if I want to learn about Nokomis Giizis, to go sit with her and to ask her so she can teach me. There are multiple ways of knowing and she an important teacher.

Multiple ways of knowing is about reconciliation. It has different meanings for different peoples. We need to understand each other in order to find the balance and re-establish respectful relationships through collaboration to address the atrocities humanity has committed to Mother Earth. Humanity is in this together, so together we need to be to – to overcome these atrocities. I learned it is a long eventful journey to come together in respect and understanding, and that we need to start somewhere. That somewhere can be the common knowledge that without N’bi, humanity will not survive with Mother Earth. My responsibility is to ensure life is here for those yet to come. It is my responsibility to continue to search for the balance, to be in this together.

I am always amazed at the knowledge kweok have. I don’t know why, but maybe it has to do with the lack of their voices at so many tables. Their knowledge doesn’t surprise me. It puts me in awe, fills me with strength. I was told at a ceremony that when kweok start standing up and being together, that is when

change is going to happen. During this journey, I learned more about strong women standing up with knowledge to protect Mother Earth. I was not able to share the many stories of strength, passion, and pure determination to protect Mother Earth. The heartfelt appreciation by many participants to have their voices heard in my study is astonishing. This document scratches only the surface. I feel I have a responsibility to the participants to continue this journey of learning and sharing their stories and knowledge.

## **Contributions to Scholarship**

The goal of this dissertation was ndakenjigwen exploring humanity's relationship to N'bi and how improving this relationship can support well-being for N'bi, other beings, and humanity. In the first chapter, I outlined the research context and problem rationale of the lack of gender balance in N'bi policies, strategies, and governance (Wilson, 2020). It is well documented in academic literature that colonization has disrupted Indigenous Peoples, excluding their knowledge and laws from current water governance (Burgler et al., 2021; Jiménez-Estrada and Daybutch, 2021; Von der Porten et al., 2018) which has created environmental conflict (LeBillion, 2020). As scholars continue to validate the need to change current water governance structures to include Indigenous women's knowledge so that N'bi can continue to live its responsibility in providing life to all beings (Anderson, 2011; Aresenault, 2021; McGregor et al., 2020). I want to draw attention to the following contributions that emerged from this research:

On the matter of the lack of Indigenous women, more specifically Anishinaabek kweok exclusion from water decision making, Anishinaabek kweok are the water carriers, the voice of N'bi, and understand N'bi is alive with spirit governing its responsibilities to all life (Anderson, 2013; Craft, 2018; McGregor et al., 2020) which supports the larger body of literature. In fact, Johnson and Wilkinson (2020) state, "By

suppressing the inclusion of women in decision making, half the world's brainpower and change-making – sets us up for failure” (pg. xx). It is beyond my comprehension that, in today's world, half the brain power (meaning women) is missing from N'bi decision making.

This study revealed the balance that is needed in N'bi decision making by including kweok. While kweok are the voice and carry the N'bi ceremonies, men play an important role. This role is to support kweok in all N'bi endeavours such as the Water Walks and as Fire Keepers in N'bi ceremony. Chiblow and Jiménez-Estrada (2021) explain, “[B]alance is in the Anishinaabek Full Moon ceremony, where women do the work for the moon and men do the work for the fire, working in unison to ensure all protocols are followed” (pg. 103). In re-establishing balance, it is crucial that kweok have safe spaces to share knowledge, experiences, learning from each other. This will afford kweok the duty to continue to send life into the future.

The future needs to include Anishinaabek naaknigewin. Several scholars have demonstrated in literature the importance of Anishinaabek naaknigewin since it is inclusive of all relationships. Indigenous legal scholar James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson (2002) explains how Indigenous law is interrelated to life and a legal transformation is needed to inform interdisciplinary synergies for healing and restoration of intercultural integrity. This study furthers current legal literature by demonstrating how N'bi has its own naaknigewin and are embedded in N'bi teachings. This study established that there are major consequences when N'bi naaknigewin and governance is disrupted which has consequences to all life. When N'bi cannot live its naaknigewin, life will cease to exist.

For Anishinaabek, N'bi has always been a teacher constantly living reconciliation. The Elders explained to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), that reconciliation is also required with the natural world. N'bi can teach humanity about reconciliation. This study lists recommendations for reconciling with oneself, correcting the wrongs, and how different legal orders can be reconciled. Each

recommendation is based on action, the act of actually doing something. This study contributes to literature on reconciliation but focuses on how N’bi can teach humanity about reconciliation. It explains how Indigenous concepts of reconciliation differ from non-Indigenous which are based on action. “Reconciliation will require words of apology...but it requires much more than that...and the promise to never act that way again in the future” (Asch, 2018, pp. 44).

The “much more than that” includes the settler state of Canada providing land back through non-interference by simply giving back the lands stolen from the Anishinaabek. This study builds on several commissioned reports about reconciliation. It generates a broader understanding of reconciliation by providing an Anishinaabek understanding of reconciliation, and one is “give us our land back”. While I am very certain that land back will not necessarily happen in my lifetime, we undoubtedly can create space for understanding Anishinaabek worldview, naaknigewin, and reconciling our relationships with the natural world. Starblanket and Stark (2018) state, “[B]egin to understand ourselves as inhabiting relations of interdependence with one another and the world we live in...represent a shift away from an atomistic, human-centred worldview and towards a relationship way of being that is inspired by the principles of interconnectedness inherent in many Indigenous legal and political orders” (pg. 176). This builds on scholarly work by generating a broader understanding of reconciliation based on Anishinaabek knowledge, laws, and governance.

Indigenous scholar Kim Tallbear (2014) challenges non-Indigenous Peoples to stand with Indigenous knowledge and Peoples. The act of standing with Anishinaabek, their knowledge, laws, and worldview is an act of reconciliation. This includes standing with N’bi as it teaches us what reconciliation can look like. N’bi consistently provides life to all humanity. It is in a special relationship as a sacred being, living its responsibilities to all beings (Sanderson et al., 2020). Non-Indigenous Peoples accepting the responsibility to understand and stand with Anishinaabek will assist in addressing reconciliation.

Chapter four provides highlights about relationships and responsibilities between Anishinaabek and Nokomis Giizis. Nokomis Giizis has a relationship with N’bi that extends beyond human relationships. Anishinaabek kwoek have knowledge of this relationship through mirroring cycles. Nokomis Giizis has 13 names named for important seasonal events (Donatuto et al, 2020; Hatfield et al., 2018). Scholarly literature has documented kwoek’s responsibilities to N’bi and the relationships kwoek have with Nokomis Giizis. This study contributes to this body of work. I advance this scholarship by asserting the relationships and responsibilities between kwoek and Nokomis Giizis do provide kwoek with unique knowledge that can advance sustainable and ethical relationships with N’bi. This study also expresses that the unique knowledge kwoek possess can be instrumental in water governance.

Currently Canadian water decision making regimes focus on human law. This study indicates that Nokomis Giizis has her own naaknigewin that needs to be considered in water governance as she is and has been capable of moving N’bi. Understanding there are forces that generate the well-being of N’bi beyond humans is integral to good relations and perhaps the survival of humankind. This helps humanity understand our place in the natural world – that is, we are interconnected not above or below it. This is an alternative approach to water governance, an Anishinaabek approach that includes kwoek and their knowledge.

Existing scholarly literature has stated clearly over time that Indigenous Peoples, including kwoek inclusion in water governance (Craft, 2014; Wilson & Inkster, 2018), is essential to good relations with N’bi. This study supports this need and collaborates that humanity is in relationship to N’bi and Nokomis Giizis. This relationship is based on Anishinaabek naaknigewin as it is applied to water governance.

My research calls upon Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples to search for their relationships with N’bi to reconcile their relationships with the natural world. The COA (2021) provides opportunities for the development of Anishinaabek knowledge in water governance advancing reconciliation through focused



work. The COA (2021) acknowledges, “Traditional Ecological Knowledge may assist efforts to restore, protect and conserve the Great Lakes” (p. 6) By centering Indigenous ways of knowing and being, will create space for Indigenous Peoples in water governance (George, 2020). It will require listening carefully to each other through respectful relationships (Borrows & Tully, 2018). Our relationship with the living earth is too interdependent and entangled to treat reconciliation separately (Tully, 2018)

This dissertation explored humanity’s relationship to N’bi and how improving this relationship can support well-being for N’bi, other beings, and humanity as it drew heavily on an Indigenous research paradigm. Among other things, this choice addressed concerns about unethical research conducted on Indigenous Peoples. The motivation behind this choice is my responsibility to be a good Anishinaabe kwe ancestor. Thus, specifically utilizing an Anishinaabek research paradigm (ARP) assisted me with furthering my knowledge on the significance of offering asema prior to seeking knowledge. In part, it helps me stand with the knowledge and the knowledge holders who shared in this study. This study was specific to the Great Lakes territory primarily working with Anishinaabek kweok. Scaling up these insights to inform water governance more broadly may prove to be a challenge since there are many Indigenous Nations in Canada with their protocols, worldviews, and law. It is a challenge worth taking on.

Mills (2017) explained that Elder Fred Kelly shared the following insight:

While international conflicts are fought between enemies on a very clear and simple proposition of win or lose, the choice here in Canada is one that must be made among friends and neighbours. We must face the underlying tensions. We must understand them and resolve them. Neither side believes the other side is going anywhere. This is home. So how do we live side-by-side and build a future of prosperity together? We share space in a common land. We are economically interdependent. We have many social ties. Our children are married to one another through which we share generations of grandchildren, So inextricably tied are we that our options are also very clear and simple: we can all win or we call all lose. (pg. 210)

Truth is sometimes hard to accept and can cause anger, frustrations, and mental anguish. But, if we choose not to seek the truth, underlying tensions will continue to prevail. We all have a responsibility and a choice as individuals, families, communities, and Nations. No one should be coerced, but settler governments have control over media and can certainly make the choice to use media for informed and ethical knowledge mobilization creating a more inclusive system of decision making that draws on Anishinaabek naaknigewin.

### **Aapiish waazhaaying (Where We are Going)**

The exploring of humanity's relationship to N'bi and how improving this relationship can support well-being for N'bi, other beings, and humanity has yielded support for current literature but also points to future research needs. First, there is a need to study and challenge current colonial practices, policies, legislation, and approaches to water governance through research. These systems are based on colonial worldviews and viable alternatives are required. A study to determine how and why water decision makers make their decisions, may provide an opportunity to identify how to educate them on an Indigenous worldview as I am certain not many have learned about the truth of Indigenous Peoples in their educational systems. The colonial state of Canada is well aware of what Indigenous knowledge is, many grapple with how to understand its application in their decision-making regimes. In fact, they may also grapple with applying Indigenous law to water governance. A study to understand non-Indigenous knowledge may assist in understanding biases in decision making and lead to the consideration of how best to include Indigenous women in water governance. But also, further exploring Anishinaabek naaknigewin has the potential to assist Anishinaabek Peoples and all humanity in re-establishing relationships and responsibilities to N'bi that have been disrupted through historical and on-going colonialism.

Secondly, throughout this study, Anishinaabek women's knowledge was explored extensively, and the study identified the need to re-establish balance. Exploring more thoroughly men's responsibilities could assist in re-establishing this balance. Delving into men's responsibilities could also address furthering the support of kweok in their responsibilities. This has the potential to assist with gendered based violence. In fact, including all genders in investigating responsibilities to N'bi could assist with restoring balance. In this study, I focused on women's knowledge; it was beyond the scope of my study to explore the role of other genders than the binary (man/woman, male/female) commonly found in the literature. I do feel this is an area that requires further investigation.

Lastly, furthering the work on the relationship between N'bi and Nokomis Giizis could assist in N'bi governance. Other forces at play that govern N'bi could also be explored. Such an investigation should include ceremony. Guidance from Elders and knowledge holders would be needed before delving into this knowledge and writing it down to share with current and future generations.

## **Glossary of Terms (Spelling varies from community to community)**

Aapiish waazhaaying (where we are going)  
Anishinaabek – plural for original peoples  
Anishinaabe – singular for original peoples  
Asema – tobacco  
E-yaawyaanh (who I am)  
N’bi – water includes rivers, lakes steams, etc.  
Kweok – women, plural  
Kwe – woman, singular  
Kendaaswin – knowledge  
G’giikendaaswinmin – our knowledge – referring to the knowledge of Anishinaabek  
Gaa-igkendmaanh (what I learned)  
Inawendiwin – relating  
Naaknigewin - law  
N’dodeneaahnon chikendaaswin – I am searching for knowledge  
Nokomis Giizis – grandmother moon  
Mishoomisnaanik – grandfathers, plural  
Nokomisinaanik – grandmothers, plural  
Nokomis Giizis – Grandmother Moon  
Bisindaage – I listen to someone  
Ozhibii’igi – I wrote things down  
Naanaagadawendam – I consider, notices, thinks, reflects, realizes  
Nisidotaagwag – it is understood

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A:



Regular Article

# An Anishinaabe Research Methodology that Utilizes Indigenous Intelligence as a Conceptual Framework Exploring Humanity's Relationship to N'bi (Water)

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## Abstract

This article presents the utilization of an Anishinaabek Research Paradigm (ARP) that employs Indigenous Intelligence as a conceptual framework for qualitative Anishinaabek analysis of data. The main objective of the research project examines critical insights into Anishinaabek's relationships to N'bi (water), N'bi governance, reconciliation, Anishinaabek law, and Nokomis Giizis with predominately Anishinaabek kweok, grassroots peoples, mishoomsinaanik (grandfathers), gookmisaanik (grandmothers), and traditional knowledge holders. Drawing on Anishinaabek protocols, the enlistment of participants moved beyond the University requirements for ethics. This also includes "standing with" the participants in the act of inquiry, in knowledge, and continued relationships. The ARP for research emerged from Indigenous ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and being. This approach did not call for an integration of two knowledge systems but rather recognizes there are multiple ways of gathering knowledge. The article explains how "meaning-making" involves Indigenous Intelligence through Anishinaabek protocols holding the researcher accountable to the participants, the lands, the ancestors, and to those yet to come.

## Keywords

ethical inquiry, action research, qualitative evaluation, social justice, mixed methods, methods in qualitative inquiry, community-based research

Indigenous research holds the potential to regenerate and revitalize the life of Indigenous peoples and communities along with the "knowing" that sustains their ongoing vitality (Johnston et al., 2018, pg. 2).

## Introduction

My research is driven by my need to be a good ancestor. I seek to explore the Anishinaabek<sup>1</sup> ways of knowing and being, specific to the Great Lakes territory.<sup>2</sup> I have listened to Indigenous Elders for the last 30 years often discussing the importance of making decisions for future generations as a responsibility. Dumont (2006) explains that the future generations are already looking back toward us with the awareness that our decisions and our actions are impacting them. My research is also driven by land-based research from which Anishinaabek knowledge stems from. Tobias and

Richmond (2014) explain how Anishinaabek teachings "illustrate a deep-seated attachment to land...they are the central feature upon which Indigenous people globally have developed strong cultural identities, transferred knowledge between generations" (p. 28). G'giikendaaswinmin (our knowledge) originates from different sources such as the lands, the Creator, ceremonies, and Elders which are "embedded in Place-experiences as the places we come from and call home, the places we care for and struggle over, the places that sustain us, the places we share" (McGregor, 2018a, p. 14). Land-based

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research ensures I am accountable to the lands, my ancestors, and the participants, and Anishinaabek protocols. Datta, 2019 explains “Land-based research inspires the transformation of research and researcher, as the researcher accepts responsibility for participants...[t]raditional protocols” (p. 2).

My primary research objective is to explore humanity’s relationship to N’bi (water) and how improving this relation can support well-being for N’bi, other beings and humanity. My goal is to understand N’bi governance and Kweok<sup>3</sup>; reconciliation and relationships to N’bi; and Anishinaabek naakingewin (law) based on Nokomis Giizis<sup>4</sup> (Grandmother Moon). As the research is mostly with Anishinaabek kweok from the Great Lakes territory, it is appropriate to utilize an Indigenous centered research approach. I utilize the Indigenous centered research to promote research that prioritizes the aspirations, needs, and values of Indigenous peoples and knowledge (Johnston et al., 2018). This research is a critical study that centers Anishinaabek kweok g’giikendasswinmin. It is firmly grounded in an Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP) utilizing Indigenous methods and avoiding the study “of” and “on” people and communities.

I do not simply study Indigenous peoples, I am “them.” I live with them, have conversations with them, I participate daily in social, cultural, and governance events, and I stand with them. TallBear (2014) refers to this lived reality as “stand with” and “studying across.” It is more than capacity building or giving back, it is the willingness to remain with “them” in the act of inquiry, in knowledge, and in continued relationships. Standing with the participants addresses power imbalance in research relationships. It is a known fact that imbalanced power relationships between researchers and Indigenous Peoples have been extractive, unethical, and often build academic careers without benefits to the Indigenous Peoples or communities (Juutilainen et al., 2019). I therefore employ an Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP) that furthers relationship building to relationship-maintenance. Specifically, I employ an Anishinaabek Research Paradigm (ARP) ensuring I am following Anishinaabek protocols to stand with the knowledge relationships. Maintaining the relationships ensures I am part of the research existing in what I am trying to understand by studying across. Research is about relationships with ourselves, others, the lands, spirit, and ideas (Breen et al., 2019). Strega and Brown (2015) state, “reflexivity – a recognition that the researcher is not separate from but exists in relationship with what s/he is trying to understand – [i]s a core component of ethical research practice” (p. 8). The framework of my Indigenous inquiry engages a wholistic paradigm drawing on spirit, heart (emotional), the mental, and the physical. Freeman and Van Katwyk (2019) explain that knowledge does not flow exclusively or primarily through our intellect and by trusting ourselves on the interconnectedness of the spiritual, heart (emotional), mental, and physical, we can deepen our experience of knowledge.

In keeping with deepening my experience with knowledge, remaining part of my research, and standing with those in my research, I employ Jim Dumont’s Indigenous Intelligence as a

conceptual framework for my ARP to bisindaage (to listen to someone; spirit), ozhibii’igi (write things down; emotional), nanaagadawendam (I consider, notice, think, reflect, realize; mind), and nisidotaagwad (it is understood; physical). Dumont’s (2006) Indigenous Intelligence involves utilizing all of our being to understand the world around us including the star world, the winged ones (e.g., birds), the ones that swim (e.g., fish), the ones that crawl (e.g., ants), and the four legged (e.g., wolves). The use of the intelligence of the mind, the heart, the body, and the spirit is a unique way of seeing, relating, thinking, and being. Dumont (2006) explains the Indigenous Way of Being is a way of doing that involves the whole person with total response with the total environment; the Indigenous Way of Seeing is a total way of seeing being informed by all senses always drawing on spirit; the Indigenous Way of Relating is inclusive of all life, human and other-than-human; the Indigenous Way of Thinking is total faculty learning inspired from the heart and generated from the mind. Employing Indigenous Intelligence moves beyond decolonizing research methodologies to focusing on Indigenous how research is conducted.

Indigenizing methodologies never loses sight on the prior step of decolonizing as Linda Smith (2012) describes research as recognizing and responding to the historically exclusive and dominant story that emerged from western research. With the arrival of the settlers and the introduction of colonization, Indigenous Peoples have endured land, language, and cultural loss. The introduction of Canadian policies was designed to destroy Indigenous Peoples by disrupting their structures and assimilating them into mainstream culture. Included in the genocidal tendencies of the settlers was unethical research conducted on Indigenous Peoples. Most of the manipulative and experimental research has damaged relationships between Indigenous Peoples and researchers (Chiblow, 2020; Mosby, 2013). Ethical standards began to change with the introduction of the Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) in 1998 after the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996) stated that Indigenous Peoples have to be consulted on what information is gathered, who gathers the information, who maintains the information, and who can have access to it (Peltier et al., 2020; Steffler, 2016). Further to OCAP and the RCAP, the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2): Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans developed Chapter 9 as a framework for ethical conduct involving research on Indigenous Peoples (Government of Canada, 2018). I further these statements, policies, and documents and move to another level of Indigenizing research to firmly ground my methodology in an Indigenous Research Paradigm using Indigenous methodologies and methods for gathering knowledge (Christian, 2019; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Utilizing an Anishinaabek distinct Indigenous Intelligence Framework aims to serve the interests of the participants of the research honoring respect, reciprocity, relationality, responsibility, relevancy, and reflection (Chiblow, 2020). The Indigenous Intelligence Framework embraces Shawn Wilson’s (2008) understanding of Research as Ceremony by

engaging in research with the intent of restoring harmony and balance to relationships between Anishinaabek kweok, N'bi, Anishinaabek law, and Nokomis Giizis.

The main objective of the research project I am drawing on was to examine critical insights, acquired from language speakers, Anishinaabek kweok, mishoomsinaanik (grandfathers), gookmisnaanik (grandmothers) on Anishinaabek's relationship to the N'bi, N'bi governance, reconciliation, Anishinaabek law, and Nokomis Giizis. Participants of this research were involved on a voluntary basis and, while they primarily are members of First Nation communities from the Great Lakes territory, they were invited to participate in the research as women who are highly focused on N'bi activism, N'bi art, Mother Earth Water Walks, reconciliation, Anishinaabek law, and ceremonies to advocate and educate for the healing of our people, the healing of our lands, and for responsibility-based governance. These participants are only a few of the kweok who are leaders responding to the degradation of N'bi in the Great Lakes territory. These are the resilient kweok who are resisting colonization, patriarchy, white supremacy, missionization, assimilation, and capitalism as they return to Anishinaabek ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and being. They understand that our actions today, by being good ancestors, will be remembered and honored by those yet to come.

### *Positionality and Background*

The intent of positionality statements is to promote transparency while acknowledging beliefs and cultural background of the researcher, which impacts how the researchers conduct themselves (Forbes et al., 2020). Within postpositivist and constructivist/interpretivist paradigms, researchers locate themselves to identify potential biases (Lavalee, 2009). Within many Indigenous communities, we identify ourselves as a form of respect in sharing who we are, where we are from, and who are our ancestors. This articulation helps establish trust (Absolon & Willett, 2005) by locating ourselves in relation to community and distinguishes our research from the many historical research projects which have had negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples and their communities (McGregor, 2018b). As an Anishinaabe kwe, behaving respectfully is integral to holding myself accountable to the lands, the knowledge shared, my ancestors, and those yet to come. Johnston and Musayett (2018) rationalizes that any potential unethical practices risk not only our own reputations but those of our families and communities which could cause relationships to rupture. The ARP I employ is distinct to Anishinaabek; it is much more rigorous than what was being asked of me from the University ethical research process. One component of transparency and accountable ethnicity is embedded within my understanding of my expected responsibility to ensure a long healthy life for Mother Earth. I understand I am part of Creation with specific roles and responsibilities stemming from my name and clan. I therefore respect my teachings of

spirit comes first by making an offering (the offering was given to N'bi) and introducing myself in Anishinaabemowin.

Aniin, Nanaboozhoo, XXXX. Ogamah annag indigo. Aji-jaak nidoodem. Ketegaunzeebee nidoonjibaa. Anishinaabe kwe indow. Ketegaunzeebee nindaa noogom. I grew up at Bell's Point on the most westerly side of Garden River First Nation with access to the St. Mary's River and the Root River.<sup>5</sup> N'bi has always been important and influential in my life. I would often watch the rivers, listening to the sounds, feeling the connection. Craft (2014) states, "[W]ater is an important source of healing ... during times of difficulty is the time to get healing from the water" (p. 29). I could feel the sounds of N'bi, understanding that N'bi is "sacred" and is a "powerful medicine" with "life giving properties" (Anderson, 2010; Chiblow, 2019; LaDuke, 2005; McGregor, 2012). I have furthered my understanding of N'bi by participating in N'bi ceremonies, Water Walks, and discussing N'bi issues with Elders and language speakers.

I live in my Anishinaabek ancestors' territory of the Great Lakes which informs my N'bi-based research. My community is the Anishinaabek of the Great Lakes and includes kweok. It has been well documented that far too often women voices are missing from governance decision making due to the violence perpetuated by colonization (Chiblow, 2020; Kuokkanen, 2019; Lawrence & Anderson, 2005; St Denis, 2017). Participating in N'bi ceremonies and Water Walks has provided me with many opportunities to learn from other Anishinaabek kweok. With kweok being birth water carriers, their knowledge is intrinsic to research on N'bi governance. I utilized their knowledge in exploring kweok relationships to N'bi and how these relationships can inform N'bi governance.

It has taken many years of persuading from family, friends, and colleagues to pursue a doctorate. I did not like educational institutions due to numerous racist experiences faced in elementary school, high school, college, and universities. I was often asked to leave history, geography, social sciences, and science classes. I was labeled as disruptive because I would not tolerate inaccurate descriptions and information about Indigenous Peoples. Many non-Indigenous students feared me just because I spoke up as an Anishinaabe kwe, leaving me feeling isolated and misunderstood. Hushed but audible racist remarks flowed consistently in the hallways and classrooms and in private conversations which too often included the teachers. Following the instructions of my ancestors, I participated in ceremony asking for guidance. The guidance that came was to be who I need to be, to be a good ancestor. Being a good ancestor has driven my personal quest to inform the world one person at a time of the immediate need to stop the destruction to the land, the waters, the air, and the sky world so that those who are yet to come will have all Creation to experience this journey in the human form.

With my experiences as an Anishinaabe kwe with N'bi, I chose my over-arching focus to be on N'bi and kweok. More specifically, I chose to explore reconciliation and relationships to N'bi as one of my primary topics when Canada released the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of



Canada in 2105. This report documents what the Commission did and how it went about its work, as well as what it heard, read, and concluded about residential schools in Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The report documents 95 Calls to Action categorized in several different themes such as child language and culture (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The Calls to Action are not specific to kweok nor do they refer to relationships to the waters and lands. One year later, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) began, releasing its final report in 2019 which included 2SLGBTQIA people. This final report has several themes listing well over 18 Calls for Justice. The Calls for Justice address human and Indigenous rights and governmental obligations; culture; health and wellness; human security; and justice to list a few (Government of Canada, 2019). Although the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the National Inquiry into MMIWG have commendable Calls to Action and Calls to Justice, relationships to the waters and lands are not detailed. Exploring reconciliation and relationships can assist with understanding how Anishinaabek naaknigewin in relationship to Nokomis Giizis can support the well-being for N'bi, other beings and humanity.

As an Anishinaabe person, I understand that Anishinaabek naaknigewin is based on relationships and responsibilities. Craft (2018) states, "Anishinaabe inaacongwin is structured relationally, primarily in a realm of responsibilities (rather than the binary of rights and obligations)" (p. 56). Anishinaabek law has different layers of law. One-layer, Natural law explains the natural realm such as Nokomis Giizis phases and cycles as guiding human behavior (Copenace, 2018). I therefore want to explore Anishinaabek naaknigewin based on relationships and responsibilities from Nokomis Giizis.

Throughout this research, I predominately worked with Anishinaabek kweok, grassroots peoples, mishoomsinaanik (grandfathers) gookmisnaanik (grandmothers), and traditional knowledge holders. As part of my commitment to minobimaadziwin, I relied on Anishinaabek ceremony throughout this learning journey. I frequently participated in several different ceremonies and continuously offered my asema<sup>6</sup> (tobacco) as spirit always comes first for Anishinaabek. Adhering to Anishinaabek protocols woven through my research ensures I remain true to my Ancestors. The methodology I employ in this research allows me to be truly accountable to myself and to attempt to always think the highest thoughts (Davidson, 2019). Anishinaabek teachings explain how humans are accountable for our actions to all our relations. Peltier et al. (2020) explains that Indigenous ceremony is critical when conducting research "in a good way" (p. 5). In being accountable to Anishinaabek, all my relations, and myself, I rely on Jim Dumont's "Indigenous Intelligence" of embracing the total breadth and depth of our way of seeing, relating, thinking, and being as my ARP, always avoiding historical and contemporary colonial research.

### Research as a Colonial Tool

A plethora of scholarly articles explain the atrocities of unethical research on Indigenous Peoples as detrimental, being done without their consent, used to perpetuate control over or disempower Indigenous Peoples, and being research on rather than with or for (Chiblow, 2020; Forbes et al., 2019; Freeman & Van Katwyk, 2019; Haitana et al., 2020; Johnston et al., 2018; Lambert, 2014; Martin, 2003; Peltier et al., 2020; Reid, 2020; Starblanket et al., 2019; Strega & Brown, 2015; Smith, 2012). The research has led to mistrust as Indigenous Peoples are over-researched most often with little involvement in the design, purpose, or outcome of the studies. Karen Martin (2003) states, "[W]e are over-researched and this has generated mistrust, animosity and resistance from many Aboriginal people" (p. 203). Colonization has had devastating effects on Indigenous Peoples. It created processes reliant upon knowledge created about rather than with and for Indigenous Peoples (Peltier et al., 2020). This type of research has not led to improvements in Anishinaabek communities (McGregor, 2018b) nor has it conveyed their worldview as understood and told by them in their stories or language. Fortunately, for new scholars like myself, there is now a wealth of books and articles by Indigenous scholars who have paved the way for decolonizing research.

### Decolonizing Research

Colonization was (and still is) not only physical exploitation and subjugation of Indigenous Peoples but was/is also the exploitation and subjugation of our knowledges (Geniusz, 2009). Scholars such as Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) have gained recognition by pointing out the differences in western methodologies and Indigenous methodologies. This work set the stage for the acknowledgment of Indigenous research methodologies as being unique and valid.

Decolonizing research calls for research designs to emerge from Indigenous ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and being. It is about breaking away from dominant European colonial ideas and institutions (Smith, 2012). Decolonizing research is understanding the importance of knowing Indigenous traditions, to act from those traditions, and to live from them. It is just as important to understand the cultural diversity of Indigenous communities and the importance of language. We are not all the same. We have different protocols, languages, and different Creation stories. McGregor (2018b) states, "Our differences may be a result of ideology, values, attitudes, lifestyles, gender, age, and social class" (p. 132). Understanding the cultural diversity of Indigenous communities, includes understanding that for Anishinaabek,<sup>7</sup> teachers include non-human forms such as animals, trees, rocks, the sky realm (McGregor & Plain, 2014). As part of my research, I followed the Anishinaabek protocol of offering asema specific to an Anishinaabek Research Paradigm (ARP).

### Anishinaabe Research Paradigm

Several policies and standards such as OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) and TCPS2 Chapter 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada, guide researchers when conducting research with Indigenous Peoples.

As Anishinaabek, we did not RE-search but rather lived our lives seeing, relating, knowing, and being from g'giikendaaswinmin. We learned from other "intelligences" such as the animals, plants, waters, and sky realm (Kimmerer, 2013). Our identity as Anishinaabek is grounded in relationships with the lands, our ancestors who have returned to the lands, and with future generations who will come into being on the lands (Wilson, 2008). We are in relationship with g'giikendaaswinmin continuously seeing, relating, knowing, and being. Debassige (2013) explains that giikendaaswin "encompasses a process of gathering, accumulating, carrying, and using knowledge, information, and sacred items for various purposes in life" (p. 6). Indigenous Peoples have distinctive languages that transmit their knowledge systems, ways of seeing, relating, knowing and being (Archibald et al., 2019; Chiblow, 2020; Kovach, 2009; Lambert, 2014). My ARP draws from g'giikendaaswinmin ways of seeing, relating, knowing, and being. These include adhering to Anishinaabek culturally specific protocols throughout the research as Indigenous knowledge and cultural protocols are not monolithic although many underlying principles are consistent such as spirit comes first.

In the Anishinaabe culture, spirit comes first in all things that we do. Geniusz (2009) explains, "[P]rotocols of izhitiwaawin (Anishinaabe culture, teachings, customs, history) dictate we must make an offering...when asking assistance of another being" (p. 55). In following izhitiwaawin, I offered asema expressing gratitude and asking for guidance as I journey on this endeavor. Indigenous philosophies, ontologies, and epistemologies adhere to the reciprocal duties and responsibilities between humans and the rest of the world (McGregor et al. 2020). Embedded within Indigenous cultures and values are responsibility, respect, reciprocity, relationality, and reflection (Archibald, 2008; Bell, 2013; Debassige, 2010; Kimmerer, 2013; Sinclair, 2013). When conducting research in Indigenous communities, Indigenous scholars have added relevance and refusal to the R's (Chiblow, 2020; Kirkness, & Barnhardt, 2001; Johnston et al. 2018). Enacting the R's is a component of my ARP entrenched in Anishinaabek cultural protocols.

### The Five-Pointed Star

I was sitting out in the crisp winter night watching the stars, marveling at their beauty, respecting the comfort they provide. I was looking for Ojig (Fisher) to see if he had anything to say on this crisp, cold night. A vision of the five-pointed star appeared. I made an offering to him in reciprocity for showing

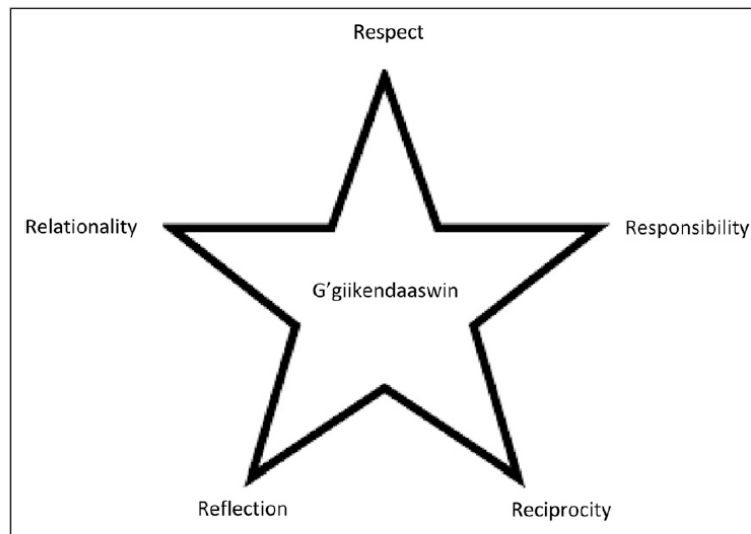
me the star. My relationship with Ojig is fairly new as I have been recently inquiring more about the star world. I have always felt a connection with the night skies, feeling the comfort of the blanket they provide. I reflected about that star and understanding the responsibility that comes with kendaaswin. It appeared that g'giikendaaswinmin is surrounded by responsibility, respect, reciprocity, relationality, and reflection—the five-pointed star. Research is about seeing, relating, knowing and being with g'giikendaaswinmin. I understood more what research meant and how the 5 Rs are integral with searching for g'giikendaaswinmin (Figure 1).

G'giikendaaswinmin is considered a gift with responsibility. DuPre (2019) states, "The ability to learn, nurture, and mobilize our knowledge is a responsibility and beautiful gift from Creator" (pg. 98). Reciprocity is an Anishinaabek protocol for acquiring g'giikendaaswinmin. Respecting Anishinaabek is understanding g'giikendaaswinmin comes from many different sources. Cormier & Ray (2018) explains "[K]nowledge in the form of stories, dreams, and ceremonies describe Anishinaabe ways of learning" (p. 118). Respect is demonstrated by the conduct and behavior in one's relationship with and in community (Manitowabi & Maar, 2018). The respect for g'giikendaaswinmin shared plays a role in Anishinaabek research. Relationality is the relationships that we hold and are a part of (Wilson, 2008). We are in relationships with g'giikendaaswinmin. Dumont (2006) explains how the world was created and it consists of relationships stating, "Respect is understood as the honoring of the harmonious interconnectedness of all of life, which is a relationship that is reciprocal." (p. 17). Reflecting is how we see, relate, know, and be. My reflection on what Ojig showed me was pivotal in understanding the interconnectedness and interdependence of the 5 Rs. Like many scholars, I utilized the teachings of respect, responsibility, relationality, reciprocity, and reflection in my Anishinaabek research paradigm.

This gift of the five-pointed star is not mine I am only a carrier of it. It is my responsibility to share the gift as many others may be able to add their interpretations, their kendaaswin. The reciprocity for this gift from Ojig is an Anishinaabek protocol. Protocols vary in Indigenous communities. Being in relationships with Indigenous peoples means understanding their specific protocols and living those protocols.

Turtle Island has numerous Indigenous communities with their own specific protocols. Kwaymullina (2017) explains the term Indigenous is a term created by colonialism which obscures the vast diversity of Indigenous Peoples suggesting a single homogenous culture which does not exist. The diversity of Indigenous Peoples is inclusive of their protocols. Martin (2003), who is a Quandamooka woman in Australia, explains research in her territory must draw on Quandamooka ontology specific to her and her Peoples. An IRP is place specific with protocols to the ancestors, customs, traditions, beliefs, and knowledges of the place. Designing research approaches for all Indigenous populations is





**Figure 1.** Five-pointed star representing g'giikendaaswinmin surrounded by the 5 Rs.

challenging “because of cultural, linguistic, historical, and geographical heterogeneity among and within Indigenous communities” (McGregor, 2018b, p. 132). Of course, there are many overarching principles such as

- (1). Research must recognize our worldview, knowledges, and realities as distinctive and legitimate.
- (2). Research must reflect the Peoples’ goals, aspirations, and needs.
- (3). Relationships between researcher and participants must be based on mutual respect and maintained.
- (4). Indigenous Peoples approve the research and research methods.
- (5). Research participants must feel safe and be safe.
- (6). Indigenous methods are legitimate ways of sharing knowledge.

(Kovach, 2015; McGregor, 2018b; Wilson, 2008). These principles are only a few common to Indigenous communities. Ultimately, “there must be a deep, abiding respect for Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous experiences” (Kovach, 2015, pg. 57) which are land-based. Since knowledge, protocols, and methodology must be place-based, I employ an ARP from the Great Lakes territory with Indigenous Intelligence to gather g'giikendaaswinmin.

### *G'giikendaaswinmin*

Indigenous knowledge systems have been called many things such as Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) or Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). Descriptions and definitions have been conjured to help people understand exactly

what Indigenous knowledge systems are, primarily in the English language. It is important to understand that Indigenous knowledge systems differ from western systems and may not fit neatly into the tightly packed colonial boxes typical research adheres to.

First and foremost, g'giikendaaswinmin is considered a gift with responsibilities. McGregor (2014) states, “[I]t is not enough just to know; one has to do something, or act responsibly in relation to the “knowledge” (p. 495). G'giikendaaswinmin is a responsibility toward generations of ancestors, the generations of today, and the generations yet to come. We have scholars such as Wendy Makoons Geniusz and Robin Wall Kimmerer who rationalize that our knowledge is not primitive but is wisdom. Many others have expressed that Indigenous knowledge systems are unique and come from various sources such as dreams, ceremony, the land, the sky world, from all life (Debassige, 2010; Dumont, 1993; LaDuke, 2005; McGregor, 2013; Peltier et al., 2020). G'giikendaaswinmin is not found in a bookstore but is place-based and relational. G'giikendaaswinmin reflects those experiences and observations from living in a place. We learn from the lands we live on. It is a lived knowledge and cannot be separated from human experience and action (Chief et al., 2016). It is based on relationships and responsibilities. McGregor (2014) states, “Anishinaabek knowledge serves as part of the foundation for understanding our responsibilities to all beings in Creation” (p. 495). G'giikendaaswinmin is collective and is not owned individually. G'giikendaaswinmin is relational to all Creation and carrying g'giikendaaswinmin is the responsibility of all generations, past and future. Research is more than just seeking g'giikendaaswinmin; it is the intelligence of the mind, the heart, the spirit, the soul, and the body (Dumont, 2006). It is Indigenous intelligence.

### *Indigenous Intelligence Framework for Research*

My research methodology follows an Indigenous Intelligence framework, as it ties innovative Indigenous research methodologies and western approaches. This approach is not calling for an integration of two knowledge systems but rather recognizes there are multiple ways of gathering knowledge. Alan Corbiere's presentation to the [Chippewas of Rama First Nation \(2015\)](#) explains how the Covenant Chain wampum belt was co-created with Indigenous and English symbols tying together the two different nations' relationship. I have listened to many presentations on wampum belts and the symbols representing the different nations do not interfere with each other but come together bringing each individual knowledge system. [Kovach \(2015\)](#) states, "Indigenous methodologies are not built upon western thought" (p. 57). Indigenous thought connects the spiritual, the physical, the mental, and the heart into one. [Wilson and Hughes \(2019\)](#) in conversation about research explains how being an Indigenist researcher is bringing the whole self to a project as it is more than just an intellectual exercise involving only the mental. I frame Indigenous Intelligence specifically for my Anishinaabek framework.

My research centers Anishinaabek knowledges and ways of seeing, relating, knowing, and being from within Anishinaabek philosophical contexts rather than assimilating the knowledge systems into a Eurocentric worldview. [Juutilainen et al. \(2019\)](#) states, "[R]esearchers need to understand that Indigenous knowledge systems must be valued and respected, not subsumed into Eurocentric academic constructs" (p. 149). I engage in a wholistic paradigm drawing on the emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental participating in relationship with what I am learning. [Wilson \(2019\)](#) explains, "As researchers, we are not separate from the process, but rather participate in relationship with what we are learning" (p. 9). [Mpoe Johannah Keikelame & Leslie Swartz \(2019\)](#) explain that Linda Tuhiwai-Smith emphasizes that cultural beliefs, values and practices "should be an integral part of Indigenous research methodology and should be explicitly built into the methodology and reflected in a transparent way." (p. 4). This framework is fundamentally about learning and is relationship-based. I understand that my Anishinaabe ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and being direct my research approach, design, implementation, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of results. I also understand that I need to be wholistic in "meaning-making" using the spirit, the heart, the mind, and the body as well as recognizing the relationships of interconnectedness and interdependence ([Archibald et al., 2019; Dumont, 2006](#)).

In [Jim Dumont's \(2006\)](#) articulation of Indigenous Intelligence, interconnectedness, interdependence, centeredness, multi-faculty responsiveness, consciousness, value-based seeing, relating, knowing, and doing are the core concepts. My understanding of interconnectedness is being connected to the collective whole using individual creativity and innovation

that benefits and advances the collective. But it also refers to the connectedness to all life based on reciprocity, responsiveness, and respect. Interdependence is understanding that we as human beings function from all levels of being—spirit, heart, mind, and body, that are all both independent and simultaneously dependent on each other. Centeredness is being centered within Anishinaabek worldview affirming, asserting, and advancing ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and doing. This multi-faculty responsiveness demands total consciousness at all levels relying on value-based seeing, relating, knowing, and doing. Value-based ways are inclusive of kindness, honesty, sharing, strength, respect, wisdom, and harmony. Exercising the total capacity of one's whole being also indicates responsiveness to future generations. [Dumont \(2006\)](#) states, "Taking intelligent action has to be informed and driven by our Indigenous culture, traditions and our way of life" (p. 26). In understanding the knowledge shared in this project, I engage the spirit, heart, mind, and body as instruments of coding.

### *Research Process*

In this section, I move to providing details on how my specific study was conducted, drawing on the ARP that has been explained above. I demonstrate how Anishinaabek ways of seeing, relating, knowing, and being were integral to the study. I give a rationale for selecting Indigenous Intelligence as the framework for this study and articulate the ways it was implemented. The research methods, including the use of conversations, a focus group, and key informants; development of conversation schedule; participant recruitment, knowledge/data gathering, analysis and approach to coding are recounted to demonstrate how Anishinaabek ways of seeing, relating, knowing, and being were employed throughout the study.

### *Beyond Ethical Approvals*

In 2000, the National Aboriginal Health Organization established ethical principles, referred to as Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP©) ([Loppie, 2007](#)). The OCAP© guides the process of data collection, protection, usage, and sharing in Indigenous communities ([Starblanket et al., 2019](#)). The Tri-Council funding agencies have led academic institutions to implement similar principles in their research ethics guidelines. Adhering to these guidelines, I completed the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans course in research ethics receiving the TCPS 2: CORE certificate for this study.

Moving beyond the University requirements for ethics, I enlisted Anishinaabek protocols. Anishinaabek protocols are embedded in our ways of knowing and being. Conducting research with and in Anishinaabek communities is about who we are, how we know and engage with knowledge, and what we do as researchers ([Breen et al., 2019](#)). As a new academic

researcher, I want to ensure I continue to conduct myself appropriately by following Anishinaabek protocols. My understanding is that living minobimaadziwin means being responsive and responsible to all life. It is continuous in all aspects of living and making offerings is one way to be respectful and responsive. McGregor (2018b) states, “[I]n Anishinaabe communities, offering tobacco, which is considered a sacred medicine, symbolizes an invitation to a reciprocal relationship” (p. 133). The exchange of asema for g’giikendaaswinmin guided me in understanding the importance of g’giikendaaswinmin being shared and kept me centered in Anishinaabek worldview knowingly and intentionally embracing minobimaadziwin.

### Research Aim

The aim of this study was to explore humanity’s relationship to N’bi and ways improving this relationship can support the well-being for N’bi, other beings, and all humanity. To address this aim, I formulated the research questions to explore Anishinaabek concepts related to N’bi governance and Anishinaabek kweok, reconciliation and relationships to N’bi, and Anishinaabek law and Nokomis Giizis.

### Gathering Methods

In this project, I primarily used conversations grouped into the three themes as the main gathering approach. Initially, the project was to use focus groups but due to COVID-19, I changed the focus groups to key informants. Starblanket et al. (2019) explain that conversations and focus groups for gathering data fall within Indigenous worldviews.

A conversational design was an appropriate method as conversations provide research participants greater control over the knowledge they are sharing (Kovach, 2009). The project is exploratory based on the research aim (Nathan et al., 2018). This method was easily aligned with Anishinaabek protocols of offering asema maintaining the relationships established with the participants. All types of interviews rely on conducting a more or less directed conversation (Charmaz, 2014). Directing conversations is not a new concept to Anishinaabek because typically if you wanted to know something, you would ask a question with an offering, which could lead to a conversation. Absolon (2011) utilizes individual conversations in her research as a means to promote equity decolonizing research methodologies ensuring Indigenous voices are elevated. This process was also used with the key informants. Key informants were the kweok from the focus groups that was originally planned but due to COVID-19, focus groups were not an option. In adhering to Anishinaabek protocols, I offered asema and a gift to each participant in exchange for their knowledge along with reading the consent forms. With the public health measures for COVID-19, not all conversations were conducted in person which meant the offering and gift protocols also did not happen in

person. Instead, I made the offering for the participant sharing knowledge before the telephone or Zoom call. Participants chose to sign the forms or give verbal consent both in person and on the telephone or Zoom call.

### Participation Through Offerings

The method of recruiting through an offering is embedded in Anishinaabek protocols. When you want to know something, you ask. With the action of asking, an offering is made. I followed Anishinaabek protocols by making an offering to each participant. Hall et al. (2015) states, “In the Anishinaabe worldview, gifting is a gesture of relationship between people” (p. 11). The participants were Anishinaabek kweok, grassroots peoples, mishoomsinaanik (grandfathers), gookmisnaanik (grandmothers), and traditional knowledge holders. The inclusion criteria were participants from the Great Lakes territory who have knowledge relating to the N’bi, N’bi governance, and Nokomis Giizis. Through years of experience working for the Chiefs of Ontario, participating in Water Walks and ceremony, I contacted already known participants sharing information about the research and setting a date and time for the conversation. In some instances, the participants already known to me suggested others I should be speaking with. Initially, the intent was to have focus groups with women’s councils, groups, and commissions. The organizations for the council and women’s commission are based in territory organizations with staff to coordinate their meetings. Due to COVID-19, the staff contacted the kweok with the study information individually so they could decide to participate as key informants rather than in focus groups. COVID-19 measures of staying at home were implemented by conducting the key informant conversations via telephone or ZOOM. Verbal consent was obtained by reading the informed consent form prior to our conversations. Offerings were made to participants and to the lands regardless of how the conversations were conducted. All participants contacted agreed to participate in the study.

### Bizindam

Anishinaabek protocols are based on bizindam. Learning to bizindam demonstrates respect and the willingness to learn. Archibald (2008) explains that “Elders say, it is important to listen with three ears: two on the sides of our heads and the one that is in our heart” (p. 8). The aim of this study was to decolonize by utilizing bizindam. Wagamese (2016) states, When you listen, you become aware. That’s for your head. When you hear, you awaken. That’s for your heart. When you feel, it becomes part of you. That’s for your spirit...it’s so you learn to listen with your whole being. That’s how you learn” (p. 113).

Engaging bizindam follows Wendy Geniusz (2009) Bis-kaabiyan by participating in decolonization to enable readiness for the knowledge being shared. Bizindam provides for decolonization by listening to hear, not react, it is actively



listening with your entire being. Jutilainen et al. (2019) reiterate that researchers must listen to the participants and respect what is being shared. In active listening, research is reconceptualized and becomes emergent (Potts & Brown, 2015) through bizindam and reflection. I drew on Indigenous theoretical frameworks that emphasize bizindam through responsibilities and relationships. I applied bizindam with all participants as the initial stage of coding.

### *Qualitative Anishinaabek Analysis*

Have you ever watched a butterfly fly? It is not gliding, soaring, or hovering but is an erratic fluttering style. This is how I felt when I encountered coding; I was erratically fluttering trying to understand what I needed to do and how to do it. The task was determining what is valid in terms of western criteria, but which is also compatible with the principles and characteristics of Anishinaabek ways of seeing, relating, knowing and being. I decided to engage in the Anishinaabek teaching that spirit comes first and if you want to know something, then put asema out and ask. This is what I did and how I began to my CODING for the g'giikendaaswinmin shared with me by framing Indigenous Intelligence as foundational and ever present in my coding process. Dumont (2006) explains that Indigenous Intelligence is a unique way of seeing, relating, thinking, and being, located in the four directions. I remembered watching the butterfly, marveling at its beauty and the balance it maintained regardless of erratic fluttering. I drifted back to a time when a butterfly came to see me in a vision focusing on the balance it maintains. I explored the four life stages of the butterfly trying to understand how life as a butterfly must be. It then came to me, that the wings of the butterfly are in four sections and all sections are needed for balance. I pictured each section of the 4 wings with the seeing, the relating, the knowing and the being maintaining true balance. I imagined the butterfly being picked up by a gentle wind and gracefully gliding through the sky world melting into the stars. The image was stunningly beautiful, and it became apparent that I could see bizindaage, ozhibii'igi, naanaagadawendam, and nisidotaagwad. Below I describe bizindaage, ozhibii'igi, naanaagadawendam, and nisidotaagwad as Indigenous Intelligence for my method for coding.

#### *Bizindaage, Ozhibii'igi, Naanaagadawendam, Nisidotaagwad*

The first phase was bizindaage (I listen to someone). The spirit is at the center of all beings. We are all spirit beings. Dumont (2006) explains being spirit-centered is a total way of seeing informed by all senses. I let myself feel what was being shared. I closed off all sounds to listen, to become spiritually attuned to the knowledge being shared. I imaged what was being said. I listened several times before transcribing verbatim.

My second phase was ozhibii'igi (I wrote things down). It was a way of relating to what was heard. Dumont (2006)

describes the way of relating is respectful of the individual. The ways of relating are captured through heart. The heart defines who we are and is a way of knowing. It is relating. I transcribed verbatim what was being shared allowing myself to stay attuned to the spiritual significance of what was said.

The third phase was naanaagadawendam (I consider, notice, think, reflect, realize). This phase utilized the mind inspired from the heart. It is a way of knowing. Dumont (2006) clarifies that the way of knowing is inspired from the heart as well as generated from the mind's intelligence. It is the way of thinking. I read through the transcripts reflecting on what was shared. I coded each verbatim transcript to find the summary. I found same phrases, thoughts, words, and found differences.

The fourth and final phase nisidotaagwad (it is understood). Dumont (2006) maintains the way of being is the total response of the total person generating creative expression and the highest quality of experience. The way of being is the doing; it becomes the physical (the body) taking action.

The following Figure 2 illustrates the phases on each wing.

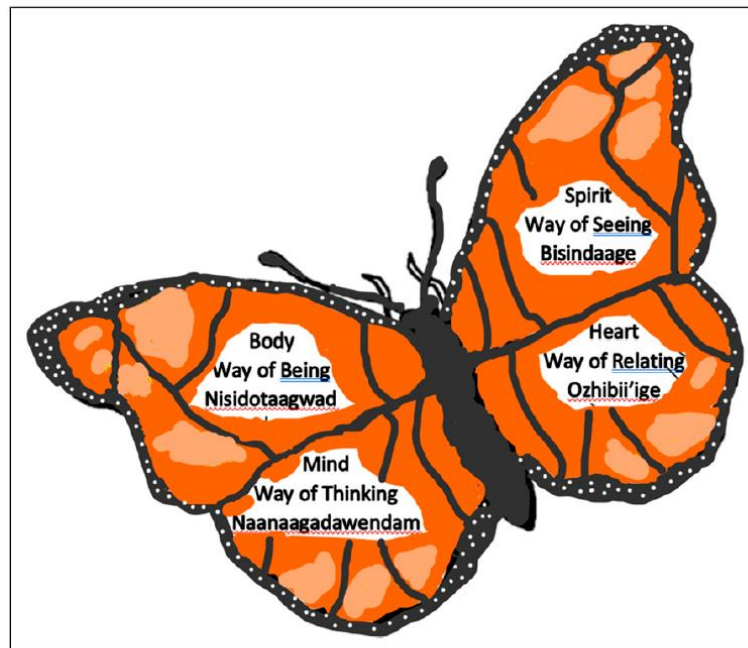
During the coding, I felt conflicts between the need to group similar ideas to draw conclusions about the interviewees' thinking and the realization that many important Anishinaabe ideas are so multifaceted that compartmentalizing the data oversimplifies the richness of the ideas. Some of the themes were so interwoven that they could not be neatly fitted into the list of research questions. This reinforced the wholistic perspective of Anishinaabe ways of seeing, relating, knowing, and being. The data gathered in this study were not meant to be tabulated, but rather described, interpreted, and understood. Archibald (2019) refers to this as "meaning-making" which involves the spirit, heart, mind, and body. Making meaning is often thought of as analyzing data. Meaning-making happened continuously throughout the research process. It was constant reflection. Constant reflection included understanding what was shared is participating in relationship with what I was learning. Breen et al. (2019) quotes Adams et al. as stating, "Knowledge can't be "discovered" or "owned" but instead it reveals itself, is experienced, is shared" (p. 9). This research required me to decolonize from dominant Eurocentric ideas focusing on an IRP, more specifically, an Anishinaabek framework. Wilson (2008) indicates that the core of our approaches is a ceremony with relationships. The approach I chose kept me in relationship with the kendaaswin that was shared.

G'giikendaaswinmin is the center of the 5-pointed star containing relationality, respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and reflection. Keno gego naabadosin (everything is connected) to the spirit, heart, mind, and body. Understanding how my way of seeing, relating, thinking, and being connects me to g'giikendaaswinmin is an ARP (Figure 3).

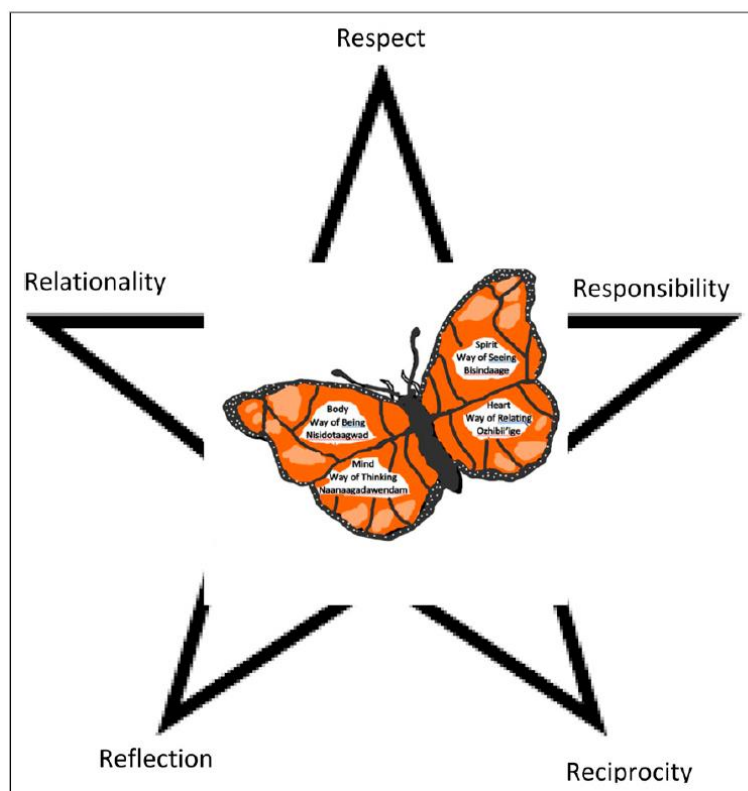
### **Summary**

This article has presented an ARP utilizing Indigenous Intelligence as a conceptual framework for research conducted in the Great Lakes territory. I argue utilizing Indigenous





**Figure 2.** Coding methodology based on Indigenous Intelligence of ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and being. Keno gego naabadosin (everything is connected).



**Figure 3.** Keno gego naabadosin.

research methodologies promotes “standing with” Indigenous peoples when conducting research as numerous scholarly articles have been written on the atrocities to Indigenous peoples through colonial methodologies. Decolonizing research assists the researchers to see the Eurocentrism in conventional research methods (Bell, 2013). Embracing Indigenous methodologies for research in and with Indigenous communities needs to be the new norm through Indigenous research paradigms.

Decolonizing research by utilizing an ARP fosters my personal decolonization in relation to being a good ancestor.

## Appendix

### Glossary<sup>8</sup>

Anishinaabek	plural for original peoples
Anishinaabe	singular for original peoples
Asema	tobacco
Aniin, Nanabooxhoo	hello
Nidizhnikaaz	my name
Ogamah annag indigo	Leading Star is my spirit name
Ajijaak nidoodem	I am crane clan
Ketegaunzeebee nidoonjibaa	I live in Garden River
Bizindam	listen with all your being
Biskaabiiyan	returning to ourselves
N’bi	water includes rivers, lakes steams, etc.
Kweok	women, plural
Kwe	woman, singular
G’giikendaaswinmin	our knowledge—referring to the knowledge of Anishinaabek
Nokomis Giizis	grandmother moon
Anishinaabemowin	Anishinaabek language
Gookmisnaanik	grandfathers, plural
Mishoomsinaanik	grandmothers, plural
Bisindaage	I listen to someone
Ozhibii’igi	I wrote things down
Naanaagadawendam	I consider, notices, thinks, reflects, realizes
Nisidotaagwag	it is understood
Keno geog naabodosin	everything is connected
Ojig	fisher
Minobimaadzwini	the good life
Ishitiwaawin	Anishinaabek culture, customs, teachings, history

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Anishinaabek ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and being contributed to bizindaage, ozhibii’igi, naanaagadawendam, and nisidotaagwad as a qualitative Anishinaabek analysis. The journey of seeing, relating, thinking of the butterfly drifting into the 5-pointed star is part of my search for g’giikendaaswinmin; it is part of my being. Living and being kendaaswin through Anishinaabek protocols holds me accountable to the knowledge shared, the lands, my ancestors, and those yet to come.


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### Notes

1. Translation to words is provided in Glossary.
2. The Great Lakes territory consists of Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake Ontario, and Lake Erie located on Turtle Island which is now known as Canada, the United States of America, and Mexico.
3. Kweok is the term used for women in Anishinaabemowin. I chose to use kweok because it was explained to me that only women had a word to remind all people of the importance of women in our culture. Women will be used when referencing a source.
4. The Moon is often referred to as the night sun which translates to Dibiki Giizis. In ceremony, women refer to the Moon as Nokomis Giizis translated to Grandmother Moon. As I am an Anishinaabe kwe (woman), I will refer to the Moon as Nokomis Giizis.
5. The Root River is a tributary of the Great Lakes emptying into the St Mary’s River. The St Mary’s River connects the Great Lakes of Superior and Huron.
6. Asema is used in offerings or as a stand-alone offering as an Anishinaabek protocol.
7. I can only speak from an Anishinaabek worldview because that is who I am.
8. Spelling of the words vary from Anishinaabek community to community.

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## **APPENDIX B: Interview Guide**

### **Anishinaabek Giikendaaswin from the Great Lakes Region**

**Susan Chiblow – Ogamauh annag qwe**

#### **Semi structured Questions (Conversations)**

##### **Theme One - Nibi Governance and Anishinaabek Women**

What are your experiences in relation to Nibi?

a. How does Anishinaabek law construct the role of women in decision making about Nibi?

1. What are the roles and responsibilities of women for Nibi?
2. How did women take care of Nibi?
3. Do you know of any laws for water?
4. Do you have any water stories?

b. What are the opportunities and barriers to Anishinaabek women in current Nibi decision making regimes?

1. Are women involved in water making decisions?
2. Are there opportunities for women in current Nibi decision?
3. What are the barriers for women in current Nibi decision?

##### **Theme Two - Reconciliation and relationships with Nibi**

What is your concept of reconciliation?

a. Can the broader discourse in Canada about reconciliation assist with improving humanity's relationship to Nibi?

1. How can we change people's views on Nibi?

b. How can reconciliation assist with reconciling different legal orders and governance structures?

2. Can we use our relationships with Nibi to change the current water policies and governance structures?

c. How can the concept of reconciliation assist with addressing environmental conflicts?

1. Can we use reconciliation to address environmental conflicts?
2. How do we do this?

##### **Theme Three - Anishinaabek law and Giizis**

What are your experiences with Anishinaabek law and Giizis?

- a. What are the relationships and responsibilities between Anishinaabek and Giizis?
  - 1. Do you have stories about Giizis?
  - 2. What are our responsibilities to Giizis?
  - 3. Do you know of any Anishinaabek laws about Giizis?
- b. How can these relationships and responsibilities inform sustainable Nibi governance including women's roles in Nibi governance decision making?
  - 1. How do we put women's roles in Nibi decision making?
  - 2. How do we inform people of the relationships and responsibilities to Nibi?